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**Migrations and the populist closure of Europe**

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# **Migrations and the populist closure of Europe**

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# **Migrations and the populist closure of Europe<sup>1</sup>**

Rada Iveković

## **Abstract and beginning**

Migrations as an on-going movement bear however also a political history of discontinuities and interruptions. In reflecting on migrations, i<sup>2</sup> shall necessarily be dealing with discontinuities, non-linearity and interruptions, which are, as frames, far more promising and stimulating than continuity. Continuity also testifies to a lack of political imagination. When starting from continuities, one is likely to keep in line with conventional power configurations and established hegemony. Hegemony builds on continuities. We opt for discontinuities because they are thought provoking. They disclose not only the other side of the medal, but unexpected viewpoints and perspectives too, including possible histories that did not happen but could have happened. They uncover alternative histories, possible histories, “unnecessary or useless histories”, deviant stories, autonomous or subaltern and complementary, unconventional narratives. Suddenly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are faced with exception having become the rule, a change of paradigm in a way, and the distressing horizon of a visible end of the world that our civilization brought upon itself, through the doing of a virus pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> The course of which the present essay is an outcome was titled “The epochal issue of migrations. The cosmopolitics of state closure. (The closure of Europe)”. I am grateful to the International Center for Cultural Studies (ICCS), National Chiao Tung University, at Hsinchu, Taiwan, for inviting me to deliver it to master and graduate students in the first semester of the academic year 2019-20. The present essay has been substantially updated since. While i meant to primarily work on 21<sup>st</sup> century migrations to Europe and on Europe’s closure, i came naturally to enlarge my topic in this longer essay by the unavoidable context: international relations, a post 1989 Europe being reconfigured, the post-cold war period, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the degradation of eastern Europe (the former eastern bloc), the rampant advancement of populisms and social nativisms of all sorts, the complex political configurations in Asia, peripheral wars and proxy wars constituting Europe with the onslaught of a new wave of cognitive neuro-capitalism, of absolute or of hyper-capitalism etc. All of this is also foregrounded in the very inspiring “Position Statement” of the ICCS for the current period, with which my classes as well as the present text have dovetailed. I must confess having been stimulated by that remarkable internal “Position Statement for IACS Project – Conflict, Justice, Decolonisation – Critical Studies of InterAsian Societies” produced at the ICCS, NCTU, in Hsinchu for the period of 2018 to 2022. I thank prof. Alain Brossat, prof. Yuan-hong Chu, and in particular prof. Jixuan (Joyce) C.H. Liu, for inviting me to their institute and International Centre to give those lectures, as well as the remarkable students of my course.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that i purposely use throughout a lower-case letter “i” (except at the beginning of a sentence), when it is a 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun designating me, R.I.

## 1. Introduction: Borders as trap?

### Hospitality and care

Petar Hektorović, alias Petrus Hectoreus (1487-1572), a knowledgeable Renaissance writer and architect who built a large patrician house, or a small castle called Tvrđalj with an original inner fish-pond in the small town of Stari Grad on the island of Hvar (Pharos) in the Adriatic Sea in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, had the idea of enjoying it and sharing it with friends, foreigners, paupers, wanderers and outsiders. He ornamented the mansion and the fish-pond, to which a garden was adjacent, with elegant inscriptions into the white building stones, and one of them read: PETRUS HECTOREUS MARINI FILIUS PROPRIO SUMPTU ET INDUSTRIA AD SUUM ET AMICORUM USUM CONSTRUXIT (“Petrus Hectoreus, son of Marin, built [this] with his own money and labor, for himself and for friends.”). The idea of *sharing* was the foundation of his philosophy. The modern European spreading over the globe had not yet become what it is today, and was seen as curiosity for and openness to the other. There was no closure within national or state borders at that time, no rejecting of travelers or foreigners. At that time, people still travelled without passports, and hospitality, nowadays disregarded, was not a vain word. That ancient and almost universal tradition of welcoming visitors has been lost in many parts of the so-called developed world, and much beyond too because of new living conditions and new economic and political circumstances, especially within absolute (or disaster) capitalism globalization and prevailing individualism. In those times and throughout ancient and medieval history, travelers and strangers were welcome unless it was a time of war or plague. The latter figured as an exception, however. Towns closed due to illness would reopen soon thereafter, and life would go back to normal, although without those who paid the price with their lives and were mourned.



Stari Grad, Hvar (Jadran), Ribnjak Petra Hektorovića (Petrus Hectoreus) u Tvrdlju.

Stari Grad, Hvar (the Adriatic Sea), Petar Hektorović's Fishpond in his house Tvrdalj, photo 2019.

Migrants, strangers, callers are, in our 21<sup>st</sup> century, met with fear and rejection when not with outright violence. This essay was to be about the Europe's and in particular the European Union's process of closure to immigration, according to the subtitle ("The closure of Europe") of the lectures that represent its bulk. The EU, being in the first place a *market*, never meant to be a social club for receiving foreigners, although it always boasted of its theoretical universalist humanism and of its principled abstract hospitality. In the case of France, we see ourselves as a *pays d'accueil*, a country of welcoming. Yet those who would come to visit don't get visas.

But something has radically changed before this essay was finished.

Most of the present paper was written in the form of lectures before the outbreak of the coronavirus covid-19 pandemic, about which i have now added a paragraph or two towards the end. Although the closure and retraction of the west from its duty of solidarity to other countries and from its historic responsibility (due to its hegemony) to once colonized continents were evident, the pandemic produced overnight a much worse and desperate closure of cities,

countries, borders and *minds*. The shutting to the virus was translated into an even harder closure to immigrants, and the latter were immediately seen as viruses themselves. Closing and hostility to immigrants became pervasive, with people hopelessly stuck at the borders. The lockdown became as global as the epidemic is. Transportation stopped, industries shut down and, in the west, those who had homes stayed at home. Skies became clear, the air became breathable again as economies were ruined and the political future was not clear. Fear of the virus instantly woke up nationalism, racism, casteism, class, ethnic and gender etc. discrimination of the worst kind. Since the epidemic is global (a first such absolute pandemic in history), there is no going back to “normal” anymore. *Normalcy is the pandemic itself now*, and it means cessation of contacts.<sup>3</sup> While the essay was going to critique the “normal” closing to others due to a colonial and imperial history of violence, we have stepped into another type of much worse retraction brought about by the malady being global and thus being “normal” in a new sense. *Exception became the rule*. Not that history had not been pushing us in that direction, not that we didn’t expect it to happen soon. But we didn’t think we were already there. Yet we are. After the sanitary crisis itself, and within the climate and ecological crises, the economic and political crises await everyone. It will be much worse for the global south. And it is clear that the nation-state cannot deal with climate change or ecology. We shall have to reinvent a political future for the planet because the present (and western, but universalized violently) modern paradigm has brought us to where we stand now – to an abyss. Meanwhile, the danger of permanent stigmatization of migrants, minorities and refugees is growing around the world as borders are closing to them under the cover of « covid-19 protection ». They are labelled as virus carriers and are even locked down in a number of European countries under various pretexts. The condition of confinement on the pretext of the pandemic, although temporarily necessary for medical reasons, threatens to become a rather permanent feature.

But covid-19, being a threshold or a portal,<sup>4</sup> a fissure when things can happen, the current worldwide psychodrama is also an opportunity for women (among others) to reinvent themselves and society. Such opportunities to fight patriarchy and other social injustices don’t happen every day and, most important, they don’t last. Incidentally, the same is also an occasion

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<sup>3</sup> Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, “Nationaux-Républicains: le grand retour?” in *Médiapart*, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/olivier-le-cour-grandmaison/blog/260420/nationaux-republicains-le-grand-retour> . *Borders of an epidemic*, edited by the MCRG, see the “Introduction” by Ranabir Samaddar, [http://www.mcr.org.in/RLS\\_Migration\\_2020/COVID-19.pdf](http://www.mcr.org.in/RLS_Migration_2020/COVID-19.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Arundhati Roy, “The pandemic is a portal”, *The Financial Times*, April 3, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

for migrant populations to remake themselves in a new society, and to reinvent that society with their hosts. Migrants were by definition, ready to recast themselves. Wanting to refashion themselves and a new life is the elementary condition that allows calling someone a migrant at all.

We have a conjuncture here of elements amount to the refiguring of themselves, for a metamorphosis.

Different countries adopted different attitudes to the 2020 virus. In developed Asian countries where the pandemic took a much milder form, governments and public health were prepared, and confinement of the whole population was not applied. Massive tests were performed on as many people as possible, and only people with coronavirus were isolated, their contacts traced and isolated too. But Europe, the USA and India were not prepared. They proceeded, with much delay, to an official lockdown of the whole population, with a disastrous and completely disproportionate toll in deaths. According to some opinions, the east Asian medical policy worked better though diversely (China, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Japan), while racial and other prejudices, as well as general unpreparedness lead to a great number of avoidable deaths.<sup>5</sup>

We shall unfortunately be able to address the virus effects only superficially at the end of the essay. In a way, present history has accelerated what had already been in view, and we can now clearly see the end of our world at the horizon, with climate change and ecological devastation, as well as the possible or probable end of the planet and humankind.

Although migrations are a regular age-old feature of societies, there has been a disquieting raise in toxic nationalisms and populism since 1989 that now accompany them. A *conservative revolution* has happened in the west and was globalized, although unequally. That conservative revolution has been followed by an on-going attempt at *restoration*. Restorations usually lead to disaster, and are usually failed. What is being “restored” is as a rule some idea, rife with symbolic pretense, of a former golden age projected into the future (with a rear-view), while the just immediate past is being removed if not forbidden: this has been the experience, among

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Dominique Michel, « Anatomie d'un désastre », April 27, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afbeFoi679I&feature=youtu.be>; Samaddar, “Introduction” in *Borders of an epidemic*, *op. cit.*, Le Cour Grandmaison, “Nationaux-Républicains: le grand retour?” *op. cit.*



other, of post-socialism, busy restoring an imaginary capitalism it sometimes never even had. Such restoration requires the hammering of new old “values”. At this time (the first half of 2020), the restoration applied is the post-covid-19 one. Instead of a change of the economic and political order globally, governments seem only to be able to propose restoration of the time before the epidemic.<sup>6</sup>

Generally and previously, 1989 remains one of the important *thresholds*: simultaneously the end, in Europe, of the cold war, the marshalling of a new post-socialist era, the maturing and historic concomitance of some kind of sinking in of the postcolonial condition too (although most historic decolorizations had happened in the 1960s), the beginning of visible capitalist globalization and toxicity, and the new imperial hegemony with endless wars as well as social and political fragmentation at the bottom level. That had all come to a brief halt in the 2020 pandemic, and authorities are most probably now planning to try and restore it.

### **Migrations as moving and as an on-going movement**

I myself come from a war in the 1990s. Wars are among the discontinuities, non-linearity and interruptions that disclose – if you want to see it – the other side of the medal, unexpected views and perspectives. They reveal possible options, histories that could have happened, but didn't. Europe is no exception to the contemporary general closure of borders to people from the global south and the east, but it is a particularly insidious example of what is going on practically worldwide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and within the contemporary world-configuration of powers. Although we have been hearing about a massive migration crisis, i am not the only one who would say that there is no crisis of migration, of migrants, of immigrants, of refugees and of the displaced, but that there is a profound crisis of conviviality, solidarity, hospitality and humanity on the receiving end in Europe and elsewhere. Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp thus writes: “[T]he so-called ‘refugee crisis’ calls for re-founding the ‘civilizational’ bases of the general and constituent policy of Europe on other foundations than the defense of former colonial territories in a new imperial division and a succession of states of ‘emergency’. [...] The current ‘crisis’ is none other than the ‘crisis’ of capitalist modernity described by Marx, amplified by financial capitalism, which is a capitalism of empires in reconfiguration. It is not

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<sup>6</sup> Alain Brossat & Alain Naze, “L’épouvantable restauration globale” in *Ici et ailleurs*, 12 June 2020, <https://ici-et-ailleurs.org/contributions/actualite/article/l-epouvantable-restauration>.

limited to Europe, it is globalized.”<sup>7</sup>

Migrants, passers-by could hardly be said to be welcome. Hospitality as known to Petar Hektorović evaporated, the displaced are now parked in temporary and wild camps all over Europe (and elsewhere) and their freedom as well as human rights are confiscated. They face rejection, pushing back (*refoulement*), racism, violence of all sorts, ethnic or religious cleansing, border closure, attempts at controlling social networks, police brutality, formal and informal encampments, hardening of the legislation on immigration. You could call it a war, such is the disproportion. There is no tolerance in wars. In another time of no tolerance and of persecution, in WWII, Hannah Arendt understood that, without citizenship, human rights of the stateless, will not be honored: migrants (at that time, fleeing Nazi Germany) did not have the right to have rights.<sup>8</sup> That situation is being repeated today. This crisis of solidarity and humanity, refusal to welcome, denial of human rights and of elementary hospitality is co-substantial with a crisis in self-representation and self-esteem of Europe, and also of representation itself. As Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp says further, “Did the ‘refugee crisis’ exist in 2015-2016? We can doubt it. The instrumentalization of statistics, untruths, and the electoral use of the migratory ‘problem’ show in the end a gap between the political world, the media and science. This climate keeps us away from the facts. A spike in arrivals for a few months has plunged the EU into alarmist speeches about the ‘crisis’, while a drastic drop in arrivals between 2016 and 2018 refuted the exodus of Syrians or Afghans in autumn 2015. The German chancellor Angela Merkel's (the most powerful European politician at that time) decision to host one million refugees, mainly from the Syrian war, surprised Europe after Germany had been extremely hostile to Greece in its 2015 psychodrama. It highlighted not so much the ‘refugee crisis’ as the very restrictive attitudes of other EU member states, including France, the prevalence of police categories in asylum policies and the lack of a prospective migration policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the general chaos created over the subcontinent by this issue and by lessons from history (not) learned, the French multi-prize winner, economist Thomas Piketty too, declared that

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<sup>7</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, interview “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical: réaffirmer les droits à la mobilité et à l'hospitalité”, ed. by Pauline Brückner, Daniel Veron and Youri Lou Vertongen in *Critique internationale. Revue comparative de sciences sociales*, N°84 July-Sept. 2019, no page numbers, translations by me, R.I. (if not stated otherwise, it is who translate excerpts into English in the whole book), <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/vers-un-imaginaire-democratique-radical-reaaffirmer-les-droits-la-mobilite-et-lhospitalite>

<sup>8</sup> Arendt, Hannah, “We Refugees,” in Marc Robinson (ed.) *Altogether elsewhere. Writers on exile*. Winchester, MA, Faber&Faber 1994, pp. 110–119 (first publication 1948), [http://www-leland.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/hannah\\_arendt\\_we\\_refugees.pdf](http://www-leland.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/hannah_arendt_we_refugees.pdf).

Europe could easily absorb one million refugees *every year*, and that this would have a positive effect on its economy.

It was a crisis both in representing oneself (Europeans to themselves) and representing as well as imagining the others.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, migration as an issue has become highly politicized, in a way different than what it had been during the cold war in Europe at least (1945-1989), when the migrants were supposed to be escaping from “communism” and surrendering to or choosing capitalism, where they would be welcome: but there were only a few of those at that time, in Europe.<sup>10</sup> Fatalities at the Berlin Wall itself were about 140 in all, to which some 250 killed at border crossings, over several decades, have to be added and all have names and a memorial.<sup>11</sup> Today however, we have *thousands that have already died at European fences, borders and at sea drowned but also shot*, and many that may have the same destiny and that should be saved *now*.

This issue deserves to be observed also from the viewpoint of those who consider attempting the passage, or of those who see Europe *from without* while belonging to those parts of the world that provide a majority of migrants to Europe, such as Africa and western Asia. Philosopher Achille Mbembe writes about the necessity for Africa, facing Europe’s closure, to take its own destiny and initiative in its hands and to start exiting the borders system. Colonial masters had installed the latter, in Africa. Facing the fact that Africa will soon have a billion inhabitants (a number that should have been attained much earlier but for the slave traffic), while external borders are now closed to them, the continent should open its internal borders, he thinks, for people to circulate freely as they did in pre-colonial times. He also claims, for anyone wishing to migrate fleeing repression, a right to hospitality, much like Ghana’s constitutional “right of abode”, which Mbembe examines in the light of Kant’s idea of a universal right to hospitality within the project of perpetual peace. In this sense, the right to hospitality should be based on a basic and *primary* cosmopolitan right: everyone is entitled to inhabit the common cosmos, the common world, of which we have just one. States come only

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<sup>9</sup> The journal *Hérodote* N°174, Paris, September 2019.

<sup>10</sup> See “La cause des migrants”, ed. by P. Brückner, D. Veron & Y.L. Vertongen in *Critique internationale* N° 84, 2019, *ibid.*, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-critique-internationale-2019-3.htm> . See in particular the mentioned interview with Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical”, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> About the Berlin wall, “Berlin War Memorial. Fatalities at the Berlin Wall, 1961-1989” *Wikipedia*, <https://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/en/todesopfer-240.html> .

after that. History is but the story of on-going moving, of settlement, resettlement and movements, and Africa in particular, as most parts of the world, has been living through circulation, drives, mixing and relocations. Borders are obstructing that natural way of humans. It is impossible to have a continent with a billion inhabitants and closed borders. A way of rendering populations vulnerable is now to prevent them from moving and depriving them of speed. This is complicated by the new ICT techniques, cellphones and Internet, which act as links and traverse borders, albeit virtually. A new division of the world is being organized right now through security methods and physical fences, walls and the international order, by which some can move and others, the “superfluous”, the “disposable”, can’t. It will not be possible to maintain such a new world order through managing entire populations, where extraction reaches greater depth not only in soil, but including within the self. A resistance to that should be provided by African states that need to recover their sovereignty, thinks Mbembe, which is in danger of emasculation (sic), against anti-migratory politics. Africa needs to define her own migratory politics, thinks Mbembe.<sup>12</sup> He is right, although we may doubt (*toute proportion gardée*) of the positive effectiveness of sovereignty whose disastrous effectiveness in the perspective of imperial hegemony under the sign of the nation-state is well established. Today sovereignty as a goal comes either in a nationalist and extreme-right context in Europe, or also as a recognized (but not yet achieved) goal of decolonization. There would be, here different definitions of the term to confront.

### Worldwide populisms. The dangers of Ur-fascism

Populisms or social-nativisms<sup>13</sup> have many versions and definitions as we shall see, and scholars disagree on them. Populism, a modifiable phenomenon coming in various doses

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<sup>12</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Peut-on être étranger chez soi ?”, in *Libération* on 13 Nov. 2019, [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/11/13/achille-mbembe-peut-on-etre-etranger-chez-soi\\_1763182](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/11/13/achille-mbembe-peut-on-etre-etranger-chez-soi_1763182); also “Rencontre avec Achille Mbembe, Jeudi 23 janvier 2020 à MC93”, Bobigny, on the occasion of the publication of his book *Brutalisme*, and of the pocketbook of *De la postcolonie* (La Découverte). An evening animated by the journalist Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux (*Le Monde; Jeune Afrique*), podcast: [https://www.mc93.com/saison/rencontre-avec-achille-mbembe?utm\\_source=Lettre+d%27information+n%1&utm\\_campaign=8b4185cdfa-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_01\\_22\\_04\\_15&](https://www.mc93.com/saison/rencontre-avec-achille-mbembe?utm_source=Lettre+d%27information+n%1&utm_campaign=8b4185cdfa-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_01_22_04_15&)

<sup>13</sup> The term « social nativism » (for populism when tending to new fascism) is used by Thomas Piketty, *Capital et idéologie*, Paris, Seuil 2020.

depending on conditions, is a much-contested concept,<sup>14</sup> and is also superficially and variously characterized. “[P]opulism captures a central dimension of the crisis of representation currently gripping European politics”, write Jäger and Borriello.<sup>15</sup> Present day populism comes into being after the evident failure of party or parliamentary democracy<sup>16</sup> and an accompanying general depoliticization and confusion about political vocabulary and orientation. Left? Right? Vocabularies now merge. From being hailed with hope by some on the left (as by Chantal Mouffe,<sup>17</sup> Ranabir Samaddar and other scholars, as well as by politicians), populisms, on the other end, are accused of association with the extreme right and with fascism by others (Rastko Močnik, Umberto Eco, Pierre Rosanvallon, Laurent Mucchielli etc.). They also have long and diverse histories which are worth studying and on which Ernesto Laclau produced a seminal work. What makes them so difficult to classify and grasp, is that they associate themselves with quite diverse issues and what appears as political orientations. They promote sometimes quite dissimilar and often rather diverging concepts of “the people” (which gives them their name, as if they all referred to the same issue or source). Most populisms don’t come within the party context or, when they do produce a party, they end up having a leadership but not much of a constituency or of membership. Whatever be their description, it is also true that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, it seems that we have globally entered an era of widespread national-populisms. Some specialists or journalists will insist that populism and nationalism, or populism and fascism, are not the same,<sup>18</sup> because there are populisms that are none of these. Although populisms rely on and promote “identities”, these are *not necessarily* national identities. Although many a writer report populism to the 1930s, we do not today have historically quite the same configuration that existed in the 1930s in Europe and the USA.

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<sup>14</sup> Anton Jäger, Arthur Borriello, “Making sense of populism”, in *Catalyst*, Vol. 3, issue 4, winter 2020, <https://catalyst-journal.com/vol3/no4/making-sense-of-populism> ; Anton Jäger with Bhaskar Sunkara, May 8, 2020, in *The Jacobin Magazine* (Stay at Home # 37), *YouTube* May 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1REyqv3RNY> .

<sup>15</sup> Anton Jäger, Arthur Borriello, “Making sense of populism”, in *Catalyst*, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Jäger and Borriello locate this decline from 1973 on (*ibid*). Darko Suvin locates the decline of the former communist party in Yugoslavia – and then of the country - from about 1975 and on. Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi. Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije*, Belgrade, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung 2014, transl. from the Engl. by Marija Mrčela; the original of the same: *Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia*. Foreword Fredric Jameson. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016. ISBN 9789004306943, Harvester Press 2017. Suvin and Jäger & Borriello describe comparable situations. This includes the fragmentation of societies into “civil society” according to different interests.

<sup>17</sup> Chantal Mouffe, “The populist moment”, in *Open Democracy*, 21-11-2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/populist-moment/>; “The populist challenge”, in *Open Democracy*, 5-12-2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/populist-challenge/>

<sup>18</sup> Jäger & Borriello, op. cit.; Jäger op. cit.

Today's Europe's citizens are demobilized, and not prone to mass movements, although riots (France), some militarized commandos and militias do exist. Jäger and Borreillo propose that we distinguish populism as a "signifier" (a denomination, a word) from the social reality going by the same name and extended across the whole political spectrum, a confusion that technically comes with much linguistic speculation carried by populism studies.

Populisms now appear in an array of countries over the continents, which gives them an appearance of relatedness. They are a feature of post-cold war globalization, are compatible with neoliberalism and intervene into shaping (or reflecting) the relationship between society and the state, by rejecting mediation (such as class relations, or representation) and advocating immediacy and direct contact between leader and followers. They may emerge as movements when they try to organize and annex confused masses, or invest existing hollowed parties, which then appears as tactics. The relation to the leader – although in many new populist formations there are (as yet) no leaders, is seen as personal, and no intercession between the "people" and the leader is tolerated, while representation itself is often waived, especially if they can claim anti-elitism and an anti-establishment posture. But populist regimes or populists in government (in all parts of the world, and in western as well as east Europe) are also seen. Their political associations and leanings are varied and dependent on the context and the balance of power. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, populisms associate however more often than not with nationalisms and with exclusivist policies. According to Sigalit Landau, populists should be called "nationalists".<sup>19</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp claims: "The fact that politicians focus their speeches on hate, as Nazism did historically, indicates that the real issue is elsewhere. By targeting an extraterritorial, phantasmatic, enemy, such discourses blind people."<sup>20</sup>

Populisms, nowadays often linked to nationalisms (India, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Italy...), also short-circuit or block the traditional kind of representative democracy, which has become inefficient and is maintained formally, but has *de facto* been circumvented. Linked with nationalism, populism is then seen as an ideology, a superficial (according to Jäger & Borriello, "thin") ideology of nationalism. Furthermore, nationalisms themselves are sometimes described by authors exactly as populism is: In the words of Stefano Bianchini, who

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<sup>19</sup> Sigalit Landau, "Migrants et démocratie, une même crainte du vide?" Intervention at the European Zadig Forum in Belgium, "Discourses that kill", on December 1, 2018, Brussels, <https://zadiginbelgium.wordpress.com/2018/09/16/discourses-that-kill-european-forum/>.

<sup>20</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, "Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical", *op. cit.*

studies nationalism within the framework of partitions in Europe: “Nationalism in fact is not a static ideology or a mere political program; rather, it is a notion, which has produced opposite views in interpretation as well as a plurality of diversifying impacts during its historical trajectory. As a result, like the ice melt into the water under specific conditions, similarly nationalism – in distinct historical circumstances – liquefies pre-existing social links, sense of belonging, cultural awareness of individuals and groups, by re-establishing new forms of solidification that might again liquefy, following further unexpected mechanisms and legal, territorial, institutional and cultural demands. According to the contexts and the power politics developments, nationalism has encouraged either integration of regions and micro-states or secessionisms and ethnic or regional separations; nationalism has produced demands for freedom and equality, as well as claims for collective ‘purity protection’, rejections of otherness, racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. Therefore, in my view, such a complex phenomenon can be explained only if we regard it comprehensively and diachronically. Given its mutant nature, it (still) affects forms of communications, traditional habits, social relations (in a broader sense, from rural life to gender, from families to classes). By liquefying their social meanings, it creates the conditions for new solid bodies. [...] In its developments, it has justified (and still legitimizes) violence, race superiority, ethnic cleaning, incorporation of territories, by coalescing with patriotism and religiosity, even at the cost of distorting their values. The dynamic of these multiple flows, I think, can effectively be represented by the concepts of ‘liquidity’ and ‘fluidity’.”<sup>21</sup>

There are, however examples of populisms without any particular ideology, for example, the movement or party *5 stelle*, *Five stars*, in Italy. The latter indeed went to government with political partners of diverse and even opposite ideologies. “Rather, populism has to attach itself to a “host ideology” and can never operate in stand-alone form (strictly populist parties, therefore, are almost structurally impossible).”<sup>22</sup> People react to the failure of bourgeois democracy, which is not to say with certainty that they have operative political proposals. Often, they are an insurgent force without a clear project, although they tend to divide the society in “the people” and “the elites”, seen as the enemy. Democracy and capitalism obviously do not

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Stefano Bianchini by Sam Potolicchio, in *Leadership notes*, <https://mailchi.mp/328c0921ed39/leadership-notes-9?e=da5d0dbf84>

<sup>22</sup> Jäger & Borreillo, *op. cit.*, and further: “Operationally, this spans variants such as a ‘populist nationalism’ (National Rally [France]), a ‘populist socialism’ (Podemos), a ‘populist fascism’ (Golden Dawn), or a ‘populist nativism’ (Vlaams Belang)” (*ibid.*).



fit together any more at all (if they ever did), especially since the extreme neoliberal turn that has prevailed from 1989<sup>23</sup> on. Indeed, capitalism has clearly become an impediment to democracy, and we are left at best with “managed democracy”, often within authoritarian regimes. Likewise, populisms needn’t *in principle* or necessarily dovetail with nationalisms, although today they mainly do. The nationalism of populism is expressed in slogans like “America first”. Populisms can take on different denominations and practice different types of association and political links. Not only national democracy,<sup>24</sup> but international democracy (democracy among states) too, has been damaged by the contamination of democracy with nationalism. Their association builds national or wider (such as European) enclosures that exclude others.

Populisms are also associated with chaos, confusion and insurgency, with times of insecurity where old values have been exhausted while new ones haven’t been clearly set up yet. Such insecurity wakes up nationalisms. The philosopher Radomir Konstantinović calls it the *palanka*,<sup>25</sup> which is a peculiar spectral condition of the either-or, of the misty ideal that remains unfulfilled and imaginary, a reality pined for but inaccessible. We have been at such a threshold since the years 1989,<sup>26</sup> one where, after the brutal impediment of the *Compromesso storico*,<sup>27</sup> the post-socialist and the postcolonial condition meet the on-going process of the collapse of industrial capitalism in the west and of bourgeois society. These start morphing into more spectral forms, such as financial capitalism and the fragmentation of a negative post-tourism cosmopolitanism of social disorientation marked by selfish individualism.

A good “terminus” example of populism whose main content is not always nationalism and

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<sup>23</sup> 1989 is a turning point and the date of the end of the cold war, especially in Europe. It is also the beginning of visible capitalist (neoliberal) globalization.

<sup>24</sup> It should be conceptually clear that no democracy can be national, and that nationalism limits democracy. Understanding this requires that we make the theoretical difference between nation and state. The blurring of the two has left a historic trace in the understanding of populism.

<sup>25</sup> R. Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke*, Nolit, Belgrade 1969. An extraordinary and most important book on bordering accompanying forms of populism and more specifically of Nazism or fascism.

<sup>26</sup> “The years 1989”, similarly to “the years 1968” (a French expression) cover more than one year and include the subsequent period bearing the consequences of an eventful year.

<sup>27</sup> The “Historic compromise” in Italy, with Euro-communism, when the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats were planning to form a government together on the basis of their common anti-fascism. At a time when both right wing and left-wing terrorism were proliferating in Italy, Aldo Moro, a center-left prime minister, was murdered in 1978 by the leftist group Brigade Rosse, and the experiment was stopped by forces from the political Right.



which is certainly social and also corporatist, is the historic case of early Argentinian Peronism (named after the dictator Perón). With regard to the latter, it is good to read Ernesto Laclau,<sup>28</sup> himself an Argentinian, and his influential book *On Populist Reason*,<sup>29</sup> as well as all that comes in his own and Chantal Mouffe's writing thereafter until his sudden death in 2014, as well as in responses and commentaries by authors who engage with him. However, one might agree with Jäger and Borreillo (op. cit.) in saying that we have here a novel "discursive" or academic populism that renders visible populism's *political logic*,<sup>30</sup> before it becomes *strategy*. Others have called such a political logic of populism a political *style*, where it is understood that there is not much content to such style, but that there may be various contextual and contingent populist beliefs. As many other authors, Laclau starts by underscoring that the polysemic term "populism" – which depends on the concept of people – often comes as an accusation or an allegation denying the agency of the people on the side of detractors, which is certainly often the case. Both he and Chantal Mouffe undertake to resignify and rehabilitate the term "populism" and also the term "people". But populism will remain a double-edged term that its sustainers will at times defend, but at times challenge. Achille Mbembe thinks that our age is prone to populism because, among other things, we have lost the human solidarity that could keep it at bay. Solidarity is also what can guarantee hospitality, and the right to hospitality needs to be restored. Africa is one continent among others in need of it because many of her youngsters are heading to Europe. On the way, they are in danger of disappearing (1 out of 14!) in crossing the Mediterranean, not counting all other risks. He also explains the conditions under which Africa must start and develop a universal politics of inner hospitality. In passing, he also adds how and why some discourses about liberty<sup>31</sup> may appear in the garb of religion today, and how Internet influences it all, among other reasons because micro-fascisms and

<sup>28</sup> R. Iveković, "Ernesto Laclau: Populism et politique", in *Cultures&Conflits* N°73, 2009, pp. 125-133, [https://www.academia.edu/24162763/\\_Ernesto\\_Laclau\\_Populisme\\_et\\_politique\\_](https://www.academia.edu/24162763/_Ernesto_Laclau_Populisme_et_politique_); "Ernesto Laclau et le bouddhisme", in *Academia.edu* 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/34491709/Iveković\\_Ernesto\\_Laclau\\_et\\_le\\_bouddhisme](https://www.academia.edu/34491709/Iveković_Ernesto_Laclau_et_le_bouddhisme); "Epistemological fractures: The decline of western paradigms. Beyond the current epistemic hegemony?" in *Journal of postcolonial writing*. Volume N°55:6, 2019, *Issue 6: Special Issue: Diasporic Trajectories: Charting new critical perspectives*, ed. by Françoise Král, Sam Coombes & Corinne Bigot, pp. 755-768, publ. online on December 27, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/S9TJ58PTTUUCCW4SKS3U/full?target=10.1080/17449855.2019.1680150>, DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2019.1680150. The following paragraph is expanded from that paper.

<sup>29</sup> E. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, London-New York, Verso 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Jäger and Borreillo, *op. cit.*: "The definition is discursive insofar as it views populism as a rhetorical means of shaping popular subjects, creating a 'people' out of diffuse groups and subjects."

<sup>31</sup> This i confirm: Iveković, *L'éloquence tempérée du Bouddha. Souverainetés et dépossession de soi*, Paris, Klincksieck 2014.\_

national-populism spread through it. In order to understand this, he analyses new forms of the self, limitless because liberated of the break of the unconscious in the new era, which is also where populism and anti-migrant sentiment breads. To Africa, it brings closure from outside as well as from inside, and impedes movement and circulation. But Africa can develop her own objectives and model.<sup>32</sup> Mbembe warns against national-populism and crypto-fascism on the occasion of presidential elections in the USA or France.<sup>33</sup>

### Europe as (an) enclosure

We will here inspect some European contemporary forms of populism and their relation to migrations. The fact is that leftist populisms claim their belonging to a *social* people and fight for a social state. But clearly, left-wing populisms originated and replicated themselves more in Latin America than in Europe so far, where there are a few cases indeed, but where there are troublesome right-wing nationalisms too, both in the east and in the west, bordering on fascism or explicitly of the extreme right. While these may agree with left populists on critiquing the elites, rightist populisms will exhort a visible, demonstrative and intimidating marching “people”, sometimes creating threatening militias in several European countries (as well as elsewhere: Shiv Sena in India; The Philippines, Brazil etc.).

We shall examine some theoretical digressions on the subject from some of Laclau’s contemporaries: for Roberto Esposito, extreme immunization from the other is suicidal (because it is in the first place murderous), yet immunity is also vital, in a practical balance impossible to theorize. Derrida as well as others has written in the same vein.<sup>34</sup> This, coming from an open “system”, seems to be contrary to the system proposed by Ernesto Laclau and

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<sup>32</sup> “Afrocomputation. Achille Mbembe, entretien avec Bregtje van der Haak”, translated into French by François-Ronan Dubois in *Multitudes* 2017/4 (N°69), pp. 198- 204, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-multitudes-2017-4-page-198.htm> . Felwine Sarr, *Politique des Temps - Imaginer les devenirs africains* (02) de Collectif, Felwine Sarr et al., Paris, Ed. Philippe Rey 2019. Catarina Antunes Gomes, « Uma pandemia transparente » (manuscript).

<sup>33</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Macron au prisme de l’Afrique”. *Le Point.fr*, 10/05/2017, [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/achille-mbembe-macron-au-prisme-de-l-afrique-10-05-2017-2126332\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/achille-mbembe-macron-au-prisme-de-l-afrique-10-05-2017-2126332_3826.php) . Felwine Sarr, *Afrotopie*, Paris, Ed. Philippe Rey, 2016; *Habiter le monde. Essai de politique relationnelle*, Montréal, Ed. Mémoire d’encier 2017. Achille Mbembe, *Ecrire l’Afrique-Monde* (01) de Collectif, Achille Mbembe. et al., Paris, Ed. Philippe Rey 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Le pharmakon”, in “La Pharmacie de Platon”, in *La Dissémination*, Seuil, 1972.

Chantal Mouffe, and especially by the latter, as a closed system.<sup>35</sup> Closed systems within strict boundaries do not easily allow gradation, discontinuities, queer connections and variety. Either you are in, or you are out, either you are friend or you are enemy. Yet borders are recognized by all. Etienne Balibar<sup>36</sup> too recognises a given (realistic) framework, but at least he is critical about pre-given boundaries.<sup>37</sup> Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, couldn't admit Turkey into Europe at a time when this was seriously considered<sup>38</sup> (although at this stage in Turkish politics in 2019- 2020, it hardly matters any more. The trust has meanwhile been ruined on both sides, and Erdogan took Turkey into an authoritarian islamist direction and to war in Syria and Libya). Chantal Mouffe's system, it seems, can't much acknowledge the real issue of migrants/refugees, so she rarely addresses the question in depth.<sup>39</sup> Interruptions or interventions of the "different" disturb close systems. The prevalent normative binary is now that *migrants are those who are not citizens* and will therefore be excluded from citizenship, benefits, welfare, help, but also from their lives being saved. It is difficult for most philosophers who build a system to deal with migrants, or with whatever exceeds it. The migrants, the *missing citizens*, are today our main issue, besides sex and gender, reconnecting the social and the natural in a new way, and the *living* (life) as well as the multiple intersections thereof, within a ruined world traversed by populism. But we may claim with Thomas Piketty that right populism or social-nativism is now a regular social tendency in politics, albeit for the domestic population only. Piketty rejects the term "populism" and calls it a "catchall" expression. For example, countries like Hungary have made many *domestic* social improvements, not available to foreigners and totally closed to immigrants.<sup>40</sup> Poland has welcome and integrated a huge number of Ukrainians, although not

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<sup>35</sup> See further down in the paper some thoughts on Laclau's and Mouffe's understanding of the chain of equivalences.

<sup>36</sup> E. Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race nation classe. Les identités ambiguës*, Paris, La découverte 1988.

<sup>37</sup> See all Balibar's work on politics or at least Balibar, Etienne. *Violence and Civility: And other Essays on Political Philosophy* (The Wellek Library Lectures). Transl. by James Swenson. New York: Columbia University Press 2009; *La proposition de l'égalité*. Paris, PUF 2010; "Cosmopolitanism and Secularism: Controversial Legacies and prospective Interrogations." *Grey Room* 44 (2), Summer: 6-25, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> This comes from private conversations with her at a time when Turkey could have still be seen as a credible candidate. Turkey is partly on European soil, so many researchers count Turkey into Europe (although not the EU) regardless of the Union's definition. See M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, "Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical", *op. cit.* In any case at present (2020) and after Turkey's engagement in repression, authoritarianism, proxy wars as well as after its islamist radicalization over the years, much because of the EU's rejection, Turkey's access to Europe isn't on any serious agenda, not even her own.

<sup>39</sup> It is worth mentioning however that Rosanvallon considers that left populism, at a difference from right populism, is (more) open to immigration. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme. Histoire, théorie, critique*, Paris, Seuil 2020.

<sup>40</sup> I would have thought that this doesn't disculpate populism, but authors have mentioned it as proof that there are social programmes even in Hungary.

counting them as foreigners (so they don't appear in statistics), while non-white or non-Christian immigrants are rejected. The main divisions are not any more left and right, but rather hard liberalism and a somewhat "softer" (at least for the domestic population) social-nativism. Piketty seems to too easily believe that a form of European federalism, overcoming forms of national populism, would be the solution.

Chantal Mouffe says that, to do politics or to understand each other, we need to *share* the symbolic order or belong to the same, as belonging to the same language.<sup>41</sup> This is problematic because, although practically verified, it would amount to not questioning the existing order, the wayward translations and defiant understandings, and indeed, to doubt the possibility of translation at all. While abdicating *human and historic hegemonic arrogance* of the western civilization, couldn't we still act as subjects and have agency? Through philosophical Buddhism and other philosophies of dispossession of the self, one could meaningfully question a given order, including politically.<sup>42</sup> Could *withdrawing the anthropocentric stance* save the planet endangered by civilization itself? Species and disciplines belong to the same mindset of arranging boxes and separating their contents under labels. It is within the symbolic order with hierarchies and hegemony that we are supposed to be political subjects, but are more often than not *missing citizens*.<sup>43</sup> Would the *epistemological decentering* of more modest humans be of assistance to the needed epistemic and political nonviolent revolution?<sup>44</sup> Don't we need to open not only to other humans, but to the living as such in order to be incorporated back into nature which, according to Marx, is also social (social *and* natural) for us humans?

Will there be a hegemonic switch, possibly with multiple counter-hegemonies and counter-governances coming to the fore? This relation is complex and must be *beyond* any binarism. In

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<sup>41</sup> Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics. Thinking the world politically*, London, Verso 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Iveković, *L'éloquence tempérée du Bouddha. Souverainetés et dépossession de soi* Paris, Klincksieck 2014. Byung-Chul Han, *Philosophie des Zen-Buddhismus*, Berlin, Reclam Philipp Jun 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Iveković, *Les Citoyens manquants. Banlieues, migrations, citoyennetés et construction européenne*, Marseille, Al Dante 2015; Read: [www.ici-et-ailleurs.org/spip.php?article520](http://www.ici-et-ailleurs.org/spip.php?article520) and [www.reseau-terra.eu/article1061.html](http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1061.html).

<sup>44</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, « De la science moderne à la connaissance postmoderne » in *Vers un nouveau sens commun. Droit, science et politique dans la transition paradigmatique*, pp. 9-71, Paris, Série sociologie 39, L.G.D.J., 2004. R. Iveković, "Some epistemological conditions of political modernity", <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/auteur22.html> (unscroll my personal page until that title, R.I.).

hegemony, you have those who are made subaltern.<sup>45</sup> But the subalterns are not always those one would think.

### European supremacism<sup>46</sup>

Assumptions of superiority rest, among others, on the tacit *cognitive precondition of separating theory from practice* by a wall.<sup>47</sup> Historically located polities have each a *general corresponding cognitive order, a translation regime* and of course a political order too. These are linked. *Separating “theory” from “practice” is in itself an infamous political operator* of hegemonic thought that often goes unnoticed. It is often in the service of the imposition of hegemonic values. Theory is supposed to be so much higher as well as linked to authority, to power, to officially confirmed knowledge, often enforced by the state, such as in national history. It is a sublime bearer of value in itself. While practice is seen as ordinary and insignificant, not requiring knowledge or training. “Theory and practice”, a fearsome dichotomy, frozen in western modernity (including Marxism) are thus constructed into an obnoxious political hierarchy pretending to reproduce some “natural” order. Theory is some kind of a fixed, rigid, inflexible supreme office that is historically western.<sup>48</sup> Not all knowledge systems or conceptual configurations display such dichotomies. What “our” dichotomy definitely dissimulates, once it becomes ossified, is that no theory is definitive, and that yesterday’s theory is tomorrow’s fallacy. Theories are corrected, updated, and transformed all the time, including by their own inventors as well as by successive interventions. Moreover, we have been learning from praxis, from reproduction and production, from political life, from associations, from experience, from movements and not only from knowledge-transmitting

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<sup>45</sup> Antonio Gramsci. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart; Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London, Verso 1985; Laclau, Ernesto, *The Rhetorical Foundation of Society*, London, Verso 2014.

<sup>46</sup> By supremacism, here, i don’t mean the Soviet and Russian art movement in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the political positioning of *supremacist* who consider themselves to be above all others, such as white supremacism, European supremacism, male supremacism etc. There is no connection with the said art movement. Political supremacism is racist, and worse.

<sup>47</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledge”, *Eurozine*, <https://www.eurozine.com/beyond-abyssal-thinking/>; [http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/pdfs/Beyond\\_Abyssal\\_Thinking\\_Review\\_2007.PDF](http://www.boaventuradesousasantos.pt/media/pdfs/Beyond_Abyssal_Thinking_Review_2007.PDF); *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against epistemicide*, Paradigm publisher Boulder-London 2014; “Epistemologies du Sud”, *Etudes rurales* N°187, 2011/1, pp. 21-50, <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.9351>. R. Iveković, “Translation and national sovereignty. The fragility and bias of theory” in *Translation* N°4, Spring 2014, pp. 53-83.

<sup>48</sup> Naoki Sakai, “Theory and Asian Humanity: on the question of humanitas and anthropos”, in *Postcolonial Studies* 13 (4): 441–464 (2010), and other writings.

institutions enabled and controlled by the state.<sup>49</sup> Political movements and *material life*<sup>50</sup> bring in invaluable knowledge that is not theoretical, although they don't guarantee it. Theory doesn't descend any more from its heights towards practice, if it ever did. They intersect or act together; none of them is given in advance. We have also learned how to rid ourselves of the obligation to produce "objective truth". We have to think the cause of the migrants transversally across society, in intersection with other variously marginalized populations, and overcome their systematic *invisibilisation*. This invisibilisation actually denounces our thinking categories, which means that the problem is also epistemological.<sup>51</sup>

Is the world sustainable only through a *fuite en avant* of chains of equivalences and of replacements of succeeding hierarchies and inequalities by one another?<sup>52</sup> Is this basically the same question as the one concerning violence, where it is assumed that violence is alas inevitable, but may at least be "civilized", as Etienne Balibar, believing in negotiation, would say?<sup>53</sup> In the latter example, it is primarily so-called "extreme violence" that is expected to need civilizing, and that then somehow becomes "acceptable". Once "civilized" and accepted, extreme violence is supposed to become tolerable.<sup>54</sup> Which means that there would be some kind of "normal" violence, customary at least to *some*. But to whom? Here we encounter the problem of *criteria*, and that of the conceptual configuration as an "environment" prone to value-judgement *within* a hegemonic relationship: *who* is to decide which violence is tolerable, and which is "extreme"? The logic of the equivalences, which requires translation among different interests in (a) hegemony, works thanks to an external *constitutive other* which appears in a configuration that requires the construction of enemies.

Tackling the question of "agency" could here face a cross-examination through ancient Indian

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<sup>49</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, "Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical", *op. cit.* She adds that in such a way scholars/activists obtain a global understanding and alliances, in view of an "insurrectional democracy of societies".

<sup>50</sup> See also, in another key, Marguerite Duras, *La vie matérielle*, Paris, P.O.L. 1987.

<sup>51</sup> B. de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against epistemicide*, Paradigm publisher Boulder-London 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, *op. cit.*; Laclau, Ernesto, *Emancipation(s)*, 1996. London, Verso 1996; Laclau, Ernesto, *The Rhetorical Foundation of Society*. London, Verso 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Balibar, Etienne, *Violence et civilité*. Paris, Galilée 2010; Balibar, Etienne, *La proposition de l'égaliberté*, Paris: PUF 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Balibar, Etienne, "Un monde sans maître? Nouvelles réflexions sur le problème du souverain." In P. Bojanić et G. Sibertin-Blanc (dir.), *De la terreur à l'extrême-violence*, Toulouse, Belgrade, EuroPhilosophie/Institut de Philosophie et de Théorie Sociale, coll. "Champs&contreChamps" 2014.

philosophies. It would be an interesting experiment since these do not acknowledge any concept of “subject”, philosophically speaking: there remains the problem of limits. “Civilizing” violence too works only within certain boundaries, while a whole world lies out there “uncivilized”. Like democracy, isn’t Balibar’s concept of *égaliberté* too selective after all, despite the hope it raises? This difficulty is severe in Chantal Mouffe’s work. While Balibar works on enlarging or pushing the boundaries and has a critical view on such mental enclosures, Mouffe takes them as a norm. Technically it is necessary to put a stop to the *fuite en avant* (dodging), which is understandable.<sup>55</sup> The result is that “civilizing” would only work *within* national boundaries with the latter: taking into account refugees or admitting Turkey into the EU etc. would thus disrupt the system. In Chantal Mouffe’s earlier work with Ernesto Laclau, the enclosure was not so definitive and seemed extendible,<sup>56</sup> while the chain of equivalences guaranteed the dynamics at least in principle if not in practice.

We are dealing with the tough closure of Europe to immigration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But it should be clear that the principle of border closure has now become the prevalent tendency of most states and of sovereigntist politics, especially so of hegemonic and dominant northern/western ones. This happens under the influence - within the latest turn of globalization (which is generally understood as firmly entrenched in the western pattern of development to which all countries are supposed to tend as to “progress” regardless of alternatives in socialist and third-world countries) - of staunch nationalisms, excessive state sovereignisms and the revival of populisms (both right-wing and left-wing ones are exclusive), of neo-colonial inclination as well as of uninhibited neo-Nazism or post-fascism once the anti-fascist legitimization of WWII has declined. Meredith Tax writes in her blog: “As I have been saying since the nineties, a violent right-wing movement—a new fascist axis, if you will—is forming all over the world, united by principles of white supremacy, ethnic nationalism, sexism, and religious fundamentalism. Backed by certain billionaires and a few like-minded governments, Trump and what remains of the Republican party are part of this axis.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Mouffe, Chantal, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*, London, Verso 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Meredith Tax, in “How Do We Defeat Trump?” on March 9, 2020, <https://www.meredithtax.org/single.php?id=230>

## The cosmopolitics of state closure

Modern borders are a modern western invention and instrument of domination that spread all over the world through colonialism, imperialism and European, followed by western, arrogance towards other countries and continents. However, Europe herself has not always been divided by borders, and there were times from Antiquity through the Middle Ages, or during Renaissance, provided there was peace and no plague, when people travelled freely around and carried no passports, but journeyed at their own risk over frontiers and borderlands that had not yet become state-borders in the modern sense.<sup>58</sup> As for 21<sup>st</sup> century's migrants, refugees and boatpeople, however, they too travel without passports or, more often, without visas since they can't get them, under the pressure of existential urgency. Borders and language are no longer an obstacle able to contain them.

Concerning borders, it is not to be forgotten that logistical borders too eventually end up producing material geographic borders, as demonstrated by Ned Rossiter.<sup>59</sup>

There is much hypocrisy in Europe's dealing with borders, as we shall see<sup>60</sup>. Not the least through the fact that the EU brings about a constitutive conflict between state sovereignty and the sovereignty of the union (or, internally, between sovereignty and state). Since the Westphalian accords sovereignty is supposed to also imply the autonomy of the individual, but alas, we see that state sovereignty manages to enforce obedience, compliance, surrender, self-censorship and domination while developing utter individualism. Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp writes à propos: "[...] to put it in other words: where are the relationships of 'class', 'gender', 'race' in the imagination and democratic practices? By drawing from what history do the police, the prime masters of migration policies and of the right of asylum, implement a model

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<sup>58</sup> Borders with, first, diplomatic recommendations and later with passport control, appear between national states. Passports are a rather late modern document used to cross borders. They certify the identity and nationality (thus the "protection") of individuals by their authorities. Although there have been much older travelling documents everywhere, the first such document was issued it seems by Parliament in England in 1414. But it is thought that passports have actually been generalized only during and following WWI, as an exceptional measure in conditions of war. A conference of the League of Nations regulated their usage in 1920 only, at first considered a temporary situation. The temporary (exception) then became permanent (the rule) worldwide.

<sup>59</sup> "In short, the geopolitics of data economies signals an emergent contest of territoriality that unsettles post-World War II geopolitical world orders defined by the legacies of colonialism, inter-governmental treaties and trade agreements, legal regimes, and supranational organizations such as the WTO, World Bank, ASEAN, and the like." Rossiter in "Logistical Media Theory. The Politics of Time, and the Geopolitics of Automation", manuscript 2019, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Sandro Mezzadra, *Terra e confini. Metamorfosi di un solco*, Roma, Manifestolibri 2016.



of antagonistic apartheid embedded in a logic of the worst at European borders? Do these actors of domination provide security, or are they content with political lies to hide the dangers, by attaining the limits of ‘civilization’? The first stake relates to hospitality as a political pillar of general interest. Hospitality was not invented by states, it precedes them. [...] [T]he state has appropriated hospitality for itself, yet it does not appear in any constitution or in the European Convention on Human Rights. If the movements of migrants, asylum, hospitality gain in importance while being numerically weak, it is because hospitality is a compass of civilization[.] The political base of hospitality is therefore *transversal* to all social movements, but often illegible, especially since the ‘populist’ parties are careful not to talk about it.”<sup>61</sup>

Considering the number of deaths by drowning,<sup>62</sup> Elspeth Guild and Sergio Carrera ask the obvious question “why do the captains of the fishing boats and other vessels in the Mediterranean not rescue these people?”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the law of the sea commands that any passing embarkation come to the rescue of a vessel in difficulty so as to save lives. But the big cruisers with thousands of western tourists never stop to rescue anyone at sea, although many must have come across embarkations in distress and people drowning. As for fishing boats, some of them do, but they are discouraged from salvaging at sea because they can be accused of cooperation in human trafficking and of smuggling in illegal individuals. The traditional and universal law of the sea that commands to save people, which is also, inasmuch as it is originally customary, part of the international law, has gradually been discontinued. It is not implemented any more in the Mediterranean over the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, starting sometime after the (scandalous) European military action that toppled president Gaddafi. As the same authors say, “One of the factors in this discussion that receives less attention is the role of current EU anti-smuggling and trafficking legislation and the way it has been transposed into national law by EU Member States, which often creates a presumption that a captain is committing the offence of smuggling or trafficking if he or she brings unauthorized people into

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<sup>61</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical”, *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> See “Fortress Europe”, a well-known independent blog (by Gabriele Del Grande) that counted 19142 deaths at Europe’s external sea-borders from 1988-2013 and 34,361 by June 2018 <https://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/p/la-fortezza.html>. The data are updated and keep changing. The blog reads: “In search of the stories that make history. The history School textbooks that our children will study, will show that in the years two thousand - thousands died in the seas of Italy and thousands were arrested and deported from our cities. While everyone pretended not to see.”

<sup>63</sup> Guild & Carrera, “EU Borders and Their Controls. Preventing unwanted movement of people in Europe?” in *CEPS ESSAYS. Thinking ahead for Europe*, N°6/14 November 2013, p. 1.

harbours.”<sup>64</sup> Europe’s attention to the Mediterranean Sea and to outer borders was increasingly transmogrified into surveillance, military feat, prevention of “terrorism”, human trafficking, pushing back armed gangs and most of all, prevention of immigration. The latter became with time their most important job, while surveillance is more and more militarized on the basis of colonial and imperial assumed experience. *That* is the crisis Europe is facing, not immigration.<sup>65</sup> The same facts are seen elsewhere, for example with Asian boatpeople trying to access Australia or New Zealand. More and more big European money was spent on this, much in a disproportionate manner according to the authors.<sup>66</sup> Institutions that would previously have been supervising navigation, trade, fishing and encouraging rescue actions, were now transformed into steadily militarized border control bodies, accompanied by the tendency of exporting European borders to North Africa and the near east. As Elspeth Guild has it, “in 1999 the Amsterdam Treaty came into force giving competence to the EU over migration, borders and asylum [...]. [...] The unsettling of the borders of Europe which I described in 2001, continued with the 2004 enlargement, the 2007 - enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania and in 2013 the addition of Croatia. [...] In Europe today it is a shared state sovereignty though no longer the sovereignty of a specific state which performs violence around external border controls as a political spectacle of claimed control.”<sup>67</sup>

In this sense, Europe’s borders have been heavily transformed after the end of the Cold War. This did not happen in the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, but over the following decades, through the EU enlargement and through the exportation of borders, to various degrees, to neighboring

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<sup>64</sup> Guild & Carrera, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Migreurop, *Atlas des migrations en Europe*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Guild & Carrera, *op. cit.* section 2. “What happens at EU’s external Borders? The scale dilemma”, p. 5-7. According to the authors, the prevention of immigration (coupled with discouraging the rescuing of people at sea) was disproportionate with the (limited) number of people who attempted to cross the border/the sea, but in proportion with the exaggerated rumors (supported by some official estimates and a general belief) about a great number of people, quasi amounting to an invasion.

<sup>67</sup> The author specifies the ways in which EU borders are altered: “(1) the export of the border into the territory of other states as part of the completion of the abolition of intra-Schengen borders; (2) the engagement of the private sectors as the gatekeeper of enforcement of border controls through sanctions on carriers bringing unauthorized people to the EU border; (3) the consequences of these two developments for refugees and persons seeking international protection squeezed out of access to the authorized travel industry and (4) the possible emergence of the private sector as the licensing authority for migration management.”, p. 9 of E. Guild, “Interrogating Europe’s Borders: Reflections from an Academic Career”, Farewell speech by prof. Elspeth Guild, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen 2019, <https://mobile.repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/208099/208099.pdf?sequence=1> . See also P. Minderhoud, S. Mantu & K. Zwan (eds), *Caught in between borders - citizens, migrants and humans. Liber amicorum in honour of prof. dr. Elspeth Guild*, Tilburg, Wolf Legal Publishers - Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen 2019.

countries, both administratively and through surveillance and military action (assistance to third countries for “border control”). In a comparable pattern, outside EU borders but in the near neighborhood, Russia shows signs of wanting to enlarge itself over the former USSR regions, and indeed it has annexed Crimea from Ukraine, thus dividing the latter.

A first wakeup call as to what this implied came in 2013 from the shipwreck of a boat heading from Lybia to Lampedusa, which capsized. 300 people died at sea and 160 were saved. It turned out that no other vessels approached to save them, discouraged by the restrictive interpretation of the law. A few years on the Italian, followed by the Maltese closed ports to Search and Rescue (SAR) boats. After the mentioned shipwreck, the European Council adopted in 2013 Conclusions about “the importance of addressing ‘*the root causes of migration flows by enhancing cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, including through appropriate EU development support and effective return policy*’.”<sup>68</sup> But this conclusion did not result in any implemented common policy. A Taskforce for the Mediterranean (TFM) was however established, which was encouraged by the EU to demand from north African countries that they monitor migrants and not let them embark for Europe. These countries would soon be helped financially to be Europe’s border police. The European Council Conclusions also called for the reinforcement of the Frontex Agency<sup>69</sup> (created in 2005) at sea and at the borders, and for the enactment of a European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) that was going to help Frontex with new surveillance technologies, satellite images and drones. These new technologies cost more and more money that could have been invested into the reception of migrants. Border control selection, in being pushed more and more into neighboring countries, was enforced also through a Border code (2006), a Return Directive (2008) and a Visa Code (2009). Rather than saving lives (although that too was mentioned in the description of its task), EUROSUR would contribute to preventing migrants to reach European shores. The EU then developed an elaborate system of visas and biometric passports aiming at keeping at bay undesirable immigrants (from Africa, the Middle East, Albania etc.). According to it, travelers would first of all be suspected of wanting to immigrate illegally. Biometric and personal data would then be entered into a database (Registered Traveler Programme – RTP), where the individual’s profile would be sampled permanently for the programme to keep and it is that,

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<sup>68</sup> European Council Conclusions, 24-25 October, 2013, Brussels, EUCO 169/13, 25 October 2013, quoted by Guild & Carrera, *op. cit.*, *Caught in between borders...*, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> An external border control *and* immigration management agency.

rather than even the documents of her country of birth, that would be the valid information.

“What is central, however, to the use of biometric database in external border controls of the EU is that they partially replace the passport as the document which determines the identity of the individual. Instead of the individual’s legal identity being a matter of negotiation between that person and his or her state of citizenship through the issue of a passport to him or her, the EU database makes an alternative claim to identifying the individual. No matter what the passport of the individual may say, the EU database which contains the fingerprints of the individual enjoys an advantage – the capacity to tie the physical person with an inalienable part of his or her body – e.g. fingerprints. (...) Thus these third country nationals have a new identity created for them by the EU visa system.”<sup>70</sup> This tendency was particularly enforced after the Yugoslav war of the 1990s, although the biometric database was a later development.

## 2. Translation and migration

I proceed now to a few words about translation, because translation is a way of dealing with the “other” and with alterity. Alterity is a tricky concept. Its double nature inevitably comes up in situations of crises. In 2020, the covid-19 epidemic revealed the paradoxical character of the virus: the virus in an *altérité intrinsèque*, says Jean-Luc Nancy.<sup>71</sup> An intrinsic otherness. Alterity is within us, and this is how our immune system comes into question, not only medically, but conceptually. We shall take translation as an approach, an attitude, and a method.<sup>72</sup>

There had been for a long time a shared lingua franca for educated people in Europe – it was

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<sup>70</sup> Guild & Carrera, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy on June 8, 2020, “Toujours trop humain”, in the YouTube serial philosophical programme “Philosopher en temps d’épidémie”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cthb0n7CtQY>, edited and conceived by Jérôme Lèbre.

<sup>72</sup> Sandro Mezzadra & Brett Neilson, *Borders as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham, Duke University Press 2013.

Latin.<sup>73</sup> A lingua franca, in the case of Amitav Ghosh's sino-Indian *Ibis trilogy* of novels<sup>74</sup> that deals with British colonies and with the Opium Wars, the language of sea-faring *lascars*, has some proximity with translation.<sup>75</sup> It also shows in its material text and its oral materiality how language is itself in the first-place translation and a direct relation with the other.

The activity of translating<sup>76</sup> reveals this general debt towards the other(s), a sort of continuity, but also an intrinsic discontinuity. Otherness is a constitutive part of the same and it deconstructs the identity with oneself. Independently of the State or of States, new forms of constitution and institution are appearing on the horizon, surfacing through still informal or simply experimental figures that we are yet unable to name, and which are not classic social movements but are political in a new sense. Political representation has lost much of its value with the deterioration of sovereignty, which is proportionate to its claim by the extreme right. Among these new forms, far from any system of representation, there are also migrations, as well as part of what is happening on the Internet and other digital social networks, a parallel world. Women's movements, that are much older than the digital dimension, often belong to this camp, as they are unconventional and because their political aspect has for a long time not being recognized. Nevertheless, we now know that much of (hegemonic and dominant) politics tends in itself to be normative, and that political qualities are denied to those whose access to the public stage is to be blocked. Translation, in its crossing of borders, takes part itself in the

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<sup>73</sup> Empires had borderlands and frontiers (various margins, doorways or military outposts, *krajine*, *marches des empires*), while borders came to be somewhat later. See William O'Reilly, "Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, Orientalism, and the Austrian Militärgrenze", in *Journal of Austrian-American History*, Vol. 2, N°1 (2018), pp. 1-30,

[https://www.academia.edu/38112337/Fredrick\\_Jackson\\_Turners\\_Frontier\\_Thesis\\_Orientalism\\_and\\_the\\_Austrian\\_Milita\\_rgrenze.pdf?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/38112337/Fredrick_Jackson_Turners_Frontier_Thesis_Orientalism_and_the_Austrian_Milita_rgrenze.pdf?email_work_card=view-paper). Modern nationalism had not quite developed yet in those outposts or doorways, as it did at the borders. The latter arose in Europe only by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and would be officialised after WWI), when shattered empires had at their borders new national states. Loyalty reigned in the outposts. Very complex identity negotiations were going on there.

