

THE MYTH OF EUROPA

DEMOCRACY EQUALITY CULTURE BEYOND THE NATION STATE

FREE COPY
MARCH 09

IN THIS ISSUE

SAMIR AMIN
Beyond Global Capitalism

STEFAN COLLIGNON
For A New Social Democracy

EYAL SIVAN & EYAL WEIZMAN
Conversation on Gaza

BOYAN MANCHEV
Europe and the Postpolitical

Includes photography by
Marc Riboud, Carlos
Vergara, Tim Hetherington,
and others



Tim A Hetherington,
Young rebel fighter
from Liberian United for
Reconciliation and Democracy
(LURD) rebel group,
LIBERIA, MAY 2003,

BEYOND THE CRISIS

Hippocrates used the word crisis to refer to the turning point in a disease. A crisis is a crossroads; it is the moment one knows what is gone, but not yet what will arrive.

One of the benefits of the present global malaise is to have legitimated the belief in the urgency of a civilisational change, and to have opened an opportunity for the emergence of a comprehensive political alternative.

The present disease is a crisis of global climate change and possible ecological catastrophe; it is a crisis of rising winds of war and the violence they unleash; it is a crisis of depletion of natural resources; it is a crisis of exponential rise in social inequality both globally and locally.

There is no financial crisis. What we face is rather a complex web of political, cultural and economic crises that call for a paradigm shift in the organisation of our societies. What this shift will be, whether it will bring a world where justice and freedom will be pronounced without blush, or whether it will bring a gloomy,

dreadful return to the madness humans are all too capable of, is in large part dependent on us. On whether we will seize this opportunity, or whether it will seize us.

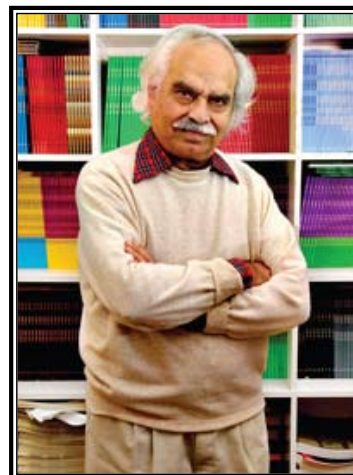
It is under the belief that an adequate declination of this shift will only be transnational that this journal operates, militating for the definition of a world to come from no privileged vintage point, from no urban centre, but through shifting geographies of thought.

It is with a conviction in the necessary ambition and breath of this shift that we use the word Utopia, and with the certainty that the arts have a prime responsibility in opening up the horizon of the imaginable, of the possible, that we call for a strong social engagement on the part of artists, writers, and intellectuals.

It is finally with the hope of contributing to the positive articulation of this shift that in this issue we feature two articles both pointing to what lies *beyond* the present crises.

SEE DOSSIER, WITH STEFAN COLLIGNON (P.8) AND SAMIR AMIN (PP 10) ►

INTERVIEW WITH RASHEED ARAEEN



Rasheed Araeen is an artist, writer and the founder of *Third Text*. He began working as an artist while studying civil engineering in Karachi; he left for London in 1964, where he pioneered minimalist sculpture in Britain. He has been active in various groups supporting liberation struggles, democracy and human rights. In his interview with *Europa* he talks about the new geographies art and the subversive power of creation.

(CONTINUED PAGE 12) ►

CHANGE

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO FORGET THE IDEAL OF PEACE

Europe is no longer a continent to make bombastic statements about itself. Someone who now proclaimed 'the hour of Europe has come' as the European diplomatic envoy arrived in a crisis area would be ridiculed even quicker than was the hapless Luxembourgian foreign minister who uttered these words on arriving in Sarajevo in 1992. The European people, and certainly the rest of the world, have known too many self-proclaimed European Caesars and saviours to allow for even the slightest pretension. This is all to the best. But this justified movement towards humility should not be confused with disengagement from the world, and even less should it result in the abandoning of the heady philosophers' ideal of universal peace, which at least in part inspired the European unification project. For it is by the measure of this ideal that Europe's lack of foreign policy coordination is woefully shortcoming. This shortcoming is all the more unacceptable because contemporary Europe itself is still the preeminent example for the world of successful national reconciliation after war: its 'soft power' depends on how genuine it appears about helping to extend this peace to the rest of the world.

There are plenty of recent reasons to be extremely frustrated with Europe's foreign policy shortcomings: chief amongst them the Gaza crisis and the war in Congo. The lack of coordination between European nations in responding to Israel's most recent military

assaults on Gaza was almost farcical – with both an 'official' European delegation headed by the Czechs, and the delegation of Nicolas Sarkozy, from whom the Czechs have just taken over the European Presidency. As many commentators have pointed out, the Gaza offensive was contrary to everything the European Union claims to stand for, and yet the best it could manage was a rather meek statement calling for a ceasefire that was simply ignored, and a further loss of legitimacy in the Muslim world as a potential mediator. The European foreign ministers also squabbled amongst themselves over responding to the UN request for an EU peace-keeping force to go to the Congo.

Thus at a time when the American presidency was quiet, when the world was impatiently anticipating a paradigm shift from Bush-era militarism, the European Union and European nation states seemed too busy trying not to step on each others' toes to show themselves to be relevant actors for peace.

These foreign policy failures are nothing new for the European Union or for its member states, and it is difficult to see how they can be resolved without some of the institutional changes to the way the EU works (notably an end to the debilitating 6-month rotating presidency of the European Union, and a high representative for foreign affairs with a real mandate and ministry backing him). In both the rejected Constitution for Europe and in the Lisbon reform treaty awaiting ratification from Ireland, the

role of the European Union in promoting peace is thankfully underlined (however much these documents might be regarded as hypocritical with regards to this goal in other ways). But the longer the endless institutional stalemate continues around these documents, the more there seems to grow a disquieting trend amongst Europe's elites to start to underplay the importance of the ideal of peace as a continuing objective for contemporary Europe at all. Their thinking seems to go like this: *Europe is in need of a new narrative. The old mission was one of reconciling France and Germany after the second world war, but now that mission has been accomplished, and no longer appeals to a new European generation which does not have first-hand memories of the war.* In its worst formulation, this line of thinking reasons that the only way of 'making Europe relevant' to the post-war generations is to appeal to their own material self-interest. This philistine tendency is gathering adherents particularly as the economic crisis bites. It finds an especially clear and unapologetic expression in the manifesto of the European People's Party for the forthcoming elections, in which the closest concern with peace is a neo-conservative emphasis on 'security':

"In the past, the need for peace brought the peoples of Europe together. Nowadays, a number of problems require both close cooperation on European level and a strong Europe in the world: The current crisis on the

financial markets and a severe worldwide recession, the fight against climate change, our ageing societies, as well as terrorism and organized crime. Only a strong Europe will be able to defend and protect our interests in the world."

Although the manifestos of other, non-conservative, European political parties are not quite so solipsistic in their formulation, reasoning that is not at all dissimilar from that of the EPP can be heard regularly from many party leaders at European level.

A move from the 'idealism' of talking of peace to the 'realism' of talking of material self-interest might be thought to be 'only natural' in times of an economic recession. It is none the less objectionable for that. Europe as a political project cannot be justified on the basis of self-interest alone: the first few glancing appearances of nationalist protectionism and populism in response to the crisis have already shown how corrosive this logic is. Europe is an idealistic project or it is no political project at all. If all political projects that are committed to peace and international cooperation are called 'idealistic', then we might go further and say that no political project in the 21st century has any justification at all unless it is idealistic. In these 'hard times', just as in any other times, it is an obligation on the people themselves to insist on these ideals, particularly where they have benefitted from them so profitably in the past.



Carlos Vergara
Cacique, Carnival Series, 1972/76
FUJI PHOTOGRAPH PAPER IN SILICON
METACRILAT OVER DIBOND,
PRINTED IN 2008
100CM X 150CM, EDITION OF 7
WWW.CARLOSVERGARA.ART.BR

European Alternatives

EUROPA is the journal of European Alternatives, a transnational civil society organisation advocating the emergence of a positive transnationalism in the cultural and political sphere, and promoting intellectual and artistic engagement with the idea and future of Europe.

European Alternatives organises events and discussions internationally, along with the flagship London Festival of Europe each Spring.

You can find more information about us on

www.euroalter.com

Europa Editors
Lorenzo Marsili
Niccolò Milanese

Advisory Office
Sandro Mezzadra
Richard Zenith
Kaylpo Nicolaidis

Associate Editor
Nadja Stamselberg

Design
Rasha Kahil
www.rashakahil.com

Projects Officer
Ségolène Pruvot

Culture Office
Eva Oddo
Luigi Galimberti
Faussone
Alexis Gibbs

 editors@euroalter.com

UTOPIA!

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM REMINDS US ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

The political and cultural hegemony of the current economic reality seems to work on a double-track; on one level it tells us that the world is 'too well made', too coherent for the introduction of any genuine novelty (there is no alternative and only one rational end, so that all the means of social change become de-politicised; juridical, technocratic, as we see only too well in Europe today); on another level it tells us that the world is too fragmented, that the multiplication of subjectivities (and the respect these call for – in what is often an uncanny alliance between neoliberalism and multiculturalism's stress on individual identities) no longer allows for the articulation of a universally or holistically alternative project. Any alternative paradigm is deemed immature, unrealistic, and accused of utopianism.

And what is utopianism? Utopian is the belief in an unrealisable project that, in spite of and through its very impossibility, stimulates action and produces a force for change. Utopian is the neoliberal inevitability, with its impossible denial of any alternative to itself; and utopian is the alternative, with its radical assertion that another world is possible.

What defines an achieved hegemony is its capacity to hide – and eventually erase – any narrative alternative to its own. An hegemony blocs the articulation of political alternatives by masking the fact of their very existence.

The recent public and mediatic silence over

the celebration of the Sixth World Social Forum in Belem, which coincided with and provided an obvious counterpoint to the Davos Economic Forum, is a telling example of the ideological censorship of the collective imagination exercised in our present system.

With a transnational participation of over 100,000 people and five heads of state including Lula of Brazil, the guiding questions of the Forum have included the search for a new global financial architecture, the definition of an environmental New Deal, the construction of a just peace process in the epicentres of the "infinite war" (Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine...), and the organisation of independent/alternative press and information.

The World Social Forum began in 2001, providing a concrete structure and a regular calendar to the 'global' protest movement that began to raise its head towards the end of the nineties. The process embodied by the World Social Forum is nothing short of the attempt to globally articulate an alternative political, economic, and cultural future for humanity. What is more, it is an attempt that rests on the commitment of a global constellation of individual subjectivities, bringing together citizens, civil-society organisations, political parties, NGOs, and self-organised groups from the five continents. The demand is as much one for utopia as for a world where utopia is possible.

The most fundamental single question raised by the World Social Forum is this: Is there an alternative to our current economic system? Is

there an alternative to a status quo where the 500 richest individuals own as much wealth as the poorest 416 million human beings? Is there an alternative to the crisis of climate change that is not *more capital*, that is not a risible 'financial' architecture of carbon-credits? Is there an alternative to the exploitation of local and delocalised labour?

These – dangerous questions – are questions that political forces in Europe have given up on asking. Pronouncing them, is the first ring of a counter-hegemonic wake-up call. Over and beyond the specific answers that the Forum as such may or may not be able to give to these questions, their mere articulation – and the testament to the *possibility* of their articulation – represent a breaking, a forcing of the consensual paradigm of economic inevitability.

And indeed, the Forum as a site of dialogue consciously rejects to embody an 'alternative' in the singular, preferring to remain open to *alternative alternatives*, to an *archipelago of alternatives*, militating for no particular, closed conception of the world to come.

This is clearly laid out in its Charter of Principles, which prohibits the Forum from taking a public political position under its own name. This has not hindered the Forum from playing the politically crucial role of linking together geographically separate struggles, underscoring the necessity of a globally coordinated grassroots political response. But if the aim of such diffidence towards position-taking is to guarantee the

openness and representativity of the Forum, and to avoid its 'partialisation' under a single sectarian as much as totalising banner, many have critiqued the limitations of such an approach, which deprives the Forum from the potential to become a synthesising, politically propitious force over and above the individual or even shared positions of its component parts. Whether this should change, is a discussion currently open inside of the Forum.

Nonetheless, the contributions of the World Social Forum to contemporary political praxis are numerous. With its heterogeneity, it has advanced a new and positive conception of diversity, something that has gradually found its way into mainstream discourse; at the same time, by weaving that heterogeneity together it contributes to an awareness that single-issue movements are not enough, that an effective political response must be polyphonically coordinated; and that coordination must be global, which is the scale at which the World Forum operates; but that 'globality', however, must not be forgetful or conducted in spite of the 'local', and indeed the Forum contributes an understanding of cosmopolitanism not as a top-down, centralised political ideology, but as a process of organic coming-together of different localities, with their prerogatives and struggles.

The political articulation of such an understanding of cosmopolitanism is the greatest contribution and ongoing mission of the World Social Forum. A project we would do well not to underestimate.

JOIN US

European Alternatives is dedicated to creating a community of activists. The organisation is run on a non-profit basis, aiming to spread an intellectually and aesthetically committed understanding of the meaning of a transnational project and the potentials of the European construction to as wide a public as possible.

