

Planet S.O.S.: Climate Change and Global Poverty

Jason Hickel

I want to use my time this evening to talk about hegemony -the hegemony of economic growth. This single idea governs our world and guides the decisions of our leaders more forcefully than almost any other. It is accepted by the right and left alike -or at least by the traditional left- to the point where it is so taken for granted that we tend not to even recognize it. It is a background assumption of our social imaginary, outside the field of political contestation, beyond the boundaries of our debates. Our politicians rise and fall on their ability to generate growth. We are told that growth is necessary for progress, necessary to improve human well-being and eradicate poverty -and we accept these claims without questioning them. If you challenge the growth narrative, people look at you like you're crazy, like you've literally lost the plot -that's how powerful its hegemony is.

The idea is so powerful that reasonable people rally around it even when it is clear that it makes no sense at all -even when simple math shows it to be contradictory and even absurd.

Here is an example. Two years ago, in 2015, the world's governments gathered together in New York to ratify the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs set out to accomplish an incredible feat -the eradication of global poverty by 2030, as measured at \$1.25 per day. This sounds like a wonderful goal, and indeed it's about time that we got around to doing it. But if you look at the text of the SDGS, you'll see that the plan is to accomplish this specifically through high rates of GDP growth.

Now, there are a number of reasons to be skeptical about this

approach. The first is that there is no direct correlation between GDP growth and poverty reduction.

It all depends on how the growth is distributed. And right now it is incredibly skewed in favor of the rich. Here is a potent fact to keep in mind. Even during the most equitable period over the past few decades, the poorest 60% of humanity received only 5% of all new income generated by global growth, while the richest 1% received more than 90% of the gains. Suddenly it becomes clear why we've been sold this story about how growth is the only option.

Now, here's some math for you. Because of this horribly skewed distribution, the pace of trickle-down is so slow that it will take approximately 100 years to eliminate global poverty through economic growth, according to recent research published in the *World Economic Review*. And note that this at the standard poverty line of \$1.25/day. Most scholars say that this line is far too low for even basic human subsistence, and that a more accurate poverty line is about \$5/day. At this level, it will take 207 years to eradicate poverty through growth. And to get there, we will have to grow the global economy to 175 times its present size. Think about it. That's 175 times more extraction, more production, and more consumption than we're already doing. And of course this is absurd, because even if such immense growth were possible, it would drive climate change and resource depletion to catastrophic levels and, in the process, rapidly reverse any gains against poverty.

So it's not just that growth is an inadequate solution to the problem of poverty. It also makes little sense given what we know about our planet's ecological limits. Indeed, even at *existing* levels of economic activity, scientists tell us that we're already overshooting our planet's biocapacity by about 60% per year, due to excess greenhouse gas emissions and resource overuse. And, crucially, it's important to recognize

that the vast majority of this is caused by overconsumption by people in a small handful of rich countries. For example, people in Europe consume on average 2.6 times more than their share of the earth's biocapacity, while people in the US and Britain consume as much as 4 times more. Their excess growth is driving us all to catastrophe.

Rapid climate change is the most obvious symptom of this overshoot, of course; but we can also see it in a number of other registers. Half of our tropical forests have been destroyed in the last 60 years. 90% of fish stocks have collapsed. Agricultural soil is depleting to the point where food yields will begin to decline within our lifetime. And species are dying off so fast that scientists have classed this as the sixth mass extinction in the planet's history, with the last one having occurred 66 million years ago. And all of this has crushing consequences for human beings - particularly in poorer countries.

And remember, all of this is only at our *existing* levels of economic activity. When we start to factor in *growth*, things start to look very bleak indeed.

Right now, the world is united around the goal of maintaining global growth at around 3% per year. Anything less, and the economy crashes into crisis.

3% may sound like a small increment, but keep in mind that this is an exponential curve, so growing at that rate means *doubling* the size of the global economy in 20 years, and then over the next 20 years doubling it again from its already doubled state, and so on until infinity. It is almost too absurd to imagine.

Now, when faced with projections about the dangers of continued growth, most economists brush them aside. They insist that technological innovations and efficiency improvements will help us "decouple" growth from material

throughput, enabling us to grow GDP indefinitely. But unfortunately there is exactly zero evidence for this view. Annual global material throughput has more than *doubled* since 1980, and over the past decade the rate of throughput has *accelerated*, not slowed down. Right now we're consuming around 70 billion tonnes of stuff per year, and by 2030 that figure is expected to breach 100 billion.

Similar false promises are wheeled out in the face of global warming projections. Some insist that we can continue to grow the economy indefinitely without causing catastrophic climate change. All we need is to shift as fast as we can to renewable energy, and rely on negative-emissions technology. This bit about negative emissions technology is important to understand. The dominant proposal out there is called BECCS: "bio-energy carbon capture and storage". According to this proposal, all we have to do is plant enormous tree plantations to suck carbon out of the atmosphere. Then we harvest them, turn them into wood pellets and ship them around the world to power stations where we will burn them for energy. Then we capture the carbon emissions that they produce and store the gases deep under the ground. Voila -an energy system that sucks carbon out of the air. What's not to love?

In fact, this plan is at the very center of the Paris Agreement on climate change. When the world's government signed the Paris Agreement, promising to keep global warming under 2 degrees, everyone heaved a huge sigh of relief. But if you look closely at the agreement, you'll see that the emissions reductions it promises don't actually get us there. Even if all the world's countries meet their targets -which is very unlikely, since the targets are non-binding- we'll still be hurtling toward about 3.7 to 4 degrees of global warming - way over the threshold.

What might our planet look like if it warms by 4°C?

Projections show that it is likely to bring about heatwaves

not seen on Earth for 5 million years. Southern Europe will turn into a desert. Sea levels will rise by 1.2 metres, drowning cities like Amsterdam and New York. 40% of species will be at risk of extinction. Our rainforests will wither away. Crop yields will collapse by 35%, triggering famine in the global South. So why is nobody sounding the alarm about this? Why is nobody freaking out? Because the Paris Agreement assumes that BECCS will work to pull carbon down out of the atmosphere. Instead of committing to the emissions reductions we need, it presupposes that technology will save us.

There's only one small problem. Engineers and ecologists are very clear that BECCS won't work. The technology has never been proven at scale. And even if it did work, it would require that we create plantations equivalent to three times the size of India, without taking away from the agricultural land that we need to feed the world's population -and that's just not physically possible. In other words, BECCS is a myth, the Paris Agreement has sold us a lie, and yet we're hanging our future on it.

If we can't rely on BECCS to save us, that means we have to commit to much more demanding emissions reductions. Kevin Anderson, one of Britain's leading climate scientists, argues that to have a decent shot at keeping below 2 degrees, industrialized countries will have to cut emissions by 10% per year until net zero in 2050. And here's the problem: even if we throw everything we have into efficiency improvements and renewable technologies, they will help us reduce emissions by *at most* 4% per year. That means that in order to bridge the rest of the gap, rich countries will have no choice but to downscale their economic activity by 6% per year.

In other words, climate science itself recognizes a clear de-growth imperative. It's time for us to face up to this reality -yet our leaders are doing everything they can to avoid this uncomfortable fact.

Now, I want to say a few things about de-growth. First of all, degrowth is not the same as austerity. Austerity means cutting social spending in order to -supposedly- keep the economy growing. De-growth is exactly the opposite. It is a process of investing in social goods in order to render growth unnecessary. Let me explain. Right now, our politicians see growth as a substitute for equality. They don't want to redistribute resources, so instead their plan is to grow the size of the economy, while hoping that a little bit trickles down to keep the masses acquiescent. But we can turn this equation around. If growth is a substitute for equality, then equality can be a substitute for growth. In other words, instead of growing the economy and intensifying our exploitation of the earth, we can share what we already have more fairly.

The good news is that there is plenty of data showing that it's possible to downscale production and consumption at the same time as increasing human development indicators like happiness, well-being, education, health, and longevity.

All it takes is investing in things like universal education, healthcare, and public housing. In other words, the commons are an antidote to growth. Consider the fact that Costa Rica has better human development indicators than the United States, but with only one-fifth of its GDP per capita and one third of its ecological footprint per capita. That's real ecological efficiency. How do they do it? With universal social policy and strong protections for the commons that have been in place for nearly 70 years.

There are other important steps that would enable de-growth. We could stop measuring progress with GDP, and focus on human well-being instead, and indeed this is the first step we should take. We could ban advertising in public spaces, which would reduce pressures for needless consumption. A universal basic income, by allowing us to walk away from bullshit jobs,

would reduce pressures for unnecessary production.

But there are a few deep challenges we need to confront. One of the reasons that the economy *has* to grow is because our system is completely shot through with debt. And debt comes with interest. If we don't grow the economy fast enough to meet interest payments, then we have a financial crisis.

Because of debt, we are slaves to growth -we are all forced to churn our planet and our bodies into money and feed it to our creditors. Greece knows this fact better than anyone else. One solution, of course, is to cancel the debt -or to refuse to pay it. Yes, creditors will lose out, and some of them will collapse, but this is a small price to pay to liberate our system from the growth imperative.

As Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary president of Burkina Faso put it, "If we don't pay the debts, no one will die. If we do pay the debts, people will surely die." And we could add that the ecosystem on which we depend will surely die as well.

But the problem goes even deeper than this, since our money system itself is based on debt. This is often surprising for people to hear. Most of us think that it is central banks that create money. But in fact more than 90% of money is created by private commercial banks. When commercial banks make loans, they are not lending money out of their reserves in the vault. Rather, they simply invent the money out of thin air. In other words, nearly every dollar or Euro that is circulating in our economy represents debt. And because debt necessitates growth, we might say that every new dollar that is created is effectively heating up the planet.

If we want to embark on a de-growth trajectory, then, we need more than debt resistance -we need to abolish debt-based currency and invent a new money system altogether. There are lots of ways we can do this. We could have the state retake

control over the creation of money, so it would be free of debt, and restrict commercial banks so they can only lend out of their own reserves. This is known as a positive money system, or a full-reserve banking system. Or instead of relying on the state we could invent our own complementary currencies. The rise of blockchain technology and the Bancor protocol make this more feasible than ever, and thousands of new currencies are springing up, allowing people to partially opt out of the dominant money system.

But confronting the de-growth imperative is more than just evolving our way toward a different economic system. It is also about radically changing the way that we think about ourselves as humans and our relationship to the rest of the world. We have to get past the mad notion that came from so-called Enlightenment thinkers like Descartes and Bacon, who convinced us that humans are separate from and superior to nature. Real enlightenment resides instead in the realization -preserved today by mystics and many indigenous peoples- that we are a *part* of nature... that the fish and the soils and the forests are our sisters and our brothers, that we share the same substance, or the same spirit. We must realize that the imperative of de-growth is not about bending to obey the laws of some abstract, externally-imposed ecological limits... it is about cultivating a new ontology, one that shifts us from an ethic of domination and extraction to an ethic of interdependence, unity and care.

We're all familiar with the phrase "socialism or barbarism". But I think Janet Biehl is correct when she says that the left's slogan for the 21st century needs to be "ecology or catastrophe."

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Overcoming the State by Reinventing the Polis

Yavor Tarinski

The rhetoric of Thatcher and of Reagan has changed nothing of importance (the change in formal ownership of a few large enterprises does not essentially alter their relation to the State), ... the bureaucratic structure of the large firm remains intact [and] half of the national product transits the public sector in one way or another (State, local governmental organizations, Social Security); ... between half and two-thirds of the price of goods and services entering into the final national expenditure are in one way or another fixed, regulated, controlled, or influenced by State policy, and ... the situation is irreversible (ten years of Thatcher and Reagan made no essential changes therein).[1]

Cornelius Castoriadis

Authoritarian Globalization and the State

For some time now, but especially with the eruption of the global financial crisis in 2008, the globalized neoliberal system have managed, in some aspects, to stabilize and entrench itself more firmly by taking explicitly anti-democratic and essentially authoritarian forms. In contrast to the narrative offered by its supporters on the Right and

chimed by most of its opponents on the Left, neoliberalism's synthesis with representative democracy hasn't led us towards dismantlement of the state bureaucracies, but instead towards their replication on global, international level (transgressing however the national political discourse). The widely propagated nowadays idea of raging individual freedom is being accompanied by the reality of aggressive erosion of personal rights and supplementation of individuality with uniformed consumerist atomization.

This state of things was clearly exemplified by the brutal power which the international financial institutions and the European technocrats exercised in the case of Greece. The naked force with which the global elites responded to the anti-austerity resistance waged by the Greeks was simultaneously a demonstration and warning that national-sovereignty is a thing of the past. It was made clear that no country will be allowed to step out of line. This new reality leads large segments of the Left even today to disorientation since the sphere of national politics, viewed by them as main front for anti-capitalist struggle, has been completely dismantled, giving birth to contradictory left-wing projects like Varoufakis's Diem25[2].

Despite all the talks of state "amputation", neoliberalism instead proceeds in its reconceptualization. In fact, the state apparatus is reduced to central enforcer of capitalist dogmas and producer of anthropological types that are necessary to keep the current system going. Narratives of "raging freedom" are invoked to mask the authoritarian nature of the contemporary oligarchy. But the state's role as guardian of the neoliberal doctrine and its main pillars, like unlimited economic growth, deepens even further its conflict with society, often resorting to brute force, and thus becoming increasingly delegitimized entity.

In the face of this global authoritarian system, in which states seek to submit local populations to the will of

international technocratic elites and transnational agreements (like TTIP), the far-Right and large part of the far-Left seem to agree on the need to revive the independent nation-state. But their essentially bureaucratic and predisposed to racism proposal seems to not find significant popular support, except for some sporadic electoral successes, provoked mainly by fear and insecurity, rather than political agreement. And the examples of the age of national-politics bear enough reasons for us to reject the retreat to the all powerful and equally authoritarian nation-state sovereignty.

On the other hand, the proposal of the so-called political Center, both Right and Left, to stick to the current discourse seems to be completely bankrupted. The dominant institutions of governance seems to be completely delegitimized, with record levels of electoral abstention and rising social cynicism, thus forced to constantly resort to sheer violence when facing popular disagreement and resistance. This reality has made many social movements and segments of society to engage in exploring new modes of organizing everyday life beyond the bureaucratic fragmentation enforced by the state.

The City as Locus for Politics beyond Statecraft

During last years the city has emerged as potential contender to the nation-state. The radical geographer David Harvey has even argued that 'rebel cities' will become a preferred site for revolutionary movements[3]. Great theoretical influence in this field is the work of libertarian thinker Murray Bookchin who, like the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis[4], returned to the forgotten ancient Athenian concept of the *Polis*[5]. He attempted with great success at revealing the revolutionary essence of this notion and its potentialities for our times. To parliamentary oligarchy, tribal nationalism and capitalist relations Bookchin proposed direct-democratic confederations of libertarian municipalities where citizens participate

directly in local assemblies and elect revocable delegates to regional councils[6]. In the city and its historic rivalry with the State, he saw a possible **public space** where civic culture can break domination in all its forms.