<sup>74</sup> Amitav Ghosh, "The Ibis Trilogy Books": *Sea of Poppies* (2009), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015), John Murray Editors; and see also *The Ibis Chrestomathy* <http://www.amitavghosh.com/chrestomathy.html>

<sup>75</sup> Anupama Mohan, "Maritime Transmodernities and the Ibis Trilogy" in *Maritime Transmodernities, Postcolonial Text* Vol. 14, N°3 & 4 (2019), <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2488> and <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/issue/view/73>

<sup>76</sup> The present paragraph is an insert from my chapter "Le féminisme, la nation et l'Etat dans la production des savoirs depuis 1989. *Un exercice épistémologique de traduction politique*" in the e-book Rada Iveković, *Politiques de la traduction. Exercices de partage*, Foreword by Etienne Balibar, TERRA H-N, Collection « Alter ego », Marseille, Sept. 2019, <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1426.html>.

shaping of shared knowledges,<sup>77</sup> which also confirms that these are not neutral. Translation has massively transformed dominant knowledges too.

The migrant woman and man define our political and public space, the one in which we are unable to hear them when they speak, because we do not share with them that political and public space, since we have not accepted them.

Could we say that a situation we have in the twenties of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a situation of war against migrants is also one of failed translation? The latter implies or is concomitant with the scarcity of air to breathe, with the existence of gated communities, with indifference to homeless people living on the pavements or with a general disposition to fend for oneself against others, especially newcomers. It comes with absolute capitalism and works especially on its edge and enclosures that have not yet been absorbed by capitalist globalization. Although translation doesn't guarantee *the quality* of its output, mediation and transposition, obstructing translation, *blocking the passages*, is an almost certain sign of violence.

While migrations have always been a normal way of human existence and being, the episodes of increased or more conspicuous migrations have to do with the repercussions of the colonial and imperialistic past, with the (relative) end of the cold war since 1989, the continued wars and proxy wars in many places as well as with the environmental crisis and climate change. But they are not just a reaction to the past; they are also a mode of collective and individual subjectivation and the way to construct a future. They are not passive. What has encouraged xenophobia and the rejection of immigration in Europe is the newest turn of neoliberalism rife with populist closure and nationalism. According to Jolle Demmers and Sameer S. Mehendale in a remarkable paper that deals with the Netherlands, but that we can extend to western Europe at that time, “[q]uite literally, public space was overwhelmingly commodified [...], reducing the state to its bureaucratic, monitoring and surveillant core.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *A crítica da razão indolente. Contra o desperdício da experiência*, Vol.1, São Paulo (Br), Cortez Editora 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Jolle Demmers and Sameer S. Mehendale, « Neoliberal Xenophobia: The Dutch Case », in *Alternatives* N°35 (2010), 53-70, DOI: [10.1177/030437541003500103](https://doi.org/10.1177/030437541003500103) p. 57.

## The post-1989 context and confusionism

The unwavering *rejection of immigration* by European countries (by most states to various degrees and by big parts of their populations) of which many had until recently been themselves *emigration* countries, comes within the context of the *populist style* spreading worldwide, of new non-progressive, non-liberating and exclusive sovereignist nationalisms<sup>79</sup> as well as of new forms of fascism around the world. In our times, the end of the cold war did away with formerly understandable, albeit dichotomically constructed and simplified values and political language, leading to a new *confusionism*. In the former “eastern bloc” in Europe, of countries around the USSR, there has since been a social, political and economic degradation which has brought some of them rather nearer to the third world than to the first world. Political “confusionism” is extensively widespread in those countries,<sup>80</sup> although it is by now present in most others too as a spirit of the time.<sup>81</sup> “With the neoliberal reign, writes Nicolas Truong, the right is led to the left and the left towards right; can the two camps get out of such confusionism?”<sup>82</sup> In the Balkans and especially in the former Yugoslavia, from which I draw some of my experiences, a 10-years civil war in the 1990s followed by thirty years of political disorientation (*déboussolement*), of confusionism, of non-development, of deterioration and of extreme-nationalist egoism gave way to drastic historic revisionism, nationalist reconstructions of the past and to the refurbishment of new “old” continuities, as well as to the fabrication of

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<sup>79</sup> One could imagine positive and partly inclusive nationalisms, though we don’t see many of those these days. Colonial nationalism of the settlers (Australia, the Americas etc.), which welcomed the importation of prevalently white “ready-made” political populations directly to be citizens (but had imported black slaves and brown workers too), have been such examples, in the enthusiasm of early settling and nation building *without the indigenous or the imported people*.

<sup>80</sup> See Madina Tlostanova, « We are witnessing an alarming revival of old-fashioned geopolitics ». An interview with Madina Tlostanova, in *LeftEast*, April 23, 2014, <https://www.criticatac.ro/lefeast/alarming-revival-of-old-fashioned-geopolitics/> ; Dimitar Vatsov, “Logics of propaganda. *Part One*. Populism and Propaganda: Dangerous Liaisons and Family Resemblances”, in *Critique & Humanism*, Vol. 49, N°1/2018 (pp. 71-106), [https://www.academia.edu/37793905/ENG\\_LOGICS\\_OF\\_PROPAGANDA\\_Part\\_One\\_and\\_Propaganda\\_Dangerous\\_Liaisons\\_and\\_Family\\_Resemblances](https://www.academia.edu/37793905/ENG_LOGICS_OF_PROPAGANDA_Part_One_and_Propaganda_Dangerous_Liaisons_and_Family_Resemblances) and “Logics of Propaganda. *Part Two*. The Conspiratorial Logic of Populist Propaganda” in *Critique & Humanism*, vol. 49, N°1/2018 (pp. 219-231), [https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG\\_LOGICS\\_OF\\_PROPAGANDA\\_Part\\_Two\\_The\\_Conspiratorial\\_Logic\\_of\\_Populist\\_Propaganda](https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG_LOGICS_OF_PROPAGANDA_Part_Two_The_Conspiratorial_Logic_of_Populist_Propaganda)

<sup>81</sup> Philippe Corcuff, “Après le Brexit et Trump: confusionnisme à gauche et extrême droitisation idéologique”, in *Les Possibles*, N°12, Winter 2017, <https://france.atac.org/nos-publications/les-possibles/numero-12-hiver-2017/dossier-la-droitisation-des-politiques/article/apres-le-brexit-et-trump-confusionnisme-a-gauche-et-extreme-droitisation#Naomi-Klein-trumpisee>. This paper deals specifically with French confusionism and populism.

<sup>82</sup> Nicolas Truong, “Avec le règne néolibéral, ‘la droite est amenée à se gauchiser et la gauche à se droitiser’, les deux camps peuvent-ils sortir du confusionnisme?” — (Truong, in “Marcel Gauchet: ‘La droite française retrouve le sillon gaulliste’”, <http://www.lemonde.fr>, Nov. 29, 2016).



competing memories and of rival victimhood narratives.<sup>83</sup> These are intended to justify war crimes during the nineties as well as present-day politics constructed on the reinterpretation and justification of those crimes. The goal is to influence the future through rewriting schoolbooks and through state nationalist propaganda. In such conditions, historic memory undergoes revision so as to build a new collective memory, which then becomes the political currency for exchange in the nationalist supermarket. Reconstructed remembrances find their way into re-founded collective memories as elements of ideological power. The idea is that only “we”, good nationalists, can recite our history, and any other view is wrong. Facts about mass massacres and civil war are turned upside-down by the main perpetrators: “we” are innocent and victims, it was the others’ fault and now they falsely accuse us while “the world” doesn’t understand. Official nationalist narratives are needed, and if repeated for a sufficiently long time, they will become The Truth.

In some cases, though not always, the situation in eastern Europe, i.e. in countries of the former USSR<sup>84</sup> and of the Warsaw Pact countries resembles that of post-Yugoslav countries, resulting in a massive general political disorientation on the basis of neoliberal triumphalism contracted overnight, and on the erasure of a formerly accepted history. A common feature leading to comparable situations is also the lack of political experience in both of these spaces, a lack of skills in formal liberal party democracy, while the common context at this stage of globalization is one of a general depoliticization and of the desemanticisation of the political vocabulary. As for the difference east-west or socialism-capitalism since the cold war, the most striking fact is that, although the Warsaw Pact dissolved, NATO did not, and has been trying to attract and influence as many eastern countries as possible since, thus disturbing the relations. This fact remains at the basis of the cultural-political difference east-west to this day.

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<sup>83</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, “Mnemonic Solidarity in the Global Memory Space”, in *global-e. Global Dynamics*, January 31, 2019|Volume 12 |Issue4 <https://www.21global.ucsb.edu/global-e/january-2019/mnemonic-solidarity-global-memory-space>; “Victimhood”, in Paul Corner, Jie-Hyun Lim (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Mass Dictatorship*, Palgrave Macmillan 2016, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-43763-1, pp. 427-439.

<sup>84</sup> Since the political parting of ways between Tito and Stalin in 1948 and Yugoslavi’s engagement with the Nonaligned movement, the country was not a part of the “eastern bloc” although this has now been forgotten as useless history, so that nowadays you get the opposite “assertion” on Wikipedia, all over the Internet or on maps that are in circulation which include Yugoslavia behind the “iron curtain”. However (see further), Yugoslavia’s and Tito’s expanse off the USSR was later mitigated by Yugoslavia’s tendency to re-salinization (without Stalin).



In his paper “Triple Victimhood”,<sup>85</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim shows how reconstructed post-cold war memories, in his examples mainly in eastern Europe but also across the three once colonized continents, have become “ideological battlefields among competing nations. The interaction of global memory formation and local mnemonic sensitivities became more complicated in the 1990s when the official memories frozen by the Cold War ideology began to thaw. [...] In the post-Cold War environment, the victimhood claims arising from those historical traumas<sup>86</sup> become entangled, producing a global memory formation.”<sup>87</sup> Lim sees in the said mnemonic competition the application of a “screen memory”, constructed as a shield from historic responsibility. The introduction of a post-colonial approach allows to see Nazism as a colonial project, which of course is a painful bias for the European colonial nostalgic who think better of colonial history than of Nazism. In his fascinating and complex paper Lim deploys the concept of *global memory space*, seen as transnational, where reciprocal relations may be negotiated and one’s own traumatic memory placed, however iffily, to be translated, evaluated or even legitimized in comparison with other historic *local* sufferings. For example, “the [Korean] comfort women issue came to the forefront, thanks to global sensibilities to the sexual violence in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. [...] Thus, the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery convened in Tokyo, 2000.”<sup>88</sup> Such local sanctified memories, however, were often instrumentalized in nationalist programmes and “the Holocaust<sup>89</sup> as the cosmopolitan memory has been appropriated to serve the mnemonic nationalism [...] The cosmopolitan memory is not free from the nationalist appropriation” (ibid, 20). So that “the memory war in the post-communist Eastern Europe and postcolonial tri-continent represent a second wave of the *Historikerstreit* globally (ibid, 21).” And finally, “[a]s an alternative to both the advocative relativization and uniqueness, the ‘critical relativization’ can work out in the global memory formation. It would make it possible for us to consider other

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<sup>85</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, “Triple Victimhood: On the Mnemonic Confluence of the Holocaust, Stalinist Crime, and Colonial Genocide”, in *Journal of Genocide Research*, April 13, 2020, DOI: 10.1080/14623528.2020.1750822, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2020.1750822>

<sup>86</sup> “Triple Victimhood”, *Ibid.*, p. 3. The author analyses and compares, non-hierarchically, “the Holocaust, the crimes of colonialism, and Stalinist terror”

<sup>87</sup> “Triple Victimhood” *Ibid*, p, 2-3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17-18. This element – Yugoslav and Rwandan sexual mass-crimes that inspire the historic action of the Women’s International war crimes tribunal on Japan’s military sexual slavery (Tokyo 2000) can be seen as a linking loop in the chain of equivalences, in Laclau’s sense. And another one in a series, Women’s international war crimes court for Yugoslavia’s successor states was convened in Sarajevo in 2015 by Yugoslav feminist associations. Staša Zajović, Daša Duhaček, Rada Iveković, *Women’s Court: About the Process*, Belgrade, Women in black 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Among other memory-programmes.

victims empathetically, and to resist the temptation of prioritizing our own victimhood.”

I have called the contemporary worldwide migrations – epochal. So are toxic populisms, which in addition seem to be contagious and rampant. Migrations involve much suffering and too many deaths, and imply delayed, interrupted and ruined lives for individuals, a limbo for months or even years in cases of survival (today, in the Mediterranean, *one out of 14 individuals* trying to cross it, dies). They characterize an *epoch*, a historic period, the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and affect several generations. This epochal on-going and unstoppable flow, not only towards Europe, faces the closure of states and locked borders such as is going on in Europe and elsewhere within a general *cosmopolitics of closure*. There is no exterior anymore. This is certainly a regression with regard to historic periods or ideals and ideologies of greater openness, of cosmopolitanism, internationalism and even of political multilateralism,<sup>90</sup> regardless even of political regimes.

While we here mainly address sovereignty’s brutal response and the dramatic border closure in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is clear that migrations involve even greater numbers within Asia and the Americas at this time, likewise struggling with populisms, nationalisms, and human trafficking. Europe and Asia are communicating vessels. So is Africa, that faces important emigration and brain drain after having already been subjected to it during the slave trade.

### **A war on migrants**

Today, Europe is waging something many of us do not hesitate to call a dirty *war* on migrants.<sup>91</sup> Many of the migrants trying to cross to Europe come in the first place from the proxy wars in western Asia, but traditionally from the rest of the Asian continent too, besides Africa. Nobody can tell the exact number of deaths at the borders and in particular in the Mediterranean,<sup>92</sup> because much of it happens out of sight, and because we don’t have the numbers of departures. There are different estimates, but all are high in numbers. According to Claude Calame, a rough

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<sup>90</sup> Goran Fejić, public lecture on Nov. 27, 2019 at ICCS/IICS, National Chiao Tung University in Hsinchu, Taiwan, “The demise of multilateralism in a multipolar world, why?”, <https://ici-et-ailleurs.org/contributions/actualite/article/the-demise-of-state>

<sup>91</sup> See two short videos by *Migreurop*: “No to the war to migrants”, May 5, 2020:1) <http://www.migreurop.org/article2919.html?lang=fr>, 2) <http://www.migreurop.org/article2919.html?lang=fr>

<sup>92</sup> The Mediterranean Sea is itself a border or rather a large *frontier region*. It hides a large number of dead.

estimate is that about 40,000 people disappeared in the Mediterranean since 2000.<sup>93</sup> The greatest Asian migrations happen, however, within Asia itself, some of them having a long history of trans-bordering (for example, greater China or greater India). In Africa too, most emigrations happen in the first place to neighboring countries. The ways states both in Europe as well as in Asia, the USA, Australia and Israel now react to subsequent waves of immigrants is pretty much the same: exporting and closing borders, trying to contain immigration, refining programmes of “chosen immigration” in relation with labor demand, *refoulement* (pushing back), ethnic or religious cleansing, constructing fences and walls, attempts at controlling social networks, police brutality, formal and informal camps, hardening the legislation on immigration to the point even of circumventing it so as to prevent migrants from even landing and applying for refugee status.<sup>94</sup> In so doing, Missbach and Palmer suggest, Australian authorities, for example, do not hesitate to practice human trafficking themselves, while pretending that their extreme policy to migrants (aiming at zero immigration) actually means to act against human trafficking. Australia keeps her unwanted migrants in offshore extra-territorial immigration detention “facilities” on the South Pacific island of Nauru,<sup>95</sup> and on Manus Island in northern Papua New Guinea, supposedly independent countries. Some would-be immigrants are also detained on Australian territory. The use of immigration detention facilities is part of a policy of mandatory detention in Australia, under the Operation Sovereign Borders<sup>96</sup> which is run by the military and aims at “zero tolerance” towards asylum seekers considered as “Illegal Maritime Arrivals”. Migrants can be outsourced to other countries too,

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<sup>93</sup> Claude Calame, “Près de 40000 personnes exilées mortes en Méditerranée: un crime contre l’humanité”, in *Médiapart*, Jan. 8, 2018, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/claude-calame/blog/080118/pres-de-40000-personnes-exilees-mortes-en-meditteranee-un-crime-contre-l-humanite>; Calame, “Migrantes et migrants en situation d’exil contraint: dix thèses”, *Médiapart*, March 25, 2019, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/claude-calame/blog/250319/migrantes-et-migrants-en-situation-d-exil-contraint-dix-theses>. Jacques Terrenoire, “L’inaction du gouvernement français face aux morts en Méditerranée est une honte”, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jacques-terrenoire/blog/130819/linaction-du-gouvernement-francais-face-aux-morts-en-meditteranee-est-une-honte>.

<sup>94</sup> Missbach Antje & Palmer, Wayne, “Deterring asylum seeking in Australia” in *Court of Conscience Issue 13*, 2019, pp. 79-82. About Australian extra-territorial detention of migrants, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian\\_immigration\\_detention\\_facilities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_immigration_detention_facilities); Jarny Blakkarly, “Nauru's detention centre”, in *Al Jazeera*, 30 May 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/05/nauru-detention-centre-suicide-160517120527051.html>; “The Nauru files: cache of 2,000 leaked reports reveal scale of abuse of children in Australian offshore detention”, in *The Guardian*, 10 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/aug/10/the-nauru-files-2000-leaked-reports-reveal-scale-of-abuse-of-children-in-australian-offshore-detention>

<sup>95</sup> Behrouz Boochani, *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison*, Picador Australia, 2018. This is a direct testimony smuggled out from the detention camp, and it brought the author an important Australian literary prize.

<sup>96</sup> Missbach Antje & Palmer, Wayne, “Deterring asylum seeking in Australia”, *op. cit.*

as shown by Australian policy, in the name of state sovereignty. Moreover, while it is the “sovereign state” in the name of a “sovereign EU” (to take this example), in virtue of their sanctuarised sovereignty, that deal with the right to asylum, the latter is defined and limited by the state. As a result, it is equated with asylum itself while hospitality has been confiscated from the people by historic dominant agencies (the state and its institutions). The fast fading “right to asylum” is thus framed through violence by police, by the military or both, and confiscated from the hands of the respective population. Some NGOs are left on the terrain, but they are more and more obliged to become professional, which again removes welcoming and hospitality from the grassroots’ level.

“Migration flows of unprecedented volume and complexity within, as well as in and out of Asia have become one of the main drivers of contemporary social change in the region. In this context, approaches to studying international migration have highlighted the institutions, infrastructures, processes, practices, consequences and experiences of migration while attending to its multi-directional, multi-sited, multi-causal and open-ended nature. New spatialities and temporalities—from transnational families, mobile cities, diaspora-and-development, global care chains, contact zones, spaces of encounter to multinational migrations—have animated migration research as material borders and socially constructed boundary lines are transgressed, rigidified or redrawn in the face of multiple-, hyper- and transnational migrations and mobilities.”<sup>97</sup>

Migrations as an on-going movement bear, in addition to a history of continuities, also a history of *discontinuities* and *interruptions*. In reflecting on migrations, i said i would necessarily be dealing with *discontinuities*, *non-linearity*, *intermissions*, *disconnections* and *interruptions*. Continuity witnesses to a lack of political imagination, whereas discontinuities allow seeing things dynamically and from queer angles. When starting from *continuities*, one is likely to keep in line with conventional power configurations and established hegemony. Hegemony builds on continuities and enchantments of similar events. Discontinuities, on the other hand, disclose not only the other side of the medal, but unexpected viewpoints and perspectives too, including possible histories that did not happen but could have happened. They uncover

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<sup>97</sup> A quote from the Call for papers on the methodology of studying migrations (“MIGRATION METHODOLOGIES. Challenges, Innovations and Conceptual Implications for Asian Migrations”) dated August 8, 2019, by Asia Research Institute (ARI), NUS, Singapore, <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/migration-methodologies/>.

alternative histories, possible histories, “*unnecessary or useless* histories”, deviant stories, subaltern and complementary, unconventional narratives. They stimulate a possible and otherwise unpredictable epistemological revolution.<sup>98</sup>

### **Linguistic aspects of populism**

It is interesting to note that several authors refer to the *language, rhetoric, discourse* or *vocabulary* of populism(s) and also to the fact that new post-cold war confusionism is really a matter of language. While using the same vocabulary, left and right populists give the same terms (such as “the people”, “the republic”, “the nation”, “globalization” etc.) contrasting meanings. Both sides rely on assumptions and implied sense that is not spelled out. While the (extreme) left uses such words against a backdrop of emancipation, right populists suggest through the same terms an ultra-conservative, discriminatory, racist or even fascist setting. Philippe Corcuff calls such confusionism “trumpism” in the case of intellectuals or politicians who do not heed to explain the source and history of the arguments they use. There is a *lexical keenness* between a genuine trumpian vocabulary and the jargon of a mislead and “trumpisé” (French) left-populist.

Most of the time, according to Philippe Corcuff, while both left and right populists that are adding to general confusionism and are referring to the same issues without highlighting their differences and without deeper analyses, they create a common pathway to confusionist rhetoric. Both sides claim that “the people” struggle against the “elites”, in spite of the fact that “the people” of the ones is a people of emancipation, while “the people” of the others is the people of discrimination, ethnicization and essentialization. The conduits of a common confusionist rhetoric has made possible, while the terms are the same, “easy” switching from left to right discourse, whereby analysis is forgotten and shortcut clichés pass as analysis: “Under the guise of a distanced analysis, the confusional rhetorical channels are set up, making

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<sup>98</sup> David Larousserie, “Suprématie quantique”, in *Le Monde*, 9 Jan. 2020, p. 27. It seems that in the latest generation of super-computers (2020), “quantic” is synonymous of discontinuities, and that such computers operate *on the basis of discontinuities* (and this has been called the second quantic revolution). Quantic objects (called qubits), that are both waves and particles, eschew a single point of view, a single space or positioning, or a single orientation; they can follow or derail the observer’s viewpoint and play tricks on her perception but can stimulate it too in offering so many options and, above all, such incredible speed in computing, calculating and obtaining results and solutions. This has been called by some “quantic advantage” or (more controversially) “quantic supremacy”. It seems that computer science has come to similar conclusions with regard to *discontinuity* and *interruption* as we have reached – without quantic computers - in philosophy and epistemology.

possible, in ambiguity, passages between themes of the extreme right and left. ‘The people’ and the ‘popular’ appear the same on both sides.”<sup>99</sup> Terms like the “era of the People”, the “populist moment” have submerged both left and right, and the left-wing populist politician Luc Mélenchon in France claims them. Corcuff quotes him and points to his confusionism. Left and right end up designating the same enemies in the “elites” (France, the USA). “At the same time and in interaction with the electoral thrusts of the Front national [French extreme right party], an ultra-conservative ideological framework structured by an obsession with identity and endowed with xenophobic, sexist, homophobic and nationalist tones was thus set up in France during the 2010s. [...] And this ultra-conservative ideology is in the process of abducting social criticism, traditionally anchored to the left by standing against an emancipatory horizon. So the far right is robbing the left in general, and the radical left in particular, of many of their postures and words. It is for example the word ‘criticism’ in general, but also more precisely the criticism of the ‘system’, the criticism of neoliberalism, the criticism of the banks, the criticism of globalization, the criticism of the media, the position of a rebel, the words ‘people’, ‘social’, ‘Republic’, ‘*laïcité*’, etc. This abduction is carried out against the backdrop of valuing the ‘politically incorrect’. [...] This ultra-conservative takeover bid on social criticism benefits from various logics helping to break down the historical link between social criticism and emancipation.”<sup>100</sup>

### Populism in India

But do popular movements in search of social justice at this time necessarily turn out to be populist? Not necessarily indeed; but probably - prevalently. While the drive for social and political justice is genuine and triggers the movements, the latter’s further development may lose sight of the primary motivation. We have seen it happen with (parts) of the 5 stelle (5 Stars) movement in Italy, with the Nuit Debout movement in France in 2016-2017, with the Yellow vests in France in 2019 or with Podemos in Spain, as well as with many others. There is an inherent contradiction in these movements (some of which become parties while others dissolve), since they claim justice from a state and institutions they consider intrinsically unjust and corrupt, and from a “system” they reject. They claim being “anti-system” and, generally,

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<sup>99</sup> Philippe Corcuff, “Après le Brexit et Trump...”, *op. cit.* Corcuff even critiques nominally leftist intellectuals that have been “trumpisés”. All the quotations from this paragraph are by Corcuff from the same paper and translated by me, R.I.

<sup>100</sup> Corcuff, *op. cit.*

do not pretend being revolutionary. Out of that contradiction, however, a new political quality *may* arise, although it is by no means granted.

It seems that after the exhaustion of steam in revolutionary movements in the west, a change of world-order paradigm could be expected to come from the global south. Europe can learn a lot from the souths, although some southern countries are also traversed by populism. In India, Modi's hindu-nationalist populism, after building and spreading for years anti-muslim sentiments, after cancelling Kashmir's autonomy, after taking away their citizenship from people in Assam who "cannot prove" their "Indianness" now equated with homogenous hinduism, after threatening with compiling a National Population Register of citizens etc., ended up passing a law by which people of muslim origin would not be eligible for citizenship (CAA, Citizenship /Amendment/ Act passed on December 11, 2019).<sup>101</sup> The idea was that immigrants of muslim origin be refused citizenship and entry, but actually, the National Population Register, the demand (in Assam) that people prove their Indianness by proving that their ancestors were Hindu (in a country where most never had any documents), as well as the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019-2020) threatened many ordinary Indian citizens and resulted in a strong resistance movement in the whole country that was only interrupted by the pandemic covid-19. A strong and mixed movement for equal citizenship and respect for the diversity of cultures and plurality arose in resistance to the CAA.<sup>102</sup> The movement was characterized by a massive participation and indeed leadership of women, as well as by hindus joining muslims in a common struggle for a secular state that prime minister Modi had betrayed. The fact that it was defined by the state as a matter of *citizenship* gave the movement not only the dimension of claiming justice and equality for all regardless of religion, according to

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<sup>101</sup> In India, the CAA triggered a massive protest movement in favour of impartial secular constitutional citizenship and of immigration by students, by women, by muslim populations and by concerned citizens at large, regardless of their origin. The Police are seen as having sided with Hindu nationalists, and riots with pogroms, killings and burning of property erupted in Delhi on February 23-26, 2020 (official information of 53 people killed and many injured) and on March 2, 2020 (26 dead), as well as elsewhere. "Explainer: What do we know about the communal violence that left 53 dead in Delhi in February 2020?", in *Scroll.in* on March 6, 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/955251/explainer-what-do-we-know-about-the-communal-violence-that-left-47-dead-in-delhi-in-february-2020>, and (for the deaths on March 2), "AN inquiry in to the anti-muslim violence in northeast Delhi: progressive medicos and scientists forum" in *Kafila*, March 20, 2020, [https://kafila.online/2020/03/20/an-inquiry-in-to-the-anti-muslim-violence-in-northeast-delhi-progressive-medicos-and-scientists-forum/#\\_ftnref2](https://kafila.online/2020/03/20/an-inquiry-in-to-the-anti-muslim-violence-in-northeast-delhi-progressive-medicos-and-scientists-forum/#_ftnref2),

<sup>102</sup> About the National Register of Citizenship see Ranabir Samaddar, Samir Kumar Das & Subir Bhaumik, moderated by Rajat Ray, August 3, 2018, "A debate on the National register of citizenship" (NRC) at CRG, Kolkata: "More than 40 lakh people have become non-citizens in Assam." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUBmECC3g2M>



Ranabir Samaddar,<sup>103</sup> but also a juridical dimension and even a constitutional dimension. “Insurgent constitutionalism” would thus be seen, on the popular and populist side, as a struggle *for the republic, for the state, for sovereignty* etc. (all elements of an unjust verticality and inequality), *for the Constitution*, and these must all be understood in the post-colonial perspective that, alone, can defend and explain them. Thus, the people, reacting to the odious and repressive state would be struggling for *another kind of state*. It is not said how the verticality of the hierarchy could be done away with – except for one crucial aspect: the claimed equality of all religions within citizenship.

Such egalitarianism (which was present on paper in India’s Constitution before Modi’s attempts to deprive muslims of it) is indeed basic especially at a time when religious equality and secularism are under attack. Yet the claim that “insurgent constitutionalism” will bring equality doesn’t say much about other divisions in society, such as gender, “minorities” in general, disabilities, Adivasis and Dalits, *jātis*, *varṇas*, castes and classes, let alone of the primeval Partition of British India.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, it focuses on India’s states and local communities as sources of justice and theatres of justice claims, away from the Indian nation, but rather within the scope of local and smaller entities, thus endorsing the fragmentation of civil society – as if the “nation” and local identities were not of the same kind.<sup>105</sup> To Ranabir Samaddar, the anti-CAA movement (anti Citizenship Amendment Act) is a new and promising movement, a new constitutional moment. Samaddar sees the hope and promises of this anti-discrimination movement in the fact that it works bottom-up, that it comes from the people (in cities and states which provide more understanding, while the “nation” embodies and conveys a bourgeois ideal of citizenship) who claim the fulfilment of the justice inscribed in Ambedkar’s<sup>106</sup> *Constitution*. In those salutary political claims for justice, Samaddar hails the appearance of a new political subject. Indeed, not only are political subjects not given outside and before the movements in which they, at times, play historic and crucial roles, but they are also in general not given forever. They are an ephemeral appearance morphing into other

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<sup>103</sup> Samaddar, “An Insurgent Constitutionalism is Driving Popular Politics in India Today” in *The Wire*, Jan. 26, 2020, <https://thewire.in/politics/an-insurgent-constitutionalism-is-driving-popular-politics-in-india-today>

<sup>104</sup> Samaddar deals with these aspects in much of his other writing.

<sup>105</sup> Indian states do not have attached “nationalities”, as was the case in Yugoslavia. So the Nation would always be on top of a hierarchy for whose lower units there is no associated name.

<sup>106</sup> Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), a lawyer and social reformer from the Dalit (“untouchable”) community and early hour Freedom fighter, composed the Indian *Constitution*. The Dalit community is a much repressed and poor community of low caste and class, or outcast people (depending on the viewpoint).



agencies that always resists being theorized. Let's hope he is right, and of course a political movement must rely on the masses in movement, but it shouldn't forget to address the evolution of institutions and of political mediation in view of maintaining the flame of democracy. If institutions are neglected and bypassed without reshuffling, leaving the void of political contents, a movement may turn directly to its leader and be transformed into merely a populist movement. Political change takes not only deconstruction, but also some necessary construction, transformation, technical improvements, managed ICT, agenda-building, time and planning. During the Delhi riots in February 2020, president Trump of the USA visited his friend prime minister Modi of India, and praised him for the great success of his country of which he did not see and did not want to see the failures or the riots in the capital. Modi had had a wall built overnight so that, at the venue of the presidential speeches, Trump shouldn't see slums and misery. Trump sold him military equipment worth \$3 billion, India being now the fourth biggest arms buyer (after Saudi Arabia, Australia and China)<sup>107</sup> even in a crisis.

J Devika, a historian academic from Kerala, publishes recently an insightful open letter to her state's governor in the influential online opposition journal *Kafila*.<sup>108</sup> She praises the state's struggle to contain the covid-19 epidemic, its management for which Kerala has been widely praised (at a difference from the rest of India). Indeed, Kerala is generally admired with regard to education, public health and solidarity. But Devika reminds that the struggle against the pandemic cannot be separated from the struggle to help and welcome migrant workers. The country has many of these,<sup>109</sup> especially from the north-east of the union. Those people have

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<sup>107</sup> "Arms industry", in *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms\\_industry#International\\_arms\\_transfers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_industry#International_arms_transfers); Andrew Greene in "Australia now world's second biggest weapons importer behind only Saudi Arabia: analysts" in *ABC News*, Sept. 19, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-30/australia-worlds-second-biggest-weapons-importer-behind-saudi/11558762>.

<sup>108</sup> J Devika, "An open letter to the Kerala governor Sri Arif Mohammad Khan about our fight against the virus, but also about our resistance to CAA-NRC", *Kafila*, on April 5, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> The speech of Kerala governor Arif Mohammad Khan on *MirrorNow Channel* on April 2, 2020, about how Kerala managed in solidarity and care (with the help of women's associations) the crisis, distributing food and help, is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by3QTHqvQYw>. Kerala also has a lot of guest-laborers in the Gulf states, most of whom are muslims, while many migrant workers from the north, the east and the north-east, many of whom are muslims too, work in Kerala. However, with Maharashtra, Kerala is also the Indian state with the highest number of infections with covid-19. Kerala has always had a unique developmental and civic level of awareness and organization in India. It has practically no illiterate. Kerala has been governed by communist parties intermittently since 1957 (after the state's creation in 1956; the first communist government was left in power for only 2 of the 5 years, in spite of enjoying full support of its constituency, and was toppled in 1959 by the central government and Nehru). But CPM has recently also become prone to the influence of *hindutvā*, hindu nationalism. On managing covid-19 in Kerala, see also Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Borders of an Epidemic. Covid-19 and migrant workers*, Kolkata MCRG 2020, [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS\\_Migration\\_2020/COVID-19.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2020/COVID-19.pdf).

now been simultaneously caught in the covid-19 snare and in the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) trap, which deprives many of them (under the assumption that they are immigrant muslims, i.e. aliens) of Indian citizenship by the rule of the central government. Vandana Shiva refuses the term of “migrant labor”<sup>110</sup> designating workers from other parts of India, and often supposed to be muslims. As other workers exiting big cities *en mass* because of the pandemic, the coronavirus might have sent them in principle from Kerala on foot towards their villages that, being in this case so far to the north and east (at thousands of km or more in West Bengal and beyond), they could not possibly have reached them alive, even had they not been hungry. But Kerala was ready and logistically organized for the epidemic, it has a strong solidarity community drive and women’s care organizations, and it started immediately public kitchens to feed the workers left without work and thus spare them travelling to their original places. This was not the case in the exodus from big cities in the north (the biggest exodus after the Partition one between India and Pakistan in 1946-48). The guest-laborers, as they here call them, were kept in situ until the epidemic passes, which spared everyone so much energy and expenditure. J Devika however deplores the discrimination of local muslims or other minorities (agreeing on this with the governor Arif Mohammad Khan), through the ruling (CPM)<sup>111</sup> party’s alignment on rightist Hindu-nationalist and anti-muslim misogynist, casteist, populist politics and on predatory capitalist policies. She deplores also the closure of Indian inner borders to coronavirus patients (Karnataka to Kerala, etc.).

Badri Raina writes, not hiding his surprise, about women protesting against the CAA in south Delhi: “Women at Shaheen Bagh<sup>112</sup> can be heard to articulate views on the economic collapse of the realm with an expertise that would hearten the best-informed academic of the day.

If the matter may be put more baldly, a glorious transformation of ‘minority’ Indians into vanguards of secular and republican citizenship is underway – a happening where citizen-

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<sup>110</sup> Vandana Shiva, on *DiEM25 TV*: “Towards a transformation of hope for the earth” with Vandana Shiva and Stefania Romano, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulePOnP4eGk&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>111</sup> The Communist Party of India (Marxist), abbreviation CPI(M) then CPM, which seceded from CPI (The Communist Party of India) in 1964.

<sup>112</sup> Shaheen Bagh is located in south Delhi. Since December 2019, the locality is known for being the site of gatherings of the on-going protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), and in particular of women who block a road there in protest. Unrest has spread to other parts of Delhi, especially where the muslim community is numerous, as well as to universities.

interests are beginning to be seen to be indivisible and best obtained from a standpoint of undifferentiated secular struggle authenticated by the constitution.

A battle is now underway between the real and the legal, as it were. If on the one side, the unresponsive Modi-Shah-RSS triumvirate seem adamant on enforcing the CAA, having now made its gazette notification, the citizenry across all denominational, gender, and gerontological divides seems equally charged to rebuff the measure, encouraging many state governments to proclaim that they will not implement the new law.”<sup>113</sup>

Both Samaddar and probably Raina start from Kalpana Kannirban’s book *Tools of Justice: Non-Discrimination and the Indian Constitution* <sup>114</sup> which introduced the idea about “‘insurgent’ possibilities of constitutionalism”, before even the present situation resulting from the CAA. She writes: “The Indian constitution gives voice to counter-hegemonic imagination of justice, rooted in the resistance movements and argumentative traditions that have blossomed in the region at different points in history. Central to the understanding of the constitution, therefore, is the fact of its historical location and specificity.”<sup>115</sup> The insurgent capabilities of constitutionalism, in India, are linked among other things, with the Gandhian tradition of civil disobedience, which is historically not exactly a revolutionary tradition (of which India has a strong tradition too) but has rather been transformational-evolutional and extremely efficient in that context. It still carries much potential. The heritage of civil disobedience has to be taken into account, and the fact that both approaches coexist in India<sup>116</sup> makes it all the more important. On the other side, Partha Chatterjee worries about a widespread and brave youth anti-CAA movement, put in motion by cell phones rather than by seasoned political parties which, however, are confused by populism and have no more force be it in India or elsewhere. He thinks that lessons could be learned from the failure of the Tahrir Square

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<sup>113</sup> Raina Badri, “Modi-Shah Duo Bring About a Fine Unintended Consequence” in *The Wire*, Jan. 19, 2020, <https://thewire.in/politics/modi-shah-duo-bring-about-a-fine-unintended-consequence>

<sup>114</sup> K. Kannabiran, *Tools of Justice: Non-Discrimination and the Indian Constitution*, Delhi, Routledge India 2013, DOI: [10.4324/9780203085523](https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203085523)

<sup>115</sup> Kannabiran, at the beginning of the “Introduction: Liberty and Non-discrimination – The Scope of Intersectional Jurisprudence”, *op. cit.*

<sup>116</sup> Often with the same authors (Samaddar and many others) as well as with the same movements.

insurrection<sup>117</sup> in Egypt in 2011 and other such unsuccessful uprisings.<sup>118</sup> After all, the Citizenship Amendment Bill was passed in Parliament through the lower house. Chatterjee thinks that effective federalism could be a solution, both because the BJP governmental party is weak in the states, but also as a matter of principle, as if we didn't have ample examples of failed federalism, he thinks.<sup>119</sup> However, one was Yugoslavia, another one the USSR, but most importantly, the *political failure* of Europe itself, although Europe is precisely not (yet) a federation (as many would have wanted her to be), all seems to indicate that there is a problem in unions, associations, and maybe especially also in federations where there is a possible conflict of sovereignties as well as divergent principles of identification: is identifying with the state, or with the nation, or with « the people » or with some other identity, the leading principle ? It all depends on the definition of these as well as on their in-depth analysis.

Now these fuzzy concepts often relate to just the political surface, and remain hollow. It is precisely the hollowness of these concept that allows for their wide rallying of followers, especially if politics take a populist turn and brandish style without political depth. In his critique of Chatterjee, Samaddar takes federalism further from state power to the “power of the people”, right into the indistinct area of the *palanka* that could in principle produce either populism, or democracy, but none with certainty.

## Women and migrants

The Hindu national-populist<sup>120</sup> policy in India is turned not only against muslims, but also against immigrants. We already mentioned that the migrants' question is tightly linked to the women's question and women's movements as one aspect of unavoidable inter-sectionality, and it is so in two ways: in the dimension of *subordination* or subalternisation of both women, migrants and other groups; as well as in the sphere of social movements: pro-refugee and pro-migrant NGOs are constituted to the largest part by women. One genuine question that we here face, although it is not a fatality, is - why, and whether or not, women are here reduced to the

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<sup>117</sup> It should be said in defense of the Tahrir Square movement however, that its efforts, regardless of their *then* misfiring, will eventually *count* historically down the line at some other opportune moment in history.

<sup>118</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “True Federalism Is the Counter-Narrative India Needs Right Now” in *The Wire*, Jan. 18, 2020, <https://thewire.in/politics/india-federalism-protests>

<sup>120</sup> Or “social-nativist” as Piketty would say in *Capital et idéologie*, Paris, Seuil 2020.

*care* dimension, their historic submissive role? Or is their action in these movements political too? Although it seems to be more and more political, there has been a lot of backlash on this issue too. In any case, there has been a *regular excess of “male power”* in circulation not only at the service of wars and terror, of colonial and capitalist history, but also as the basis of our shared civilization and patriarchy.<sup>121</sup> Healing human civilization from *patriarchal dominance*, so firmly intertwined with exploiting and exhausting nature, would help. Systemic, structural and accepted violence, the horrors of renewed femicides, of the steady extermination of women, repeated forms of ill-treatment of girls and women, the practices of sex-selective abortions and malnutrition of girl-children resulting in millions of missing-women in countries like India and China, the impunity with regard to mass killings of women in Mexico (cartels), in Mali, systematic rape as an instrument of terror in Yugoslavia, in Congo or elsewhere (Boko haram terror, ISIS or others), not to mention sexual mutilations - all these clearly feature a *deterioration in women’s condition* worldwide, parallel to the powerful wave of rejection of migrants in northern countries. But paradoxically at the same time the condition of upper-class women in the west has considerably improved in many formal aspects (although equality has never been reached). Historically, as Silvia Federici<sup>122</sup> convincingly demonstrated, the historic witch-hunts in Europe but also in the Americas through colonialism, have been fundamental to the construction of worldwide capitalism. Whole symbolical apparatuses in most cultures are hysterically gendered, unleashing patriarchal, nationalist and gendered violence, linked to androcentrism, to the systematic destruction of nature, capitalist extractivism and permanent wars.

From another point of view and proceeding from discontinuities, however, *as a non-species, non-nation, non-identity, non-gender* (or queer), we would give the other species and individuals equal chances as ourselves: *only then would we too be safe, inasmuch as others (other humans, but also other species) are safe with us*. Anthropocentrism and androcentrism are of course a great part of the problem.

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<sup>121</sup> R. Iveković & Goran Fejić, “Women and armed conflicts”, in *Cosmopolis* 2015/3-4, <http://www.cosmopolis-rev.org/fr/> ; also: [https://www.academia.edu/12115829/Goran\\_Fejić\\_and\\_R.\\_Iveković\\_Women\\_and\\_armed\\_conflict](https://www.academia.edu/12115829/Goran_Fejić_and_R._Iveković_Women_and_armed_conflict)

<sup>122</sup> Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Brooklyn, N.Y., Autonomedia 2004. Also: Luisa Passerini, *Love and the Idea of Europe* (“Remapping Cultural History”, Vol. 9), Oxford-New York, Berghahn Books 2008.

State failure, even relative or gradual rotting, produces political confusion<sup>123</sup> and confusionism, political agnosticism and depoliticization, which is easily responded to through nationalism or xenophobia that often come as a way out. And nationalism is regularly turned against others in any form. This is what the threshold of 1989 brought about. As Arundhati Roy would suggest later, on the occasion of the covid-19 pandemic, each such threshold is a *portal* that features an historic choice.

### Constructing knowledge together

Migrations, as an epochal and global issue, define our time, the 21<sup>st</sup> century as much as our new parallel or, rather, transversal, dimension and environment of the Internet and ICT (New Information and Communications Technologies (NICT or ICT) does, or as much as environmental conditions, natural degradation and climate change do. These features are linked. While Europe was in principle built upon the abstract norm of welcoming, receiving, and hospitality to others, this is now disregarded not only in practice by administrations (and sometimes by people), but it is also bypassed or forgotten as the founding moral principle.<sup>124</sup> And while people have always migrated in great numbers, contemporary biocognitive, digital and neoliberal disaster capitalism of our postmodern times is characterized among other things by much nomadism and migrations,<sup>125</sup> as well as by wars, by the rejection of people from the global south and by the definitive impediment that this kind of capitalism brings on democracy. In a globalized world, migrations too should be apprehended globally and as a trans-border phenomenon. (While ICT is by definition transnational, although it does give plentiful space to exclusive nationalisms too.) In my course at the International Institute for Cultural Studies (ICCS/IICS) of National Chiao Tung University in 2019, i tried to raise some philosophical questions regarding the functioning of exception(s), immunization and blind-spots within a given political context, and some political questions regarding the responsibility of Europe in

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<sup>123</sup> Serge Halimi, “Comment échapper à la confusion politique” *Monde diplomatique*, May 2015, pages 1 and 16, <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2015/05/HALIMI/52909>; Benoît Bréville & Pierre Rimbart, “Une gauche assise à la droite du peuple”, *Monde diplomatique*, March 2015, pp. 8-9. Philippe Corcuff, *op. cit.*

<sup>124</sup> During the cold war, dissidents from the east/socialist countries were welcome, confirming the principle. But nowadays migrants are rejected, invalidating the same principles. This shows the ideological entrenchment of both attitudes. It is not surprising now that leaders in eastern Europe such as Putin or Orbán should be extreme-right populists or social nativists and should oppose immigration with – practically – fascist and racist (as well as of course sexist) arguments.

<sup>125</sup> In this class, the generalized condition of ICT was self-understood and studied (see Griziotti) by students as preliminary to the work on migrations. The teacher while dwelling more on migrations than on ICT, expected students to understand ICT in the context.

this state of affairs. However, it should be made clear that migration is not an exceptional phenomenon at any time in history, but that it is a normal, recurrent and regular feature of humanity and that it happens in most parts of the world and on all continents all the time, Europe and Asia included. What may have changed is not the fact that people migrate, but our *awareness* that different types of migration, due to complex and plentiful reasons, are happening everywhere globally and simultaneously.

That awareness is also the result of our changed *epistemological condition*, in the framework of which we must count with the new fact (or, the reinforced fact) of *common learning*, or learning in common within organized although mainly informal cognitive labor. The latter is an important and specific feature of our times. Knowledge now comes from at other times unknown sources, from below, from across the board, from lower classes, from groups not formally educated, from labor, from production and reproduction experiences, from political experience, from local and global associations or NGOs linked to all sorts of life-forms and political claims, *including from forced migrant*<sup>126</sup> *and diversely displaced populations*. Not only knowledge, but politics too, comes from associations, feminist and other groups, from hackers, workers and creators etc. Politics is not any more a matter of political parties or of the state only, there are now many more interventions and interest groups that act politically. They too are associated with new forms and ways of knowledge. The latter is now not only directed from north to south and from west to east, as it used to be during conquering colonial and post-colonial imperialistic times, but now also from south to north and in all possible directions. Knowledge doesn't come any more exclusively from official teaching institutions, but can come in sharing and exchange (*en partage*) from informal "institutions". Refugees and migrants, informal groups from elsewhere, groups of women as well as associations, peasants, indigenous populations, activists, can and do bring and share their survival experiences and other knowledge as well as valuable practical capabilities. At times they bring in new knowledges and experiences, or such that we may have once had, but that we have lost over time in sedentary lives, through colonialism and through provincializing within absolute capitalism. In doing so, they may meet local immunity conditions and filters that operate a selection in who and what they will let through due to this new type of "nomadism" (about which capitalism activates *historical amnesia*, preferring to ignore its recurrent character). These conditions will act on symptoms and (re)presentations, they will introduce *switch-ups* to

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<sup>126</sup> Nowadays, migrations are generally forced in one way or the other.



new cognitive conditions that will gradually bring about new forms of material life. Knowledges and technologies mediated by guest-populations (be they *gastarbeiter* or otherwise migrants), travelers, refugees, come as “the fruit of a multi-ethnic and multicultural common”.<sup>127</sup> Knowledges developed *together and shared* belong indeed to the category of *commons*.

Whether due to entropy or to an “inbuilt” or over time developed “bug” for many reasons, we humans don’t seem to be acting to our benefit. The young generations are raising the alert.<sup>128</sup> How come that we are unable to act jointly and responsibly to save the planet – and to save ourselves, consequently - in spite of knowing that we are destroying it and that its end is now in view, at this last minute? How come that we do everything to destroy the very nature we depend upon for life and to which we belong as its part? Sébastien Bohler claims that we developed a “bug” in our own brains that makes us able only to think *at short term only*, not at long term. This excludes solidarity with the next generations.<sup>129</sup> And we also know that politicians are unable to think at long term, because they have electoral concerns and deadlines. We have dropped the solidarity with future generations that our predecessors once had, since we have become monstrous consumers, and consuming has become even more important than survival.<sup>130</sup> Not that we have not relied on our brains: our brains, once our savior, have changed their behavior, and are leading us to our loss. Furthermore, our system of balanced society and of equilibrium is very precarious. “Paradoxically, the quasi-equilibrium of logistical media generates an intensification of disequilibrium in Virilio’s sense of human disorientation and the surrender of decision. [...] Time as the pulsation of sensation amplified to serve capital’s appetite of synchronic extraction. This is the end point of logistical ambition: the instantaneity of capital accumulation unshackled from the externality of the interval.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Giorgio Griziotti, *Neurocapitalism. Technological Mediation and Vanishing Lines*, preface by Tiziana Terranova, transl. by Jason Francis McGimsay, Minor Compositions, Colchester/New York/Port Watson 2019 (on-line: [www.autonomediamedia.org](http://www.autonomediamedia.org)). See also Ricardo Viscardi, “Una inscripción deconstructiva del contexto de la globalización tecnológica”, in *Revista latinoamericana del Colegio Internacional de Filosofía*, N° especial “Cincuenta años de deconstrucción”, Dec. 2019, pp. 213-225. Ned Rossiter, “Logistical Media Theory. The Politics of Time, and the Geopolitics of Automation”, manuscript 2019.

<sup>128</sup> See the new youth climate movement and the school strike lead by Greta Thunberg, relying not on political parties, but on scientific climate research.

<sup>129</sup> Sébastien Bohler, *Le bug humain*, Robert Laffont, Paris 2019; Greta Thunberg on the contrary, claims solidarity between generations.

<sup>130</sup> Sébastien Bohler, *Le bug humain*, op. cit.

<sup>131</sup> Ned Rossiter, “Logistical Media Theory. The Politics of Time, and the Geopolitics of Automation”, manuscript 2019, p. 7.



We not only carry bugs, we are ourselves traversed by the same life as bugs, viruses, bacteria, animals and plants, all in constant transformation and passing through each other, says Emanuele Coccia, much agreeing with Vandana Shiva who, on her side, in the face of massive land grabbing, industrialization of agriculture and its kidnaping by powerful transnational corporations, has undertaken to help saving seeds and local knowledges as well as the livelihood of the peasants.<sup>132</sup> Everything is in permanent transformation, metamorphosis, metempsychosis thinks Emanuele Coccia, and life and death belong to *one and the same endless process*.<sup>133</sup> We are all part of one same life process, where life feeds on life. We eat other beings and are eaten by them. “Identities” are just tiny snapshots of passing moments, much as understood in ancient Indian (and other) philosophies. It is clear that in our utter modern alienation due to the extractivist productivist attitude having become a system and the world order we live in, we have forgotten much of this immediate experience of our milieu. We have exterminated other populations, both human, animal and vegetal, and decimated species. Since western modernity, we humans have cut ourselves from nature, although we belong to it. We can only conclude from the work of Vandana Shiva or Emanuele Coccia that we need to rebuild a world reintegrating nature, refusing the extreme productivism of neoliberalism and accept that life is a stream that passes through us. Life doesn’t belong to us individually, although for a short spell we are inhabited by it. Life, because it is *common*, is shared with other beings and other species.

Knowledges developed, constructed *together* and *shared* belong indeed to the category of *commons*. We shall definitely loose them if we are unable to share our understanding. *Common*, shared knowledge and knowledge constructed in common, is of a different quality than simply individual knowledge, and especially than knowledge to be imbedded as capital into social and state structures. *Common knowledges* (as a process) are the capability of cultural and material

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<sup>132</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Reclaiming the Commons: Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge, and the Rights of Mother Earth*, Santa Fe, Synergetic Press 2020; Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, *Ecofeminism (Critique. Influence. Change.)*, London, Zed books 2014

<sup>133</sup> Emanuele Coccia, *Métamorphoses*, Paris, Rivages 2020; Emanuele Coccia, «Vivre signifie toujours sacrifier d’autres êtres vivants» [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/06/12/emanuele-coccia-vivre-signifie-toujours-sacrifier-d-autres-etres-vivants\\_1576295](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/06/12/emanuele-coccia-vivre-signifie-toujours-sacrifier-d-autres-etres-vivants_1576295); Emanuele Coccia, “Hors de la maison. De l’alimentation ou de la métaphysique de la réincarnation”, *Multitudes* 72, Automn 2018, <https://www.multitudes.net/hors-de-la-maison/>; Emanuele Coccia, “Toute espèce est métamorphose”, *Libération*, Oct. 29, 2019, [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/10/29/toute-espece-est-metamorphose\\_1760429](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/10/29/toute-espece-est-metamorphose_1760429); Emanuele Coccia, “Les virus nous rappellent que n’importe quel être peut détruire le présent et établir un ordre inconnu”, Interview by Sonya Faure et Anastasia Vécin, *Libération*, 14-3-2020, [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/03/13/emanuele-coccia-les-virus-nous-rappellent-que-n-importe-quel-etre-peut-detruire-le-present-et-etabli\\_1781597](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/03/13/emanuele-coccia-les-virus-nous-rappellent-que-n-importe-quel-etre-peut-detruire-le-present-et-etabli_1781597).

co-production of an era for a society or for communities, reflecting the *métissage*, hybridization and history of its time. We need to take into account these new conditions, because migrations are happening in precisely that context. So is the case with the climate issue too. I have sustained that migrants are our missing citizens<sup>134</sup> and our co-citizens. But for the time being, those of them who survive the journey and reach Europe face utter rejection. Yet they are our condition for *becoming human* in a common world of a new humanity.<sup>135</sup>

### The epistemological turn

Today's epistemological turn and new knowledges are not only the result of the post-industrial real-time or digital computing IT dispensation and cognitive labor enabled by hackers (Griziotti would say, after Marx, Gramsci and Negri, general intellect and collective intelligence), but also that of shared knowledge and sedimented experiences of a number of people of mixed or various identities, generations, origins and aspirations, collaborating either directly, or through sharing results of epistemological experiences. These occur in the so constituted informal "cognitive factory" mainly in towns when in the west, but also on all sorts of networks in different dimensions including the Internet (Rushdie's "endimions"?).<sup>136</sup> Cognitive laborers – the cognitive proletariat – are highly skilled but informal and mostly exploited workers. They cannot separate their working from their free and private time anymore, which is the technique used by capitalism to tie them down and extract value from them. They are mass workers<sup>137</sup> who have become mass consumers too, but are often resisting commodification. Now while we shall here keep in mind ICT and bio-cognitive capitalism<sup>138</sup> as *one of* the main facts of the *material* (however dematerialized) *background* of 21<sup>st</sup> century migrations in general, and while we shall study them, we are not addressing them as our main topic. But we need to take these new conditions into account as a framework, because migrations are happening in that context. So is the case with the climate issue too and as we shall soon discover, with possible and probably pandemics.

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<sup>134</sup> R. Iveković, *Les citoyens manquants. Banlieues, migrations, citoyennetés et construction européenne*, Marseille, Al Dante 2015.

<sup>135</sup> Ricardo Viscardi, "'Nuevas Humanidades' en la globalización", in Tropelías. Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada, número extraordinario 4 (2018), pp. 222-235.

<sup>136</sup> In Salman Rushdie, *Grimus*, Penguin Books 1990, an early science-fiction novel by the author. "Endimions" is the anagram of "dimensions".

<sup>137</sup> Griziotti, p. 26.

<sup>138</sup> Yann Moulier Boutang, *Capitalisme cognitif. La nouvelle grande transformation*, Paris, Eds. Amsterdam 2007.

Among the new cognitive laborer, a recent category of workers, there are those who are in favor of free software, and those who are not (the latter would also be in favor of control and privilege), resulting in different *philosophies and politics of knowledge* characteristic and coexisting in our times. In a world traversed by migrations, - speed, acceleration<sup>139</sup> and ICT play an important role.<sup>140</sup> Griziotti says that operating as a digital interface between the domains of knowledge and capital. Software code transforms raw information into value in cognitive capitalism,<sup>141</sup> thus establishing a *biocognitive condition* where everything is commercialized and subsumed within *living labor*. Corporations develop into nervous systems programmed to “innervate financialization inside the company-body [that] progressively invades the State Welfare Organization”.<sup>142</sup> Humans are now seen in the first place as consumers and are studied as such, while “the client-capital must generate rent”.<sup>143</sup> Knowledge useful for this new socio- economic formation often comes as “marginal”, from garages, kitchens, bedrooms, from offshore or from elsewhere. Transnational networks of cognitive labor are thus spontaneously created, but are also expropriated by the system. They both serve it and evade it. The client herself is transformed into an unpaid producer,<sup>144</sup> a do-it-yourself condition that partly neutralizes those aspects of citizenship that imply subjectivity and agency. Within that system, the deadly commodification of our personal data is willingly and unconsciously surrendered for free by individuals, tying down whole societies, through personal desire that is constantly equalized, scraped, scratched so as to adjust to the suggested desires that we may think are our own.<sup>145</sup>

Nowadays migrants, generally forced in some way, are those who are neither nationals nor citizens as we saw, and this is the dominant aspect of present-day migrations. It is now nationals vs. migrants. The opposition is between citizens and non-citizens, and the latter are presently

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<sup>139</sup> “After the steam era and the introduction of electricity later, real time opens the third and last phase of the industrial era: thermodynamic forces come into play in the first, electricity is the immaterial fluid that irrigates the factory in the second, and the flow of information and networks are the nervous system that animate the automated, sophisticated and complex actions in the third phase.” Griziotti 2019, p. 47.

<sup>140</sup> Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics. An Essay on Dromology*, transl. by Mark Polizzotti, Semiotext(e) /Foreign Agents 1986. Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, transl. by Jonathan Trejo-Mathys, New York, Columbia UP 2015.

<sup>141</sup> Griziotti, p. 54.

<sup>142</sup> Griziotti, p. 58.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Griziotti: *prosumer*, p. 67.

<sup>145</sup> Bernard E. Harcourt, *La société d'exposition*, Paris, Seuil 2020.

mostly figured as migrants. Migrants have become the emblematic figure of the “other” and of the non-citizen, often muslim.<sup>146</sup> States build walls in order to prevent them from “trespassing” and from even applying to acquire citizenship rights or residency permits, as if on the basis of human rights they were not entitled to equal treatment. By the same occasion, the way human rights are often dealt with, between “charity” and “security”, oftentimes reduces these to limited “humanitarian” action entrusted to powerless though well-intended associations. Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp and P. Dasen have investigated the relation between human rights and migration policies by national states. Their publication proposes several things, among which: a world human rights tribunal (an old proposal by Monique Chemilier-Gendreau), the enhancement of the rights of migrants in globalization, and a postcolonial constitution for the EU.<sup>147</sup> Being included in, or stripped of citizenship,<sup>148</sup> nationhood and national or ethnic “identity” is now the most fateful existential factor that can save or jeopardize lives in a world where – despite some too hasty announcements about the end of the nation-form – national states still prevail,<sup>149</sup> albeit with altered features. Isn’t identity, or origin, an accident, as Achille Mbembe says.<sup>150</sup> In the time of populisms (when it comes to nationalism, right wing and left-wing populisms are not that different) and of worrisome advancing re-fascisation or

<sup>146</sup> The “other” is an empty signifier, so that different figures (depending on the time, the context) may take that label, with local variations. In the 21st century, the “Muslim” and the “migrant” are, especially in the west (but not only: in much of Asia this is the case too), contents to be filled in under that name.

<sup>147</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp & P. Dasen (eds.), *Mondialisation, migration et droits de l’homme: un nouveau paradigme pour la recherche et la citoyenneté*, vol. 1, Bruxelles, Ed. Bruylant, 2007. On the World tribunal and also on a European tribunal for human rights, M. Chemilier-Gendreau, in *Le Monde diplomatique*, <https://mondediplo.com/1999/01/08rights> and *Le Monde diplomatique*, [https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1996/11/CHEMILLIER\\_GENDREAU/5893](https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1996/11/CHEMILLIER_GENDREAU/5893); Patrick Taran, « Clashing Worlds: Imperative for a Right-Based Approach to Labour Migration in the Age of Globalisation », in *Mondialisation, migration et droits de l’homme: le droit international en question/Globalization, Migration and Human Rights: International Law under Review*, vol. 2, ed. by Vincent Chetail, Brussels, Bruylant 2007, p. 421-435; [13] Globalization, migration and labour: Imperatives for a rights based policy” in *Age of Globalization* 3/2013, pp. 63-82, [https://www.socionauki.ru/journal/files/aog/2013\\_3/063-082.pdf](https://www.socionauki.ru/journal/files/aog/2013_3/063-082.pdf). Sandro Mezzadra, « Citizen and Subject. A Postcolonial Constitution for the European Union », in *Mondialisation, migration et droits de l’homme*, *Mondialisation, migration et droits de l’homme: un nouveau paradigme pour la recherche et la citoyenneté*, vol. 1, ed. by M-C. Caloz-Tschopp & P. Dasen, Bruxelles, Ed. Bruylant, 2007, *op. cit.*, *ibid.* p. 533-551.