Please join our organisation by becoming a member, and receive each copy of Europa straight to your doorsteps, free entrance to all our events, and complimentary copies of our perfect-bound journal.



VISIT: WWW.EUROALTER.COM
TO BECOME A MEMBER



Marc Riboud,
Bal celebrating the
Independence of Nigeria,
NIGERIA, 1960
© MARC RIBOUD / COURTESY
WWW.HACKELBURY.CO.UK
WWW.MARCRIBOUD.COM

THOUGHTS ON A TRANSNATIONAL LEFT

A coherent European left must move beyond three false dilemmas and propose a positive alternative.

BY MICHAŁ SUTOWSKI
AND KRYTYKA POLITYCZNA

The European left has been in a state of crisis for at least three decades. Many factors, economic and socio-cultural, give rise to that; Post-Fordism and the transition into a “fluid” phase of capitalism; the functionalisation of the emancipation ideals of the 1968 revolution through a system based on hedonism and individual consumption; the Postmodern ideology; deconstruction of the welfare state; and finally, the collapse of real socialism in the Eastern Block. In my opinion, at least three fundamental political dilemmas – basic oppositions which determined the framework of the left-wing thought at the beginning of the 21st century – are wrongly defined, constituting the main source of the problem.

The first dilemma is one of the scale of action, the dilemma between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The opponents of the current globalization model can be divided

into two groups. On the one hand, there are the “sovereignists” or anti-globalists, whose strategy is based on defending societies, economies and communities from the destructive influence of capital flow, by means of strengthening the nation state and protectionism. As regards Europe, they are often against the development of European integration. On the other hand, we have the supporters of a cosmopolitan global government that would coordinate successive levels of management and regulate economic flow, thereby constituting that great community called Humankind. Both solutions are dead ends. The first does not acknowledge the asymmetry of forces between big corporations and national governments. Furthermore, it does not recognize the phenomenon of *Standortkonkurrenz* [competition between different localities] which is conducive to capital outflow to countries whose governments allow for lower taxes and social standards. The second solution would require structures and institutions of unimaginable size (just how many envoys would a genuinely democratic world parliament amount to?); but most of all it is based on universalist, highly Eurocentric assumptions, particularly applicable to those philosophical principles of law which would be valid in “the global republic,” but also required by such a community

of political cultures. It is not easy to dismiss the accusation that such a solution would simply become a new model of Western political and cultural colonialism, difficult for the rest of the world to accept.

Another prevailing opposition concerns the attitude towards the broadly understood “system”: between supporters of the swing to the centre and access to the mainstream (i.e. Giddens’/Blair’s/Schröder’s *Third Way*), and the radical resistance and dismantling of the system from “the outside.” The first side of that conflict finds its justification in Fukuyama’s “historical necessity acknowledgement,” which leads directly to the acceptance of neoliberalism. At the same time it supports the right-wing concept of transferring the basic political conflict from economy to culture. The Left may be permitted to fight for the rights of gays (women, children, immigrants, etc.) with the Right, but the released capital revels in the background undisturbed. The fight for acknowledgement replaces (instead of complementing) the fight for redistribution, whilst the lack of a left-wing alternative for the socially excluded pushes them into the arms of conservative populists (Haider, Le Pen). On the other side, anti-system radicalism allows the rebels to retain their ideological virtue untainted by contact with the mainstream media, current politics or political institutions. However, as Slavoj Žižek rightly points out, the capitalist system constitutes its own “Outside”, into which its critics are readily appropriated. The followers of the radical split, passing an alleged judgment from “the outside”, perfectly sustain and legitimize the *status quo*. They do so in various ways: as another economic niche (labeled “radical revolt”), in the recognition of pluralism (“hey, look at our freedom of speech, even for freaks such as these!”), or, in the extreme case, by constructing an Other-enemy exiled from the social and symbolic structure of liberal community (“enemy combatant” in Guantanamo).

The third dilemma concerns the subject of change – who are “the Wretched of the Earth?” Either there is “an objective collective interest” of some class, subclass or proletariat, whether conscious or not, or there are only separate groups of interest – the handicapped, for example, or subjects of discrimination. One side of the dilemma says that they can lead their own “micro-fights” (separately gays, feminists, workers in junk-jobs) but they will not make up one political movement. The other side of the dilemma thinks it possible that the multitudes created by fluid

capitalism and propelled by some “invisible hand” could overthrow the system harmoniously and without any intentional coordination. But both solutions would lead us astray. The systems of hierarchy, exploitation, domination and discrimination are much more complex than a simple class division. Contrary to what was the case in the 19th century, there are now very narrow elites, a broader middle-class (if threatened with pauperization), and a “superfluous” subclass, along with many unsolved identity issues. Individual and group interests are not “objectively” concurrent, whilst their sources of oppression are not necessarily identical. Separate “micro-fights” will prove ineffective, as particular tactics are often contradictory. Many wealthy Polish gays, for example, voted for the conservative-liberal party because lower taxes would allow them to move out to a more secure neighborhood. Their erotic pursuits, meanwhile, can then be conducted in nightclubs customarily avoided by the conservative population.

Criticism has always been a strong point of the Left, but rarely has it taken a positive standpoint. One should ask not what is wrong, but, as Tchernischevsky said (and Lenin followed him), “What Is to Be Done?” In looking back at the first of the aforementioned dilemmas, perhaps the only trustworthy solution is for democratic regional block construction.

.....
**“THE LEFT HAS TO APPEAR
 IN THE MEDIA – NOT AS
 PROVOCATEUR, BUT AS
 REPRESENTATIVE OF A
 COHERENT POLITICAL VISION”**

Of course, I do not mean NAFTA, but rather the South-American MERCOSUR and the European Union. Obviously, their current drawbacks and deficiencies are evident (lack of political coherence, tax and social policy determined at state level, and in particular the huge democracy deficit). Still, these are the strong regional structures which would stand a chance of organizing the world on a large scale, whereby the position of peripheral territories would be strengthened, whilst *modernization* would not have to mean *Westernization*. For example, a network variant of the welfare state (similar to the Finnish) could perhaps be adapted at a European level, but would be hardly conceivable as a global model. Therefore, other regions would have to develop different ways to control markets and redistribution. When it

comes to human rights, the regional blocks model would be more conducive to pluralisation and contextualization than today’s universalism and uniformity of the Western pattern. Lastly, the existence of a few such possibilities is conducive to a more democratic development of global regulations than it is in a unilateral world. The European idea of soft-power (I dare say our most precious contribution to the global order) would take roots more easily in the global Polyarchy.

In surpassing another “false” opposition – either entrance into or rejection of the mainstream – we begin to “shift mainstream.” Whilst staying within the framework of liberal democracy, we ought to restore the concept of politics as a sphere of *agon* and not *consensus*. Secondly, we ought to change (that is shift to the left) the scope of what can be uttered in the public sphere with legal validity, meaning that there ought not to be any pressure on us to simply enliven political debate with opinionated tomfoolery. What is required is presence in mass-media, the construction of a network of associations, and the credible symbolism of a political project. The Left has to appear in the media – not as provocateur, but as representative of a coherent political vision, backed with academic, cultural and pop-cultural background. As Gramsci observed, the political sphere is won over by the winning over of the cultural.

Answering the question about the subject of change it can be said that the role of politics is to properly determine who are “the Wretched of the Earth.” Different interests are not objectively convergent and proper contextualization and definition can help find the missing links between them, or “the logic of equivalence” in Chantal Mouffe’s words. The suffering, impairment and lowered self-esteem of individuals and groups cannot be reduced to one conflict. The intellectual and practical task of the Left should be to offer them a common political dimension.

Crises have always been a threat, but also a chance for the Left. 1929 bore the fruit of the welfare state in the US. The same outcome in Europe was imposed by Stalin’s tanks on the Elbe. Perhaps the current collapse of financial markets will help to end the end of history that offers as the only choice hedonist American capitalism or slavish Chinese capitalism. What do we get in return? To travesty a sentence perhaps never uttered by Marx (despite what Sorel hoped): even the mere thought about that is reactionary. We shall see. ■

Translated from Polish by Karolina Walęćcik



Angèle Etoundi Essamba
Rupture 2, 1993,
(SEE INTERVIEW P. 19)

THE FABLE OF CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Europe risks merging a high degree of mobility and flexibility with the immobility of the juridical and social status of migrant workers.

BY ENRICA RIGO

While I began to write what I initially conceived as an article commenting the latest developments of European migration policies, press agencies and the major Italian newspapers spread the news of a revolt in the detention centre of island of Lampedusa, which caused the temporary escape of nearly all of the 1300 detained migrants. For its size and impact, this is undoubtedly the largest revolt to have affected Italian centres so far. The island – which, beyond a mere geographical place, has now become a symbol of Italian and European migration management – witnessed just a few days before the migrants' revolt a series of local demonstrations against the government's decision to build a second centre, this time one of "identification and expulsion" (*Centro di Identificazione ed Espulsione*), which would keep migrants on the island until their final repatriation. The attempt was one of making Lampedusa, as already the case with Malta, an example of a European "Pacific solution", similar to that which at the beginning of the millennium has transformed the island-state of Nauru in a kind of open air prison for Asian migrants trying to reach Australia.

In Lampedusa, the local population has welcomed with cheers the rebellion of the migrants, who paraded shouting "freedom, freedom!". This coined a very odd alliance between the instances of the migrants and the resentment and aggression of a civil society that in the name of touristic development rejects the presence of the detention centre.

What caught my attention during the reports over the revolt was the command of the Italian language of many of the North-Africans who escaped from the centre and explained the situation and their grievances to the journalists. Who knows if the European Commission, faced with such an evident indicator that this is not certainly the first time these migrants reach Italy, would declare itself satisfied with this kind of "circular migration"? Seen from the perspective of the migrant, of those rebelling, of the transnational movement that in the last years has mobilised for the construction of a European citizenship "from below", and above all from the point of view of all those who are forced every day to face and fight the sprawl of juridical mechanisms marking their own life, this is certainly not a consolatory thought. It becomes every day more obvious, in fact, that the official rhetoric and state policies superimpose themselves on the concrete strategies and the transnational networks adopted by migrants, attempting to domesticate them. The recent rhetoric of "circular migration", sold as a reasonable and efficient model to manage human movements, is just one example of this tendency, if a paradigmatic one for its emphatic promotion by the European institu-

tions, and its capacity to function as a prism through which to observe the multifaceted constitution of a European citizenship in the making. According to the official documents, "circular migration can be defined as a form of migration that is managed in a way allowing some degree of legal mobility back and forth between two countries". This model of circulation management is directed to citizens of third countries who come to Europe "temporarily for work, study, training or a combination of these,

"OCCASIONS OF ACTUAL REVOLTS THAT SEE MIGRANTS IN THE FRONT LINE BEGIN TO MULTIPLY"

on the condition that, at the end of the period for which they were granted entry, they must re-establish their main residence and their main activity in their country of origin" (Commission communication *On circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries*).

Against what might be expected, the Commission does not propose any kind of measures to stimulate or facilitate this form of migration. On one side, national legislations would be probably sufficient, for they already presuppose "some circularity"; on the other, the circularity of migrants goes to complement the fight against illegal migration thanks to the negotiation of "mobility packages", which guarantee access to citizens of third countries collaborating in the readmission of expelled migrants. In short, more than an innovative model, "circular migration" seems to be an expedient to channel the man-

agement of migration into a pre-existing policy making scheme, based on a multi-level management. And not last an "informal" level, which, thanks to the massive illegalisation of migratory movements inside and outside of the borders of the European Union, guarantees a "rotation" of migrant work force not dissimilar to that realized with the agreements on the import of labour immediately after the second world war (on the two forms of "rotation", see the work of the research group *Transit Migration*).

It is however important to appreciate a number of differences to understand the peculiarity of the European model. Aside from the so-called fight against illegal immigration, the second pillar on which circular migrations rests is its *transitionality*, which is due to a juridical apparatus that by marking a series of temporal barriers [length of stay, etc.] constantly multiplies and reiterates spatial borders [conditioned access]. This is not comparable with the transitory nature of much management of migrant labour force in European countries in the after-war period, where "guest workers" were encouraged to return to their countries of origin once the need for additional work force was satisfied. Nor are we looking at a transitionality that virtuously leads to citizenship. We are rather faced with a prolonged management of the transit and circulation of labouring force through a system of mechanisms that permanently differentiate the access of migrants from the access to rights. The points-based system of recruitment already adopted in many countries is part and parcel of this logic, representing a

first step towards the European "Blue Card" currently under consideration. The Blue Card is conceived to attract a highly qualified work-force formed in emerging economies such as those of China or India, while not granting any access to citizenship nor, at least at the beginning, to permanent residency. In this way Europe – with a move that can only be called alarming – could merge a high degree of mobility and flexibility within the European space with the immobility of the juridical – and therefore social – status of the workers benefitting from this same freedom of movement.