While large cities worldwide are increasingly following their own agendas that often go against State policies, like the city of London and its resistance to Britain's leave of the EU (the so-called 'Brexit')[7], a new generation of municipal platforms is emerging, boosted by the deepening of the crisis of representation. Most of them are partially influenced by the above-mentioned theoretical framework, and have sprung in different parts of the world, but mainly in Europe. In Spain such projects govern most major cities like Barcelona and Madrid[8]. These platforms are trying to reverse the austerity measures that are being enforced by the State, international technocratic institutions and transnational agreements, remunicipalize basic services, introduce participatory decision-making bodies on local level, challenge governmental anti-migrant policies etc. Some of these 'rebel cities' have begun connecting with each other, thus multiplying and strengthening their voices.

In the US also local municipalities have reached to conflict with the central government's policies. Close to 250 cities across the country have pledged to adopt, honor and uphold the commitments to the goals set by the Paris Agreements after the announcement of president Trump's plans to break up with the latter[9]. But while the motivations of some of these local administrations remain questionable due to their possible connections with the main electoral opponents to the contemporary government, municipal platforms are emerging in the US as well, like the initiative *Olympia for All*[10] that tries to give more participatory and ecological characteristics to the municipality of Olympia, Washington (USA).

Of course there are problems with these practices. Most of

these municipal projects attempt at trying to radicalize cities through the mechanisms of local bureaucracies that resemble to a large degree the state apparatus. This fact rises the question of how far this “radicalization” can go. It also underlines the difficulty of balancing between city bureaucracy and social movements. These problematics should not make us abandon the city as potential locus for making politics outside statecraft, but provoke us to rethink it as truly public space that is constantly being recreated by its citizens and that goes beyond narrow electoralism.

One contemporary case that goes in this direction is the democratic autonomy being built in Rojava. The base of the confederal system that nowadays functions in this part of the war-torn Middle East was set through strategy that resembles to a large degree the principles of libertarian municipalism. Activists began organizing grassroots decision-making bodies – communes and councils – in neighborhoods and villages, mostly situated in North Kurdistan and Rojava, that functioned in parallel to the official state institutions, trying to gain legitimacy through providing space that allows people to directly self-organize their everyday lives. Their work proved successful when during the Arab spring a power vacuum was created and most of the involved communities were able to self-manage themselves sustainably without the involvement of statist apparatuses.

Beyond Bureaucracy and Domination

The authoritarian nature of the contemporary system requires anti-authoritarian alternative paradigm if it is to be successfully challenged. While many have argued that the current rise in authoritarianism and technocracy is nothing but a temporary phase in the liberal oligarchic rule, others, like Walter Benjamin, have argued that the “state of exception” in which we live is in fact not the exception but the rule[11]. Electoral victories by far-right candidates and

fascist parties are not some sort of systemic breakdown but continuation of traditional hierarchical rule by other means. Thus it is up to all of us, of those “below”, to bring about a real exception in the tradition of heteronomy and radically break up with domination of human over human and of humanity over nature.

The way through which this could be achieved, logically cannot pass through the ballot box, either on national or local level, but through the self-organization and self-institution of society itself. This would imply communities organizing independently from established bureaucracies and determining themselves their agendas. Something similar to the demonstrations against the **Dakota Access Pipeline** where indigenous people and social movements managed to achieve significant victory, against both big capital and an alliance of state governments, in the preservation of their commons, building “from below” a movement that spread to more than 300 cities across the US and received solidarity from all over the world, including Thailand, Japan and Europe[12].

We saw that in the last decade the popular resistances in urban areas have adopted an anti-authoritarian approach with democratic characteristics. Vanguardist structures like parties and syndicates, once dominant among social movements, have nowadays been abandoned and replaced by open participatory institutions. Demonstrations are increasingly turning into reclamation of public spaces and buildings. Thus we can speak of general social attempts at redefining what democracy is.

The role of social movements in these processes would be not to lead but to nurture these direct-democratic traits that stem from our very societies. Among the main questions for them should be how to manage to successfully locate and maintain the grassroots institutions that are emerging in public squares and city neighborhoods in the short eruptions of civil disagreement with enforced “from above” policies. And

how their character could be transformed from purely symbolic to effective and decision-making. This also puts forward the need of regional and even transnational connectedness between such dispersed local grassroots institutions for them to be able to function sustainably in the face of state and capitalist hostility. For such germs of genuine direct democracy we could also look beyond the contemporary Western world, in places like Chiapas, Rojava and other indigenous communities and cultures but also in historical political traditions that go as far as the ancient Athenian *Polis*.

Conclusion

As Castoriadis have suggested, we are at a crossroad in the roads of history[13]. Some of the more visible paths will keep us within heteronomy, in worlds dominated by the barbarism of international agreements and technocratic institutions, State apparatuses and nationalist cannibalism. Although the characteristics of each one of them may differ, their base remains essentially the same: elites and predetermined truths dominating society and nature. Humanity have been living within this framework during most of its recent history and the symptoms are painfully familiar to us all: loss of meaning, conformism, apathy, irresponsibility, the tightening grip of unlimited economic growth, pseudorational pseudomastery, consumption for the sake of consumption, technoscience that strengthens the domination of capitalist imaginary etc.

There is however another road that is not that visible, but always existent. Unlike the above mentioned directions that are being determined by extra-social sources, this one has to be opened and laid through the political practice of all citizens and their will for freedom. It requires the abolition of bureaucratic fragmentation of everyday life, which is the essence of the State, reclamation of the public space and the *Polis*, reawakening of the creative imaginary and re-

articulation of the project of Autonomy. But it is a matter of social and individual political choice which road our societies will take.

Notes:

[1] Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Castoriadis Reader*, Blackwell Publishers 1997, pp 406-410

[2]<https://greece.greekreporter.com/2016/02/10/why-varoufakis-diem25-will-fail-to-produce-change-in-europe/>

[3] David Harvey: *Rebel Cities*, Verso Books 2012, p.117

[4] Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Castoriadis Reader*, Blackwell Publishers 1997, pp 267-289

[5] Murray Bookchin: *From Urbanization to Cities*, Cassel 1995, p. 62-81

[6] <https://new-compass.net/articles/communalist-project>

[7] <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/items/hss/178917.html>

[8]

<https://www.redpepper.org.uk/rebel-cities-the-citizen-platforms-in-power/>

[9]https://www.buzzfeed.com/jimdalyrmypleii/us-states-and-cities-react-to-paris-withdrawal?utm_term=.xmlReY303#.lgnX98G2G

[10] <https://new-compass.net/articles/olympia-all>

[11] Walter Benjamin: *Selected Writings, Volume 4 1938-40*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University 2003, p.392

[12]

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/people-300-cities-are-taking-part-nodapl-day-action>

[13] Cornelius Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, unauthorized translation 2005, p.146

***The present text was delivered as a speech in a panel, entitled "Overcoming the State", part of the 3rd Antiauthoritarian Festival in Ioannina, Greece (June, 2017).**

Jacques Rancière: Democracy, Equality, Emancipation in a Changing World

Jacques Rancière

I will start from the knot between two of the concepts that are proposed to the reflection of our panel: equality and emancipation. I will briefly recall the two main points that are implied for me in the idea of emancipation.

The first one is that equality is not a goal to be reached. It is not a common level, an equivalent amount of riches or an identity of living conditions that must be reached as the consequence of historic evolution and strategic action. Instead it is a point of departure. This first principle immediately ties up with a second one: equality is not a common measure between individuals, it is a capacity through which individuals act as the holders of a common power, a power belonging to anyone. This capacity itself is not a given whose possession can be checked. It must be presupposed as a principle of action but it is only verified by action itself. The verification does not consist in the fact that my action produces equality as a result. It enacts equality as a process. I act, we act as if all human beings had an equal intellectual capacity. Emancipation first means the endorsement of the presupposition: I am able, we are able to think and act without masters. But we are able to the extent that we think that all other human beings are endowed with the same capacity. Second, emancipation means the process through which we verify this presupposition. Equality is not given, it is processual. And it is not quantitative, it is qualitative.

The idea of emancipation dismisses the opposition made by the so-called "liberal" tradition between freedom thought of as

the inner autonomous power and dignity of the individual and equality thought of as the constraint of the collective over individuals. "Free" is just like "equal": it does not designate a property of individuals. It designates the form of their action and of their relation to other individuals. The presupposition of equal capacity is a principle of shared freedom opposed to the presupposition that the human beings can only act rationally as individuals and cooperate rationally in a community according to a principle of subordination. "Autonomy" has been a key concept in modern emancipatory politics. But it must be understood correctly. It does not mean the autonomous power of a subject as opposed to external forces: it means a form of thinking, practice and organization free from the presupposition of inequality, free from the hierarchical constraint and the hierarchical belief. It means the opposition of two kinds of commonsense and two common worlds, one based on the process of verification of inequality and the other based on the process of verification of equality. This is what is entailed in the concept of disagreement that I proposed to conceptualize the political conflict. Disagreement is not a conflict of forces, nor even a conflicts of ideas and values. It is a conflict between two common worlds or two common senses. This is what is meant by the scenario of secession of the Roman plebeians on the Aventine that I put at the center of my analysis of what "disagreement" means. In the commonsense which grounds the domination of the patricians, there can be no discussion between the patricians and the plebeians because the plebeians do not speak. They just make noise. The presupposition of inequality is not a simple idea, it is embodied in the concrete reality of a sensory world so that the plebeians must not simply argue that they are speaking beings too but also invent a whole dramaturgy to create the sensory world where the heretofore unthinkable- and even imperceptible- fact that they speak is made perceptible.

This idea of emancipation makes us think of politics in terms

of conflict of worlds in contrast to the dominant idea that assimilates it to a conflict of forces. It is a conflict of common worlds. Social emancipation is not the choice of community against individualism. The very opposition of community to individualism is pointless. A form of community is always a form of individuality at the same time. The point is not about the presence or absence of social links, it is about their nature. Capitalism is not the reign of individuality: it organizes a common world of its own, a common world based on inequality and constantly reproducing it, so that it appears as *the world* – the real existing world in which we live, move, feel, think and act. It is the already existing world with its mechanisms and its institutions. In front of its sensible evidence the world of equality appears as an always tentative world that must be perpetually re-drawn, reconfigured by a multiplicity of singular inventions of acts, relations and networks which have their proper forms of temporality and their proper modes of efficiency. That's why the secession of the plebeians on the Aventine is paradigmatic: the world of equality is a "world in the making", a world born of specific breaches in the dominant commonsense, of interruptions of the "normal" way of the world. It implies the occupation of specific spaces, the invention of specific moments when the very landscape of the perceptible, the thinkable and the doable is radically reframed. The conflict of worlds is dissymmetrical in its principle.

But the fact is that this dissymmetry has long been obscured by the evidence of a middle term that seemed to be common to the world of equality and the world of inequality and also to designate at the same time a world and a force. That term was work- with its twin, named labour. On the one hand, work was the name of the force that capitalism gathered and organized for its own benefit and the reality of the condition of those who were exploited by capitalism. But, on the other hand, it was the force that could be re-assembled against that

capitalist power, reassembled both as a force of struggle in the present and the form of life of the future. In such a way the world of labour appeared to be both the product of inequality and the producer of equality. The two processes were made one single process. The Marxist tradition set up this conjunction within the "progressive" scenario according to which inequality is a means, a historical stage to go through, in order to produce equality. Capitalism was said to produce not only the material conditions of a world of equal sharing of the common riches but also the class that would overthrow it and organize the common world to come. To play this role, the workers' organisation had to take up and internalize, first in the present of struggle, next in the future of collective production the virtue that had been instilled into them by capitalism, the virtue of factory discipline.

The anarchist tradition opposed to that view of inequality producing equality another view emphasizing the constitution of free collectives of workers anticipating the community to come through both egalitarian forms of organization and the constitution in the present of forms of cooperative work and other forms of life. But this counter-position still rested on the idea of the "middle term": the idea of work as being at once a form of life, a collective force of struggle and the matrix of a world to come. It is clear that work can no more be posited to-day as the identity of a force and a world, the identity of a form of struggle in the present and a form of life of the future. Much has been said about either the end of work or its becoming immaterial. But capitalism did not become immaterial even if part of its production is knowledge, communication, information and so on. Material production did not disappear from the common world that it organizes. Instead it was relocated, far from its ancient locations in Old Europe, in new places where the work force was cheaper and more used to obeying. And immaterial production also implies both classic forms of extraction of plus-value from underpaid

workers and forms of unpaid labour provided by the consumers themselves. Work did not disappear. Instead it was fragmented, torn out and dispersed in several places and several forms of existence separated from one another so as to constitute no more a common world.

Along with this economic disruption came the legislative reforms adopted all over the world to make work again a private affair. Those reforms did not simply remove the rights and the social benefits acquired by the workers' struggles of the past, they tended to turn work, wages, job contracts and pensions into a mere individual affair, concerning workers taken one by one and no more a collective. Work has not disappeared but it has been stripped of the power that made it the materially existing principle of a new world, embodied in a given community. This means that we are now obliged to think of the process of emancipation, the process of equality creating its own world as a specific process, disconnected from the transformations of the global economic process. We are also facing the difficulty of dealing with this situation. I think that this new situation and the difficulty to deal with it are perfectly expressed by the slogans that have resonated in several languages during the recent movements: "democracia real ya", "Nuit debout", "occupy everything" or "Na min zisoume san douli". All of them take their efficiency in an ambiguous interface between the logic of the conflict of forces and a logic of opposition of worlds.

"Occupy" and "occupation" are the most telling examples of this ambiguity. They come from the historical tradition of working class struggle. The "sit-in strikes" of the past strikes when workers occupied the workplace, made a conflict of forces identical with a demonstration of equality. Not only did the strikers block the mechanism of exploitation but also they affirmed a collective possession of the workplace and the instruments of work and they turned the place dedicated to work and obedience into a place for free social life. The new

“occupation” takes up the principle of transforming the function of a space. But this space is no more an *inside* space, a space defined within the distribution of economic and social activities. It is no more a space of concrete fight between Capital and Labour. As Capital has increasingly become a force of dislocation which destroys the places where the conflict could be staged, occupation now takes place in the spaces that are available: those buildings that the contingencies of the real estate market has left empty or the streets which are normally destined to the circulation of the individuals and the commodities – and sometimes to the demonstrations of the protesters. The occupying process transforms those spaces destined to the circulation of persons, goods and value into places where people stay and affirm by the very fact of staying their opposition to the capitalist powers of circulation and dislocation.