<sup>148</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich 1973. Insa Breyer, Speranta Dumitru, « Les sans-papiers et leur droit d’avoir des droits. Une approche par l’éthique de la discussion », *Raisons politiques*, 2007/2 (N°26), p. 125-147. DOI: 10.3917/rai.026.0125. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-raisons-politiques-2007-2-page-125.htm>. M-C. Caloz Tschopp, *Hannah Arendt. Les sans-Etat et le "droit d’avoir des droits"*, Vol. 1 & *Hannah Arendt, la "banalité du mal " comme mal politique*, Vol. 2, Paris, L’Harmattan 1998.

<sup>149</sup> See Ranabir Samaddar, “Migrants, NRC, and the Paradox of Protection and Power”, <https://thewire.in/rights/migrants-nrc-paradox-protection-power>

<sup>150</sup> Julie Clarini, “Achille Mbembe, passant soucieux. Du Cameroun, où il est né, aux Etats-Unis et à l’Afrique du Sud, en passant par Paris: trajectoire d’un penseur en mouvement consterné par l’état du monde, comme en témoigne son nouvel essai, «Politiques de l’inimitié»”, in *Le Monde*, June 20, 2016. [https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2016/06/22/achille-mbembe-passant-soucieux\\_4955945\\_3260.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2016/06/22/achille-mbembe-passant-soucieux_4955945_3260.html)

re-Nazification in many places worldwide, this is even more the case. At a time of rejection, *refoulement*, “pushing-back”,<sup>151</sup> and of all too frequent deaths if not outright assassinations of foreigners (especially those from the global south) at the borders in Asia, Australia, Europe, Israel, South Africa and North America, but also selectively in Africa and elsewhere, it is decisive whether one has or has not access to nationhood and citizenship. To survive, it is crucial to be of the right nation<sup>152</sup> and possess valid and recognized documents. Not to mention persistent and widespread femicides, that only partly correspond to this pattern and have some specific features, but rely on a male-supremacist gender-ideology easily linked to sovereignist nationalism.

### 3. Who are the migrants and refugees?

Who are the migrants and refugees? They have been driven away by adversities. They are those who need to get away from where they are, for whatever the reasons. Their movement implies the right to movement, as well as a right to hospitality. They are ready to come our way without any prejudices, and open mindedly. They are ready to change, to “become others” (a Deleuzeian term, *devenir autre*: “becoming” against “being”), to be transformed, to work, to invest themselves in a new society. Most of the time they don’t care about religion, about identity, about language; they are ready to discard theirs for the benefit of a new constructive togetherness. They come in total openness that far surpasses that of the sedentary. They are our chance, although many see them as intruders, foreigners, as an inassimilable element. It is the sedentary society that is actually bolted and needs to open. The newcomers are more open than the society they are trying to join, contrary to the stereotype. The latter, nowadays in Europe, sees them as basically muslim and “therefore” dangerous, as potential terrorists and troublemakers. They have become the symbol of the unwanted alien and as an inferior species. But immigrants, be they muslims or others, are in principle and by definition open to integration and willing to achieve it. When they try to migrate to Europe out of necessity and because of

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<sup>151</sup> “Push-back”, see <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/140819/la-france-persiste-expulser-des-refugies-vers-le-soudan>; Latinka Perović <https://lupiga.com/intervju/intervju-latinka-perovic-srbija-nastavlja-politiku-slobodana-milosevica>

<sup>152</sup> This can also be verified in essential testimonial literature about WWII nazi death camps, such as by Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*, Turin, Einaudi 2018 (new ed., first publ. in 1947) or by Robert Antelm, *L’espèce humaine*, Paris, Gallimard 1957, or from Hannah Arendt in general (*Les origines du totalitarisme*, op. cit.).

diversely untenable conditions, because of wars imported by the west, they oftentimes do not really have illusions about Europe (contrary to what Europeans like to think). They may not idealise it, but they have nowhere else to go. “Africans don’t dream of Europe”, says philosopher Achille Mbembe.<sup>153</sup> We should take advantage of such a rare opportunity, which is our good luck as much as theirs, in a process that will make of them and of us, of immigrants and of the welcoming society, one social and political body constructing a *common project* for the future. On the practical side, this is why we should also fight for voting rights for resident foreigners (that only a few countries in Europe practice at the local level), for their citizenship quickly to be acquired and for their integration. Although many civil society associations and some leftist parties around Europe welcome them, the opposite is happening on most levels. Europe is tolerating, while looking the other way, thousands of people drowning in the Mediterranean and being killed on its borders, as well as many more being detained in *invisible* camps<sup>154</sup> and prisons for people who committed no offence and are not under investigation. The doings of the states in this respect, as well as the whole issue, are kept away from the public, while assertions about European moral and general superiority are hammered in. Today, when we talk about migrations, we have in mind indistinctly migrants (legal or “illegal”), refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers etc.

Claude Calame says in his ten theses “Migrants in a situation of forced exile”:

“1. Striking men, women and children, any exile from the country of origin is caused by a situation of constraint. [...]

2. Driven by capital-rich countries (including rich EU countries) and based on extractivism and productivism, economic-financial globalization and neo-colonial domination for the benefit of big banks and multinationals create and maintain a variety of different situations causing exile: wars, repressive regimes, land grabbing, destruction of food, agriculture, wild urbanization, unemployment, crime, deepening inequalities, pollution, climate change, etc.

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<sup>153</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Les Africains ne rêvent pas d’Europe”, in *Courrier international* N°1492, June 6-12, 2019, pp.50-52 (translated from *Mail & Guardian*, Johannesburg).

<sup>154</sup> On using the term “camp” today, see *Migreurop* <http://www.migreurop.org/article675.html?lang=fr>

3. To this extent, forced exile and immigration to the richest countries are not crimes [...].
4. The European Union is not the scene of an influx of refugees or a crisis of migrants, it is not threatened by any "great replacement": if in 2015 the asylum applications in the 28 EU states amounted to 1,250,630, in 2018 the number of first-time applicants reached 634,700, just over 0.1% of the total population!
5. One of the effects of the closure of EU borders and their outsourcing in neighbouring countries (Turkey, Libya, Morocco) is a crime against humanity: since the early 2000s, the crossings constraints of the Mediterranean caused more than 40,000 deaths, men, women and children.
6. The discriminations the exiled are the victims of in the rich countries where they try to find refuge are intersectional; their combined criteria are the state of dispossession, precariousness, foreign origin, sex, religion, possibly "race"; they lead to the rejection and denial of humanity to the exiles.
7. Not only do northern countries face only a small proportion of population displacements and migratory movements that they partly provoke by their policy of economic and financial domination; but after a selection, they apply to the exiles considered as deserving to be authorised to seek asylum individual rights resulting from the Geneva Convention of 1951 relative to the refugee status, while southern countries must apply collective rights, granted in huge refugee camps.
8. The defense of fundamental human rights and social rights (food, housing, health, training, culture) of exiles who, sorted in a discriminatory manner in the EU countries become "undocumented" (in fact, people without a residency permit), proceeds from the defence of individual and social rights of residents and of poor and disadvantaged dwellers, victims of similar discrimination.
9. Respect for individual and collective human rights means that the host country must provide the material, social, political and moral means for the exercise of these rights,

as well as the means to fulfil the duties arising from these rights.

10. The policy of denigration, invisibilisation, removal and expulsion of migrants must be replaced by a policy of psychic, social and cultural ("anthropopoietic") reconstruction of the exiled, whatever their origin, in a pluri-dimensional move of restoring solidarity."<sup>155</sup>

Calame's merging of scholarship with involved activism is important, insightful as well as more and more widespread. It is typical as a *démarche*, steps in a procedure. People engaged in social sciences are now able (expected by their own community and by the concerned) to study and possibly support imagining and constructing new political subjectivities, new agencies, born out of the merger of migrants, migrants' and other movements, of NGOs etc., of their supporters and associations dedicated to them in Europe, in view of constructing and establishing *together* a new "European people" alarmed by the challenges of our time. Migrants' initiative and migrants' movements, agency and autonomy are primal here. Europe has been and will be constructed more and more with these newcomers – new Europeans - and our common future already depends on them. As the EU becomes a new immigration land (after other continents it colonized), it will be meeting Europeans in an *intersectionality and political transversality of rights* and of diverse but complementary interests. Transversality of specific interests doesn't mean that common interests are neglected. This needs to be understood, prepared and politically worked out. European people are not only Europe's local indigenous populations, but also people from emigration countries, newcomers and future citizens. As much as we need to think climate change in advance and in solidarity with future generations, so do we need to think Europe or the world the way they will be, in solidarity and reciprocity. From 2015 on and for a year, more than a million people immigrated into Europe, mostly over land ("the Balkans route") after risky sea passage, forming a singular and new type of movement. It met partly with the readiness of parts of the population to welcome them, but soon more and more with the European *crisis of hospitality*. In particular from 2016 on, an immigration wave surprised Europe in the middle of the Greek crisis. In the general chaos created over the subcontinent by this issue, and by lessons from history (not) learned, the

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<sup>155</sup> Claude Calame, professor at the EHESS School in Paris and member of the CADTM, Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (<http://cadtm.org/English>), in "Migrantes et migrants en situation d'exil contraint: dix thèses", in *Médiapart*, March 25, 2019, transl. by me, R.I., <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/claude-calame/blog/250319/migrantes-et-migrants-en-situation-d-exil-constraint-dix-theses>



French multi-prize winner, economist Thomas Piketty, declared too that Europe could easily absorb one million refugees every year, and that this would have a positive effect on its economy.

Often, people at the level of towns, provinces, communities, individuals, especially women and their associations, were very welcoming, while states and high authorities developed within a year (from 2016) a political refusal of immigration from the east and particularly from the (global) south. While the migrants and refugees met pro-immigrants' activists and their associations, the centers of power developed elaborate pushing-back techniques. Of course, today, as the route over land is closed by bolted states (Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Croatia and the whole of central Europe) and the Mediterranean is deadly to the refugees, there is again some idealizing of the Balkans route by those who underestimate the poisonous quality of regional political relations since the Yugoslav wars of the 1990', especially with regard to the generally shared fixation of nationality, national values, and the overestimation of the nation seen as merely interesting anthropological data or ethnographic curiosity.

The nation with nationalism and dreams of sovereignty is also a deadly killing machine. Those countries, be it *states or populations* (with the due exceptions of anti-nationalists, feminists, migrants-welcoming groups and pacifists), that take lightly "peoplehood" and execrable toxic national enmities resulting today from the recent civil war(s), will refuse to see *that transit-migrants and would-be refugees are met with the same hostility as the too-similar neighbor from a once common country*. The situation is socially and politically so degraded and noxious in the Yugoslav space today. The crisis due to the latest degree of absolute capitalism is reinforced by revamped militarization and machismo. One cannot build any constructive political programme or hope for welcoming foreigners on *minor ethnological observations* there, however enthusiastic. Every aspect of life and politics is gangrenous while the consequences of the war. The *still on-going low-intensity conflict* simmering has not been removed and societies are not healed. Because those societies are split, it is unimaginable that a gap between states' perception and the population's perception can open any serious perspective in improving the fate of migrants. This is why a renovation in the direction of building a new Europe from its present ruins must come from the initiative of the most motivated and the least blasé: the migrants and the undocumented.

It is true that the migrants challenge the European order of closure and the regime of borders, for an array of European leaders in their electoral perspective. It will take a considerably longer time, if not a miracle, to make those borders soft and to get those attempts at opening out of clandestinity. We shall have to learn seeing the migrants as part of a *revolutionary liberation movement*, beyond any social movement of a new type, a movement shared by locals too. But challenging border regimes in itself will not be sufficient. Such a joint movement needs to become much wider, all encompassing, trans-border and transnational.

### **Forced migrations and border crossing**

Today, when we talk about migrations, we have in mind indistinctly migrants (legal or “illegal”), refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers etc. Most of those crossing the Mediterranean or coming from the global south, though not all, are officially considered illegal, because Europe has become a fortress. Many become “illegal” after having entered the EU with visas. They then can’t obtain visa extensions. Death at sea because of EU’s border closure is criminal. The International Criminal Court was called upon in 2019 on the question of EU and Member States responsibility for massive drowning in the Mediterranean, on the grounds that: “1001. The evidence provided to the Prosecutor is diverse and includes an expert opinion on the situation of migrants in Libya; a victim statement confirming, for the first time to the best of our knowledge, the involvement of the Libyan Coast Guard (‘LYCG’) in smuggling, trafficking and detention of migrants; internal documents of high-level EU organs, framing the commission of multiple Crimes Against Humanity within the context of a predefined plan executed pursuant to a policy aimed at stemming migration flows of Africans; statements by policymakers, made before, during and after the commission of the crimes, that establish their awareness of the lethal consequences of their decisions and implicate them in the alleged crimes; and reports by civil society organizations on the ‘dire and unacceptable’ human rights situation in Libya.”<sup>156</sup>

We purposely don’t want to distinguish between categories of the displaced. I reject the distinction between “legal immigrants”, detaining visas or supposed to be acceptable political refugees, and supposedly illegal “economic” asylum seekers. No one can be illegal from the

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<sup>156</sup> Quoted by Elspeth Guild in “Interrogating Europe’s Borders”, *op. cit.*, <https://mobile.repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/208099/208099.pdf?sequence=1>, p. 15.

perspective of human rights. *No-one is illegal*, as go the stickers distributed to migrants in Serbia and elsewhere by welcoming women's groups. After WWII and during the cold war, international organizations tried to distinguish between political refugees or asylum seekers (from socialist countries which, in Europe, amounted to Eastern Europe) that were welcome, and economic refugees, that were not welcome unless they were "temporary" immigrant workers imported on contract and for a limited time by immigration countries. The distinction between migrants has always been infamous, but nowadays it is even more difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the two groups. People migrate for various reasons: fleeing poverty, conflicts, ethnic or religious cleansing (Rohingyas among others, Syrians, Iraqis), fleeing nationalism, wars, absence of democracy, sexual harassment and mutilation, forced marriages, ecological and manmade disasters etc. They also travel to study or to teach. We should call all of these forced migrations, as seen in the work and the publications of the Calcutta Research Group.<sup>157</sup>

Many hit the road individually, though most do so in groups, forming unstoppable human flows over continents, deserts and seas alike. Thousands travel for months or years, since no quick fixing of their situation is at hand, but many never arrive and are never able to settle down. Thousands die while traversing the deserts, the seas, at the borders and by walls and fences that are becoming ever tougher. There are also those who travel abroad for work, for education, as well as those who accompany the freely admitted relocation of capital and investments, controlled by transnational corporations more than by states, and who are thus on the upper side of the wave, in what Giorgio Griziotti calls "new nomadism" as opposed to the (imaginary?) "initial" or original nomadism of the human species, which was dictated by natural sequences, by seasons and by exploration. Their displacement may also be forced. As European borders close even further with the coronavirus pandemic of covid-19 in 2020, we see women's' and migrant-helping associations help the new nomads in distress in spite of local closures and extreme right authorities that chase them away, such as in Trieste<sup>158</sup> for example, and Trieste has always been a gate.

Colonialism itself is also part of the history of migrations, in particular modern settlers'

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<sup>157</sup> Mahanibban Calcutta Research Group, <http://www.mcrg.ac.in>

<sup>158</sup> Marinella Salvi, « In Trieste, volunteers support migrants in spite of the Lega », in *Il manifesto* Global edition, March 19, 2020, <https://global.ilmanifesto.it/in-trieste-volunteers-support-migrants-in-spite-of-the-lega/>

colonies, such as Latin America, British colonies, and, in the case of France, Algeria. Not only Europeans settled round the world, but they also imported and settled in their colonies' workers from third countries (their other colonies) and continents. Ancient "colonialism" too is part of migration history. Adventurism that will take humans to cosmic immensity will probably also be migratory. Migrations have the double characteristic of salvation, opening new living spaces and conditions, as well as being suicidal and murderous. Migrations are the issue of our times, because there is no more outer space to which to migrate; and because we have become aware of its violence that, in itself, is not new. They impose new know-hows and the study of the phenomenon transnationally as well as understanding the limits of nation-states and of the concept of nation. They impose a cosmo-political approach that questions the limits of law, of rights, of "identity", of citizenship, of gender, of colonial, post-colonial and imperial(istic) history, as well as the limits of the state. While studying these new political figures, we are bound to raise questions about modernity, about the constitution of universals,<sup>159</sup> of "exception", of national states, of borders and of their current (21<sup>st</sup> century) retrograde closure, be it the closure of individual states or of such constructs as the European Union (as well as of its member states).

All these things happen within national states, although some authors have already predicted the disappearance or the transformation of the latter or to the post-Westphalian framework for the state.<sup>160</sup> The *national state* (*Etat national*) appears with western modernity, whereby the national state can also represent, to various degrees, the *rule of law* (*Etat de droit*).<sup>161</sup> In non-democratic regimes we also witness, to different extents, among other political figures, the *party state*. In the one-party state which is also authoritarian, but in a country born out of a revolution or a liberation war as well, the state may (but need not) legitimize itself through excessive violence and the victory at war. The state has in any case the self-attributed monopoly of violence.

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<sup>159</sup> Etienne Balibar's two books: *Des universels. Essais et conférences*, Paris, Galilée 2016; « Les universels », in *La crainte des masses. Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx*, Paris, Galilée 1998, pp. 419-454, and many papers. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, op. cit. Kindle, esp. chapters 4, 7 & 8, and other publications.

<sup>160</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, New York, Polity Press 2015, Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice. Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, New York, Columbia UP 2010; Nancy Fraser, Kate Nash, *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*, New York, Polity Press 2014; José Manuel Pureza, "Towards a post-Westphalian internationalism", in *Eurozine* 2002, <https://www.eurozine.com/towards-a-post-westphalian-internationalism/> & *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, N°118/2019.

<sup>161</sup> In many other European languages the rule of law is called "the state of law": *Etat de droit*, *Pravna država*, *Estado de derecho* etc.

It is remarkable that, even as we may want to overcome the modern European concept of nation (the nation-form), the national state or the state itself as such, no other system of organization comes our way. Political imagination, be it of individuals or of movements, is very feeble in visualizing possible new organizational forms. Colonized countries have resisted the pressure of the (metropolitan) nation that pretended to include them as subordinate, only to come up with their own idea of a nation within a much-auspicated national state that then claims sovereignty. The nation and the state, as also the national-state, have been reproducing themselves around the world since modernity. National states have prevailed over the globe, have covered the latter's whole territory and have absorbed or pervaded older and local forms. There *have* been transnational movements or organizational political forms however, such as the Nonaligned movement, the African Union, the European Union, various federations etc. But they have all retained the nation as their basic unit, while rejecting the idea of a dominant nation. Let me quote Akhil Gupta:

“[It is made] clear that the potential forms that states can take in the modern world are severely circumscribed. It is for this reason that movements *against* the nation-states themselves aspire to the status of autonomous nationhood. The pervasiveness of nationalism as a system of practices and as a form of ideology cannot therefore be adequately explained simply by referring to the appeal that it has for those nationalist elites who clearly stand to gain the most from it. Instead, to understand why the nation comes to be such a privileged form of statehood, we need to locate the question of nationalism *centrally* within the context of the postcolonial interstate system. It is difficult to imagine what a state that is not a nation would look like and how it would operate in the contemporary world. By reflecting on the historical context, it is possible to make the circumstances that have led to the emergence of the nation-state as a dominant organizational form. This also enables us to speculate about the conditions that may lead to its demise and the eventual development of an alternative hegemonic spatial formation. The reinscription of space in the context of late capitalism, by destabilizing the complacent equilibrium of the contemporary world system of nation-states, may very well be tending in that direction.”<sup>162</sup> This is clearly the crossroads where we stand in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The modern nation was exported from Europe through colonialism. In the colonies at independence the new local nations then aspired to have a state too, thus spreading the

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<sup>162</sup> Akhil Gupta, “The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism” in *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 7, N°1, “Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference” (Feb., 1992), pp. 63-79.

national state form.

In national victory, especially through the results of nationalist violence and wars for a new generation of national states since 1989 in Europe, we discover that, among other things to aspire to, even careers too can be seen as war loot.<sup>163</sup> A distinction proper to Slavic languages comes as useful here, although it is not standardized in social sciences: “nation state” (or “national state”)<sup>164</sup> can be said either *nacionalna država* or *narodna država*. The first expression corresponds to the usage in English. But the second, *narodna država*, means both (or either) “national state” or “the people’s state”. “People” in general has no sedimented meaning, and it may denote many things politically. It may mean “the people” as differentiated from elites or from the rulers and, as it was used in “people’s democracies”, it may denote the people of a non-capitalist country. It can denote that *chosen* part of the nation that produces a revolution. It may denote the constituency of some political power, a political or a juridical term etc. “People” is a polysemic term<sup>165</sup>. It is much invoked by populists. But it may also denote an “ethnic” people. This last meaning is very recognizable to Slavic ears. *Narod* thus means both “nation” and “people” and that ambiguity is often played out. I am mentioning this because Latinka Perović opposes (rightly, i think) the idea of a “national state” (*narodna država*) to the idea of a “state of the rule of law” (a “law state” - *pravna država*). This distinction may be possible on one hand because of the peculiar Serbian history she is referring to, where some modern institutions, including the state, came to be *before* any democracy and not as a result of the latter). In the Yugoslav wars of the nineties in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is the national state, as an *ethnic* state, that was the political aim of the nationalists and that was seen, in Serbia, as guarantying social stately functions.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Traumatologija partijske države”, in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *Srpska strana rata. Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju*, Belgrade, Republika 1996, p. 95.

<sup>164</sup> In English we usually say “nation state”, not “national state”. I use “national” as one degree stronger than “nation-”, and as an adjective. When i write “national state” (Etienne Balibar), i also mean to say that a nation state is “ethnic”, that the nation (in “national state”) is *narod*, where the “common origin of the people” is meant. Both *nation* and *narod* etymologically imply (common) birth in their respective languages.

<sup>165</sup> Zoran Oklopčić, *Beyond the People: Social Imaginary and Constituent Imagination*, London, OUP 2018.

<sup>166</sup> Latinka Perović, “Beg od modernizacije”, in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *Srpska strana rata. Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju*, Belgrade, Republika 1996, p. 130.

## Danger at sea

One of the women captains who have been saving migrants in the Mediterranean and who was being sued in Italy for the “crime of rescuing”,<sup>167</sup> addressed to the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, the following letter:

“« Paris, I love you. I love you for all the free and solitary people that live in you. Fighting for their freedom every day, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, distributing blankets, friendship and solidarity. I love you for those who are sharing their homes, love and struggles everyday – regardless of their nationality, regardless if they have papers or not.

Madame Hidalgo, you want to award me a medal for my solitary action in the Mediterranean Sea, because our crews ‘work to rescue migrants from difficult conditions on a daily basis’. At the same time your police is stealing blankets from people that you force to live on the streets, while you raid protests and criminalize people that are standing up for rights of migrants and asylum seekers. You want to give me a medal for actions that you fight in your own ramparts. I am sure you won’t be surprised that I decline the médaille Grand Vermeil.

Paris, I’m not a humanitarian. I am not there to ‘aid’. I stand with you in solidarity. We do not need medals. We do not need authorities deciding about who is a ‘hero’ and who is ‘illegal’. In fact, they are in no position to make this call, because we are all equal.

What we need are freedom and rights. It is time we call out hypocrite honorings and fill the void with social justice. It is time we cast all medals into spearheads of revolution!

Documents and housing for all!

Freedom of movement and residence! »

Pia Klemp”<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> In French, *délit de solidarité*. Pia Klemp was threatened with up to 20 years’ imprisonment for it.

<sup>168</sup> Quoted from Yannis Youlountas’s Blog on August 20, 2019: <http://bloggy.net/2019/08/20/la-navigatrice-et-sauveteuse-en-mer-pia-klemp-refuse-la-medaille-de-la-ville-de-paris/>; see also *Le Monde*, “Migrants : la Ville de Paris propose à la capitaine du « Sea-Watch 3 » de « discuter » après son refus d’être décorée”, [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2019/08/21/migrants-la-ville-de-paris-propose-a-pia-klemp-de-discuter-apres-son-refus-d-etre-decoree\\_5501337\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2019/08/21/migrants-la-ville-de-paris-propose-a-pia-klemp-de-discuter-apres-son-refus-d-etre-decoree_5501337_3224.html)

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a tribunal in Sicily called off the decree issued by the then Italian Vice-Prime Minister Salvini that prohibited boats with refugees from docking in Italian ports. But some Italian authorities had started discouraging rescuing and disembarking in Italy even before the decree prohibiting landing. They had started harassing, arresting and confiscating SAR ships.<sup>169</sup> Nearly twenty underage non-accompanied youngsters had been first disembarked in Lampedusa (Italy) on August 19<sup>th</sup>, and then the tribunal ordered to let the rest of the refugees-migrants (initially 134), who were still on board of the *Open Arms*, land on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019. This was at least a first temporary defeat of the strong man in power, the fascist and national-populist politician who would soon provoke a political crisis and topple his own government, claiming absolute power. Salvini had made the entry prohibition to migrants his single political issue in Italy, and continues with it since he fell from power in August 2019, while Italy too became prey to confusionism. In 2020, while Salvini lost some of his popularity facing the urgency of the pandemic and is not in government anymore – the most popular politician in Italy is... Putin!<sup>170</sup> In a divided country, Salvini's positioning with respect to the migrants' issue has many supporters. It also has much resonance around Europe with the extreme right formations. The health and security situation, the psychological, moral and material conditions on the mentioned rescue boat which was not equipped for accommodating over a hundred people, was dire, as she had been at sea for some 19 days without refurbishment and with passengers in need, extremely strained and anguished in a humanitarian urgency, especially in fear of being sent back to Libya where they had suffered torture (although no Mediterranean Search-and-Rescue /SAR/ boat would actually take them back to Libya). As the *Open Arms* was being emptied of her temporary occupants, another rescue boat, the *Ocean-Viking*, had been waiting for three weeks between Lampedusa (the southernmost Italian island) and Malta, not allowed to dock in any port in Europe. Having learnt from the experience of the two rescuing women captains prosecuted by Italian courts, of the *Aquarius*, and the *Sea-Watch-3* rescue ships, the *Ocean-Viking*, a boat better equipped with radars etc., would not dock without authorisation. They said that she was now prepared to stay at sea for a longer period, availing herself of medical aid on board, with food, water, fuel, etc., although there was a limit to how long they could hold. But not all RAS boats have this possibility for want of material support, in a politically hostile environment. The *Ocean-Viking*

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<sup>169</sup> SAR: Search and Rescue (ships, NGOs etc.).

<sup>170</sup> According to an inquiry by Ilvio Diamanti, expounded in the webinar « Le Covid 19 et ses conséquences sociales et politiques en Italie », with Marc Lazar (organiser and moderator), Giovanni Orsina and Tommaso Vitale, in a Video programme on the present situation in Italy, by Science-Po university, Paris, May 20, 2020.



had 356 passengers on board,<sup>171</sup> in equally difficult conditions. She proceeded to four rescue operations at sea during August 2019, and she still had those almost 400 people on board on August 21<sup>st</sup>, not allowed to let them disembark.

In 2019, there is no-one who knows what is really happening off the Libyan coast, while there must have been *at least 800 dead* in the first half of 2019 only.<sup>172</sup> No European state accepted those migrants although 400 people would be nothing for the 500.000.000 inhabitants of the EU, and in any case there is no permanent or principled solution in view, while the few remaining rescue boats, hindered by European immigration politics performing what they call “border management,”<sup>173</sup> carry surviving stranded migrants every day. Thomas Piketty, the multi-prize economist, said that Europe could easily integrate one million people every year, should the integration be well thought and prepared politically, economically and socially. “Foreigners as much as new generations must find a way of being integrated into the political community while not betraying the way they have constructed themselves”, writes Sigalit Landau, and continues: “The foreigner, by what s/he brings new, requires his host community to take a reflexive and critical look of itself [...] [D]emocracy can’t claim any state ideology [...] to establish its legitimacy. The political regime depends on pluralist and conflictual participation of the citizens. This is what explains that populists, after transforming foreigners into easy scapegoats, attack democracy itself today.”<sup>174</sup> Populism’s “intrinsic principle is *the rejection of critical pluralism*. ‘Killing discourses’, if we don’t oppose them with any counter-discourses, will not continue to merely put migrants’ lives into peril. In the long run, they will also threaten democracy’s vitality” (*ibid*). Rescue boats whose number has decreased due to harassment from authorities err at sea without a solution in view.

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<sup>171</sup> Marie Verdier, “De ‘L’Open-Arms’ à l’Ocean-Viking’, l’errance des bateaux humanitaires”, in *La Croix*, 19-8-2019, <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/LOpen-Arms-Ocean-Viking-lerrance-bateaux-humanitaires-2019-08-19-1201041832>

<sup>172</sup> Marie Verdier, « En ce moment il n’y a personne pour voir ce qui se passe au large de la Libye » an Interview with the president of SOS Méditerranée François Thomas in *La Croix*, 16-8-2019, <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/En-moment-personne-voir-passe-large-Libye-2019-08-16-1201041394>

<sup>173</sup> Goran Basic and Sophia Yakhlef, “Border management, cooperation and control in the Baltic Sea area” at the conference “Migration, irregularisation and activism conference”, [https://www.academia.edu/26125687/Border\\_management\\_cooperation\\_and\\_control\\_in\\_the\\_Baltic\\_Sea\\_area](https://www.academia.edu/26125687/Border_management_cooperation_and_control_in_the_Baltic_Sea_area) . Cooperation in this context denotes the cooperation of police forces from surrounding countries. The aim is controlling borders and making sure that no immigrants (in this example, from the east and the north) get through.

<sup>174</sup> Sigalit Landau, “Migrants et démocratie, une même crainte du vide?” Intervention at the European Zadig Forum in Belgium, “Discourses that kill”, on December 1, 2018 in Brussels, <https://zadiginbelgium.wordpress.com/2018/09/16/discourses-that-kill-european-forum/>.

Authors such as Patrick A. Taran argue that, although many countries have seen the importance of the contribution of immigration to their economies and social development, non-regulated immigration is a serious threat to human rights and has a high cost in social unrest but also in productivity.<sup>175</sup> Migrants are thus at the centre of a contention between capital and labour, also for the local population and not only for themselves. It is a matter of integration, a complex process. “Migration provides responses to fast-changing needs for skills and personnel resulting from technological advances, changes in market conditions and industrial transformations. In countries of aging populations, migration offers a potential to replenish declining work forces as well as to inject younger workers, potentially increasing dynamism, innovation and mobility in work forces. It is a global phenomena [sic]; no region and few countries are untouched.”<sup>176</sup> In countries where the rate of the retired among working people is fast increasing (it is calculated that in Europe it will be 4 retired to 7 active by 2050), immigration is a solution. A general problem worldwide is that jobs do not necessarily appear where people are born or live. Demand for migrant labour is increasing, although locally in prosperous countries political postures and xenophobia may be against immigration in spite of the fact that economy may require it. At the same time, because of deindustrialisation, changes in the structure of labour in Europe (aging of the population, more women on the market, low immigration) and other structural causes, the standard of living is due to be 22% lower than it is currently, and this was an estimate before the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.<sup>177</sup> This shows how immigration is necessary to Europe. However, as Taran writes further, “The corresponding treatment of migrant workers clearly contradicts internationally agreed human rights principles and specific international legal standards.

Treatment of migrants in general and migrant workers in particular is commonly characterized by abuse and violations of norms, both national where they apply to migrants, and international standards.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Taran, “Globalization, migration and labour: Imperatives for a rights based policy” in *Age of Globalization* 3/2013 (pp. 63-82) p. 64. [https://www.socionauki.ru/journal/files/aog/2013\\_3/063-082.pdf](https://www.socionauki.ru/journal/files/aog/2013_3/063-082.pdf)

<sup>176</sup> Taran, *ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>177</sup> Taran, *ibid.* p. 65.

<sup>178</sup> Taran, *ibid.* p. 67.

Migrants symbolise a currently prevalent condition of humanity in movement, the new universality of exiles and migrations.<sup>179</sup> Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp writes “the exiles are figureheads of an upset world dominated by destructive and exterminist capitalism.”<sup>180</sup> It is therefore crucial that we should defend the right to movement and to hospitality for all. Who will be the contemporary allies and road companions of the new nomads, of the migrants, in intersectionality? No doubt they will be multiple and will bear no definitive definition of closed numbers. As Maria Lugones explains while writing about the *coloniality of power*,<sup>181</sup> any power, but also about *the coloniality of normative gender*, the answer not only to the conversion of diverse interests, but also to the collaboration of multiple interests is to be found in intersectionality (where they really interact) and thus also in our approach to knowledge and its construction and temporality.<sup>182</sup> In our view, it is in the interest of women and of movements worldwide to join the requests of the migrants, which is also what they do. Their condition is the most critical, the most globally widespread and it coincides in many points with that of women, whose interests intersect with theirs. In so doing, women and migrants alike will necessarily join the struggles of workers’ movements, of movements resisting wars and violence, as well as of movements against all forms of racism (anti-Black, anti-Semitic, anti-Arab etc.), of movements against discrimination, exploitation, degradation and mismanagement of the Third World and of once (or still) colonised countries, of various Occupy and Indignados movements. The limits of the ideologies of failed modernisations (supposedly, only in Third World or Socialist countries and not in the west), whose “failures” are ascribed to cultural, civilizational, psychological features or stereotypes, or to “communism”, are now showing their limits.<sup>183</sup> We are constantly told that the failure in modernisation and in capitalism is due to some shortcomings in their bearers in countries that are lagging behind. As Rastko Močnik shows, the neoliberal version of globalisation is not

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<sup>179</sup> Rada Iveković, *Les citoyens manquants. Banlieues, migrations, citoyennetés et construction européenne*, op. cit.

<sup>180</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical: réaffirmer les droits à la mobilité et à l'hospitalité”, op. cit.

<sup>181</sup> Aníbal Quijano, «Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism and social classification», in *Coloniality at large. Latin America and the postcolonial debate*, ed. by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui, Durham & London, Duke UO 2008.

<sup>182</sup> Lugones, Maria (2008). « The Coloniality of Gender ». *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise*, 2 (Spring), 1-17. Original: « Colonialidad y Género », *Tabula Rasa*, N°9, p. 73-101, (Colombia) 2008.

<sup>183</sup> Maria Todorova, “Re-imagining the Balkans”, chapt. 4 in Srećko Horvat & Igor Stiks (eds.), *Welcome to the desert of post-socialism. Radical politics after Yugoslavia*, London, Verso 2015, pp. 85-102. Rastko Močnik, *Spisi o suvremenom kapitalizmu*, transl. by Srećko Pulig and Vesna Arsovski, Zagreb, Arkzin 2016.

indispensable, but its embodiment in institutions and accumulation regimes has a high price – in wars, terrorism, fascism and post-fascist politics.

Močnik distinguishes two aspects of fascism: on the one hand cultural romantic fascism (nationalistic ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe), and on the other, the technocratic “non-politics” fascism, which is founded on the idea of governance, even of expert governance. He shows how neo-liberalism will open the door for national- populism and even outright fascism. Such “non-politics” has its hidden ideology in classical liberalism, which is formally supposed to mean freedom, equality, tolerance and multiculturalism. The neo-liberal discourse doubts democracy from the very beginning and prefers technocratic politics, through which its authoritarianism is legitimised and functions formally and supposedly impartially. But in its present form, it has clearly become incompatible with democracy. It despises the people and it often, though not always (since companies do need workers and often want them), introduces discriminatory policies in particular towards migrant populations. This description fits perfectly the politics of Emmanuel Macron, the current French president. With regard to the migrants, it generally fits the rejection, the pushback and the expulsion<sup>184</sup> politics of the European Union, of most of its member states and of a great deal of its public opinion.

### **Immunisation against others**

This is where “exception” will be politically theorised along with mechanisms of immunisation and made a theoretical shield instrumentalised to salvaging (in our case) Europe’s self-esteem and supposed moral superiority. Immunisation, like inoculation – as exception, as a parenthesis within an environment - functions as a shield against a foreign body or a virus. But an *overdose* of immunisation is lethal, as Roberto Esposito, Jacques Derrida,<sup>185</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy,<sup>186</sup> and in his way Agamben<sup>187</sup> or others have shown. It produces self-immunity. Self-immune illnesses, as we know, transform the parenthetical situation into the rule, and there is no cure for self-

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<sup>184</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Expulsion: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, Cambridge (MA), Belknap Press 2014.

<sup>185</sup> Jacques Derrida, *PHEDRE*, Suivi de *La pharmacie de Platon*, Paris, Flammarion 1989.

<sup>186</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Paris, Métailié 1992; *L'intrus*, Paris, Galilée 2000.

<sup>187</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer I: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita*, Turin, Einaudi 1995; *Quel che resta di Auschwitz. Homo sacer III*. Turin, Bollati Boringhieri 1998.

immunity.<sup>188</sup> The self-immune organism proceeds to destroy itself in a kind of suicide. Except in situations where the procedure is not absolutized, but where immunity relativizes itself for the sake of *sharing life*: Esposito gives the example of pregnancy and turns to positive instances of *relative* immunity. It all depends on the *dosis*. In Derrida indeed, *pharmakon* carries both possibilities of immunity, the lifesaving and the lethal one. The journalist Nicolas Truong, interviewing Agamben on his paper about the covid-19 pandemic being innocuous and merely the state's invention<sup>189</sup> that caused a big scandal, asks him the following: "It would seem that [according to you], terrorism being exhausted as a cause of emergency measures, *the invention of an epidemic*<sup>190</sup> could offer the ideal pretext to extend (emergency measures) beyond all limits, as you write. How can you contend that it is an 'invention'? Can't terrorism, much as an epidemic and while being very real, lead to security policies one can consider unacceptable?" While Agamben's answer may seem somewhat evasive, it is true that he developed the concept of "state of emergency" as a paradigm of government in *Homo Sacer* and other writings. In the wake of Michel Foucault as many of his generation, he also reflected on the concepts of "command" or on *ozio* "idleness", and on "destitution". His article in *Il Manifesto* in 2020 drew criticism because he was committed to defending freedom by minimizing the scale of the epidemic while there was a disproportionate number of casualties in Italy. In his interview with *Le Monde*, he insists on "the extremely serious ethical and political consequences" that stem from the security measures implemented to curb the pandemic. In this, he is not alone.

The language of immunity and exception comes from medicine and medical surveillance managed by states. It reactivates borders even where they had been deactivated.

We observe that some forms of borders have made their comeback under a "medical" guise

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<sup>188</sup> Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita*, Torino, Einaudi 2002.

<sup>189</sup> Agamben, "Coronavirus e lo stato di emergenza", *Il Manifesto*, February 26, 2020 and *Quodlibet*, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia>. In English in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, "Coronavirus and philosophy", Giorgio Agamben, "The Invention of an Epidemic", [http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/?fbclid=IwAR0i2ee2dApxn86TqL\\_pi4gzoxzwRHLYqiPcdemG\\_9\\_s8FVnLCR3DzVF9Uk](http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/?fbclid=IwAR0i2ee2dApxn86TqL_pi4gzoxzwRHLYqiPcdemG_9_s8FVnLCR3DzVF9Uk); French translation and interview by Nicolas Truong, *Le Monde*, March 24, 2020, [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/03/24/giorgio-agamben-l-epidemie-montre-clairement-que-l-etat-d-exception-est-devenu-la-condition-normale\\_6034245\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/03/24/giorgio-agamben-l-epidemie-montre-clairement-que-l-etat-d-exception-est-devenu-la-condition-normale_6034245_3232.html)

<sup>190</sup> Emphasis added.

into the very Schengen Europe<sup>191</sup> that was supposed to abolish them, and under the pretext of immunization and surveillance. European states now even protect themselves against “invasions” of migrants coming from or through their European neighbors, but also against “insider’s” penetration by other Europeans. Not only are some borders reestablished in a “soft” (medical) way, but so are regions closed to each-other too within countries, such as at the “déconfinement” of May 11, 2020 in France.

But other unexpected things do happen in times of crises, such is that of the coronavirus crisis of 2020 in Europe. It helped reestablish borders, closing states, surveillance, and cutting immigration, limiting liberties not only of migrants but also of its own population. Pandemic restrictions enhance authoritarianism and dictatorial leanings and disregard democracy.

Women, prominent among others in intersectionality, as well as various associations of support to the undocumented, informal groups, NGOs and movements steadily resist such states’ closure. They work towards the new European subjectivity in becoming, into which sooner or later, migrants among others will be inscribed. The disaster in the Mediterranean Sea is the result of the European response, or rather, non-response since 2016, to the arrival of a wave of candidates to immigration since 2015, and especially since the access of an extreme right hardliner (Matteo Salvini) in June 2018 to the position of deputy prime minister, embodying the Italian government. This hardening passed from decree to *la legge di sicurezza bis*, the law n° 53 on security, eventually voted on June 24, 2019. Soon after that, Salvini was to fall, but he gave way to a pro-fascist migration politics in much of Europe. This “Salvini’s decree”, among other things, was a law imposing the closure of Italian ports to all rescue ships,<sup>192</sup> and it implied the criminalization of rescue NGOs, SAR boats, associations, activities and rescue operations. After the closure of borders which spread from Italy to the rest of Europe, various

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<sup>191</sup> The Schengen Agreement (among some EU countries) was signed in 1985 and refers to the “Schengen Area”, where internal border checks had been discontinued and circulation was free. The Schengen borders regime has been unilaterally cancelled, though not officially abolished, by seven of the states concerned as from 2016 (initially, France, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Poland, and Sweden and then Hungary etc.), when a first wave of Syrian war-refugees appeared and caused the capitulation of the EU with regard to her basic principles.

<sup>192</sup> At first a series of decrees by the interior minister Salvini, this law that mainly addresses migration, the security of borders and general “safety” has been voted, expanded and applied since, on several occasions from 2017 on. It sanctions with the confiscation of the boat and a minimum of 15.000 euros fine to a maximum of 1 million Euros the captain who should enter a closed port “in case of violation of the decree of prohibiting entrance, transit or stop-over in Italian territorial waters”. The captain is arrested in flagrancy in the case of the “offense of resistance or violence against a warship” as happened in the case of captain Carola Rackete.

rescuing initiatives that had already been active in the area had to change and reconstruct their approach, since they were now criminalized and prosecuted. At the same time, Europe exported its borders to first line outer countries that were now to manage them in exchange for payment, mainly Turkey (in 2016), Libya, Morocco. As the pushing back of migrants became more and more open, separate marketable accords were established, certainly on the basis of post-colonial pressure, with several countries, now more and more remote, who would keep them within their borders. Turkey was the first, and received six billions euros for the service of keeping migrants and refugees away from Europe, of which a last instalment although promised still needs to be paid after delivery, while it seems to many on the European side that Turkey broke the deal (this has been its constant threat to Europe).<sup>193</sup>

### **An open sea or a death trap?**

Four years later however, after thirty four Turkish soldiers were killed *on Syrian territory* by the Syrian-Russian coalition (Turkish incursions there are frequent as they try to neutralize the Kurds and keep them away from their borders where the Syrian army is pushing them), president Erdogan said Turkey would open its borders to Europe and wouldn't keep the refugees any more from crossing to Europe. They not only opened the border on the Turkish side, they also transported Iraqi, Afghan and Pakistani migrants directly to the Greek border fence on the Balkan route. The effect was immediate on February 28, 2020 as Greece instantly closed its borders. Some boats did dock in Lesbos, where the population tried to prevent the refugees from alighting. These "frontier-people" are stuck at the borders in desperate conditions without any humanitarian aid allowed by any of the parties. Turkey already had more than 3.700.000 Syrian refugees, while almost another million is being pushed towards Turkey at the moment these lines are being written and another two million Syrians from Idlib are now likely to be squeezed there additionally. Besides Afghans (whom the EU by now considers expulsable and their country as a "no risk" area), Turks also want to get rid of Kurds first of all, and keep their border towards Syria closed.

The deal Turkey-EU is officially described in Europe as a "win-win" situation, and it is clear that Turkey is highly interested too. But several NGOs and refugee-helping associations see it

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<sup>193</sup> Jean Quattremer, "Migrants: Erdogan ouvre sa frontière, la Grèce la ferme", in *Libération*, Feb. 29, 2020, pp. 4-5.

as shameless and impracticable. EU institutions present it not only as advantageous to both sides, but also as a generous gesture of goodwill on the European side towards Turkey,<sup>194</sup> after tense relations for a long time. European Stability Initiative (ESI)<sup>195</sup> points out at the communicating vessels of Turkey and Greece, and pleads for a corresponding European help to Greece, who has to face increasing numbers of refugees (though not as in 2015-2016). As coronavirus covid-19 broke out in early 2020 and refugees reached already overcrowded camps in the islands where demands for refugee status have not been examined, new thousands arrived also on the land border between the two countries. It could be expected. Greece has the highest number of migrants in Europe, while Turkey has the biggest number of migrants than any country on its territory. Coronavirus now blocked passages and people have been stuck on no man's land, while Europe is paralyzed and can't swiftly unblock them and distribute asylum seekers over member countries. Only Portugal regularized its clandestine foreign workers at the beginning of April 2020 in view of the epidemic.

The April 3, 2020 ESI newsletter says: "At its external border in Greece the European Union faces the certainty of massive but avoidable human suffering, spiraling into an uncontrollable disaster. Member states that care to prevent it must act. Here is how.

"The EU has an interest to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe when the corona virus hits the more than 40,000 refugees and migrants crammed together on Greek islands under dismal conditions, without sufficient medical care or even the option to wash their hands regularly. The EU and Turkey also have a common interest to support more than 3.5 million refugees now in Turkey; to control mobility in the face of the biggest public health crisis in a century; and to provide humanitarian assistance to more than 2 million displaced near the Turkish border in Syria.

"Governments across Europe are closing borders and restricting movement: cities, regions, countries are under lock-down. UNHCR and IOM<sup>196</sup> have *suspended all humanitarian*

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<sup>194</sup> European Stability Initiative (ESI), « Aegean Plan 2.0 – preventing a disaster in the times of Corona », April 3, 2020, <https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/ESI%20-%20Aegean%20Plan%202.0%20preventing%20a%20disaster%20in%20the%20times%20of%20Corona%20-%202020%20March%202020.pdf>

<sup>195</sup> European Stability Initiative (ESI), a think tank working on south-east Europe in view of Europe's enlargement and on resolving conflicts, created in 1999 in Sarajevo. It is currently lead by Gerlad Knaus.

<sup>196</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Migration Organization (IOM).



*resettlement*. Public institutions, including asylum services, are closing, from the Netherlands to Greece. There is a strong public health interest to stop movement and ensure social distance to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

“This has consequences for refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants. One result of recent border closures and measures to restrict mobility is that most of them will not be able to leave the countries where they are now. This creates an even more urgent need to help people where they are, and to support the communities hosting them. And it requires concrete steps:

“A renewed EU-Turkey statement 2.0, including a renewed EU commitment to support refugees and communities in Turkey for the next years with substantial financial assistance. At the same time Turkey should reaffirm its commitment to implement the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016.

“A joint plan for the EU and Turkey to provide immediate humanitarian support to displaced people in Idlib in the North-West of Syria.

“A transfer of at least 35,000 asylum seekers from the Greek islands to the Greek mainland as a matter of urgency. The humanitarian situation on the islands is catastrophic and a huge threat to the health of Greeks and asylum seekers on Lesbos and the other islands.

“To achieve such a transfer will require building new accommodation on the mainland for 20,000 people, i.e. at least ten camps for 2,000 people each”.<sup>197</sup> And further: “Tens of thousands of people on small islands, 20.000 alone on Lesbos, with completely inadequate health infrastructure, under abysmal conditions, without support. Add to this panic among migrants and refugees, fear among islanders, lack of security, all against the background of a deadly pandemic: this is a recipe for a humanitarian disaster. The atmosphere on the islands is already explosive.”<sup>198</sup> About the deal between EU and Turkey, the ESI says: “Strikingly this EU-Turkey Statement turned into the most effective expression of moral realism in EU migration management in the past four years. It had a dramatic impact. It sharply reduced irregular migration across its south-eastern external borders *without undermining the individual*

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<sup>197</sup> ESI, *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> ESI, *ibid.*

*right to asylum*. It sharply reduced numbers of deaths in the Aegean. It helped millions of refugees in Turkey gain access to education and health care. At the same time, it was never properly implemented on the Greek islands, not because this was not possible – what needed to be done was obvious already before it was adopted in March 2016 [...]. »

According to ESI, which has nothing to say about deaths in the Mediterranean (mainly, now, in central Mediterranean and not in the Aegean Sea) on this occasion, it seems to support “border management” in preventing “irregular migrants” from entering Europe during coronavirus times.<sup>199</sup> They too, like European authorities, distinguish between migrants (seen as irregular), and recognised refugees, a distinction we don’t make. But they are somewhat softer on the rejection of immigrants than European officials.

Turkey, Libya, Morocco, and then also weaker countries such as Niger, Mali, Gambia or Mauritania were pressed for bilateral deals with former colonisers obliging them to contain migrants within their borders in exchange for money. Croatia, at its admission to the EU, and up to 2020 got 54 million euros to prevent the migrants from entering Europe and is pushing them to Bosnia.<sup>200</sup> So is Serbia. Australia, to mention an extra-EU arrangement, signed a resettlement agreement with Cambodia, to which it sends its asylum seekers parked in Nauru or on Manus Island in the Pacific. There are graded and very complex border policies applied and proposed to countries in quasi-concentric circles. Such a technique recalls the *Kautiliya-Arthashastra* of ancient India, which has it that “The third and the fifth states from a madhyama [i.e. “central” or “neutral”, R.I.] king are states friendly to him; while the second, the fourth, and the sixth are unfriendly. If the madhyama king shows favour to both of these states, the conqueror should be friendly with him; if he does not favour them, the conqueror should be friendly with those states.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> ESI, *ibid*.

<sup>200</sup> Pablo Tosco, “El refugio de los sueños rotos”, in *El País*, 29 Feb., 2020, p.5. Lorenzo Tondo, “Crosses on our heads to 'cure' Covid-19: refugees report abuse by Croatian police », *The Guardian*, May 28, 202, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/28/they-made-crosses-on-our-heads-refugees-report-abuse-by-croatian-police>

<sup>201</sup> An ancient Indian political theory of geopolitical circles could apply here (by Chanakya or Kautilya in the treaty *Kautiliya-Arthashastra*, between 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE): its principle is that the enemy of our enemy is our friend, in alternating concentric circles. Following quote from “CHAPTER XVIII. THE CONDUCT OF A MADHYAMA KING, A NEUTRAL KING, AND OF A CIRCLE OF STATES”, in *Arthashastra* by Kautilya, translated by R. Shamasastry (first edition Mysore 1909). Paul Halsall, *Indian History Sourcebook: Kautilya: from the Arthashastra c. 250 BC*, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Arthashastra/Book\\_VII](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Arthashastra/Book_VII).

Similarly, the peripheral countries within the Union, especially if they are not (yet) in Schengen, perform the role of policemen for the core countries. The first outside frontline countries, especially in southern but also in eastern Europe, have been hard-pressed to accept Europe's outsourced borders. The ones and the others are meant to prevent migrants from approaching the core, and are treated with colonial arrogance. Elspeth Guild says: "The Mediterranean is a terrible example of the consequences of pursuit of policies of extra-territorialisation of border controls to achieve ephemeral if not illusory migration management objectives."<sup>202</sup>

### **Moving on in an on-going movement: migrations**

Although such outlawing of salvaging humans had been proclaimed by a single country, Italy, it has had and still has a disastrous domino-effect on the whole region and on Europe: separate bilateral agreements are established to outsource borders and the detention of migrants to countries as unsafe as Libya (an on-going civil and proxy war provoked by France's and NATO military intervention in 2011) or Turkey (involved in the Syrian war), declaring them "safe" for migrants; other countries closing their ports (Malta explicitly following Italy; most other states just persistently not cooperating in the repatriation of sea-saved newcomers); closing supposedly "open" Schengen borders, starting with France which was the first to shut its southern border towards Italy to migrants upon covid-19, after which other governments followed suit, especially countries on the Balkans route; emptying the Mediterranean of NGO saving boats so that there are no witnesses to the terrible shipwrecks and daily deaths; erecting walls and fences at the borders (Ceuta and Melilla in Spain towards Morocco; Hungary to Serbia; Slovenia to Croatia; Macedonia to Greece etc.); abandoning humanitarian politics and the withdrawal of "international protection"; numerous formal and informal camps all over Europe, all without exception in derelict conditions, amounting to *detention camps* for foreign would-be immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers without any juridical justification; pushing-back (*refoulement*) of immigrants regardless of their human rights and contrary to international law, to the Law of the sea or any moral decency; blocking all attempts of rescuing at sea<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> E. Guild, "Interrogating Europe's Borders", <https://mobile.repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/208099/208099.pdf?sequence=1> *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>203</sup> The journalist Rouguyata Sall gives an overview of cases of SAR boats blocked previous to the incident with *Sea-Watch-3* under captain C. Rackete, in an article in *Médiapart* on July 3, 2019, "Carola Rackete, symbole du harcèlement des sauveteurs humanitaires", <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/030719/carola-rackete-symbole-du-harcement-des-sauveteurs-humanitaires>, see Annex.

prohibiting salvaging-ships by seizing them or by barring their mooring and refueling through closing ports; imprisoning international travelers from the global south at airports in invisible detention places; the general increase of violence to immigrants and the undocumented and sometimes to passport-holder foreigners, the increase of racism-and-sexism motivated crimes; the general deterioration of democracy, humanist or civic behavior in Europe; non-saving people in danger of death etc., the growing lack of solidarity between European states (let alone to the migrants themselves) with regard to migration issues; the discouragement of welcoming programmes by local communities; citizenship status would *retroactively be retrieved* from those who are suspected or judged non worthy of it, although the Constitutional court opposes this point and some people point out to the unconstitutionality of the law itself; the right to work and to social help to migrants would be stopped, producing a great amount of undocumented foreigners without any rights; the “extinction of the right to asylum”, or its restriction etc., all of this happening already, sporadically or systematically.

## Southern Europe

I am insisting on the Italian examples because Italy with the south of Europe more than any other country is emblematic of what is going on in Europe at this time.<sup>204</sup> Saving people, which should be the duty of states and their border guards, has practically been abandoned by the latter and by the EU. Dumping them has become common and has infested public opinion and societies too (with the exception of dedicated mostly women’s associations that are now being criminalized). States,<sup>205</sup> after having discarded social concerns and issues, after having given up on the welfare state (this is particularly visible since 1989, but has been an older and longer process), have failed on the issue of migrations, solidarity, hospitality and care and have deserted looking for solutions. Some, as Italy, Hungary, but also France, criminalize the rescuing of people who are bound to die at sea or in the mountains while looking for passageway, or at the borders. A French collective called *Délinquants solidaires* worked out a

<sup>204</sup> Martina Flamini, Nazzarena Zorzoella, “Asilo e protezione internazionale”. See “Lo status di rifugiato – La protezione sussidiaria – Questioni processuali – Visti umanitari – La protezione umanitaria nel procedimento di protezione internazionale – Il diritto intertemporale *post* decreto legge N°113/2018 – Questioni procedurali (la formalizzazione della domanda di protezione internazionale – il rinnovo del permesso di soggiorno umanitario) – I provvedimenti ex regolamento N°604/2013 Dublino III – Le misure di accoglienza – Diritti civili dei richiedenti asilo: l’iscrizione anagrafica.” In “Diritto, immigrazione e Cittadinanza”, fascicolo 2, anno 2019, <https://www.dirittoimmigrazionecittadinanza.it/rassegne/rassegna-di-giurisprudenza-italiana>

<sup>205</sup> I mainly have in view *European states*, but sadly the posture is being assumed all over the world by states, who respond only to nationalist egoism and short term interests of the politicians looking for an electorate.

Guidebook on the “crime of solidarity”, *Délit de solidarité, le guide*.<sup>206</sup>

Since the departure of the Italian hard-liner from government, the situation has somewhat eased, rescue ships are now allowed again to dock in Italian ports, but the negotiations as to which country will take how many immigrants still take days and weeks, and are completely opaque.

### More danger at sea: Italy

There had once been a European Mediterranean rescue programme called Mare Nostrum<sup>207</sup> (2013-2014), a military *and* humanitarian operation established in 2014, after the first Lampedusa tragedy, by the Italian Marina Militare (when 366 people out of 500 drowned at sea on October 3, 2013 in this one shipwreck alone, followed on April 12, 2015 by 400 drowning off Reggio Calabria, where only 150 survived, and then on April 19<sup>th</sup>, by about 800 dead, to mention only bigger wreckages in a continuous flow).<sup>208</sup> The operation was aimed at rescuing shipwrecked “illegal” people,<sup>209</sup> and sticking by the Right of the sea. After Mare Nostrum was discontinued in 2014 and *state-organized rescue operations were stopped*, private initiatives and NGOs stepped in. The NGO SOS Méditerranée, registered in Marseille and working with Médecins sans frontières (MSF), was established as a European humanitarian maritime project rescuing boatpeople from 2015 on. All these sudden increase and interventions of NGOs and private civil society initiatives imply the expiry of any states’ or international action (not counting the more and more powerless UN) caring about migrants. SOS Méditerranée acted through the RAS boat *Aquarius* (that saved over 29.000 lives), which

<sup>206</sup> *Délit de solidarité, le guide*: <http://www.delinquantssolidaires.org/item/delit-de-solidarite-le-guide>. A link to the Délinquants solidaires, a group of organizations and individuals engaged in helping migrants: <http://www.delinquantssolidaires.org>

<sup>207</sup> Incidentally, Mussolini’s fascist Italy once promoted the concept of Mare nostrum to represent the Italian colonial and imperial project, using an ancient Roman concept of a shared sea (shared, but “ours”). Isn’t it a sign of the times that the same term fascist should be back and used by the whole of Europe ignorant of its history? Shouldn’t “our” sea be “everyone’s”?

<sup>208</sup> An article in *Le Monde* on April 20, 2015, Camille Bordenet & Madjid Zerrouky, “Méditerranée : chiffres et cartes pour comprendre la tragédie” relates about 22000 dead at sea since 2000, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/20/en-2015-un-migrant-meurt-toutes-les-deux-heures-en-moyenne-en-mediterranee\\_4619379\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/20/en-2015-un-migrant-meurt-toutes-les-deux-heures-en-moyenne-en-mediterranee_4619379_4355770.html) ; see also Migreurop, Observatoire des frontières, “Méditerranée : les naufrages meurtriers de migrants ne sont plus une fatalité!”, April 12, 2015, <http://www.migreurop.org/article2592.html?lang=fr>

<sup>209</sup> Why the quotes to “illegal”: because to me, no one is illegal (as goes the famous migrants’ and feminist slogan). But states distinguish between “migrants” who are not supposed to get access to Europe and “refugees” who, once and if they get the status, are eligible for integration. I don’t make this distinction. I often call them all “migrants”.

was soon seized and immobilized; in the summer of 2019, the SOS Méditerranée ship *Ocean Viking* carried out rescue operations, taking distressed boatpeople on board but again, getting no authorization to debark them in Europe. The then Italian fascist interior minister Salvini called them “a taxi service for migrants”. On the states’ side, Mare Nostrum was replaced in 2014 by Frontex and its operation “Triton”, a European programme administratively based in faraway Poland and aimed not at saving lives, but at managing borders, i.e. “protecting” European (especially southern) borders and re-directing refugees back to their countries or at least back to their first country of entrance into Europe. Frontex “manages borders” on land and at sea, Mediterranean or Baltic. A previous states’ programme called Sophia, a compromise between the policies of saving lives but focusing on pushing back (*refoulement*), has itself been gradually weakened and discontinued. As Germany was the first to step back from that operation, Sophia now (2019) has no boats any more but only planes,<sup>210</sup> while the coordination centre Mediterranean Rescue and Coordination Centre (MRCC),<sup>211</sup> also a point of information for rescuers at sea and journalists in Italy, has stopped informing the latter. During Frontex’s<sup>212</sup> time of activity, since states discontinued rescuing at sea, NGOs and private individuals stepped in to save people drowning in frail embarkations overloaded by human smugglers and traffickers,<sup>213</sup> while so many died at sea. Nowadays (2019) however, in the wake of Frontex and while states don’t operate any salvaging at all, NGOs and private recovery of people are criminalized by states, and ports are closed to RAS ships. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the situation is tragically hopeless for the migrants. It is difficult to evaluate the number of losses since there are no NGOs allowed in the area. Since 2017, there are units of European coastguard with fast boats “defending borders” as if from aggression, but not with the duty of saving lives.

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<sup>210</sup> Marie Verdier, « En ce moment il n’y a personne pour voir ce qui se passe au large de la Libye », an Interview with the president of SOS Méditerranée François Thomas in *La Croix*, 16-8-2019, <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Europe/En-moment-personne-voir-passe-large-Libye-2019-08-16-1201041394>

<sup>211</sup> Jérôme Gautheret, Jean-Pierre Strootbants & Julia Pascual, “Loins des regards, la Méditerranée est devenue un trou noir”, in *Le Monde*, July 10, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>212</sup> Frontex, which stands for “Frontières extérieures”, is L’Agence européenne pour la gestion de la coopération opérationnelle aux frontières extérieures des États membres de l’Union européenne (2004-2016), [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/frontex\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/frontex_en)) but it also stands for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. It is a European Union agency (from October 2016 on, with its seat in Poland, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/frontex\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/frontex_en)); revealing about the latter, “Frontex sert de passerelle aux industriels pour proposer aux différents gardes frontières les dernières innovations technologiques pouvant répondre à leurs besoins, et faciliter l’achèvement des objectifs industriels de recherche et développement”, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agence\\_europ%C3%A9enne\\_pour\\_la\\_gestion\\_de\\_la\\_coop%C3%A9ration\\_op%C3%A9rationnelle\\_aux\\_fronti%C3%A8res\\_ext%C3%A9rieures](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agence_europ%C3%A9enne_pour_la_gestion_de_la_coop%C3%A9ration_op%C3%A9rationnelle_aux_fronti%C3%A8res_ext%C3%A9rieures) .