From the perspective of a radical social critique it seems no longer sufficient to simply reaffirm that the institutional strategies for the control of the labour force mirror the migrants' practices of resistance – first of all those that, escaping the attempt to limit freedom of movement, *de facto* oppose the hierarchy of territorial divisions. If this can be an indication of the eminently political character of migrations, of their function as a practice of citizenship, the risk is that this same citizenship remains stuck in an increasingly tight corner. On the other hand, it is true that occasions of actual revolt that see migrants in a front line are beginning to multiply, and not just in Italy. The revolt of Lampedusa itself could be analysed through multiple layers. And not last that which, beyond any illusions on the reciprocal opportunism that made the protest of the local population overlap with that of the migrants, underscore that political practices can never be boxed inside of pacified categories. It is not always from where we most expect it that a decisive novelty arises. ■



Angele Etoundi Essamba
Symbole 3, 1999,
(SEE INTERVIEW P. 19)

AN ITALIAN BARBARITY

On February 5th the Italian Senate approved a bill allowing doctors to report to the police any illegal migrant who enters the hospital to be cured.

The same bill authorises the establishment of informal citizens' patrols. In the month of May 2008 two nomad camps were set on fire by unidentified groups.

On February 7th around ten migrants detained in the Lampedusa centre attempted to commit suicide, swallowing razor blades or hanging themselves with their own clothes. In January the United Nations refugee agency slammed Italy for allowing "unsustainable" overcrowding in Lampedusa. The number of people crammed into the 850-bed centre rose to 1,850, most of whom are forced to sleep outside.

The same day a group of Tunisians started a hunger strike against the imminent repatriation decided by Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, despite the risk they would be tortured upon return. The Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg defined this repatriation as in breach of rulings by the European Court.

Italy is governed by a three-party coalition combining Berlusconi's Populist Party, the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale, and the racist and post-secessionist Lega Nord.

EUROPE:

SOUTH EAST EUROPEANS REMIND US THAT POPULAR PROTEST IS GOOD FOR DEMOCRACY

We should not turn a blind eye to political abuse when it is perpetrated by friendly governments.

BY MARKO ATTILA HOARE

Idealism is the new realism, it has been said. Nowhere has the adage proved more pertinent than in South East Europe, where socially fired popular protests against despotic regimes have consistently worked to spread and strengthen democracy.

There has been an unfortunate tendency on the part of some of our political leaders here in the West to applaud popular protest when it is directed against Communist or other anti-Western regimes, but not when it is directed against our allies. Yet to hold such double standards today is to fail to grasp the political realities of the late 2000s. For there is a very good case to be made that states today that are less than democratic are necessarily less than perfect members of the European family.

This may be demonstrated by a look at the southern flank of South East Europe - Turkey and Greece. Both countries have been committed members of NATO for many years, but anti-democratic tendencies in both have rendered them less than model allies. Turkey's brutal suppression of its Kurdish population, and the resulting war between the Turkish security forces and Kurdish PKK rebels, has persistently spilled over into northern Iraq, further undermining stability in that already barely stable country. Turkey is a strategically crucial member of the Western alliance, yet its human rights abuses, its restrictions on free speech and its military's interference in politics are well known facts. Turkey's gradual democratisation in recent years, under the guidance of the moderately Islamic, pro-EU Justice and Development Party (AKP), has ironically, according to some sources, led extremist elements from the ranks of the secular Turks to begin closing ranks with the Turkish Islamists on an anti-democratic basis.

As for Greece, though its restric-

tions on democracy and human rights abuses are not on the scale of Turkey's, as a pillar of democracy in the Balkans it scores much lower than its eastern neighbour. Greece's disgraceful role in regional politics includes its past support for the Milosevic regime, its undermining of the fragile states of Macedonia and Kosovo.

Both Greece and Turkey are, however, countries whose internal politics are very much in states of flux. Greece has in recent weeks been the scene of a huge explosion of social anger on the part of youth and workers, directed against the very government of Costas Karamanlis that has been proving such a menace to regional stability. The protests have included riots, vandalism and assaults on police officers, something that can only be condemned. But the violent element cannot obscure the large numbers of Greeks who have been protesting and striking peacefully. Although the protests have now passed their peak, the social struggle in Greece is not over; Greek farmers have recently been blockading roads and border crossings in Greece in protest at the low prices of farm produce. It would be a mistake to see these protests purely in social terms; as was the case with the Romanian revolution of 1989, the Greek protests, fired as they are by social grievances, may have positive political effects. There is every reason to hope that these protests will hasten the end of the Karamanlis regime and contribute to a political rejuvenation of Greek politics, resulting in a country more at peace with itself and with its neighbours.

There was a time, perhaps still not completely past, when radical socialists would see in every wave of social protest the harbinger of the overthrow of capitalism, and many members of the conservative right would fear such protest for the same reason. Yet saner heads today know this is false: ordinary people are fundamentally conservative with a small 'c'. They do not want the overthrow of capitalism, or revolution for revolution's sake, but engage in social protest defensively, when the system seems to be letting them down. What

Ferhat Özgür
I LOVE YOU 301, 2007
(FROM TRIENNALE BOVISA, "SAVE AS...")

they want is stability, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness. For all the Cassandras' talk of how recognising Kosovo's independence in February 2008 would drive the Serbian people into the arms of the extreme nationalists, most Serbian people are fundamentally less interested in Kosovo than they are in feeding themselves and their families - as was proven when pro-European elements won the Serbian parliamentary elections that followed soon after international recognition of Kosovo's independence. Bread and butter issues will, in the last resort, trump nationalist pipe-dreams; Turkish Cypriots abandoned the unrealisable goal of an independent Turkish Cypriot state when in 2004 they voted overwhelmingly in favour of Cyprus's reunification on the basis of the Annan Plan, because

they wanted to enjoy the benefits of EU membership. Greek students who had a better chance of finding decent jobs and pursuing more promising careers after graduating would be less likely to go out on to the streets to fight the police. Thus, the ordinary people of the Balkans, like the rest of us, have an interest in the spread of stable, post-nationalist democracy.

Quieter, but perhaps ultimately more significant than the social explosion in Greece, is the movement to apologise for the Armenian genocide currently under way in Turkey;

.....
"IN THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD, IN PRINCIPLE, OUR GOVERNMENTS GOVERN WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE."
.....

more than 28,000 Turkish citizens to date have signed a petition drafted by a group of Turkish intellectuals apologising for what happened to the Armenians in 1915. Turkish state prosecutors have announced they will not take action against the organisers of the petition. This campaign, the work of entirely mainstream Turkish academics, journalists and others, marks a tremendous step forward for Turkish democracy; a step toward a Turkey that will, it is to be hoped, enjoy normal relations with neighbours like Armenia, Cyprus and Iraq, and whose commitment to, and sharing of the values of, democratic Europe will be unquestioned. Yet this process of democratisation depends entirely on the initiatives of brave individuals, such as the organisers of the apology petition.

No southeast European nation is a stauncher friend of the West than Kosovo. Here, a particularly active protest movement exists, directed against the international administration of the country but catalysed by social discontent, and spearheaded by the group known as 'Vetevendosje', which is Albanian for 'self-determination'. Given the dismal record and stupendous corruption of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the pusillanimity of the EU in resisting Serbian efforts to destabilise Kosovo, the frustration and anger that have spawned this movement can only be described as entirely legitimate and justified. The people of Kosovo are as deserving of full democracy as any other nation, and full democracy requires full international independence. If we allow the international administration of Kosovo to drag on indefinitely, without any meaningful progress on the reintegration of the Serb-controlled areas, we shall only have ourselves to blame for any future popular explosions in Kosovo in which the international administration finds itself on the receiving end.

The Russians have something to teach us about how not to treat one's allies. After the Russians cut gas supplies to the Balkans in the course of their recent dispute with Ukraine, citizens of Russia's supposed 'ally' Serbia, in the industrial city of Kragujevac, burned a Russian flag earlier this month in protest at being left without

A person who publicly denigrates Turkishness,	the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey,
shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and three years.	A person who publicly denigrates the Government of the Republic of Turkey,
the judicial institutions of the state,	shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and two years.
shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and two years.	I love you 301

INSIDE / OUTSIDE

heat during the winter. And as one elderly Belgrade resident was quoted as saying, 'Russians always gave us nothing but misery. They should never be trusted, as this gas blackmail of Europe shows'. Resentment of Russia is not limited to Serbia, but has spread across eastern Europe. In the words of one elderly citizen of Bulgaria, another country frequently described as traditionally pro-Russian: 'This is a war without weapons in which Russia has used its control of energy supply to flex its muscles in front of the world... I am cold and angry. We have always been dependent on Russia, and this crisis shows that the situation hasn't changed. Instead of bombs or missiles, they want us to freeze to death.' In the Bulgarian port of Varna, residents demonstrated in front of the Russian consulate, holding banners that read 'Stop Putin's gas war'. Moscow's mistake has been to wage its gas war indiscriminately, without taking into account the effect this would have on South East Europeans upon whose goodwill its geopolitical ambitions ultimately depend.

In the democratic world, in principle, our governments govern with the consent of the people. Our elected leaders should not forget this; as ordinary people in Greece, Kosova and other South East European countries have shown us, citizens are still capable of taking to the streets to punish politicians who fail to protect them. ■

THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF A EUROPEAN 'NEIGHBOUR'

After the crisis of Summer 2008, the European Neighbourhood program in Georgia has become even more important. But beyond policy the cultural dimension cannot be forgotten.

BY DR. LEVAN KHETAGURI

Neighbourhood policy and the role of Europe

I will not hide the fact that co-operation with the European Neighbourhood policy program, the signing of this document and in particular the involvement of cultural cooperation in this program is of utmost importance not only for the citizens of Georgia but for the whole Caucasus region. This program should play a key role in the further development of civil society.

In spite of all this, there are issues that cannot be regulated by programs only. Further integration with Europe – a historical process for Georgia – is a positive process itself. From ancient times Georgia considered its role as being an integral part of antique and Byzantine world. The perspective of becoming a member of European Union instead of just being its neighbour is a serious stimulus for citizens of Georgia. But against the background of the euphoria created by this positive fact, I will hazard to share with you some questions which are preoccupying me at this time:

Basic Values or a Price?

Are the so-called western values more important to Europe than let's say capital, money, prosperity, power?

Are the western values geographical to Europe or Universal?

I thought that European-western values were linked with the Enlightenment values that were first established in French Revolution

and afterwards in the Bill of Rights. But nowadays what is of a higher importance: *the truth or pragmatism or fear of the powerful*? The world of intellectuals has diverged from the world of pragmatic politicians, whose supreme values no longer represent the truth and human rights.

Today a politician one might say: "I will not sacrifice my country's prosperity for another country's defence. I will not blame the guilty because he is powerful."

The so-called unity of the leaders is acceptable for politicians, whether it is justified or not. But does being a politician necessarily mean a denial of Western values?

Do Western values oblige the Georgian government to implement Western standards and would the neighbourhood policy be a stimulus and a guarantee of their implementation?

The current question is – does virtue have any kind of value in politics? Is the policy of European Union based on virtuous values?

Does pragmatism outweigh the truth?

Is the neighbour important even if it is not powerful – can friendship be based on fear?

Politicians or Citizens?

To what degree does the political activity of leaders take into account the views of the very citizens who brought them to power?

How transparent is the policy – are the written and oral political statements adequate to the real ones?

Does the neighbourhood policy consider the interests of the citizens or does it simply assist in strengthening the political elite?

Fear or Freedom?

Freedom is free from fear – today Europe does not fear Russia – how true is that?

And one more thing: how long do we have to fear Russia – is it not a neighbour, does it not have a responsibility that of a neighbour?

Did Russia indeed become a country, which has a responsibility for civilization?

Does everyone today have a right to freedom or is it just for the chosen? Who decides – one neighbour or a group of neighbours?

European Union consists of big and small members;

European Union consists of big and small neighbours;

Does the European Union have old and new members?

Does everyone have the same right in European Union?

These dilemmas or rather questions may very well be early or too late, some may sound silly or even naïve. It is just that the neighbours cannot be chosen or exchanged, just as you cannot exchange a single-room flat for a four-room flat and cannot improve the condition of space without wanting to invade. Nor can you put out an announcement – *I am a small country with a rich and ancient culture in search for a nice neighbour, one who will make an effort to scare or invade me at most once a century but not more; or otherwise we will not be able to coexist as neighbours.*

Hope

I truly think that neighbourhood policy does have a chance to prove that enlightenment values really are transcendent: that they defy time and political seductions. ■



DOSSIER:

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA: SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AFTER THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

The financial crisis gives an opportunity to define a new society in Europe. A new European socialism will be based on freedom, economic security, equality and democracy.

BY STEFAN COLLIGNON

A new era is dawning. The financial crisis of 2008 is not the end of capitalism. Capitalism dates back to the Medici revolution, which invented modern banking, but since then it has gone through many different regimes and articulations. The 2008 crisis marks the end of the Reagan-Thatcher counter-revolution. Neoliberalism and monetarism are dead. Even Nicolas Sarkozy now calls for the re-foundation of capitalism. This does not mean that thousands of policymakers are not continuing to implement old recipes, helplessly watching their loss of control over events. Antonio Gramsci once said a crisis is when the old is dead, but the new not yet born.

With the election of Barack Obama new paradigms in policy-making become possible. Yes, we can reconcile markets and social justice; we can invent a new social model for Europe. We can integrate the real and financial economy. But how? European social democrats were able to shape various epochs to different degrees. How can they adapt to the new situation?