The name “occupation” is still the same and it still about perverting the normal use of a space but the occupying process is no more a conflict of forces to take over a strategic place in the process of economic and social reproduction. It has become a conflict of worlds, a form of symbolic secession that is both materialized and symbolised in a place *aside*. *Occupy Wall Street* took place in a park situated besides the center of this financial power that has destroyed the factories that previously were the site of occupation movements. The Spanish movement of the *Indignados* created, during an electoral campaign, assemblies presenting themselves as the seat of “real democracy now”. Real democracy was pitted against the self-reproduction of the representative caste. But “real democracy” also was, in the Marxist tradition, the future of material equality opposed to bourgeois “formal democracy”. It was a future promised as a consequence of the takeover of the State power and the organisation of collective production. Now it designates a form of relation between human beings that must be practiced in the present both against and besides the hierarchical system of representation. Real democracy in a

sense became more formal than the "formal democracy" stigmatized by the Marxist tradition. Not only did it equate the enactment of equality with the form of the assembly where all individuals have an equal right but it imposed a number of rules such as the equality of time allowed to all speakers and the power for individuals to block the decision of the majority.

Occupation has become the name of a secession. But that secession is no more the action of a specific community claiming their rights. Instead it appears to be the materialization of an aspiration to the common, as if the common were something lost, something that had to be reconstructed through the specific act of the assembling of a multitude of anonymous individuals publicly performing their being equal as the same as their being-in-common. That's why that secession, that being-aside, was expressed in paradoxical terms, and notably by the strange slogan adopted by many assemblies as the affirmation of real democracy: "Consensus instead of leaders". It seems paradoxical to posit consensus as the specific virtue of the dissensual assembly gathered in occupied spaces. It can be objected that the dissensus precisely consists in the constitution of another form of community based on horizontality and participation. But the problem of democracy is not so much about the number of people that can agree on the same point as it is about the capacity to invent new forms of collective enactment of the capacity of anybody.

By underlining this paradox, I am not willing to disparage those movements. Some people have pitted against the pacifism of the consensual assemblies the necessity of violent action directly confronting the enemy. But the "confrontation with the enemy itself" can be thought of and practiced in different ways and most of the forms of direct action opposed to the pacific assemblies – for instance destructions of bank automats, shop windows or public offices – had the same

character as them: they were also symbolic expressions of an opposition of worlds rather than strategic actions in a struggle for power. Other people have precisely criticized this lack of strategy; they said that those movements could change nothing to Capitalist domination and they made new calls for the edification of avant-garde organizations aimed at taking over the power. But such an answer is unable to solve the paradoxes of emancipation. The strategic world view that sustains it is a view of inequality producing equality. That strategy has been enacted by the communist parties and the socialist states of the XXth century and we all know their results. Inequality only produces inequality and it does it ceaselessly. Moreover this strategic world view has lost the basis on which it rested, namely the reality of work/labour as a common world.

We are now facing again the dissymmetry between the process of equality and the process of inequality. Equality does not make worlds in the same way as inequality. It works, as it were, in the intervals of the dominant world, in superimposition to the "normal" – meaning the dominant – hierarchical – way of world making. And one of the main aspects of the dissymmetry is precisely the fact that the process of equality dismisses the very separation of the ends and the means on which the strategy of inequality producing equality is predicated. This is what freedom means ultimately. Freedom is not a matter of choice made by individuals. It is a way of doing. A free action or a free relation is an action or a relation that finds its achievement in itself, in the verification of a capacity and no more in an external outcome. In the hierarchical societies of the past it was the privilege of a small category of human beings, called the "active men" in contrast to all those who were subjected to the reign of necessity. In modern times, freedom was democratized first in the aesthetic domain with the Kantian and Schillerian category of free play as an end in itself and a potentiality belonging to everyone. Then the young Marx did more as he made it the

very definition of communism that he equated with the end of the labour division: communism, he said in the *Paris Manuscripts* means the humanisation of the human senses; it is the state of things in which this capacity of humanisation is deployed in itself instead of being used as a simple means for earning one's living. And he illustrated it with the case of these communist workers in Paris who gathered at a first level to discuss their common interests but did it more deeply to enjoy their new social capacity as such.

True enough Marx's analysis relied on the identification of work as the essential human capacity. When work can no more play this role, the task of creating a world where the ends of the action are no more distinct from their means may seem to become paradoxical in itself. The free and equal community is something that can no more rely on a given empirical substratum. It must be created as an object of will. But, on the other hand, this will can no more be posited in the terms of the means and ends relation. That's why it tends to become a global desire for another form of human relations. This turn was best illustrated in the Occupy Wall Street movement by the multiple extensions of the use of the verb "occupy" that made it the signifier of a global conversion to another way of inhabiting the world: "occupy language", "occupy imagination", "occupy love", and eventually "Occupy everything" which seems to mean: change your way of dealing with everything and with all existing forms of social relationships. Perhaps this enigmatic slogan finds its best translation in the Greek slogan "Na min zisoume can douli" ("Don't live any more like slaves"). This sentence did not only invite to rebel against the intensification of the capitalist rule. It invited to invent here and now modes of action, ways of thinking and forms of life opposed to those which are perpetually produced and reproduced by the logic of inequality, the logic of capitalist and state domination.

I think that this request found a response in the invention of

this form called "free social space" – a form that took on a particular cogency in the social movements of this country. What makes this notion significant in my view is that it calls into question the traditional oppositions between the necessities of the present and the utopias of the future or between harsh economic and social reality and the "luxury" of "formal" democracy. Those who opened such spaces made it clear that they did not only wanted to respond to situations of need, dispossession and distress created by the intensification of the capitalist rule. They did not want only to give shelter, food, health care, education or art to those who were deprived of those goods but to create new ways of being, thinking and acting in common. We can draw from this a wider definition of this form: a free social space is a space where the very separation of spheres of activity – material production, economic exchange, social care, intellectual production and exchange, artistic performance, political action, etc. – is thrown into question. It is a space where assemblies can practice forms of direct democracy intended not simply to give an equal right of speech to everybody but to make collective decisions on concrete matters. In such a way a form of political action tends to be at the same time the cell of another form of life. It is no more a tool for preparing a future emancipation but a process of invention of forms of life and modes of thinking in which equality furthers equality.

What this sentence asks us to do is to change all the forms of organization of life and the modes of thinking that are determined by the logic of inequality, the logic of capitalist and state domination.

Of course we know that these cells of a new social life are constantly subjected to internal problems and external threats. This "already present future" is always at once a precarious present. But it is pointless, I think, to see there the proof that all is vain as long as a global revolution has

not “taken” the power and destroyed the Capitalist fortress. This kind of judgement is a way of putting the fortress in our heads, of instituting a circle of impossibility by proclaiming that nothing can be changed before everything has been changed. Emancipation has always been a way of inventing, amidst the “normal” course of time another time, another manner of inhabiting the sensible world in common. It has always been a way of living in the present in another world instead of deferring its possibility. Emancipation only prepares a future to the extent that it hollows in the present gaps which are also grooves. It does so by intensifying the experience of other ways of being, living, doing and thinking. The free social spaces created by the recent movements inherit the world forms – cooperatives of production and forms of popular education – created by the workers’ movements of the past and notably by anarchist movements. But our present can no more share the belief that sustained the forms of self-organization of the past. It can no more rely on the presupposition that Capitalism produces the conditions of its own destruction and that work constitutes an organic world of the future already in gestation in the belly of the old world. More than ever the world of equality appears to be the always provisory product of specific inventions. Our present urges us to rediscover that the history of equality is an autonomous history. It is not the development of strategies predicated on the technological and economic transformations. It is a constellation of moments- some days, some weeks, some years which create specific temporal dynamics, endowed with more or less intensity and duration. The past left us no lessons, only moments that we must extend and prolong as far as we can.

*The present text is the speech of Jacques Rancière at **B-FEST** (International Antiauthoritarian Festival of Babylonia Journal) that was held on 27/05/17 in Athens with the title

“Democracy, Equality, Emancipation in a Changing World”. The Greek translation can be found [here](#).

Διεθνής Συνάντηση για το Νερό / Transnational Meeting for the Water 28.05

Scroll down for English!



BFEST

26 27 28
ΜΑΪΟΥ

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ΔΙΕΘΝΗΣ ΣΥΝΑΝΤΗΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΝΕΡΟ

κίνημα NoDAPL, Βόρεια Ντακότα (ΗΠΑ)
Μεσοποταμία (Τουρκία)
Women Water Warriors (Ιρλανδία)
Σκουριές | Μεσοχώρα - Αχελώος SOS
Πήλιο-Βόλος | Κολοβρέχτης | Άραχθος | Ασωπός
Αώος | Δημόσια ΕΥΔΑΠ | Φίλοι της Φύσης

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ 28 ΜΑΪΟΥ 17:00

Κυριακή 28/05/2017 B-FEST Αθήνα

Σήμερα ο πλανήτης μας βρίσκεται στο χείλος της καταστροφής. Το μέλλον φαντάζει συνεχώς όλο και πιο αβέβαιο εξαιτίας της ραγδαίας περιβαλλοντικής υποβάθμισης, αποτέλεσμα του κυρίαρχου παραδείγματος της απεριόριστης οικονομικής ανάπτυξης. Μεταξύ των πόρων που υφίστανται υπερεκμετάλλευση βρίσκεται και το νερό –η ουσία από την οποία αποτελείται και το μεγαλύτερο μέρος των ίδιων των σωμάτων μας. Δεν είναι δύσκολο να φανταστεί κανείς τις δυστοπικές διαστάσεις ενός μέλλοντος όπου το νερό είναι πλήρως περιφραγμένο από μια μικρή ελίτ.

Ωστόσο, ο αγώνας γύρω από το μέλλον του νερού δεν είναι μονόπλευρος. Το κράτος και η αγορά, που πασχίζουν για την ιδιωτικοποίησή του αμφισβητούνται από κοινότητες και συλλογικότητες οι οποίες βλέπουν αυτόν τον ζωοποιό πόρο ως **κοινό αγαθό**. Σε ολόκληρο τον πλανήτη μαίνεται ένας σιωπηλός πόλεμος για το νερό μεταξύ των κυρίαρχων και των από κάτω, ο οποίος θα διαμορφώσει την πορεία της κοινωνίας και της φύσης. Από τις ιθαγενικές κοινότητες της Βόρειας Ντακότα και το κίνημα NoDAPL στα οικολογικά κινήματα της Μεσοποταμίας ενάντια στο φράγμα του Ιλισού και τους σημερινούς αγώνες στην ελληνική επικράτεια ενάντια στην ιδιωτικοποίηση του νερού αλλά και στο συνεχιζόμενο κίνημα ενάντια στο φράγμα της Μεσοχώρας στον ποταμό Αχελώο, η αντίσταση των από κάτω οργανώνεται για να προστατέψει και να διατηρήσει το νερό ως κοινό αγαθό.

Καλούμε όλους αυτούς τους αγώνες, όλες αυτές τις αντιστάσεις να δικτυωθούν μεταξύ τους! Το μέλλον του νερού δεν μπορεί να καθοριστεί εντός των εθνικών συνόρων, καθώς χρειάζεται μια παγκόσμια συλλογική δικτύωση. Γι' αυτόν τον λόγο, προσκαλούμε οριζόντιες κινήσεις πολιτών και κοινωνικά κινήματα τα οποία μάχονται για να διατηρήσουν το νερό ως κοινό αγαθό σε μια διεθνή συνάντηση κινήματων για το νερό, η οποία θα λάβει χώρα **κατά τη διάρκεια του τριήμερου πολιτικού φεστιβάλ «B-Fest» στην Αθήνα.**

Η συνάντηση θα πραγματοποιηθεί την Κυριακή 28 Μάη στις 5 το απόγευμα και έχει ήδη τρεις σημαντικούς συμμετέχοντες από το κίνημα **NoDAPL** της Βόρειας Ντακότα (ΗΠΑ), το **Οικολογικό Κίνημα**

Μεσοποταμίας (Τουρκία, Βόρειο Κουρδιστάν) και την ομάδα **Women Water Warriors** από την Ιρλανδία. Από την Ελλάδα θα συμμετέχουν μεταξύ άλλων οι εξής κινήσεις-πρωτοβουλίες: Water Warriors (Θεσσαλονίκη), Επιτροπή Αγώνα Μεγάλης Παναγίας, Μεσοχώρα-Αχελώος SOS, Water Volo – Κίνηση Κατοίκων Πηλίου και Βόλου για το Νερό, Ομάδα Πολιτών για τη Διάσωση του Υγροβιότοπου του Κολοβρέχτη-Εύβοια, Σύλλογος Προστασίας Αράχθου, Φίλοι της φύσης, Ινστιτούτο Αθανάσιος Παντελόγλου (Ασωπός), ΣΕΚΕΣ για Δημόσια ΕΥΔΑΠ.

Μέσω αυτής της συνάντησης θα θέλαμε να προκαλέσουμε έναν διάλογο και μια σειρά από κοινές δράσεις, οι οποίες από τη μία θα έχουν παγκόσμιο βεληνεκές και από την άλλη θα ενδυναμώσουν τους τοπικούς μας αγώνες.

Ας συμμετέχουμε όλοι στην απόφαση και οργάνωση των κοινών μας αγώνων για το νερό!

Open Invitation for the Transnational Meeting for the Water – 28/04/17 B-FEST Athens, Greece

Today our planet is on the brink of disaster. The future feels increasingly uncertain with the rapid environmental degradation caused by the dominant societal paradigm – unlimited economic growth. Among the resources being overexploited is also water – this very substance that consists most of our own bodies. It is not difficult to imagine the dystopian dimensions of one future where water is completely enclosed by a tiny elite.

But the struggle over the future of water is not one-sided. The state and the market that strive at privatizing it, are being challenged by communities and collectivities that view the life-giving substance as **commons**. All over the planet a silent war over water is taking place between those in power and the ones “from below” that will determine the course of society and nature. From the indigenous communities of North

Dakota and the NoDALP movement to the ecological movements in Mesopotamia against Ilisu Dam and the current greek struggles against the water privatization as well as the continuous movement against the Mesochora dam on Acheloos River - grassroots resistance is mounting to protect and maintain it as commons.

We call on all these struggles to link with each other! The future of water cannot be determined along national borders, it requires transnational collaborative networking. For this reason we invite grassroots initiatives and social movements that fight to preserve water as commons to a transnational meeting that will take place during the 3 days festival "B-Fest" in Athens, Greece (26-27-28 of May).

The meeting itself will take place on Sunday 28 of May at 17:00 and already has 3 key participants from NoDALP Movement (USA), from Mesopotamian Ecological Movement (Turkey, North Kurdistan) and from Women Water Warriors (Ireland), as well as various initiatives from all over Greece. Through it we would like to initiate a dialogue and series of common actions that will produce global repercussions and strengthen our local struggles.