<sup>213</sup> Who raise anything from 1000 euros on per person, spoiling them and their families of all their possessions.

Migrations continue and will not stop not only as the result of colonial past history, but also due to the on-going ferocious and endless extractivism characteristic of a greedy capitalism.

Sovereignists (read: extreme-right populists or social-nativists) in Italy abhor RAS boats and NGOs.<sup>214</sup> Like everywhere, part of the population is in favour of rescue missions, and donations by individuals have been very generous on the occasion of the incident with *Sea-Watch-3* (432.000 € in one week from Italians only, 1.3 million in the rest of Europe, mainly Germany) and with captain Carola Rackete, whose disproportionate fine for saving lives is to be 1,5 million €. The Sea-Watch NGO had also rented a plane *Moonbird* (for 262.000 € in 2018) flying over zones prone to shipwrecks and disasters. The latter informs the ships of wreckages and helps them coordinate operations. The French association of two voluntary pilots, *Pilotes volontaires*, also signal embarkations in difficulty at sea to the NGOs that run boats; they have two *Colibri* planes that have been joined by *Moonbird*. They fly over 1500 km every day. The German NGO Sea-Watch received 1,8 million € as donations in 2018. Another German rescuing NGO is Sea-Eye with the boat *Alan Kurdi* that saved so far 14.459 migrants according to the same source. The new (2018) Italian platform *Mediterranea Saving Humans*<sup>215</sup> raised 1.012.757,50 € in the same period in the whole of Europe, in association with the Banca Etica (“Ethical Bank”), of which 438.000 in Italy. It shares its Internet application for raising funds with Open Arms, and innovates with the Alarm Phone, a hotline and Contact centre sharing information about boats having difficulties.

*Mediterranea Saving Humans* (MSH), a platform of Italian associations and initiatives of the civil society coordinating refuge-cities among other activities claiming moral disobedience and civic obedience, bought the ship *Mare Jonio*, rented the yacht *Alex* as an accompanying

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<sup>214</sup> The information on NGOs, projects and boats operating search and rescue in the Mediterranean in the following paragraphs comes partly but not exclusively from Alessandro Ziniti, “Missione ONG” in *La Repubblica*, July 8, 2019, Anno 26, N°26, p.1, 2-3.

<sup>215</sup> Information about numbers regarding *Mediterranea Saving Humans* (MSH) received from the crowdfunding return of information after the closure of the campaign. MSH was founded by activists Luca Casarini (from aboard the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior*), and Beppe Caccia of Infomigrants on 13-3-2019, Part 1, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/15634/mediterranea-getting-ready-to-save-humans-part-1> and many others <https://www.produzionidalbasso.com/project/mediterranea-saving-humans/>. MSH has also received support from many cities that have sided against the anti-migration policies of the Italian government: Palermo, Naples, and Milan as well as Barcelona and Amsterdam. There is also the Ya Basta! organisation of Bologna and the national branch of ARCI, as well as the “counterinformation” website iDiavoli, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/15634/mediterranea-getting-ready-to-save-humans-part-1>



vehicle<sup>216</sup> and is also busy on shore with many solidarity programmes with associations. Mediterranea writes about the Mediterranean Sea - “A sea that has been turned into a graveyard and a desert by European governments. (...) Once again, we are going where there is an absolute necessity for us to be. In the Mediterranean, where the future of us all is at stake, because what drowns in that sea is our humanity, the best part of our laws, and the hope to live in a more just and free world. Once again, we are at sea to rescue ourselves.”<sup>217</sup>

MSF launched a Mediterranea boat with the task of monitoring, testifying and reporting on the dire conditions of the migrants at sea. The Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms (with the ship *Open Arms*) received 3,5 million € through donations by individuals. There is now solidarity among the NGOs working at sea and their boats. Their work can be claimed to be coordinated and a new, extended type of *care*. This is care work at a higher, social and political level, only partly having to do with gender relations where it stems from historically. On land, the old NGO Save the Children operating in 48 countries raised only in Italy - 4,9 million €. The famous NGO Médecins sans frontières (MSF), operating in 72 countries, has raised in 2018 - 61,4 million €. The NGO called MOAS (Migrants Offshore Aid Station) based in Malta<sup>218</sup> and searching and rescuing at sea, after having worked in the Mediterranean since the very beginning of the crisis in 2015 (registered in 2013 and operating since 2014, when the boat *MV Phoenix* was bought), have moved on since 2017 to help the Rohingyas between Myanmar and Bangladesh and in the whole region. In 2014, MOAS saved about 3000 people drowning at sea, and in 2015 about 12.000, having moved from the central Mediterranean to the east, to the Aegean Sea. They pursue humanitarian aid and try to negotiate humanitarian corridors and evacuate the most vulnerable victims to Europe. States and also the European Union as a whole have given up on saving or welcoming migrants. But it is sensed that Italy, Spain and Germany,

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<sup>216</sup> After rescuing, the *Mare Jonio* has been put under probative (investigative) seizure from September 2019 and, covid-19 intervening, until June 2020, so *Alex* (a support boat) had to step in to save boatpeople. But then *Alex* was confiscated too, under administrative seizure, all of it amounting to a 65.000 € fine. *Mare Jonio* is now back in central Mediterranean off the Libyan coast saving boatpeople, but with a reduced crew for want of means. The 2020 pandemic situation has made the migrants' condition still more perilous.

<sup>217</sup> See <https://mediterraneaescue.org/en/>. Mediterranea Saving Humans is probably the only NGO claiming *disobedience of unjust laws, but civic obedience*, and claiming to sail into Libyan territorial waters to save lives, facing Libyan “coastguards”. Alessandra Sciurba, Researcher, activist and speaker for Mediterranea SH, <https://www.ilsussidiario.net/news/alessandra-sciurba-chi-e-la-portavoce-di-mediterranea-sfida-salvini-sui-migranti/1902972/> & <http://www.affaritaliani.it/cronache/alessandra-sciurba-attivista-ong-dai-centri-sociali-alla-filosofia-594637.html>

<sup>218</sup> MOAS was founded by the Italian philanthropist Regina Catrambone, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regina\\_Catrambone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regina_Catrambone)



the three countries whose populations are most involved with a strong desire to rescue people on the borders, have been establishing one after the other, after the big and senior NGOs like MSF and Save the Children, operations and smaller NGOs active at sea and on the borders, trying to keep these open for humans.

Due to the frontal offensive of states, especially Italy, waging a war against the NGOs, against SAR boats and humanitarian organizations, solidarity has been growing among parts of the European population. The aggressive offensive of Italy especially since 2018, has amounted to dismantling and closing smaller NGOs and confiscating SAR boats, such as the *Iuventa* (seized in Trapani, Italy, and still awaiting the result of the investigation) and the ship *Lifeline*, arrested and seized in Malta, whose captain has been detained, sued and finally condemned. The motif in such cases is usually “association with traffickers and smuggling in illegals”. Malta and Italy have been the staunchest countries with regard to closing ports in order to avoid immigration. It is true that there has been no solidarity towards their southern neighbors on this front from other European countries, especially none with Italy or Greece, who are frontline countries of arrivals, or with Spain. Local populations have been diversely welcoming or hostile, but have also suffered the pressure of too many refugees, especially in the Greek islands such as Lesbos, where (in early 2020) the population is resisting the state’s enlarging of official camps (an official camp with 2-3000 places received some 20.000 people, while a wild encampment without facilities all around it has that many, and none of these are allowed to travel to the mainland). Lack of solidarity is also what favored the arrival of a partly extreme-right coalition government in Italy and also in Greece. It also reinforced extreme right forces and parties in other European countries from south to north and west to east.

Most European states including France did not and still do not respond to the requests of the countries at the southern edge of Europe, where most immigrants arrive for geographically understandable reasons, to distribute the immigrants over the subcontinent. Italy, Greece and Spain have had the biggest burden of arrivals. One country exceptional in this respect has so far been Portugal, which doesn’t reject its obligation and which consents to its quota, but most don’t. Germany has demonstrated most solidarity and welcomed the most part of migrants especially during the first year, but because of that it has also developed in part of its population a strong aversion to immigration that, in political terms, fosters the dangerous extreme right and populism. On the issue of immigration, as we saw, chancellor Merkel lost her immense

popularity. Today, it is the Green left-oriented party that supports immigration in Germany, and so do activists and NGOs that have returned to the sea in spite of the states' propensity to pushing-back (*refoulement*). Some echelons of the Catholic Church and the present Pope personally also support migrants and NGOs. The once important NGO fleet of searching and rescuing boats has been reduced, mainly through Italian politics and the silence of other countries, to just a few boats left, as we have seen. The Open Society Foundations, financed by George Soros and not hostile to immigration, declared through its president Patrick Gaspard: "To criminalize is typical of authoritarian regimes."<sup>219</sup> Other civil society initiatives and activist groups exist all over Europe, such as Women in Black Belgrade (covering the territory of once Yugoslavia) and Women in Black elsewhere, many other feminist organizations, as well as Seebrücke, Aita Mari, Jugend Rettet, Borderline Europe, Inura, Open Arms, Welcome to Europe and others.

An important association and source of research on European migrations and borders, on information and coordination as well as on cartography is Migreurop, Observatoire des frontières, a European and African network of scholars and activists fighting against the spreading of camps and the arbitrary internment of foreigners as part of the on-going process of externalization of European borders, whose site appears in French and Italian.<sup>220</sup> Not the least, the research and solidarity activity by the programme Repenser l'Exil dans la Citoyenneté Contemporaine<sup>221</sup> and many others, through international workshops and conferences, networking, publications and the online journal *(Re)penser l'exil*,<sup>222</sup> and its founder, philosopher Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, should be mentioned for their extraordinary achievements both scholarly and activist in support of migrants, as well as for the significance and motivation Marie-Claire's work has had for me.

<sup>219</sup> Tonia Mastrobuoni, "Intervista a Patrick Gaspard. La fondazione di Soros 'Criminalizzarle è tipico dei regimi autoritari'", in *La Repubblica* July 8, 2019, p. 3. That whole issue of *La Repubblica* with several well-informed articles, was dedicated to the crisis generated by European/Italian authorities with respect to immigration in July 2019, who disregarded International law and the universal Law of the sea.

<sup>220</sup> Migreurop (with its seat in Paris), <http://www.migreurop.org/?lang=fr>; some texts do appear in English, Spanish or German too: <http://www.migreurop.org/article643.html?lang=en>; see the maps for an assessment of the number of camps detaining foreign travellers: <http://www.migreurop.org/article2747.html?lang=fr>.

<sup>221</sup> The programme Exil, Création Philosophique et Politique, Repenser l'Exil dans la Citoyenneté Contemporaine, [https://www.beobachtungsstelle.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf\\_divers/Veranstaltungen/resume\\_9jan.pdf](https://www.beobachtungsstelle.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf_divers/Veranstaltungen/resume_9jan.pdf), was located at the Collège international de philosophie, Paris, from 2010-2016 [www.exil-ciph.com](http://www.exil-ciph.com). It was preceded by the "Groupe de Genève «Violence d'Etat et droit d'asile en Europe»", founded by the same person, prof. Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp.

<sup>222</sup> *(Re)penser l'exil*, <http://exil-ciph.com/revue-en-ligne/>

On the southern Tunisian island of Djerba, in the absence of salvaging NGOs at sea due to Europe's closure, corpses are counted every day on the beaches, many of them of African travelers and in particular from Eritrea.<sup>223</sup> They come from capsized boats mainly off the near-by Libyan border. The Spanish rescue ship *Open Arms*, which was kept blocked (*arraisonné*) for seven months after a previous history of saving people, has again saved 124 individuals in two operations at the beginning of August 2019. But it had no permission from any European port to dock and bring them in, or even to get fuel, and it is one of the few rescue-ships left in the central Mediterranean after SAR ships have been purged. With one or two others, it is hoped that it will eventually oblige European governments to take a shared decision with regard to the necessity of disembarking, because the survivors cannot be kept at sea waiting in precarious conditions for weeks as has been the case lately, before only some of them are allowed to shore.<sup>224</sup>

Although the above-mentioned various contemporary movements that interest us may not have the means to resist, for one (let's take that example now), ecological and man-made disasters and the destruction of nature and of our habitat, both migrating populations and women are at the heart of such devastation and ecological interests. There will necessarily be a common and open front of all priorities being *prioritarian*. For a long time, women had been told that their problems (not seen as universal problems of humankind)<sup>225</sup> can wait and will have to be solved after more urgent matters defined by males, while the unspeakable difficulties faced by migrant populations have not even been taken into account. Within hegemonic thought and politics, migrants' issues are circumscribed and relegated to 2nd class and minority issues, which, objectively, they are not. A newest and contemporary version of feminism will necessarily be taking into account all these "migrants" and "minority" issues as urgent and, as crucial as women's issues, which are really humankind's issues and not those of one gender only. This is what Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser call "Feminism for the 99%".<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Lilia Blaise, "A Djerba, une marée de corps de migrants", in *Le Monde*, July 10, 2019, p. 2; Jérôme Gautheret, Jean-Pierre Strootbants & Julia Pascual, "Loin des regards, la Méditerranée est devenue un trou noir", *op. cit.*

<sup>224</sup> Maria Martín/Ana Marcos, "El Buque español 'Open Arms' abre un nuevo frente en la UE al rescatar a 124 migrantes. A la espera de un mecanismo de reubicación", *El País*, 3-8-2019, p. 17.

<sup>225</sup> But see with at least Federici, de Sousa Santos and Balibar how problematic universality and universalism are...

<sup>226</sup> Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto*, Verso, London 2019.

#### 4. The European post-1989 and post-cold war failure and closure

On the topic of populism, we shall evoke Ernesto Laclau (and Chantal Mouffe commenting on him), Nancy Fraser, Nebojša Popov, Dubravka Stojanović, Dimitar Vatsov and others. In countries prone to populism, which are also countries in crisis permeated with the failure of at least the welfare state (and sometimes of the state *tout court*), there are also *populist political movements* besides, occasionally, populist parties or the state itself applying populist politics. The yellow vests in France in 2018-2019 have been such a populist movement, the possible harbinger of both progressive and destructive politics. Incidentally, the yellow vests have not only rejected all forms of political representation, but they have also resisted producing a political leader, which is not unusual in contemporary populisms.<sup>227</sup> Populists demand protection from insecurity by the state, consider the existing protection insufficient, and the state, together with the elites (political or intellectual) as generally unreliable and corrupt. This demand goes against the grain of the evolution of capitalism as it is today though in the end it is not radical in the case of right-wing populisms. Such a demand presents populism as a counter-movement to the established order. It is however open to nationalisms and identitarian leanings.<sup>228</sup> The populist movements enhance the figure of the “people” that acquires quasi-mystic characteristics (*le peuple; les gens*).

Regarding populism’s appearance in countries with poor democratic experience, Nebojša Popov writes: “Populism is usually described as the expression of the ‘organic unity’ of the people [...]. [...] In countries without democracy, populism, in spite of claiming it, undermines the very beginning of creating elementary presuppositions for democracy.”<sup>229</sup> But whatever is said of populism can often be said of other political formations, especially of the extreme right, and not only. Populism may best be described as a particular style or even as a “method, rather than being understood as a lasting construction, as stability or as an essence; a style aiming at resemblance, a flux and becoming. Populism usually arises at a moment of crises and of attempt

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<sup>227</sup> Iveković, “Epistemological fractures: The decline of western paradigms. Beyond the current epistemic hegemony?” in *Journal of postcolonial writing*. Volume 55, 2019, *op. cit.*

<sup>228</sup> Arnaud Zacharie, *Mondialisation et national-populisme. La nouvelle grande transformation*, Bordeaux, Le Bord de l’eau 2020.

<sup>229</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave (Serbian populism. From a marginal phenomenon to a dominant one)”, in a supplement to the weekly *Vreme* N°135, 24-5-1993, p. 4.

by a new elite to take over in conditions of instability.<sup>230</sup> Dimitar Vatsov, seeing it as a set of mainly linguistic and discursive features, defines populism as follows: “In general, we understand populism in Wittgenstein’s sense: as a primitive political language game.”<sup>231</sup> Further, Vatsov attempts to disclose “the grammar” of this game and gives a list of its basic features,<sup>232</sup> while mainly calling populism “propaganda”, especially in the Bulgarian examples he gives.<sup>233</sup> But for one, populism or at least “right wing populism”<sup>234</sup> seems not to be clearly distinguishable from, whose definition is itself, again, rather imprecise, and its denomination often unfocused. Many serious an author has therefore argued against the usage of the term “populism”. As for myself, i prefer to cautiously use it in order not to dismiss some valuable research existing on it. The term is already largely in circulation and seems to describe political realities of our time over several continents. A good distinction between fascism and populism could seem to be that *fascism* (as a generic term including Nazism) *has mass murder as its project*, and that it is not an aberration of capitalism but its legitimate result. Populism doesn’t usually have that project, although it may embark on it. Sigalit Landau thinks that populisms go for de-humanizing discourses that kill, are ready to reject any checks and balances, and have been denouncing democracy as such since the 1980s in order to aim at immigration and while propagating hate speech against migrants.<sup>235</sup> For Darko Suvin, fascism is committed to *unceasing warfare* which is demanded by its economy. He gives this minimal definition of

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<sup>230</sup> Groupe d’études géopolitiques, *Le Style populiste*, Paris, Editions Amsterdam 2019.

<sup>231</sup> Dimitar Vatsov, “Logics of propaganda. *Part One*. Populism and Propaganda: Dangerous Liaisons and Family Resemblances”, in *Critique & Humanism*, Vol. 49, N°1/2018 (pp. 71-106), p. 72, [https://www.academia.edu/37793905/ENG\\_LOGICS\\_OF\\_PROPAGANDA\\_Part\\_One\\_and\\_Propaganda\\_Dangerous\\_Liaisons\\_and\\_Family\\_Resemblances](https://www.academia.edu/37793905/ENG_LOGICS_OF_PROPAGANDA_Part_One_and_Propaganda_Dangerous_Liaisons_and_Family_Resemblances) and “Logics of Propaganda. *Part Two*. The Conspiratorial Logic of Populist Propaganda” in *Critique & Humanism*, vol. 49, N°1/2018 (pp. 219-231), [https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG\\_LOGICS\\_OF\\_PROPAGANDA\\_Part\\_Two\\_The\\_Conspiratorial\\_Logic\\_of\\_Populist\\_Propaganda](https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG_LOGICS_OF_PROPAGANDA_Part_Two_The_Conspiratorial_Logic_of_Populist_Propaganda)

<sup>232</sup> Vatsov, *op. cit.*, *Part One*, p. 73, see the list further.

<sup>233</sup> For reasons he gives on page 75 of the same, Vatsov, *op. cit.*, *Part One*, p. 75-76, using the term “populist-propaganda front”.

<sup>234</sup> I am reluctantly attempting to use this term that is not rigorous, and find the distinction between left and right unclear, deceiving and prone to ideological usages, as sometimes the denominations of other political terms too have been, such as “fascism”. In the Yugoslav conflict, for example, everyone accused the opposite side of fascism, but no-one saw themselves as a fascist. In that context, fascists are always the others, and the term is often an allegation. So is also the term populism. Such terms are loaded because *political labels are normative*. “Fascism” is both a historic period and a political configuration, as well as, in some cases, a label and an allegation. So is “communism” etc.

<sup>235</sup> Sigalit Landau, “Migrants et démocratie, une même crainte du vide?” Intervention at the European Zadig Forum in Belgium, “Discourses that kill”, on December 1, 2018 in Brussels, <https://zadiginbelgium.wordpress.com/2018/09/16/discourses-that-kill-european-forum/>.

fascism in his paper “Explaining fascism today.”<sup>236</sup> The definition is good in distinguishing fascism from Stalinism (as equivalent totalitarianisms, the way Hannah Arendt<sup>237</sup> among others used to present them indistinctly),<sup>238</sup> but also in distinguishing fascism (as right-populism) from left-oriented populism or, say, from historic Peronism. The definition however would seem to leave out many cases of contemporary rightist populisms, and might abandon to conjecture the idea that, although today’s populisms may not always have the project of mass murder (we thus may want to distinguish fascism from populism on that basis), they may be sliding in its direction in the ultimate consequence. This tendency and the inspiration of some populisms in fascism, of course, while it cannot be denied,<sup>239</sup> cannot be measured either, and cannot be theorized or defined, hence the difficulty. But we may keep it in mind. Suvin pleads for an “operative understanding” of fascism. Elsewhere, he spots « medical pre-fascism».<sup>240</sup>

I would go for an “operative » (tentative and provisional) understanding of populism itself. Could we say that populism is a fascism not yet in power or not on purpose, involving an epistemic confusion? Or, when in power, a fascism not yet deploying its full intention? Clearly, fascism can’t stand semantic fuzziness and polysemic meanings. This may be sometimes the character of right-wing populism too. When exclusive meaning or single « truth » is not applicable, fascism is ready to enforce it, even in changing history and facts and reinterpreting culture. Indeed, fascism appears when contradictions become impossible to handle and action authoritarian is needed. For my purpose, much work on contemporary fascisms is material for the study of contemporary populisms too. I here propose a conditional description of “populism” with examples, without any pretension to be precise more than other authors. Much of the times, populism dovetails with *confusionism*, although the latter is also the larger range of its

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<sup>236</sup> Suvin, “To explain fascism today.” *Critique* 45.3 (2017): pp. 259-302, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2017.1339961> . On the relation of colonialism to historic fascism, as well as on the relation of misogyny and fascism, however, Suvin’s theses are today undefendable, though not purposely so. They are also excellent and necessary work in progress.

<sup>237</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich 1973.

<sup>238</sup> Where the problematic concept is “totalitarianism” and not “fascism”.

<sup>239</sup> See the programmes of extreme right parties in Europe, who wouldn’t necessarily publicize their fascist leaning, as they aspire to obtain public respectability.

<sup>240</sup> Suvin, “So we’re in kinda, medical pre-fascism, “for the rulers a very welcome excuse for the future: only police and pass-holders on the streets, no unruly demonstrators, approaching total control — in Chinese cities apparently reached, certainly on most Italian streets.” “Thoughts Within the Colonizing Siege: A Work in Progress” in *Political Minimal Magazine*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.politicalanimalmagazine.com/2020/04/09/thoughts-within-the-coronising-siege-a-work-in-progress/>

contextual comprehension. The field of connotations is frightfully large. I will call populism a wide array of political forms with more or less the following characteristics: populism takes homogenization and it often appears in countries with not (yet) quite stable and defined political institutions and civil society (such as Yugoslav countries), though it can also appear in countries with old and stable institutions that have been run-down and in which society is split into opposed camps, where institutions are being discredited (today's France, Italy and the UK). Populism intends to shorten the way to the political goal which, in the case of many - though not all - examples of populism carries the intention of some social betterment, a social politics. Peronism in Argentina, especially its first period,<sup>241</sup> is an example of that. Suvin is reluctant to classify Peronism as fascism, but clearly lacks the concept of populism in at least this case. Peronism was and still is social today, with powerful policies of education, public health and support for the needy. Suvin's difficulty in this and in dealing with various fascisms comes additionally from his ignoring any kind of intersectional approach. Without it, the way fascism treats women becomes incomprehensible and appears as a mere *addition* to its characterization instead of showing it as *constitutive* (together with class and race interjectionally). It additionally prevents him from understanding that the same is not constitutive only of fascism, but of all in-egalitarian social and political configurations.

In Argentina, both left and right, agreed on social policies and supported Perón. How do you abbreviate the way to the political goal? Curtailing the way to the goal (say, to obtain some welfare, especially for the lower strata of society) means that institutions may be bypassed by the leader because they are seen as cumbersome, bureaucratic, and because it is thought that they will make the way to the goal longer. When institutions are bypassed or even destroyed, as happens in populism, democracy is badly damaged: see Serbia.<sup>242</sup> Thus, and while populism, as an advanced syndrome of confusionism, asserts to be in favor of democracy, political representation (elections, parliament etc.) is seen as unreliable or even as counterproductive. The goal can be obtained *directly through the activity of "the people"* (giving the name to populism), through faith in a leader who will incarnate it and carry out the task. Dimitar Vatsov observes that populist homogenization can be done both "from below", as well as "from above",

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<sup>241</sup> Juan Perón (1895-1974) was president of Argentina for three terms, from 1946-1952 (when he governed with his wife Evita), from 1952-1955 and, after exile, again from 1973-1974.

<sup>242</sup> Latinka Perović, Interview in *Lupiga*, <https://lupiga.com/intervju/intervju-latinka-perovic-srbija-nastavlja-politiku-slobodana-milosevica>

by elites and for the sake of governmentality,<sup>243</sup> where it can be impersonated in a leader. Of course, it should be the “right” leader. I would actually think that the two logics are complementary and concomitant, and Vatsov does say that they run parallel. If the leader is not right, the experiment can badly fail and may end up, beyond a first revolutionary impulse in populism, as fascism. There is a risk involved. The construction not only of a fragmented and individualistic civil society but also of political parties (of populist parties) will therefore correspond to this need: let’s not waste time with inner party democracy or with the construction of too many command-transmitting functions.

Populists will disregard not only institutions, but also laws, and populist leaders will rather act through quick decrees (not necessitating the approval of elected representatives and parliament). This is why the populist leader Matteo Salvini, after a series of decrees criminally closing Italian ports to rescue ships and to Search and Rescue (SAR) NGOs having caused so many deaths at sea and prohibiting sea-faring activities that saved immigrants<sup>244</sup> during 2018-2019, subsequently acted on two levels: first, through transforming the port- and border-closing decrees into a law, which he managed in August 2019; and second, through attempts to tie-down the judiciary and strip it of its power and independence (something he hadn’t quite achieve, however). National laws, however, can’t deal with the *global* phenomenon of migration. As Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp also says, national laws that restrict immigration actually dismantle the universality of laws that would normally be applied to everyone, while now a selection is made on the basis national/non-national or subjects/non-subjects. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos says regarding human rights, but it could also apply to law, “We know that human rights are not universal in their application”,<sup>245</sup> quite regardless of the claim of universality.

And also, there is a direct link between migrations and war (and the responsibility of states, among others – European states), migrations and climate change, migration and epidemic, but most of all, the idea of “migration crisis” has to do with the space given to the other in western

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<sup>243</sup> Dimitar Vatsov, “Logics of Propaganda. *Part Two*. The Conspiratorial Logic of Populist Propaganda” *op. cit.* p. 211.

<sup>244</sup> Decrees, of which some were overturned by judges of a still independent judiciary.

<sup>245</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against epistemicide*, Boulder-London, Paradigm publisher 2014, Kindle edition p. 43, footnote 3.



modernity, according to Caloz-Tschopp.<sup>246</sup> It all entails progressive restrictions of rights, especially for others or foreigners.

### Populism populism

Furthermore, a strong populist system or movement sooner or later develops a personality cult of the leader who is supposed to directly embody the “people”, which is contrary to democracy, and proceeds to weakening institutions. Newer theories relying on the distinction between left and right populism<sup>247</sup> will imply that left populism – and a leftist leader - is good, while right populism – and a rightist leader - is bad. It is a very simplifying binary doctrine, a black and white dualistic construction that is appealing to some and has many supporters because it is so basic. Whatever be the situation, another distinction may clarify the issue. Elise Massicard says that right populists do not claim to represent the whole people, but only a part, its part by them selected, as is the case with Erdogan’s Turkey. There, the notion of people doesn’t include the Kurds or the immigrants of recent wars, or in India, where Modi’s concept of the people doesn’t include the muslims. The “people” can be defined ethnically or religiously, and those who are not encompassed in the category of “people” are *others*. In Europe itself, “others” are nowadays seen as muslims, but also as migrants, often thought to be the same.<sup>248</sup> The distinction between a marginal and a dominant populism, as distinguished by Nebojša Popov, may be methodologically and epistemologically quite convincing.<sup>249</sup> In populism, the leader homogenizes “the people” and is an essential unifying figure. “The people”, homogenized, and having practically achieved organic unity, are supposed to act directly through the leader, or the leader acts for them, on their behalf. This is why populist leaders lean towards authoritarianism and may have a propensity to dictatorship.

As a result, the characteristic of populist countries is that their societies are split. This has been

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<sup>246</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical: réaffirmer les droits à la mobilité et à l'hospitalité”, *op. cit.*

<sup>247</sup> Resulting from the fact that populism is often hesitant between “left” and “right”. On this, see Umberto Eco (further down) and Vatsov’s third point in the enumeration of features of populism, Vatsov, *op. cit. Part One*, p. 73. See also Chantal Mouffe, on the basis of Ernesto Laclau’s and her own theoretical work, further.

<sup>248</sup> Elise Massicard in the debate between Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan & Elise Massicard, at Science-po, Paris on Oct. 22, 2019, “Populismes et démocratie”, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/evenements/?event=populismes-et-democratie>; Alain Dieckhoff, Christophe Jaffrelot, Elise Massicard (eds.), *Populismes au pouvoir*, Paris, Les Presses de Sciences Po 2019.

<sup>249</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave”, *op. cit.*

the case with many movements in post-democratic countries of late (where democracy has become merely formal), which claim collective leadership and the refusal to enter party and state politics on traditional terms. While they raised many hopes through nonconventional and nonviolent politics of some of them, it turned out that they mainly didn't radically put into question the socio-economic and political system as a whole. Some of them, when they morphed from movement to party, seemed about to introduce significant political changes (Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece). But Syriza was politically defeated, while Podemos's score, once in government, still has to be evaluated. Some features of populism appear in those movements too. Populism is sometimes apolitical (in the old sense of the word) with regard to the right-left divide, or politically "agnostic". Dubravka Stojanović says that there is quite some system in that anti-system attitude of the populists.

We need to distinguish populism in power and populism as a movement, a distinction that is significant if we consider the anti-system aspect of populisms. Being anti-system doesn't necessarily mean being in opposition. Often, populists claim *both* to be in power, and thus in the "system" and *at the same time* to be anti-system. If we consider populists in power, once they have conquered it, they would be majoritarian and may want to restrict minority rights, turn authoritarian, introduce de facto discrimination and take only one part of the "people" as "the people". They lightly discard or avoid intermediate political bodies because of the trust they invest in the leader directly. But there have been exceptions, and they may be induced to make unexpected local alliances.<sup>250</sup>

### **Much confusionism**

Pierre Rosanvallon, instead of equating automatically populism with fascism thinks that the populism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has to do with language and the vocabulary in use. This is what he shares with Vatsov and others: the populist counter-movement rejects the current political vocabulary which has, in many cases indeed, lost meaning and whose terms have been emptied of sense (it is presumed, by the abhorred "elites", whether intellectual or political or both). This new language is utterly simplified so as to be accessible to the virtuous and not much educated "people" that claims to be "ordinary". The movement visualizes its own dynamics applied to

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<sup>250</sup> Elise Massicard in: Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan & Elise Massicard, at Science-po, Paris on Oct. 22, 2019, "Populismes et démocratie", <https://www.sciencespo.fr/evenements/?event=populismes-et-democratie>

an imagined and much constructed political reality. It includes wanting to uproot or replace the elite. This is the result of the previous and accumulated frustrating changes in society, such as the dislocation of the class configuration, that of secularization, and the loss of ideological references within the new type of global capitalism. The latter carries with it a much higher educational level and is fed by the digital dimension which prefers individual innovation and contributions to the collective ones. It has given to populism its digital power and incredible speed of action through the social media on cellphones. 21<sup>st</sup> century populists have massively used the social media, Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp in their communication and have therefore been efficient. This is a truly new factor. Social media, and the fact that the movement is ahead of others including of the state in that field, are the basis of mobilization and of its surprise effect and astonishing efficiency. Basically, populism is nostalgic of a (supposed) once better world, a world of now exacerbated individualism and anxiety of loss. In most of the descriptions of populism, a convergence of left and right populists is recognized. Rosanvallon<sup>251</sup> as well as Piketty<sup>252</sup> seem to think that a difference between left and right populism (although Piketty doesn't use the word; he calls populism "social-nativism" instead) lies in their stand on immigration, left populists being softer on the issue. They are not that soft according to me, their "softness" consisting in not exacerbating the issue, while migration is not their main preoccupation. Populism, eager to get power, remains however at the mercy of possible (and, i would say – probable) authoritarian mutations, such as we see nowadays in an array of countries, as well as of association with nationalism and xenophobia.

Social nativism according to Piketty, in a welcome and much needed expression, covers both postsocialist and postcolonial populisms, and works in situations without a charismatic leader as well.<sup>253</sup> Namely, the postcolonial condition (starting with the formal and official end of historic colonialism) joins the postsocialist condition since 1989 on a *common terrain of "lost in politics"*, and influences the on-going construction of the European Union (EU). Some of

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<sup>251</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme. Histoire, théorie, critique*, Paris, Seuil 2020.

<sup>252</sup> Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme*, op. cit., and Thomas Piketty, *Capital et idéologie*, Paris, Seuil 2020. According to the authors, left populists are more open to immigration than right populists, and this is what makes the main difference between the two. But in the field, the actual "openness" of left populists is most timid to say the least, because of various political calculations. One can see that in France, the left populist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon is embarrassed by the question, because his party La France insoumise is trying to attract votes from the extreme right party Rassemblement national too, which is much stronger. Although left populists may not be ideologically aggressive on immigration, their nationalism encourages them to be quiet about the issue, while the extreme right is pugnaciously against.

<sup>253</sup> Piketty, *Capital et idéologie*, op. cit.

the central and east European countries joining the EU (or queuing-up to join) are in bad shape economically and mentally or ideologically (social nativism), and look more like impoverished third world formerly colonized countries, adding to general confusionism after the great divide. Extreme right parties undoubtedly pull most, but it is noteworthy that some east European cities (ex. Budapest) resist extreme nationalism of their governments and that some of those countries have recently elected non-nationalist governments (although immigration remains taboo). Europe's wretched *integration* at the time of incorporating east and central European countries into the EU, which encourages populisms in the sense of social nativism, is based on the unconditional acceptance by newcomers in the EU of the unquestionable scenario of neoliberalism without alternative. For countries that had had a developed social state during socialism, such integration was partly unexpected and to various extents disastrous. It has been devastating both to them as well as to the EU, which sailed into a sea of new confusionism.

Giving up the ideological binary of the cold war era produced a general frame of ideological *indefinability* and general *confusion* into which anything could fit. While the EU is simultaneously in the pangs of beginning its own decolonization (the decolonization of minds), diverse historicities meet that have not been synchronized. Disparate temporalities unpredictably intersect. Connection with the (post)colonial heritage and also with the gender, race and migrants questions never met before, especially for the east-Europeans, pop up unexpectedly. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Europe's integration with new elements from the eastern end, had mainly been thought as a means to avoid further immigration from the global south and to keep wars at bay as far as possible from Europe's borders. But that project now looks as a failure. The "former west" now extending towards Europe's east also co-produced eastern Europe's fiasco.<sup>254</sup> It extended Yugoslavia's fiasco (which happened in the 1990') into that of its successor states' as well as to European politics and mediation. While the political left looks right, and the political extreme right goes social<sup>255</sup> and the two consciously agree only on stakes that both sides can sacrifice (migrants, the poor, and women

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<sup>254</sup> The fiasco of the USSR and its satellites, both in their socialist projects and in their post-socialist "transition" endeavours, for many of them, whether within or without the EU. (While China seems to attempt another path for a softer landing into... capitalism?)

<sup>255</sup> Nicolas Truong, in "Marcel Gauchet: « La droite française retrouve le sillon gaulliste »", <http://www.lemonde.fr>, Nov. 29, 2016. Philippe Corcuff, "Après le Brexit et Trump: confusionnisme à gauche et extrême droitisement idéologique", in *Les Possibles*, N°12, Winter 2017, <https://france.attac.org/nos-publications/les-possibles/numero-12-hiver-2017/dossier-la-droitisement-des-politiques/article/apres-le-brexit-et-trump-confusionnisme-a-gauche-et-extreme-droitisement#Naomi-Klein-trumpisee>

– the backlashes are there to be seen), the fog of confusionism covers the European subcontinent. It fosters the uncertainty of a new political vocabulary, not yet established and an interregnum between past and new systems of value (not yet available) and polysemic and unclear terminologies in social sciences.

## Populism in Europe

It was a very delicate situation indeed in France: the “gilets jaunes”, the yellow vests, lower middle classes from the province and some suburbs, who have really suffered from the fall of their standard of living (that they expressed as a demand for more buying power, neglecting all other dimensions of the quality of life), were seen as irrational, without political experience or solidarity with the unemployed. Indeed, they didn’t care or ally with the jobless. They were not politically differentiated or identifiable, with elements of both left and right in their action. Some seemed violent. “Black blocs” (who were there to break shop windows at demonstrations) and extreme right groups joined them or were instrumentalizing them. The yellow vests in France have brought about a lot of incertitude in analyses and the situation has become “politiquement illisible”, *politically unreadable*, opaque and non-transparent. The president’s position (Macron’s) became shaky, but had he fallen, the situation would have produced a period of chaos with much more violence (on top of the already existing one), through riots and police brutality. After which, government rightly feared that the fascist party Rassemblement national, with more probability, or the tribune Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his leftist party La France insoumise would come to power. The latter have been weaker than the fascists, but politically equally nationalist, unclear on immigration at first or rather anti-immigration. However, they became more restrained on the topic later. In the highly improbable event of Jean-Luc Mélenchon coming to power, he probably wouldn’t know how to rule or what to do, and the fascist leader Le Pen could still get through. Luckily, such a scenario didn’t happen. The alternative script to all this chaos would have been that the “gilets jaunes” lead us finally to a necessary social, political and economic revolution: but this was unlikely to happen because there was no leadership, no political alternative project or politics, and nothing in view. The yellow vests continued rioting, without a clear programme or agenda. All in all, the French seemed spoiled (although there is undoubtedly quite some poverty and inequality) and were asking for more “pouvoir d’achat”. France is still a rich country, which they are overlooking. These people seemed to want to remain within absolute neoliberal capitalism the way it is, but wanting *within it* to get higher salaries or pensions and not to have

to pay taxes (two contradictory demands among others). They had no programme to overthrow the system. There is no particular displaying of solidarity with the undocumented and migrants. Some of the *gilets jaunes* have also been xenophobic. The situation was ugly and dangerous. Parisians themselves had not joined the riots in the city where the yellow vests would come every Saturday to make havoc and to destroy shop windows. People from the provinces were rioting around cities. With the yellow vests and the *casseurs* (black dressed and masked violent rioters called “black blocks”) coming in with them, the situation resembled more to the official politics of Modi in India. The danger of populism progressing was great, and with it the backsliding of democracy. The growth of neo-fascism was visible and not unexpected.

It all had and has to do with a general tendency in Europe at this time (the end of the welfare state, right-wing national-populisms, xenophobia, anti-immigration hysteria, Brexit, the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the division of Ukraine, European proxy wars elsewhere etc.), instant spreading of the news and cell-phone politics, with the trumpism kind of populism spreading over the world, and with the international political situation of capitalist globalization the way it has turned out to be. The idea of Brexit, which can be seen as part of the history of European nationalisms but also as part of the history of European partitions<sup>256</sup> itself, like other “news”, spread as social media rumors and as an epidemic. It became an obsession with part of the Britishers. Conspiracy theory had an important role in it and, comparable to the time of Yugoslavia’s partitioning, narratives linked the present situation (the UK within the European Union) to World War II narratives: the EU only plotted through other means to occupy the UK as the Nazis once did while, it was being suggested, the UK alone had liberated Europe. The EU was then misrepresented as the continuation of a Nazi conspiracy, and resisting it became a heroic national duty. Such a historic (mis)representation, used on Internet but also at times by the prime minister, enabled a quick national(ist) homogenization leading to and making stronger the idea of Brexit. Nazi bombardments on GB during WWII have been equated with Europe’s behavior and intention, so that the danger was seen as more and more pressing while the social media built the narrative and an imaginary of Euro-phobia (in continuation of WWII Germano-phobia) across the country. According to Fintan O’Toole, “Rhetorically, it was commonplace among British anti-Europeans that the EU was a continuation in another, more

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<sup>256</sup> Stefano Bianchini, *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe*, London-New York, Edward Elgar 2017; Bianchini, “Taking a closer look at state partitions”, in “Elgar Blog”, 2017, <https://elgar.blog/2017/10/27/taking-a-closer-look-at-state-partition/>. For partitions in general see S. Bianchini, S. Chaturvedi, R. Iveković, R. Samaddar, *Partitions. Reshaping States and Minds*, London, Routledge 2004.

insidious form, of previous attempts at domination from the continent.<sup>257</sup> Such is the power of fake-news nowadays and, what is most important, the power of the real difficulty of distinguishing between news<sup>258</sup> and fake-news.

All this is taking place within a brutal extractives neoliberal globalization,<sup>259</sup> where the state is being transmogrified and has changed its characteristics. Before we continue, let me quote here a brief appraisal of globalization with relation to the state:

“Beyond the economic dimension that constitutes its main spring, globalization is a process of ‘decompartmentalization’ of the world. Fruit of a belief in the virtues of liberation and the multiplication of exchanges, it comes from a doctrine whose horizon is the advent of a ‘world without borders’. Presented as favoring the growing fusion of societies and as tending, in doing so, to a form of perpetual peace, globalization appears as an ‘acritical notion’, a phenomenon as inevitable as it is beneficial. This process is not, however, axiologically neutral. Favoring an economic apprehension of man and the world, globalization competes with the traditional political concept of power and the regulation of social relations of which the state is the instrument. More generally, the promotion of a single space uniformly covering the globe contradicts the alveolar representation by virtue of which it had been thought until then, as well as with the unity according to which this division has been carried out. A situated legal order proceeding from the expression of a determined power expressing itself within a precisely delimited geographical sphere, the State appears, by its very structure, as an obstacle to the achievement of the program of globalization.

“This antagonism between the state and globalization gives rise to a game of mirrors; the

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<sup>257</sup> F. O’Toole, “The Paranoid Fantasy behind Brexit”, in *The Guardian*, Nov. 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/16/brexit-paranoid-fantasy-fintan-otoole> O’Toole (who also wrote a book on the subject) shows that such a “fantasy” that he attributes to the conservative was actually nurtured in English literature after the war, much before the UK entered the EU or left it.

<sup>258</sup> Let me just mention *en passant* that we have no applicable definition of “normal news” while we have political confusion on a grand scale on Internet and in the heads, which is part of the difficulty. Thinking means, in our time, living with uncertainties and a much more modest epistemological apparatus and attitude, even as we accumulate more and more knowledge. Some certitudes of western modernity have rightly disappeared, while the 21<sup>st</sup> century human tries to incorporate herself back within *living beings* and nature.

<sup>259</sup> There are two terms in French we have for globalisation: « mondialisation » is seen as positive globalisation valuing the coexistence of cultural differences, reciprocal solidarity, ecological concerns and care for the climate, while « globalisation » is negative, extractive hyper-capitalist globalisation. The first opens to political projects, the second is the nightmare we live in on this exhausted planet that the humans have ruined.

situation of the first provides information on the evolution of the second and vice versa. Supposing its discretion or even its renunciation, globalization offers the reflection of a state put to the test. The opening now considered essential of legal orders and the temptation of the State to project itself outside its borders in order to become an actor in globalization combine to put into perspective if not to alter most of the attributes that were classically attached to it. Sovereignty dissipates as the state competes with other authorities to which it has sometimes transferred jurisdiction. The relations between compartmentalized legal orders move in fluid relationships of systems and, more generally, of concepts apparently as stately as the border, as public order or even as the sovereign powers are seen unequally but entirely contested or disputed.

[...]

“Globalization then invites us to determine what constitutes this identity, the hard core - supposing that it exists - of this form of institutionalization of power. However, through the state, globalization induces and accompanies a vast reconfiguration of power. By causing, in the first place, the obliteration of the State (I), it participates in the dissipation of power. It weakens its perceptibility and, consequently, the faculty of domesticating it that the stately centrality authorizes. However, not causing the disappearance of power, globalization, inducing the migration of a certain number of the usual state’s attributes towards spheres and in favor of authorities that are themselves global, prompts the concealment of power by its dispersion (II). This movement nevertheless finds, thirdly, its limit in the persistence of a political and univocal conception of power of which the survival of the State is the testimony (III). It is precisely the ambiguity of a period characterized both by the loss and by the resistance of the traditional montages of politics and the right to grapple with a competing postmodern model [...].”<sup>260</sup>

President Emmanuel Macron had been silent at the beginning of the yellow vests’ insurrection and for a very long time. But whatever he was going to say, the protesters were now going to want his head. He has been inadequate for several reasons it is true, and very pompously

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<sup>260</sup> This convincing description of globalization and its relation to the state is quoted from the invitation to a conference on the state in globalization (*L'identité de l'Etat dans la globalisation*, <https://www.cpjp.eu>), organized by Pierre-Marie Raynal at the Centre de philosophie juridique et politique at the Université de Cergy-Pontoise (Paris) on February 6-7, 2020 (my translation, R.I.).



“Jupiterian”<sup>261</sup> at that, but a headless state, moreover one where there is no more respect for institutions, for representation or for authority is in great danger. Surprisingly, although the direction has been announced for a while, France seems to be taking the road opened thirty years ago with "ethnic cleansing" in Yugoslavia, with Europe's handling of the Yugoslav war: the road of “identitarian politics”, of nationalisms, of ethicizing and racializing the other, of rejecting whoever has been defined as different. This has led to general xenophobia, to islamophobia and antisemitism, as well as to an inflation of populist vocabulary in a fragmented society. Many other European countries are already in that boat. Only, one wouldn't know where to emigrate any more this time.

### Populisms in post-Yugoslav countries

In her book *Populism the Serbian Way*, historian Dubravka Stojanović<sup>262</sup> analyses the history of populism in Serbia,<sup>263</sup> and explains the local specific historic links of populism to nationalism as well as populism and of fascism. Indeed, there are different *degrees* of nationalism. Nebojša Popov had already produced outstanding research on the relationship of Serbian populism and nationalism with their historic current *narodnjaštvo*, also in its links with Russian *narodnjaštvo*<sup>264</sup> as an example. It is true that each case of populism is different. Radomir Konstantinović before them, identifying nationalism and Nazism, wrote about *Serbian Nazism*. Nationalism or Nazism are possible with *any* nation according to him.<sup>265</sup> Having mainly in mind populism in the Balkans and especially Milošević's populism during

<sup>261</sup> An epithet his regal and quasi-imperial, cold and very formal attitude earned him with the press.

<sup>262</sup> Dubravka Stojanović, *Populism the Serbian Way*, transl. by Aleksandar Bošković, Ivica Pavlović, Esther G. Polenezzer and John White, Belgrade, Pešćanik 2017 (e-book downloadable at [Pešćanik](https://pescanik.net/author/dubravka-stojanovic/), <https://pescanik.net/author/dubravka-stojanovic/>).

<sup>263</sup> Other post-Yugoslav countries would have to some extent comparable, though by no means identical histories of populism. The case of Serbia and Croatia, whose nationalisms constructed themselves in a clinch of reciprocal hate, would be the staunchest and diversely hegemonic in the region. Both (as well as other post-Yugoslav nationalisms and populisms) are anti-immigrant, even as immigration doesn't threaten them.

<sup>264</sup> *Narodnjaštvo* is a correct translation of the word “populism” into some Slavic languages, although it should not be forgotten that *narod* means both “people” and “nation”; but above all it denotes those who are of the same birth (*rod*). Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave”, in a supplement to the weekly *Vreme* N°135, 24-5-1993. N. Popov (ed.), *Srpska strana rata. Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju* (The Serbian side of the war. Trauma and catharsis in historic memory), Belgrade, *Republika* 1996.

<sup>265</sup> Radomir Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke* (Smalltown philosophy), Belgrade, Nolit, 1981 (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1969); from this book in French: « Sur le nazisme serbe » (On Serbian Nazism), *Lignes*, N°06, 2001, pp. 53-75 and « Sur le style du bourg » (On smalltown's style), *Transeuropéennes*, N°21, 2001, pp. 129-139; pages from the book *Beket prijatelj* (Beckett the friend), Belgrade, Otkrovenje 2000, in French in *Transeuropéennes* N°22, 2002. On the author R. Konstantinović, see Rada Iveković, « La mort de Descartes et la désolation du bourg (R. Konstantinović) », *Transeuropéennes*, N°21, 2001, pp. 174-178.

the war-decade through the 1990s, Popov proposes the following list of features<sup>266</sup>: “the most visible symptoms of populism are: *anti-individualism, anti-rationalism, anti-pluralism, anti-humanism, anti-liberalism, anti-socialism, anti-intellectualism, anti-elitism*. In a nutshell – *anti-modernism*.”<sup>267</sup> Dubravka Stojanović stresses several regular features that, accompanied by xenophobia and a strong anti-immigration stance, appear in the Serbian case of populism as well as in most others.<sup>268</sup> Other authors, such as Demmers and Mehendale, effectively describe the actually generalized construction of a dependency between xenophobia and established neo-liberalism, the rejection of others in a country, The Netherlands, otherwise known to have been welcoming and hitherto infused with (superficial) multiculturalism: “the making of normative distinctions based on cultural criteria was embraced by both Left and Right in Holland.”<sup>269</sup> And the authors expose the process thereof: “careless, baseless extrapolations from the level of the individual to the group; the conflation of Islam with Fascism; the equation of good citizenship with pornography; and above all, the search for collectiveness in the production of the ‘other’ [...]”<sup>270</sup>

Dubravka Stojanović argues how, in Serbia, modern institutions appeared differently than in western Europe (which seems to be in her examples the desirable model), not through political activity and the pressure of civil society as the result of an evolution, but rather, how they were directly established from above by the state because of the early formation of the latter, before civil society could give them shape: political society<sup>271</sup> in Serbia was more advanced than the social sphere, which was still to a great extent rural. An important Yugoslav philosopher and writer, Radomir Konstantinović, had written eye-opening theoretical and significant work on the latter - the transition of a partly rural and patriarchal society towards its first

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<sup>266</sup> And we shall decline several other descriptions of populism below.

<sup>267</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave”, in a supplement to *Vreme* N°135, 24-5-1993, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Italics by the author N.P.

<sup>268</sup> She also analyses specific local features that i shall skip, such as the historic formation called *zadruga* (family cooperative) of premodern times – an extended family which is also a production unit in an agrarian society, and a role model for state-building.

<sup>269</sup> Demmers and Mehendale, “Neoliberal Xenophobia: The Dutch Case” in *Alternatives* N°35 (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid. op. cit.*, p. 57. The “equation of good citizenship with pornography” is a particularly twisted, populist, vulgar and macho construction, which presupposes that muslims are sexually frustrated unlike “we” who are *free* to use pornography if we like. So pornography becomes the symbol of liberty!

<sup>271</sup> By which she means that part of society that gravitates around the state circles.

modernization.<sup>272</sup> It has not been very different in other parts of the Balkans. A comparable situation in postcolonial India is described by Nivedita Menon and Aditya Nigam in their book *Power and Contestation. India since 1989*, where principled democracy is said to have been formally granted through the decolonizing devolution of powers, prior to, and aside from its local requirements through a genuine local political movement and evolution of political claims.<sup>273</sup> In India it is clearly a matter of imposed political forms through colonialism, but one could safely think that in Serbia too it was a matter of foreign, western influence, although not of direct colonialism: effects are similar. Stojanović shows how successive nationalist governments in Serbia attempt conforming to the formal requirements posed by the European Union to her would-be members,<sup>274</sup> or how they circumvent and eschew expectations, in particular through installing the “screen memory” of the Holocaust, comparing Serbian victims in the 1990 war (that nationalist Serbia itself provoked) to WWII Jewish war victims.<sup>275</sup> In similar manners, institutions (parliament, political parties, the judiciary, education, health, civil society associations etc.) had a relatively long period of empty or clumsy functioning before a new generation learned political manners and distilled political claims. In Serbia and the Balkans such institution-building and state-building went from the 19<sup>th</sup> century well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. The result is the slow construction of the state itself and its unfinished form.

The latter is probably truer of the Balkans than of India, because India inherited a ready-made heavy state machine from the UK, and profited from home-rule in its preparation for postcolonial devolution.

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<sup>272</sup> R. Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke*, Nolit, Belgrade 1969. An extraordinary and most important book on social-nativism bordering on (local) nazism and fascism.

<sup>273</sup> Nivedita Menon, Aditya Nigam, *Power and Contestation. India since 1989*, London, Zed Books 2007 (New edition with New Epilogue, New Delhi, Orient Blackswan 2014). Be it added on the side, the authors take the year 1989 not as the end of the cold war (which they wrongly consider to be a western concept of no concern to India, although it is evidently a globalized one) and the beginning of neoliberal globalization. They see that year as the beginning of the implementation of neoliberalism in India, independently of the global aspect of 1989. It is however an ironic truth that “1989”, the general landmark, should be there for both – the global and the local aspect.

<sup>274</sup> Serbia is a very remote candidate to the EU, while Slovenia and Croatia are already members. But torn between an allegiance to Russia and one to the EU (while the two seem at this stage incompatible), Serbia may not be quite sincere in her pro-European stance.

<sup>275</sup> Dubravka Stojanović, *Populism the Serbian Way*, (e-book to downloadable at *Peščanik*, <https://pescanik.net/author/dubravka-stojanovic/>), *op. cit.* The term “screen memory” is also used by Lea David’s, “Between Human Rights and Nationalism: Silencing as a Mechanism of Memory in the Post-Yugoslav Wars’ Serbia”, in *Journal of Regional Security* (2015), 10:1, 37–52, p. 46. Jie-Hyun Lim uses it as well. According to these readings, a “screen memory” artfully displaces or shifts historic memory, which, through a screen label, is used to attract international esteem and compassion (“Serbs are victims like the Jews”), while avoiding discussing Serbia’s responsibility during the 1990s wars, and silencing any other voices.

According to D. Stojanović, there has been a general feeling of the unfinished or of incompleteness about the state and society in Serbia. And, we could add, of the whole of Yugoslavia and successor states as well. With the general regression through the war decade in the 1990s, this has been even more accentuated in all post-Yugoslav countries. And yet, Serbia, Croatia and other Yugoslav countries (former republics and autonomous regions, especially Kosovo, of the latter) have still a very strong and querulous urge for state-building and for the assertion of their state, even as they compete in getting into the European Union, a super-statal formation. At a time when the EU is in a crisis less visible from the Balkans in order to assert their sovereignty, which is a typical populist requirement, they build on their “first” state, historic or imagined no matter. Vatsov shows how, in the case of neighboring Bulgaria at least (but Yugoslav examples are not far), *statelty* propaganda usurping the principled populist insurgence potential, transforms its “emancipatory potential [...] into an instrument of governmentality”, thus converting it into its very opposite.<sup>276</sup>

He writes: “Our main thesis is that contemporary populist propaganda systematically substitutes, through series of strategic metonymies, the empty signifier of ‘the people’, replacing it with personalized *étatist* reifications of sovereignty. In doing so, propaganda converts populism: it turns the emancipatory potential of populism into an instrument of governmentality.”<sup>277</sup>

The “first” referential state on which to build their state in sovereignist right-wing nationalism may be imaginary (like in the case of North Macedonia, whose nationalists look back at ancient Greece as theirs), or it may have had a first historic appearance in the past. In the case of Serbia, as described by historians Dubravka Stojanović and Latinka Perović, but also as claimed by the politicians, World War I has been the foundation and the hammered permanent and international “guarantee” of the emergence and confirmation of the first Serbian state. Serbia even today builds on it versus the west, claiming the historic partnerships of that time (for example, with France), even if these have been forgotten elsewhere. But locally, nationalist Serbia builds on older times – on medieval orthodox monasteries and Serbian statelets, knights

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<sup>276</sup> Vatsov, *op. cit.*, *Part One*, p. 94. The author introduces here the striking concept of “discursive terror” (ibid. p. 95).

<sup>277</sup> Vatsov, *op. cit.*, “Logics of Propaganda. *Part Two*. The Conspiratorial Logic of Populist Propaganda”, in [https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG\\_LOGICS\\_OF\\_PROPAGANDA\\_Part\\_Two\\_The\\_Conspiratorial\\_Logic\\_of\\_Populist\\_Propaganda](https://www.academia.edu/37793860/ENG_LOGICS_OF_PROPAGANDA_Part_Two_The_Conspiratorial_Logic_of_Populist_Propaganda)

and knights. The case of Croatia is equally embarrassing, because today's independent Croatia builds upon the Croatian Quisling state (NDH),<sup>278</sup> which collaborated with the Nazis, was subordinate to them in WWII, and had established an extermination camp for Serbs, Jews, Romas and communists in Jasenovac, on its territory. Additionally and locally, official "independent" Croatia builds also on some more or less mythic kingdom as well as on the narrative of martyrdom at the hands of the communists, the Serbs and the partisan anti-Nazi and anti-fascist guerrilla war of liberation from 1941-1945. Neither Croatia nor Serbia build on the Yugoslav heritage. Both countries are here in a double-bind situation of paradoxical and opposed obediences. Unfinished states in that sense nurture delayed effects like delayed bombs. This is how Stojanović describes revisionist schoolbooks in Serbia (but it is pretty much the same elsewhere in post-Yugoslavia) that refute common Yugoslav history and especially its socialist history from 1941-1991. Such schoolbooks produce consequences 20-30 years on, preparing ever-new generations for wars to come, by implanting nationalist and xenophobic ideology into younger generations. Through these, grand national(ist) revisionist narratives are constructed, memories are divided and opposed, and the competition in victimhood is launched, with various political agendas addressed to both international and internal audiences, though with different expectations in the two cases.

Nationalist sovereignty, statehood, loudly claimed though in actual conditions of impotent sovereignty at the expense of neighbors and enemies, national egoism and symbolic signs of power are among populism's characteristics: state, power, leader, values, people, "us" as opposed to "them", usually within a binary setting. Contemporary populism lacks the capacity of political analysis and remains unaware of the fact that within globalization nobody can be completely sovereign or live in autarchy, because everyone depends on everyone else. Rather, arrogantly claiming absolute sovereignty derisively shows weakness and a satellite's orbit in the shade of big powers' hegemony.

### **Various readings of populism and fascism**

Likewise, Nitasha Kaul describes how Indian contemporary Modi's sovereigntist populism builds on the construction of enemies, on contempt for minorities, disdain for Kashmir,

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<sup>278</sup> NDH, *Nezavisna država Hrvatska*, Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945), was a puppet condominium state of fascist Italy (which capitulated in 1943) and of Nazi Germany in WWII.

arrogance to muslims, absolute authority of the leader,<sup>279</sup> and has even been inspired by historic Nazism.<sup>280</sup> Similarly to Modi's abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy in August 2019, Serbian nationalist and populist president Milošević had abolished the autonomy of Kosovo, which had been an autonomous region in Yugoslavia within a complex and not well calibrated federalism of six republics and two autonomous regions (Kosovo and Vojvodina) within Serbia. It is now on the recuperation of Kashmir but on the rejection of muslims that Modi rebuilds or re-founds Indian (by now, hindu) sovereignty, or gives it a new turn, in the same way in which Milošević had inbuilt into the reclaiming of Kosovo its new sovereigntist legitimization and his personal enhancing as a national leader and savior.

As Serbian nationalists claim Kosovo to be Serbian, Indian nationalists under Modi claim Kashmir to be Indian, although the Kashmir issue remains unresolved since the partition of British India into independent India and Pakistan. Both leaders claim that the estranged provinces represent the nation's essence and national core, although both have responsibility in having lost them and in having perpetrated terror and obtained structural violence in them. India hasn't been able to politically solve the now cleaving Kashmir question (between India and Pakistan), and has substantially contributed in aggravating its situation. Hindutva,<sup>281</sup> holding a unitary and organic concept of the Indian nation as Hindu, has been spreading hate-speech and violence. Kashmir has the longest standing UN mission monitoring the line of control between the two neighboring countries. India never allowed Kashmir to hold the promised elections at independence, and enforced in it a rule of colonial terror. Kashmir should be saved from the dichotomic structuring of its problem between India and Pakistan, and be allowed to think out a solution for itself. On the case of Kashmir, India has betrayed her politics of secularism and has racialized Kashmiris much as post-Yugoslav Serbia has the Kosovars, among other methods by over-militarizing the province and by killing Kashmiris/Kosovars and practicing ethnic and religious cleansing. Modi's first act was to curtail (Indian) Kashmir's autonomy, but his second act was to deny nationality to muslim citizens who cannot "prove"

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<sup>279</sup> Nitasha Kaul, "Kashmir Is Under the Heel of Indian Colonialism", in *Foreign Policy*, August 13, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/13/kashmir-is-under-the-heel-of-indias-colonialism/>

<sup>280</sup> To complete the picture, see the citation from Umberto Eco on Ur-fascism, and in the Annex 2, Dimitar Vatsov's list of general features of "propaganda" (populism).