A new perspective for Europe's left needs to integrate economic and political norms and values into a coherent project for society. Since World War II, three paradigms have dominated political and economic thinking in the world. In the East, Marxism rejected markets and democracy; in the West, Keynesianism laid the foundations for social democracy and political liberalism, while Friedman's counter-revolution developed a neoliberal ideology from the theories of monetarism.

Friedman's anti-Keynesian revolution was not primarily directed against the welfare state. His more

fundamental attack sought to establish the superiority of the market economy over centralised planning. In this he was right. Today, after Deng Xiaoping and the fall of the Berlin Wall, we are in one sense, all Friedmanians.

But this concession does not warrant the adoption of the erroneous monetarist paradigm. Friedman did understand that money was crucial to the functioning of a market economy. So did Marx. But they both remained confined to the classical economic paradigm, whereby markets are places for exchange of 'real' goods, while money was simply a veil that covered the reality. Marx drew the radical conclusion that capital and therefore money must be abolished. Not surprisingly, the 'new' economy of communism resembled the old: resources were allocated by hierarchy, and not by contracts between free and equal individuals; markets and consumer choice were suppressed. Friedman and his followers took another track: if money was a veil, it could distort. Inflation was the main cause of

"A NEW ERA OF HUMAN FULFILMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS IS WITHIN REACH, IF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN EUROPE DRAW THE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FAILURES OF THE PREVIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PARADIGM".

distortions. Monetary policy therefore had to ensure price stability so that markets remained transparent and efficient. Only in the absence of inflation would prices send out the right signals to firms and consumers. Perfect competition would push profit maximising entrepreneurs to provide optimal welfare. Markets' 'invisible hand' (Adam Smith) would then yield a unique equilibrium towards which the economy would naturally gravitate. There was no role for governments or regulation.

This paradigm did not recognise the important role that money has in *creating* markets and in ensuring that the promises stipulated

by financial contracts are fulfilled. It ignored that our real economy is characterised by oligopolistic and not by perfect competition. The truly alternative economic paradigm of a monetary economy was first elaborated by John Maynard Keynes; it has subsequently been fine-tuned by Joseph Stiglitz and others: money is credit, a bridge to the future, and not a veil. Tomorrow's reality is determined by today's promises.

Because the human condition is characterised by fundamental uncertainty, money is a precautionary instrument to secure access to goods, services and resources in a risky world. Therefore money is a constraint to our actions in the present and in the future. And competition means striving for money, income and profit. It is frequently distorted by information asymmetries and does not necessarily lead to the unique equilibrium of welfare where everyone is better off. In this perspective, economic policy must aim at reducing uncertainty and insecurity. The financial crisis has reminded us all: without financial stability markets collapse. But more importantly, the generalised uncertainty in the economy as a whole, including prospects for effective demand and employment, will reduce growth, jobs, income and wealth.

The legitimacy of Keynesian macroeconomic policies and the modern welfare state were derived from this insight. But they became dysfunctional when the neoclassical-Keynesian synthesis started using fiscal policy as if money did not matter. The vulgarisation of Keynes opened the gate for Friedman. A misguided view of markets led to the deregulation of financial institutions. Believing that money served mainly as means of exchange in goods markets rather than as the ultimate asset for the extinction of debt justified the creation of liquidity, which has fuelled the enormous financial bubble in the American economy.

Fortunately, the European Central Bank has been more careful, but does it operate from different intellectual foundations? Today, we need a new paradigm for economic policies that links markets to security, that renews the promise of mo-

ernity and progress; a paradigm that marries economic freedom to social justice, equality to solidarity.

Regulating financial markets today may be necessary to overcome the economic crisis, but it is

ANTONIO GRAMSCI ONCE SAID A CRISIS IS WHEN THE OLD IS DEAD, BUT THE NEW NOT YET BORN.

not sufficient as a new paradigm for a Social Europe. The emergence of modern social democracy cannot be separated from the existence of market economies and therefore from the institutions of money and finance. Modern social democracy has gone beyond Marxism, without forgetting that capitalism endogenously produces injustice. For the political norms of modernity will only be recognised as valid and legitimate in a society where contracts are concluded by market participants who interact as free and equal partners. These political norms give priority to freedom and equality over fraternity, to contractual relations of solidarity over the patriarchal hierarchy of community and they emphasise democracy as the only system which allows individuals to control the collective as free and equal citizens.

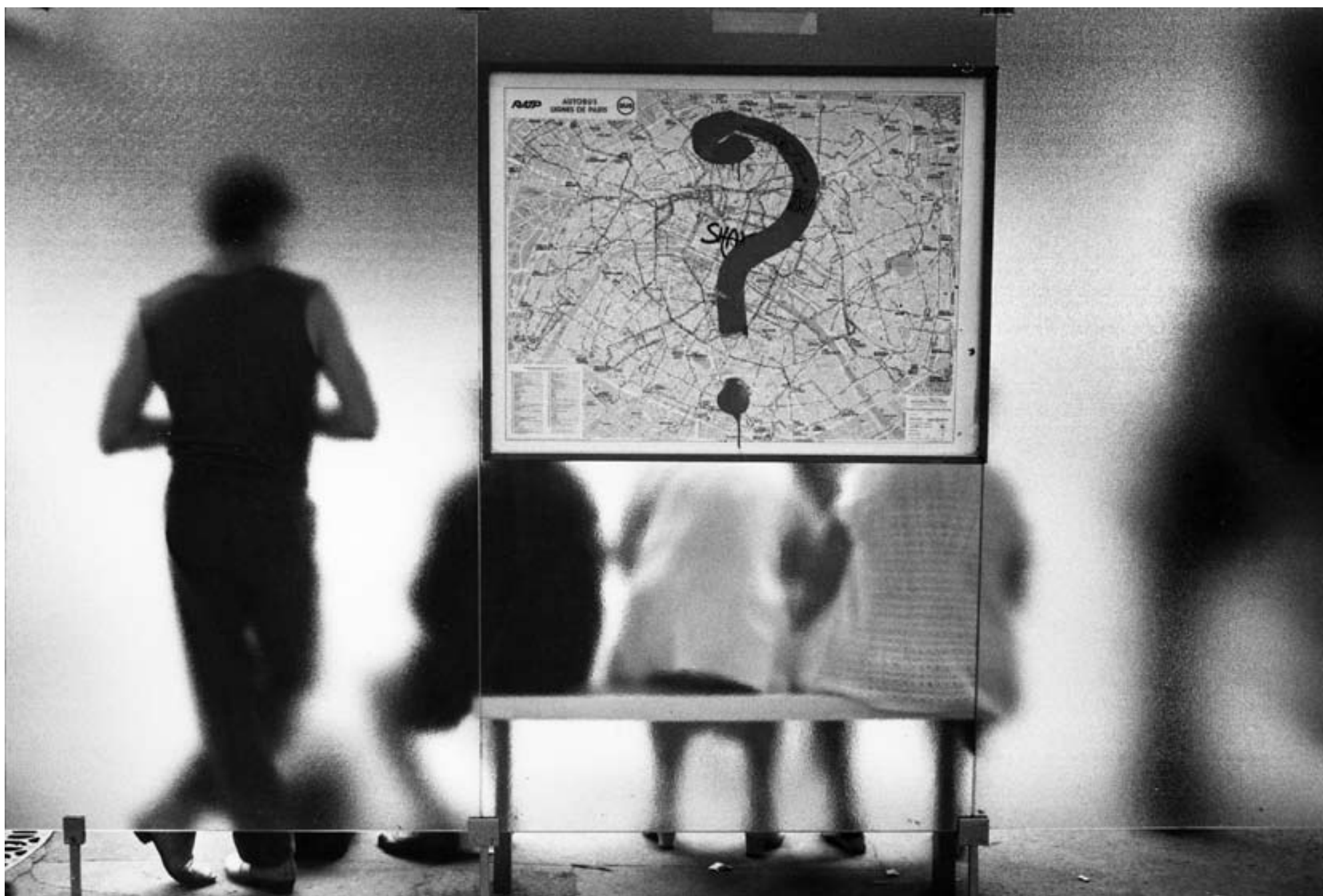
The aspect of democracy is of particular importance for a new social democratic paradigm in Europe. For decades, governments have behaved as if they were benevolent planners that were implementing 'the right policies' in order to make people happy. But few questions were asked *what* it is that made people happy. How much personal comfort are we ready to sacrifice for saving the planet? Do the rich not feel happier when 'wealth is spread around' (Barack Obama)? Do they not live more secure lives when crime rates are lower? And are crime and poverty not correlated? Does fairness not affect the subjective quality of everyone's lives? These and many other questions will only find an answer after long drawn out debates and public deliberation.

We increasingly find that citizens' input into the policy-making process is a value in itself that raises individual happiness. This brings

us to the issue of policy-making in Europe. For years Europe stood for peace and prosperity. But this association is increasingly put into question. Peace is taken for granted and neoliberal policies are proclaimed to be the only road to prosperity. But many citizens only find that their income is stagnating, real wages falling, jobs insecure, new employment nowhere to be found, while top executives make fortunes. These citizens have no choice over policies. They have to accept what governments and their bureaucracies negotiate on their behalf. If citizens in the European Union are dissatisfied with a particular set of practical policies, the only means they have to oppose them is to turn against the European Leviathan 'in Brussels'. Europe's institutions stifle political controversy and partisanship. Citizens have little to no choice between alternative policy packages. Yes, every five years they can vote for the European Parliament; but who believes seriously that it makes a fundamental difference to *their* lives? The Commission President is selected like the pope: in smoke-free secretive meetings between chiefs who are not accountable to the people. The assembled heads of governments have all kinds of interests but cannot, by definition, represent the *general* interest of the European Union. As long as democracy remains confined to the nation state, European institutions will not be able to muster support for the policies they pursue.

Europe must 'dare more democracy', to take up Willy Brandt's famous formula. But here again, new thinking for the new age is required. The growing conservative creed in Europe is that a European democracy is not possible because there is no European *demos*. What the advocates of this belief really mean is that national collective identities prime over the concrete interests of individual citizens. Citizens are assumed to fulfil the stereotypes of 'their countries' and they must surrender to what governments decide in their name. At best it is democracy *for* the people, but not *by* the people. The conservative policy consensus that emphasises cultural identities of communities may help governments to legitimise their

BEYOND THE CRISIS



Marc Riboud,
A bus stop near the Luxembourg Garden,
Paris, 1984

© MARC RIBOUD / COURTESY:
WWW.HACKELBURY.CO.UK
WWW.MARCRIBOUD.COM

.....
**“IF EUROPE’S SOCIAL
 DEMOCRACY WANTS TO MEET
 THE CHALLENGE OF MOVING
 INTO A NEW ERA, IT NEEDS
 TO BECOME THE ADVOCATE,
 THE CARRIER AND THE
 IMPLEMENTER OF A PROPER
 EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY.”**

policies at *home* (‘we are defending you’), but it prevents consensus and legitimacy at the European level. It is the opposite of what Jean Monnet described as the purpose of European integration: ‘We do not create coalitions of governments, we unite human beings’.

The renewed awakening of nationalism is a direct consequence of the dominance of neoliberalism. By shrinking the public sector, neoliberal policies have broadened the scope for private and reduced the space for democratic decision-making. But many privatising decisions and actions have direct or indirect consequences for all. These unintended consequences arise in the form of negative spillovers and externalities, because markets frequently fail to coordinate behaviour optimally. What is done by one group of companies or individuals may be seen as a welfare loss by many others.

So what to do? The conservative response is to appeal to mo-

reality, customs and communitarian identity. They argue, individuals should conform to what the prevailing and conventional sense of ‘proper’ behaviour. Deviation is sanctioned. But in Europe, communitarian identity means national identity and national interest. This confinement prevents minority dissent from crossing borders and forming majorities. Pan-European alliances are blocked because individuals are identified with their country and have to surrender to their governments’ interest. In a modern democracy citizens are the demos, the sovereign. With democratic institutions, public deliberation will lead to policy solutions for what citizens consider best for themselves. Citizens will accept the chosen solution, even if in minority, because they had an opportunity to participate and contribute to the preference-building process. But Europe does not have democratic institutions in this sense. Policy decisions reflect a consensus among

governments and their bureaucracies, not among citizens. Public debates do not usually take place across the European Union, but only in the isolated honey combs of nation states. Nor is there any public choice by citizens. Like in pre-modern monarchies, governments negotiate policies with governments and states are the sovereign, not citizens. Of course, exceptions exist. The European Parliament has responded to public criticism of the so-called Bolkestein Directive on services. But as a rule, citizens are treated as spectators in a football match: they are supposed to support the local club with applause, but certainly not as owners of public goods that they all own jointly.

If Europe’s social democracy wants to meet the challenge of moving into a new era, it needs to become the advocate, the carrier and the implementer of a proper European democracy.

From the beginning, social democracy was internationalist, treat-

ing citizens as the sovereign, while conservatives thought of them as cattle. Today, European social democracy must fight for individuals’ freedom to take political decisions at the European level. They must acknowledge that European citizens are *equal citizens* with equal *rights to decide what they consider their best interests*. European democracy means, European citizens will be able to elect a European government that will make laws that are applicable to all citizens because they are all affected by them. It is now necessary that all democratic parties in Europe unite behind this project. A new era of human fulfilment, social justice and democratic progress is within reach, if social democrats in Europe draw the conclusions from the failures of the previous economic and political paradigm. But it is also clear that this redefinition of aims and purposes is necessarily a European venture. Europe remains the most exciting project of our times. ■

DOSSIER:

BEYOND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

With the financial collapse of September 2008 begins the development of a major systemic crisis.