Let's all participate-decide-organize our common struggles for water!

**B-FEST: Programme of
Discussions and Speeches**

(eng)

B-FEST 6 | WE ARE UNGOVERNABLE!

International Antiauthoritarian Festival of Babylonia Journal

26-27-28 May 2017, Athens School of Fine Arts, Greece

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DISCUSSIONS | CONCERTS | CINEMA | THEATRE | BOOK & PHOTOGRAPHY
EXHIBITION | CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES | COMIX | WORKSHOPS

Programme of Discussions and Speeches:

Friday 26 May

18:30 Changing Lives: Experiential Approaches to the Lives of Trans Subjects

Paul B. Preciado (philosopher, writer, activist)

Paola Revenioti (activist, artist)

Eliana Kanaveli (Babylonia journal)

18:30 Kurds and Communalism in Erdogan's Turkey

Ercan Ayboga (Rojava/ North Kurdistan/ Mesopotamian Ecology Movement)

Nikos Katsiaunis (Babylonia journal)

19:30 Planet S.O.S.: Climate Change and Global Poverty

Jason Hickel (anthropologist, university LSE)

Evridiki Bersi (Friends of Nature)

Yavor Tarinski (Babylonia journal, TRISE)

20:30 Digital Commons: Internet as Free Public Space

Peter Sunde (co-founder of The Pirate Bay)

Antonis Brumas (Babylonia journal, TRISE)

Saturday 27 May

18:00 Libertarian Schools: From Fourfoura to Summerhill or to the School of the Community

Evaggelos Vlahakis (filmmaker, optical / literate animator)

18:00 Extractions in Greece & Cyprus and the Answer of the Movements

(against the extractions in Akama, Pendadaktilo and Halkidiki)
Greek Cypriots (Klitos Papastilianou & Maria Hatzimihail from "Syspirosi Atakton")

Turkish Cypriots (from the group "Dayanisma")

Members of the Committee for Struggle Megali Panagia, Halkidiki

18:00 Antimilitarism and the Paradigm of Freedom in the Middle East

Uri Gordon (Israel: Anarchists against the Wall, university of Nottingham)

Nodas Skiftoulis (Antiauthoritarian Movement Athens)

19:00 Open Assembly for Coordination between Squats hosting Refugees

19:00 Contemporary Ecological Struggles in Rojava and North Kurdistan

Ercan Ayboga (Rojava, North Kurdistan, Mesopotamian Ecological Movement)

Yannis Papadimitriou (Environmental Initiative of Epirus)

Giorgos Papahristodoulou (Babylonia journal)

20:30 Democracy, Equality, Emancipation in a Changing World

Jacques Ranciere (French philosopher)

Alexandros Schismenos (Babylonia journal)

Sunday 28 May

17:00 Transnational Summit for the protection of Water

(Participants from Europe, America, Middle East)

18:00 Digital Labor: Oligopoly, Labor and Exploitation in the Internet

Nikos Smirneos (assistant professor at the University of Toulouse)

Antonis Brumas (Babylonia journal)

19:00 USA and the Trump Age: Race, Gender and the activity of the movement Black Lives Matter

Melissa Valle (University of New Jersey)

Eliana Kanaveli (PhD of Sociology)

Apostolis Stasinopoulos (Babylonia journal)

20:30 Protecting Water: The Struggle of the movement NODAPL

Aldo Seoane (indigenous from Standing Rock, North Dakota, USA)

Nikos Ioannou (Babylonia journal)



B-FEST

ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΑΝΤΙΕΞΟΥΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟ ΦΕΣΤΙΒΑΛ
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26-27-28
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Ιθαγενής από

**STANDING ROCK,
DAKOTA**

BLACK LIVES MATTER Η.Π.Α.

PETER SUNDE

ιδρυτής **THE PIRATE BAY**

JASON HICKEL

κλιματική αλλαγή, αποανάπτυξη

ERCAN AYBOGA Revolution in **Rojava** -
Οικολογικό Κίνημα Μεσοποταμίας

URI GORDON

Ισραήλ: Αναρχικοί ενάντια στο τείχος

WE ARE UNGOVERNABLE!

ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ | ΣΥΝΑΥΛΙΕΣ | ΣΙΝΕΜΑ | ΘΕΑΤΡΟ | ΕΚΘΕΣΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΥ & ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑΣ | ΠΑΙΔΙΚΕΣ ΔΡΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ | ΚΟΜΙΞ | WORKSHOPS



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ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ 26

- 18:30 Αλλάζοντας Ζώες:**
Βιωματικές προσεγγίσεις στις ζωές των τρανς υποκειμένων
Paul B. Preciado (φιλόσοφος, συγγραφέας, ακτιβιστής)
Πάολα Ρεβενιώτη (ακτιβίστρια, καλλιτέχνης)
Ελιάνα Καναβέλη (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)
- 18:30 Κούρδοι και Κοινοτισμός στην Τουρκία του Ερντογάν**
Ercan Ayboğa (Ροζάβα/ Βόρειο Κουρδιστάν/ Οικολογικό Κίνημα Μεσοποταμίας)
Νίκος Κατσιαούνης (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)
- 19:30 Πλανήτης S.O.S.:**
Κλιματική αλλαγή & Παγκόσμια φτώχεια
Jason Hickel (ανθρωπολόγος παν/μιο LSE, The Guardian, Al Jazeera)
Ευριδίκη Μπερσή (Φίλοι της Φύσης)
Yanor Tarinski (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία, TRISE)
- 20:30 Ψηφιακά κοινά αγαθά:**
Το Ίντερνετ ως ελεύθερος δημόσιος χώρος
Peter Sunde (ιδρυτής The Pirate Bay)
Αντώνης Μπρούμας (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)

ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 27

- 18:00 Ελευθεριακά Σχολεία:**
Από το Φουρφουρά στο Σάμερχιλ ή στο σχολείο της κοινότητας
Ευάγγελος Βλαχάκης (κινηματογραφιστής, εμπικωτής οπτικ/κου γραμματισμού)
- 18:00 Οι Εξορύξεις σε Ελλάδα - Κύπρο και η απάντηση των κοινοτήτων**
(ενάντια στις εξορύξεις σε Ακάμα, Πενταδάκτυλο και Χαλκιδική)
Ελληνοκύπριοι (Κλείτος Παπαστυλιανού & Μαρία Χατζημιχαήλ από «Συσπείρωση Ατάκτων»)
Τουρκοκύπριοι (ομάδα Dayanizma)
Μέλη Επιτροπής Αγώνα Μεγάλης Παναγίας, Χαλκιδική
- 18:00 Αντιμιλιταρισμός και το πρόταγμα της ελευθερίας στη Μέση Ανατολή**
Uri Gordon (Ισραήλ: Αναρχικοί ενάντια στο τείχος, παν/μιο Νότιχαμ)
Νώντας Σκυφτούλης (Αντιεξουσιαστική Κίνηση Αθήνας)
- 19:00 Ανοιχτή συνέλευση συντονιστικού καταλήψεων στέγης προσφύγων**
- 19:00 Σύγχρονοι οικολογικοί αγώνες σε Ροζάβα και Βόρειο Κουρδιστάν**
Ercan Ayboğa (Ροζάβα/ Βόρειο Κουρδιστάν/ Οικολογικό Κίνημα Μεσοποταμίας)
Γιάννης Παπαδημητρίου (μέλος περιβαλλοντικών πρωτοβουλιών στην Ήπειρο)
Γιώργος Παπαχριστοδούλου (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)
- 20:30 Δημοκρατία, Ισότητα, Χειραφέτηση σε έναν κόσμο που αλλάζει**
Jacques Rancière (Γάλλος φιλόσοφος)
Αλέξανδρος Σχισμένος (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)

WE ARE UNGOVERNABLE!

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ 28

- 17:00 Διεθνής συνάντηση κινημάτων για το νερό**
Συμμετοχές από Ευρώπη, Αμερική, Μέση Ανατολή
- 18:00 Digital Labor: Ολιγοπώλιο, εργασία και εκμετάλλευση στο Διαδίκτυο**
Νίκος Σμυρναίος (επίκουρος καθηγητής στο Παν/μιο της Τουλούζης)
Αντώνης Μπρούμας (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)
- 19:00 Η.Π.Α. και Τραμπ Εποχή:**
Φυλή, Φύλο και η δράση του κινήματος Black Lives Matter
Melissa Valle (παν/μιο Νιου Τζέρσεϊ)
Ελιάνα Καναβέλη (διδάκτωρ κοινωνιολογίας)
Αποστόλης Στασινόπουλος (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)
- 20:30 Προστατεύοντας το νερό:**
Ο αγώνας του κινήματος NODAPL
Aldo Seoane (Ιθαγενής από το Standing Rock, Βόρεια Ντακότα, Η.Π.Α.)
Νίκος Ιωάννου (περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία)

ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ | ΣΥΝΑΥΛΙΕΣ | ΣΙΝΕΜΑ | ΘΕΑΤΡΟ | ΕΚΘΕΣΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΥ & ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑΣ | ΠΑΙΔΙΚΕΣ ΔΡΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ | ΚΟΜΙΞ | WORKSHOPS



B-FEST

ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΑΝΤΙΕΞΟΥΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΟ ΦΕΣΤΙΒΑΛ
ΤΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟΥ ΒΑΒΥΛΩΝΙΑ

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26-27-28
ΜΑΪΟΥ 2017

ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΣΧΟΛΗ ΚΑΛΩΝ ΤΕΧΝΩΝ
ΠΕΙΡΑΙΩΣ 256

ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 27

ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ 26

MAIN STAGE:

BARAYANKA ☉ KRAAK
PADMÉ (PUNK-ROCK FROM ISTANBUL)
LOST BODIES ☉ BAD LUCK ☉ ΑΡΝΑΚΙΑ
STRESS ☉ COYOTE'S ARROW
ΚΑΤΩ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ ΔΕΝΤΡΟ ☉ ΛΑΡΓΚΟ

DANCE STAGE:

DRAMA QUEERS ☉ STRAP-ON UNICORNS
TEMPÊTE ☉ Visuals: Bravo

HIP-HOP STAGE:

ΟΠΛΙΣΤΗΣ ☉ DTAEYS & VIRAL
PRODUCTIVE ☉ TWINSANITY
ΕΚΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΣ ΜΗΔΕΝ ☉ MER NOIR
ZORO&BUZZ ☉ ΣΞΞΠΥΡ & DJ VANILLA

ΟΙ ΣΥΝΑΥΛΙΕΣ ΞΕΚΙΝΟΥΝ ΚΑΘΕ ΜΕΡΑ
στις 19:00

MAIN STAGE:

THREE WAY PLANE ☉ BE UNIVERSE ☉ ΜΕΣΚΑΛΙΝΗ
LAZYTRAINS ☉ BAG OF NAILS ☉ TSIRI BAND
MAGIC DE SPELL ☉ DIRTY FUSE ☉ BAILDSA
MUCHATRELA ☉ SEXY CHRISTIANS ☉ BANDALLUSIA

DANCE STAGE:

AKIS SILVES ☉ BAKERMAN ☉ SPEERIT ☉ NIKT
SANITER ☉ SOFTCORE ☉ RENA ☉ BUNAS

ΡΕΜΠΕΤΙΚΟ STAGE:

ΡΕΜΠΕΤ ΑΣΚΕΡ
ΛΑΪΚΗ ΟΡΧΗΣΤΡΑ ΛΑΜΠΗΔΟΝΑΣ (Λ.Ο.ΛΑ.)

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ 28

MAIN STAGE:

HALAY LAMBA ☉ ΚΟΝΣΕΡΒΑ ☉ 45RATS
RADIO SOL ☉ ΣΠΥΡΟΣ ΓΡΑΜΜΕΝΟΣ
ΑΓΟΡΙΑΣΤΟΝΙΛΙΟ ☉ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΓΛΟΥΤΕΝΗ
ΜΟΝΙΜΟΣ ΚΑΤΟΙΚΟΣ

ΡΕΜΠΕΤΙΚΟ STAGE:

Τραγούδι: Στέλιος Γαλανός, Ζαμπέλα Γαλανού,
Βασιλική Τσιφτσά, Κιθάρες:
Δημήτρης Χριστοδουλόπουλος, Χρήστος Ζούμπος,
Μπουζούκι: Θανάσης Αδαμόπουλος,
Μπάσο: Γιώργος Μάκρας

WE ARE UNGOVERNABLE!

ΚΑΘΕ ΜΕΡΑ

B-FEST CINEMA

Προβολές Ντοκιμαντέρ
Ταινιών Μυθοπλασίας
Ταινιών Μικρού Μήκους
Συζητήσεις με σκηνοθέτες
και συντελεστές

ΕΚΘΕΣΕΙΣ ΖΩΓΡΑΦΙΚΗΣ

ΓΙΩΡΓΟΣ ΜΙΚΑΛΕΦ «17»:
Εμπειρίες βασανισμού πολιτικών
κρατούμενων πάνω σε χαρτόνι
«ΜΑΝΑ ΓΗ»
από την Ομάδα του Nosotros

ΘΕΑΤΡΟ

«ΜΑΜΑ ΦΡΙΚΙΟ»
από την ομάδα Theatre de Votanique
«...ΤΩΝ ΕΛΛΗΝΩΝ» του Κώστα Γεραντώνη
«ΠΛΗΝ ΟΜΩΣ...» από την Ακτιβιστική
Ομάδα Θεάτρου του Καταπίεσμένου

ΕΚΘΕΣΗ ΦΩΤΟΓΡΑΦΙΑΣ | ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ | ΠΑΙΔΙΚΕΣ ΔΡΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΤΗΤΕΣ - ΚΟΥΚΛΟΘΕΑΤΡΑ | ΕΚΘΕΣΗ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΥ & ΑΥΤΟΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΝ ΚΟΜΙΞ - ΦΑΝΖΙΝ

Pirates and Hobos: Radical Politics on the Margins of Society

Yavor Tarinski

“Though you are a sneaking puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by laws which rich men have made for their own security; for the cowardly whelps have not the courage otherwise to defend what they get by knavery; but damn ye altogether: damn them for a pack of crafty rascals, and you, who serve them, for a parcel of hen-hearted numbskulls.”
Captain Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy[1]

“Long-haired preachers come out every night, Try to tell you what’s wrong and what’s right; But when asked how ’bout something to eat they will answer with voices so sweet: You will eat, bye and bye, in that glorious land above the sky; Work and pray, live on hay, you’ll get pie in the sky when you die.”
Joe Hill[2]

Although the bigger part of human history has went under conditions of hierarchy, authority and heteronomy, germs of autonomy and politics “from below” were always present in every historic moment, each time with different dynamic, according to the specific socio-historic context. In the crackings of the system, where the dominant institutions of authority were on the retreat or have lost significant level of their social legitimization, appeared the possibility for the emergence of radical politics, allowing for the different experience and organization of everyday life and human

relations. It is important to note that although such cracks provide fruitful ground for radical thinking and acting, by no means are they enough by themselves for such to emerge.