<sup>281</sup> Hindutvā, "being Hindu" is a Hindu-nationalist and exclusivist, mainly anti-muslim, sentiment and policy.

their Indian origin. The latter is aggravated by the regime allowing for right-wing RSS<sup>282</sup> terror and utter violence at Jamia Millia University and Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi (2019-2020), in addition to having kerked the autonomy of the latter university. As for the 1999 Serbian nationalist attack on Kosovo, it was stopped only by external intervention.<sup>283</sup> But apart from Pakistani ritual and regular violent response especially through providing the backstage for islamist extremists, no foreign intervention is likely in order to save a *de facto* divided Kashmir from brutal Indian *and* Pakistani occupation.<sup>284</sup>

It is technically difficult to distinguish, nowadays, sovereigntist nationalist populism from relapses of fascism, especially in the European context, although Vatsov's attempts to distinguish them seem approximating a welcome clarification.<sup>285</sup> Fascism *is* populist. And "people's democracies" too have much relied on populist sentiment, which was at its core in that part of society that supported those regimes (while the other party was silenced). One interesting reading is Umberto Eco's booklet on Ur-fascism ("Original fascism") or, as he calls it in the Italian translation of his own English original, on "eternal fascism".<sup>286</sup> The first surprise, knowing the author's intellectual rigor, is his stereotyped assertion that historic fascism was gentler than Nazism.<sup>287</sup> Was it really? According to Eco, while Nazism was a

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<sup>282</sup> RSS, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ("National Self-Defence Organization") is an Indian extreme right-wing Hindu nationalist and social-nativist formation established in 1925 along lines differing from Gandhi's and more to the right. It is still active and flourishing under Modi, who is also responsible of the large-scale pogrom on muslims in 1992 in the state of Gujarat, where he was chief minister and allowed the killings to happen without moving the police. RSS is today the umbrella organization for other right-wing bodies and affiliated parties, including the ruling BJP (Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party). The RSS runs militias as well as various social services, and is vigorously anti-muslim.

<sup>283</sup> The NATO bombings of Serbia (at that time, going under the shortened name of "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", although it had lost at the civil war most of Yugoslavia's territories and would lose remaining Montenegro soon thereafter) took place between March and June 1999 at the end of the Serbian Kosovo war in the series of Yugoslav wars triggered, after Serbian and Croatian aggressions on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia's on Kosovo. Those bombings, which were clearly unjustified according to international law and had not been accepted by the UN (hence, they were executed by NATO), actually finally stopped the war and aggression for a greater Serbia, in this particular case - on Kosovo (after consecutive wars from north-west to almost south-east).

<sup>284</sup> On Kashmir, see among others Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Delhi, Penguin Random House India 2017 as well as Salman Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Granta Books 1990 and *Shalimar the Clown*, Vintage Books, London 2006.

<sup>285</sup> Insofar as Vatsov evaluates them considering their 'emancipatory' capacity. Vatsov, *op. cit.*

<sup>286</sup> Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism", in *The New-York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, [https://www.pegc.us/archive/Articles/eco\\_ur-fascism.pdf](https://www.pegc.us/archive/Articles/eco_ur-fascism.pdf); *Il fascismo eterno*, Milano, La Nave di Teseo 2017.

<sup>287</sup> By the way, why is it that "fascism" is officially written with a minuscule, and "Nazism" usually with a capital letter in English? I keep both as lower case or minuscules. (The official explanation is that « Nazism » denoted a specified country and government, hence the capital letter, while « fascism » didn't.)

totalitarian dictatorship fascism, owing to its *philosophical weakness*, was a dictatorship but *not completely totalitarian* and was not a coherent system of thought. It was fuzzy. That assertion also corresponds to a largely shared cliché and, as all clichés, it carries some elements of truth. Yet Eco himself knows, and warns, how dangerous it is to spread such clichés. Populisms show it and fascisms even more so, although they are often convenient ready-made thoughts. To explain his view, Eco then shows the many contradictions inherent in “fascist thought”.<sup>288</sup> We can say that many if not all of these appear as much in the *fasciosphere*<sup>289</sup> as in populisms, with a palette going all the way from the left (wanting to obtain quick social reforms for the population) to the extreme right (pushing migrants back, violence, militarization etc.). He explains how the name of a historic “derivative”<sup>290</sup> of Nazism, i.e. “fascism”, has become the general term – *pars pro toto* (a metonymy) - encompassing both. There was, he says, one and only Nazism, one and only Nazi architecture, Nazi art, but not so with fascism, which was not so rigorously organized or so “successful” in the way of a state. Fascism, he says, can be played in many ways (he uses Wittgenstein’s idea about language-games here, and so do Laclau and Vatsov in their analyses of populism). Finally, fascism looks very much like populism in the sense that it is *confusionist* rather than tolerant according to Eco. Ideologies, political ideas and a sense of history are all mixed up in it and tend to a-historicity. Eco writes: “Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it will still be recognizable as fascist. Take away imperialism from fascism and you still have Franco and Salazar. Take away colonialism and you still have the Balkan fascism of the Ustashes.” But nevertheless, Eco works out fourteen characteristics of “Ur-fascism”, of “original fascism” or “eternal fascism”, which are eye opening. In his own words:

“1. The first feature of Ur-Fascism is *the cult of tradition*.<sup>291</sup> Traditionalism is of course much older than fascism. [...]

<sup>288</sup> Eco doesn’t believe that fascism has intellectual contents or thinking, although some intellectuals have gone astray into fascism. The same can be said of much populism.

<sup>289</sup> *Fasciosphere*: a French contemporary political parlance term (“fachosphere”), see further down.

<sup>290</sup> “Derivative” or first appearance? Italian fascism was in power ten years before German Nazism. It should be clear that properly understanding Eco’s analysis takes knowing well Italian history, although in his short paper the author tried to explain it to people very distant from that history.

<sup>291</sup> Here and elsewhere in Eco’s citation, italics are by the author, Umberto Eco, except if specified otherwise.



This new culture had to be *syncretistic*. [...] [S]uch a combination [although it is intolerant] *must tolerate contradictions*. [...]

As a consequence, *there can be no advancement of learning*. Truth has been already spelled out once and for all, and we can only keep interpreting its obscure message.

[...] The Nazi gnosis was nourished by traditionalist, syncretistic, occult elements. [...]

2. Traditionalism implies *the rejection of modernism*. [...] However, even though Nazism was proud of its industrial achievements, its praise of modernism was only the surface of an ideology based upon Blood and Earth (*Blut und Boden*). [...] The Enlightenment, the Age of Reason, is seen as the beginning of modern depravity. In this sense Ur-Fascism can be defined as irrationalism.

3. Irrationalism also depends on the cult of *action for action's sake*. Action being beautiful in itself, it must be taken before, or without, any previous reflection. Thinking is a form of emasculation. Therefore, *culture is suspect* insofar as it is identified with critical attitudes. Distrust of the intellectual world has always been a symptom of Ur-Fascism [...].

4. No syncretistic faith can withstand analytical criticism. [...] For Ur-Fascism, *disagreement is treason*.

5. Besides, disagreement is a sign of diversity. Ur-Fascism grows up and seeks for consensus by exploiting and exacerbating the natural *fear of difference*. The first appeal of a fascist or prematurely fascist movement is an appeal against the *intruders*<sup>292</sup> [i.e. against the immigrants]. Thus Ur-Fascism is racist by definition.

6. Ur-Fascism derives from individual or social frustration. That is why one of the most typical features of the historical fascism was *the appeal to a frustrated middle class*, [...] frightened by the pressure of lower social groups. In our time, when the old "proletarians" are becoming petty bourgeois (and the lumpen are largely excluded from the political scene), the fascism of tomorrow will find its audience in this new majority.

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<sup>292</sup> Italics by me, R.I.

7. To people who feel deprived of a clear social identity, Ur-Fascism says that their only privilege is the most common one, *to be born in the same country*<sup>293</sup> [or rather, of the same nation]. This is the origin of nationalism. Besides, the only ones who can provide an identity to the nation are its enemies. Thus, at the root of the Ur-Fascist psychology there is *the obsession with a plot*, possibly an international one. [...] The easiest way to solve the plot is the appeal to *xenophobia*. But the plot must also come from the inside: Jews are usually the best target because they have the advantage of being at the same time inside and outside. [...]

8. The followers must feel humiliated by the ostentatious wealth and force of their enemies. [...] Thus, by a continuous shifting of rhetorical focus, *the enemies are at the same time too strong and too weak*. Fascist governments are condemned to lose wars because they are constitutionally incapable of objectively evaluating the force of the enemy.

9. For Ur-Fascism there is no struggle for life but, rather, life is lived for struggle. *Thus, pacifism is trafficking with the enemy*. It is bad because *life is permanent warfare*. This, however, brings about an Armageddon complex. [...] [T]here must be a final battle, after which the movement will have control of the world. But such a "final solution" implies a further era of peace, a Golden Age, which contradicts the principle of permanent war. [...]

10. Elitism is a typical aspect of any reactionary ideology, insofar as it is fundamentally aristocratic, and aristocratic and militaristic elitism cruelly implies *contempt for the weak*. Ur-Fascism can only advocate a popular elitism. Every citizen belongs to the best people of the world, the members of the party are the best among the citizens [...]. But there cannot be patricians without plebeians. In fact, the Leader, knowing that his power was not delegated to him democratically [this implies populism] but was conquered by force, also knows that his force is based upon the weakness of the masses [...]. Since the group is hierarchically organized (according to a military model), every subordinate leader despises his own underlings, and each of them despises his inferiors. [...]

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<sup>293</sup> Italics by me, R.I.

11. In such a perspective *everybody is educated to become a hero*. In every mythology the hero is an exceptional being, but in Ur-Fascist ideology, heroism is the norm. This cult of heroism is strictly linked with *the cult of death*. It is not by chance that a motto of the Falangists was Viva la Muerte (in English it should be translated as “Long Live Death!”). [...] The Ur-Fascist hero is impatient to die. In his impatience, he more frequently sends other people to death.

12. Since both permanent war and heroism are difficult games to play, the Ur-Fascist transfers his will to power to sexual matters. This is the origin of *machismo* [...]. Since even sex is a difficult game to play, the Ur-Fascist hero tends to play with weapons – doing so becomes an ersatz phallic exercise.

13.<sup>294</sup> Ur-Fascism is based upon a selective populism,<sup>295</sup> a qualitative populism, one might say. In a democracy, the citizens have individual rights, but the citizens in their entirety have a political impact only from a quantitative point of view – one follows the decisions of the majority. For Ur-Fascism, however, individuals as individuals have no rights, and the People is conceived as a quality, a monolithic entity expressing the Common Will. Since no large quantity of human beings can have a common will, the Leader pretends to be their interpreter. Having lost their power of delegation, [...] they are only called on to play the role of the People. Thus, the People is only a theatrical fiction. [...] There is in our future a TV or Internet populism, in which the emotional response of a selected group of citizens can be presented and accepted as the Voice of the People.

Because of its qualitative populism Ur-Fascism *must be against "rotten" parliamentary governments*. [...] [A] little later Mussolini liquidated the parliament. Wherever a politician casts doubt on the legitimacy of a parliament because it no longer represents the Voice of the People, we can smell Ur-Fascism.

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<sup>294</sup> It is in particular in this point 13. that the author compares fascisms and populisms. Both are said to be xenophobic, racist, anti-“intruders”, anti-immigrant.

<sup>295</sup> “Populismo qualitativo” in the author’s Italian version.

14. *Ur-Fascism speaks Newspeak*. Newspeak was invented by Orwell, in 1984, as the official language of Ingsoc, English Socialism. But elements of Ur-Fascism are common to different forms of dictatorship. All the Nazi or Fascist schoolbooks made use of an impoverished vocabulary, and an elementary syntax, in order to limit the instruments for complex and critical reasoning. But we must be ready to identify other kinds of Newspeak, even if they take the apparently innocent form of a popular talk show.”<sup>296</sup>

Umberto Eco writes towards the end of his essay: “Ur-Fascism can come back under the most innocent of disguises. Our duty is to uncover it and to point our finger at any of its new instances – every day, in every part of the world.” For him, present-day fascism was reminiscent of fascism and Nazism before WWII and during it. He therefore warns of not taking it too lightly when it appears. In her own essay on rampant contemporary fascism, Meredith Tax says: “But the left is not strong enough to take on both fascists and neoliberal elites at the same time. We need to be able to work with liberals on things we can agree about, or we will lose.” And she continues, referring to the thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which are now regularly invoked by many authors as a warning: “The left was not strong enough to go it alone in the Thirties either. The Communist International tried for a while, in what is now called its Third Period, calling for a ‘united front from below’. In practice, that meant it attacked the liberal parties that were competing for the allegiance of the working class, rather than focusing on the fascists. In Germany, for instance, their slogan in 1932 and 1933 was, ‘After Hitler, us!’ But after Hitler, there was no us—the German left was dead, in exile, or in concentration camps.”<sup>297</sup>

Demmers and Mehendale note some further characteristics of the same phenomena over recent years: “the denial of contradiction; the naturalization of the present; the taken-for-granted reification of identity. All of it ceaselessly repeated.”<sup>298</sup> According to them, the neoliberal consensus, involving the loss of even an illusion of national economy has left *culture as the battlefield for establishing a political electorate* and opening the market for a policy based on ethnic criteria.<sup>299</sup> Thus, minorities have become targets of hatred, especially Islam. It was like

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<sup>296</sup> Umberto Eco, “Ur-Fascism”, *op. cit.* in *The New-York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, [https://www.pegc.us/archive/Articles/eco\\_ur-fascism.pdf](https://www.pegc.us/archive/Articles/eco_ur-fascism.pdf); <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1856>

<sup>297</sup> She refers to the division of the left, busy fighting sectarian battles rather than facing fascists: Meredith Tax, in “How Do We Defeat Trump?” on March 9, 2020, <https://www.meredithtax.org/single.php?id=230>.

<sup>298</sup> Demmers and Mehendale, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

a national-cultural call to war, and the search for new forms of community was translated in the Netherlands into an ethnic turning point. “Neoliberalism may be technically agnostic on matters of culture and race, but the neoliberal project is well-served by the permanent construction of an Enemy (either within or without) who can satisfy the otherwise alienated consumer-citizen’s need for inclusion and belonging.”<sup>300</sup> Furthermore, “[T]he erosion of earlier modes of collectiveness (both real and imagined), and their replacement by new ‘liquid’ forms of belonging, is crucial.”<sup>301</sup> The authors speak of *market-populism*.<sup>302</sup>

## 5. Belonging or departing

We should try and understand the difference in migrations today (linked to the idea of “belonging”?)<sup>303</sup> as compared to earlier migrations. Migrating from Europe to America in modern times had usually been an *individual* solution for general poverty or for seeking work, a single solution for social problems. While immigrants from all possible countries settled individually in the Americas and integrated there, they co-produced with earlier settlers (the local populations having mostly already been decimated) complex modern joint societies. This has stopped with Trump. Immigrants usually kept their “identities”, their “origins”, languages or religions privately, but had all become “Americans” publicly. Migrating to the Americas or to Australia, considered “empty” continents where from, at least in the case of the USA and of Australia, immigrants are rejected (or selected) today. After they have been immigration countries, was considered a triumph and a personal accomplishment by the interested. Later, while the independence of a whole lot of formerly colonial states during the huge nineteen-sixties independence wave (where most African countries were liberated) was based on emancipatory and inclusive nationalisms, the new *narrow* nationalisms of the “post-national” era of our time are based to a great extent on “belonging”, on ethnicism and on exclusive nationalism exacerbated by neoliberalism, financial capitalism, by intensified sovereignty projects and by acceleration. It is strange to see that, while the end of national states is being

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid. *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid. *op. cit.*, p. 61-62.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>303</sup> Sam Coombes, “Opacité et ouverture: le Discours antillais et les multiplicités. Le Discours antillais du monde” (manuscript); Édouard Glissant: *A Poetics of Resistance*, Bloomsbury Academic 2018.

declared and states yield their sovereignty to transnational corporatism, present-day nationalisms preach ever more unwavering state-sovereignty while they are practicing exactly the opposite. We could say that, in the form called nation-state, as opposed to the time of post-war postcolonial independencies, it is now the element of “nation” (ethnicity, identity etc.) that boasts a largely inflated and exaggerated “sovereignty” (whether achieved or not), while the element of “state” is ever less and less independent and less sovereign in terms of finance and economy, although the opposite is pretended and sermonised.

### **Sovereignty and memory**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, many weak or subaltern states, such as the Balkans states within Europe or on its edge, as well as many once colonised but still dependent states all over the world, constantly claim sovereignty and boast about sovereignty, raised as a threat or defence against competing states and neighbours. But sovereignty is an empty representational figure. In Europe (both the EU and eastern Europe) at this time, lost sovereignty, or imagined lost sovereignty produce an excess of sovereignties’ claims which are mainly extreme right and populist, beseeched by nationalists. The ritual lamentation over lost sovereignty actually corresponds to the end of traditional Westphalian sovereignty, now replaced within globalisation by “governance”, and by a fictive sovereignty within relations of interdependence. While traditional sovereignty produced traditional both individual and collective political subjects, governance now skirts (evades) the position of the political subject by substituting it with the promise of a status of consumer and of surfer on the Internet, i.e. of incomplete or damaged subject, as it dismantles historic memory.<sup>304</sup> Ivan Čolović uses the insightful term “parasitic memory”, when an overwritten official history, circumventing its own crimes, replaces them by a sort of screen memory of past “heroic” deeds in national history.<sup>305</sup> Experiences, lines of resistance sometimes important, could be erased from memory, from official histories, and in any case could be closed, and they were able to perpetuate injustices with immutable “facts”. Since the bias of an already classified history

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<sup>304</sup> On the question of state-arranged general loss of memory, see the interesting movie of Lav Diaz, *The Halt* (original title *Ang Hupa*). The Philippines, as in this movie, would not be the only example.

<sup>305</sup> Ivan Čolović, “Parazitska sećanja” (“Parasite memory”), in *Peščanik*, 29-8-2019, <https://pescanik.net/parazitska-secanja/>

once and for all, we can only recognise its reproduction even as we wish to change its course.<sup>306</sup> The violence in one's own history is often overlooked, forgotten, and presented as non-violent, while violence is attributed only to the enemies. History should never be considered closed, because there are no definitive facts. The past is necessarily always revisited from the present, and this is how the present works on the past *and* the past works in the present.

Griziotti writes, “fundamentalist movements seem to have in some way substituted those of Soviet-inspired national liberation from the Cold War era” (p. 160). But Griziotti is wrong there, in thinking that the national liberation was necessarily always inspired by the Soviet Union or only by it, although he does remark that technological mediation in social transformation is generally not taken into account. Indeed, it is the other way around, *national liberation is obviously self-produced and self-enhanced* in a gesture of *autonomy and political emancipation*, and only subsequently may it have undergone Soviet – or other for that matter – influences, alliances and technological intervention. Those influences have been several, some of them ephemeral and now historically over or defeated, others (such as the Chinese example), still operating though in a changed context. As political influences on third world countries tending to autonomy, emancipation and independence during the Cold War, among others, you could also count that of Ghana for example (one of the first independent countries in Africa during the sixties of the 20th century), a decade of post-WWII decolorizations, that of Yugoslavia, that of Algeria or of other movements and countries; among them, yes, the Soviet Union too. In Latin America, Cuba had been a model for a long time and, at all times, Haiti. To many countries Haiti, the place of the first black revolution, has been exemplary. To others, the Indian independence, especially for its supposed non-violence (Gandhi),<sup>307</sup> has been the prototype, especially for the Black civil movement in the USA. Non-violence, which by now has an impressive international record,<sup>308</sup> comes as a regular motive of inspiration in many situations and, while it weighs powerfully either politically or in the sphere of thinking, it has yet never prevailed as wars continue. Mandela in South Africa and, on the other hand, feminist theories

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<sup>306</sup> It is obvious that the other extreme, opposed to this necessity of opening up history, would be the revisionisms that would reduce the injustices of the past to the downside. These are obvious closures of any history precisely.

<sup>307</sup> Gandhi's movement was a strong non-violent movement, but Gandhi himself never absolutized violence as valid in all situations: there are situations in which you must defend yourself, for example. I say, “supposed non-violence”, because although the movement was very powerful in India in the last period of the British Empire, the society itself, like all societies, was and is divided, and fraught with extremely violent elements too.

<sup>308</sup> Hawthorne, Thoreau, Gandhi, Tolstoy, Martin Luther King Jr., Mandela, Silvia Federici, Vandana Shiva, Judith Butler etc.

have cultivated nonviolence among other principles, and so do environmentalists and climate activists such as Vandana Shiva.<sup>309</sup>

Judith Butler introduces and theorizes the ethical strength of non-violence in practical politics, and pleads for the recognition of its forceful advantage.<sup>310</sup> Of course, different assessments of both violence and non-violence make it difficult to articulate a common denominator or a scale of either. Violence as the state's monopoly settles the *différend* in many cases, but it doesn't prevent discernment and conceptual variance. Although violence is usually attributed to those who suffer most from it (since it is usually attributed to others), Butler's approach to non-violence goes for a critique and the overcoming of mere individualism and building in common a new world aiming at radical equality. It necessarily includes encompassing a social dimension of lives understood *also* collectively in a general condition of interdependence and sharing at all levels. The horizon of equality is necessary here because all human lives matter in reciprocity and solidarity, *all are grievable*.<sup>311</sup>

During the period of the sixties and the seventies, after a wave of decolonization, new political subjectivities emerged in the form of newly independent states and political liberation movements, just about when, by the end of the seventies Yugoslavia hit a economic crisis as part of a general and world-wide beginning of a transition to financial capitalism and a neoliberal policy regime.<sup>312</sup> The UN at that time was suddenly filled with many emerging independent countries, politically ambitious, in what we now call the Global South.

### **The Non-aligned movement (NAM)**

Third World formerly colonized or otherwise downtrodden countries went through a first emancipation surge. No one then knew that those first independences would not bear the expected fruits, but would end up in neo-colonialism, new imperialism and in power passing

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<sup>309</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Reclaiming the Commons: Biodiversity, Traditional Knowledge, and the Rights of Mother Earth*, op. cit.; Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, *Ecofeminism (Critique. Influence. Change.)*, London, Zed books 2014, and other books by V. Shiva.

<sup>310</sup> Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-violence. The Ethical in the Political*, Verso, New York – London 2020.

<sup>311</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War. When is life Grievable?* Verso, New- York – London 2016; *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso, New York – London 2019.

<sup>312</sup> Andreja Živković, "From the Market... to the Market: the Debt Economy After Yugoslavia", in Horvat and Štiks (eds.), op. cit., p. 49.



from foreign to domestic dominant interests while the population would remain equally poor. Many a southern liberation leader would turn out to be a dictator, with the new countries still dependent on the former colonizers. Proxy wars for raw material were fought in Africa, in the Middle East and elsewhere. In the sixties and seventies therefore, through UNCTAD, those new independences seemed to be able to overturn and revolutionize an unjust world order and transform it, through a powerful majority of countries in the UN, into a future just world order, then called the New World Order. Between the two political blocs, east and west, socialism and capitalism, around respectively the Soviet Union and the USA, emerged the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) of countries refusing the existing division of the world. The movement with political ambitions was partly a relative sequel to the Bandung Conference (1955) which had concerned Africa and Asia in economic matters only. The previous year 1954 was also that of the bloody French defeat in Dien Bien Phu and of the beginning of the bloody Algerian liberation war, while the British Empire had yielded to decolonization much more easily and earlier. The first formal conference of the Nonaligned Movement was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961, while its main organizing countries were, besides the latter, also Egypt, Indonesia, Ghana and India. The Non-aligned had wider ambitions than Bandung, both politically as well as geographically, and were very promising at that time. A succeeding period of trans-state capitalism deconstructed its promising efficiency, but its project appears even today as an extraordinarily progressive one. Paradoxically, the Cold War was both its framework and origin, as well as its limit. The equilibrium between the two great powers (USSR and USA) managed a “third” space of nonalignment and resistance to both. China was also nonaligned (nonaligned considering the lines of the two big powers), but was never officially a member of the NAM. It was actually too big for that, but it did support many of the nonaligned countries<sup>313</sup> in many of their demands, and it did help many. Today the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) still exists officially, but it has no meaning, no force or political orientation since the two referential blocs of that time (capitalism and socialism, “west” and “east”) have disappeared. In Yugoslavia, the NAM was logically linked to the inner policy of workers’ control, and those were the two main policies of that country which ultimately however sank into a civil war in the 1990.<sup>314</sup> Although that history was rich, instructive and interesting, it is

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<sup>313</sup> Not Yugoslavia for that matter, but these are bilateral details i don’t address here. Yugoslavia was considered a traitor to socialism by the eastern bloc countries around the USSR and was not a member of that group. China recognised the Yugoslav state, but not its communist party (traitor to Marxism, according to China), and had, together with its satellite Albania, execrable relations with Yugoslavia.

<sup>314</sup> Tvrtko Jakovina, *op. cit.*

not studied anymore because the said country disappeared, and people don't know of the NAM or of Yugoslav self-management any more. To no effect does it belong into "useful history".<sup>315</sup>

A record was issued in Belgrade in 1987, "The Song of the Nonaligned World". The music was composed by Emil Glavnik, arranged by Lazar Ristovski, while the lyrics were written by Dušan Višekruna, and sung in several third-world languages as well as in English and French. The translation of the somewhat dry lyrics was more or less improvised by who was at hand. It was sung in several languages by a choir of adults and one of children. It was a *svečana pesma* or a "solemn song", of the type played at official meetings. You would not exactly be motivated to dance to the tune. The record was distributed as a present in nonaligned countries and to visiting officials. It didn't meet popular success, but was instead studied by anthropologists who compared it to national anthems, in particular by Akhil Gupta.<sup>316</sup> Gupta studied the paradoxical attempt of nonaligned countries to overcome nationalism and the national horizon, while claiming at the same time national sovereignty and international democracy among countries big and small. Gupta also dwelled on the constitution of the Indian nation and its contradictions, but overlooked the fact that Yugoslavia, for one, was explicitly *not* being constituted as a nation, but rather clumsily as a federation of nations or – and there is here a lot of political bewilderment – a federation of national states (six of them, and 2 autonomous regions). This was, within internal affairs, totally along the lines of the NAM transnational project internationally. But was this one of the reasons why Yugoslavia collapsed in an era of national states? As part of the truth, it is possible. As Gupta tried to show, the nonaligned movement (NAM) actually tried to construct a transnational identity and to inhabit and make real an imaginary transnational and cosmopolitan wishful space, that of a glorious and successful early globalization performed by southern countries (or "Darker nations").<sup>317</sup> He also compares this effort to that of building the European Union as a union of sovereign national states. Akhil Gupta: "In 1987, a little noticed long-playing album was released in Belgrade. The cover has a photograph of the leaders of 25 nations in full national regalia at the

<sup>315</sup> I owe the concept to the writer Slobodan Šnajder, *Umrijeti u Hrvatskoj*, Zaprešić, Fraktura 219, p. 132.

<sup>316</sup> Akhil Gupta, "The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism" in *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 7, N°1, "Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference" (Feb., 1992), pp. 63-79.

<sup>317</sup> Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations : A People's History of the Third World*, New York- London, The New Press 2007. Both Gupta and Prashad, while studying benevolently and with sympathy the Nonaligned movement and investing in it expectations, deal with some easy stereotypes or at times misrepresentations of Yugoslavia's history.

first Nonaligned Summit held in Belgrade in 1961. Above and below the borders of the photograph is the album's title, 'song of the Nonaligned World', repeated in Slavic, Hindi, Arabic, Spanish and French. The back sleeve has a more recent color photograph of smiling children from what appears to be a veritable United Nations. Inside are the photographs of the meeting sites of various Nonaligned Conferences and the words of the (only) song on the album, repeated in all the languages mentioned above." NAM, now useless history, was at that time a complex common political, social and cultural *transnational* project that included the idea of international equality between states, of a new and just world order, and hailed anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism as well as cancelling of poor countries' debt etc.

"Useful history" would only refer to such continuities that can be linked from some past event to some presently recognizable feature or political form, possibly official. All else becomes superfluous, and discontinuities are disregarded. In such an understanding of history, no bifurcations or deviating roads, no discontinuities or alternatives are admitted into mainstream history, no complementary histories, no alternative memories, no memories nurtured by others.<sup>318</sup> The others' history, or the history now considered useless, is erased and not studied any more. This is true of the socialist history of Yugoslavia from 1941-1991,<sup>319</sup> as well as of the socialist past of generations that lived in the Soviet Union or its satellite countries. It is true of the hidden history of the civil war in Spain, as well as of many other places. In my lifetime the cold war was one such machine (among others) for levelling out history, but so was and still is *transition*.<sup>320</sup> It involves not only the loss of the historic dimension, but also that of a sheer temporal factor, as well as their programmed and active *disremembering*. It is true that any kind of established political power has the tendency to induce forgetting its origin and above all its alternatives.

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<sup>318</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, "Victimhood Nationalism and History Reconciliation in East Asia", in *Academia.com*, [https://www.academia.edu/2700211/Victimhood\\_Nationalism\\_and\\_History\\_Reconciliation\\_in\\_East\\_Asia?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/2700211/Victimhood_Nationalism_and_History_Reconciliation_in_East_Asia?email_work_card=view-paper); Lim, "Mnemonic Solidarity in the Global Memory Space", in *global-e . Global Dynamics*, January 31, 2019|Volume12 |Issue4, <https://www.21global.ucsb.edu/global-e/january-2019/mnemonic-solidarity-global-memory-space>.

<sup>319</sup> Dubravka Stojanović, *Populism the Serbian Way*, op. cit. Dubravka Ugrešić, *Fox*, transl. by Ellen Elias-Bursać and David Williams, Rochester, Open Letter 2018. Alexis Jenni, *Féroces intimes*, Paris, Gallimard 2019.

<sup>320</sup> All types of transition: from the historic one that gave the name of "Transition", referring to the post-dictatorship era in Latin America, to post-colonial transition and post-socialist transitions dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and world capital in general. What is usually meant is an unquestionable conversion to neoliberal capitalism and globalization, by which the mainstream discourse has it that the transition means catching-up by backward countries, and filling the historic gap. Alternative options are erased and forgotten.

The Cold War itself was strongly felt in Europe as well as in Asia, though differently. In a way, its effects and some of its features are felt even today in a much stronger manner in Asia than in Europe. In Europe, it produced a kind of lasting difference mainly in political culture that is particularly striking nowadays, thirty years on.

As a result of the process of depoliticization, European countries of the former eastern bloc are today much more politically confused if not more reactionary. They are so in an awkward way, and are decidedly right-leaning politically, inspired by fascism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant and anti-feminist positions. Countries of the former eastern block as well as Yugoslavia had “spared” their citizens politics, so they didn’t get any political experience. Compared with them, countries in western Europe are (or rather, were) potentially more progressive. But the process of depoliticization was more gradual, slower and based, at a difference from eastern and central-European countries, on an individualistic concept of the human. The gradual depoliticization and determinization of political language on both sides eventually converged in today’s populist tendencies. On the whole, conservative eastern Europe launches contagious xenophobic politics of social fascism, when not outright state fascism. New editions of state fascism or post-fascism have emerged from the nineties on (after the cold war) in countries like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia (not a E.U. member), and have spread west or have independently grown in countries like Italy. It is a sign of the times that eastern and western Europe now converge although from different political cultures, in xenophobia, post-fascism and new populisms. There are strong tendencies of at least social (through movements and parties) if not state new fascism obtained through populist methods in several western European countries such as Italy (a post-fascist party in power in a coalition in 1918-1919), France etc. It can’t really be asserted that this is “contagion” from Hungary. It is rather a general tendency in international politics everywhere including other continents (see Trump, Modi, Bolsonaro and Duterte in The Philippines etc.). This tendency *comes with the present stage of globalized capitalism*, the involution and regression in political thinking that we witness everywhere, the proxy wars produced by Europe and the USA in many countries and continents (Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East in the first place), as well as what can be called political “confusionism” which is also characteristic of the post-cold war period where the values of “left” and “right” have been lost. Worldwide democratic erosion assorted with blunt physical power, wars and annexation of territories is now a regular feature of international relations that are no longer regulated through multilateralism, all of it at the expense of democracy and of

respecting a minimum of codified International Law. The rule of physical force reigns now, as “illiberal democracy” and authoritarianism are gaining power: once in power through elections, leaders do not respond for their deeds anymore and do not heed their public opinion or international regulations. This is a setback to the rule of law, to interstate democracy and to the international order.

In Asia, the physical features of the Cold War are felt much more than in Europe even today as the cold war is supposed to have ended. But it has left palpable traces in borders and state sovereignties, especially between China and countries that the latter considers as its parts, such as Taiwan or Hong Kong. In Europe, those borders have moved to the line dividing the European Union from other countries (those of the former eastern bloc but others too, such as Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria or extra-European countries such as Morocco, Libya etc.) of a different political culture and involved expectations. In 1989 and at the beginning of the nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those borders seemed very clear, but they are again quite blurred in Europe thirty years on due to the xenophobic and racist, not to say the post-fascist, dispensation, and the ultimate (and to my mind irresponsible and ugly) refusal of immigration in both eastern and western Europe. The same is also part of western European social fascism<sup>321</sup> and populism, and an equally irresponsible disposition: we have forgotten the role and history of colonial politics, the source of (western) Europe’s immense wealth, in rejecting refugees and migrants even as we kill them at borders and let them be drowned at sea. The European Union is waging a merciless war to would-be immigrants and asylum seekers, regardless of the moral aspect and political history of the present situation. That the material world is being lost sight of, translates well what we are here reading out of the political and social circumstances.

European countries want to obtain zero immigration – no immigration at all. This is of course absurd and impossible to achieve, but government after government and nationalist party after party (both left and right, in this they are akin) keep promising it to their constituencies regardless of the human cost. Immigration will not stop. But we should stop the hecatomb arranged by governments. Moreover, a Europe which is getting old and where the birth-rate has sunk needs those people, needs fresh workers to support its welfare programmes and the pensions of its retired elderly population. Not welcoming them means shooting ourselves in the foot. But prejudices and racism are so strong (even though not openly admitted) against

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<sup>321</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Portugal: Ensaio contra a autoflegelação*, São Paulo, Cortez Editora 2014.

“foreigners” especially extra European and non-white newcomers, against other “races” and especially nowadays against muslims, that racism and xenophobia will prevail although it is counterproductive. Islamophobia coexists with anti-semitism, with hate speech of all sorts, with ideas of “identity”, “belonging”, nationhood.

When people move it is also, in a way borders that are moving and are being redesigned. The same is happening in Asia, with the same ugly characteristics: people are rejected to sea or to jungles and peripheries, whatever their motivation to travel over to other places. Most countries usually tend to have a zero-immigration policy, like Singapore. Many people, if not driven away by war, tsunamis and ecological disasters, migrate for work. It is to a great extent work that is migrating. This is something that present-day capitalism welcomes, though under its conditions. In many ways, the societies and the states are more conservative in this regard than capitalism itself, so although capital travels freely, people don't.

### **Closure of borders**

With other western or northern countries, Europe is among the champions of the closure of border to people from the global south and east. Such closures of borders are supported by a proliferating social but also governmental populism. Populism is not itself adverse to the neoliberal form of globalized capitalism we are in and which has, culminating in the 2007-2008 crisis, mutated into financial and financialized capitalism. In spite of the USA being at its epicenter, the latter has become a global condition to which no country could subtract itself. Within its general framework, it morphed diversely in different places, in spite of the fact that it could encompass - but leave out - pockets of non-capitalist, or un-classifiable, modes of production and social settings. Within ever-greater political left-right confusionism and disorientation, while sometimes bashing neoliberalism profusely, political parties, leaders and the public sphere (should they even not be particularly adverse to immigration, of which Europe does have a need at least as workers) express strong anti-immigration views in calculation of their constituencies' wishes. Migrants and refugees (now often seen as muslims) are reified and transformed into dispensable elements. Nancy Fraser writes: “In Europe, by contrast [with the USA], dislike of neoliberalism is palpable. *But its principal expressions are anti-immigrant*

populism and xenophobic anti-Europeanism,<sup>322</sup> on the one hand, and demoralized passivity, on the other hand.”

The small subcontinent is a particularly insidious example of what is going on in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and within the new world-configuration of powers.<sup>323</sup> Although we have been hearing about a massive migration crisis, one could say that there is no crisis of migration, of migrants, of immigrants or refugees, but that there is a profound crisis of welcoming, care and solidarity. It should be briefly remembered that the concept of care has been developed by feminist theory and practice. The pandemic of 2020 displayed how obviously care is radically fundamental. It values *reproductive work* more than production, intent on creating a *society of care*. Neoliberalism has completely neglected the necessity of care (from the individual to the social and state levels). Care means caring for oneself, for the other(s), for the planet, for environment, and for the climate: *caring for life*, as a value, precedes any consideration of production that our global economic and political system has however prioritized. Within the care concerns, the ones about the *freedom of movement for everyone*, especially from south to north, is basic. Migrants, passersby could hardly be said to be welcome today. They are parked in temporary official as well as wild, improvised camps all over Europe and beyond. They face rejection, pushing back (*refoulement*), racism, and utter violence of all sorts. This crisis of welcoming, denial of elementary hospitality is a corollary of a crisis in representation.<sup>324</sup> It was not a crisis in an excess of arrivals; rather, it was both one of representing oneself (Europeans to themselves) and representing or even imagining the other. We could say that it is actually part of an epistemological crisis coming to maturity and becoming more and more visible, but one that is drawing on the history of western modernity for which all other epistemes and points of view but the hegemonic one were erased, and are now slowly re-emerging, or have survived in liminality. Migration has meanwhile become politicized beyond the cold war, within rising populisms and politics of border control in view of “zero tolerance” for immigration.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Hegemony as Capitalist Strategy: For a Neo-Marxian Critique of Financialized Capitalism”, in *Perspectives sur la philosophie d’Ernesto Laclau*. Introduction by Rada Iveković, Diogo Sardinha and Patrice Vermeren, Paris, l’Harmattan 2020.

<sup>323</sup> Sandro Mezzadra, *Un mondo da guadagnare. Per una teoria politica del presente*, Roma, Meltemi 2020.

<sup>324</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, interview “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical: réaffirmer les droits à la mobilité et à l’hospitalité”, *op. cit.* in *Critique internationale. Revue comparative de sciences sociales*, N°84, 2019.

<sup>325</sup> See “La cause des migrants”, ed. by Pauline Brückner, Daniel Veron & Youri Lou Vertongen in *Critique internationale*, N°84, 2019, *op. cit.*, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-critique-internationale-2019-3.htm>. Also *Hérodote* N°174, Paris, September 2019.

A first European (future) “Schengen Agreement” – covering the gradual abolishment of the internal borders between some countries of the Union (“Schengen countries”) and an extended control of the external borders, was signed in 1985, but was extended over the years and in full swing between 26 European countries from 1995 on, when the European Union lifted in principle its internal borders. While lifting the inner borders, Europe however maintained the nationhood of each separate European country. If we compare the EU with the Nonaligned movement, we shall see that the latter tried to enhance a common identity where all nonaligned countries would be included, but where the principle of the coming together would transcend nation, state, religion, language in a *movement*. Nonaligned identity would indeed be a permanent transformation based on a southern or third world view, and would be set in a future to be achieved.

The episode of an internal opening of borders, complementary to outer closure, thought as a strengthening of the union and the symbol of its concept, is known as Europe’s “Schengen borders”. It was to allow free inner circulation of European citizens as well as of those foreigners who were either exempt of visa or equipped with a “Schengen visa” not easy to get to third world countries’ citizens. At the same time, outer European borders were to be collectively and in solidarity protected as common. This arrangement was also to prevent illegal immigration at outer borders. Unfortunately, the provision collapsed already during the 2016 summer massive arrival of groups of Syrian refugees, and it first collapsed in France: countries re-established inner borders in violation of their own Schengen border scheme, and started building outer<sup>326</sup> and inner walls and fences on those borders. Borders were exported to neighboring countries. After the 2015-2016 migrants’ disaster (calamity in the sense of high mortality of the migrants and of an on-going war on them), rescue groups started organizing. The first closure of an inner Schengen border between two EU countries was the one re-established by France towards Italy. In that way, European member states individually contradict their common will inbuilt in the European Union, and reactivate state sovereignty, which, in modernity, has always been linked with the erection of national borders. A major European principle is trampled here after a short-lived Schengen arrangement that was thought to be progressive and transnational. The European Union or her principle collapsed in the summer of 2015 at the occasion of the abominable “Greek crisis”, when the EU acted ruthlessly to Greece condemning her population to utter poverty, and her politics to humiliation. That was

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<sup>326</sup> Without any restraint: outer borders are closed, outsourced and exported elsewhere.



soon followed (in 2016) by the arrival of the refugee-seekers,<sup>327</sup> mostly from Syria where a proxy war was (and still is) raging. Summer 2016 already saw intra-Schengen European border closures, invalidating Schengen itself. The dilemma and controversy about *immigration management* and *border control* became visible in 2016: the two tasks were to a large extent incompatible, and difficult to be performed by one and the same agency.

Europe's *crisis of hospitality* and of *care* (rather than a migration crisis) was sufficient to shatter the Schengen system of borders, which was subsequently and additionally challenged by the unexpected coronavirus covid-19 pandemic in 2020. At this point, it was discovered that the virus doesn't respect sovereignty, but that, as Elspeth Guild and Didier Bigo wrote, "[a]vailability of simple medical supplies like masks and hydroalcoholic gel depends on state sovereignty. [...] [M]utual recognition of medical diplomas across the EU is more honoured in the breach than the observance. [...] While COVID-19 has no respect for state borders, medical personnel have to respect it. Border controls are a reflex action by bureaucracies seeking to establish their claim to state sovereignty."<sup>328</sup> According to the authors borders, having inevitably a symbolic value but being otherwise helpless in the face of the scale of international travel, they are not able to deal with medical aspects. "[F]rom a public health perspective, the most important response should be to provide care including isolation.*(ibid.)*" "Of which the Schengen borders are incapable. The authors further say: "[O]ne of the first COVID-19 reactions of some EU states was to close their borders with their neighbors. The first to do so on COVID-19 grounds was Austria (11/3), followed by Hungary (13/3), then Denmark, Lithuania and the Czech R (14/3), Germany and Portugal on 13/3, Poland (15/3), Estonia and Spain on 17/3, Finland on 19/3 and France merged its temporary border controls for terrorism purposes to COVID-19 in early March. But this accounts for only 12 of the 27 Member States.[...] [T]he state sovereign reflex to close borders with the rest of the world (uninhibited by EU internal rules) was greater among these countries."<sup>329</sup> So it was easier to close transcontinental borders on the occasion of covid-19 (but we know that those numbers kept rising in the earlier case of closure to would-be immigrants).

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<sup>327</sup> Over a million of people, or maybe even two million, at that time. At least 800.000 of those got asylum in Germany, after which the episode was closed and no new immigrants were admitted.

<sup>328</sup> Elspeth Guild & Didier Bigo, "Rethinking EU Borders in the time of COVID-19", April 16, 2020 in *Compas*: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2020/rethinking-eu-borders-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

<sup>329</sup> Guild & Bigo, *ibid.*

The first victims of the closure of borders be it because of social-nativist politics and the hospitality crisis or because of covid-19, are the migrants and refugees. The authors continue: “Many EU states failed to take into account their international obligation to provide access to their territory to everyone who needs protection from persecution or torture. UNHCR had to remind them that refusing access to the territory to refugees is and always has been illegal. Sadly, this message has yet to be heeded.”<sup>330</sup>

While Asia developed exponentially since the decolonization decade of the 1960s, or at least very rapidly over the past thirty years (i.e. during the last leg of contemporary capitalist globalization), and while it elevated out of poverty millions of people, it was the other way around in Europe. In Europe, while rich economic elites, limited in numbers, managed immense profits, the flipside of those profits has been that the number of poor people has drastically increased and so has the class gap (5 million poor in Italy; in France, at least one million people live beneath the threshold of poverty, which is around 1000 € in 2019; and it is worse in some European otherwise prosperous countries), while some cities developed extraordinarily in proportion to the states’ loss of power, and yet extreme precariousness grew in the former middle classes, due to the rapid dismantlement of the welfare state, of the social state and of industries, all this while political life is fragmented, the consensus and trust of the peripheries to the central state are lost, political parties have become inoperative, and nationalisms are growing.<sup>331</sup> National-populists unduly blame all of this on immigration. In the face of this, instead of the quest for a shared solution, fear of the others, of an “invasion”, of “a great replacement”<sup>332</sup> as well as nationalisms go rampant and are merrily warmongering. The unjustified panic of invasion actually doesn’t allow to see migrations in all their international wholesome dimension, but only through one perspective which privileges one’s

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<sup>330</sup> Guild & Bigo, *ibid.* While the number 12/27 appears in the mentioned blog, the proportion of 19/26 appears in Elspeth Guild’s private video a fortnight later on the 48<sup>th</sup> day of the Paris lockdown (or Mayday 2020). The authors seem to think that 12/27 or even 19/26 represent a positive and small proportion of intra-Schengen border closures, because not all countries (27 or 26, Brexit intervening) adhered to them (“only” 12 or 19). I doubt this optimistic view. Let us be reminded that some of these closures consist in barbed-wire fences and walls patrolled by the military under arms or, in some places, by civilian militias, and that these have a longer sinister history in Europe and elsewhere.

<sup>331</sup> Nicola Zingaretti, “Caro Cacciari, dobbiamo fermare i barbari”, in *L’Espresso* N°28, “Capitani e no”, anno LXV, 7-7-2019, pp. 30-35.

<sup>332</sup> *Le grand remplacement* (“The great replacement”) is the title of an e-book by Renaud Camus (on Lulu, a selfpublishing on-line platform, 2011). There has been much controversy around that book and its xenophobic supremacist ideas, but its title gave the name to the expression “Le grand remplacement” and to a national populist belief that Europe’s and France’s white population will soon be replaced by southern immigrants, seen as mainly muslim.

own viewpoint and imagined interest. According to Ned Rossiter and from the point of view of a *Logistical Media Theory*, a process of provincializing is at work here: “To foreground the provincial as a limit horizon for media-theoretical analyses of power is not to make a distinction between the provincial and some variant of neoliberal globality. We are always-already provincial. This is our situation. Provincialization is an historical process that afflicts both centers and margins of empire”.<sup>333</sup>

Elsbeth Guild concludes: “The EU is fully able to adjust its border control and migration management systems to meet legitimate demand for mobility. The EU response to Ukraine is an example of a well-considered and human rights-oriented approach to borders and migration. The key is to acknowledge that migration and movement of people is a political question where the preferences of ultra-patriotic leaders should not be tolerated.”<sup>334</sup>

All of this is happening within a general scare regarding climate change and the growing of a general awareness regarding the imminent ecological catastrophe (or a foreseeable end of the world). But the ecologist mind-set is often, though not always, ahistorical and apolitical.

### **Migrants as missing citizens. The togetherness of citizenship**

Migrants who survive, get through and reach Europe are transformed into homeless undocumented people on the streets, bereft of a labor and residency permit. Few are integrated. When they work – and some do work for years, but their rights are not recognized if they do not exist juridically. This is particularly the case in France (in other countries, like the UK, once they are in, they can work; but this may not last). France knew a bold movement of the undocumented (*sans-papiers*) coming out of the closet as political subjects in 1996,<sup>335</sup> which has been extended into today’s migrants’ and their supporting associations efforts at getting

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<sup>333</sup> Ned Rossiter, “Logistical Media Theory. The Politics of Time, and the Geopolitics of Automation”, manuscript 2019, p. 1.

<sup>334</sup> E. Guild, “Interrogating Europe’s Borders: Reflections from an Academic Career”, <https://mobile.repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/208099/208099.pdf?sequence=1> *op. cit.*, p. 17. It could be said however that Europe too did add to some confusion in Ukraine, by proposing her the choice between a European option and the Russian option. It was unrealistic alluring (EU was not going to admit Ukraine any time soon). Ukraine should never have accepted the either-or posture on this topic. Clearly, the country needs to be able to rely on both the EU and Russia, and the killing dilemma needs to be deconstructed.

<sup>335</sup> Alain Badiou, *De quoi Sarkozy est-il le nom?*, Paris, Nouvelles Éditions Lignes 2007; Badiou, “La situation épidémique”, Paris, Tracts de crise, Gallimard 2020.

dignity as well as political and social rights. The way they are officially treated has to do with the spirit of colonial rule still pervading in the country.

In the colonial era of a previous globalization – the latter being gradual, recurrent, permanent-, there were continents and “empty spaces” open to immigration. But since the nation-state form has prevailed over the planet, which means since western modernity, there are no such possibilities any more for the “surplus” populations. These have no place to go to. As for historic colonization, it was a double-edged process: for departing Europeans (who were, at that time, emigrating forever), emigration was a salutary solution (the way it might be for migrating Africans today, if they make it). It was a liberating, creative and emancipatory act of individual sovereignty and of becoming a subject-agent, possibly a citizen. It saved from hunger, poverty, civil wars, death or prison. Exiles didn’t care about fatherland. They were looking for another homeland. They were looking forward to building another country as theirs. They also suffered the many pangs of exile, which is not an easy condition, and which should also be seen in general, as much as the migrants’ movements today, as political.<sup>336</sup> The Americas were colonized on that basis, by individuals. Who are today’s migrants? They are our missing citizens, or our co-citizens. Those we miss and actually need in building our country or subcontinent. Without them, “our” homeland, in this case i mean Europe, wouldn’t be what it is. Building a place to make it livable politically, socially, economically, environmentally and humanely, *takes action performed together*. This *togetherness* is a key-element in any project. Europe needs its immigrants, both present and still to come. She needs them socially, culturally, generationally (the EU is aging) and economically. Europe needs to let them in and abolish walls, to admit them to its citizenship and residency rights. If not with these future citizens, Europe will resort to a discriminatory and racist politics where “they” will be excluded and only “we” will remain to build “ethnically ‘pure’” and closed countries prone to rampant fascism. The temptation for that is great both in nationalisms linked to individual countries and “identities” through “belonging”, as well in an all-European nationalism that slowly builds up in spite of its being in contradiction with nationalist particularisms. This all-European “nationalism”, an anachronism, appears as a frontline of “defense” against “others”, especially those coming from the global south and from areas where Europe has historic responsibilities that she ignores. In any case “patriarchy is the backbone of any form of

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<sup>336</sup> Darko Suvin,<sup>[1]</sup><sup>[2]</sup><sup>[3]</sup> “Exile as mass outrage and intellectual mission: miseries and splendors of forced displacement” (2004), in Darko Suvin, [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)

nationalism.”<sup>337</sup>

## 6. Postsocialism and transition

### About Yugoslavia and the eastern bloc

The conditions in post-socialist countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (after 30 years of post-socialist “transition” – the term is an infamous ideological construct), at a difference with western Europe, are worth mentioning, since they present specific features due to a distinct history and the inheritance of a different modernity,<sup>338</sup> including a lack of experience in formal liberal democracy but with a long history (now generally cancelled) of “people’s democracy” and of predatory politics inflicted on them by neoliberal transition.<sup>339</sup> As Mignolo and Tlostanova write, in their own context, “[w]e wish [...]to take into account the Russian revolution and the split of the Enlightenment project into two modernities (the liberal and the socialist).”<sup>340</sup> Also, “[t]hus we can say, that modernity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was realized in two forms – the liberal/capitalist modernity and the socialist/statist one.”<sup>341</sup> Similarly, in a decolonial move, Françoise Vergès locates a decolonial feminism in its international and its gender and class context, in places that are *not* Europe. “They [*elles*] undermine civilizational feminism which, having transformed women’s rights into an assimilationist ideology and one of integration into the neoliberal order, reduces the revolutionary aspirations of women to the 50/50 sharing of privileges imparted to white males of the white supremacy.”<sup>342</sup>

<sup>337</sup> Aleksandar Hemon, “Kusturičin Andrić se ne bi bavio kompleksnošću bosanskog društva”, an interview by Aleksandra Ćuk, in *Danas*, 26-8-2019, pp. 17-18; see also Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam”, *op. cit.* p. 27.

<sup>338</sup> Mignolo-Tlostanova, “Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option”, in *Kult 6, Special Issue* “Epistemologies of Transformation: The Latin American Decolonial Option and its Ramifications”, Fall 2009; Madina Tlostanova, “Introduction. A Futureless Ontology?” *DECOLONIAL ART FROM THE RUINS OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE*, Durham, Duke University Press 2018. Rada Iveković, “Radomir Konstantinović, La philosophie de bourg, La mort de Descartes” in *République internationale des lettres*, 1998: [www.republique-des-lettres.com/k1/konstantinovic.shtml](http://www.republique-des-lettres.com/k1/konstantinovic.shtml); “La mort de Descartes et la désolation du bourg (R. Konstantinović)”, in *Transeuropéennes* 21, 2001, pp. 174-178.

<sup>339</sup> Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks “Introduction. Radical Politics in the Desert of Transition”, in Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks (eds.), *Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism. Radical Politics After Yugoslavia*, London, Verso 2015, p. 7. The authors criticise the European Union’s persisting *mission civilisatrice*.

<sup>340</sup> Mignolo-Tlostanova, “Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option”, *cit.* p. 130.

<sup>341</sup> Mignolo-Tlostanova, “Global Coloniality and the Decolonial Option”, *cit.* p. 136. See Matthieu Renault, *L’empire de la révolution: Lénine et les musulmans de Russie*, Paris, Syllepse 2017.

<sup>342</sup> Françoise Vergès, *Un féminisme décolonial*, Paris, La fabrique 2019.

Transition of the post-socialist countries of Europe has been engaged since the 1989 period.<sup>343</sup> According to Madina Tlostanova, “A number of post-socialist communities started cultivating bitter reactions of disappointment in the European, and wider Western, project, and their critiques resembled, and even openly borrowed from, postcolonial arguments [...]. And it was a story of the suddenly cancelled Socialist modernity that left its voluntary and involuntary participants and agents in ruin and unable to rejoin history.”<sup>344</sup>

1989 or the end of the cold war in Europe entailed an unnamed transition to the neoliberal economy of globalized capitalism, and also the construction of a collective amnesia regarding everything during the socialist period, while decades of life-experience of individuals but also of societies and of entire populations was ignored, disregarded, dismissed and despised. Countries in transition (this is also true of post-colonial transitions) were supposed to “catch-up” with more developed countries and to have been lagging behind. They were now summoned to fill in the gaps. In the framework of western excessive ideological triumphalism after 1989, the binary construct of capitalism-socialism disaggregated, and capitalism became the all-pervasive model for all. Socialism was not only considered failed and obsolete, but was also erased from memories together with people’s lifetime. Nevertheless, a lot can still be learned from that experience.

The politics of European socialist countries over the last decades of socialism will here be evoked marginally and only in view of understanding today’s disproportionate rejecting attitudes to immigration. They will be addressed while mainly having in mind a country which had been exceptional in the context (but is no more so, since it disappeared), Yugoslavia, and there too, in contrast with the “eastern bloc” of the USSR and satellites, of which Yugoslavia was ultimately not a member. In the words of Johanna Bockman: “In 1948, the Soviet leadership expelled Yugoslavia from Cominform, the Soviet-dominated organization uniting the Communist parties of the East Bloc. Set on a new path, Yugoslav leaders soon rejected the Soviet system

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<sup>343</sup> 1989: the year, but actually a whole period, meaning the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the visible leg of the last late-capitalist globalization in the absence of opposite patterns (such as socialism). On 1989, among others, Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata*, Fraktura, Zaprešić 2011. Also, Jean-Yves Potel, “Les sens de 1989: la démocratie ou la guerre? (1/3)”, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-yves-potel/blog/270819/les-sens-de-1989-des-revolutions-democratiques-13>; “Les sens de 1989: Des révolutions démocratiques (2/3)”, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-yves-potel/blog/280819/les-sens-de-1989-la-democratie-ou-la-guerre-23>; “Les sens de 1989: le gâchis néolibéral (3/3)”, [https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-yves-potel/blog/310819/les-sens-de-1989-le-gachis-neoliberal-33#\\_ftn13](https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jean-yves-potel/blog/310819/les-sens-de-1989-le-gachis-neoliberal-33#_ftn13).

<sup>344</sup> Tlostanova, “Introduction. A Futureless Ontology?” in *Decolonial Art...*, *op. cit.* p. 4 & p. 9.

and developed a new kind of socialism, which they understood required the immediate withering away of the state as a next step on the way to communism.

This new form of socialism aimed to decentralize the state and the economy, create worker-based economic democracy, move away from state ownership of the means of production to its ‘social’ ownership, and expand the role of the market in the economy.”<sup>345</sup> But it is not to be forgotten that the eventually ossified political system in Yugoslavia was based upon what Nebojša Popov, in a perhaps blunter way, called “partisan”, including its very important and legitimizing antifascism: “Partisan [...] is restricted to a once-only usage of the people, until a party-state is installed and strengthened.”<sup>346</sup>

In a dispute between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (and between Stalin and Tito), Yugoslavia was kicked out of the bloc and then departed voluntarily as well towards a big transformation. Having no more support in the eastern bloc, Yugoslavia co-initiated and joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a more politicised and enlarged sequel of the Bandung conference of 1955. From the 1950s on indeed, developing countries forged the Non-Aligned Movement, a global transcontinental movement meant to build a “New International Economic Order”<sup>347</sup> *avant la lettre*, independent from Western Europe, the United States, and the “developed” world, but also independent from eastern Europe.<sup>348</sup> Yugoslav economists theorised the withering away of the state because they expected the market to regulate economy. Paradoxically, while the state was supposed to wither away according to the Yugoslav Marxist blueprint, Yugoslavia still expected the state to first strengthen, organise and build up institutions, and wither away much later, probably as part of a wider design. Today, finally, studies of post-socialism come out of the shackles of

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<sup>345</sup> Johanna Bockman, “The Long Road to 1989. Neoclassical Economics, Alternative Socialisms, and the Advent of Neoliberalism”, in [https://www.academia.edu/7103289/The\\_Long\\_Road\\_to\\_1989\\_Neoclassical\\_Economics\\_Alternative\\_Socialisms\\_and\\_the\\_Advent\\_of\\_Neoliberalism](https://www.academia.edu/7103289/The_Long_Road_to_1989_Neoclassical_Economics_Alternative_Socialisms_and_the_Advent_of_Neoliberalism)

<sup>346</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave”, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>347</sup> Johanna Bockman, “Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism: The Economic Ideas behind the New International Economic Order”, in [https://www.academia.edu/11780898/Socialist\\_Globalization\\_against\\_Capitalist\\_Neocolonialism\\_The\\_Economic\\_Ideas\\_behind\\_the\\_New\\_International\\_Economic\\_Order](https://www.academia.edu/11780898/Socialist_Globalization_against_Capitalist_Neocolonialism_The_Economic_Ideas_behind_the_New_International_Economic_Order). Catherine Samary, *D'un communisme décolonial à la démocratie des communs : Octobre 1917-2017*, Vulaines sur Seine (FR), Editions du Croquant 2018.

<sup>348</sup> See Paul Stubbs, “Socialist Yugoslavia and the Antinomies of the Non-Aligned Movement”, in *Lefteast*, June 17, 2019, <https://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/yugoslavia-antinomies-non-aligned-movement/>; Johanna Bockman, “A Variety of Globalizations”, in [https://www.academia.edu/21958098/A\\_Variety\\_of\\_Globalizations](https://www.academia.edu/21958098/A_Variety_of_Globalizations).



the duality of the opposing ideologies of the Cold War, both for eastern Europe of the USSR bloc and, on the other hand, for Yugoslavia.<sup>349</sup> The workers' ownership of the means of production was supposed to move beyond state ownership (which had been officially abandoned and was to be overcome in the direction of the withering away of the state) and bring about true communism. It was also to bring about true socialist democracy through work and through "people's ownership" or social ownership, *društveno vlasništvo*, as opposed to capitalist private ownership or Soviet-like state ownership. State ownership as in the USSR was seen to be far behind social ownership, and it was seen as strengthening the state instead of its withering away, as was the Yugoslav literal totally unrealistic utopia.<sup>350</sup> There had been a great interest for the Yugoslav "market socialism model" from the 1950s on in the west too, some theoreticians compared it to the utopian "Illyrian model of economy", often to the former's disadvantage for not complying with its project, sometimes identifying the two.<sup>351</sup> The Yugoslav state did soon end up "withering away" indeed, but through a civil war in the 1990s... And it was a speedy affair. But in the sixties and seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, just as a global transition to the financial form of capitalism had begun, the NAM had a strong influence on the UN and on UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development), and seemed to be bending world politics. This was the period of the mass

<sup>349</sup> Chiara Bonfiglioli, "The First UN World Conference on Women (1975)<sup>[1]</sup> as a Cold War Encounter: Recovering Anti-Imperialist, Non-Aligned and Socialist Genealogies", in *Filozofija i društvo* XXVII (3), 2016, pp. 521-541, DOI: 10.2298/FID1603521B. The author shows the intersection of gender, society, economic development, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-imperialism, practiced by Yugoslav state feminists, and practiced by dissident feminists of that time as well (which is not clear from this article). Contrary to what the author implies, NAM was not part of Bandung and did not join it, although it drew some inspiration from there. The Bandung group (of which Yugoslavia was only an unofficial observer) was a meeting of Afro-Asian countries. NAM had a different orientation, being more political while the first were more economic. See also Paul Stubbs, "Socialist Yugoslavia and the Antinomies of the Non-Aligned Movement", in *Lefteast*, June 17, 2019, <https://www.criticatac.ro/lefteast/yugoslavia-antinomies-non-aligned-movement/> and "The Emancipatory Afterlives of Non-Aligned Internationalism", in *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Publications* online, <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/41556/After>, January 2020.