BY SAMIR AMIN

The crisis is systemic in the sense that the further pursuit of the model of capitalism employed over the last decades will become

impossible. The page will necessarily be turned, over a period of « transition » (of crisis) that will be brief or long, orderly or chaotic. “Another world is possible,” said the « alter-globalists » of Porto Alegre. I would say « another world is on its way », which could be even more barbarian, but which could also be altogether better, in different degrees.

The dominant social forces will try, in conflicts that will become more and more acute, to maintain their privileged positions. But they

will not be able to do this unless they break with many of the principles and practices associated with their domination until now. In particular: renouncing democracy, international law and respect of the rights of the peoples of the South. If they manage this then the world of tomorrow will be founded on what I have called « apartheid at a global level ». A new phase of « capitalism » or a system that is qualitatively different and new? The question merits discussion.

The workers and the people who will be the victims of this barbarian evolution can defeat the social forces and reactionary politics (not « liberal politics » as they try to call themselves) at work. They are capable of taking the measure of what is at stake in this systemic crisis, of liberating themselves from the illusory responses which still often have the wind behind them, of inventing adequate forms of organisation and action, of transcending the fragmentation of their struggles and of over-

coming the contradictions which come from this. Will they thereby « invent » or « reinvent » the socialism of the 21st century? Or only advance in this direction, on the long route of the secular transition from capitalism to socialism? I would lean towards the second probability.

The Domination of the oligopolies, foundation of financierisation in disarray

The phenomenon described as financierisation of contemporary capitalism finds its expression in the expansion of investments on the monetary and financial markets. This exponential expansion, without precedent in history, began a quarter of a century ago, and has carried the volume of operations conducted annually on the monetary and financial markets to more than 2000 trillion dollars, compared with barely 50 trillion dollars for worldwide GDP and 15 trillion for international commerce.

The financierisation in question was made necessary by, on the one hand, the generalisation of the system of floating exchange rates (where the rates are determined day to day by what is called the market), and on the other hand, the parallel deregulation of interest rates (equally abandoned on the side of supply and of demand). In these conditions, operations on the monetary and financial markets no longer constitute, principally, the counterpart of exchanges in goods and services but are from now on motivated almost exclusively by the concern of economic agents to protect themselves from fluctuations in rates of exchange and interest.

It is self-evident that the vertiginous expansion of these operations for covering risks could not respond in any way to the expectations of those who used them. Elementary common sense should make it clear that the more the means of reducing the risk for a given operation are multiplied, the more the collective risk augments. But conventional economists are not equipped to understand this: they need to believe in the absurd dogma of the self-regulation of markets, without which their entire construction of the proclaimed « market economy » would collapse.



Liberia
Photo by TA Hetherington
2005
© TIM A HETHERINGTON
TIM@MENTALPICTURE.ORG

THIS AND THE COVER IMAGE FORM PART OF THE UPCOMING BOOK LONG STORY BIT BY BIT: LIBERIA RETOLD, AN EXAMINATION OF THE POWER DYNAMICS OF RECENT LIBERIAN HISTORY.

BEYOND THE CRISIS

But we must go further. The question is to identify the social interests that are represented behind the adherence to the dogmas concerning deregulation of the markets in question.

Here again banks and other financial institutions appear to have truly been the privileged beneficiaries of this expansion, which allows the discourse of the powerful to attribute all the responsibility for the disaster to them. But in fact the financialisation was profitable to all the oligopolies, and 40% of their profits came solely from their financial operations. And these oligopolies control simultaneously the dominant sectors of the real productive economy and the financial institutions.

Why, therefore, did the oligopolies deliberately choose the route of the financialisation of the system in its totality? The reason is that doing so allowed them simply to concentrate, for their benefit, a growing proportion of the mass of profits realised in the real economy. The apparently insignificant rates of return for each financial operation produce, taking into account the gigantic number of these operations, considerable volumes of profits. These profits are the products of a redistribution of the surplus mass generated in the real economy and are the rents of the monopolies. We understand therefore why the high rates of return of financial investments (to the order of 15%) were counterbalanced by mediocre rates of return for investments in the productive economy (to the order of 5%). This levy on the global mass of profits operated by the oligopolies' financial rent, means that the cause (the oligopolistic character of contemporary capitalism) cannot be dissociated from its consequence (the financialisation, that is to say the preference for financial investment rather than investment in the real economy).

The expansion of the monetary and financial market conditions that of investment in the real economy and limits its growth. In turn, this weakening of the general growth of the economy brings about the same effects in employment growth, with the well-known associated consequences (unemployment, growth of precarity, stagnation – even reduction – of real salaries uncoupled from progress in productivity). The monetary and financial market dominates in turn the job market in this way. The ensemble of these mechanisms, which constitute the submission of the entire economy (the « markets ») to the dominant mon-

etary and financial market, produces increasing inequality in the distribution of income (facts which no one contests.)

The responses of those in power : restore financialisation

We are now equipped to understand why the powers in place, themselves at the service of the oligopolies, didn't have any other choice but to put the same financialised system back in the saddle. To question the domination of the monetary and financial markets over all the other markets would be to question the monopolistic rent of the oligopolies.

Can the policies that have been adopted to this end be effective? I don't think that the restoration of the system to the way it was before the crisis of autumn 2008 is impossible. But that would require that two conditions be fulfilled.

“IF CAPITALISM HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE HALF OF HUMANITY IS SEEN AS «SUPERFLUOUS » POPULATION, DON'T WE HAVE TO THINK THAT IT IS IN FACT CAPITALISM ITSELF WHICH HAS BECOME A SUPERFLUOUS MODE OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION?”

The first is that the State and the central banks inject into the system a volume of financial means sufficient to wipe-out the mass of bad debt and restore the credibility and the rentability of the resumption of financial expansion.

The second is that the consequences of this injection must be accepted by society. Workers in general, and the peoples of the South in particular, will necessarily be the victims of these politics.

The actual crisis of the oligopolies' capitalism has not been the product of an increase in social struggles imposing the reigning-in of their ambitions. It is the exclusive product of internal contradictions which belong to its system of accumulation. In my opinion, there is a central distinction between the crisis of a system produced by the explosion of its internal contradictions, and that of a society which undergoes the assault of progressive social forces which nurture the ambition of transforming the system. This distinction dictates to a large extent the possible outcomes. In a situation of the first type, chaos becomes a high probability, and it is only in a situation of the second type

that a progressive exit becomes possible. The central political question today, then, is to know if the social victims of the system in place will become capable of forming a positive, independent, radical and coherent alternative.

For want of such an alternative, the restoration to power of the renting financialised oligopolies is not impossible. But in this case the system will retract only to jump higher, and a new financial debacle, even more profound, will be inevitable, because the « adjustments » that are planned for the management of financial markets are largely insufficient, since they do not question the power of the oligopolies.

There remains the question of knowing how the states and the peoples of the South will respond to this challenge. The analysis of the challenge with which they are confronted, aggravated by the crisis in globalised financialisation, is important here.

The question of natural resources and the North/South Conflict

Our modern world system must register from now on a qualitative transformation of decisive importance. Some of the major natural resources have become considerably rarer – in relative terms – than they were even 50 years ago, whether or not their exhaustion constitutes a real menace or not (which can certainly be disputed). An awareness now exists that access to these resources cannot be open to all, and this is true, independently of the question of whether their current usage jeopardises the future of the planet. The « countries of the North » (I deliberately use this vague term to specify neither states nor peoples) intend to reserve the exclusivity of access to these resources for their own usage.

The egoism of the countries of the North finds its brutal expression in the phrase pronounced by President Bush (one which his successors will not dispute): “the American way of life is not negotiable”. Many in Europe and in Japan think the same way, even if they abstain from proclaiming it. This egoism means simply that access to these resources will be largely forbidden to the countries of the South (80% of humanity), whether they intend to use these resources in ways analogous to the North, wasteful and dangerous, or whether they envisage other forms which are more economic.

It goes without saying that this perspective is unacceptable for the countries of the South, in principle

and in fact. Besides, the methods of the market are not necessarily sufficient to match the rich countries' demand for a guarantee of exclusive access to these resources. Certain countries of the South can mobilise significant resources to make themselves noticed in these markets of access to resources. Ultimately, the only guarantee for the countries of the North resides in their military superiority.

The North/South conflict has become the central axis of the major contradictions of contemporary capitalist/imperialist globalisation. In this sense this conflict cannot be dissociated from that which opposes the pursuit of the domination of oligopolistic capitalism with the progressive and socialist ambitions which could promote positive alternatives here and there, in the South and in the North. To think of the alternative, in particular in the immediate term and in response to the crisis, requires taking account of the right and desire of the countries of the South to accede to the resources of the planet. Humanitarianism is not an acceptable substitute for international solidarity in struggle.

The conditions of a positive response to the challenge

It is not sufficient to say that the interventions of States can modify the rules of the game, or attenuate the errors. The real alternative consists in reversing the executive power of the oligopolies, which is inconceivable without their nationalisation with a purpose to their progressive democratic socialisation.

The dimensions of the desirable and possible alternative are multiple and concern all the aspects of economic, social and political life.

In the countries of the North the challenge implies that general opinion cannot allow itself to be constrained in a consensus defending their special privileges compared to the people of the South. The necessary internationalism passes by anti-imperialism, not humanitarianism.

In the countries of the South the crisis offers the occasion to renew a national development which would be popular and democratically self-centred, submitting relations with the North to its own requirements, in other words “delinking”. That implies:

- i) National control of monetary and financial markets
- ii) Mastery of modern technologies as soon as possible
- iii) Restoring national control over natural resources
- iv) Putting into retreat the globalised management dominated by oligopo-

lies (WTO) and the project of military control of the planet by the United States and their associates.

v) Liberating oneself from the illusions of an autonomous national capitalism in the system, and backwards looking myths.

The agrarian question strikes more than ever at the heart of choices that will have to be made in developing countries. Development worthy of the name cannot be founded on growth – even strong growth – which is to the exclusive benefit of a minority – even if it were 20% - abandoning the popular majorities to stagnation or even pauperisation. This model of development associated with exclusion is the only one which capitalism knows for the peripheries of its global system. The practice of political democracy, when it exists (and it is of course the exception in these conditions) will become extremely fragile if it is associated with social regression. In counterpoint, the national and popular alternative which associates the democratisation of the country with social progress, that is to say inscribes itself in the perspective of a development that includes – not one that excludes – the popular classes, implies a political strategy of rural development based on a guarantee of access to the soil for all the peasants.

If capitalism has reached the point where half of humanity is seen as « superfluous » population, don't we have to think that it is in fact capitalism itself which has become a superfluous mode of social organisation?

Clearly if the global capitalist/imperialist system which really exists is founded on the growing exclusion of the peoples who constitute the majority of humanity, and if the model of usage of natural resources produced by the logic of capitalist rentability is at once wasteful and dangerous, the socialist/communist alternative cannot ignore the challenges that these realities represent. An « other style of consumption and of life » than that which gives apparent happiness to the peoples of the rich countries and is in the imagination of its victims must impose itself. The expression of a « solar socialism » (which we can understand as socialism plus solar energy) proposed by Elmar Altvater must be taken seriously. Socialism cannot be capitalism corrected by equality of access to its benefits, at national and global levels. It will be qualitatively superior or it will not be. ■

Presented at SOAS London,
November 2008

INTERVIEW WITH RASHEED ARAEEN

Rasheed Araeen, artist, writer, and founding editor of *Third Text*, analyses the state of cultural globalisation and the meaning of engaged art.

BY LORENZO MARSILI

1. SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES OF ART

LORENZO MARSILI: We are now witnessing an explosion of interest in the cultural production of the “former-third world”, of which the recent craze around Indian or Chinese contemporary art is an example. This dynamic, even if not devoid of a commercial logic, seems to be part of a general geographical restructuring, which some may praise as a potential new multipolarity of the art world. I have two questions on this:

Would it be possible to understand the current stage of cultural globalisation as a kind of replication/fragmentation of the periphery/centre relation, with a host of inter-connected “urban global hubs” pitted against a local and excluded “outside” (“New Delhi” versus the Indian “periphery”)? To what extent do these global hubs collaborate in the diffusion of an essentially hegemonic and homogenising trans-national artistic consensus, and to what extent can they instead contribute to the emergence of a genuinely alternative and de-centred discourse?

You have strongly criticised multiculturalism for inducing “non-white” artists to wear their cultural mask, to parade their identity card of “otherness” and “happily dance in the court of the ethnic King Multiculturalism”. And we have seen an early exploitation of “Chineseness” or “Indian-ness” in the blockbuster exhibitions that first engaged with artists from these countries. But can we argue that this seems to be changing with the growing maturity of cultural globalisation? China is managing to establish a very competitive, partly independent and home-grown “art system”, and I don’t know your opinion on the latest show of Indian art at the Serpentine...

torical nature and it can only be evoked or dealt with historically. To be specific, it involves looking at the history of ideas produced by art, not any art but that which emerged as part of human progress and advancement fundamental to modernity that has its roots in European enlightenment. Art sometimes followed its prescribed root, other times it revolted against its rationality; resulting from this conflict between the European rationality of progress and free artistic imagination has been a movement of idea that nevertheless did produce a body of knowledge whose critical examination led to the narratives of art history. What is this body of knowledge and how it was produced and by whom and how it was spread globally offer us an answer to most of your questions.