Today we can think of many such cases: the most famous amongst whom are the Zapatistas and the Kurdish liberation movement. **Both of these social groups have experienced explicit exclusion from the welfare functions of the state and subjected only to the exploitative and repressive ones.** Thus, a complete de-legitimization of the dominant system sediment among the local population, which together with the cooperative local traditions, allowed the liberation of radical imaginary.

Two significant cases of the past could be viewed in this line of thought: the **pirates** and the **hobos**. Both of these social groups found themselves excluded from the hegemonic order of their times, becoming superfluous and thus hunted and repressed. This condition of theirs however provided fertile ground for the emergence of radically different political culture, based on direct democracy and commoning.

Pirates

17th and 18th century was a period in which piracy was flourishing, leaving to the future generations rich legacy of literature and experiences. The pirates were, in their bigger part, people with no means to survive "legally", runaway slaves, political fugitives, naval deserters etc. Various reasons provided fertile ground for the pirate lifestyle to develop among these "marginal" segments of society. An important role played the Caribbean islands, where the most significant pirate activity took place. This area was highly uncharted at that time, offering a power vacuum, with many unclaimed and uninhabited islands, making it extremely difficult for policing by any navy of that period. Thus it provided innumerable hiding places, caves, coves, unknown paths etc. to everyone that wanted to avoid monarchic control.

Simultaneously the Caribbean islands were located on the trade route between South America on the one hand, and Spain and Portugal on the other, i.e. a route through which significant treasures were transferred.

Unlike the discipline of merchant and military vessels, pirates, although certainly no saints, were most often organized in an anti-authoritarian manner. Pirate crews were deciding the rules under which they would sail the seas in assemblies in which each member had to agree and sign them.[3]

Often these rules were highly egalitarian, viewing the achieved booty, as well as the provisions, as **commons**. Highly exemplary for this are the articles of Bartholomew Robert's crews, according to which every member had a vote in the common affairs, equal share of the fresh provisions and liquors at any time and could use them as he wished, unless the whole crew voted retrenchment because of scarcity[4]. Similar egalitarian characteristics were shared among other crews as well, like the one of John Gow.[5]

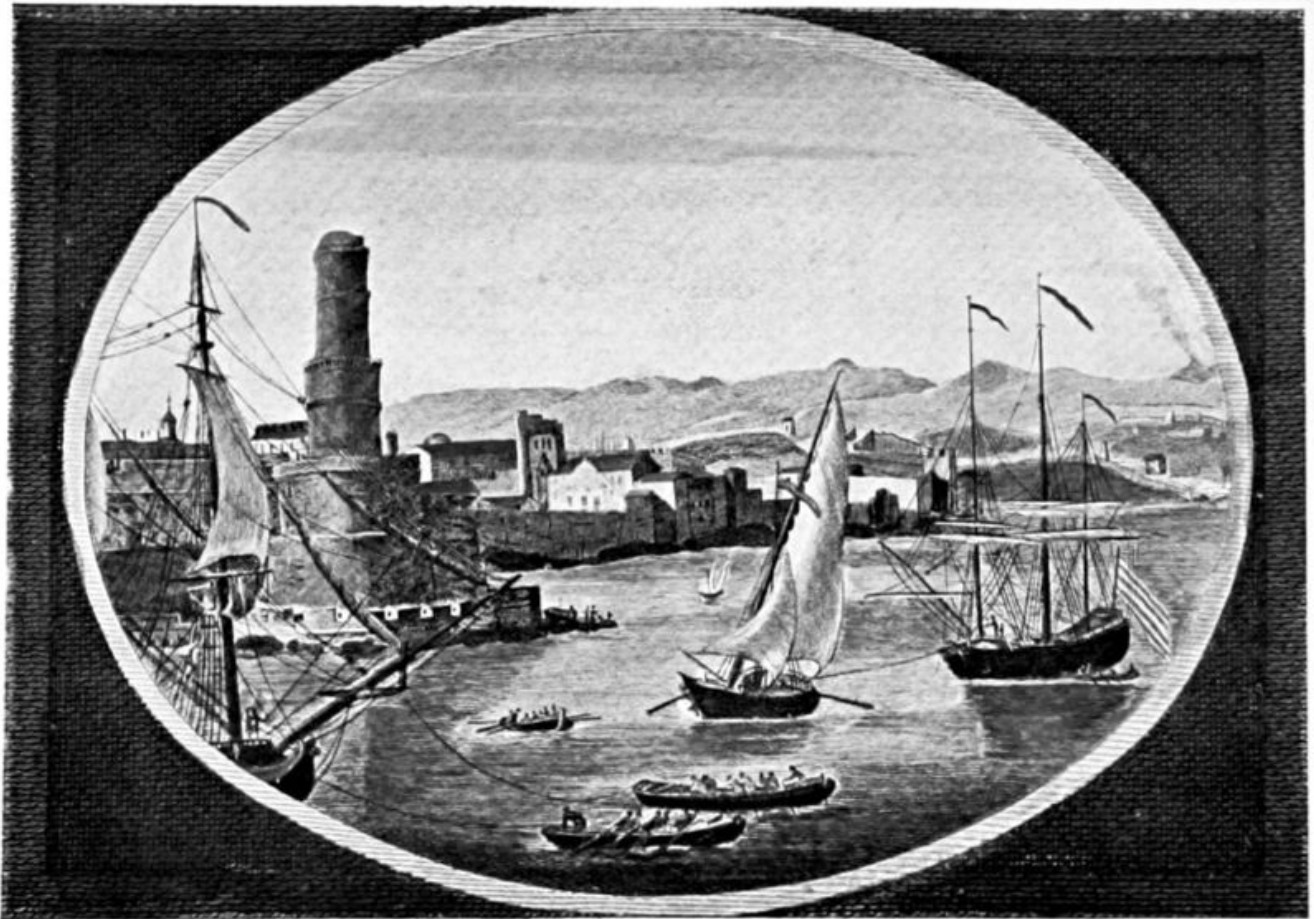


Illustration of the Pirate city "Port Royal"

These libertarian tendencies among the pirates didn't remain unnoticed by the monarchic authorities. The Dutch governor of Mauritius, impressed by the democratic character of a pirate crew he met, noted that **"every man had as much say as the captain and each man carried his own weapons in his blanket."**[6]

Their egalitarian character was strengthened even further by the forms of solidarity such crews practiced. Often pirates had rules, based on mutual aid that enacted that injured shipmates, unable to fight, would still receive their share. Articles by both the Bartholomew Robert's crew[7] and that of George Lowther's[8] offer testimony for that, even characterizing their stock and provisions as public.

Often, claims about the anti-authoritarian tendencies among pirates are being met with skepticism because of the fact that most tales and myths that bear witness about them speak about

adventures of brave captains leading their mates. But this was not necessarily the case. Except of the ship rules on which all the crew had to agree, the captains were also often elected and could be revoked at any time if the shipmates decided that they abuse the authority, nested in this position.[9] The captain had to keep track of the condition of the ship and the course it was taking, as well as to command in the heat of battle. For everything else the whole ship's crew had to assemble and decide.

The attitude pirates had towards slavery differed, but many didn't participate in the slave trade. There were many ex-slaves on pirate ships, seeking freedom far away from the authorities. In fact among the pirate crews the proportion of blacks was much higher than the one among merchant or naval ones.[10]

Somewhat similar was the case of the women. In the period when piracy flourished it was difficult for a woman to legally enter a vessel. There are many tales of women dressing as men so that they could enter and travel with a ship. Many saw in piracy a way to rebel against the imposed gender roles, although women still were minority amount pirates.[11] Some female pirates created quite a name for themselves like Mary Read and Anne Bonny.

Although each pirate crew was sailing the seas separately, there were many cases in which several of them have joined forces like in 1695, when the ships of Captain Avery, Faro, Want, Maze, Tew and Wake all met up for a combined raid on the annual Muslim pilgrim fleet to Mecca.[12] It is indicative for the connection pirates shared from the way the original buccaneers called themselves – “Brethren of the coast”.[13] Pirate crews were continually returning to various “free ports” where they were meeting with each other as well as with black market merchants with whom they traded. Pirates recognized each other and didn't attack one another. **This interconnectedness between the various pirate cells and the**

evidences for the existence of a unique pirate language are both signs for the emergence of a distinct culture.

One of the most famous pirate settlements was Libertatia. It was founded by Captain Mission and his crew in northern Madagascar in 18th century.[14] The founders of Libertatia renounced their nationalities and called themselves Liberi instead. They created their own language, consisted of colorful mixture of English, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Madagascan and other African languages. The land was held in common; while treasures acquired at sea were carried into common treasury and decisions were taken collectively by all settlers. There are disputes whether Libertatia was something more than just a myth, but the very fact that such a vision appeared indicates the radically democratic and egalitarian tendencies among the pirates.

The decline of piracy began in the beginning of 18th century, when new measures were introduced to counter the many pirate crews sailing the seas. Rewards were given to anyone that would fight the pirates. A new law, approved in 1700, allowed the execution of pirates wherever they could be found, while before that they had to be transported back to London, where to be trialed.[15] And for the case of trials a new special court was introduced to deal exclusively with piracy, consisted mainly of naval officers.[16]

Hobos

The second half of 19th century, during the so called *Long Depression*, saw the rise of the so called hobos in the US – unemployed homeless people (sometimes voluntarily abandoning their homes in search for work). Unlike the colorful amalgam of the pirates, the hobos were predominantly white and male, although exceptions were not missing.[17] **What characterized their lifestyle was the way they viewed the widespread American railroad network. For the hobos this was a commons which they were using to travel, without paying a ticket, all**

across the country in search for work.

Unlike other 'migratory' groups inside the US of that time (like Mexican, Chinese and Europeans), hobos used to travel individually. But like the pirates, they kept close ties with other fellow travelers through free camps they called "**jungles**"[18]. These encampments were located at close proximity across the railroad, near spots where trains had to stop for one reason or another (like changing crews, wagon composition etc.). The jungles were shelters, since they offered relative safety for hobos to clean themselves, eat, sleep, share information and socialize. Because of the hobo's nomadic lifestyle, most often these camps were having temporal character, and the ones with continuous existence had their congregation changing often.

Like the pirate ships and free ports, a basic characteristic of the hobo jungles was their democratic and egalitarian character.[19] The inhabitants collectively forged the rules by which they themselves had to co-exist, while sharing food, utensils, blankets etc. All had to follow whether the rules were successfully enforced and had to participate in the defense of the camp in case of an attack by police, mercenary thugs or far-right groups like the American Legionnaires[20].



A Hobo Jungle

Vital part of these democracies was the institution of the jungle committees whose main task was the prescription of punishments as well as taking care of the everyday troubles in the camp.[21] Their members and chairman were voted between the inhabitants of these camps. Often the punishments they prescribed were viewed as too severe by the community, with the latter to offer alternative solutions.

During their existence and interaction with each other, hobos developed their own slang and system of signs.[22] While individually travelling, most of them were leaving signs on walls for other fellow travelers as whether one place was safe to hang around, whether there was a fascist threat nearby (to which hobos often fell victim), available jobs etc. Thus hobos corresponded with each other and outside their jungles.

Basic characteristic of the hobos was the way they viewed the

railroads – as a commons. Hundreds of thousands of them crossed the country annually, with their “jungles” dotting the rail map. Their effort at *re-communalizing* train transport and land was most often unconscious, driven by sheer need. **However, many hobos were highly political, among whom the majority sympathized or was affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World.[23]**

The huge presence of hobos on national level didn't remain unnoticed for long. Their effort at re-commonization confronted them with one of the most developed industries of that time, spreading on 254,037 miles in 1916.[24] The hobo jungles on the other hand challenged the ongoing land concessions and enclosures. Thus a complexity of several factors led to the decline of hobos.

In the beginning of the 20th century a wave of brutal repressions began, with “shoot-on-sight” attitude being adopted by the railroad security. To confront their numerous “enemy” they joined forces with the police and the far-right, who viewed the hobo lifestyle as degenerate. Thus the number of “trespassers” shot rose dramatically – 2,553 were killed in 1919 and 2,166 in 1920.[25] This wave of repression spread to other political groups that challenged the established norms – among whom the IWW becoming object of physical elimination of valuable cadres by the authorities. The 1930s was the last decade during which the hobos had significant presence around the US, due to the Great Depression.[26]

Parallely with this, a new era of transportation was unfolding over the continent – this of automobiles, buses and trucks. This deeply privatized way of transport completely changed the conditions that were once favorable for the rise of the hobo culture. In a world where highways were to replace railroads as a main means for travel there was place for scarce hitchhiking, but not for a mass commoning movement.

Also a stereotype emerged presenting the hobos as lazy and

illiterate parasites on society who have been stripped of any decency, because they no longer were restrained by “home” and “family”. [27] This narrative helped “normalize” the violence that the state waged against them. The image of the hobo as degenerate, as self-destructive as well as socially corrosive has been since then reproduced through movies, literature, music etc.

Reshaping everyday life

Although the pirates and hobos remained in history, spaces for radical politics could be found and today. And while Zapatistas and Kurds are developing their autonomies in distant from us lands, similar patterns could also be found in our own backyard. With the unfolding of the multidimensional crisis of the last decade there are many cracks in the system in which radical politics could potentially be cultivated.

This does not mean that we should engage in a search for one revolutionary subject that can lead us towards “brighter future”, but that we can find many such subjects all around us and that we can transform our everyday reality into laboratory for direct democracy and commoning.

It should once again be made clear that the exclusion from the welfare functions of the dominant system is not necessary precondition for the emergence of democratic and egalitarian projects. From the history we know of societies that in such cases have turned towards fascistic and authoritarian forms, while others, immersed into luxurious consumerism, have given birth to participatory and ecological tendencies. Thus what makes a really important precondition for such radical political projects to flourish is the liberation of the imaginary, something that was encouraged through the adventurous lifestyle of both pirates and hobos. What we should strive at is making the experience of everyday life more interactive by involving each member of society into the shaping of our common future.