<sup>350</sup> Johanna Bockman, "Markets in the name of socialism", Interview to *Rebel News*: <https://rebelnews.com/jackmarsh/markets-in-the-name-of-socialism-an-interview-with-johanna-bockman/>

<sup>351</sup> The so-called "Illyrian model of economy" was so dubbed by US economist Benjamin Ward who called Yugoslav post-1954 reform of specific market socialism "the Illyrian model" (a name that doesn't correspond to anything but the imagination of who proposed it): B. Ward, "Firm in Illyria: market syndicalism" in *The American Economic Review* 48:4 (1958), 566-89: [https://books.google.fr/books?id=trL\\_DQAAQBAJ&pg=PT43&lpg=PT43&dq=the+Illyrian+model+of+economy&source=bl&ots=kbIzk\\_LBSg&sig=ACfU3U3HzMVuG1te5TD0TXZyL\\_6s7mGoJw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj9-emxI\\_rjAhV0DmMBHdW1Bjc4ChDoATAIegQICBAB#v=onepage&q=the%20Illyrian%20model%20of%20economy&f=false](https://books.google.fr/books?id=trL_DQAAQBAJ&pg=PT43&lpg=PT43&dq=the+Illyrian+model+of+economy&source=bl&ots=kbIzk_LBSg&sig=ACfU3U3HzMVuG1te5TD0TXZyL_6s7mGoJw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj9-emxI_rjAhV0DmMBHdW1Bjc4ChDoATAIegQICBAB#v=onepage&q=the%20Illyrian%20model%20of%20economy&f=false). He or others sometimes saw the Yugoslav model as not corresponding (or not being quite up to) the imaginary and utopian "Illyrian" model. Generations of economists continued discussing the "Illyrian model" as if the appellation they gave it were not in itself problematic, considering the Yugoslav geographic space they compared it to or they sometimes situated it in, creating thus a somewhat mythical concept. On the same, see some information in Johanna Bockman, "Markets in the name of socialism", *op. cit.*



post-WWII decolonisation and of the entrance in great numbers of African countries and other third-world countries in the UN. Yugoslavia played a leading role in this movement with India, Egypt, Indonesia, Ghana and, later, Cuba as well as many others.

### **Who will be the allies of the new nomads? Women very much**

Nevertheless, although Yugoslavia ended up as a failed project, the experience of Yugoslav state and official historic feminists (between 1945 and the nineties) who countered, resisted and criticised a new feminist wave from the end of the seventies in Yugoslavia, is worth mentioning. This is so in spite of the differences between the two, not the least because of the actual *achievements* of state feminism, but also because of their utopian charge which is welcome and would be needed today: that experience can be seen as a worthy framework to inherit from and reinvent from, of an alliance of feminism, migration support movements, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist movements, as well as climate and environment aware endeavour. With many third world developing and newly independent countries, Yugoslavia had in common the experience of resistance to Nazism and fascism, which it equated with these other countries' anti-colonial resistance and struggles. That resistance and struggle were historic founding elements of socialist Yugoslavia, but also of its resistance feminist movement, however official and statelike. The difference between Yugoslav state feminists and a new generation that started new feminist activities mainly at universities by the end of the seventies, was in that the latter, not rejecting the achievements of the first, demanded much more in the social, political and cultural sphere. In addition, the latter were reading feminism coming from the west and soon from the third world too (while no feminism was coming from the socialist bloc). State feminists believed that dissident feminists rejected Marxism, but the truth is that these actually elaborated "women's question" beyond Marxism and beyond its weak points and blind spots. State feminists also believed that the condition of women needed always to be contextualised *intersectionally* with labour conditions, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism etc. and that this should always be spelt out in the first place. They had actually *invented intersectionality* much *avant la lettre* although they didn't give it a name. Younger dissidents took the socialist revolution and its heritage especially regarding women as a given fact, and questioned, for example, the way self-management misfired in many ways or dis-functioned for women, how absent they were from it – and thus from sharing power – because they were oppressed by reproduction and housework. Yugoslav society was very patriarchal in spite of a progressive legislation. Feminists didn't believe that

women's condition should wait any longer in order to be alleviated and solved, they thought it was an absolute priority for all. These new feminists didn't reject the experience of the former generation, but were also busy with the personal and individual level that state feminists despised as bourgeois, and impatient with measures they didn't see coming that would correct and eradicate patriarchy. They had in view spheres of life that state feminists didn't even perceive. They were irritated by the fact that no improvement and re-education seemed to be asked of menfolk, and that sexism and violence against women persisted. They didn't believe that these were mere remnants of former times, but thought rather that power, state-building and the construction of the nation(s) were structurally patriarchal. At the same time, at a difference with many western countries (for ex. Italy), Yugoslav women at that time had the right to divorce, to abortion, and all formal rights equal to men reiterated – on paper. The difference between state and dissident feminist should be seen as a typical *generation gap* among women, and also as the occasion to practice and implement intersectionality, although the latter was not a known concept at that time.

While the Soviet Union, the hegemonic (and first) socialist country at the time, had a controlled non-market economy of “state socialism” (soon called “state capitalism” in Yugoslavia and perhaps elsewhere), Yugoslavia on the contrary opted for a market economy, thinking that democracy would come from economy, from below and from self-management, though this is not what happened eventually.<sup>352</sup> Market economy was already globalized to a great extent. Yugoslav economists believed that *market socialism* would rectify the failures of *state socialism* (or *state capitalism*) in that the economy itself would naturally correct the course without any need for the state to intervene. Ideally, the state would be in charge of administration and coordination, while market economy would obtain democracy. Within Yugoslavia, this was called workers' *self-management* or *workers' control*. Workers' control corresponded, on the side of external politics, to the Non-Aligned Movement, which also proclaimed non-interference from without (i.e. from the NAM on individual member states' inner politics). International equality and democracy between states was also proclaimed, thought to be obtained through the UN, facilitated by the NAM which in the sixties and seventies had great international prestige and promised a bright future to many a small and just liberated country. NAM was intent on struggling on behalf of southern countries at a common

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<sup>352</sup> Darko Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi. Radiografija SFR Jugoslavije* (Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia), op. cit.

level through all the institutions of the UN. But many thought that the NAM was actually only reformist and capitalist, and indeed there were diverse visions of and options for the NAM within its members. However, the NAM was primarily and strongly oriented towards anti-colonialism. The NAM and at that time UNCTAD's<sup>353</sup> economic ideas (brought to it by the NAM) such as clearing all debts of formerly colonized countries, were actually looking for a *globalization alternative* to the capitalist one and for a south-south orientation and interdependence.<sup>354</sup> Unfortunately, they didn't necessarily quite know how to obtain it. It was a full-fledged alternative project of a world order with a strong theory. It was a utopia again.

But in the 1980s, it became clear that workers' control in Yugoslavia had seen too many state interventions according to clientelist interests, contrary to its official declarations. Due to its local shortcomings and the globally oncoming financialized capitalism, nobody was aware of that at the time. The latter would produce a worldwide crisis, while the NAM had lost much of its influence in global institutions. And, in spite of its better performance than by a state-controlled economy like the USSR's, Yugoslavia wasn't quite up to her utopia. This was what the students during the students' movement in 1968 in Yugoslavia had protested about (mainly in Belgrade, but also in Zagreb and in other places). They demanded that the proclaimed socialist aims and promises be kept, and rejected the growing class divide that was officially inexistent and invisible.

The symbolic division of Europe and of the World, which also amounted to the end of the Cold War at least in Europe, ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall as the symbol of that division in Europe and with the reunification of Germany. By the crisis of the eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some Yugoslav but also some other economists had seen the 1989 crisis itself as a possible road towards some kind of sustainable socialism, although others, such as Jeffrey Sachs saw it as "the end of socialism and the beginning of the transition to capitalism."<sup>355</sup> This is what it ended being, and it was very brutal. But, as Andreja Živković wrote while studying the oncoming economic crisis in Yugoslavia in the context of the European construction,

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<sup>353</sup> UNCTAD (the UN Conference on Trade and Development) was established in 1964 by the UN General Assembly, on the request of NAM voiced at its first 1961 kick-off conference in Belgrade (proposed by Yugoslavia and other NAM countries).

<sup>354</sup> Tvrtko Jakovina, *op. cit.*

<sup>355</sup> Johanna Bockman, "The Long Road to 1989. Neoclassical Economics, Alternative Socialisms, and the Advent of Neoliberalism", *op. cit.*

“[t]hus the opening to foreign capital (FDI and financial flows) in reality represented a transfer of value to EU capitals, the very sign of dependent development, taking the concrete form of the combination of a debt trap and external recession (i.e. the collapse of external financial flows).”<sup>356</sup>

Much of the politics in the east-European bloc as well as in Yugoslavia (in the latter, according to Darko Suvin, in particular from about 1975 on, and as the regime gradually “re-stalinised” itself)<sup>357</sup> ended up developing what one could call forms of populism<sup>358</sup> where, essentially, society is de-structured, the state disorganized, and people are depersonalized,<sup>359</sup> especially as the regime’s failures became evident and there were elites’ interests to be saved, a protection that would take on the form of nationalisms. Not surprisingly, as historian Dubravka Stojanović writes, “[P]opulism is indeed a system, notwithstanding that it derives its greatest support by presenting itself precisely as *anti-systemic*. Its rhetoric is marked by one prefix: anti. It presents itself as anti-urbanist, anti-modernizing, *anti-immigrant*, anti-capitalist, anti-individualistic, anti-Semitic, anti-communist... [...] [A]lbeit showing itself as “anti”, as rebellious, it is in fact a very firm system, authoritarian in its very essence. It swallows up all before it, depositing its ‘credo’ over everything. It annuls institutions, tramples over laws, alters collective memory, constructs a new identity for a nation [...]”<sup>360</sup> And, as Nebojša Popov writes, “Where the emancipatory process has started and created norms, the institutions and procedures keeping irrational destructive energy under control, violence is an occasional dramatic historic episode; but where such a process is only at its timid beginnings, violence has incomparably more dramatic dimensions, and it prevents the very establishing of elementary conditions for democracy. In the latter case it is not a marginal, but a lasting and dominant feature.”<sup>361</sup>

A distinction between extreme neoliberalism (TINA, “There is no alternative”, M. Thatcher)

<sup>356</sup> Andreja Živković, “From the Market... to the Market: The Debt Economy After Yugoslavia”, in Horvat and Štiks (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>357</sup> Also, Nebojša Popov, “Traumatologija partijske države”, in Nebojša Popov (ed.), *Srpska strana rata. Trauma i katarza u istorijskom pamćenju*, Belgrade, Republika 1996, p. 105.

<sup>358</sup> Darko Suvin, *Samo jednom se ljubi... (Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities)*, *ibid.*, although he himself doesn’t use the term “populism”. Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave / Serbian populism. From a marginal phenomenon to a dominant one”, *op. cit.*

<sup>359</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Traumatologija partijske države”, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

<sup>360</sup> Dubravka Stojanović, *Populism the Serbian Way*, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9. Italics mine, R.I.

<sup>361</sup> Nebojša Popov, “Srpski populizam. Od marginalne do dominantne pojave”, in a supplement to *Vreme* N°135, 24-5-1993, p. 5.

and fascism (“neither left nor right”) may be taken into account and maintained, although it is sometimes difficult. And many politicians now seem to support the ambiguity of “neither-nor”.

Močnik recognizes Yugoslavia to have been, in its partitions, the avant-garde of the retro-garde. The disintegration of Yugoslavia started in the early eighties (Tito himself died in 1980). Local reigning coalitions in the different republics and regions of Yugoslavia had wanted to maintain power. To do that, they reintroduced capitalism under the banner of separate national sovereignties based on right-wing ethnic nationalisms (reminiscent of their own historic fascisms), and this opened the way to fascistoid politics.<sup>362</sup> There are some similarities between historic fascism<sup>363</sup> and post-fascisms today. And it comes in grades as both Eco and Močnik<sup>364</sup> say. According to Rastko Močnik, Umberto Eco or Leonardo Boff, fascism is present *as a permanent possibility* that will materialise under adequate conditions.<sup>365</sup> Such suitable conditions, in the case of former socialist states that are weak and dependent (such as post-Yugoslav countries), are particularly receptive to fascism, Močnik writes, for the following reasons: ideologically because they have inbuilt fascist elements (such as racism, nationalism, national collectivism, the cult of power, hate, anti-intellectualism etc.) into their basis; and economically and politically because they were eager to join as subordinate the “world order” in the making. When liberalism is unable to face and resolve its contradictions, as was the case at the partition of Yugoslavia, it is prone to embark on fascism under conditions of general confusionism. The new political class in the making since the fall of socialism is opposed to any antifascist tradition, which is attributed to much hated “communism”, while the political class goes primarily for anticommunism under the banner of fascism, which is not always ideologically clear (or it is so as little as what others have called populism). When they explicitly condemn fascism to produce more confusionism, it is for the European international market, whereby they equate socialism-communist-stalinism and fascism. Any antifascist

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<sup>362</sup> Močnik, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>363</sup> Darko Suvin calls historic fascism “canonic fascism” in “To explain fascism today.” *Critique* 45.3 (2017), pp. 259-302, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03017605.2017.1339961>

<sup>364</sup> Rastko Močnik, *Extravagantia II, Koliko fašizma?* (“How much fascism?”), Ljubljana, Studia Humanitatis Minora 1995.

<sup>365</sup> Leonardo Boff, “There is in Brazil today a figure, more comical than ideological, who proposes fascism, in whose name violence is justified, and who defends torture and torturers, homophobia and other social deviations. It is always in the name of an order to be forged, using violence against the current disorder. Fascism has always been criminal.” In “Neo-fascism: a worldwide wave”, *Germ* (2018), <http://www.mondialisations.org/php/public/art.php?id=41907&lan=EN>

activity is therefore characterized as communism, says Močnik.<sup>366</sup> It is not always farsighted to accept the term of “antifascism” by anyone, especially not when fascism comes as an allegation.

If one analyses “fascism today”, as Alain Brossat does in his paper “Relancer l'analyse du fascisme, dans une perspective *dé(euro)centrique*”,<sup>367</sup> one is obviously tempted to see its worldwide spreading in at least the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and therefore one is enticed, like Brossat, to neglect its European roots. So attributing fascism to Europe alone could be some kind of decolonial fundamentalism or, paradoxically, even some sort of “eurocentrism”. But historic (Suvin: canonic) fascism came to be in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is now pretty much looming over the European subcontinent. Of course, with Brossat and many other analysts of fascism, we must take it in its history and its development. It is true that in places like Yugoslavia in its civil war throughout the 1990s, everyone accused their enemies of being fascists, to disqualify them. There was no escaping the label, whichever side you were on. Conflicts can be made much worse and deadlier when they haven't developed concepts and terms that allow an in-depth analysis. So, there are many more labels for fascism than there are fascisms, but this unfortunately doesn't mean that fascisms are not spreading particularly at our time, and that we shouldn't be worried. In that paper, Brossat doubts historically the notion of (post)colonial fascism, but doesn't solve the problem. Didn't nascent Nazism exercise the efficiency of its future “theory” after expropriation, through the concentration camps or reservations and ultimately through slaughter in a racial war and genocidal extermination of most of the Hereros and Namas in German South West Africa, present day Namibia (1904-1907)? Africans were not seen as humans. Is it OK not to take into account epistemological history? Against unnamed opponents, Brossat claims that they reduce fascism to a regime (and names immediately and rightly Duterte, Bolsonaro, Salvini, Trump). But those same phenomena have been profusely analyzed in the way that Brossat claims as right by some of those he would probably oppose, and who do not at all reduce today's fascism to a regime, indeed who even develop intricate distinctions between state fascism (*régime*) and social

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<sup>366</sup> Rastko Močnik, *Extravagantia II*, *Koliko fašizma?* op. cit.

<sup>367</sup> Brossat, “Relancer l'analyse du fascisme, dans une perspective *dé(euro)centrique*”, in *Ici et ailleurs*, December 2, 2019, <https://ici-et-ailleurs.org/contributions/politique-et-subjectivation/article/relancer-l-analyse-du>

fascism.<sup>368</sup> That both can exist together is even more worrisome. Beyond the racialization of social stratification, we could unfortunately say that fascism is endemic practically everywhere. But its being endemic is different from its coming to power and relying on a society fascist to a great degree. In this sense, Brossat is right, there are different geographic genealogies of fascisms, but also a general possibility of it. And it is OK to say, with Brossat but also with Eco, that historic Nazism is a version of fascism (this is how the metonymy of the name “fascism” has worked)? But Europeans shouldn’t neglect the genealogy of their European fascisms and Nazisms.<sup>369</sup> Although all power is “colonial” in its essence even when it doesn’t achieve much historic colonialism, it is true that historic colonialism and coloniality, as well as racial supremacism etc. (which, Brossat thinks, is the kernel of fascism) stem from Europe. They are intimately linked to European specific modernity, and have been supported by European fascisms when these came to be. The latter produced a hegemonic knowledge system that erased many alternative epistemes, not only on colonized continents but also domestically.

### **Post-socialist post-fascisms**

*Post-socialist post-fascisms* that have also come to exist, replace the old class domination with a new one, creating anew the bourgeois democracy instead of dismantling it as might have happened in an earlier historic fascist sequence. Through the imprecise term post-fascism, Močnik means to denote elements of fascism that traverse capitalism. Boaventura de Sousa Santos may be more precise on this, and from another angle (for him, the three basic social and political evils are colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy, and others are derived from these): there can be fascist elements in societies, societies themselves can be fascist and induce the state to take up and implement fascist politics. There is a difference between fascist societies and fascist regimes. In a number of cases, we can have the two together. Also, it is not that imperialism is the last stage of capitalism (Lenin). Worse, imperialism is inscribed into the capitalism’s DNA, as goes the other widely shared Marxist saying.

Tolerance is falsely much invoked in post-socialist societies, as a means of silencing the social conflict. But tolerance is also much needed in campaigns and activism aiming at protecting

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<sup>368</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “A emergência do fascismo social”, in *A gramática do tempo. Para uma nova cultura política*, p. 301-309, Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal), Edições Afrontamento 2006.

<sup>369</sup> Radomir Konstantinović identified Serbian nazism: any people, according to him, could turn nazi. R. Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke*, Nolit, Belgrade 1969.

minorities when it comes to lesser rights. This concerns gender, immigrants, various ethnic and otherwise (self)identified or minority groups that are treated as exceptions to the rule that confirms it. Instead of real equality, such claims of tolerance can only supplement inexistent real equality. In a way tolerance classifies those that it tries to support, showing its own paradox: tolerance confirms the exception that it denounces. A European concept, the nation makes its historic modern appearance at the time of the Westphalian accords in the midst of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and spreads over the continents through colonial conquests. The Westphalian accords will only be challenged as a reaction to the airplane attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001, by the “War on Terror”, through the attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan and by the establishing of an extraterritorial Guantanamo camp and of “extraordinary rendition actions”. Tariq Ali emphasizes that we have had a general state of emergency since 9/11,<sup>370</sup> imposed by the USA internationally, which never abated since. And it has been enhanced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The irresistible spreading of the concept of nation applies differently to different sides of the *abyssal line* (de Sousa Santos). A vertical and patriarchal construction favoring the existing hegemony in state-building and other aspects, the nation is a machine for exclusion of those who are not of the same “birth”. The national question, which is older than our times and has a long history, is intrinsically linked to the colonial question, which prevails in a new deadly wave between the two world wars and again today. The nation supports the state in its verticality, as much as it is in return supported by it. Different histories have given the opportunity to at least two different sequences: by one of the options, it is an established state (by any type of power, personal ambition or historic circumstances) that will create or enhance the nation. By the other, a nation fights to get a state (Palestine, the Kurds etc.). Nation building and state building coincide, but can also clash, especially in cases of partitions or political inequality. The nation appeals to sentiment and passion through identification with the “same” (same nation, ethnic group and even gender)<sup>371</sup> and de-identification with the “different”, whereby

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<sup>370</sup> Tariq Ali in conversation with Maja Pelević, *Diem25*, “Visible skies above, a tsunami of banalities below”, April 28, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpWva9pAyEg>

<sup>371</sup> R. Iveković, "Women, Nationalism and War: 'Make Love Not War'", *Hypatia*, Special Cluster on Eastern European Feminism, Vol. 8, N°4 (Fall 1993), pp. 113-126; reprinted in: *Women's Studies. Journal for Feminist*, «Selected Papers, Anniversary Issue 1992-2002», pp. 101-109; reprinted in: Paula Banerjee (ed.), *Women in Peace Politics, South Asian Peace Studies*, Vol. 3), New Delhi, Sage 2008, pp. 112-130. French (slightly different) version: "Les femmes, le nationalisme et la guerre", *Peuples Méditerranéens* N°61 (Yougoslavie. Logiques de l'exclusion), Dec.-1992, pp. 185-201. In Serbocroat: *Ženske studije* (Belgrade), 2-3/1995, pp. 9-23. In Macedonian: "Ženite, nacionalizmot i vojnata", in *Lettre internationale* 5-6, mart-juni 1997, god. II, Skopje, pp. 131-143. In Bulgarian: «Ženite, nacionalizmot i voinata : 'Pravi ljubov, a ne voina'» in *Ženski identičnosti na Balkanite*, ed. by Krasimira Daskalova & Kornelia Slavova, Sofia, Polis 2004, pp. 43-61.



both these categories (same, other) are constructed. Nowadays, foreigners, immigrants, refugees are perceived as “others” and as inassimilable. They are treated harshly accordingly. As we have passed from settlers’ immigration to immigration through labor, says M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, the profile of the foreigner has changed accordingly.<sup>372</sup> This, however, doesn’t prevent immigrants from being rejected on racist or nationalist grounds. In south and south-east Asia, the Rohingyas’ tragedy, after the religious cleansing and land grabbing operated by Myanmar’s powerful landowning Buddhist clergy, meets with the political resentment and populist setting in neighboring countries such as Bangladesh or India. The condition of minorities (Muslims, Tamils, Christians) in Sri Lanka is instrumentalized again by a Buddhist-landlords coalition. State building coincides, in such cases, with proprietors’ interests, while the persecuted minorities (oppressed by both the authorities and the majority society) flee when they can.

Who are the new nomads of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? We all are migrants or nomads in a way, *toute proportion gardée*. This is how *the migrants’ fate is universal*. There are now more and more people who are *forced* to move for all the multiple reasons we have been listing in this essay. *The right to stay in one’s own country* and not to have to migrate is a basic human right. That right is complementary to the indisputable and unquestionable equal *right to circulate and live in any country one wants to* or at least a country that one can access. More than often the country targeted is not a particular choice, but the result of compromise and (im)possibilities. This complementarity is essential but is regularly forgotten by politicians. It is necessary to strongly *stipulate such a right to live anywhere one chooses too*, and to assert it at the same level as the right to stay in one’s country, which is a right preferred and hammered by anti-immigration nationalists. Forced migrations have already been a long-existing fact, for all sorts of reasons among which colonial history, imperialism, war and inflicted violence. Once nationalists and populists are in power, morally expressed inclusive “rights” are turned into exclusive laws, and closed and migrant populations or local minorities are considered as invading aliens. Expulsion is then on the agenda of states and of power structures. Identity allegations are then tagged upon the undesirable; they are depicted as the historic “enemy” of the moment, at this time (in Europe) mainly as migrant invaders, “moslems” or “islamists”. During the Cold War the unwanted were tagged as “communists”, but over a longer historic period of time “Jews” or the Romas have also played such a scapegoat role, or whoever the

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<sup>372</sup> M-C. Caloz-Tschopp, interview “Vers un imaginaire démocratique radical (...)”, *op. cit.*

allegation-cum-accusation is made to stick to. In such conditions, ideology is secondary and circumstantial, empty of content but instrumental. Ideologies, finally, gain to be read and understood also through the category of “spectacle” as in Guy Debord, because we are in times of all-display, of individualistic immediacy and immediate responses expected. It is social superficiality enforced by economist productivism that prioritizes capital over lives.

### Epistemological considerations

Boaventura de Sousa Santos is one of the authors who could shed some light on the problem that we shall be coming across all along – universality and universalisms as seen through western modernity. How come that, while we can *in principle* all agree about the universality of the human condition (“all humans share one humanity”), this universality is so poorly, so seldom translated into concrete life and is not being implemented in practice, not being translated into some concept of equality or justice? De Sousa Santos shows how western-centric modernity, which has historically been promoting universal or general theories supposed to work everywhere, has actually been applying to *other humans* an abstract (and empty) universalism. This is important not only in the material sense of reaching out for reality, but essentially also as an epistemological method that claims universal applicability. “The global north, he writes, is getting smaller in economic as well as political and cultural terms, and yet it cannot make sense of the world at large other than through general theories and universal ideas.”<sup>373</sup> This of course historically implies violence: “The negation of one part of humanity is sacrificial in that it is the condition of the affirmation of that other part of humanity that considers itself as universal.”<sup>374</sup> And, “the unconditional inclusiveness of [the] abstract formulation has been used to pursue the exclusionary interests of a particular social group.”<sup>375</sup> De Sousa Santos sees western modernity as propagating a kind of *metonymic reason*, metonymic in the sense that it takes a part of the world (i.e. itself) as the whole, and thus becomes blind to other types of episteme and other kinds of knowledges, seeing these as necessarily mistaken: “metonymic reason claims to be exclusive, complete and universal, even though it is merely one of the logics of rationality that exist in the world and prevails only in the strata of the world comprised by Western modernity. Metonymic reason cannot accept that

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<sup>373</sup> B. de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies*, op. cit. Kindle ed. p. 19.

<sup>374</sup> *Epistemologies*, p. 123.

<sup>375</sup> *Epistemologies*, p. 135.

the understanding of the world is much larger than the Western understanding of the world.”<sup>376</sup> He sees in the western programme of modernity a *disguised form of nihilism*: “Modernist expectations were grandiose in the abstract, falsely infinite and universal. As such, they have justified death, destruction and disaster in the name of redemption ever to come.”<sup>377</sup> And this is how the author describes today’s outreach of abstract universalism: “Unlike universalism, which was the force of an idea representing itself as being imposed *without the idea of force*, hegemonic globalization is the force of an idea that asserts itself by the very idea of force, that is to say, by such imperatives of the free market as rating agencies [...]” etc.<sup>378</sup> It is crucial to understand the doing of the construction of knowledge, including through *national* programmes, in producing historical relationships to others and other cultures<sup>379</sup>: “The claim of the universal character of modern science is increasingly displayed as just one form of particularism, whose specificity consists of having the power to define all knowledges that are its rivals as particularistic, local, contextual, and situational.” And further: “At the core of ecologies of knowledge<sup>380</sup> is the idea that different types of knowledge are incomplete in different ways and that raising the consciousness of such reciprocal incompleteness (rather than looking for completeness) will be a precondition for achieving cognitive justice. Intercultural translation is the alternative both to the abstract universalism that grounds Western-centric general theories and to the idea of incommensurability between cultures.”<sup>381</sup> There is no theory that can explain everything, and knowledges and cultures are *reciprocally incomplete*. He spots “two ‘nonrelationships’ of Western modernity with non-Western cultures: destruction and assimilation. They are ‘nonrelationships’ in that both refuse to consider non-Western cultures as relevant cultural alternatives. (*ibid.*)” Intercultural translation must develop, according to him, new hybrid forms of cultural understanding within contact zones where mediation and translation happen. What must be dealt with and overcome (not only in the west) is *abstract* universalism as a position that silences all other views : “[...] abstract universalism [is] a

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<sup>376</sup> Epistemologies, p. 168.

<sup>377</sup> Epistemologies, p. 185.

<sup>378</sup> Epistemologies, p. 199. Emphasis added.

<sup>379</sup> B. de Sousa Santos has worked on what he calls cultural translation, or intercultural translation. While i see the usefulness of this term which implies an understanding of translation in a wider sense as mediating between different cultures and a plurality of elements within a thus created “contact zone”, and not merely from a source to a target language, i myself (R.I.) have been using the term “political translation” dealing with the politics of translation. But it must be said to his credit that de Sousa Santos’ cultural translation *is* political.

<sup>380</sup> “Ecologies of knowledge” is de Sousa Santos’ term for his *démarche* or approach.

<sup>381</sup> Epistemologies, op. cit., Kindle p. 212.

Western peculiarity whose idea of supremacy does not reside in itself but rather in the supremacy of the interests that sustain it. The critique of universalism is related to the critique of the possibility of a general theory. Diatopical hermeneutics<sup>382</sup> presupposes, rather, what I designate *negative universalism*,<sup>383</sup> the idea of the impossibility of cultural completeness.”<sup>384</sup> And finally, according to the author, “the work of translation is based on the idea of the impossibility of a general theory. Without this negative universalism, translation is a colonial kind of work, no matter how postcolonial it claims to be.”<sup>385</sup>

## Migrants and the fasciosphere

### Migrants in the Yugoslav space

In 2019, when migrants and refugees (whether under the allegation of “moslems” or not) are the main scapegoats in Europe, many countries drive them brutally away. Croatia, as it assumes the European Union presidency in the first part of 2020, is at the very same time blamed because of reports of its appallingly inhumane treatment of migrants on its territory. Italy and Greece which are also, because of the lack of solidarity of other European states in welcoming them, the countries where most of the migrants are now stuck,<sup>386</sup> push them back as much as they can. Italy and other central Mediterranean countries had closed their ports to Search and Rescue (SAR) boats and associations,<sup>387</sup> while the police treated or treat the migrants violently, in particular by closing them up in camps. Such camps are overcrowded in Greece and the country cannot solve the problem single-handedly. In addition, the Italian parliament voted in August 2019 (just before the dissolution of the government in coalition with the fascists of the Lega party) a new version of the “security law” about borders and immigration, investing

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<sup>382</sup> “Diatopical hermeneutics” is de Sousa Santos’s term for his method. He has a very elaborate vocabulary. *There is no overall clarity or encompassing overview* (*Übersichtlichkeit*).

<sup>383</sup> Further on the same page, *negative universalism* is called “a residual general theory: a general theory about the impossibility of a general theory”, *Epistemologies*, p. 220.

<sup>384</sup> *Epistemologies*, op. cit. Kindle p. 220. In other words, interests nurture empty universalism. Emphasis added.

<sup>385</sup> *Epistemologies*, p. 227.

<sup>386</sup> The latter policy of Europe – having no solidarity with southern frontline countries especially Greece and Italy - has greatly contributed to the 2019 Italian coalition government with the fascists of the Lega party coming to power as well as to the growth of national-populism in France, as well as generally to the exponential growth of neo-nazis and fascists in the whole of Europe.

<sup>387</sup> The situation was somewhat eased by the second half of 2019 with the departure of Salvini from government, but the evil had been done.

Salvini as the minister of interior of quasi-absolute power (thus, in charge of borders and immigration). Although Salvini himself soon vanished from government,<sup>388</sup> a swarm of smaller parties and group are multiplying, acting much through practical enactments, publications, art, sports, constantly staging talks, sketches, videos and performances, gaining influential and extended transnational internet (and paper) visibility. Individuals in those groups, acting as intellectuals, bring to the fasciosphere books, journals and publishing houses that the parliamentary extreme right didn't use to have, because culture was in the past dominated by the left, however tamed, at least in France and in Italy. Taking hold of culture and especially of "popular culture" and that thanks to the general and dangerous confusionism, is a very adroit and far-fetching move. These groups, that call for *military action against migrants*, are the support of *international openly declared fascism*, while extreme right nationalist and fascist political parties such as the Lega in Italy, the Rassemblement national in France, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) or the Fidesz ruling party in Hungary (which claims an ill-defined Christian democratic orientation), that also cooperate transnationally, maintain a façade of political respectability and act through parliaments. That swarm of European relatively small but powerful groups or even lesser nationalist anti-immigration parties having a huge impact includes the Golden Dawn in Greece, the CasaPound, acting in Italy through militarized "squadras" or squads, along with Forza nuova (with ramifications in France and elsewhere),<sup>389</sup> or the Jobbik party in Hungary,<sup>390</sup> the Freedom party of Austria (FPÖ) etc.<sup>391</sup> They are all supported by Russia, i.e. by president Putin's party United Russia and are part of his long-term European politics of destabilization. In Russia, "Today's Russian citizens (...) are

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<sup>388</sup> It is not sure that he will not be back.

<sup>389</sup> Andrea Mammone, *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2015.

<sup>390</sup> The case of Hungary, where things are moving, has however revealed itself somewhat atypical compared to western Europe, though within the EU: although it is an extreme right, racist and fascistoid party in its origin, the very loud Jobbik party maneuvered a shift to the center-right position and relinquished its explicit racism and anti-migrant position because it had to demarcate itself from the ruling party. The latter party, Fidesz, has on the contrary been maneuvering towards extreme right positions but without wanting to identify itself at all with Jobbik and the neo-Nazi and fascist swarm whether at home or internationally, because it strives to maintain its parliamentary stance. It claims recognition by the classical right and Christian democrats in the European government, where its recognition has however been made pending and put into question (as well as that of the corresponding Polish party) because of its repression of the juridical system ("illiberal democracy") but surreptitiously also because of its too visible racism and anti-migrant predication.

<sup>391</sup> FPÖ, extremely anti-migrant, had entered a government coalition with the very right-wing Conservative party in Austria. But the latter had to demarcate itself from the FPÖ when the latter's links with Putin, and Russia financing it, were made public. The Conservative party is now (2020) in a coalition with the Green party (Die Grünen, Die Grüne Alternative). For the deal, the green had to sacrifice their rather open stand on immigration, so Austria remains closed on that issue.

offered only a bad theatrical performance—a cocktail of Stalinism and fascism with strong Orthodox Christian and fundamentalist nationalist ferment.”<sup>392</sup>

The now unleashed *squadrismo*, squadrons of fascist militants parading with fascist insignia, flags and slogans through the streets in Italy, threatening and scaring the population are completely reminiscent of the historic fascism of Mussolini’s time. The coronavirus pandemic has somewhat eased their pressure. The resisting movement to fascism (in 2019), called the “Sardines” now seem a feeble shield. Historic fascism too had a cultural pretension in the Italian artistic movement of Futurism, fascinated by speed, mechanics, rapid transportation and stakhanovist industries in the 1920s. They condemned slowness, thus announcing the era of expectation of absolute speed and no free time that we live in in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dovetailing with ultraliberalism and neurocapitalism. The extreme right has been entering Europe from both the bottom, through society, as well as top-down, from some parliamentary parties. Extreme right and nationalist parties have been for a long time supported by Putin and recently also by Trump.<sup>393</sup> European governments and the EU generally fear the probable further growth of those parties and of the fascio-nebula. This paralyses them with regard to migrants even in cases when some of them would accept some of the latter. The paralysis will last until the fascist come to power, but if that happens, migrants could be chased away by the navy in a frontal war.

Worse is the situation, no doubt, in places where Europe outsources through bilateral accords its borders, police facilities and recommendations (not to let migrants through), such as Libya (through a bilateral accord with Italy), where migrants are treated harshly, exposed to beatings, lynching, rape, to starving, illnesses and killings, to attacks within the bombarded camps and to local harassment, theft and extraction of their last goods. It is mostly detention in overcrowded places without facilities for an indeterminate time without any other reason than preventing their sailing to Europe<sup>394</sup> while European public opinion looks the other way. In a detention camp at Tajoura near Tripoli, 53 detainees were killed in July 2019 probably by the

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<sup>392</sup> Madina Tlostanova, “Introduction. A Futureless Ontology?”, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>393</sup> There may arise some differentiation here, depending on whether support and financing comes from the one or the other.

<sup>394</sup> The UNHCR and the IOM (International Organization for Migration) condemn such attacks: “UNHCR, IOM condemn attack on Tajoura, call for an immediate investigation of those responsible, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/7/5d1c836c4/unhcr-iom-condemn-attack-tajoura-call-immediate-investigation-responsible.html>

dissenting Field Marshal Haftar, while the guards were firing at those who tried to escape.<sup>395</sup> Everything is put into action everywhere in order to *preclude* the migrants not only from travelling, but also from officially asking for asylum.

The partition of Yugoslavia is linked to the history of Europe in the sense that it happened (through a 10 years war in the 1990s) at the threshold ending the cold war, where the EU had several unexplored choices but chose the worst. The ethicist and nationalist fragmentation of Yugoslavia and its war anticipated the gradual populist degradation that was going to befall Europe.

On land on the other hand, where the Balkans route traversed by unequipped migrants on foot through perilous mountains (deadly in winter) and hostile environment persists parallel to the attempts to cross by sea, Croatian, Serbian as well as Montenegrin authorities violently push migrants and would-be refugees, who often come over Greece, Bulgaria or Albania, to Bosnia-Herzegovina. They are especially pushed to the supposed “muslim” part (officially, “entity”) of Bosnia.<sup>396</sup> It is a calculation on all these post-Yugoslav sides, but especially for Serbian nationalists both in Serbia and in the Serbian enclave (“entity”) of Bosnia-Herzegovina called Republika Srpska, as well on the Croatian side, to ethnically and religiously permanently cleanse territories conquered from Bosnia during the last Balkans war in the 1990s, to eschew “security issues” linked with a great number of passing migrants as well as the burden of caring for refugees. The whole burden will thus befall to the muslim part of Bosnia (only 23% of the Bosnian territory) within the Bosnian-Croat Federation.<sup>397</sup> While Greater-Serbian propaganda has it that Bosnian society has been changing its ethnic configuration by importing Arabs

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<sup>395</sup> The UN and the EU recognize the Tripoli government for a Libyan government, not Haftar. But some states, such as France, paradoxically support Haftar with arms, while officially recognizing Tripoli.

<sup>396</sup> The Dayton Accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina brokered in 1995 accepted the *fait-accompli* resulting from the civil war in which two new upcoming states (Serbia and Croatia) of Yugoslavia had fought each other on the territory of the third (Bosnia) and claimed some of its territories. The international agreement ossified the divisions and “identities” arisen in the war, and a “muslim entity” was established, as well as a Croatian one (the two – in a Federation of two), in addition to the Republika Srpska (i.e. the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina). “Muslim” is here a normative allegation that the Dayton accords and the “international community” accepted together with the territorial *fait accompli* of war conquests on Bosnian territory. Within Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina had been mixed and in any case *not differentiated territorially*.

<sup>397</sup> The Dayton peace accords (Dejtonski mirovni sporazum) at the end of the war in 1995, fixed a 2 or 3-parts or 3 entities Bosnia-and-Herzegovina: one is Serbian (Republika Srpska), while the two others, the Croatian and the Bosniak entities are co-members in the Croat-Bosniak Federation. (All Bosnians are Bosnians whether they are Serb, Croat or Muslim, but some Bosnians, those who are now called Bosniaks, are “Muslims” by an official normative ethnic definition. In this very flawed construction, there is no place or status for secular Bosnians regardless of religion.)

(during the war there were indeed some Wahabist fighters who had joined Bosnian defense forces), it is actually Serbia but also Montenegro and Croatia that are transforming the ethnic constitution of Bosnia by *pushing transnational migrants* into it. As Edin Subašić writes, “We finally have migrants from muslim countries that are let through into Bosnia-Herzegovina by our eastern neighbors, the authorities of Republika Srpska and the so-called ‘Croatian regions’ who direct them towards 23% of the zone of the ‘Bosnian territory’, as Croatia erects obstructing fences and prevents the entering of migrants [into Croatia], while the European Union and other international agencies remain significantly silent and are undertaking measures aimed, it seems, at creating conditions for a lasting settlement of trapped migrants in Bosnia-Herzegovina.”<sup>398</sup> Needless to say, Bosnia doesn’t want the migrants either, and also doesn’t have the means to welcome them.

Croatian nationalists and authorities have the same calculation. Jointly with Serbia, they are informally constructing a homogenous “muslim”, i.e. according to them *a non-European Bosnia-Herzegovina*, calling both *muslims* and *Muslims*<sup>399</sup> “jihadists”, which they intend to use as an argument to endear themselves to the already pretty Islamophobic European Union and to fascistoid political currents. Bosnia becomes the dumping place for possible refugees, generally believed to be muslims (even when they are not, as sometimes happens). The argument that Bosnia *is* muslim will later be used against it. Croatia, a EU member, receives help from the EU for keeping the migrants *ante portas*, away from the European borders and the former Schengen borders, of which Croatia is still not a member. The Serbian “entity” of Bosnia, which aims, within the nationalist greater Serbia project, to join Serbia proper, possibly through an exchange of territories at the expenses of Kosovo against European wishes,

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<sup>398</sup> Edin Subašić, “Migranti kao dio tajnog projekta” (“*Migrants as part of secret project*”), 29-6-2019, in *AlJazeera Balkans*, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/migranti-kao-dio-tajnog-projekta>, translated by me, R.I.

<sup>399</sup> In the once Yugoslav specific denominations, which were clear to Yugoslavs but which have been ossified and separated beyond repair, the usage was to call “muslims” (much as “catholics” etc., no capital letter when it refers only to religion) the members of the Islamic religious or cultural community; but to call “Muslims” (capital letter, as in “Serbian”, “Yugoslav”, “Italian” etc.) those who in Bosnia recognised themselves as *Muslims by nationality* (this applied in particular to *cultural muslims* (*citizens* of Bosnia, and only in Bosnia), whether believers or atheists (in both cases, they could be called “Muslims” if they so declared themselves). To be “muslims” (no capital letter) in the religious sense in Yugoslavia only meant to be originally from a muslim family, a fact unimportant to citizenship. To be “Muslim”, now called “Bosniak” (Bošnjaci), was a specific Bosnian nationality (capital letter), meant to belong to the “Muslim nation” in the mainly *three-national state of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, the other two nationalities being Serbs and Croats. The denominations were further complicated by the fact that *all* citizens could also declare themselves *uncommitted*, but muslims were the most numerous among these in Bosnia. Bosnia in addition has a Jewish community, as well as a Roma one, like other Yugoslav republics, but they are considered minorities, at a difference from Muslims, Serbs and Croats. Many Bosnians from all communities had emigrated during the 1990 war and four years’ siege of Sarajevo.



apparently refuses proposed help for the reception of migrants. They, together with Serbian authorities, promptly accompany migrants through their territories towards the “muslim part” of Bosnia. Nationalists on all sides join hands at *reproducing and spilling into Europe mechanisms of the ethnic and religious cleansing they have been so good at carrying out in the 1990s*, as a pattern for today’s European general alien-phobic policies inspired by aggressive national-populisms. The police beat, harass and torture migrants, kill them sometimes, oblige them to recite local nationalist slogans or songs, persecute them over the mountains when they even have no shoes, scare and shock them as they try to approach the local population to ask for a glass of water.<sup>400</sup> They forbid the population to help them, although women’s organizations and individuals brave the authorities and do continue their care work for them. Police kettle the migrants, and rush them as animals, push them over the dangerous river, deliver them and sometimes sell to intermediary groups and traffickers who take them over to territories in Bosnia where the authorities are too weak to react, but where the migrants are not welcome in any way either. Authorities collaborate with various local nationalist militias, continuing exactly what they had been doing during the Yugoslav civil war in the nineties. Women get raped on all sides, death toll is important, nationalisms are mounting and all of it is being kept away from public eyes as much as possible. In 2020, migrants stuck in winter in Bosnia who try to cross to Croatia hoping to get through to Italy and who are repeatedly pushed back to the starting point, call it ironically “The Game”. “Hooded men who arrest them, steal their money, clothes and shoes, destroy their cell phones and give them a brutal beating. According to the testimony of migrants and monitoring groups, the Croatian police force is participating in a systematic campaign of violence and robbery of migrants and refugees who are looking for a safe road to western Europe. ‘But are we not in Europe?’, says rhetorically Omar, an Algerian who has stayed in an abandoned factory for three months and is going through his fourth attempt to cross the border. On previous occasions he was stopped by the

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<sup>400</sup> See Davor Konjikušić, “Palice za izbjeglice” (“*Policemen’s batons for the refugees*”), in *Novosti* N°1019 (Zagreb), pp. 8-9, as well as the Ombudswoman’s report on the issue and similar matters in the same publication, Dragan Grozdanić, “Hrvatska, prazna i porazna” (“*Croatia, empty and failed*”), in *Novosti* N°1019 (Zagreb), pp. 12-13. For the driving of migrants and refugees to Bosnia by Serbian extremists, traffickers and the police, as well as by Montenegrin authorities and smugglers of people, see Edin Subašić, “Migranti kao dio tajnog projekta” (“*Migrants as part of secret project*”), 29-6-2019, in *AlJazeera Balkans*, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/migranti-kao-dio-tajnog-projekta>; Dariusz Kalan, “In Bosnia, a Migrant Way Station Is Becoming a Winter Prison” 20-2-2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/20/in-bosnia-a-migrant-way-station-is-becoming-a-winter-prison-bihac-croatia-borici-refugees/>; Maxim Edwards, “Bosnia’s migrant route bottleneck”, in *Politico*, 26-12-2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/bosnias-migrant-route-bottleneck/>; David Chater, “Stranded in Bosnia, refugees desperate to reach Western Europe”, 24-11-2018 in *Al Jazeera* <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/stranded-bosnia-refugees-desperate-reach-western-europe-181124124035304.html>.

Croatian police who, with blows of kicks and batons, stole his belongings and money, and forced him to return to Bosnia crossing a frozen river almost naked.”<sup>401</sup> While some of the local people here as elsewhere try to help the suffering migrants, while NGOs, women’s’ associations and such locally organized group as No Name Kitchen in Bosnia give some relief, police in Croatia brutally push them into Bosnia after aggressing them through illegal, inhumane, quasi-fascist and racist methods as a sort of self-dubbed recycled “antimurale christianitatis” or “bulwark of christendom”.

## 7. The years 1989

Self-love and hate of others progress hand in hand. “Patriotism” (which is only a deceitful way of calling nationalism) calls for depreciation of others, of other nations. In Europe, this has historically and recurrently largely also implied racism, either permeating societies (often a first stage) or instituted by states. We have a new wave of that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it must be understood that, especially with right wing parties, nationalism can be augmented to mean a preference for Europe as a whole when facing other continents. This is of course all saturated with violence.

Ranabir Samaddar, in his paper “The Present time of Chaos”, shows how the presently reigning chaos in the world, which is also an ideological chaos, where left and right surf on the same political ideas, has prevailed as a general political symptom and condition of the erosion of bourgeois citizenship. He writes: “Chaos therefore today is global in nature, so is the need for a global comprehension, and a form of response that has global resonance. (...) Chaos is thus the equivocal unity of this past which has produced on us a truth effect and thus has the power to detain us in its hold and its dissolution, the remnants of order and its decline and eventual disintegration.”<sup>402</sup> So the problem is social, economic and political, but it is also epistemological, which can be seen in new social movements that we have no clue at reading. During the eighties in France and elsewhere in Europe legitimization through anti-Nazism that was inherited from the shock of WWII, was fading away, and some openly Nazi or fascist parties and groups came to prominence. Much-feared right-wing violence (linked to colonial

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<sup>401</sup> Pablo Tosco, “El refugio de los sueños rotos”, in *El País*, 29 Feb., 2020, p. 5. Translated by me, R.I.

<sup>402</sup> R. Samaddar, “The Present Time of Chaos”, *The Wire?* (manuscript)

history and to Nazism) gradually overcame left-wing occurrences of violence in the 1980s.<sup>403</sup> It is noteworthy that either left or right could think this. At the end of that period there was a more or less general economic crisis and, in 1989, we had the tearing-down of the Berlin Wall, which had symbolized the cold war radical division and opposition between eastern Europe (the once socialist bloc) and the west (symbolizing the capitalist bloc). Now 1989 also marks a triumphalism of the latter over the defeated socialist bloc lead by the Soviet Union, as well as the beginning of a new round of globalization, introducing unbridled neoliberalism without scruples, soon leading to financial capitalism.

At the same time as ICT developed, some (not all) labor dematerialized, *salaried* work disappeared and welfare states were dismantled. In China, that year represents the crackdown of Tiananmen Square, while economic liberalization had actually been started earlier by Deng Siao-ping. After the libertarian episode of 1968 in Europe and the world, marking the end of post-WWII hopes (the students' movements of 1968 showed an impatience with desires and promises not delivered, also with regard to the Vietnam war and international issues),<sup>404</sup> a new wind with ethicist and identitarian requests would soon start blowing. All countries, both southern (Africa and other developing countries) and eastern (countries of the Soviet bloc), were now supposed to perform a transition to the neoliberal system while at the same time they were strangled by international organizations such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund), World Bank etc. (which also learned something in the process, or how to make themselves and their draconian conditions if not acceptable, at least unavoidable for poor countries).

### Transitions in southern Europe

Transitions were of course also proposed to formerly colonized countries, at about the same

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<sup>403</sup> Alexis Jenni, *Féroces infirmes*, Paris, Gallimard 2019. Raphaëlle Leyris, "La guerre d'Algérie, creuser encore" in *Le Monde des Livres*, April 26, 2019. Nicolas Lebourg, *Les Nazis ont-ils survécu?*, Paris, Seuil 2019 (quoted by Alexis Jenni).

<sup>404</sup> With a significant difference in Yugoslavia, where the students protested the government having betrayed original socialist principles and promises: Hrvoje Klasić, *Jugoslavija i svijet. 1968.*, Zagreb, Ljevak 2012.

time, of which “1989” is the emblematic new starting point.<sup>405</sup> This produced an at first unexpected result – the transforming of eastern and central European countries, after various episodes of violence, war or time bomb mechanisms, whether members of the European Union or not, into bearers of extreme right wing populist, ethicist and nationalist policies similar to the fascist ones of yesteryears. The new (or rather, renewed) right-wing violence after WWII and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century responds, without analysis or willingness to wait, to immigration from the global south seen as invasion and from the Syrian war interpreted as “the great replacement.”<sup>406</sup> The chance and opportunity of this immigration for Europe are not perceived. Such hate-view responds to attacks linked to islamist fundamentalism (which, in their turn, are linked to Europe’s ignored political responsibility regarding the colonial period), it responds to the general loss of political options, of political imagination and sense, it responds to the simultaneous fading away of the welfare state demanded by corporate transnational business. This series started symbolically with the “nine-eleven” (2001) terrorist attacks, has produced hate-speech on all sides, and made Europe and the west generally imagine themselves as being in self-defense. This of course enables extreme right-wing violence, but also left-wing violence when it is nationalist. Post-fascist groups and parties throughout Europe preach that governments explicitly encourage immigration in order to do away with the national, European or Christian character of our societies and culture. This goes all the way to double-front positions like fascism and extremism or nationalism. The two fronts are love (for us and “ours”) and hate (of others). They are active on Internet and virally followed. They are commonly unicist and organicist, opposed to politically more liberal ways. During WWII, the Nazis, on the basis of the German colonial genocide in present-day Namibia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century against the Herero, the Nama and the San populations, had produced such a two-front formation in which, logically, it became acceptable, even desirable, to eliminate others (Roma, Jews, the disabled, communists, “inferior populations”, women etc., depending on the “enemy”

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<sup>405</sup> “Juillet 1944 a vu la création des deux institutions financières internationales (IFI), la Banque mondiale et le FMI, principalement dominées par les États-Unis. Voilà 75 ans qu’elles sont des outils de domination au service des puissants, contre les intérêts des peuples. Cet anniversaire est l’occasion de rappeler comment ces IFI influencent les politiques des Etats qu’elles prétendent aider. Avec toutes les conséquences que l’on connaît sur les populations. La récente immolation, en Belgique, d’un Guinéen, père de deux enfants d’une vingtaine d’années, est un exemple de plus des résultats de la politique inhumaine et criminelle de l’Europe forteresse, des plans d’ajustement structurel imposés par le FMI et de l’extractivisme désastreux du capitalisme cupide et égoïste. Au Nord comme au Sud, le couple dette-austérité sévit avec les mêmes effets antisociaux. Depuis 75 ans, les recettes des institutions de Bretton Woods ne laissent que désolation sur leur passage et ne font qu’aggraver les situations.” Editorial, Committee for the Abolition of illegitimate Debt (CADTM), on Aug. 8, 2019, [www.cadm.org](http://www.cadm.org). See also: “Debt machine”, a movie by Laure Delesalle, *Al-Jazeera*, 2017, (1<sup>st</sup> ed. “Arte”), <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2017/05/debt-machine-170515074319495.html>

<sup>406</sup> Michel Houellebecq, *Soumission*, Paris, Ed. J’ai lu, 2017.

chosen at a given time). The unitary ideology of “we first” (“America First”, “Europe first”<sup>407</sup> or “France first” etc.), of taking pride in oneself or of national preference, results directly in acts of purification and of eradicating the others. Being in favor of greater units, for example of the European Union as opposed to national states within it, can also be of right-populist (social-nativist) and post-fascist ideology. This is not always clear to Europeans, who consider themselves as progressive because they are Europeanists. Transnational Europeanists, who like to see themselves as progressive because “above” sovereigntist nationalism, can be fascist and right-wing nationalists too. They operate through populist manners. Even left-wing nationalists, or people who consider themselves as left-wing, can actually easily be racists and even fascists. Politicians such as the French president Macron try to take advantage of such false oppositions as the one between national(ist) sovereigntists (that he opposes) and Europeanists to whom he claims to belong.

This gradually opens the way to “illiberal democracy”, a type of populist politics put in place among others by Hungarian president Orbán by preaching “our nation” against Europe seen as an empire (Europe from which Hungary, however, largely profits through funding) and against immigration.<sup>408</sup> “Illiberal democracy” remains a formal democracy, more and more explicitly a “Christian democracy” (within a context of no experience with democracy). But the leader, as is traditionally the case in historic populisms (for example, in France, *boulangisme* and *poujadisme* etc.), confiscates political power and agency from the people. It is easy for him because Orbán controls the press and the judiciary. There are no clear or consistent policies, and political positions by the ruling party are taken through successive *theme campaigns*. After 2015, migrants have been a successful political theme, supported by constant anti-migrants propaganda. On the western front of the wave of new populisms, we also see formal democracy

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<sup>407</sup> Surprisingly, Ursula von der Leyen, the new president elect (2019) of the European Commission, proposed to create a new European “ministry” of “Protecting our European way of life” (instead of the former and softer “Migration, home affairs and citizenship”), which provoked outrage in the EU as xenophobic. The latter is presided by a right-wing vice-president of the European Commission. Now, this would surely be a regression as compared to the former mandate of Junker, and has been widely criticized including by the EU politicians. After a debate, the European Parliament ended up euphemistically renaming the commission as a commission for “Promoting the European Way of Life”. This is a warning about a general tendency that opposes “the European way of life” to “migrants”, as was remarked by the present president of the EC, Jean-Claude Juncker, who disapproved it in an interview to “Euronews” on Sept. 13, 2019, as much as did Thomas Piketty in his interview on the programme “28 minutes” on Arte-TV on Sept. 14, 2019. Read Edwy Plenel, “This Shameful Europe” in *Médiapart*, 13-9-2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/international/130919/shameful-europe> and <https://www.euronews.com/2019/09/16/this-shameful-europe-view>.

<sup>408</sup> ESI (European Stability Initiative), “*The Wizard, the Virus and the Pot of Gold. Viktor Orbán and the future of European solidarity.*” *ESI Report* 18 April 2020 Newsletter, <https://www.esiweb.org/publications/wizard-virus-and-pot-gold-viktor-orban-and-future-european-solidarity>.

weakening though formally maintained, political representation vanishing, and alarming tendencies building up such as, among others: the claim for access to free arms (and the accumulation of illegal arms), belief in private vendetta, requests for the restoration of death penalty, renewed subordination on grounds of gender or ethnicity, especially of women and people constructed as “others”, as minorities; hate speech, rejection of immigrants, disemantisation and depoliticization, the hatred of differences, the claim for “order”, surveillance and decorum by a hypocritical society busy assuring the growth of inequalities and exploitation within absolute capitalism.<sup>409</sup>

As said earlier, it is difficult to define populism. It has a history we shall mainly have to skip here. Ilvo Diamanti & Marc Lazar analyze the phenomenon of populism in France and Italy. They speak about *popolocrazia*, *peuple-cratie* or “people-cracy”. They think that the emergence of new political practices, new regimes beg for a new vocabulary. Of course, there is a difference between a populist regime with populists in power, and a populist tendency with right-wing populist in society and in parties, but not in government. Populist tendencies have nowadays effectively transformed liberal and representative democracies. While classical modern democracy is based on the separation of powers (legislative, executive and judiciary), on the rule of law having historically its source in Enlightenment<sup>410</sup> as well as on *checks and balances* that control government, populist movements rely on the leader, and hammer people’s direct democracy (by “incarnation”, meaning without representation or mediation, and beyond political mechanisms such as parties and parliament). Populists demand referenda all the time on any topic. Populism claims to be a new phase of democracy, which it also threatens. In France, for example, populists are not in power at this time, although there is a general populist tendency in social movements and in parts of governmental discourse. Populists are getting louder through the movements and are a challenge for a tired liberal democracy in a country where government, through a “royal president” (a French speciality), is authoritarian and is also disposed to some elements of national-populism. In Italy, after the departure of the fascist Salvini from government, the prime minister Giuseppe Conte remained as a weaker figure. But in his next government, now rid of Salvini, Conte gained in popularity especially during the coronavirus crisis. The Movimento 5 stelle in power is a party without a clear political

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<sup>409</sup> Alessandro Gilioli, “Zitti o perdiamo”, *L’Espresso* N°28, *Capitani e no*, op. cit., (2019), p. 22.

<sup>410</sup> A modern literary and cultural movement in the 18th century /1715-1789/ and, by extension, political too, which aspires to knowledge, enlightenment and overcoming obscurantisms of any kind including religion as a form of state power.

orientation. At the time of the first Conte government the two vice-prime ministers (Salvini from the fascist Lega and Di Maio from 5 stelle) were in constant disaccord, sustaining a permanent government crisis,<sup>411</sup> and finally Salvini toppled the very government he was in. He then disappeared from government but not from populist fascist politics.

In Italy populist politics had actually started much earlier, with Silvio Berlusconi,<sup>412</sup> as what Marc Lazar calls the “populism of entrepreneurs”. Lazar also thinks that we shouldn’t underestimate regionalist forms of populisms,<sup>413</sup> among others. What is to be understood about present-day national-populism, is its getting along with conditions of neo-liberalism,<sup>414</sup> as well as its general “confusionism”. Populists claim to be anti-system, they loath the elites, in the first-place intellectuals elites but also establishment elites, whether governmental or economic, although they are generally less worried about economy. They often manage to impose their schedule, priorities and manners to society and the authorities even when they are not in power. The irony is that those who resist them often have to do so through the populists’ own ways, *language* and style in order to be heard. In a way, populism has nowadays become contagious and has become a general style. Many people fear that this is bringing us back to the 1930s when nazism spread over Europe and much of the world. Indeed, this is worrying, though neither the circumstances nor the manifestations are identical. As Larry Elliott observes, if we

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<sup>411</sup> “I moderati siamo noi, la Lega la pianti con i fucili”, Interview with Luigi Di Maio by Annalisa Cuzzocrea, *La Repubblica*, May 14, 2019, p. 4. Of the two components of the Italian government of 2019, Salvini of La Lega party was much more overtly adamant than the 5 stelle party in obtaining Zero immigration. He was passing law after law to prevent immigration and helping migrants, establishing the “offence of solidarity” (which is being observed by border authorities and self-instituted militant patrols in France too, although being critiqued but negotiated in parliament). Governments are traditionally weak in Italy and that one soon collapsed too because, unlike in France, they do not have the presidential system.

<sup>412</sup> Berlusconi, a media tycoon, crony businessman and populist politician, was prime minister of Italy in 1994-1995, 2001-2006 and 2008-2011.

<sup>413</sup> In the debate between Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan et Elise Massicard, at Science-po, Paris on Oct. 22, 2019, “Populismes et démocratie”, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/evenements/?event=populismes-et-democratie>

<sup>414</sup> An interesting observation by Johanna Bockman about a ‘liminal’ space between eastern Europe and the west as a failed hegemonic project that had been initiated by the political right but was traversed by leftist pro-Soviet ideas, and which would be the source of today’s liberalism exactly in as much as it is liminal, especially in Italy. However, this finding doesn’t seem to be connected with any information about the financing of extreme-right terrorism in Italy, that had been attributed at the time to the extreme-left, by the CIA. The latter terrorism had then produced a second wave ultra-leftist terrorism during the *anni di piombo* (“the lead years”). Aldo Moro’s assassination issue etc. The CESES- Centro studi economici e sociali or the Centro studi e ricerche su problemi economico-sociali is research centre trying to enable east-west dialogue and research. It also had Yugoslavia among its favourite research subjects. See J. Bockman, “The origins of neoliberalism between Soviet socialism and Western capitalism: ‘A galaxy without borders’”, [https://www.academia.edu/929598/The\\_Origins\\_of\\_Neoliberalism\\_Between\\_Soviet\\_Socialism\\_and\\_Western\\_Capitalism\\_A\\_Galaxy\\_Without\\_Borders\\_](https://www.academia.edu/929598/The_Origins_of_Neoliberalism_Between_Soviet_Socialism_and_Western_Capitalism_A_Galaxy_Without_Borders_).

compare the 1930s with today's (2020) situation in the world, both come after a general economic crash (1929 and 2007-8), but in the first case the turning point (i.e. substantial changes in the economic setup) happened not after the first world war but only after about 11 years later through the crash (in 1929).<sup>415</sup> While in the second case the 2008 financial crash did not produce a turning point (much like WWI). But the latter, a change of paradigm, could be the outcome of the coronavirus covid-19 crisis, since demands such as universal basic income and similar solutions have been requested. The difference is that the 1930 and the period of the second world war were a time of full employment (armaments production), which is not the case today.