The problem here is of the spread of this knowledge under and with colonialism. Not that there was something wrong with this knowledge but it became a civilising tool in the hands of the coloniser. In turn, the colonised did accept, though grudgingly, what appeared to be a promise of better life. However, this acceptance and what followed as a collaboration between the coloniser and the colonised did not produce what was the basic promise of modernity: universal human freedom, self-realisation and equality.

What in fact modernity offered was an un-resolvable contradiction of colonialism; it could not be realised so long as colonialism was there. While centre-periphery paradigm, central to colonialism, was reinforced, philosophically or ideologically, by the gap between the European Self and its colonised Other, the struggle of anti-colonialism was or should have been to

“POSTCOLONIAL KNOWLEDGE IS TRAPPED WITHIN AND LEGITIMISED BY INSTITUTIONAL POWER”

confront this gap. This gap could have been filled only when the coloniser and the colonised were tied together in a struggle that liberated them both from colonialism. But, as the anti-colonial struggle became a tool in the hands of a particular class which was produced, nurtured and nourished by the colonial regime and which was in pursuit of its own power, the ideology of anti-colonialism collapsed into the illusions of the independ-

ence of postcolonial nation states.

While the former colonies of the West are now independent states, colonialism is still there. It has taken a different form; a benevolent form which covers the centre-periphery gap by collapsing it within a discourse that is open to all but not on the same basis. With this has in fact emerged a postcolonial surrogate ruling class in the so-called Third World with its surrogate intellectuals. Those intellectuals who could not be absorbed by the agendas of these nation states, migrated to the West where they now occupy an important place, both outside and inside the academe, as part of the postcolonial discourse. Although this has created an enormous body of useful knowledge, most of this knowledge is either reactive or a critical elaboration which only supplements what had already been there within the liberalism of Western humanities. In other

with their own different identities, into this scenario has been promoted and legitimised by the postcolonial surrogate class and its intellectuals. It is this collaboration between the centre and periphery

“AS CHINESE AND INDIAN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS ARE INTEGRATED INTO GLOBAL CAPITAL THE GAP BETWEEN THE EXPLOITING CENTRE AND THE EXPLOITED PERIPHERY HAS NOW COLLAPSED.”

that has produced the multiculturalism of ‘cultural globalisation’, in which Chinese and Indian artists are now allowed and are celebrated. As both the Chinese and Indian industrial products are integrated into the global capital and

obtaining the self-rule as the ultimate end. The self-rule was only a stepping stone into the continuity of a historical process, beyond the so-called independence of postcolonial nation states, that should have led to the liberation of both the perpetrators of colonialism and its victims from what has now become the colonial ideology of neo-colonialism and its world-view that now prevails and dominates the world. But this process was halted or high-jacked by those who became the rulers of the post-colonial world. Those who claim to have once struggled against the colonial regimes are now in fact complicit with the ideology of neo-colonialism.

2. ART AND SUBVERSION

LORENZO MARSILI: You have written that art has a historical responsibility, a subversive function. This journal has often called for just such awareness on the part of artists: can I ask you what you mean with these expressions, and how “subversion” can operate in the field of visual arts today?

You write that the only option open to an artist today is the commodity market, transforming the artist into a producer of commodity. I have two questions.

- This is a call for the restructuring of art institutions and the art system more generally; how radically do you want to pursue this critique, and what are its main targets?

- Secondly, to what extent are artists or cultural figures personally responsible for sustaining and legitimising a certain system of cultural mercantilism? If I want to hear Žižek speak on the end of capitalism I need to pay ten pounds.

You have been very active in founding pioneering cultural journals. In 1987 the project of *Third Text* was born with, amongst others, the objective of resisting Western “control” of the art world and cultural production more generally. In what way does the changed paradigm of cultural globalisation call for a change of political strategy for an anti-hegemonic cultural project?

RASHEED ARAEEN: Art is part of a historical process that should lead to a better society; and the responsibility of art lies within this process. It must continue maintaining this process, not only through new ideas and innovations but they must in-

POLITICISING THE OPERA HOUSE

BY PAOLA K

A number of symbolic occupations of public buildings have taken place in Athens as part of a wider climate of resistance and contestation from the events of December onward. Athens’ Opera House came to be added to this list., chosen as a symbol of established art.

An opposition was in this way expressed to the art-spectacle that is being passively consumed and the demand was raised for an un-mediated art from everyone, for everyone.

People’s participation in the occupation was impressive from the first day to the last. Daily, long assemblies gathered around 400 people. The occupation would host intense discussions on art and politics, free classes of dance and martial arts, radio shows, workshops, screenings, art improvisations and concerts. The main avenue running in front of the Opera would be closed off ever so often by people dancing in the spontaneous parties that would start off almost every night.

Messages of solidarity poured in from workers at the Opera Teatro Colon of Buenos Aires; from the University of Rozario in Argentina (which was also occupied in solidarity); from the group Revolted Women of Brazil; from Venezuela and from UNAPE, the Popular Union of Artists of Ecuador.

The occupation lasted for nine days and ended with a strong demonstration. For these nine days the Opera was truly liberated. Even for a little while, a building that hosted and will continue to host sterile ideas, dead art and indifferent people, hosted a cultural core of free expression and resistance instead.

words, postcolonial knowledge is trapped within and legitimised by the institutional power that continues to perceive the Other not as an integral part of the Self – and vice versa – but the one who can be accepted in its progressive discourse only paternalistically. The Other is now in fact accepted into what can be shared by both the Self and the Other, so long as what divides them is not challenged and transformed into a liberated space – a space that is occupied by both on the same and equal terms.

Although what you call ‘cultural globalisation’ is part of the demand of global capital for continually unending innovation and production of new things, the successful entry of the products of other cultures,

its exploitation of globally available cheap labour, the gap between the exploiting centre and the exploited periphery has now collapsed into this common goal. And culture is used to cover this up, producing global spectacles of art biennales and art fairs in which the colonial desire and fascination for the Other is put on display and is consumed like any other exotic commodity.

However, what I have described here is only part of the story. But a dominant part which is visible, recognised and globally celebrated. There is another part which is somewhat invisible, unrecognised or suppressed. It involved those who understood the true purpose of anti-colonial struggle, for whom it was not merely the question of

Jetez-les à la Mer,
Jaffa 1948
ANONYMOUS PHOTOGRAPHER.
SEE NEXT PAGE FOR CONVERSATION
ON GAZA CRISIS



volve a vision that leads to a transformation of society. This transformation can take place by subverting what is an obstacle in its way.

Art as a 'subversive' force was in fact fundamental to the radical avant-garde. But this subversion became pacified once it entered the art institution with a demand to be recognised and legitimised as art. It is a difficult and unavoidable paradox, un-resolvable if art must maintain its status as art. And we haven't yet found a way out of this paradox. The problem here is the individualism of the artist, whose main aim is only to strive for an individual success. Such a success does make an idea visible and distribute it in society. But by the time it reaches society and is consumed by it, it is no longer a subversive idea.

In fact, the institutionalisation of the avant-garde has today turned it into any other product promoted by the sensationalism of the mass media, and consumed by the public the way it consumes other things of the consumer culture. Its 'subversion' is now the same illusion by which capitalism operates and by

.....
**"ART IS NO LONGER
 PERFORMING ITS
 HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY"**

which it makes the public buy and consume its useless products.

Art is therefore no longer performing its historical responsibility, as it is trapped not only in the artist's inflated ego but the demands of a consumer society that puts the artist high up on a pedestal of the unique subject different and isolated from its own masses. Unless art enters and reinforces the creativity of the masses, it cannot be a liberating force for society as a whole.

Art now needs a new strategy which liberates it not only from the demands of consumer culture but its entrapment within the art institution. The role of art institutions cannot be denied in the process that connects an individual's creativity with the public, but this role has now become subordinate to the demands of art market for which art is like any other precious commodity. What we therefore also need now is the liberation of art

institutions from this subordination, so that they can perform the role for which they are established in society.

The point I want to make now is about art institutions particularly in Europe – as your publication is concerned with Europe. It seems they have not yet come to terms with what is in fact embedded within their own structures as part of the legacies of colonialism; and this has prevented them from recognising the fact that societies of Europe are no longer white societies but have become multiracial societies, particularly as a result of postwar immigration of people from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. What we found in both Paris and London, in particular after the war, were integrated multiracial art communities in which artists of different racial or cultural backgrounds pursued the same goal within the movements of modernism and the avant-garde. Where are their achievements? European art histories do not even mention, let alone recognise, any of these achievements as part of Europe's own histories or achievement. I would in fact go further

to say that these institutions have actively suppressed the knowledge of these achievements; and have instead turned to the promotion and celebration of what could be considered by them outside the movements of modernism and the avant-garde.

This brings back me to your first question about the 'explosion of interest in the cultural production of the "former-third world", to say that the art institutions in Europe are in fact behind what you call 'cultural globalisation'. Why are these institutions promoting what are no more than the spectacles of exoticism of other cultures, while suppressing what their own postwar multiracial societies have produced in art? Why is 'cultural globalisation' more important for these institutions than what was necessary for the internal transformations of European societies?

The achievements of the postwar multiracial societies of Europe was in fact an allegory, that which provided a historical model for the postcolonial transformation of these societies. But the suppression of this achievement shows that Eu-

rope is perhaps not yet ready or unwilling for this transformation.

The critical role of *Third Text* should therefore remain in removing those obstacles which halt or stop historical processes of society's social transformation; in particular to expose what is suppressed as knowledge. What *Third Text* faced, and has been facing since its emergence in 1987, was an extremely difficult task. It was the task of both confronting and negotiating both the postcolonial conditions responsible for 'cultural globalisation' and the institutional power that produced and legitimised them. This involved many compromises; sometimes even against our own objectives. But these compromises were necessary. Without these compromises *Third Text* would not be there, still operating after twenty two years of its existence. However, we have not capitulated to the dominant view and become one of its postcolonial functionaries. *Third Text* hasn't achieved all its objectives, but we have not given up the hope. ■

London, 3rd February, 2009
 See Back Cover for Rasheed Araeen's
 Manifesto for the 21st Century

ZONES OF CONFLICT: GAZA AND THE QUESTION OF THE REFUGEE

EYAL SIVAN AND EYAL WEIZMAN IN CONVERSATION



Photo by Ikey Green

Eyal Sivan is a filmmaker, producer and essayist, born in Haifa Israel; Eyal Weizman is director of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University. In this conversation, which took place as part of the conference Zones of Conflict, they approach the critical topic of the recent invasion of Gaza, and the resulting question of the position of the refugee.

Eyal Weizman: The destruction and the killing are on a huge scale. For us critically engaged in war and conflict, the problem is the assumption that if we exposed the level of atrocity and violence, if we brought it into heightened visibility, there would be an equally forceful, responsible, political public reaction that transferred outrage into a political action directed at stopping atrocities. But what if outrage itself becomes part of the logic of the application of

power here? From the last two major attacks it was involved in, Lebanon and Gaza, it became clear that the Israeli military, realising that it cannot fight counterinsurgency and urban war, opts to terrorise the population until it exercises sufficient pressure on its elected government to comply with the state's security vision. Thus the level of destruction, the dead children, the exploding schools and the overflowing hospitals are not "collateral" to Israel's at-

tack on Hamas, but the central part of Israel's strategy to convince the Palestinians that they are defeated and that resistance is futile. So Israel needs spectacular violence in its relation to the Palestinians and the world – the latter should acquiesce to its ultimatums to avoid generating an even larger catastrophe. We are faced with the mediatisation and amplification of rage used in continuation with a state logic that seeks to demonstrate its punishing

violence. If this is the case – should we even think about calling outrage? Should we find new ways of opposition?

Against the saturation of images of collapse and catastrophe, should we call for a strategy of withdrawal, a withdrawal of the image and of information? Or maybe there a way to engage in critical debate while taking this paradox into account, dealing with its proliferation in relation to a search for political transformation vis-à-vis an event? Should we absolutely ignore that event, or should we contribute to its hyper-visibility?

I think that we must initially, rather coldly examine the terms that are being employed: firstly, the 'War on Gaza', which implies the territorialisation of that war, as if Gaza was a sovereign, coherent, legitimate zone, and not a fragment of occupied Palestine, under a state of siege. We must not accept the language of the violence imposed. We hear of these words all the time, they have a utilitarian logic, whereas they are terms which need to be explained and reproduced as the categories of power itself. Another problem is that by heightening the visibility of this violence we may inadvertently contribute to the singularity of this event, which is in effect the last blow in a long process of attacks on Palestinian refugees.