Notes:

[1] Captain Samuel "Black Sam" Bellamy quoted by Captain Charles Johnson in *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724)

[2] Joe Hill, famous hobo and IWW activist, in *The Preacher and the Slave* (1911)

[3]

<https://mentalfloss.com/article/23673/democracy-high-seas-how-pirates-rocked-vote>

[4] A specific Pirate Code of Conduct was agreed by Bartholomew Roberts' in the Shipboard Articles of 1721
<https://sites.google.com/site/thepiraterepublic/the-constitution-of-the-pirate-republic>

[5] <https://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng182.htm>

[6] <https://www.eco-action.org/dod/no8/pirate.html>

[7] <https://beej.us/bartart.html>

[8]

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Captain-George-Lowthers-Pirate-Code-Articles>

[9] John Ward: *Barbary Pirate*, The History Press 2010, p.42

[10]

<https://thepirateempire.blogspot.gr/2016/01/black-pirates.html>

[11] https://www.pantherbay.com/bio_womenpirates.php

[12] E. T. Fox: *King of the Pirates: The Swashbuckling Life of Henry Every*, Tempus Publishing 2008

[13] Peter Kemp and Christopher Lloyd: *Brethren of the Coast: The British and French Buccaneers of the South Sea*, St. Martin's Press 1960

[14] Rediker, Marcus: *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, Beacon Press 2004

[15] John Raithby: *Statutes of the Realm: volume 7: 1695-1701*, Great British Record Commission 1820, pp590-94

[16] Max Boot: *Pirates, Then and Now* in "Foreign Affairs" vol. 88/4 2009, pp94-107

[17] See the movie *Riding the Rails* (1997), written and directed by Lexy Lovell and Michael Uys.

[18]

- <https://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/White/hobo/thejungle.html>
- [19] Todd Depastino: *Citizen Hobo*, University of Chicago Press 2005, pp81-85
- [20] Benedict Giamo: *The Homeless of Ironweed*, University of Iowa Press 1996, p.82
- [21] George Caffentzis: *In letters of Blood and Fire*, PM Press 2013, p.92
- [22] <https://www.cyberhobo.com/signs/hobosigns.html>
- [23] <https://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/143783.html>
- [24] William Greenleaf: *American Economic Development Since 1860*, University of South Carolina Press 1968, p.79
- [25] Nels Anderson: *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*, University of Chicago Press 1923, pp 161-62
- [26] William A. Darity, Jr: *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 2nd Edition*, Macmillan Reference 2008, p.494
- [27] Charles Elmer Fox: *Tales of an American Hobo*, University of Iowa Press 1989, p.xvii
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If There Is to Be a Democratic Europe | Cornelius Castoriadis

This rare interview with Cornelius Castoriadis was made by the ACTA Foundation (Fundació per a les idees i les arts) and appeared for first time in the book "Europes: Els Intellectuals i la Qüestió Europea" (1993), pp. 343-48. It was translated in English, edited and contributed freely and anonymously in internet as a public service on March 2011.

Cornelius Castoriadis

Before answering the questions posed by ACTA, it seems to me to be indispensable to elucidate three themes that order or should order all political reflections on present-day Europe. Within the limits allowed, this can be done only in a brief, therefore dogmatic, way.

A. Almost all human societies have always been instituted in heteronomy or, what is the same thing, the closure of signification. The institution of society (the law in the most general sense of the term) is posited there as intangible, since originating in a source that transcends the living society: God, gods, founding heroes, the ancestors-but also, as a modern version, the laws of Nature, of Reason, and of History. At the same time, the magma of social imaginary significations, which through its institution holds society together and creates a world for itself, is closed there: it furnishes an answer to all the questions that can be posed within its framework but cannot itself be called into question. And individuals are raised and educated there through these laws and these significations in such a way that challenging one or the other is, for those individuals, unthinkable-psychically and intellectually almost impossible.

In known history, this state of affairs has been truly ruptured only in Europe, and this has happened twice: first in ancient Greece and then in Western Europe. It is only in those two societies that one observes the birth, and the re-birth [*renaissance*], of democratic political activity as a challenge to established institutions under the aegis of the question "*What is just?*" of philosophy as a calling into question of the inherited significations under the aegis of the question "*What is true?*" and, finally and especially, the conjunction and mutual fertilization of these two activities, even if it has almost always remained indirect. It is in those two societies that the project of individual and collective autonomy is born, each being inconceivable without the other.

In this sense, Europe has ceased for a long time to be a

geographical or ethnic entity. The word *Europe* connotes the state of a society in which people and communities are free in their thinking and in the positing of their laws and are capable of limiting themselves on their own [*s'auto-limiter*] in and through this freedom.

B. Yet the project of autonomy has been broken down in Europe and in the whole "Western" zone of the world-for several decades. Europe has also been the society that has given birth to capitalism, a demented but efficient project of unlimited expansion of pseudo-rational pseudo-mastery to be exercised over nature and human beings. Contestation of capitalism and, more generally, of an institution of society characterized by the domination and exploitation of some by others, was broached by the workers' movement, but such contestation was confiscated by Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism so as to culminate in the most monstrous forms of totalitarianism, which is also a European creation. The collapse of Communist totalitarianism in the countries of Eastern Europe, which has deceptively appeared as a triumph and justification of capitalism, reinforces for the time being the apathy and privatization of populations, which are already, as a function of the degeneration of the workers' movement, settled into a life of consumerism and televisual stupefaction.

Contemporary Western Europe, like all of the West, is characterized by the waning of political and social conflict, the decomposition of political society which has been fragmented into lobbies and dominated by bureaucratized parties, the spread of irresponsibility, the accelerated destruction of Nature, of cities, and of a human *ethos*, generalized conformism, the disappearance of the imagination and of cultural and political creativity, the reign in all domains of ephemeral fashions, intellectual fast foods, and universal rubbish. **Behind the facade of "democratic" institutions, which are so only in name, European societies are liberal-oligarchic societies in which the ruling strata**

prove themselves increasingly incapable of managing their own system in their own well-understood interest.

C. The constitution of the European Economic Community was undertaken, and remains dominated up till now, by political and administrative bureaucracies lacking any popular participation. So long as that is the case, the "Europe" that will result the reform will be a mere agglomeration of national capitalist societies overshadowed by politico-bureaucratic machinery, even further removed from peoples, that will become even more ponderous and irresponsible than it is today. **Only the emergence of a large democratic and radical popular movement that would also challenge the existing structures in particular States would be able to give another content to "European construction" and make it into a democratic federation of really (*effectivement*) self-governed political units.** My answers below to the questions posed are formulated under the hypothesis -as impossible as it might seem today- that such a movement will exist and will be victorious. Outside that hypothesis, the issue is, in my view, only of sociological interest and not of a political interest.

If the process toward European integration is reinforced and strengthened, toward what pattern of integration should it head? What should be the predominant dimensions (cultural, political, economic, social...)?

What should be the fundamental units of political representation? The current States? The nations, with or without the State? Cultural communities? Regions?

If there is to be a democratic Europe, it can be founded only on self-government. With the dimensions of the social and political units of modern times, and in particular with a Europe of 350 million inhabitants, self-government requires the greatest possible decentralization and the institution of grassroots political units on a scale where direct democracy could actually function in an effective way. Direct democracy

does not signify democracy conducted by polling or over the telephone lines of television stations, as the recent perversion of the term in France tries to make it mean, but, rather, the participation of all citizens in the making of all important decisions, and implementation of those decisions, as well as the treatment of current affairs by committees of popularly elected delegates who can always be recalled. The possibility of recalling delegates dissolves the false alternative between "representative democracy"-where "representatives" in fact dispossess of all power those whom they "represent"-and "imperative mandates"-where the delegates could be replaced by vote-counting machines.

The size of these grassroots political units should be of the order of, at most, 100,000 inhabitants (the dimension of an average city, a Paris ward, or an agricultural region of around twenty villages). Twenty or thirty of these units would be grouped together in second-level units (pretty much the size of present-day regions in Spain, Italy, or France). Those units could, in turn, be grouped together in "national" units, so long as the "Nation" retains its relevance, which would ultimately be united within a **European Federation**. At all those levels, the principle of direct democracy would have to reign: all decisions principally affecting populations at a certain level would have to be made by direct vote of the interested populations, after information {is circulated} and after deliberation. So, for example, the federal laws would have to be adopted by federal referendum. And at all levels, the committees of popularly elected delegates who can be recalled at any time would have only subsidiary powers pertaining to the execution of popularly-made decisions and to current affairs. At all levels, the ruling maxim should be no execution of decisions without participation in the making of decisions.

It is clear that if a popular movement sufficiently powerful and radical to impose a democratic European Federation were to

develop, it would create much richer and much newer forms of political coexistence and cooperation than those I am trying to outline here. This outline is to be taken only as an illustration of one possible concrete manifestation of democratic principles.

It is also clear that, contrary to what is happening now, the political dimension will have to be the central dimension of any effort at European integration. Without that dimension, "Europe" will be, at best, only a zone of economic unification leaving the instituted structures intact. Finally, it is also obvious that such a political change will not be able to take place unless it swiftly embraces the other dimensions of the institution of society: the economy, social solidarity, education, culture, and so on.

Do you think that there is a European culture? To put it in other terms, does the cultural diversity existing in today's Europe advance Europeanization or hinder it?

The unity of European culture since the Middle Ages is beyond doubt. But there has also been for centuries, as one knows, a development of national (or regional) cultures, going hand in hand with the triumph of vernacular languages over Latin and the establishment of more or less "national" States. That has not prevented this developing diversity from being a tremendous source of mutual enrichment as early as at least the fourteenth century (to go no further back than Petrarch), and it has remained so, despite the rivalries, wars, and monstrosities perpetrated by some on others that have, up till now, caused only brief eclipses. On the level of philosophy and the sciences, there is but one European culture (even if, in philosophy, there is something like "national styles"). On the level of literature and the arts, one would have to assume that the reader is illiterate if one were to indulge in making an (in fact impossible) list of the cross-fertilizations without which no national culture in Europe would be what it is, and perhaps wouldn't even exist. Just two points seem to

me to merit particular emphasis.

The mutual fertilization of which I spoke is neither a sum of "influences" passively undergone nor an agricultural product of the European soil, nor the mechanical result of spatial proximity. Such proximity is but one external condition, which is in no way sufficient. Cross-fertilization has resulted basically from the active opening up of each culture and of each individual creative person to the other cultures and the other works produced in this zone, from a permanent awakening to beauty and truth created elsewhere. This opening is the key characteristic of European culture, and it goes far beyond the each time given spatial and temporal borders, as is shown at once by Europe's unique relationship to its (Greek, Roman, medieval) past, which, through its continuous creative reinterpretation starting in the Renaissance has remained ever present, and by its also unique relationship with its spatially outer world. Of all the great civilizations known in human history, European civilization -and this is so already since Herodotus- is the sole one that has almost constantly (save for the interruption of the Christian High Middle Ages) shown a passionate interest in the existence and the creations of others. In contrast to the other great civilizations - India, China, Japan, Islam- it has been the sole one not to have closed upon itself and the sole one of which it might be said that it has really wished that nothing that is human remain foreign to it. It is in this respect that one recognizes, beyond the very content of its political and philosophical creations, its universalist character.

On the other hand, it is clear that the development of Nation-States has gone hand in hand with a cultural closure at the level that depended on the State, that of general education, a level whose importance is decisive in any case and especially so because it is indirectly but powerfully orders peoples' political future. In each country, such education is centered almost exclusively around the country's culture and, more

particularly, its "national" literature. It is characteristic, and distressing, that one can at present complete one's secondary-school and even university education in France (and I believe that the situation is basically identical in all European countries, not to mention the other ones) without having read a single line of Cervantes, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kafka, or Dostoyevsky (whose names one will have, at best, simply come across in history classes). As for the Greek and Latin classics, there is no point in even talking about them. It is almost a tautology to say that a culture can exist only by being rooted in a living language and that the privileged vehicle of this language is literature. But it is absurd to proceed as if knowledge of this literature had to be accompanied by the exclusion of all the other ones (and the same thing could be said for the great extra-European works).

In conclusion, the cultural diversity of present-day Europe could stand in the way of the development of a European identity only if, unfaithful to the very spirit of European civilization, one continued to close educational curricula to everything that is not "national."

Will national communities without a State -as is the case with Catalonia, but many others as well- become diluted, or will they be reaffirmed within a process of unification? What would the desirable evolution be, and in what ways could they participate in unification?

No one can respond to this question of whether stateless national communities (or even ones with a State) are going to be diluted or reaffirmed within a process of unification. But a democratic Federation, like the one whose features were sketched out a bit above, would most certainly involve a huge amount of facilitation, for these communities, to help them get organized with all the autonomy they would wish within the Federation. That said, the question of the desirable evolution of the existing national entities (with or without a State) brings up an inextricable knot of antinomies. The principle of

individual and collective autonomy implies that every community that so desires in full knowledge of the relevant facts is to be able to organize itself in accordance with the political form it wishes to have (therefore also the Nation-State). But in another connection, this same political project of autonomy, which is addressed to every human being and every human collectivity, implies, through the universalism that is consubstantial with it, going beyond the imaginary of the Nation-State and reabsorbing the Nation into a vaster community that, ultimately, encompasses humanity in its entirety.

At the same time, in effectively actual historical reality, the imaginary of the Nation and of the Nation-State is far from receding and even seems, as is shown by the recent events in Eastern Europe but also all across the globe, to be reviving and reinforcing itself as the sole refuge for individuals who are atomized by contemporary capitalist society and disoriented by the collapse of the significations and values that characterize that society. Finally, we do not know, and we cannot even conceive, of a culture without roots in a concrete language that would be a living, everyday language and not just a commercial or administrative *lingua franca*. The Hellenization of the eastern Mediterranean that began with Alexander, the Latinization of the western Mediterranean under Roman rule, and the Arabization of Islamized peoples after the seventh century offer some examples. (And the Swiss counterexample is not really a counterexample since, while Switzerland has politically been able to safeguard its unity for many centuries, culturally its three main parts have always been turned toward and nourished by the surrounding German, French, and Italian cultures.)

While English (or rather Anglo-American) is increasingly playing at the present time the role of the aforesaid *lingua franca*, it seems difficult to envisage an "anglicization" of Europe and impossible to accept the disappearance, as cultural

languages, of such beautiful, rich and history-laden languages as are practically all the European languages extant today. While waiting for history to do its work, whose orientation and whose effects it would be childish to want to lay down or even to foresee, I would be a supporter of a solution that, still from the perspective of a democratic Europe, would frankly adopt as *lingua franca* of the European Federation, rather than some artificial language, a living one (and English seems, for several reasons, the best placed to play this role), whereas particular cultural linguistic communities would continue to develop.

Yet one could not conclude these few reflections without underscoring -on the occasion, as a matter of fact, of this last question- the importance of a major obstacle in the path of a European Federation: the tremendous persistence of the imaginary of the Nation-State, which makes it seem that the peoples already constituted in States are in no way inclined to abandon "national sovereignty," while the other ones are especially preoccupied with the idea of achieving an "independent" state form, whatever its cost and whatever its content.

So long as that is the way things are, "Europe" will be reduced to a bureaucratic structure somehow or other heading up and overseeing the national States, and it will be futile to speak of "European integration".

Source: <https://www.notbored.org/PSRTI.pdf>

Refugees : Human mobility

between past and present (part 2)

Claudia Moatti

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Part 1 available [here](#).