Populisms arise at times of crises; that is certain. We are in the middle of a big series of crises today in Europe (as well as in many other parts of the world). According to many authors, it is the covid-19 outbreak that spells out the general crisis. The crisis in Europe has been described in different ways, but always as multiple – economic, political, social, moral or, by Etienne Balibar, even as spiritual.<sup>416</sup> In the thirties, say Lazar and Diamanti, the populists called for dictatorship, deeming democracy corrupt and inefficient. Today it is the other way around; populists now pretend to be the best democrats, also thinking that democracy as it is inefficient. They criticize traditional political parties, considering that parties and elites are all necessarily corrupt and they plead for a “different politics”, without a clear project however. Here like elsewhere, populists use social media very swiftly, take advantage of them, which classical governments in Europe have not really so far been able to.

Yann Algan states the principal causes of populism. It is the economic crisis and the anger – both left and right - of anti-system unruly forces. The economic erosion for a great deal of the population, including middle classes in Europe, brings economic insecurity. Over the last thirty years, trust in the governing elites has been eroded steadily, but there is a difference here between leftist populists and rightist populists: the right-wing populists are more defiant towards anything that relates to others, to the different. This includes migrants, neighbors,

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<sup>415</sup> Larry Elliott, “The coronavirus crisis may lead to a new way of economic thinking” *The Guardian*, 22 Mar 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/22/the-coronavirus-is-leading-to-a-whole-new-way-of-economic-thinking>

<sup>416</sup> Spiritual in the sense of a “lay religion”: Etienne Balibar, “La philosophie à l’épreuve de la pandémie”, in conversation with Adèle Van Reeth, on *France Culture*, 24-4-2020, <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie-emission-du-vendredi-24-avril-2020>. Why religion, one wonders?



minorities and co-citizens. During thirty years a society of solitude has arisen as the labor conditions have changed, where everyone is now alone and relationships have vanished. This is desocialization and the growing of a society of isolated individuals in de-industrialized countries. The situation is now one of isolation at work; there are not any bigger fostering firms with strong unions. The Yellow vests have shown this in France – they were composed of many isolated individuals such as drivers or pensioners who tried to connect with others on the mythic roundabouts.<sup>417</sup> According to Algan research proves that, while there are differences in values held by left and right populists, the surprise found in polls is that left-wing voters even from needy classes, contrary to what may have been expected, do not vote (at least not in France) *for the reduction of inequalities*. They vote instead for extreme right parties that have meanwhile become respectable within the general confusionism. Much like right-wing populist voters. This invalidates, according to him, part of Piketty's theory, whose major stand is the urgent necessity to cut inequalities in society. We may also add that it shows that there is no solidarity in an individualistic society. Olivier Duhamel corroborates what may create such defiance or mistrust towards "elites" in society, in conditions where the collectivist hyper ideologies or master-discourses have disappeared (be they leftist or religious). There are now the social networks, corruption is not tolerated any more, while the factors of fear are social precarity, the belief that immigration is damaging and rampant, terrorism imagined to be only muslim, climatic deregulation and the digital – class – fracture. The latter are long term problems that no politician can solve and that cannot be treated at the national level only. Duhamel then praises the concept of *care* which, he says, it is necessary to develop, where we see that some feminist concepts make their way into the mainstream.<sup>418</sup> While it is encouraging to see eminent political science endorse feminist ideas, the paradox remains that, as feminist activism and theories gain in importance and are now highly respected in many countries by intellectuals and by international institutions, never has the macho violence against women and children been more pronounced, brutal and widespread, from femicides to "normal" rape, trafficking and violence in war and warlike situations like emergent epidemics or migration. As if the traditional *backlash* in these matters were now simultaneous and not, like before, scaled in time. This raises the question of the acceleration of time, due among other reasons to

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<sup>417</sup> Yann Algan in Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan & Elise Massicard, at Science-po, Paris on Oct. 22, 2019, "Populismes et démocratie", <https://www.sciencespo.fr/evenements/?event=populismes-et-democratie>; Yann Algan, Elisabeth Beaseley, Daniel Cohen, Martial Foucault, *Les origines du populisme. Enquête sur un schisme politique et social*, Paris, Seuil 2019.

<sup>418</sup> Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan & Elise Massicard, at Science-po, Paris on Oct. 22, 2019, "Populismes et démocratie", *cit.*

instantaneousness linked to globalization and to the Internet.

### Nazism and fascism

While many a writer will debate on the equivalence or not between fascism and national-populism (or at least, right-populism), thinking that fascism is a historic period and a political disposition, Radomir Konstantinović had no hesitation and preferred a precise and strong term to define Serbian historic nationalism or version of populism: he calls it *Serbian Nazism*.<sup>419</sup> According to Konstantinović, any population, especially under the banner of a nation, is capable of Nazism. Likewise, Rasko Močnik, on the other hand, writes an in-depth analysis of *Slovenian fascism*,<sup>420</sup> which stands perfectly for all Yugoslav fascisms or Nazisms. And finally Leonardo Boff explains the practical universality of old-age fascism as an ever-present possibility, similarly to Umberto Eco: "Fascism is an extreme derivative of fundamentalism, with a long tradition in almost every culture".<sup>421</sup> Shall we suppose that fascism is an ever-present threat in every people? No culture, no society, is safe in that respect.

The Lega party in Italy, which was in the beginning a local and regional radically rightest separatist party in the extremely rich north of the country (nurturing the idea of an autonomous state like "Padania"), has a history of having gradually been inclined to and infiltrated by various neo-fascist and post-Nazi elements and by militant pro-fascist groups. The populist once autonomist and mainly strongly anti-south (*antimeridionalista*) and also xenophobic movement fed by post-Nazi hate-speech and conspirationalism, gradually dovetailed with the Lega Nord (there were several autonomist Legas, that of the Piedmont, that of Padania etc.) which, in its turn, increasingly spread towards the less developed south of the country. The anti-fascist legitimacy of the post-WWII consensus which had been endorsed both by the PCI, the Communist party as well as by the Demo Christian party had started fading away (like in neighboring Yugoslavia and in other places) in the 1980s, also due to the intervention of the

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<sup>419</sup> R. Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke*, Nolit, Belgrade 1969, pp. 366-383. His famous book theorises populism, called "a condition" - the condition of *palanka*. In French: « Sur le nazisme serbe » (On Serbian nazism), *Lignes*, n°06, 2001, pp. 53-75 and « Sur le style du bourg » (On smalltown's style), *Transeuropéennes*, n° 21, 2001, pp. 129-139. Palanka exists insofar as it is imaginary, a mere drive, and a reality never to be attained. Also in his œuvre *Jezik i biće u iskustvu pesnika srpske kulture dvadesetog veka* (Language and being), 8 volumes, Belgrade, Prosveta-Rad & Novi Sad Matica srpska 1983.

<sup>420</sup> Rasko Močnik, *Extravagantia II*, *Koliko fašizma?*, op. cit

<sup>421</sup> Leonardo Boff, "Neo-fascism: a worldwide wave", in *Germ*, <http://www.mondialisations.org/php/public/art.php?id=41907&lan=EN>

CIA over the previous decade of extreme-right-wing terrorism painted as left-wing-terrorism, which, indeed, did produce a near civil war and in any case a lot of reactive and ugly left-wing-terrorism too in Italy.<sup>422</sup> The polarization of those years was also the result of the left-wing communist and the right-wing Christian-democrat agreement proposed by the communists, of a *historical compromise* (*Compromesso storico*), whereby, relying also on the anti-fascist consensus, the two might eventually have gone together to government. Moro's assassination stopped that experiment. The Yalta division of the world in zones of interest was still very much the rule, and the CIA was not to let communists go to power anywhere *in the west*. The western and global fortress was to stay intact, proclaiming itself the pattern of democracy.

Today, Italy has much associative, popular and citizen's resistance to the current anti-migrant and xenophobic, anti-European, politics. One of the famous cases is the small town of Riace in Calabria that embraced foreigners and migrants into a place abandoned by Italians in search of work more to the north. In the summer of 2016, during the culmination of *Europe's crisis* because it didn't know how or didn't want to welcome immigrants and refugee-seeker (i don't call it a *migrant's crisis*), some 1800 inhabitants welcomed about 450 immigrants to the place. Riace lived again with its African, Syrian, Afghan and other immigrant citizens; houses, schools, hospitals reopened, local politics functioned again, the once abandoned town became prosperous. The (now former) mayor of Riace Mimmo Lucano, who organized it all, was imprisoned and replaced, but became famous and came out of prison as a hero well-known not only in Italy but also elsewhere in Europe, as an example of resistance. On May 13, 2019, Mimmo Lucano was himself welcomed in triumph by students and teachers who gave him a standing ovation at Rome University La Sapienza with the famous partisan song "O bella ciao",<sup>423</sup> while the fascists of the group Forza nuova tried to prevent his access to the premises. Students had to encircle him and protect him on his way there. Urban guerrilla was avoided that day. He told the assembled students and teachers about the Riace experience (which became a symbol of a hospitable Europe that also exists), gave a lecture of humanity, humility,

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<sup>422</sup> Of which the most well-known was the case of the captivity and assassination of the then prime minister Aldo Moro by the terrorist group Brigate rosse (1978). That put an end to the *Compromesso storico*, the aborted *historic compromise* between the Communist Party and the Christian-Democrats.

<sup>423</sup> A sign of our confusionist times: the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War partisan song "O bella ciao" (originally a song from paddy fields in the region) is now sung by people of any political orientation including the extreme right, who obviously do not know its history: "Les avocats scandent 'Bella ciao'. Scène insolite: les avocats, vêtus de leurs robes noires, ont repris à l'unisson l'air de 'Bella Ciao', aux paroles légèrement modifiées pour l'occasion." *Le Progrès* (Rhône), 13 janv. 2020 <https://www.leprogres.fr/rhone/2020/01/13/les-avocats-de-lyon-reprennent-bella-ciao-devant-les-24-colonnes>

of accepting others, a lesson of applied hospitality and care. It was a stunning event giving hope to Italy and Europe. He said “Our welcoming was spontaneous, we didn’t have one Euro at that time, but we had a dream about repopulating our town. People living in it started thinking that there is finally hopefulness, because new people were coming, and it didn’t matter a bit where they came from or of what religion they were.”<sup>424</sup>

Europe has a long history of constant and repeated wars and conquests, even before its colonial adventures, of recurrent long conflicts between kingdoms, countries, religions, which can all be seen as being of the same kind, as wars against the “others”. Wars and violence against the other (country, religion, language, gender, “race” etc.) are meant to be consolidating established regimes and hegemonic as well as dominant powers, and so they are for the victorious. Often, they result in an imposed or accepted hegemony. Probably most peoples and regimes throughout history have had this tendency anywhere in the world, except for small “pre-historic” endogenous and matrilineal communities. Although there is no “virtuous” history or community anywhere in the world, although nearly any population or states are capable of violence, societies can also thrive on it. Europe has had a particularly bloody history of conquests, and has constantly exported violence and wars in modernity (not to mention antique colonialism and the crusades) together with its borders and the form we call “nation”. Wars are usually fought in order to bring about peace and a *certain political order* with it, that of the winners. So each war is followed by a peace agreement. A peace agreement establishes the victor and the kind of political and social contract the latter guarantees (and which in turn guarantees him safe conduct and more). This is hegemony. Europe too has had plenty of those.

As Timothy Garton Ash reminds us,<sup>425</sup> at least three such peace agreements are outstanding: the Westphalian agreements (Westphalian peace) in 1648,<sup>426</sup> the agreement resulting from the

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<sup>424</sup> Maria Novella De Luca, “Tutti a lezione da Lucano superstar. Gli applausi degli studenti alla Sapienza ‘Siamo l’onda rossa che ferma quella nera’”, *La Repubblica*, May 14, 2019, p. 19 (translated by me, R.I.). See also the daily *Il manifesto*, with a series of articles and interviews, “La Sapienza accoglie Mimmo Lucano”, by Giansandro Mela, and articles on official anti-immigration policies, *Il manifesto* May 14, 2019.

<sup>425</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, “The European project is in big trouble – but it’s worth defending”, *The Guardian*, May 9, 2019, “Why we must not let Europe break apart”, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/09/why-we-must-not-let-europe-break-apart>

<sup>426</sup> Westphalian peace ended a series of European religious wars through a diplomatic meeting – between Protestants and Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire in the first place - and in particular the Thirty years war in Central Europe (leading to the late process of unification of Germany). It initiated the modern political international system, ended the supremacy of the Catholic Church over states, brought about the emancipation of individual subjectivities and political agencies of kingdoms some of which were soon to become republics.

Vienna Congress ending Napoleon's conquest wars in 1814-15 and re-founding a (new) European order on the basis of territorial issues, issues regarding the status of Jews, slavery abolition issues<sup>427</sup> and, third, the Versailles treaty ending WWI and the war between Germany and the Allied powers in June 1919. It is usually said that the Versailles treaty, by its "humiliation" of defeated Germany, lead to Nazism and WWII.<sup>428</sup> But many other peace agreements could be counted over centuries, and any such peace settlement can also be seen as a historical threshold re-dimensioning and reconstructing the equilibrium of political powers in Europe (and elsewhere), depending on who won the last round. Even regardless of its warring background and longer history, now (2020) that the European project *as it was* is in ruins after its unwillingness to welcome immigrants, after so many died at sea and at the borders and still continue dying, after the financial crisis of 2008 when banks, and not people were saved, after the Greek crisis in 2015, and after covid-19 unveiled it all, is it still worth defending it as Timothy Garton Ash professes?

The banking crisis of 2008 was one of the last elements in a series that *boosted populisms* in Europe (but they were boosted everywhere else too in similar processes), and decredibilised socialist parties and social democracy. Why? Because the latter had agreed, when in power, to implement austerity in exactly the same manner as right parties had or would have. The result was that there was no-one to vote for anymore, since voting for the left or for the right gave identical results, while the welfare state started being dismantled. The austerity consensus, when the private debt was transformed by the states into public debt, fell on the people through the taxes that states had to lift in order to save the banks.

After all, the European project – not to mention its colonial history and slavery, has been a neoliberal one and has revealed its limits exactly in all those failures. A European project would have been worth defending, yes, but rather not the one at whose ruins we now find ourselves. Many Europeans have miscalculated it, not that they didn't have doubts. As it seems now, if something new and unexpected doesn't happen, it rather looks like a disaster.

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<sup>427</sup> A new German confederation was to replace the moribund Holy Roman Empire then. But in 1815 Napoleon escaped from his prison in Elba, recovered his throne and restarted his conquering campaigns: he was then defeated at Waterloo.

<sup>428</sup> Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, 1-2, Basel-Frankfurt-a/M, Roter Stern Verlag 1977-78; *Buch der Könige – 1. Orpheus und Eurydike*, 2. *Orpheus am Machtpol*, Basel-Frankfurt-a/M, Stroemfeld Verlag 1997.

In continuation of the Versailles treaty, the Rapallo treaty was signed in 1920 between the Kingdom of Italy and the neighboring Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes across the Adriatic sea in order to solve the dispute over the defunct Austrian Adriatic littoral: it assigned to Italy, as a reward for fighting WWI with the Allied Powers, the Dalmatian coast, the islands on the north-eastern shore, and the cities of Rijeka and Zadar<sup>429</sup> in the northern Adriatic as well as others. This attribution of a mixed territory inhabited by both Italians and Slavs, was declared to respond to the claimed self-determination of the Italian populations,<sup>430</sup> whereby any comparable claim to self-determination by Slavic populations was disregarded. Those territories switched from Italy to Yugoslavia on several occasions, and are now in the hands of post-Yugoslav states, the biggest chunk belonging now to Croatia. There was also a second Rapallo treaty in 1922, this time between Germany and the USSR, following WWI and the Brest-Litovsk treaty (1918) between the USSR and the so-called Central Powers (Ottoman Empire, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria) by which the USSR stopped waging WWI, and peace in central-eastern Europe was settled. Many treaties or peace agreements, whether signed or implicit, have been as many thresholds in history. They could be considered and listed or, on the contrary, dismissed, depending on the historic scenario and agencies one is interested in. But coming back to Timothy Garton Ash, a historian specialized in Germany and in eastern Europe, he doesn't count the tacit *peace agreement of 1989*, after the fall of the Berlin wall, the one by which the unilaterally triumphant west-cum-capitalism overrun the existing cold war equilibrium. More than many of the previous peace agreements, this so established globalization "peace", outlines a still negotiated new world order. This is not the New World Order that non-aligned and 3<sup>rd</sup>-world countries were dreaming of in the 1960s and the 70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century creating then a first globalisation *avant la letter*,<sup>431</sup> but the new world order of transnational capitalism in its latest avatars: big-data and cognitive and financial capitalism with sub-primes, bio-political capitalism, where states follow suit and obey capital, where goods and work circulate, but where populations, forced migrants and rejected/excluded or

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<sup>429</sup> In Italian: Fiume & Zara.

<sup>430</sup> The climax of this condition was the pre-emptive military (by nationalist and irredentist militias demobilized from earlier WWI battles) coup and "cultural" invasion of the fascist avant-garde by poet/warrior Gabriele D'Annunzio (he, as the dictator of Fiume called himself "Comandante") on the city of Fiume/Rijeka (1919), where he set up the "Italian Regency of Carnaro" (foreshadowing the later fascist regime) *before* Mussolini's imminent coming to power (1923). This occupation of Fiume/Rijeka was subsequently blocked and ended by Italian government troops themselves, when the Free State of Fiume was established in "respect" of the first Rapallo peace treaty. But Fiume was annexed to Italy the year after Mussolini took power (1924). Strangely enough, the USSR seems to have been the only country to recognise D'Annunzio's "Carnaro" (Kvarner) state.

<sup>431</sup> Johanna Bockman, "Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism...", *op. cit.* Tvrtko Jakovina, *op. cit.*

disposable groups and individuals are prevented from circulating and left to die, when they are not fought against directly by states at the payroll of big transnational capital.

### Central and eastern Europe

It is even worse in central Europe and in eastern and central Europe, in countries that were allied to the Soviet Union formerly or that were formerly socialist in their own way (Yugoslavia), in countries like the post-Yugoslav ones, countries such as Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro etc. Regimes in eastern Europe are much more authoritarian. Also, their populations, if in resistance, are actually much more worried by the corruption of the governing elites (if they don't partake) than, for example, by environmental, ecological and other issues (while in western Europe, the latter – ecologists etc. - made a veritable push-through at the May 2019 European elections).<sup>432</sup> As Marc Lazar says in an interview, “If ‘people-crazy’ gets to power and is consolidated, it constitutes a step to something else: to illiberal democracy or to ‘democrature’, which is already in action in Warsaw and Budapest.”<sup>433</sup> Lazar and his co-author Diamanti consider populism to be first of all a new style in politics. Marc Lazar says that the style of populism can be associated with diverse ideologies but that it is not an ideology in itself. There are three elements in populism's style: Firstly, a homogenized people turn against the elites or the caste in power. Second, there are only simple solutions to the problem, for example a referendum or social media. Thirdly, the “incarnation” of the people in a leader is more important than its representation, and intermediary powers will be considered superfluous. But this doesn't prevent populism to be ideologically structured, especially towards the extreme right, while some populist parties, such as the Movimento 5 stelle (the 5 Stars movement) in Italy are rather pure “style” without a strong ideological characterization. Lazar also insists that populism itself is not specifically Europe's illness, but the manifestation of an evil that is larger and encompasses all spheres of life. One of the main and repetitive points that appear in all right-wing populisms is what has been called the “migration crisis” which, within a mainly economic crisis, echoes the failure of both patterns of dealing with immigrants: failure of the multicultural model (seen in France as “Anglo-Saxon”) and of the integrative model (seen in France as French, but seen elsewhere as

<sup>432</sup> Ivan Krastev, “Le centre politique a résisté, mais pour combien de temps?” in *Courrier international* N°1492 du 6-12 juin 2019, p. 14 (translated from *Hospodárské Noviny*, Prague).

<sup>433</sup> Marc Lazar, “The ‘peuplecratie’ is a challenge to liberal and representative democracy”, *Le Monde*, May 3, 2019, p. 23.

assimilationist). According to him, populism is characterized by the defiance of “the people” towards elites (all types of elites, whether political, elites class-wise, intellectuals, entrepreneurs etc.) all considered as rotten (*tous pourris*). It actually claims some other kind of politics, as the one the Yellow vests movement wanted in France in 2019. They saw themselves as the best defenders of democracy, which, they thought, had been confiscated by the elites. According to the author, three points have become obvious over the past thirty years since the new turn of neoliberalism: 1. The diversification of the people in power will continue and some of it is claimed by the populist movements – there have been openings towards women and the young, but there will be closures to others; 2. Liberal democracies should still have a capacity to resist. The populists are not about to irresistibly conquer power in Europe; 3. We are, according to Marc Lazar’s pessimistic conclusion, in *a moment of de-civilisation* opposed to humanist values, which is seen in all the disagreeing about “values”, “way of life”, “identity”.<sup>434</sup>

Haven’t we, in the post-World War II period, enjoyed the welfare state and the social state over several decades (in the post-war reconstruction boom of thirty years, *les 30 glorieuses*), only to see it dilapidated from the end of the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on? Because of that neo-liberal exacerbation, public health services were privatized and produced so many deaths during the covid-19 epidemic, says Tariq Ali<sup>435</sup> (and say many others). This was made crystal-clear during the 2020 pandemic crises: European countries were completely unprepared for it because public health had been neglected for years. This is why the virus proved so deadly. After this episode, it is not to be expected that migrants are accepted. European borders were in any case open just for insiders, reminds Tariq Ali. And for goods. According to Ali, the EU, in particular Germany, let in some refugees in 2016 because they came as the result of European wars. If we go to a new war, we shall be obliged to accept at least some refugees. As for the USA, Trump wouldn’t today accept them. Europe, Ali continues, has become a continent without any consciousness. Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, was destroyed as a politician when she spontaneously let in refugees a first wave in 2016.

She however then rebuilt her political credit again only in 2020, during the coronavirus

<sup>434</sup> Olivier Duhamel, Marc Lazar, Yann Algan & Elise Massicard, débat à Science-po Paris, 22-10-2019, “Populismes et démocratie”, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/evenements/?event=populismes-et-democratie>

<sup>435</sup> Tariq Ali in conversation with Maja Pelević, *Diem25*, “Visible skies above, a tsunami of banalities below”, April 28, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpWva9pAyEg>



emergency and because Germany managed the crisis excellently, without any shortages of material or facilities, unlike other European countries. But of course, she didn't try to open borders to immigrants this time round, knowing that it would be politically counterproductive: it would wake up the extreme right and would again damage her political popularity. And since the covid-19, the nation-state has again gained been reinforced.

Other authors think that the 2020 virus represents a break with traditional politics, with the political inheritance of the 19th century in Europe, as a would-be ideology wanting to replace traditionally existing political orientations. For example, we often hear from populists that they are neither left nor right, or that they are both. They endorse confusionism. In any case, populisms are plural, and we now have references to left and right populisms in political studies, with the *legitimation of left-wing populisms* through the philosophical political inheritance of Ernesto Laclau, mainly through its reinterpretation by Chantal Mouffe.<sup>436</sup> After Gramsci, Carl Schmitt is here again the horizon. Laclau used to be seen as responding to a leftist counter-hegemonic movement from below while, as Vatsov shows, national-populisms also act from above.<sup>437</sup> They establish power “propaganda” of unification beyond class or party divisions through government. Nowadays, populist leaders tend to manage a state like a firm: see Berlusconi or Trump. Many interpretations of *what a people is* intervene here – the people as sovereign, *peuple*, *plebs*, *demos*, *ethnos*, and the people as consumer. In “constructing the people”, a European still inexistent people, Balibar argues in an interview in *Médiapart*: “They [the extreme right] can stick to a purely reactive position: ‘we refuse the dismantling of national sovereignty, because national sovereignty is social protection’. They obviously do not speak of ‘assets acquired through social struggles’, and that's why i find dangerous the speech of Chantal Mouffe, because although she perceived well that there was a competition of this type, she believes to be able to practice the outbidding of nationalism and win on the same ground.”<sup>438</sup> Long-term social struggles by the left can produce longer-lasting political effects, but populist

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<sup>436</sup> Philippe Corcuff, *op. cit.*

<sup>437</sup> Vatsov, *op. cit. Part One*, p. 74.

<sup>438</sup> Balibar: “Ils [l'extrême droite] peuvent s'en tenir à une position purement réactive : « nous refusons le démantèlement de la souveraineté nationale, or la souveraineté nationale c'est la protection sociale ». Ils ne parlent évidemment pas « d'acquis des luttes sociales », et c'est pour ça que je trouve dangereux le discours de Chantal Mouffe, parce que si elle a bien perçu qu'il y avait une concurrence de ce type, elle croit pouvoir pratiquer la surenchère du nationalisme et gagner sur le même terrain.” Germinal Pinalie, “Étienne Balibar: Europe, au-delà de l'élection, quelle refondation et pour qui?” in *Médiapart* 22-5-2019, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/germinal-pinalie/blog/220519/etienne-balibar-europe-au-dela-de-l-election-quelle-refondation-et-pour-qui>

movements rather go for quick-fixes and political shortcuts which do not guarantee lasting social advantages.

Several theoreticians think, when it comes to Europe, that we don't yet have a European people (Balibar, Lazar and others). Chantal Mouffe will say that it takes a people constructing a people.<sup>439</sup> But is it being constructed from above or from below, as Balibar would propose? Islamophobia that resulted partly from the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Twin towers in the USA, and partly from historic colonial prejudices, blindness and deeply ingrained historic racism, then from increased immigration wrongly understood as threatening both economically and threatening European "identity", has contributed to the explosion of populisms, but also produced an elementary distrust of politics. A test was the vote in Europe on May 26, 2019 for the European parliament. Shall we have, as it seemed, a consolidated majority of united European extreme-right parties facing dispersed left-wing parties and a political left incapable of uniting? It was much feared that Italy, with post-fascists and national-populists in power, may become an "illiberal democracy" like Hungary and that France may follow suit. But Italy has had an efficient democracy in the past and solid democratic traditions (so the worst did not happen, although the right-populist and social-nativist government was immensely popular). While France, under the guise of representative democracy resulting from the French revolution, has actually had a "regal republic" encouraging populists. Finally, the extreme right parties all over Europe, though strong, did not achieve overwhelming victory (in European polls in 2019), while green parties across the subcontinent made considerable progress and achieved political visibility that is thought to be definitive now, and on the rise.

The resistance to Europe's closure will have to be *transnational* because capital and capitalism are transnational and globalization has been attained. It stands no chance otherwise. Such a joint transnational resistance to nationalisms, populisms, to current de-democratization, depoliticization or "illiberal democracies" is yet stammering in Europe. It would have to propose a different Europe in political and organizational terms. In Ned Rossiter's words, "The material world, in other words, is losing sight of itself".<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Chantal Mouffe & Íñigo Errejón, *Construire un peuple. Pour une radicalisation de la démocratie*, trad. par François Delprat, Paris, Les Ed. du Cerf 2017. See also comment by Philippe Corcuff, *op. cit.*

<sup>440</sup> Ned Rossiter in "Logistical Media Theory. The Politics of Time, and the Geopolitics of Automation", manuscript 2019, p. 11.

## Theories on populism

It must be clear by now that two philosophers who are a team have done decisive work on populism. Ernesto Laclau is the philosopher of a *systemic* political philosophy, as well as the author of seminal work on populism. Sound systemic philosophical constructions are admirable, and Laclau's is particularly so. Chantal Mouffe, who partakes of Laclau's seamless system especially through and since their joint groundbreaking book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*,<sup>441</sup> has been further refining and sharpening her own philosophical way of thinking radical democracy (besides other philosophical work such as in engaged aesthetics that she has been developing in addition). Thinking radical democracy in this case inevitably goes all the way to being normative. The construction is very convincing and elaborate, with detailed answers available at every possible level, from the practical pragmatic to the theoretical one. Mouffe's thorough description of the degradation of the social and political quality of life worldwide since the entrance on the scene of financialized capitalism is indeed very persuasive and accurate, including her assertion that social-democrat and other left parties have accompanied the movement towards this last stage of globalized neoliberalism "without an alternative" or the hegemony of "oligarchic regimes", which also implies the triumph of right-wing populisms. Like some other authors we mentioned, Chantal sees populism as more a matter of "style" than of definitive contents, and she defines it as follows, invalidating in advance many too quick reproofs: "Populism is not an ideology or a political regime, and cannot be attributed to a specific programmatic content. It is compatible with different forms of government. It is a way of doing politics which can take various forms, depending on the periods and the places. It emerges when one aims at building a new subject of collective action –the people– capable of reconfiguring a social order lived as unfair. [...] [A] variety of populist movements has emerged rejecting post-politics and post-democracy.<sup>442</sup> They claim to give back to the people the voice that has been confiscated by the elites."<sup>443</sup> And, "Populism refers to the dimension of popular sovereignty and the construction of a demos that is constitutive of democracy. It is precisely this dimension that has been discarded by neoliberal hegemony, and that is why the fight against post-democracy requires a populist political

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<sup>441</sup> Laclau & Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London, Verso 1985.

<sup>442</sup> "Post-politics" and "post-democracy" are accepted as descriptions of the present political moment (2020) by many theoreticians. R.I.

<sup>443</sup> Mouffe, "The populist moment", in *OpenDemocracy/ DemocraciaAbierta* on Nov. 21, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/populist-moment/>

intervention.”<sup>444</sup> In her definition of populism generally, she draws on Laclau’s pivotal book,<sup>445</sup> perhaps by reading into his work more of her own conclusions: “He [Laclau] defines populism as a way of constructing the political, which consists of establishing a political frontier that divides society into two camps, calling for the mobilization of the ‘underdog’ against ‘those in power’.”<sup>446</sup> There is this curious and reductive (Schmittian) general assumption of binaries (“two camps”), of which several examples are given throughout her work (“two camps”, “they/us”, “friend/enemy”), into which however the pair left-right somehow doesn’t fit and is said in need of being overcome: is left-populism and right-populism such a binary, or is it different? Their system and principled binarism is socially and politically cleaving, and theoretically problematic or simplifying as any binarism. For some reason, there seems not to be a front of equivalences between the Schmittian friend/enemy duo and the left-populism - right-populism one. The left/right split is first generally rejected as a matter of principle and as outdated (“traditional politics”), but it is then subsequently acknowledged within the construct of left-populism vs. right-populism within which left-populism is naturally chosen by the philosopher, and is called radical. According to Mouffe, populism is the result of our having entered post-democracy and the post-political era. The latter is the consequence of both left and right agreeing on TINA.<sup>447</sup> By this compromise, left and right parties<sup>448</sup> accept neoliberal globalization and they also agree to the blurring of the very categories of left and right. As stated by Chantal Mouffe, these categories do not any more catch the width and the depth of the political space and need to be transgressed. They are discarded until they are called back in the distinction of left- and right-populism.

Chantal Mouffe’s is one more of the numerous definitions of populism that have been circulated by authors, of which we examine some. It has the advantage of being explicitly articulated to many concrete political and social issues. This is where Chantal’s effort becomes

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<sup>444</sup> Note that fighting the (economic, intellectual, ethnic, national, power etc.) elites is a common place with all populisms, most confusionisms and some other movements too. This quote shows the normative intention of the text, Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, in *OpenDemocracy* on Dec. 5, 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciabierta/populist-challenge/>

<sup>445</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, London-New York, Verso 2005.

<sup>446</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, in *OpenDemocracy/ DemocraciaAbierta*, op. cit.

<sup>447</sup> TINA, “There Is No Alternative”, a saying by Margaret Thatcher with regard to neo-liberalism.

<sup>448</sup> Mouffe insists: *centre-left* and *centre-right* parties.

normative, as she rightly discerns that *times of crises* (as i too have tried to show elsewhere)<sup>449</sup> and “populist moments” are the suitable moment for changes and political interventions. Indeed, from my own experience in the women’s movements and politics in Yugoslavia, as well as from observations elsewhere – that opportune lapse of time, the right “moment”, the *kairos* for action may be very short and may soon be sealed when a new gender or other regime is accepted through an imposed hegemony and is ossified following an obtained compromise (where, usually, something else must be sacrificed). Chantal writes: “The ‘populist moment’ we are witnessing offers us the opportunity to re-establish a political frontier that allows us to recreate the agonistic tension typical of democracy. In fact, several right-wing populist parties are already doing so, and this explains their recent progress. The strength of right-wing populism can be explained precisely because it was able, in many countries, to draw a frontier and construct a people in order to translate politically the various resistances to the phenomenon of oligarchization induced by neoliberal hegemony.”<sup>450</sup> According to Mouffe, the crisis described is the expression of “heterogeneous demands that cannot be formulated through the right/left cleavage, as traditionally configured. (*ibid.*)” To assemble such disparate demands, the left/right opposition, she explains, needs to be expressed in *another way* (a “populist way”, a “progressive way”, *ibid.*). Here is where left and right suddenly come back into the picture from which they were just purged: “a progressive left-wing populism”<sup>451</sup> is auspicated.

Chantal Mouffe adds: “Antagonism, however, can manifest itself in different forms. It can take the form of a friend/enemy confrontation in which the goal is to eradicate the ‘they’ to establish a radically new order. The French revolution provides an example of this ‘antagonistic’ populism. [...] For a populist movement to be compatible with pluralistic democracy, the confrontation must be agonistic. An agonistic populism does not advocate total rejection of the existing institutional framework. Its objective is not the destruction of liberal-democratic institutions, but the disarticulation of the elements that constitutes the hegemonic order and the re-articulation of a new hegemony.

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<sup>449</sup> Rada Iveković, *Autopsia dei Balcani. Saggio di psico-politica*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 1999. In German, *Autopsie des Balkans. Ein psychopolitischer Essay*, Droschl : Graz 2001; e-Book in the French original: *Une autopsie des Balkans. Essai de psycho-politique*, [https://www.academia.edu/33180065/Iveković\\_Autopsie\\_des\\_Balkans](https://www.academia.edu/33180065/Iveković_Autopsie_des_Balkans), and other writings.

<sup>450</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, *op. cit.*

<sup>451</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, *op. cit.* Mouffe, “The populist moment”, *op. cit.*, as well as her books on populism and on agonistics.

A left populism<sup>452</sup> suitable for the European situation must be conceived as a 'radical reformism' which strives to recover and deepen democracy.” And here a leftist politics comes back and is acceptable, after the left/right divide has been condemned: “It is a struggle that is carried out by means of a 'war of position' within the institutions, in order to transform them.”<sup>453</sup> That will be achieved through agonistics and not antagonism,<sup>454</sup> where the “enemy” will be an adversary fought with dignified political means. But it seems difficult to imagine that a radically new order out of “radical reformism” identified with left (populism) may result *with certainty* from the reductive confrontation of “us” with “them” or from the elimination of one of the two sides. What precedes this scene and as an *unsaid* common denominator to the situation is the opposition of “left (-populism)” and “right (-populism)”, but these are explicitly introduced only in a second step. The construction seems somewhat wobbly, and is due to the fact that a complex, challenging but redundant system is being constructed no matter the cost. I would be cautious about the “radically new order” here, and would prefer to see the possibility of a radically new order (if at all thinkable) as the result of something less predictable or rather incalculable, or concluded at best *a posteriori*. But *systemic* philosophy needs to construct and hypothesize in advance. The construction is very elaborate, but reaches the level of some kind of promised prophecy.

In such a construction, obviously, keeping the frontiers between “them” and “us” is essential, although that frontier can be moving. Chantal writes further: “I am convinced that in the next few years the central axis of the political conflict will be between right-wing and left-wing populism, and it is imperative that progressive sectors understand the importance of involving themselves in that struggle. To devise a left populism requires visualizing politics in a way that recognizes its partisan character.”<sup>455</sup> The evidence of the left-right divide in populisms, however, is not the sign of a flourishing political condition. It is rather the expression of a degradation of the political, a sign of depoliticization, quite to the contrary of what is suggested by the author. We certainly cannot pretend to be neutral and we can recognize the partisan *and* the passionate character of politics. But I would think that nothing certain follows from there, while many illusions may result thereof. It is not clear at this time (2020) in Europe or

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<sup>452</sup> There it is again. Suddenly, “left” is meaningful again, and it refers to “radical reformism”.

<sup>453</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, *op. cit.*

<sup>454</sup> Mouffe, Chantal, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically*. London, Verso 2013.

<sup>455</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, *op. cit.*

elsewhere, that the opposition of left- and right-populisms may bring a radically new quality of progressive politics rather than *more confusionism*, not only because of the opposition of left and right, but rather because of the postulation of populism with its cleavage. In France in any case, right-populism/fascism is, as a party, unfortunately so much stronger (the Rassemblement national, former Front national, a party linked to colonial and nationalist history as well as to the history of racism and violence), and it induces left-populism to imitate it, to enhance nationalism, to reach out for the same popular constituency and for the same arguments (nationalism etc.) but with far less likelihood of attracting votes. On the same terrain and on the same issues (immigration, protectionism, nationalism etc.), right-populism has so far been more effective than left-wing populism in most countries. Right-populism is the sign and maybe the reason of the disappearance of left-oriented politics. Instead, we now have utterly disoriented politics.

And finally, according to the author, “By re-creating political frontiers, the 'populist moment' we are witnessing in Europe points to a 'return of the political'. A return that may open the way for authoritarian solutions —through regimes that weaken liberal democratic institutions— but which can also lead to a reaffirmation and deepening of democratic values. Everything will depend on the kind of populism that emerges victorious from the struggle against post-politics and post-democracy.”<sup>456</sup> The fact is that, as regards the *kind* of populism, in too many places right-populism has been much more efficient and has invited mimetism in nationalism from left-populism. We may soon end up having many more “illiberal democracies” than we imagined in Europe and elsewhere. Actually, solutions to this conundrum in the sense of a new and efficient radical politics might easily come rather from the global south this time, and from populations that have nothing to lose in the struggle, than from Europeans. Europeans are still too rich – in spite of the crisis - to accept to lose more. Or so would we have thought a few years back, when national-populism had not yet inundated southern and “peripheral” countries too. Obviously, the “populist moment” corresponds to the old concept of *palanka*<sup>457</sup> which too can turn either way. This is why the *palanka* or the *populist moment* is also a possible source of risk and greater dangers. Throughout history *palanka* has been the potential and probable, though not necessary, birthplace of extreme violence and suffering that could have been

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<sup>456</sup> Mouffe, “The populist challenge”, *op. cit.*

<sup>457</sup> Radomir Konstantinović, *Filosofija palanke*, Nolit, Belgrade 1969. Rada Iveković, *Autopsia dei Balcani. Saggio di psico-politica*, *op. cit.*

avoided. In countries like France but in many others too, it is nowadays linked to the *fasciosphere*, leaving no great option to left-populism. There have been concatenations of events that can be seen as chains of equivalence. It has often been more probable than not that the *palanka*, the populist moment, might engender violence that, it seems, doesn't bother too much about theory or about "radical politics". There certainly could be moments and epochs when, however, it might engender progressive changes and a new political arena. At this beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is more probable? The raging unbridled violence is more visible than ever in history, and probably more to be expected.

What Chantal Mouffe's re-signification of the notion of left-populism shows undoubtedly, is the inadequacy and the problematicity of the polysemic term *populism* that we all, she included, still use. Alain Brossat calls it "Populism: the success story of an eclectic notion."<sup>458</sup> He thinks that it sells well, although it witnesses to a loss of meaning, and "this approach is just a diversion aimed at making us forget what fascism always is, at its inception". And, he adds, fascism always acts through language (don't other political schools too?). "The fascists keep their promises for these are promises of death [...]" "Since it appears that we have entered the era of a form of post-democracy that is compatible with fascism [...] it is clear that the engine of modern democracy is seriously damaged. [...] In sum, « populism » is the driving belt of the discursive operation consisting in dodging the question of the diagnosis on what market democracy has become as the regime of contemporary politics. [...] It has a paradigmatic value, for it was a full-scale crash-test for those who advocate so-called « left populism » which consists in betting on the setting of an « hegemonic bloc » or coalition so that the conditions for a radicalization of democracy would appear, a process that should go through the conquest of power (the occupation of the State) by leftist and progressive parties. What happened in Brazil was not only the most recent crash-test for this strategy, it was, after Greece and some others, the final one and the swansong of « left populism » [...]"<sup>459</sup>

Many authors consider populism to be fascism. A consistent and deeper critique could put some order into the naming dilemma on the sameness/difference of populism and fascism, and sort out the terminology, in order to help us overcome *confusionism*. It is especially the distinction of a left- and progressive populism and a right-populism, that is improbable and simplifying.

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<sup>458</sup> Brossat, "Populism: the success story of an eclectic notion", [https://iccs.nctu.edu.tw/zh/wps\\_one.php?USN=9](https://iccs.nctu.edu.tw/zh/wps_one.php?USN=9).

<sup>459</sup> Brossat (*ibid*).



According to Chantal Mouffe, right wing populism would be drawing on the liberal tradition, while progressive left-wing populism draws on the democratic political logic and tradition. Both are the sources of “our European political system” which i would prefer not to essentialize, but which appears regularly as the common denominator or “our” European, western political system which is presented as the only tradition worthy of attention. Even bigger than the problems of the term “populism”, is the problem of distinguishing between left and right populism since they are so much alike on so many issues. Chantal acknowledges the distinction as blurred nowadays. But doesn’t this blurring apply to her own writing and distinguishing between the two populisms as well? On March 3, 2020 in the French Parliament, the right-populist party Rassemblement national voted the left-populist party’s La France insoumise *motion de censure* (“censure motion” or “vote of no confidence in the government”) on passing the law on the pension system by force without submitting it to a vote. The right-populist party *did not* vote against the government’s action in support of the right political party Les Republicans’ vote of no confidence, with which one would abstractly think they would naturally have sided. Not only are the left- and right-populisms indistinct in many cases, but their blurring paralyses politics. The option of distinguishing between them is not really operative in practice, as Chantal Mouffe would expect, although it may sound very learned in theory. Namely, right-wing populism is difficult to distinguish from fascism, but then it is also difficult to distinguish – on the other hand – from left-wing populism (for one thing, they have the same constituencies), although we may all agree that left-populism is *not* fascism, and even that all populisms are not necessarily fascist. These terms are moving. In the first place, they all comprise nationalism and some degree of implicit or explicit xenophobia, racism and anti-immigration resolve. But day-to-day politics is not theory. Not only is the current populist confusionism between extreme left and extreme right populisms, which mainly resides in some commonly recognized *social* issues, dangerous for the future of Europe and of the world, but it makes improbable theories that, while refuting one of them, go and reach for the other. A blurred nebula can hardly constitute a practicable theory, however impressive its ideal architecture and theoretical construction.

### National populism in France

Laurent Mucchielli uses the term *national populism* and exposes the *confusionism* that we just

mentioned. In his last book<sup>460</sup> he works specifically on national-populism in France in relation to the latter's colonial and violent history and today's islamophobia. In France as elsewhere, color and "race"-blindness is used to cover class inequalities, but also to conceal inequality in exposure to police brutality and to cover the basic inequality in treatment, in services (including health services) and human rights between citizens and non-citizens. Official France is in complete denial of its colonial history, of the injustice still imparted to even its own citizens of colonial origin and in denial of everyday racism. The non-citizens are migrants, refugees, and the non-documented. Mucchielli writes: "[...] national populism continues to progress in France as in other countries of the world. The reasons are obviously multiple, but it is partly on intellectual ground that this progression is being built. National populism marks decisive points when it manages to make de facto allies who come voluntarily or involuntarily to legitimize it. They just have to say that those are «good questions» being asked, and the game is already well won. When, for example, on June 24, 2017, the philosopher and academician Alain Finkielkraut (himself somewhat tortured by identity issues and obsessed with the headscarf since 1989) invites in his France Culture programme one of the fathers of contemporary islamophobia, Renaud Camus, to speak of his alleged theory of the « great replacement » (an idea actually rooted in the extreme right at least since the 1960s),<sup>461</sup> he legitimizes the whole of this current of nationalist and racist thought. He is well acquainted with the rest of the contemporary far-right galaxy, having already dined with many of its representatives. [...] In these small Parisian networks, one thus finds all the largely interconnected galaxy constituting the «fachosphère».<sup>462</sup> «the neoconservatives, on the rims of the right and the extreme right; the islamophobic, taking up the thesis of a 'clash of civilizations' [by Samuel Huntington]; sites linked to the National Front [Front National, today Rassemblement National, RN]; ».<sup>463</sup> « [...] The ambition of the present book is to understand why all these homilies of mistrust, rejection, sometimes of hatred, towards immigrants and Muslims are so successful today, far beyond nationalist and racist circles, even though they most often state confounding untruths. [...] At a

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<sup>460</sup> Mucchielli, *La France telle qu'elle est. Pour en finir avec la complainte nationaliste*, Paris, Fayard 2020, [https://www.liseuse-hachette.fr/file/138224?fullscreen=1&editeur=Fayard#epubcfi\(/6/12\[pre2\]!/4/2/2\[PRE\]/4/2/2/1:0](https://www.liseuse-hachette.fr/file/138224?fullscreen=1&editeur=Fayard#epubcfi(/6/12[pre2]!/4/2/2[PRE]/4/2/2/1:0)

<sup>461</sup> Mucchielli quoting F. Charpier, *Les Plastiqueurs. Une histoire secrète de l'extrême droite violente*, Paris, la Découverte, 2018, p. 346-349.

<sup>462</sup> Mucchielli quoting Site N°1 of the fachosphère : « Fdesouche », in D. Albertini, D. Doucet, *La Fachosphère. Comment l'extrême droite remporte la bataille d'Internet*, Paris, Flammarion, 2016, p. 55-56. Note that fachosphère is sometimes written *fasciosphere*. It mainly designates extreme-right Internet, publishing and generally militant activities.

<sup>463</sup> Mucchielli quoting Albertini-Doucet, p. 14, *op. cit.*

time when nationalist, populist and xenophobic or simply racist leaders are increasingly imposing themselves at the heads of governments and states (Trump in the United States, Johnson in the United Kingdom, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Salvini in Italy, Erdogan in Turkey, Netanyahu in Israel, Narendra Modi in India, Scott Morrison in Australia, Mauricio Macri in Argentina...), and as they keep the gates of power in France, there is an urgent need to articulate, synthesize and disseminate all this knowledge in order to fight against the sum of ignorance, lies or hypocrisy that pervade public debate and social networks. »<sup>464</sup> And he adds: “In a country with around 67 million inhabitants, we [see] that African immigrants therefore represent around 4.2% of the population, which is distributed between 2.7% of Maghrebis and 1.5% of sub-Saharan Africans. [...]

In reality, if sub-Saharan African immigration has increased in recent decades, in the 2010s, immigration has once again been primarily European. [...]

The racism aiming at descendants of immigrants from the Maghreb countries, however, is of an extent and longevity unparalleled in the French history of immigration. It is at the heart of a major conflict that will soon have been half a century old and that continues today. The nationalists-racists who constantly feed it attribute this fact to an alleged irreducible or consubstantial specificity to this immigration. It's wrong. [...]

The contemporary success of sermons hostile to immigration and foreigners in general is not explained simply by the *former colonization*, but also, and even more, by the *recent decolonization*. [...]

By comparison [with Great Britain], French decolonization was rather disastrous. If it took place nearly peacefully in sub-Saharan Africa (notwithstanding the bloody repression of independence tendencies in Madagascar), it was marked by two terrible wars, in Indochina and Algeria.”<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Mucchielli, “Introduction. Un étonnement, une ambition et une méthode”, in *La France telle qu'elle est. Pour en finir avec la complainte nationaliste*, op. cit.

<sup>465</sup> Mucchielli, “1 Les migrants, les immigrés, l'histoire de l'immigration”, in *La France telle qu'elle est. Pour en finir avec la complainte nationaliste*, op. cit.

## **8. Instead of a conclusion**

Populisms, nationalisms, and extreme right orientations, be it in government or in society, are today, particularly in Europe, the greatest enemies of immigration. They go against the spirit of our time and against a shared humanity responsible for life in general. Immigration is an unavoidable necessity of our globalized condition on many counts, as well as the condition of our common survival: economically, demographically, historically, culturally, socially, politically etc.

There are socio-economic as well as political causes and reasons of forced migration (most migrations are forced in some way), with the discrimination, injustices and inequalities they cause. Current populisms and neo-fascist leanings of European governments greatly increase the risk taken and the probability for migrants without visas to suffer and in one out of 14 cases, to die at the borders of Fortress Europe. Many different policies could be engaged to tackle not only the discrimination of emigration countries in the global south by the north, but also to put an end to the unacceptable way migrants are treated, for those that manage to reach Europe. These policies concern the planet. They will have to go through the establishment of international laws respected by all, and will therefore be global, in addition to being posed also at the local level of each state, each society, each individual. It will be about overcoming the exploitation systems of humans, of nature and of the environment that have been in place for too long. The basic extraction models of the global south are still today (neo) colonial and neo-imperialist: national-populist and neo-fascist regimes are particularly easily grafted on these. They have the support of hegemonic economic if not political elites in power. These elites have worked for over thirty years on obliterating the lessons of history (and in particular those of nazism, fascism and authoritarianisms). They have been busy in dismantling of the welfare state, of a social state, of the achievements of the working class, of a political culture of dialogue and negotiations, of any idea of solidarity with the poor, the minorities or the migrants. They have worked hard on the rejection of humanist ideas, which contributed to the loss of meaning in the political language of modernity. Populisms are not a solution in the shared construction of a common world where all lives will be respected and a new gender, social, economic and political order will be developed in solidarity. It will be in a collective effort regardless of the origins of individuals. Populisms will have to be resisted on all levels. There may however be a small chance – to be grabbed absolutely – that the coronavirus crisis of the

covid-19 epidemic, which has made obvious the limits and life-threatening exaggerations of the present phase of global neoliberal capitalism, may represent a wake-up call and the beginning of a change of paradigm. In the wake of the per definition *global* pandemic and awareness of it, more movements may become global. There are some signs of it, such as in the example of the Black Lives Matter movement having become global across all continents on the occasion of the assassination of George Floyd by the racist police in Minneapolis, USA, on May 25, 2020. Or as the *#Me too* Movement against systemic violence on women. Or as the environmentalist movement of young students, initiated by the teenager Greta Thunberg, in favor of an *ecological transition*. Or as the by now general awareness around the world about the implications of climate change. Or as indigenous populations' movements in third world countries in favor of a new approach to agriculture and resisting land grabbing and utter capitalist productivism. All these movements have become transnational. There may be more such movements to come. What is new here are their transversality, transborder and cosmopolitan quality, as well as their reciprocal intersectionality. In a globalized world, the political subject will be global in addition to being local. Watch the news.

### The epochal issue of migrations

Faced with disaster and her responsibility, Europe looks the other way, the only aim of its politics at this time being that immigrants from the south or the east don't get through. And as we have seen with the affair of the SAR<sup>466</sup> boat Sea Watch-3 that was seized and confiscated in Lampedusa after several other NGO's rescuing boats,<sup>467</sup> the European administration has so far *no solution* for these situations dictated by fascist authorities and a xenophobic public opinion all over the European subcontinent. The only instances going against the European official stance on immigration are women's organizations, corresponding NGOs and associations, academics and researchers as well as some cities<sup>468</sup> across Europe that have

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<sup>466</sup> SAR: Search and Rescue. See *Fairplanet* <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/mediterranean-is-saving-humans/>

<sup>467</sup> When the captain had no choice but to land the rescued, in spite of Italian authorities having closed the ports and forbidden rescuing.

<sup>468</sup> Inclusive cities & Refugees welcome: Barcelona, Bergen, Bristol, Cartagena (Spain), Hamburg, Innsbruck, Neukölln Berlin, Reggio Emilia, Riace and others. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/intercultural-cities-and-refugees>; Helge Schwiertz & Felix Keß, "Safe harbours: the cities defying the EU to welcome migrants", in *OpenDemocracy*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/safe-harbours-cities-defying-eu-welcome-migrants/>. *Forced Migration Review*, <https://www.fmreview.org/cities>; *Cities and Migrants: Implementing the Integrating Cities Charter*, 2018, [http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/3rd\\_Integrating\\_Cities\\_Report\\_October\\_2018\\_FINAL.pdf](http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/3rd_Integrating_Cities_Report_October_2018_FINAL.pdf)

independently and unilaterally declared themselves as safe havens for immigrants, practicing translocal connections for that. The two captains Carola Rackete and Pia Klemp had been arrested and put on trial in Italy. They were prosecuted for “smuggling illegals”, though C. Rackete was soon released by a judge for preliminary investigation, Alessandra Vella, who ruled that the closing ports decree can’t apply to saving lives, while Ana Isabel Montes Mier (chief of mission) and Max Reig (captain) of the SAR ship Open arms, who had saved 200 migrants in march 2018 by landing them at Pozzallo, were accused by the Italian authorities of “criminal association (*associazione a delinquere*) in view of helping illegal immigration”.<sup>469</sup>

An estimate of the impact of *women’s individual and collective political subjectivities* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century migration epic is still awaited and is promising.<sup>470</sup> To their activism women can also add their traditional work of care, nowadays often reinvented. Among the activists dealing with migrants and helping them, across the specter, women are most numerous. Most of the NGOs are made of women, but a common front will necessarily have to be constructed *intersectionally*. Part of the work of activists with the migrants is the work of *care*.

Feminist intellectuals, activists and organizations now think that the work of *care* women have always been in charge of privately but also professionally (care has been largely genderised, but also racialized, and biased by class in western societies), should now be upgraded, radicalized, shared, enlarged and made part of *welfare* and *public health*. Care should be *revalued*. Care should not only be shared with men, extricated from family obligations and given public recognition and remuneration, but it should be shared with society and the state who should step-in, organize, coordinate and distribute it evenly, while seeing to it that the allocation of tasks is just. In addition to a merely social endeavor, care should be deployed across and beyond gender barriers, but it should be a social state’s responsibility and part of its welfare obligations *to both citizens and non-citizens*. Yet it is not easy to make *care* overcome the gender, class or race barriers which have constitutively been inbuilt into societies. In the words of Eléonore Lépinard:

“The devaluation [of *care*] is the product of the naturalization of these tasks, as if women

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<sup>469</sup> Francesca Mannocchi, “Se questo è un porto sicuro”, in *L’Espresso* N°28, “Capitani e no”, anno LXV, 7-7-2019, pp. 12-17.

<sup>470</sup> Michela Murgia, “Il dissenso è donna”, *L’Espresso* N°28 (2019), pp. 18-20;

innately knew how to perform them and were in any case biologically programmed to perform them. Naturalization makes it possible to devalue the economic value of these tasks, thus confirming their social devaluation - a devaluation which is also reflected in the fact that women who have the material means do so on poorer women, and very often on immigrants. [...] No matter how well I know that the care activities need to be upgraded socially and economically, I do not want to be assigned to them full time. Only one solution: share them.”<sup>471</sup>

We know by now that neither men, nor society or the state will readily give in and come share the work of *care* with women, although there has been some progress in western/northern countries on that front. Unfortunately, that progress, together with other undoubtable advancement in gender relations, comes with parallel huge setbacks and backlashes as a price. Historically subordinate groups of people, on whatever their principle of discrimination, being in a double-bind situation, are always bound to lose something for anything they gain, because patriarchy as well as other principles of inequality and injustice are quick to adapt and get again the upper side. Whatever way (or method, such as positive discrimination) has been used to help discriminated against groups to make some steps forward, will also eventually be used against them, usually at some point along the way.

Women, accompanied by many male colleagues too, have been providing care work to migrants at sea and on the borders. This was well understood by researchers and competent institution. The public prosecutor of Agrigento, on July 2, 2019, deconstructed efficiently with the help of numbers and data, at a hearing by parliamentary commissions, the *assumption turned into executive policy* since over 2018 and later by a law, of Italy's ruling vice-prime minister.<sup>472</sup> The latter organized pushing the migrants back to Libya, a country at war. He declared it to be safe, while everyone knows that refugees and migrants are kept in camps (actually prisons) there, with no facilities. They are tortured, raped, famished on a regular basis and often killed.<sup>473</sup> Libyan so-called coastguards, financed (and trained since 2016) by Europe, capture boats of migrants and deport them back to Libya. It is business. Indeed, on the Libyan

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<sup>471</sup> Eléonore Lépinard, “Penser un après-covid féministe : pour un partage radical du care”, in *CO-VIES20 vivre (dé)confiné-e-s, penser en commun*, [https://covies20.com/2020/05/25/penser-un-apres-covid-feministe/#\\_ftnrefl](https://covies20.com/2020/05/25/penser-un-apres-covid-feministe/#_ftnrefl)

<sup>472</sup> Matteo Salvini, one of two vice-ministers in a weak coalition headed by the extreme-right populist party Lega. He lost this position in July 2019.

<sup>473</sup> Francesca Mannocchi, *ibid*, as well as several other articles in that issue of *L'Espresso* N°28 (2019) which was dedicated to the present European crisis in trying to contain immigration: Michela Murgia, “Il dissenso è donna”, *op. cit.*; Alessandro Gilioli, “Zitti o perdiamo”, pp. 21-23; Roberto Saviano, “Quella guerra fatta di parole”, pp. 25

sea front, in 2018, one out of 14 migrants<sup>474</sup> who had attempted crossing the sea have died. According to the Italian official position that benefitted from an efficient media campaign and was welcomed by apparently much of the population, RAS boats and NGOs collaborate with (Libyan and other) human smugglers and traffickers, but according to the prosecutor, there has been no proof of human smuggling. No condemnation resulted from the investigations in actual trials where NGOs were charged. An official (one Carmelo Zuccaro) asserted to a parliamentary Schengen committee in 2017, additionally, criminalizing the NGOs, that the latter, financed by the traffickers, aim at destabilizing Italian economy,<sup>475</sup> and that the very existence of rescuing NGOs are a pull-factor for immigration attempts, a contention proved wrong and refuted by social researchers. Although juridically no proof was ever established of a collusion of people-saving NGOs with people-smugglers, the Italian state-orchestrated propaganda has been very efficient in turning a large portion of public opinion against migrants, against life-saving NGOs and in favor of turning migrants down and pushing them back, i.e. in favor of closing borders and of outsourcing them<sup>476</sup> to southern countries like Libya, where there were more than 6000 migrant prisoners detained near Tripoli in the summer of 2019<sup>477</sup> and where one of the generals involved in the current civil war, and backed by the USA, Khalifa Haftar, hit a prison and killed more than 40 migrants in July 2019. In addition, Libya is full of warring militias and predators on migrants who made of this situation their lucrative *business*. Europe is continuously outsourcing those borders and paying Libya for containing the migrants' departures in spite of the fact that numbers of refugees and migrants perished in the Mediterranean. That number of deaths drastically increased (due to the absence of RAS boats and NGOs) according to the UNHCR report "Desperate Journeys",<sup>478</sup> in spite of the UN's criticism of the conditions in the camps, and of the recent insufficient decision to close down some of them.

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<sup>474</sup> Francesca Mannocchi, "Se questo è un porto sicuro", *op. cit.* in *L'Espresso* N°28, p. 15.

<sup>475</sup> All such charges have been cleared as being without proof by the tribunals in Catania or Palermo, where such accusations were processed at court.

<sup>476</sup> The outsourcing of borders by Europe has a longer history linked to colonialism, which started first with trying to contain epidemics that were all thought to come from the "east", through quarantines. Anne Rasmussen, "Aux frontières de l'épidémie", in *Le Monde*, 8-9 March, 2020, p. 28.

<sup>477</sup> Francesca Mannocchi, "Se questo è un porto sicuro", *op. cit.* in *L'Espresso* N°28, p. 17.

<sup>478</sup> Six people died each day in 2018, attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, according to a UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) report published in January 2019, and 17.000 since 2014.

A very necessary read: "Desperate journeys", <https://www.unhcr.org/media-page-desperate-journeys-report-january-2019.html>; <https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/>;



## The on-going European war on migrants<sup>479</sup>

As Europe is becoming a gated community, or rather, a “gated subcontinent”, seen as a fortress, there is obviously an *on-going war against refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers*, fought by European states individually and, by default, by the European Union.<sup>480</sup> There are clearly silent and hidden *assassinations* of migrants, or occurrences of letting the migrants die, a tranquil genocide of sort in the Mediterranean and at the borders, away from the public gaze. That similar things are happening over other continents is no excuse. The problem is complex. The EU or member states have so far not been able to come to a common decision on the issue. According to activists’ reports, even the weather forecast services (the “Navtex system”), which give weather alerts but traditionally also share news about SOS calls and ships in distress, have been silent – because prevented - since 2017.<sup>481</sup> This makes it impossible to locate boatpeople in agony. As a consequence, the number of deaths by drowning has increased, although the number of risky voyages has diminished through impediment. Decisions and sensible politics are being delayed indefinitely, which amounts to the “by default” immobility, which, in its turn, amounts to a non-declared war. So the only space of activity with regard to the problem which is being swept under the carpet, regards the visibility of this war: individual states as well as the *EU agree in invisibilising it*, looking the other way, not admitting it, pretending that “we” are not morally objectionable. The European public mustn’t know, so information is filtered and “corrected” through denial and a lot of unofficial (and sometimes official) disinformation. If they get to know, they should think it is all in our national interest. European self-attributed “humanist” universalism does marvels here, as we think ourselves blameless. If people are brought to believe the latter, they should also accept their states’ and EU’s official stance. The current Mediterranean war (not to say anything of lateral wars on our other, land borders) is even insistently fought on the front of *visibility and of the media*.<sup>482</sup> This is an additional reason why the NGOs, as witnesses, as well as informed journalists, are undesirable if the states want

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<sup>479</sup> On the war against migrants, see various articles in Migreurop, <http://www.migreurop.org/article2919.html?lang=fr> (video with English subtitles); “France delivers boats to Libya: NGOs demand justice!”, <http://www.migreurop.org/article2915.html?lang=en>; <http://www.migreurop.org/article2929.html?lang=fr>; <http://www.migreurop.org/article2920.html?lang=fr>, and others.