Eyal Sivan: I am very happy to have had an introduction, because I must admit that after spending the time of the war in Israel shooting [a film] in Jaffa, I am quite confused. I was trying to make a film about the colonisation of the symbol of Palestine, in order to reflect on the fact that the only common symbol for the people that are living in this place called Palestine or Israel is the orange. I was trying to make a film about this commonality, this being together, which is in fact what Palestine was. And it was not a zone of conflict, but became a zone of conflict. The few thousand Palestinians in Jaffa have relatives in Gaza, because the refugees in Gaza are from Jaffa and from all those places that were under threat of the missiles from Gaza. There was a map published in the Israeli papers on the first day of the attack, which showed the range of the missiles coming from Gaza. And strange enough it was also a map of the places where the refugees now living in Gaza are originated from. They are the same places attacked by the Palestinian rockets, it is in some way an act of return. All those places are the places where the people who are under attack in Gaza have come from. And at the same time I was there in Jaffa trying to make a film on something that doesn't exist.

We have the possibility to reflect, and almost the need to understand. For us, all that's going on is a ques-

tion of denial. Denial is the nature of those populations that are under attack, which is not only the denial of the status of the refugees, but also the fact that there is or was something that is Palestine.

And so within this wordless, speechless position, while I was working in the last twenty years in that zone, the zone of conflict shifted, I became the zone of conflict.

Eyal Weizman: Indeed what is not discussed in context of this war is that the violence is directed at refugees. This is a part of an ongoing "war on refugees", the [provisional] culmination of a historical process that started with the ethnic cleansing of southern Palestine in the fall of 1948.

I think that "war on refugee" is a distinct type of military/political/economical action that is afflicted

.....

"THE "WAR ON REFUGEES" ATTEMPTS TO UNDO THE "REFUGEE" AS A POLITICAL CATEGORY, BECAUSE THIS CATEGORY IS PERCEIVED AS DESTRUCTIVE AND NIHILIST."

.....

on Palestinian refugees and which is undertaken through both destruction and construction. The refugees are managed through a combination of violence, "generosity" (after all the refugee and the history of humanitarianism intersect very clearly), "threat"...and "reward"

The "war on refugees" attempts to undo the "refugee" as a political category, because this category is perceived as destructive and nihilist. In the context of Palestine, but also in many other conflicts worldwide, the status of "refugee" is a manifestation of the unresolved and even of the un-resolvability of the conflict – without, that is, major political transformations. The demand for return is the one thing that in Israeli eyes threatens the very existence of the Israeli political/colonial order.

"The war on refugees" is applied in two interrelated ways: direct military force of destruction and killing, is often, if not always followed by development attempts to decamp the refugees by the transformation of their habitat. This process of "development" based on welfare and architecture is an attempt to address an "unresolvable" political issue with a series of existing socio-economic means or even urban solutions.

In the context of the "war on refugees" we can think about the six-day occupation not only in territorial terms, but as the handing over of the management of the Palestinian

refugee problem from Jordan and Egypt to Israeli. In fact, between, '49 and '67 Israeli ambassadors to different states in the world and the UN did not stop to complain about the fact that Palestinian refugees were not re-housed and absorbed, both politically and urbanistically, as citizens and into the fabric of cities. The occupation gave Israel the opportunity to show what it meant all these years. And indeed in fact the first plans that were drawn up after the 67 occupation of Gaza and the West bank were not for Jewish settlements, which came only later. The initial plans were for refugee cities, which would be built for the Gaza refugees and move them into areas near Hebron, in the West Bank, into specially designed cities that would undo the collective experience and the refugee status. It had a behaviourist logic to it: if only the Palestinians could live better, have better conditions, they would forget their political struggle. It was an attempt to address a political issue by the means of architecture. But these did not work out for various reasons, as there was internal conflict within the Israeli government.

The attempts to undo the refugee took much more of a violent turn few years later: it was Sharon's idea, the Haussmannisation of the refugee camps that took place between 1971 and 1972, the creation of a new urban form through the destruction of built matter. It was always the perception of the Israeli security apparatus of the refugee camp as a rabble of people and materials – material to be designed and reconfigured to be better controlled, so that the politics of resistance could be singled out and repressed. The refugee camps were not only seen as the location from which resistance was offered, but as the urban condition that bred this very resistance. Sharon wanted to eliminate the camps once and for all.

The spectre of the reconstruction of Gaza was present in Israeli discussions from the beginning of the attack, it was discussed simultaneously. We will destroy and international aid will rebuild. Without this understanding that international aid will clean up this mess – I doubt destruction would be allowed on this scale. It definitely didn't happen on this scale when it was Israel that had to foot the bill for the cleaning. The territorial withdrawal allowed the increase of violence and destruction.

We need to underscore the continuity of destruction and construction, and to see those not as separate actions but as continuous ones that amount to the reconfiguration of the built environment – the way it is reconfigured addresses what is perceived as the political category of the refugee. And the category of the refugee goes beyond the immediate context of the actions of Israel;

it is more generally a destructive category, the refugee is that which goes against and threatens the logic of state and borders, threatens the order of power. The refugee is that element which will both delegitimise and destroy the state. Although officially most Arab states support and promote the maintenance of this category of refugees – the very existence of the refugee also threatens their political orders. This might help connect this attack to the larger and ongoing "war on Palestinian refugees" in a wider historical/geographical context - from Zarqa [Amman 1970], Jebalya, Rafah and Shati [Gaza 1972], Sabra and Shatila [Lebanon 1982], Jenin and Balata [West Bank 2002] to Nahr el Bared [Lebanon 2007], and further to the kind of violence afflicted on refugee camps in the DRC at present.

This is also exemplified in various discussions that we have been hearing in the past years, for example within the different agencies that are dealing with Palestinian refugees. There has been many recent calls to dismantle UNRWA as the agency that supposedly "perpetuates" the refugee problems by handing refugee cards to descendents of the people who themselves were transferred. The political and verbal attacks on UNRWA are strangely mirrored by the fact of military attacks against its facilities in Gaza.

Eyal Sivan: And we also talk about the resolution of conflict, and if we are able to think about the figure of the refugees we can consider that

.....

"AND SO WITHIN THIS WORDLESS, SPEECHLESS POSITION, WHILE I WAS WORKING IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS IN THAT ZONE, THE ZONE OF CONFLICT SHIFTED, I BECAME THE ZONE OF CONFLICT."

.....

the recent attack is an attempt to solve the Palestinian refugees problem. When you consider as the solution the notion of peace, peace becomes the solution also to the problem of the refugee, the refugee is not anymore a problem, while a resolution to the notion of the refugee also calls for a leaving of the refuge and coming back, it demands that the moment of peace be peaceful. I believe that we should think about exactly this element: why the refugee notion was not raised. Who are those people that are under attack? And remember that part of the exposure of the Gaza attack is also a denial of the region of the conflict, which is the original war crime, the ethnic cleansing and annexation of Palestine. Not identifying who are

the people under attack allows the act of denial of the very beginning of the conflict, which is 1948 Palestine.

Eyal Weizman: In that sense, when we think about the question of reconstruction this is what we hear constantly: a few days into the war, a big meeting in the United Arab Emirates was held, and the first billion was already promised, the second billion is now also coming. This is not necessarily a problem and its consequences could indeed be positive, definitively to many families whose livelihood will be saved; but how is this money going to be spent, and what are the long-term consequences of the politics of reconstruction? We must be tuned to that. There are many ways of construction and the problem has a planning dimension to it.

In some bad examples reconstruction – namely when foreign aid is given for isolated housing clusters that fragment and scatter the spatial and historical continuity of the refugee camps – disrupts the refugee-ness as a political and historical experience. These attempts to improve, to transform the built environment in which refugees live could be part of that attempt to undo the refugee as a political identity, i.e to depoliticise the refugee problem.

In 1951, for the first time the residents of a tent encampment on the beach of Gaza were the first ones to receive pre-fabricated homes. People finally moved into them, but not without controversy; it is this resistance to transformation, the constant suspicion of refugees against improvement of their habitat – rather than the fact of not actually allowing for any transformation (there is finally always an improvement) – that keeps alive the refugee as a political category. UNRWA builds extensions to refugee camps in a way that keeps the community intact. Other agencies are far less sensitive to these nuances, or else intentionally attempt to de-refuge the refugee. If one understands that logic, one can see the current situation differently. This calls for a nuanced and urban thinking that is tuned to the communities that have been under such brutal and traumatizing attack, and not only seeing reconstruction according to the Hamas/Fatah divide.

What we want to leave you with is the non-obviousness of reconstruction. This does not mean that building homes for refugees is by definition a bad thing, that improving the conditions on the ground would necessarily depoliticise this political subjectivity and identity. But it is a problem, and one that needs to be thought through socially and architecturally. ■

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE AND THE END OF POLITICS

EUROPEAN PROJECT AND EUROPEAN PRAXIS

The debate on the end of history is still relevant at the close of the twenty-first century, helping us to analyse the European post-political paradigm.

BY BOYAN MANCHEV

If, in a sense, the European project was an invention of the philosophers, is this also true for contemporary Europe, for Europe of the European integration? What is the operational and the regulative value of a philosophical concept in the political field? I will try to answer this question from the perspective of the philosophical and political debate on the End of History (a notion which I prefer to translate here, for reasons which will become clear with the development of my argument, as the End of Politics).

The Hegelian concept of the End of History reached its climax in the period after the fall of communism. It can be considered as the symptomatic concept of the political thought in the last decade of the last century, especially after Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). Is the debate on the End of History still relevant at the close of the twenty-first century's first decade, a decade marked by the events of 11 September 2001 and twenty years after the fall of the Berlin wall? Can we consider the contemporary transformation, or even crisis of traditional political projects, as symptoms of the End of History? During the last decade we have witnessed a process of

discursive substitution, which has to be critically examined – the concept of the End of Politics gradually takes the place of that of the End of History. The decline or the End of Politics is on the one hand celebrated by neo-liberal theorists, who affirm the supremacy of economics over politics, as well as by advocates of the "Third Way". On the other hand, it becomes the regulative horizon of the leftist philosophical criticism of modern forms of political power. Hence, the End of Politics appears as the new emblematic figure of political philosophy.

A central question in this respect would be – is the European project becoming a paradigmatic post-political project?

Alexandre Kojève and the European Project

Surprisingly enough, it seems that one departure point for a possible answer to the questions formulated above could be an investigation into the philosophical and the political ideas of one of the most original thinkers of the last century, especially in view of the European construction: the Russian-born French philosopher, Alexandre Kojève. Alexandre Kojève was not only a cosmopolitan intellectual mediating between the East and the West of Europe; he was (or pretended to be!), at the same time, surprisingly, one of the "authors" of the European political project.

Aleksandr Vladimirovich Kozhevnikov was born in 1902 in Moscow. After leaving Soviet Russia in 1920, he completed a thesis on the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Soloviov under the supervision of Karl Jaspers in Heidelberg. In the 30's Kozhevnikov

moved to Paris where he acquired French citizenship and accepted the name Kojève. From 1933 to 1939 he taught his already legendary seminar on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. The seminar was attended by some of the leading French philosophers and intellectuals of the period: Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Bataille, Klossowski, Althusser, Queneau, Aron, Breton, and Hannah Arendt, many of whom were profoundly influenced by Kojève's reading of Hegel. The seminar proposed an original reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, indebted to Marx and Heidegger, which emphasised the historical,

.....
"KOJÈVE WOULD APPEAR AS THE POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL "PROPHET" OF THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE END OF THE COLD WAR, THE PERIOD WHICH STARTED TWENTY YEARS AGO WITH A REVOLUTIONARY EUPHORIA AND WHICH ENDS UP TODAY IN A SENSE OF GLOBALISED FAILURE."

anthropological and existential dimensions of Hegel's seminal work. At the centre of his interpretation of Hegel, Kojève placed the negating activity of man – synonymous with human desire – the driving force of the historical process as a process of overcoming and transforming the material world through labour and the struggle for recognition. Kojève's seminar was published by Queneau under the title *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, in 1947. After the war, Kojève's friend Leo Strauss in-

troduced his thinking to the United States, where he also influenced Allan Bloom and Francis Fukuyama.

Kojève was not only a mastermind of contemporary French and American thought. Quite unexpectedly for a philosopher – a striking exception in the last century – Kojève quitted early – and irreversibly – the academic institutions in order to become one of the supposed mandarins of French and European policy. After the Second World War Kojève started to work in the French Ministry of Economic Affairs (where he remained until his death in 1968 in Brussels, during a European meeting). He had an indisputably important role in the construction of the EEC and GATT. Of course, it is quite possible that his role is exaggerated, but what most concerns me in this short text is the use of biographical fact as a symptom of a general movement, which radically exceeds the personal case: the transformation of the philosophical into political praxis as a founding movement for the modern political idea of Europe.

The End of Politics: Kojève as "Prophet" of the Contemporary World

I will formulate the following working hypothesis here: according to the logic of Kojève's philosophy of history the European project is the embodiment of the End of Politics.

It is not at all a secret that the prestige of the Hegelian concept of the End of History in the last century is due to Kojève's influence: its contemporary use is profoundly indebted to Kojève's Marxist interpretation of Hegel. Kojève saw the the becoming of Spirit as a material historical process. From his perspective, the culmination of universal history, or the end of history, is the state of satisfaction of human desires. In that sense, the end of the Cold War was the structural precondition of the fulfilment of universal history and of the becoming of universal society of freedom and welfare that makes political struggles meaningless, i.e. of the End of History. For that reason, Kojève suggests that the fulfilment of human productive capacities happens not in communism, but in capitalism, in the economic effectiveness of the United States, which would be joined by the Soviet Union. In other words, Kojève appears as the "godfather" of the "post-political era", the era in which economic regulation replaces mod-

ern political forms. To the extent that – according to his Marxist-Hegelian vision – politics is determined by man's struggle for recognition, the end of the Cold War thus implies the end not only of the political *struggle* but also of the political in its proper terms. From such a perspective, Kojève would appear as the political and philosophical "prophet" of the period following the end of the Cold War, the period which started twenty years ago with a revolutionary euphoria and immense eruptions of hope, and which ends up today with resignation, a sense of globalised failure, which has perhaps already engaged the irreversible process of the progressive destruction of our world: the period of "globalisation".