Patterns of coexistence

One of the major problems with the influx of refugees and migrants is therefore that of their legal integration (what status to grant: foreign resident or citizen?), and of their social condition: what financial protection, what formation, what job opportunities?

The openness of the community to the Other, whether an “absolute stranger”, whose background is unfamiliar, or a “relative stranger”, who comes from a place with preexisting ties and agreements, according to the distinction by Jacques Derrida, has had a long history. Works of literature since the *Odyssey* and Greek tragedies like *Oedipus at Colonus* have continuously wrestled with the issue, presenting a broad typology of the various possible choices (assimilation, ghettoization, exclusion, and discrimination). Legal categories also expressed these possibilities, ranking different kinds of foreigners and migrants and distinguishing them from the locals, thus showing the place assigned to them in language.

Unlike contemporary societies, national and territorial, where the word « foreign » always takes the same meaning (referring back to the non-national), the notion of the foreigner was uncertain in previous societies, where there were various forms of foreignness. The meaning varies according to the political systems, and even within the same society, it could vary from one era to another. In other words, the status of

the Other was constantly being defined and redefined. Moreover, the foreigner was not necessarily the one who came from elsewhere,, but one whose origin was unknown – bastards, for example – or he who had no social networks and therefore no authority – like the *miserabiles* of Italian cities in the early modern period[1].

However, the central question raised in all societies is with whom to share common space and common goods. The response may have to do with the political structures: community size, degree of centralization, cultural unity, administrative development ... but also with circumstantial conditions: like famines, religious, political, economical crises, wars – that is to say, the actual state of a society.

This last point seems essential. Let us return to our example about the Goths who in 376 CE knocked on the doors of the Roman Empire, with women and children, seeking asylum under pressure from the Huns. They were very similar to the Syrians fleeing Daech and Assad, and the Somalis fleeing Dadaab. But the Roman Emperor hesitated before accepting, and then the Roman officials were so disorganized, corrupt, ineffective that the Goths revolted: the war broke and Rome experienced a bitter defeat.

The example deserves reflection: Rome before this episode extensively practiced the integration, forced or voluntary, of foreign peoples. But in 376, that policy no longer worked. And one reason is that the Empire itself was fragile and disorganized, and that it was more and more closed, beginning a century earlier a process of reification of Romaness and of defining Roman identity against that of others, whether Persians, Manicheans, or heretics, etc.

Isn't it what is happening now similar? European identity is reified, it closes, and rejects the Other ... In the media and all public places, it is all about "the crisis of migrants" but the crisis concerns also the host societies.

The security measures and the widespread panic is reflected in language (invasion, crisis, hotspots). It is also found in the spectacular images and the exaggerated figures, and in the increasing role of Frontex (the European agency for the regulation and supervision borders). Likewise, this finds expression in the haggling over migrants between England and France, which resulted in setting up the Camp of Calais, and between Europe and Turkey, and with Morocco, and previously with Libya. So too does the construction of walls. All these procedures have shown the inability of national governments and the European Union to plan and organize the movement of people, even though the High Commissioner of the Refugees gave early and repeated warnings when between 2011 and 2014 Turkey and Lebanon absorbed massive numbers.

Economic arguments in support of limiting entry to refugees also testify to the precarious state of the Europeans, and finds expression in the slogans often used by populist parties such as “our boat is full” even if it is the migrants who are shipwrecked. Or, as former

French minister Rocard used to say, “we cannot accommodate all the misery of the world.”. Words like “saturation’ and “density” are so familiar to those who remember the Evian Conference in July 1938 organized by Roosevelt to address the problem of Jewish refugees, of German and Austrian origin. At that conference which brought together 32 countries (9 European and 20 Latin American), representatives were incapable of taking any concrete decision, arguing over quotas[2].

The economic threat expressed by quotas is indeed not an objective phenomenon and the figures are disputed: it is necessary in these arguments to distinguish fantasies and fears from reality. It is clear that mass immigration can only be resolved if *everyone* is concerned – for example if every member of the European Union participate; and that Asylum policies do not entail just the philosophical question of

sharing, but they also reflect the immediate interests of societies. The Roman Empire (until the third century) and the Ottoman Empire, both non-ethnic states, some Italian cities like Livorno in the 15th-16th century, and the Netherlands and Germany in the 17th derived great economic profits from the welcoming of migrants. Some used them to cultivate fallow lands, to defend border areas, and to serve in the military as deportees worked for all the dominant powers across history. Other countries benefited from a transfer of knowledge and wealth. In return, host countries provided stability to these people in the form of citizenship or protected status.

Yet the cost of this policy was sometimes enormous, particularly in demographic terms. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in October 1685, which made Catholicism the only official religion of France, around 200,000 French Protestants fled to Switzerland, the United Provinces, to the British Island and to Protestant Germany[3]. Geneva tripled its population in the 1680s; and to take a final example 34 million immigrants reached the United States between 1810 and 1921[4]!

Of course, there were always voices that opposed the arrival of so many migrants and still others who recalled a tradition of integration. In fact, the reception of migrants has a great deal to do with the imaginary, that is to say, with the self-image of a society and its vision of the world, its ideals, and its values. About the possible settlement of the Goths in Thrace before the war, Greek rhetorician Themistius argued: "Philanthropy triumphs over destruction[...] It is said that already the barbarians transform their iron spades and sickles, and they cultivate the fields. So soon we will see the Scythians not be called barbarians but Romans. Soon we will see such companions, living in our community, to our table, in military expeditions and contribute to tax." [5] Themistius expresses in fact three ideas: the superiority of solidarity over closure, the usefulness of migrants; and the

possibility of making foreigners into fellow citizens sharing duties and privileges.

Living together shapes culture as much as it is shaped by it.

Today anxiety towards migrants reflects a crisis of identity of the host societies, their fear of losing their values, their civilization. But can we integrate only those who are similar to us? We must get out of the terms in which the immigration debates enclose us, the choice between basing our attitude not on culture but on "sharing the common"[6] or defending our fixed identity[7]. The first position too easily forgets the importance of culture, language, history; the second reifies identity. Let's accept the changes that come from mobility like those that come from technology transfers, and defend the values that we consider universal – the status of women, the protection of children, to name but these. These values will actually be strengthened and defended by integrating migrants, who are, once again, not invaders or colonizers, but exiles fleeing barbarism.

Now is Europe changing today?

There is always a plurality of competing discourses. Along with the discourse on national identities, there has existed throughout history a "European principle of circulation,"[8] which re-emerged from time to time. This discourse was articulated during the Enlightenment, when European societies conceived of the movement of people and goods as a necessary exchange, and again in the nineteenth century when Europe welcomed revolutionaries expelled from their countries while labor migration developed on a larger scale across the Atlantic[9]. But these movements were supported by civil society. However, in the late nineteenth, and especially during the First World War, liberal migration policies were rejected, and the States seized upon the issue of migration[10]. From then on and throughout the twentieth century, the principle of nationality has permanently removed

all cosmopolitan ideas, even as the number of migrants increased. The European Union has only reproduced the same national idea on a large scale, while disempowering member states.

The current situation is thus a continuation of the challenging facing European construction with on one side a free trade area and on the other border closures. It is a continuation of the great reversal that I mentioned at the beginning of this article, which led to the crushing of the human. It is also a continuation of the history of a Europe that has never really accepted otherness.

It is not enough to say that the new security discourse only helps to hide the profound responsibility of European states in the crisis of the Middle East and in the rise of extremist groups within populations born in Europe. We do not need guilt to practice inclusion.

Rather, we should develop an alternative discourse to Neoliberalism, a project of a democratic society that enables citizen action. When citizens are in control of their destiny, when they feel capable of shaping their world, they are not afraid of the Other, and they even recognize the courage of those fleeing persecution, as Harry Truman said in 1952[11]. It is a lesson that can be drawn from the actual action of citizens who help and interact with migrants in opposition to the law.

Besides “the moral imperative to save lives” and to preserve the integrity of the bodies and of the minds of human beings, it seems better, as François Crépeau suggested, to organize mobility than resist it. It is better to open legal channels for migration and facilitate the movement of people in order to create fluidity, which was so successful in ancient times. The choice before us is twofold: either close borders and create mafias and violence, revolt and dehumanization; or bring protection and co-responsibility, negotiation and above

all dialogue. In my view, this last choice is the only way to retain in our globalized societies a sense of our own humanity.

NOTES:

[1] Simona Cerutti, *Étrangers. Étude d'une condition d'incertitude dans une société d'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Bayard, 2012.

[2] And creating the "Comité intergouvernemental pour les réfugiés" (CIR). See Greg Robinson « Le Projet M de Franklin D. Roosevelt : construire un monde meilleur grâce à la science... des races », in *Critique internationale* 2/2005 (n° 27), p. 65-82.

[3] Philippe Joutard, "Réseaux huguenots et espaces européens", in *Revue de Synthèse. Circulation et cosmopolitisme en Europe*, dir. H.Asséo, 2002, tome 123, p.111-129: p. 111.

[4] Hans Magnus Enzenberger, *Die Grosse Wanderung*, Francfort, 1992, p. 26.

[5] *Oration XVI.211-212*

[6] Jay Walljasper, *All That We Share. A Field Guide to the Commons*, December 2010 (<https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/6687/all%20that%20we%20share.pdf?sequence=1>)

[7] Garrett Hardin, *The Immigration Dilemma. Avoiding the Tragedy of the Commons*, Washington, DC, 1995

[8] Daniel Roche, "Voyages, Mobilité, Lumières", in *Revue de Synthèse. Circulation et cosmopolitisme en Europe*, dir. H.Asséo, 2002, tome 123, p. 17-36: p.19.

[9] Dick Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact. World Migrations in the Second Millenium*, Duke University Press, 2002, p.277 ff.

[10] Karl Bade, *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Munchen, 2000, p. 292ff.

[11] Against the *Immigration and Nationality Act* (Mac Carran-Walter Act) which aimed at limiting the European immigration, Truman said: « we do not need to be protected against

immigrants from these countries ; on the contrary we want to stretch out a helping hand, to save those who have managed to flee from Europe, to succor those who were brave enough to escape from barbarism ». The same Truman had send bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seven years before.

The text is transcribed version of Claudia Moatti's speech during B-fest 5 in Athens, Greece.

Video from the same speech:

[youtube id="fwo0N0nocae"]

Refugees : Human mobility between past and present (part 1)

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This is not the first time in history that we speak of a "crisis of migrants" and that as in Europe, Turkey, Malaysia, the US, Kenya and Thailand, that is to say all around the world, we're trying to expel or return them to their countries of origin, or to ship them to other countries. In the 19th century, between 1832 and 1851, France, who generously hosted political exiles, began to speak of a "refugee problem" and in 1852, it ended the long French tradition of hospitality by closing borders, and deporting immigrants to the United States, Britain, Belgium, and Switzerland.

It is not the first time in Europe that we consider expelling less fortunate immigrants: England, the most open countries to

immigration and asylum until the twentieth century, although less by humanitarianism than by economical interest, issued in 1905 the Alien Act to prevent the entry of proletarian masses, who were often Jewish.

Yet all that was nothing compared to the million of refugees in the 20th century, who took to the roads and seas following the intervention of states, during and after the two World Wars, after decolonization, and after the fall of the « Iron Curtain ». Understandably, some have called it a “century of refugees”[1].

It is why, upon the arrival of thousands of refugees who now cross the Mediterranean –in 2015, over one million have passed through Greece and they are again at the gates of Europe– one is struck by the apparent amnesia of our contemporaries, unless this is a kind of repression of the traumatic experiences of the second World war: the deportations, the concentration camps, and the many ships that were refused asylum like the Saint Louis in 1939, which left Hamburg for Cuba, then for Florida, and was refused entrance in these countries, and had to return to Europe, where 900 Jews ended mostly in refugee camps in Belgium and the Netherlands; or the Struma which in December 1941 left Costanza in Romania for Palestine and, arriving in Istanbul, was sent back to the Black Sea where it was sunk; only one of the 800 Jews on it survived.

But, who among today’s analysts refers to the past to better analyze the present, to make sure the mistakes of the past are not repeated? Those hostile to migrants tend to forget that modern nations were formed by massive migrations, while others forget the negative aspects of communitarianism[2]. However, since the 1990s, the image of the “Great barbarian Invasions” of the Roman Empire, and the “hordes” of the Middle Ages, is a regular feature of speeches of those fearing the flood of Eastern Europeans and Turks, Syrians, Afghans or sub-Saharan. In fact, the European Union closed its borders and adopted

many discriminatory measures, returning the refugees to their country of entry in Europe (according to the Dublin Regulation III) or asked other countries to filter them.

In our world which is deemed to be increasingly mobile and interconnected, globalization has made the circulation of capital and goods more fluid than ever. However, borders are closed with barbed wire. Such measures increase the anxiety and concern about the movement of people, regular or irregular. In a world that has enshrined freedom of movement in the Universal Declaration of 1948, a tension exists between the recognition of this right, and practices that deny it in effect.

It must be said that the concept of freedom of movement is elastic: it was deployed in the history of both goods and people, capital and knowledge; and it was used to justify slavery as well as the abolition of slavery; trade or cosmopolitanism as well as colonization and the appropriation of space by the dominant States. As the German sociologist Alfred Schutz put it: Freedom of movement is, "the figure of all mobilities" ; and its ambiguity explains why it has become today one of the factors of inequality in the world.

In order to think about these tensions and paradoxes, it is important to have a long-term perspective. This is not necessarily to look for past models but rather to understand changes and ruptures and avoid the fantasies, while remaining aware of the absolute specificity of our time and of the big reversal we have been witnessing since the second part of the twentieth century.

In 1945, in fact, after the great Catastrophe, women and men of all countries wanted to build a new world based on humanistic values, respect for others, and protection of the individual. The Universal declaration of rights, which was the basis for the expansion of international institutions placed the human being at the heart of all their concerns. This was a

major break from previous periods. Never before in the history of mankind was such an «institutionalization» of the defense of human beings experienced or even thought. Yet, these statements have been ignored in fact and the opposite became the norm. As Miguel Abensour said, the idea of emancipation, a 19th century idea revived after the Second World War, has turned into the harshest exploitation of men. Today, what we could call the “great reversal” is clearly visible, illustrated by the growing number of persecuted people in the world: over 51 million according to UNHCR figures. Who can forget the permanent camps of refugees, such as those of the Palestinians in Jordan, or the Somalis in Kenya or the great number of new camps created in the last few years? We fear these confined migrants so much that we do not even consider the majority of them as “manpower.” Neoliberalism, which imagines everything, including human beings, as “capital”, which feeds on crisis, and conceives competition as a value and the firm as a model, is not for nothing in the degradation of the human person.