<sup>480</sup> Sandro Mezzadra and Maurice Stierl, “The Mediterranean battlefield of migration”, in *Open Democracy*, April 12, 2019 <https://mediterraneaescue.org/en/news-en/the-mediterranean-battlefield-of-migration/>

<sup>481</sup> *Infomigrants* on 13-3-2019, Part 2, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/15667/mediterranea-getting-ready-to-save-humans-part-2>

<sup>482</sup> Marco Damilano, the editorial: “Il dovere di tenere la rotta”, in *L’Espresso* N°28, “Capitani e no”, anno LXV, 7-7-2019, p. 10 of pp. 8-11.

to keep this war secret. No wonder that the philosopher Achille Mbembe critiques the European historic “universalisme de surplomb”, “universalism from above” or “overhanging universalism” of which he announces the imminent and necessary end,<sup>483</sup> much as Etienne Balibar does it in his own work, or Souleymane Bachir Diagne,<sup>484</sup> as well as many others. Mbembe sees such a universalist overview covering a “post historic” age that intensifies “brutalism”<sup>485</sup> and ever more “combustion” leading to a new partition of the earth, which operates through new techniques of selection. “Modern reason itself, he writes, will have transformed Africa and the Negro (Nègre) into the premonitory signs of humanities becoming-a-crematorium”.<sup>486</sup> In this process, according to the author, the *Nègre*, not counting as human, played the role of the fossil – or nature - as a possible producer of energy. And Mbembe invests hopes into an Afropolitanism open to the future, an Afropolitanism which is not to reproduce the type of universality that western modernity had imposed on the world.

Migreurop writes about the conditions under which young people travel to Europe today: “2019 was marked by the expansion, above all of the media, of the no-fly movement. Last August, the fact that young climate activist Greta Thunberg chose the boat to join the UN sparked innumerable comments, the Plymouth-New York crossing evoking the era of great European emigrations to the New World. However, for the past 30 years, hundreds of thousands of travelers, often as young as the Swedish activist, have been denied the opportunity to fly. Each year, they are forced to cross seas and continents, by boat and on foot, because paper barriers and multiple checks prevent them from approaching airports. Access to international flights remains a privilege for the wealthy, which only the wealthy have the choice of forgoing. Until the 1980s, joining Europe from Africa, Southeast Asia or the Middle East was not an odyssey: the financial mobilization of relatives was enough to finance the purchase of plane tickets which, although costly, did not reach the staggering sums required today to get on a raft or in the back of a truck. The obligation to hold a visa, which is never granted to people said to be

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<sup>483</sup> A. Mbembe, « Il faut refaire de l’Afrique le foyer principal du débat sur elle-même » in *Le Monde*, Nov. 5, 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/05/il-faut-refaire-de-l-afrique-le-foyer-principal-du-debat-sur-elle-meme\\_6018148\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/05/il-faut-refaire-de-l-afrique-le-foyer-principal-du-debat-sur-elle-meme_6018148_3212.html) (as well as in much of his work).

<sup>484</sup> Souleymane Bachir Diagne & Jean-Loup Amselle, *En quête d’Afrique(s). Universalisme et pensée décoloniale*, préface d’Anthony Mangeon, Paris, Albin Michel 2018.

<sup>485</sup> Achille Mbembe, *Brutalisme*, Paris, La Découverte 2020. Mbembe borrows the term from the contemporary critique and theorising of socialist architecture.

<sup>486</sup> “La raison moderne elle-même aura fait de l’Afrique et du Nègre les signes prémonitoires du devenir-crématoire de l’humanité”, *ibid.* “Modern reason” is reason aligned with an “overhanging universalism”.

“at risk of migration”, is thus the main cause of the slaughter that falls on those who try to exercise their right to emigrate. [...]”<sup>487</sup>

In June 2018, the SAR boat *Aquarius* was blocked at sea for over 10 days with more than 600 migrants on board, Italy and Malta having closed their ports, no country accepting to take them in. This is not called a war, although in numbers of deaths it does amount to one: more than 300 people in 2013, more than 1200 people in 2015, more than a thousand dead from June 2018 (662 in 2018), 519 dead during the first five months of 2019, counting only the shipwrecks in the Mediterranean and *the cases reported*. We shall never know the exact numbers of loss of lives in this war, because they are concealed not only by the dominant anti-immigration ideology, but also by the silence of the waves: many shipwrecks happen soundlessly without witnesses, especially since the RAS NGOs have been outlawed, and they are difficult to reconstruct. It is not a war in the traditional sense either. This undeclared war at sea is much more devastating than some wars on land. Rather, it is a pre-emptive action aiming at obtaining the wished goal – and promised to the electorate – of “zero immigration”. *Not naming something is a deliberate politics of suppressing it* and rendering it invisible or negligible. That which has no name, doesn’t exist or can easily be overlooked and swallowed by the public. B. de Sousa Santos studies these cases in his *sociology of absence*.

There is now a necessity of the union of all *emancipation forces*<sup>488</sup> *in resistance*, where migrations feature as the new setting and context especially in post-industrial societies since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also, due to an achieved and definitive toxic capitalist globalization everywhere. The emancipation forces will be diverse and transborder. As we know from colonial history, capitalism predates on other and even on “precapitalist” or non-capitalist production at the peripheries and in (former) colonies. There are enclosures (pockets) of different modes of production that fuel its dynamics.

In this context, we also need to think about “inadequate”, different “damaged, invisibilised, twisted” and “incomplete subjects”. Many of them have come to be in the category of disposable humans. They as well as some single subjects, need to assemble, they need support,

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<sup>487</sup> An excerpt from Migreurop Note # 10: "Visas: inequalities and mobility with variable geometry", November 2019, Editorial. See also Note # 9. <http://www.migreurop.org/article2927.html?lang=en>

<sup>488</sup> Griziotti but also Fraser, de Sousa Santos *op. cit.* etc.

allies and a larger front. This is where “disremembering” intervenes. We need to identify levels at which the state now intervenes in its surveillance efforts to control people and erase or transform collective memories: it now acts *beyond bio-politics and bio-power*, so that biopolitics is not revealing any more the human condition. The state, namely, doesn’t bring in surveillance for its own sake and for the pleasure of domination only, but also in order to get information about all the smallest details of our lives, our habits or preferences, in order to sell us goods or to resell our data further. In fact, it is not even the state any more that does it or, in any case, the state agrees to this realm of absolute commerce. Any smallest details about us are sellable, and have become merchandise. They gather the information through social media, where people submit their own information for free by surfing on the Internet. The digital dimension controls it all in an apparently impersonal way like an automated mechanism or a deadly and suicidal desiring machine<sup>489</sup> through invisible algorithms of which we don’t even suspect the existence, and that can “predict” our behavior, feelings or events. These have the power to turn experiences that we might believe original into the most conventional, conformist, conservative and obedient ones. The way these processes function have a lot to do with the style of the neoliberal organization of society and politics (for the sake of corresponding economic interests) where democracy, subjectivity and engaged politics have evaporated in favor of a new ungraspable automatism, formalism, a post-politics and general depoliticization, and where the personal or private sphere has shrunk. In such a world, we shall soon have to buy air, space, temperature and water (indeed, many already pay them dearly – those who can afford), and we shall be asked to pay for the right to speak in the public and political sphere, which, at that, is rapidly disappearing. To its dependents, the digital sphere suggests, anticipates and creates desires that these think to be theirs and original. Slavery to those mechanisms is such that it is difficult to snatch oneself from them because they have become a system and because we need their services, and moreover by now they really have a hold on the whole society through a new type of conquering and far-reaching rationality beyond even the Big Brother imagination, and not only on isolated individuals. From the cell-phone to your credit card, to your passport (if you have one), to paying taxes (if you are not among the *disposable*, such as migrants are), to admitting your child at school, to buying stamps at what has remained of the post-office, to renting a vehicle, to everything else, you depend on the digital sphere. By now, many more people in some countries such as India or China have cell phones rather than toilets. Our private sphere has been eaten up by the digital sphere and by technologies that we

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<sup>489</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, Paris, Minuit 1980.

don't understand and that not one person comprehends wholly. We don't own our private sphere any more. Even to resist the digital sphere, which reaches far beyond the state, you have to go through it through decentering moves, you need to grasp something of it and use its tricks. The new Leviathan is the digital sphere, not the state anymore, and this probably approximately from the time when the state has submitted to the market and to transnational corporations and interests that transcend it. Can we get out of utter commodification of our personal information? Paradoxically, people who are not commoditized through the digital element because they are not connected - do not exist in it. They are marginal. Migrants are among them, as well as some other (marginal) people and groups in different parts of the world who resist neuro- and absolute neoliberal and global hyper-capitalism. Their list is constantly updated. Will such marginality one day provide a way out, once many recognize what they have in common, their *commons*? Can the digital become, or is it already one such *common*, while having a venomous dimension as well?

### The new Leviathan

Some chunks of history that do not belong to "useful history", even when they actually cover long periods (30, 50 or 70 years), are skipped in a crisis and a change of regime. The cold war was one such machine (among others) for levelling out history, but so was and still is *transition*.<sup>490</sup> The latter involves not only the loss of the historic dimension, but also that of a sheer temporal dimension, as well as their programmed and active *disremembering*. It is true that any kind of established political power has the tendency to erase its historic origin, save for a "founding mythical event", and especially its alternatives. Post-socialist transition (after 1989) follows on post-colonial transition (after the 1960s). The two have much in common in spite of the time-gap, by which the non-simultaneous have become contemporary in another time: transitions are meant to bring a lost country back into the fold of "normalcy", i.e. capitalism, which also involves a dimension of domination by those countries who consider themselves to be universalist,<sup>491</sup> the depositories of the only pattern and lesson givers.

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<sup>490</sup> All types of transition: from the historic one that gave the name of "Transition", referring to the post-dictatorship period in Latin America, to post-colonial transition and post-socialist transitions dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and world capital in general. What is usually meant is an unquestionable *conversion to neoliberal capitalism* and *capitalist globalization*, by which the mainstream discourse has it that the transition means catching-up by backward countries, and filling the historic gap. Alternative options and attempts are erased and forgotten as *useless history*, and so are whole chunk of the history of existing people.

<sup>491</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against epistemicide*, op. cit.

Postcolonial and post-socialist countries have to “catch up” with developed countries. During the sixties and seventies, the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) used to resist that model, offering the utopia of a new world-order and an alternative globalization.

Such an environment coincides with and also evolves within the new dimension of New Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), the Net, in the context of *cognitive capitalism*,<sup>492</sup> which is also described, from other angles, as *neurocapitalism*,<sup>493</sup> financial neoliberal capitalism or even, we could say, “*absolute*” capitalism or *disaster capitalism*.<sup>494</sup> For those who have been obliged to leave their homes, it is indeed disaster capitalism.

### Epistemic conditions of historic arrogance

On March 1, 2020, an escalation in the long-lasting Syrian war (since 2011) that had already made almost two million refugees in Lebanon (and 30% of the latter’s country population), over a million in Jordan (nearly 10% of the population) and almost four million in Turkey, launched some additional 20.000 migrants from Turkey to Greece (over the sea to the Greek islands and over land towards the Balkans route). Turkey announced officially that day that it had moved three days earlier an enhanced military attack on the Syrian army after the latter had killed some thirty Turkish soldiers *within Syrian territory*. The movement of migrants is the result of Turkish president Erdogan’s pressure on Europe to take more immigrants, because Turkey has been fighting a war against Asad’s regular Syrian army, which is supported by the Russian army. In fact, Turkish authorities themselves organized the transport of migrants from Istanbul to the Greek border on free buses on March 4 and 5, 2020. A fragile truce that will not last between Putin and Erdogan was reached to start on March 6. The reality is that the warring attacks on the Turkish eastern border towards Syria at the town and province of Idlib has launched nearly another million people who try to cross over into Turkey because they can’t flee back into Syria where they would be killed by the regime. Turkey is busy exterminating the Kurds on that eastern border and doesn’t want any of that additional population, Syrians, Kurds or Daesh militias in. So, that the eastern border is sealed completely but fired against. Erdogan let circulate the rumor that the border to Europe is now opened, and sent there those

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<sup>492</sup> Yann Moulier Boutang, *Le capitalisme cognitif : La Nouvelle Grande Transformation*, Paris, Ed. Amsterdam 2008. Michael HARDT, Tony NEGRI, *Empire*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard UP 2001

<sup>493</sup> Griziotti, *op. cit.*

<sup>494</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine. The rise of disaster capitalism*, New York-London, Picador 2008.

20.000 people, who had already come from war horrors, but had been stationed in Turkey while hoping to get through to Europe. He didn't tell them that the same western border was actually closed by Greece and Europe. Europe thinks of borders only as a security issue and feeds Frontex, while keeping the migrants away even when it comes to such insignificant numbers as these. This is again being presented as a migration crisis, although 20.000 people do not represent a migration crisis or threat in any way. They only showcase Europe's *crisis of hospitality, solidarity and care*. This reinforces Frontex, while Greek islands are saturated with migrants whose dossiers are not even examined. People are unlawfully maintained in these overcrowded camps and not allowed to go ashore.

Additional incomers have now been attacked and pushed back by extreme right groups of the Golden Dawn party on the island of Lesbos (where the local population has not been hostile to the refugees, but the island has long been inundated by refuge seekers). One child was killed as the border self-dubbed "protectors" pinched the inflatable dinghy boats. At the land border ("Balkans route") it is the same scenario. As some migrants tried to escalate the fences and razor wire while Greek police have been shooting at them (one adult killed on March 2, 2020), Turkish troops on the other side shot teargas at them to prevent them from fleeing back to Turkey. Erdogan is trying to obtain support for his war efforts in Syria from Europe. Although he did get most (but not all so far, March 2020) of the amount the 2016 deal implied, provided he kept the migrants, he is not getting the expected support. Expected to keep the migrants from crossing to Europe, it is not clear whether the agreement holds any longer. Migrants are paying the price of it.<sup>495</sup> Europe has no political unity on any issue, and has not been able to come to a shared politics on immigration or to a common *policy of welcoming* according to presumed "European values".

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<sup>495</sup> Claude Calame, "Répression de migrants confrontés à la pandémie: un troisième crime contre l'humanité?", *Médiapart* 23-4-2020, [https://www.mediapart.fr/search?search\\_word=R%C3%A9pression+de+migrants+confront%C3%A9s+%C3%A0+la+pand%C3%A9mie%3A+un+troisi%C3%A8me+crime+contre+l%27humanit%C3%A9%3F](https://www.mediapart.fr/search?search_word=R%C3%A9pression+de+migrants+confront%C3%A9s+%C3%A0+la+pand%C3%A9mie%3A+un+troisi%C3%A8me+crime+contre+l%27humanit%C3%A9%3F); Claude Calame, "Les effets de la politique migratoire de l'UE en Méditerranée et en Libye: des crimes contre l'humanité?", *Médiapart* 12-1-2020, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/claude-calame/blog/120120/les-effets-de-la-politique-migratoire-de-lue-en-mediterranee-et-en-libye-des-crimes-contre-lhuman>; see also: Stéphanie Maupas, "Deux avocats accusent l'UE de crimes contre l'humanité envers les migrants de Libye", [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/06/03/plainte-contre-l-union-europeenne-devant-la-cpi-pour-le-traitement-des-migrants-en-libye\\_5470685\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/06/03/plainte-contre-l-union-europeenne-devant-la-cpi-pour-le-traitement-des-migrants-en-libye_5470685_3210.html).

These supposed “European values” that are written into the basis of the EU Treaty<sup>496</sup> while Europe proclaims itself to be the worldwide standard of democracy, are constantly evoked (in the media, in politician’s speeches, at school etc.) and are said to include hospitality to refugees and refuge-seekers. In France, “European values” (surreptitiously a remnant of self-understood “christian values”)<sup>497</sup> are as important a label and as proudly and constantly displayed as the other stately-patriotic slogan “France, the country of human rights”.

### **Self-preference and the hate of others. Towards new national-populisms**

The national ideology of the “model” country, France, builds a consensus between right-wing nationalists and supposedly more centrist “state believers” who constantly advertise the Republic (another such empty label and slogan). With these three slogans that no-one can counter unless they want admonition, one is ideologically safe. But one could argue that historically “European values” have also been, and have meant colonialism, imperialism, genocides, witch-hunt (the historic witch-hunt), patriarchy, racism, constant wars etc. and that the post-WWII thirty years of prosperity (*les Trente glorieuses*, “the glorious 30 years” or the post-WWII boom) was based on a merciless exploitation of colonies that is now forgotten. What has been called “European values” would better be called “human values”. But they should also be implemented and European exceptionalism and self-satisfaction should be tempered. Human values such as hospitality and welcoming of foreigners are actually universal and exist in all cultures. Europe shouldn’t think of herself as an exception in that respect or rather, she might well have been an exception in the reverse sense, a champion of inhumanity and rejection. The lack of self-criticism, color and race etc. blindness, colonialism and postcolonialism-blindness and the extent of hypocrisy are amazing and can be tested on the relationship to “others” that are constructed as subhuman. Nor was 2015, when “European values” and even Christian values actually collapsed, a migration crisis. It was a hospitality

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<sup>496</sup> There are actually two such treaties: 1) The Treaty of Rome, i.e. the “Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union” (Rome 1957, full title the “Treaty establishing the European Economic Community”), and 2) the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht 1992, called the Maastricht Treaty).

<sup>497</sup> European countries have diverse approaches to Christianity, but some claim it explicitly, especially in countries that have joined the EU from eastern Europe. Others, like France, consider themselves secular, and do not mention Christianity too openly, but do prioritise Christianity (seeing it as neutral) in comparison with Islam. For example, all bank holidays in France are Christian, not one is Muslim etc. Countries like Poland, Hungary, Slovakia would consider Christianity as a basic “European value”, although it was not considered so at the establishment of the EU. This is all part of the big confusionist game.



and care crisis.<sup>498</sup>

Events on the Greek-Turkish borders in early 2020 reveal other types of crises persevering in the EU. In these years, Europe lost all its compassion and solidarity, both to migrants and to south-European countries. Pictures of the migrants' tragedy do not trigger sympathy anymore, except with the activists and women's organizations helping them. The reason why four-five years later the EU still can't welcome a few refugees from Turkey, while she still tolerates internal quarrels between those who would give Turkey additional funds to keep them, and those who refuse, is that in those few years right-wing populism and outright fascism has dangerously grown. It is threatening many European countries. Germany is at risk of neofascism since Merkel's attack of hospitality to a million immigrants, had been seen as a failure by the extreme-right nationalists, instead of as a success. In the meantime, several political events put much of Europe on the rails of fascism: fences and walls were built towards the "east" or the "south", anti-immigration discourses were developed, Brexit happened on the topic of immigration, and Poland availed itself of a right-nationalist (more than) conservative party. The extreme right has greatly grown in Germany and not only in its east, Austria and Italy have had fascists in their governments, the extreme right party in France has been commonly accepted as a party like any other (which it is not), while the European new diplomacy can't tell left from right and still has a patronizing discourse reminiscent of colonialism *vis-à-vis* of Africa.<sup>499</sup> Europe is now afraid of her own national populisms and fascisms. German politicians are trying hard to think of a way to satisfy Erdogan (and induce him to keep those almost 4 million immigrants wanting to move to Europe) that would not at the same time feed the extreme right party AFD (Alternative for Germany). The EU is now stuck between its extreme-right-populisms and its "European Values" that she tries hard to present as progressive, while migrants from various countries are stuck on no-man's land, being tear-gazed from both sides.

Mucchielli's term "national populism", as well as Piketty's appellation "social-nativism" may be sharper and more precise than the one i have used so far, "populism". I agree with all the

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<sup>498</sup> Elif Aksaz and Jean-François Pérouse (eds.), "Guests and Aliens": Re-Configuring New Mobilities in the Eastern Mediterranean After 2011 - with a special focus on Syrian refugees, Istanbul, Institut français d'études anatoliennes [11 SEP], OpenEdition Books 2016.

<sup>499</sup> Josep Borrell, "La frontière de l'Europe n'est pas en Méditerranée mais au sud du Sahel", in *Le Monde*, 8-9, March, 2020, p. 21.

authors that consider the latter imprecise and flimsy, but have made use of it on one hand because many authors refer to it, and because the term appears by now in a vast library of books of which many just cannot be circumvented, while others invite critique and must be addressed. “Populism” covers a huge range of ideas and phenomena, it appears in a number of unavoidable theoretical constructions that need to be studied if we want to grasp the *history* of the phenomena that interest us – the relation of populism to migrations in a time of globalization. The other reason why i take the liberty of utilizing that word comes out of my conviction, and is rather linguistic.

It comes from working on the issue of *translation*. Being loaded with negative connotations and being sometimes close to fascism, in addition to referring to confusingly diverse and too numerous phenomena and political configurations (now also) all the way from the left to the right, the word “populism” is not popular, especially not on the left. Until recently and until the post-Laclauan development of the concept over recent years, populism was seen in Europe as denoting what is now called “right populism”, close to fascism, while “left populism” was an ideological impossibility and oxymoron. But that has changed, whether we like it or not. The catch lies in the fact that now both “left populism” as well as “right populism” are *social* and pretend to demand the happiness of the “*people*”. Both fish for votes in the same constituencies. But banning a word will not make it disappear or do away with its referent phenomena. It may prevent you from reading certain authors and understanding their categories. Translations of the word “populism” are many, and every author translates it to her or his own liking or political feeling. We need to learn working with polysemic expressions to study what they stand for. We need to practically accept terms not-so-exact in order we need to accept thinking with doubt, while doubting, and draw provisional, interim and tentative conclusions without expecting the definitive horizon of absolute translation, because there is no such thing. Our time prescribes it, this is not a particular personal choice, and it would certainly be far more comfortable to deal with certitudes. We even need to be *activists of the uncertain* of sorts, because freedom means travelling over the ocean of incertitudes and disorientation, while at the same time discovering the direction we want to adopt: although many conditions are given in advance due to history and the place one occupies, we must at the same time think that nothing is given in advance in order to get - not anywhere, but *somewhere* at least. Refusing to use a term will not make go away either that term or its referent object or reality, however tricky. Refusing it may make us miss a lot of that reality or of the thought trying to grasp it. What i just described

represents, of course, the complete change that occurred in our *cosmovisión* since the setting in of the neo-neoliberal paradigm and hegemony that we have been describing and undergoing under its extreme form, and it includes the general *rightisation* of the global *and* local political scene. To make the best out of the uncertainty we now inhabit and that inhabits us, we need to be clear on the objectives to follow. Does one accept immigration in a world where it is obviously inevitable and far from being fatal or unfortunate, but where the political right has constructed a violent irrational and nationalist, populist scare against it, closing over the “people” it manipulates a blind bubble that refuses political thinking?

The analysis Didier Eribon makes of his country (*Retour à Reims*)<sup>500</sup> is very convincing, interesting and French. Speaking of France, he says that the left parties, such as the Communist and the Socialist parties, had abandoned the working class and given up representing it. Other analysts would say that the working class itself had disappeared and that parliamentary democracy has weakened since 1989. Starting with the UK (but the tendency then spread over Europe and beyond), left parties themselves converted to the neoliberal capitalist agenda and, when in government, implemented austerity just as right-wing ones. Suddenly, politics didn’t focus on the welfare state and its demands anymore, but went along with the political right (and even foreran it) in dismantling the public sector, public health and education, social and old age insurance and pensions. According to Eribon, this threw workers in an utterly and unexpectedly precarious condition. The left while still in power (such as during Mitterrand’s second term as president) started using police repression against workers from that time on (and it still does). This was, he says, a massive capitalist attack. The “left” had betrayed the workers. The workers and ordinary people then started voting for the right-wing parties, especially for the extreme right, for several reasons: the extreme right (post-fascists and some of the populists) targeted exactly the same population as once the left, namely, workers. This was possible because classical party democracy was discredited while party membership declined hugely. And extreme right parties also had a very demagogic double-speak addressing what remained of the workers. A big process of *de-politicisation* was then engaged across the political spectrum from the eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on, by both right and left wing parties, supported by the state. Political amnesia was inculcated, political *desemantisation* of words and meanings progressed, so that confusion regarding terms and appellations grew. People didn’t know any more what was being spoken about. While Yugoslavia underwent similar

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<sup>500</sup> Eribon, *Retour à Reims: Une théorie du sujet*, Paris, Fayard 2009.

processes at the same time, in her case it led to a civil war and to partition, among other reasons, adding to the international situation (end of the cold war) because her institutions were less solid.

Such confusionism and populisms had the same origin – in the end of classical party democracy in the west, and in the evaporation of democracy in the party state, in the case of Yugoslavia. Eribon seems to think that it was merely the left parties' fault, but it was actually the whole picture that shifted. The old political language was disqualified, but there was as yet no new language.<sup>501</sup> We were all told, both east and west (but Eribon ignores this, as he is mainly interested in France), that there was no working class anymore, that society had developed beyond class interests or class divisions. In France and in the west, it was thought, there were no more group interests to defend, that there were only individuals and everyone had to fend for himself or herself, Eribon grieves. In Yugoslavia, individualism was practiced in the wake of clientelist (class) interests in the *palanka* (Konstantinović), although not recognized intellectually. It allowed however, both east and west, homogenizing under various nationalist “identities” and interests. The sense of belonging, the “we” was reconstructed; it was not any more the working class or common interests. Rather, it was a “we” that could identify with individual success (and chance). Soon, in Europe, and especially starting from the Yugoslav partition wars in the nineties, the “we” was reframed as national or ethnic-national. Today, naturally, the European “we” in each country (whether left or right, when nationalist) is basically ideologically anti-immigrationist, even if this is economical madness all things considered.

Europe has very bad memories of all of that due to Nazism, and nationalisms had practically been eliminated, or proscribed after WWII, having a terrible connotation of all types of racism, violence, aggression, genocide, destruction, concentration camps and extermination through camps and wars, especially of such groups as Jews, communists, Roma, Slavs, east Europeans, opponents and others. As everyone knows, with Japanese fascism it was not any better in Asia. Now, and since 1989, it appeared that it was workers' organizations that had adopted right-wing political orientation, more or less extreme right ones. Marine Le Pen<sup>502</sup> has her best support in

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<sup>501</sup> Rada Iveković, *Politiques de la traduction. Exercices de partage*, Foreword by Etienne Balibar, TERRA H-N, Collection « Alter ego », Marseille, Sept. 2019, <http://www.reseau-terra.eu/article1426.html>

<sup>502</sup> Leader of the extreme right party “Rassemblement national” that has now operated its “come back” as a presentable or acceptable party, its links to historic fascism publicly “forgotten”.

areas where the workers' left parties were strong, such as the north of the country. The rightest idea of Brexit is the strongest in former strongholds of the Labor party (or rather, a big proportion of Labor voters were in favor of Brexit). Eribon thinks that this is because of the betrayal of labor and workers' parties. In Yugoslavia<sup>503</sup> too, the Communist party had become from the mid-seventies on and during the eighties (thus, during the same period as in western Europe), the single party of an emerging middle class but most of all, it had also become a party and state bureaucracy. Eribon however reminds that a middle-class party may still deal with workers' problems and willingly act "in their name". This is still evident today through the fact that a lot of middle-class civil servants in France, especially those working in education, are left voters and have previously been members of the Communist and Socialist parties. Their remnants among others are today the Parisian "bobos".<sup>504</sup> Elsewhere, comparable processes have been happening.

There has been a sea change and a turning point, from the nineties (from 1989) and especially from 2000 on, when some members of the working class exited the "closet" and openly confessed that they have now been voting for the fascists. Prior to those years, it was not possible to admit so in public or to be proud of it, even if some did. With "confusionism" reigning, every inhibition has been abandoned. Now, and this is new, more and more people *identify* with the National front party renamed Rassemblement national in their effort of inculcating amnesia regarding their political origin. This is made easier by the fact that the state nowadays in France, as well as in Italy (Macron, Salvini and others) really haughtily neglects the working class and has no respect, no openings or proposals for ordinary people, workers, pensioners, people living in the suburbs and the *banlieues* – for the majority. Eribon thinks that Macron's conservative and authoritarian politics incite the French to vote for the extreme right out of spite and may bring it to power, in addition to deconstructing the European Union. We shall see at the next French presidential elections (2022), but at the past *European* elections the

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<sup>503</sup> Darko Suvin, *Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia*. Foreword Fredric Jameson. Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2016. XXI+428 pp. ISBN 9789004306943 hardcover, 9789004325210 e-book, paperback Chicago: Harvester P, Oct. 2017.

<sup>504</sup> *Bobo*, French short for "bourgeois-bohemian", urban middle-class leftist intellectuals much involved in art, sitting-room politics, street demonstrations, ecology, climate change politics, and "a middle- or upper-class Parisian who chews on organic food and dons all-natural fibers, yet couldn't live without their industrially mass-produced iPhone.", <https://cafebabel.com/en/article/are-you-a-hipster-a-bobo-or-a-bananowe-dziecko-5ae0058bf723b35a145decbl/> or "The French have embraced a new expression to describe those who have it all: Bobo. The term is short for bourgeois and bohemian, two social castes no one ever expected to find mixed up together.", <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/14/news/in-france-a-new-class-reinvents-the-good-life-bobo-style-has-it-both.html>

expected landslide victory of the new post-fascists and of the populists didn't quite happen, although they remain fearfully strong, albeit not united across the subcontinent. It took the last thirty years, says Eribon, to reorient the working class from the left to the right. It has been so in eastern and central Europe too, but under strange circumstances: nobody knew, there, what left or right are, since there was no memory of such a divide or political experience. People were lost in political space. The whole political scene in France as well as elsewhere has shifted to the right. France has not been an isolated country in this, and we might well want to see the *global* picture of it all.

Starting with François Mitterrand in France, a *conservative revolution* was silently operated, still under the auspices of formal democracy, but with strong elements of police repression making progress. In early 2020 indeed, France is at last beginning to publicly discuss its rough police methods, which have become very violent causing brutality in political conflicts to escalate incredibly on both sides. Intellectuals too (*some* intellectuals, rather. We know from Marx that intellectuals are not politically or ideologically an independent group) followed this path gradually, radicalizing their positions. Agencies that have once been left oriented, gradually switched to political views that were once defended by the political right, especially with regard to violence and to the urgent agenda. The whole political field, with all the political language, vocabulary and meanings, shifted from left to right. This "rightisation" occurred within our lifetime over the last forty years or so. Marxism was rejected *en bloc* especially since 1989, and so was left-wing sociology (such as by Pierre Bourdieu) and humanities. It is true no doubt that the history of the French communist party and its lack of critical distance with Stalin and later simply with the Soviet Union was much responsible for this. That party never had much credibility because of its emulation of the Soviet Communist party, although it had followers. So the French Socialist party – which didn't count workers among its members any more - filled the space once belonging to the Communist party of France before liquefying itself. We know how it all ended: socialist parties capitulated on the left front, in Italy even earlier than in France, and both disappeared. The last socialist president in France, François Hollande, ended by himself the project of dismantling much of the welfare state, didn't protect workers, and went through with neoliberal reforms, as did the left in government everywhere.

The same had happened in Italy and elsewhere. Didier Eribon thinks, and he may well be right, that it is dangerous to pit identity politics (such as national adherence, or other "belonging" –

LGBT, feminist movements etc.) and class politics against each other, as many politicians and parties now do. That is what happened in Germany, with Sahra Wagenknecht, a left populist politician of the Die Linke party, who played identity politics against workers' interests and ended up rejecting immigration, encouraging workers to embrace an anti-migrant ideology (and, all in all, a German "we" facing them). We are in a time of social fragmentation. Wagenknecht's idea is that only the nation-state can defend the workers. Germany however still has a working class and was not as de-industrialized as France. Transnational solidarity with immigrants and refugees must then be sacrificed, which is terrible from any truly leftist or humanist point of view. In this way, the regular left is not international or transnational anymore, and quite some time after the declared death of the nation-state by many authors,<sup>505</sup> we see the extreme right coming back in this sinister fashion. At the time of exacerbated nationalisms, "Proletarians of all countries unite!", the appeal of the *Communist Manifesto*, stands no chance with most such "left-wing" parties as we have them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the problems we face are international, transnational and new. In Italy, after so many exaggerations and bad calculations, Salvini finally fell from office ingloriously together with the *Lega* in August 2019, when a new government (a binary of the 5 Stars Party + Democratic Party, with the same prime minister and of course the same president), is installed. Salvini will carry on with his social fascism and national-populism.

Under such conditions, we must think (about) migrations and try to understand them within the historic conditions of our times. We must theorize solutions and possibilities, both short term and long-term ones. The short-term ones are the most painful. Politicians only worry about the short term for electoral reasons.

Such confusionism is the breeding scene of a conflict that, in the conditions given today – those of a lack of social and international solidarity, of political determination and orientation conditions, of social-nationalisms, populisms, neo-Nazism and neo-fascism – is dangerous. Several authors have predicted that the coronavirus-covid-19 may be the beginning of the end of the Chinese regime as we knew it, that it may be the "Chinese Chernobyl"<sup>506</sup> or, we would

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<sup>505</sup> Hamid Dabashi, "The end of the nation-state", in *Al-Jazeera*, "Opinion/Europe", <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/nation-state-200125093206918.html>

<sup>506</sup> "[I]f the virus cannot be contained quickly, this could turn out to be China's Chernobyl moment" writes Jamil Anderlini in "Xi Jinping faces China's Chernobyl Moment", *Financial Times*, Feb. 10, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/6f7fdbae-4b3b-11ea-95a0-43d18ec715f5>.

rather think if referring to the USSR, the *Chinese Afghanistan*. Will it also be not the beginning of the end, but the end *tout court* of the European Union, after the successive crises of 2008 (the financial crisis), the Greek crisis of 2014-2015, the care crisis in welcoming immigrants of 2015-2016, and the new covid-19 crisis of 2020, the crumbling of self-attributed “European values” (but the insistence on them of conservatives politicians, who try to institutionalize them), the global ecological crisis and the climatological youth movement? Some governments, all economies as well as social habits have been shaken by the virus, but in order to answer that question we shall have to wait for the end of the pandemic. Poverty on a large scale is announced in rich countries, let alone in the poor ones. Is a different Europe possible?

### Coronavirus covid-19 the revealer

I had finished the major part of the present text when the pandemic appeared in Europe, where i had just returned from Asia. About the coronavirus, Rocco Ronchi writes in “The virtues of the virus”：“Covid-19 has become a sort of generalized metaphor, almost the symbolic precipitate of the human condition in post-modernity.”<sup>507</sup> It has suddenly revealed and exacerbated all existing economic, social and political inequalities and injustices.<sup>508</sup> We saw it coming over the past three decades: the consumerism, the excessive productivism and extractivism, the disregard for nature and the refusal to see ourselves as its part, the arrogance of the globalized west self-declared the best and democratic, now universalized with its pockets of disposable lives. But the virus also reminded us that any crisis, and especially this one, has laid bare the epistemological dead-end of European (or western) modernity, as well as the limits of our economic, political and social neoliberal choice imposed to all. It all reminds us of our vulnerability and fragility. Yet the 2020 virus has also appeared as a “portal” (Arundhati Roy) possibly for *another* civilizational choice. Many have however expressed the short-lived hope that the after-covid-19 be this turning point to a better option. Nonetheless, as soon as the

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<sup>507</sup> Rocco Ronchi, “The virtues of the virus”, translated from the Italian by Emma Catherine Gainsforth, in “Coronavirus and philosophers”, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* on 14-3-2020, [http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/?fbclid=IwAR0i2ee2dApxn86TqL\\_pi4gzoxzwRHLYqiPcdcmG\\_9\\_s8FVnLCR3DzVF9Uk](http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/?fbclid=IwAR0i2ee2dApxn86TqL_pi4gzoxzwRHLYqiPcdcmG_9_s8FVnLCR3DzVF9Uk)

<sup>508</sup> Judith Butler, “Capitalism has its limits”, *Verso Blog*, March 30, 2020, [https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits?utm\\_source=Master+List&utm\\_campaign=53bb38c6d5-UK+Direct%3A+Verso+blog+response&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1f96ba5fab-53bb38c6d5-409471853&mc\\_cid=53bb38c6d5&mc\\_eid=43557bd59c](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits?utm_source=Master+List&utm_campaign=53bb38c6d5-UK+Direct%3A+Verso+blog+response&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1f96ba5fab-53bb38c6d5-409471853&mc_cid=53bb38c6d5&mc_eid=43557bd59c); Jules Falquet, Le “coup du virus” et le “coup d’état militaro-industriel global”, *Médiapart* 30 mars 2020, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/jules-falquet/blog/300320/le-coup-du-virus-et-le-coup-d-etat-militaro-industriel-global>



lockdown was lifted in many countries, the post-covid-19 route appeared to be not the global change of system that had been anticipated, but rather an attempt at political *restoration*, one in a long series but a restoration of a new kind: a *global restoration*. Alain Brossat theorizes the after-coronavirus 2020 restoration: “It is a restoration of a new genre, unprecedented, in its global and transnational character precisely. As a historical, political and cultural concept, restoration means the re-establishment (as a result, in general, of a counter-revolution) of a regime, of a fallen political form. The monarchy, therefore, in the French context of 1815, after the defeat of the Napoleonic armies at Waterloo. What characterizes in substance the restoration in general (and the French Restoration at the beginning of the XIXth century in particular), it is the attempt, completely vain and illusory in its bottom, to put back in the saddle a political form, a system of domination whose material and ideological foundations and especially, perhaps, the symbolic institution (Claude Lefort) have been carried away by the course of history. Restoration, in this sense, always rests on a literally *untimely* phantasmagoria; it occurs at the wrong time, it maintains the illusion of a return to life from a dead past. [...] The political restorations can only be brutal, police, obscurantist, supported by the conservatism of the ecclesiastical hierarchies and, they oppress the people and are based on the most reactionary layers of the society, in particular those of which they vainly attempt to restore the shine - the aristocracy of the Old Regime in the case of the French Restoration. They restore the old order as a kind of decorum (they can do nothing more). [...] Restoration understood in this sense is, in modern, more precisely in post-revolutionary societies, a key political figure. It primarily affects the forms of domination, the political system, but it extends its effects to all social and cultural life - it is always hostile to the artistic avant-garde and it always promotes family order, it makes a conservative and obscurantist use of religion. Which, conversely, tends to validate any return of the religious as a form of restoration, when it can have a revolutionary function (the Iranian insurrection of 1978). But these constants give way to a great diversity of forms, which means that in the 20th century, certain regimes of a restorationist type also have marked fascist traits - Primo de Rivera, Franco, Salazar ... [...] Neither the dictatorship that sets in in Germany after the crushing of the Spartakist uprising in 1918-19, nor the dictatorship of Pinochet are restorations. In restoration, the symbolic issues, those of order and of the symbolic institution, are decisive. It is about restoring the past in the present.”<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Alain Brossat & Alain Naze, “L’épouvantable restauration globale” in *Ici et ailleurs*, 12 June 2020, <https://ici-et-ailleurs.org/contributions/actualite/article/l-epouvantable-restauration>. Transl. by me, R.I.

As for western modernity, it has not dictated capitalism: several types of “really existing socialisms” had come out of the same modernity, and have not been the only product of modernity to have failed. In that sense, really existing capitalism and really existing socialism certainly belong to the same species, one that has no disposition or guarantee of eternity. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, modernity never even promised capitalism. He thinks that of the two, it will be the first to disappear:

“Western modernity and capitalism are two historically different and autonomous historical processes. The socio-cultural paradigm of modernity arose between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, before the industrial capitalism had become dominant in nowadays central countries. From there, the two processes converged and intersected but, that aside, the conditions and the dynamics of development of each of them maintained themselves separate and relatively autonomous. Modernity doesn’t presuppose capitalism as its own mode of production. In fact, conceived as a mode of production, Marxist socialism is also, as much as capitalism, a constitutive part of modernity. On the other hand, capitalism, far from presupposing socio-cultural premises of modernity in order to develop, coexisted up to progressing in conditions that, in the paradigm of modernity, would have doubtlessly been considered pre-modern or even anti-modern.”<sup>510</sup>

### Other knowledges and epistemologies

Our epistemological construction, the way we have transmitted knowledges (both in the west and in eastern Europe), the way we produced and ordained hierarchies of values applying to other humans, to other epistemes, have deprived us of all *other knowledges that exist*, and have made us erase or suppress most of them. Knowledges will have to be reorganized, and alternative knowledges do exist. Today, many Westerners who never particularly thought of it, including many intellectuals who could have known, but have ignored, are ready to rehabilitate alternative knowledges. The climate change and the environmental crisis adding, people now think that our knowledges should be rid of the lethal energy they carry.<sup>511</sup> No knowledge is

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<sup>510</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *A crítica da razão indolente*. op. cit., p. 49 (translation by me, R.I).

<sup>511</sup> Saskia Sassen’s interview with Srećko Horvat “What if this is the beginning of a possibility?” on *YouTube Diem25 TV*, March 27, 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cUbBpS9zfA>.

complete, they are all *reciprocally incomplete*, and therefore complementary or valid under only certain conditions. So is the case with western knowledges too, that the west has managed to impose on most of the world as hegemonic. A new paradigm emerges, according to Boaventura de Sousa Santos: all knowledges can finally be seen as what they are: local, yet total in their intention (which doesn't mean that such totality is ever reached or is possible). All scientific-natural knowledge is also scientific-social (or it implies a social aspect). Each is likewise self-knowledge, and aims at constituting a *common sense*.<sup>512</sup> And also, all knowledge paradigms tend to produce "universal truths" and propose their own patterns as universal to all, which they are not. Etienne Balibar proposes the idea of multiple and alternative universals.<sup>513</sup> The states, in organizing the transmission of knowledges and their contents, in deciding who can or cannot access knowledge (and which kind of knowledge), in dictating or financing part of the research, maintain their *epistemic hegemony* which is really wider than only the sphere of knowledge, and is protracted to the social, political, economic and other spheres. Hegemonic knowledge in the sense of international relations is the extension of one type or construction of knowledge over dominated or colonized countries.

The virus has also disclosed our general present-day condition, and especially the alarming inherent class, gender and "race"<sup>514</sup> inequalities and injustices in our societies. This is why it is important to have a comparative view of the covid-19 effects in countries of the global south.<sup>515</sup> Eye-opening papers have been written about India, where covid-19 meets starvation, caste and class segregation and exploitation, widespread tuberculosis as well as constant movements of migrating populations both intra-Indian or trans-border for work, because of

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<sup>512</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Um discurso sobre as ciências*, Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal), Edições Afrontamento (16th edition 2010).

<sup>513</sup> Balibar, "Les universels" in *La crainte des Masses*, Paris, Galilée 1997, pp 419-453; *Des universels. Essais et conférences*, Paris, Galilée 2016.

<sup>514</sup> Under « race » we can include phenomena like ethnic, caste, national, minority and other differences turned into social, economic and political inequality and injustice.

<sup>515</sup> For Uruguay, see Ricardo Viscardi, "Poder de bloque: el estigma de covid-19" 1a. quincena, junio 2020, [https://ricardoviscardi.blogspot.com/2020/06/poder-de-bloque-el-estigma-decovid-19-1a\\_11.html](https://ricardoviscardi.blogspot.com/2020/06/poder-de-bloque-el-estigma-decovid-19-1a_11.html)

persecution, of starvation, of land grabbing, of expropriation etc..<sup>516</sup> The “normalcy” of our everyday lives, the stress, the alienation, the incivility and lack of graciousness have made us forget about those inequalities and injustices. As the Indian Prime Minister Modi proclaimed the lockdown in a matter of hours on March 24, 2020, “migrants began their long trudge to nowhere” when “draconian state measures unleash[ed] havoc on the poor”.<sup>517</sup> Migrants, here, means the big army of inland migrant exiles that represent the main part<sup>518</sup> of the workforce in India, on short-term informal contract or no contract. 90% of India’s economy is cash-only economy: menial workers, servants, construction workers, delivery-boys, waste-pickers, rickshaw drivers of several categories, unskilled laborer, cleaners, dhobis (garment-washers), chowkidars, garbage pickers, small vendors, beggars, people living on the street with only meagre day earnings, while 30% of Delhi’s population live in slums and shanty-towns. A very big part of that army of informal workers are women, and all are exposed to get covid-19 due to medical preconditions such as malnutrition, TB and other illnesses. According to Maya John, the public and official information about the virus being strongly biased class-wise, “[t]hese peculiar circumstances [of TB being more contagious and higher in numbers than even Covid-19 in India] demand that we lay bare the skewed relationship between social epistemology (ways of knowing) and epidemiology (study of incidence, distribution, and control of diseases) in order to lay the ground for people to have a *different* cognitive (re)mapping.”<sup>519</sup>

As transportation was immobilized overnight (and most of the workers wouldn’t have any money for it, had it not), as their housing is sometimes purposely demolished, at the lockdown

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<sup>516</sup> Aditya Nigam, three texts in *Kafila*, 1) “Coronabiopolitics and life after capitalism - Manifesto of hope i”, <https://kafila.online/2020/03/26/conona-biopolitics-and-life-after-capitalism-a-manifesto-of-hope-i/>; 2) “Life after capitalism and the new ‘Al Shatir-Copernicus’ revolution – Manifesto of hope ii” <https://kafila.online/2020/04/09/life-after-capitalism-and-the-new-copernican-revolution-manifesto-of-hope-ii/>; 3) “Fascism, the revolt of the ‘little man’ and life after capitalism – Manifesto of hope iii”: [HTTPS://KAFILA.ONLINE/2020/04/23/FASCISM-THE-REVOLT-OF-THE-LITTLE-MAN-AND-LIFE-AFTER-CAPITALISM-MANIFESTO-OF-HOPE-III/](https://kafila.online/2020/04/23/fascism-the-revolt-of-the-little-man-and-life-after-capitalism-manifesto-of-hope-iii/). Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Borders of an Epidemic. Covid-19 and migrant workers*, Calcutta MCRG 2020, [http://www.mcr.ac.in/RLS\\_Migration\\_2020/COVID-19.pdf](http://www.mcr.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2020/COVID-19.pdf).

<sup>517</sup> Jamal Kidwai, “As Migrants begin their long trudge to nowhere” in *Kafila*, 31-3-2020, <https://kafila.online/2020/03/31/as-migrants-begin-their-long-trudge-to-nowhere-a-note-on-migration-in-delhi-jamal-kidwai/>; Maya John, “Knowability and unknowability of COVID-19 – Is there ‘class’ in the coronavirus panic?” in *Kafila*, 5-4-2020, <https://kafila.online/2020/04/05/knowability-and-unknowability-of-covid-19-is-there-class-in-the-coronavirus-panic-maya-john/>. See also Vijay Prashad, “The cost of the COVID19 pandemic must not bankrupt the people” | *DiEM25 TV* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjTJKwj3lys>

<sup>518</sup> 92%, according to Kidwai, *op. cit.* See also Ranabir Samaddar, Interview by Monobina Gupta “At the Stroke of Midnight, Migrant Workers Became Aliens in a Double Sense”, in *The Wire*, <https://thewire.in/rights/interview-ranabir-samaddar-migrant-workers-invisible>

<sup>519</sup> Maya John, *ibid.*

people started by the thousands on foot to their villages hundreds of kilometers away from the big cities where they worked or tried to make a living, but where they had no housing and no means of surviving.<sup>520</sup> The police beat them as they walked through the city and then along the main roads in a gigantic exodus. They were stopped and prevented to pass by people and/or authorities in regions and villages they crossed, because they were thought to be covid-19 carriers. As they arrived, for those who survived illnesses and famine on the road, they were exhausted and starved, and so were the villages. While most of them are low-caste, it was even worse for those of them who were muslims in a Hindu-nationalist majority milieu. A week or so after their departure, voices about starvation of this chronically malnourished population started trickling out in the leftist media, to the indifference of authorities and of much of the upper caste and class public opinion. But at the same time, worries started being expressed by the latter, a layer to whom physical work is forbidden by tradition, about the disastrous disappearance of servants, as well as worries and discussions about whether it is all right to take them in and keep them in the house, lest they “pollute” it. The latter worry has increased as some of them have been called or have now come back. Activists and writers around the feminist publishing house Zubaan in Delhi, in their webinar, have discussed many of these issues. They are talking about a major *failure of care*, failure on the part of the state but also of the traditionally hierarchical society.<sup>521</sup> They are critical of the fact that it is women who perpetrate this discrimination, as a weapon and sign of their own social weakness. They are outraged at the concept “social distance” which, they argue, has always been there with regard to lower castes and in particular to Dalits, but also to muslims, and plead for the term “physical distance” in the case of a medical emergency. These cleavages are exploited by Hindu-nationalists, who are anti-Dalit, anti-muslim and anti-migrants. At the same time, Indian (as much as Pakistani) workers in the Gulf countries, and particularly the most numerous group of Keralese (more than 2.1 million), are at the mercy of inhumane conditions maintained by their employers, who mainly confiscate their passports and have stopped paying them, while they

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<sup>520</sup> Ranabir Samaddar (ed.), *Burdens of an epidemic. A policy perspective on Covid-19 and migrant workers*, by MCRG [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS\\_Migration\\_2020/Burdens\\_of\\_an\\_Epidemic.pdf](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2020/Burdens_of_an_Epidemic.pdf)

<sup>521</sup> ZUBAAN feminist Webinar on ZOOM: “A Crisis of Care: Feminist Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Lockdown in India.” 16 April 2020: Ajita Rao and V Geetha on social distancing, exclusion and caste or [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udTD8\\_IkBA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udTD8_IkBA). 21 April 2020: Hasina Khan and Alana Golmei on racism and Islamophobia or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8agV7-eWdUU&t=193s>. 25 April 2020: Vandana Singh and Shomona Khanna on ecological shifts and perspectives or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLgejjkxwbU&feature=youtu.be>. 28 April 2020: Raj, A Revathi and Chayanika Shah on queer and trans communities' experiences, or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Iub0oSV-JY>

have no access to health services, no rights, no housing with the possibility physical distancing (or no housing at all), no money to send remittances home and no way to travel back<sup>522</sup> or to stay (while they labor permits and visas have expired).

The general Indian case is not particularly original: in the same way, the virus has turned to reveal the worst ruthless discrimination and indifference, when not outright rejection, to “others”, in the first place to the migrants or the would-be migrants at the borders of Europe or at sea. Social and class inequalities equally surface in Europe too, the inequality with regard to work (mainly, the difference between physical and office work – the latter can “tele-work”), the inequality facing the loss of jobs, the inequality facing the virus, the inequality regarding schools etc. Here too, the extreme right parties are exploiting the circumstances advocating border closures even in passing from one district to another – inner borders. It is in the latter demand that we can see the appalling dovetailing of the issue of immigration and that of the coronavirus with its medical emergency. Societies and states are divided on the issue, but majorities are against immigration. The issue of the failure of care is excellently identified by Indian thinkers, and should be considered by all others too. We have seen it come to the fore in Europe as well, where care has been mainly at the hands of women also. The state as well as society as a whole should take part in rebuilding care at a level beyond individuals and families. On this our societies have failed.

On the other hand, in the countries of Chinese culture apparently (not only mainland China), discipline, civility, graciousness and confucianism that have a wider view of building a common world together (as opposed to western and westernized countries with individualistic values), have helped controlling the pandemic.

It is to be seen whether the coronavirus of 2019-20 will prove to have been a turning point to a new world economy and paradigm, a new international world order. Although there are some indicators, it is not clear who, as a (probably) global as well as a local political subject, could take care of the tipping point. Meanwhile, populists and outright fascists as well as other destructive energy are ideologically prospering, including from the virus, and are taking advantage of the global restoration. If we continue in that direction and continue closing our

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<sup>522</sup> S. Irudaya Rajan, H. Arokkiaraj “For Indian migrants in the Gulf it is a financial rather than a health crisis”, in *OpenDemocracy*, 20 April 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/pandemic-border/indian-migrants-gulf-it-financial-rather-health-crisis/>

borders to immigration, the murderous charge of our civilizational choice will very soon prove to be suicidal. But we can still do better *together* as a global-and-local plural political subject, joining all resisting forces in a common and tolerant project of hospitality and conviviality away from the deadly capitalism we have trapped ourselves in. After all, we all share one life to which we contribute individually and collectively.

## 9. ANNEX

### 1) SAR ships in the Mediterranean

The journalist Rouguyata Sall gives an overview of cases of SAR boats blocked previous to the incident with *Sea-Watch-3* under captain C. Rackete, in an article in *Médiapart* on June 28, 2019, “Carola Rackete, symbole du harcèlement des sauveteurs humanitaires”, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/030719/carola-rackete-symbole-du-harcelement-des-sauveteurs-humanitaires>

“En mars 2019, le *Mare Ionio* est bloqué pendant deux semaines après le sauvetage de 50 migrants, qui ont finalement pu débarquer à Lampedusa.

Le 9 mai 2019, Giuseppe Garcia est le chef de mission à bord du *Mare Ionio* ; il recueille 29 migrants au large de la Libye. Suivant la procédure, l’équipage du *Mare Ionio* contacte le Centre national de coordination du sauvetage en mer (ITMMCC), pour pouvoir accoster dans un port sûr. « *Le ministère de l’intérieur nous a donné l’ordre de retourner en Libye* », affirme Giuseppe Caccia, qui risque jusqu’à quinze ans de prison. « *Nous avons argumenté sur la situation de guerre et de violation permanente des droits de l’homme en Libye. Puis nous avons pris la direction de Lampedusa.* »

Le même jour, la marine italienne a secouru de son côté 36 migrants sur une embarcation de fortune dans les eaux internationales au large de la Libye, « *conformément au droit international* », précise-t-elle dans son annonce. Matteo Salvini distingue alors ces deux opérations de sauvetage: « *Un navire militaire qui, via son ministère de référence devra assumer ses responsabilités, est une chose; mais un navire privé ou appartenant à des centres sociaux, comme le Mare Ionio, en est une autre. Pour eux, les ports resteront fermés.* »

Mais le *Mare Ionio* pourra finalement accoster à Lampedusa.

Outre l'aide à l'immigration clandestine et la non-obéissance à un navire de guerre, la plateforme *Mediterranea* est accusée d'avoir enregistré le *Mare Ionio* comme navire de commerce et non comme navire humanitaire de recherche et sauvetage.

Depuis, le *Mare Ionio* est toujours bloqué. Mais quelques heures avant la libération de Carola Rackete le 2 juillet, les membres de *Mediterranea* ont pris la décision de retourner au large de la Libye avec *Alex*, leur bateau de support. Pour continuer leur mission de « *surveillance et de dénonciation de la violation des droits de l'homme et donner les premiers secours aux personnes en détresse qu'ils pourraient croiser en mer* ».

Violaine Carrère, chargée d'études à l'association française Gisti (Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés) et membre à titre individuel du réseau Migreurop, dénonce toutes ces actions contre les sauvetages en mer. Elle cite en exemple les déclarations de Carmelo Zuccaro, procureur de Catane, qui parlait de la complicité entre les passeurs et les navires humanitaires. C'était début 2017, quelques mois après la fuite d'un rapport confidentiel de Frontex.

D'après le *Financial Times* (FT), l'agence Frontex y évoquerait une « *collusion* » entre les ONG et les réseaux de passeurs. Mais le média américain avait reconnu son erreur et publié un correctif depuis.

En avril 2019, cette même erreur du FT vaut à Christophe Castaner le titre d'« *adhérent d'honneur* » du groupuscule d'extrême droite Génération identitaire. Le ministre de l'intérieur déclare à la fin du sommet du G7 des ministres de l'intérieur à Paris: « *On a observé, de façon tout à fait documentée, je vous le dis, une réelle collusion à certains moments entre les trafiquants de migrants et certaines ONG.* »

Il précise que « *certains navires d'ONG étaient ainsi en contact téléphonique direct avec des passeurs qui facilitaient le départ des migrants depuis les côtes libyennes.* » Alors que dans les rapports Frontex, il était question d'appels avec des téléphones satellitaires détectables.



Quelques jours après, il n'évoque plus que « *des interactions de fait entre des passeurs et certaines ONG* ».

Cette liste de bateaux et ONG bloqués ne saurait être complète sans citer l'*Aquarius*, navire humanitaire affrété par les ONG SOS Méditerranée et Médecins sans frontières en 2016. L'*Aquarius* ne patrouille plus depuis la fin de l'année 2018 et est bloqué à Marseille depuis la perte de son pavillon panaméen, pour non-respect des « *procédures juridiques internationales en matière de secours* ».

Alors qu'ils n'avaient déjà plus le droit de naviguer, la justice italienne enfonce le clou en ordonnant la saisie de l'*Aquarius*, car l'équipage aurait caché aux autorités portuaires la nature « *contaminée* » de certains de ses déchets, à savoir les vêtements des migrants, passés en ordures ménagères – soumises à des taxes portuaires bien plus faibles – et non en déchets « *potentiellement infectieux* », comme Médiapart le racontait [ici](#).

Aux yeux de Sara Piestranni, de l'association Arci, cette nouvelle affaire du *Sea-Watch 3* et l'arrestation de Carola Rackete sont une énième étape franchie contre la solidarité des ONG. « *Ce n'est pas nouveau, regrette-t-elle. On peut remonter en 2004, avec le cas du Cap Anamur.* »

Le 11 juillet 2004, ce bateau d'une ONG allemande est autorisé à entrer dans le port sicilien de Porto Empedocle avec 37 personnes secourues à bord. Le capitaine, son second et le président de l'ONG sont arrêtés le lendemain pour aide à l'immigration clandestine et le bateau est mis sous séquestre. Le procureur avait alors requis des peines de quatre ans de prison et une amende de 400 000 euros d'amende pour les membres de l'ONG... qui, cinq ans plus tard, seront tous acquittés.

Entre le *Cap Anamur* et le *Sea-Watch 3*, de nombreux navires humanitaires ont fait face à la justice italienne.

En juin 2018, le *Lifeline*, affrété par une ONG allemande du même nom, a été mis en séquestre à Malte. Une enquête est ouverte à l'encontre du capitaine, accusé de ne pas avoir correctement enregistré le *Lifeline*. Un an après, il vient de faire appel de sa condamnation en première

instance (amende de 10 000 euros). Le *Lifeline* reste bloqué tant que le procès n'est pas terminé.

En mars 2018, l'*Open Arms*, affrété par l'ONG espagnole Proactiva, est mis sous séquestre après avoir débarqué 218 personnes secourues dans un port sicilien. Le coordinateur de l'ONG et le capitaine sont sous le coup d'une enquête pour aide à l'immigration clandestine.

Après six mois d'immobilisation par les autorités espagnoles, le navire a été autorisé à reprendre la mer en avril dernier. À condition de ne pas se rendre au large de la Libye, sous peine de 200 000 à 900 000 euros d'amende. Mais la semaine dernière, le navire met cap vers la SAR libyenne. « *Notre mandat est de secourir les gens, nous allons là-bas pour témoigner et faire notre possible pour qu'aucune vie ne soit perdue* », a expliqué une porte-parole à l'AFP.

Début août 2017, la justice italienne a saisi le *Juventa*, de l'ONG allemande Jugend Rettet, accusée de complicité avec les passeurs libyens. Elle clame depuis son innocence. L'ancienne capitaine du *Juventa* n'est autre que Pia Klemp, devenue depuis capitaine du *Sea-Watch 3*. Elle est actuellement en procès et risque jusqu'à vingt ans de prison, soupçonnée tout comme 10 membres de son équipage, d'aide à l'immigration clandestine de 2016 à 2017.

**2) Dimitar Vatsov's list of populism's ("propaganda's") characteristics, to be compared to Umberto Eco's list further on the characteristics of Ur-fascism:**

Dimitar Vatsov's list of general features of "propaganda" (populism). , as described by Vatsov, *op. cit. Part One*, p. 73 (please note that references are by Vatsov and from his quoted chapter):

“□ Populism proclaims that the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard’ (Canovan, 1981, p.4);

□ populism rejects pluralism (Müller, 2017), or at the least, reduces it discursively, constructing ‘chains of equivalence’ (Laclau, 2005), insofar as ‘the people’ is represented as a single entity, as a single ‘general will’ (*volonté générale*) that transcends all group, class, and cultural differences;

□ that is why ‘populism itself tends to deny any identification with or classification into the

Right/Left dichotomy' (Germani, 1978, p.88);

□ populism attacks meritocracy as a principle of legitimating elites (Krastev, 2017) and appeals rhetorically to the traditions and virtues of the common people, but does not have any coherent ideology (Minogue, 1969);

□ in fact, populism creates an 'antagonistic frontier' between the people and the elites (Laclau, 2005), whereupon 'we, the people' is opposed to 'they, the elites': populism 'considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps' (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017, p.6);

□ the populist opposition of 'us' versus 'them' usually follows a 'conspiratorial logic', according to which 'the elites' are accused of being 'corrupt', they are 'blood-suckers' who govern in 'their own interest' and conspire against 'the people' – thus, 'conspiracy theory' is 'a mode of populist logic' (Fenster, 2008, p.90);

□ the conspiratorial logic of populism allows the 'us/them', 'people/elites' relationship to be strained, in some cases, to the point of extreme political polarization – of 'friend/enemy' antagonism;

□ populism is anti-institutional: it most often tries to bypass the complex institutional forms of party representation (in liberal democracies) and instead of representation of 'part' of the people, it proposes 'direct' representation of the general popular will through 'charismatic leadership'."

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