This is why the past is more necessary than ever to any reflection on the current situation because we might find in it, as Castoriadis would say, a « germ » capable of inspiring new forms of coexistence. In order to trace a few strands of a long history of human mobility, I begin with a few comments about mobility in general, then I examine past mass migrations. After that, it becomes possible to contextualize the precariousness and insecurity of migrants and explore the notions of hospitality and coexistence. I will conclude by raising a question that is central to these discussions: has Europe changed?

Migration and Human Mobility between past and present

It is now recognized that mobility is a constant in human history. Since prehistoric times, mankind has moved, and it is in motion that it has diversified and progressed. Sedentarianism appears late in the Neolithic agricultural

revolution between 15,000 and 5,000 BCE. Since then, there was a constant tension between the ideal of sedentarianism and that of mobility, between xenophobia and openness. But even if the idea of "the people" has most often referred back to a homogeneous and stable whole, which is the foundation of the legitimacy of the state, as opposed to the mobile and disorganized multitude, mobility and sedentarianism have coexisted in practice, including in territorial states that have tried to settle mobile groups.

Mobility in all its forms has thus structured pre-modern societies. It can be defined as a social process that begins with the fact of leaving one's family and ends in a transnational process[3], as a factor of transformation of societies (through knowledge, culture, or wealth transfers) but also of identity: migrants forge links between different parts of the world, accumulating multiple identities, or just switching cultures[4]. The figure of « the man in motion » has even expressed the human condition itself and, in ancient legends, the legislator, the one who gave stability and identity to a country, was always described as a man coming from elsewhere[5] 5 . Moreover, apart from a few people who claimed to be autochthonous, the myths of foundations tell stories of immigration or of mixture of peoples (for example synoecisms), thus reflecting the experience of ethnic diversity found all around the Mediterranean. The distance is huge between these conceptions and practices, and our world, where the Other, as a whole, as a mass, is considered as a danger.

Migration, a sociological or demographic analytical category, is a particular form of mobility. It refers to the fact of leaving the place where one lives with the intention of settling elsewhere. The term originally contains no specific connotation, except the idea of an uprooting experience, nor does it correspond to any specific status. In fact, in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and in early modern times, the

concept does not exist. Rather, there were many terms that applied to situations of mobility. This shows that pacific population flows were not an object of consideration, or of norms[6].

Today, the terms mobility and migration are too weak to account for the violence of our world. The existing word is somewhat more eloquent: "migrant", a recent term, refers to people who probably are too undesirable to even be called "immigrants", too persecuted to deserve the status of "emigrants"; as for "refugee" it is a legal status recognized only half a century ago, by the Geneva Convention of 1951 (we will return to this text later).

If mobility was a structural phenomenon of pre-modern societies, were people free to move? Although fluid, these societies were actually very regulated. But what characterized them is first that they did not seek to control their territory as such, or the flow of people, but only certain categories of persons, according to various logics (fiscal control, military issues, health problems)[7]. Second, they were more concerned by emigration than by immigration, since the demographic wealth was at the heart of their conception of power (this was the case in ancient societies, in the France of Louis XIV or in England of the 18th century for example).

Since the formation of Nation-States, primarily in Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, constraints on mobility got higher and its modalities changed. In the legal world of modern States in which sovereignty is circumscribed by the territory and is exercised through it, one receives the right to move freely within the state territory of which he is a national, while the state cannot in principle forbid him from remaining there, leaving or returning there. However, the state may prohibit its territory to a foreigner, who is uniquely defined as "non-national". And it is clear that European integration with the Shengen Agreements has only pushed to the limits of Europe the same logic and the same

constraints. In this context, while the right to emigrate has been recognized by the Universal Declaration of 1948, the right to immigrate which is under the sovereignty of states is not; or at least not for everyone. Today, in fact, the wealthy, the businessmen have no borders. And the difference across the world grows between them and all those who are denied this right, so that one could speak of *global apartheid*. A very different situation from the past.

Following the same logic, Nations-States imposed passports, border controls, and sophisticated identification techniques. They also sought to suppress minorities, absorb or expell them, initiating in the twentieth century a process of 'unmixing of peoples'[8] and of ethnicization of citizenship, which put on the roads millions of people: more than 1 Million Greeks came from Turkey and around 500 000 Turkish Muslims left Greece after the breakup of the Ottoman empire! To which must be added the return of thousands of settlers to the mainland after decolonization (1 million French from Algeria after the end of the war in 1962) and the departure of many minorities from their country as a result of the transformation of previous colonies into Nation-States: the Ghanaians leaving Nigeria, Senegalese leaving Ghana, or the Indians East Africa, etc.

Mass migrations

These kinds of mass migrations that are so characteristic of the twentieth century, are not a recent phenomenon, however. They are found in all periods of history and in all forms of mobility: in home-community migrations like rural exoduses and internal deportations; in colonization movements; and in cross-community migrations, forced –or voluntary[9]. Think of the millions of captives and slaves deported all along the centuries or of European expansion into the new world, which caused what Aristide Zolberg called "the revolution of departures." [10]

Forced mass migrations, like those we see today, that is to say movements of hundreds or thousands of people, including both men, women and children, fleeing or displaced under threats whether political, military, economic, or climatic, also existed in ancient times. The Gothic tribes fled the Huns in the fourth century CE and sought asylum from the Romans. Jews and Moors were forced to flee Spain from the end of the fifteenth century; Huguenots fled France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and especially after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685); in 1830-32, Algerian Kabyles (and others) fled French colonialism to Syria then under Ottoman rule; and in the 20th century, million people deported to be killed – among which the Armenians by the Turks or the Jews and Gypsies by the Nazis and their collaborators in Europe. In the twentieth century, only the Iron Curtain during the Cold War limited migration, while removing a fundamental right, the right to emigrate.

The idea and image of a mass dehumanizes migrants; we must instead individualize them to understand the extent of the phenomenon and reveal the human experience beyond the mass. We must realize that each of them, whether poor or wealthy, is primarily a man who cannot go home without putting his life in danger. Migration, which probably carries with it hope for change, is in this sense first of all precarious and insecure.

Precariousness of the migrant: from safety to security

Precariousness and insecurity have always characterized the life of the migrant on the roads and seas, in host countries, or even in the place of origin.

Precariousness is primarily the risk of losing one's liberty and property and, for example, being imprisoned or interned if one belongs to a country at war against the place where one resides. This practice, in use since ancient times was officially abolished at the beginning of the early modern times, but regularly practiced by all the following periods,

for example in the USA in 1941 against the Japanese who were detained while their property was confiscated[11]; in France, at the beginning of the Second World War against the Germans refugees, mainly Jews, as reported by Lion Feuchtwanger in his narration: *The devil in France. My Encounter with him in the summer 1940* (published in 1941).

Precariousness comes also from not speaking the language of the host country, not knowing the local laws, not knowing one's fate; risking to be arbitrarily expelled, or being under the power of smugglers. Over the 16th-17th centuries in the Dutch, French and English Caribbean or in the southern colonies in North America, European migrants pledged to perform labor to a ship captain or a trader traveling with them. These contracts, and thus the migrants themselves, called *indentured servants*, were at their arrival auctioned off to the highest bidding employers for a period that could vary from three to ten years – a kind of temporary servitude that is well known in the world today. Another kind of smugglers, who made migrants into commodities, was the *redemptioners* who, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, offered migrants to finance their trip by working for them once arrived[12]. Today, smugglers are more explicit: Muslims expelled from Thailand to Burma were captured at the border by traffickers who made them pay dearly for their passage to predominantly Muslim Malaysia; Syrians leaving Turkey enrich in the same way smugglers who sell at a very high price the improbable crossing, while so many female migrants are enrolled involuntarily in prostitution.

To combat this insecurity, two responses have been provided across history: ensuring the *safety* of migrants, or ensuring the *security* of the host societies. *Safety* was ensured through preferential agreements between states, through judicial protection, through forms of public hospitality, and sometimes more pragmatically through bilateral agreements on labor exchange (for mercenaries or workers). Efforts to protect

migrants were also the expression of moral values or social ties: associations indeed played a role in the reception of migrants, in information sharing, judicial protection. But what underlines these practices is an ethics of hospitality –which resolved the question of trust, perhaps the most fundamental issue for all migrants and host societies.

When the security of the state is privileged, which occurs mainly in centralized and territorialised states (the late Roman Empire, the French absolute monarchy, for example), there is no question of trust and no question of hospitality. Suspicion prevails because migrants are seen as intruders, who disturb the community, who can take over the work of others and disrupt the social order. Asylum seekers arouse suspicion because their claims could be fraudulent. As a result, discriminatory measures multiply and the definition of asylum rights gets restricted, as it has been the case since the 80s. In this context, camps and walls also multiply even if they are expensive to build and maintain (over 15 million Euros given by Europe to Bulgaria according to an article in *Le Monde*). Let's notice their absence in pre-modern times, except during wars or crises (epidemics for example gave birth to sanitary cordons in early modern times).

This logic, and this distrust, ultimately create more than suspicion. They lead to the criminalization of migrants (whether they are accused of being swindlers, drug traffickers or terrorists). Again, the past provides us with examples, but this phenomenon is primarily a feature of our time. Not only are migrants sidelined but they are confined in camps. Following the haggling between the EU and Turkey, migrants arriving in Greece, including children, were arrested and interned because they infringed on the agreement. Recently, the UN general rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, denounced this agreement and this detention, declaring them illegal.

The effect of policies privileging security is threefold:

within states, hyper security has an impact on the freedoms of citizens; outside and inside. they promote the parallel economy, and finally produce among migrants a defiance against and non-compliance to the laws and authorities of the host country. Distrust of societies towards migrants produces distrust and violence among migrants who feel that the law is not fair, that the host country is dysfunctional, and that hiding, being a clandestine, is the best choice. There is in the security centered policies a tendency towards escalation that is simply difficult to control.

The status of "refugee" itself illustrates this hesitation throughout history between trust and distrust, between safety and security. In pre-modern times, asylum was primarily a place where a fugitive found an absolute protection (a temple, later a church). It was also a privilege given to foreigners by a city that accepted to protect them from seizure of their goods or of their bodies. The same idea lies in the notion of *hospitium*, in latin, which refers to private or public hospitality and protection. In the most ancient periods, also, exile was considered not as a punishment, but as a refuge from civil or physical threat, including from a judicial punishment (this is what was offered to Socrates by his followers before his judgment but he refused, preferring to die in his city). In these two notions of exile and asylum, the logic was primary based on the point of view of the fugitive and the goal was his protection, his safety.

In opposition, the modern concept of refugee is defined from the perspective of the state, the place of origin (which no longer protects its citizens) and the host country ... The UN Refugee Agency defines "an asylum-seeker as someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated". The history of this status must be placed again in the context of the development of the nation-state[13]: it starts after the First World War in 1922 when the Nansen passport was created for all stateless persons.

Followed the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 which defined asylum for the Eastern European refugees; and then, the Protocol of 1967, which broadened the protection to “those persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group or political opinion “. “Those persecuted”: the notion of persecution unifies refugee status although it did not integrate the victims of civil wars and dictatorships[14], but in practice, each person, individually, has to prove that he is being persecuted –refugees have a legal status, but they do not form a social group capable of acting collectively, they can only be the objects of decision and speech ; second, only national states are responsible for the interpretation of texts and individual situations[15]. From the 1970-80s, while the line between the different types of migrants (economic migrants and political refugees) was being blurred, the interpretation of texts became narrower, showing that states sought to protect themselves from refugees, especially when they came from the Third World. While Europeans opened the doors of their countries when they needed manpower, now that migrants want to come in, they do not accept them anymore. This evolution does not only concern Europe. In fact, in this regard, the difference between the South and the North is vanishing[16].

NOTES:

[1] C.D Wingenroth, « Das Jahrhundert der Flüchtlinge », *Aussenpolitik*, 10, n.8, S: 409-499, quoted by K. Bade. *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Munchen, 2000.

[2] H.M. Enzenberger, *Die Grosse Wanderung*, Francfort, 1992.

[3] Dick Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact. World Migrations in the Second Millenium*, London 2002, p.8 ff.

[4] This is an important point : when does a stranger stop being a stranger ? According to Alfred Schultz (The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology, *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 49, Issue 6 (May, 1944), 499-507), the stranger is

always a stranger in an host country until he is normalized ; on the contrary, for Georg Simmel, the stranger remains always a potential wanderer (*Bridge and Door. Theory, Culture and Society*, 1994).

[5] Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton, 2001.

[6] For example, Claudia Moatti, 'Immigration and cosmopolitanization', in P. Erdkamp (ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*. Cambridge, 2013, 77-92.

[7] On these issues, see Claudia Moatti and Wolfgang Kaiser, "Mobilità umana e circolazione culturale nel Mediterraneo dall'età classica all'età moderna", Introduction to *Migrazioni*, a cura di P.Corti et M.Sanfilippo, Einaudi, Torino, 2009, p. 5-20.

[8] Rogers Brubaker, "Aftermaths of Empire and the **Unmixing of Peoples**: Historical and Comparative Perspectives", *Nationalism reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, 1996, 148-178

[9] On these three kinds of migrations, see Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History*, London, 2nd ed. 2013, p.4-6.

[10] Aristide Zolberg, "La révolution des départs", in N. Green and F. Weil, *Citoyenneté et émigration*, Paris, 2006, p.37 ff.

[11] According to the *Alien Enemies Act* voted in 1798 and still in use, the President had the right to detain or deport male citizens of a hostile nation, above the age of 14, during the time of war. On this episode

[12] On these historical kinds of smugglers, see Karl Bade, *Europa in Bewegung: Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Munchen, 2000, part II., chapter 2.

[13] Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *Le droit d'émigrer*, 2016.

[14] As noticed by Dick Hoerder, *Cultural in Contact. World Migrations in the Second Millenium*, Duke University Press, 2002, p. 515.

[15] On these issues, see Gérard Noiriel, *Etat, nation et immigration. Vers une histoire du pouvoir*, Paris, 2001, p.278 287.

[16] Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *Le droit d'émigrer*, 2016, p.32.

The text is transcribed version of Claudia Moatti's speech during B-fest 5 in Athens, Greece.

Part 2 available here.

Video from the same speech:

[youtube id="fwo0N0nocaE"]

Interview with Dilar Dirik on Rojava (audio)

A rare interview with Dilar Dirik, taken by Ivaylo Stefanov for *Babylonia Magazine* during the 5th edition of the international festival B-Fest (May 2016).

Dirik analyzes the relations in Rojava between the grassroots structures (communes and councils) and the local political parties, comparing the Kurdish democratic autonomy with Catalonia of 36-39 and the contemporary communities of the Zapatistas.

She also attempts to shed some light on the ongoing conflicts in the southern parts of Turkey, focusing on the situation in Bakur, the place where democratic autonomy first took roots amongst the Kurdish population.