This is why I suggest replacing the concept of the End of History with the concept of the End of Politics. The diachronic historical perspective, a *progressivist* one, is apparently discredited. The End of Politics is a concept which speaks for a structural transformation, and not of a temporal reality, namely for the transformation of the modern vision of democracy into a post-political project. I believe that this redefinition would have an explanatory role as far as the contemporary neo-liberal and "Third Way" theories – typologically close to Kojévian legacy – are concerned. Kojève's assertions can be seen on the one hand as arguments in favour of the neo-liberal ideas of a decline of politics; on the other hand, Kojève influences a radical tendency in contemporary political philosophy to reflect on the possibilities of stepping out of the modern forms of political sovereignty (Foucault, Derrida, Agamben, Esposito). In other words, the implicit or explicit political critique of the philosophers in question is also influenced by a vision of the "End of Politics". In my view, both tendencies face unsolvable problems, related to the possibility of common action. How is action possible after the End of History and/or Politics? Giorgio Agamben, undoubtedly inspired by Kojève, is quite direct in his response: at the end of history, after the "fall of law", the human state will be a state of "inoperativeness" (the genealogy of this notion could be traced back through Jean-Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot to Raymond Queneau and Kojève). That is why, ultimately, the end of history will imply a return to the "animal state", as announced

CHANGEUTOPIA!



We are currently running *ChangeUtopia!*: a process of six transnational debates in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Warsaw and Barcelona culminating in a final Congress in London in the month of May 2009.

YOU ARE INVITED TO:

BERLIN – Art in a Transnational World

Date: March 28 2009 / Venue: House of World Cultures

The appointment in Berlin focuses on the political potential of art and its relation to the question of transnational struggle and globalisation, exploring the production of individual and collective subjectivities in a transnational space currently characterised by consensus and the market.

Participants include Gianni Vattimo, Boyan Manchev (College International de Philosophie), André Lepecki (New York University), Oscar Guardiola Rivera (Birkbeck).

European Alternatives

More info: www.euroalter.com



(above)
G. Roland Biermann
APPARITION 21
 TRITPYCH, 2004,
 SILVER GELATIN PRINTS ON ALUMINIUM
 DI-BOND, 160 X 47 CM EACH,
 © G. ROLAND BIERMANN / COURTESY:
 WWW.MYRIAMBLUNDELL.COM
 WWW.GROLANDBIERMANN.COM

by Kojève. Thus, through the mediation of Kojève's thought, we not only find ourselves in the centre of the debates of contemporary political philosophy, but we also find a unique position from which to articulate a germane perspective of facing the actual political crisis or *crisis of the political*, and more specifically, the difficulties of the European project.

The European Praxis

The world today is far from being the idyllic post-historical or post-political place envisaged by Kojève. Today the world alters before our eyes – and the most tangible result of the globalised politico-economical action in the (post-political?) age of financial capitalism seems to be the reduction of universal imperative and of the local places of justice. We have, then, urgently to foster a critical reflection on the vision of politics that carries the idea of an End of Politics.

But there is also a positive dimension of “Kojève's symptom”: we can identify within Kojève's philosophy and personal gesture an indication of the possible way out from the paradox of the End of Politics. Kojève's

crucial intuition is that the European question is a question of *praxis*, and it is precisely this intuition which is expressed by his radical decision to replace the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* with the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Politics is governed by the *common praxis*, or by the *praxis of the common*. And the common *praxis* is always political. It is not necessary to go back to Aristotle in order to affirm that the *praxis of the common*, i.e. the ways-of-doing-together or the actualised-common-form-of-life is the originary dimension of politics. From this point of view, *praxis* is something completely different from the contemporary commoditisation of life, which, according to Fuku-

yama's interpretation, functions as a means of symbolic recognition in the post-historical world and is the unambiguous sign of the end of political struggle: consumerism as the peaceful triumph of capitalist individualism. Fukuyama's lifestyle *apologia* is undoubtedly indebted to the famous Kojève footnotes to the second edition of his *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, where he suggests that the paragon of the End of History is not the animal state but the “Japanese snobbism”. There is still some meaning at the End of History, Kojève suggests: a purely aesthetic meaning beyond the political struggle, a surplus to the meaningless, effectively purified of post-historical economical regulation, as incarnated

by the United States.

Let us be attentive, then, to the positive resonance of “Kojève's symptom”, and oppose its post-political sentence for Europe. Kojève's gesture opens the question of the originary bound of personal *ethos* with the common *praxis*, which has the potential to oppose the individualistic visions of the “post-political ideologies”. Today, more than ever, we face the critical necessity to reopen the possibility of an affirmative political action. Only a vision of common *praxis* as an affirmative political action could open and govern the future of Europe. ■

The present article is related to research work conducted as a Robert Bosch Fellow at the IWM

I PAINT BECAUSE I'M A BLOND: MARLENE DUMAS'S FEMINIST EXPLORATION OF THE BODY AND IDENTITY

MOMA retrospective measures the political moments of the human form.

BY LOGAN ELIZABETH WERSCHKY

Marlene Dumas: *Measuring Your Own Grave*, an exhibition of over 100 works currently at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, presents Dumas's career-long exploration of identity through the human form. Despite the startling quality of Dumas's work—saturated with images of corpses, sex workers, and disfigured babies—the retrospective proves to be much more than an exploration of the grotesque: it is a testament to the artist herself rather than her work. Thankfully, Dumas is a striking individual, with a complex understanding of and complicated relationship with identity.

The piece “*Measuring Your Own Grave*” (2003), from which the exhibition takes its title, encapsulates the significance of Dumas's personal biography in her oeuvre. Beneath the inscribed text reading “*measuring your own grave,*” a figure, collapsed at the waist and with arms outstretched the width of

the 140 cm square canvas, takes a literal dimension of his or her own grave. It is a morbid image, signaling an approaching and accepted end. Death is a common theme in Dumas's work, ranging from the ominous as in “*De Wacht-Kamer*” (The Waiting Room) (1988) to the bloody as in “*Dead Girl*” (2002). For Dumas, the images she creates become her legacy and, collectively, a portrait of herself. In 2008, Dumas explained:

“I've been told that people want to know why such a somber title for a show? Is it about artists and their mid-life careers or is it about women's after-50 fears? No, let me make this clear: It is the best definition I can find for what an artist does when making art and how a figure in a painting makes its mark. For the type of portraitist like me this is as wide as I can see.”

It cannot be overlooked—one must take measure of the fundamental role the human form takes in her work. For Dumas's body of work is a composite of hundreds of images of bodies.

Through portraiture, Dumas constructs her own image as well as explores the theme of identity more generally. Just as she explores death, Dumas examines identity through the opposite extreme—origin. Sexual imagery of pornography,

erections, and vaginas are presented along with images of pregnancy, birth and babies. The small painting, “*Immaculate*” (2003), frames a shadowed vulva between pale and ashen thighs and torso. While referencing Gustave Courbet's “*The Origin of the World*” (1866), Dumas directly addresses the physical origin of life.

Dumas also takes a more existential view of identity. It is the complementary ideas of origin and of belonging which reveal her unique biography and provide perspective on her subjects. Her approach is often political and feminist, drawing from her personal history. Born in Cape Town in 1953, Dumas left at the age of 23 to attend art school in The Netherlands. Her departure from South Africa was voluntary, but as a white woman also political. While Dumas continues to live and practice in Amsterdam, she is well aware of her outsider status and the multiplicity of her identity. A self-described “*allochtoon*,” she demonstrates the complexity of origin and identity politics: “*My fatherland is South Africa, my mother tongue is Afrikaans, my surname is French. I don't speak French.*” This investigation of identity through the idea of belonging—socially and politically—is clear in a number of paintings.

Perhaps this is confronted most

directly in “*The Look Alike*” (2005), where Dumas portrays the face of a young man who was mistakenly apprehended because of his resemblance to an individual pursued on terrorism charges. In “*Black Drawings*” (1991-1992), Dumas assembles 112 ink and watercolor drawings of faces. The title plays with ambiguity as the piece is drawn in black ink but also displays the faces of black individuals. Through

.....
“DUMAS'S BODY OF WORK IS A COMPOSITE OF HUNDREDS OF IMAGES OF BODIES.”

providing 112 different faces, Dumas examines racial identity and representation. She confronts sameness and difference within this grouping and takes away traditional subjectification of black individuals. This is particularly interesting considering Dumas's profile as a white woman of South African origin who, whilst proclaiming that she is “*always not from here,*” benefits from white privilege, and also can overwhelmingly “*pass*” in Dutch society.

Dumas's work provides a strong feminist narrative. Through representing the body, and manipulating the body in her exploration of

identity, Dumas exemplifies how the personal is political. Germaine Greer, noted scholar and feminist, describes the importance of the body stating, “*The personal is still political. The millennial feminist has to be aware that oppression exerts itself in and through her most intimate relationships, beginning with the most intimate, her relationship with her body.*” Dumas's paintings of sex workers may come to mind, as the use of the body is so visceral, yet it is her 1977 “*Don't Talk To Strangers*” mixed media piece, in which she takes fragments of private texts (real and contrived) to construct—or refigure—a personal, yet publicly-displayed identity. It is one of her few works without an image of the human form.

The exhibition is organized somewhat thematically on two floors of the museum and this separation emphasizes Dumas's choice of medium. The 6th Floor galleries only contain paintings and reflect Dumas's deliberate pursuit of working in the medium. While other feminist artist worked in new media, Dumas decided to focus on painting in the early 1980s. This choice is a striking feminist act, challenging the gendered history of art. She has said, “*So I decided that instead of saying that in spite of the fact that I'm a woman, I also like to paint, I'd say I paint because I'm a woman, I paint because I'm a blonde.*”

This purposeful yet self-amused approach takes on the burden of history in Dumas's use of appropriation. At times she clearly alludes to historical male artists, as she does in “*The Woman of Algiers*” (2001), using Eugene Delacroix's 19th century piece, “*Women of Algiers*” as a point of reference in subject and title. She also takes on more playfully near contemporaries, such as Ad Reinhardt and Robert Rauschenberg.

Depicting the most intimate moments in life, Dumas creates images which linger in the mind. Yet in the end, the exhibition leaves you yearning for Marlene Dumas in the flesh. ■

Marlene Dumas: *Measuring Your Own Grave* is at the Museum of Modern Art, New York through 16 February 2009. It will then travel to The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas from 26 March – 21 June 2009.

.....
 (far left)
Marlene Dumas
MEASURING YOUR OWN GRAVE, 2003
 OIL ON CANVAS

(left)
THE WOMAN OF ALGIERS, 2001
 OIL ON CANVAS



THE AFRICAN FEMALE FORM BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

INTERVIEW WITH ANGÈLE ESSAMBA

The photography of Angèle Essamba aims to construct a multiform image of African women.

BY SÉGOLÈNE PRUVOT

Angèle Etoundi Essamba was born in Cameroun and settled in Amsterdam more than twenty years ago. Her work provides an insight in the complex challenges facing the formation of a truly cosmopolitan feminism: to integrate the attempts, views and needs of women who have very diverse experiences, without imposing the views of one group, i.e. that of middle-class white European women.

Europa: In your photographs, your main subjects are women, black women. Why did you choose to focus on them?

Angèle Essamba: I wanted to challenge usual representations of black women. These representations often evoke exoticism of black women or show images of poverty, misery, submission and lack of autonomy. These representations have been totally constructed by European media. They also show African women in their traditional

roles: that of mother and caretaker, of worker in the fields. I did not recognize myself in these images and it seemed vital to me to break with it and to apply another look on African women and on myself: the reality is way more complex, it is multiform.

Photographing black women is also a way to explore my own identity, their lives and bodies reflect, each of them in their ways, various experiences that I have been through. Many of my photographs are also self-portraits. I photograph the human body because it is similar to me, close, intimate. It is also the medium by which transmission happens -transmission of life. Marks and traces on bodies also tell an intimate story.

Your last series of work is entitled 'veil and unveiling'. Why did you choose this particular topic?

This strand of work explores not only the Islamic veil but also all types of veils and scarves; it is a logic follow up of my previous works: it plays with materials, fashion effects, weaving and movements. I wanted to focus on strength and elegance or for instance on the sensuality with which some women wear the veil. The veil dares, invites and seduces because it allows the gesture of unveiling. A naked body is not necessarily freer than a covered one.



(top)
ROOTS 4
2000

(bottom right)
AU DELA DU MYSTÈRE 5
1999

(bottom left)
NOIR 4

In some European countries, debates on the signification and admissibility of the Islamic veil have led to various forms of stigmatization and deliberate exclusion, which I want to challenge.

In some of your works you use superposition. Is there a symbolic importance to that in relation to your themes?

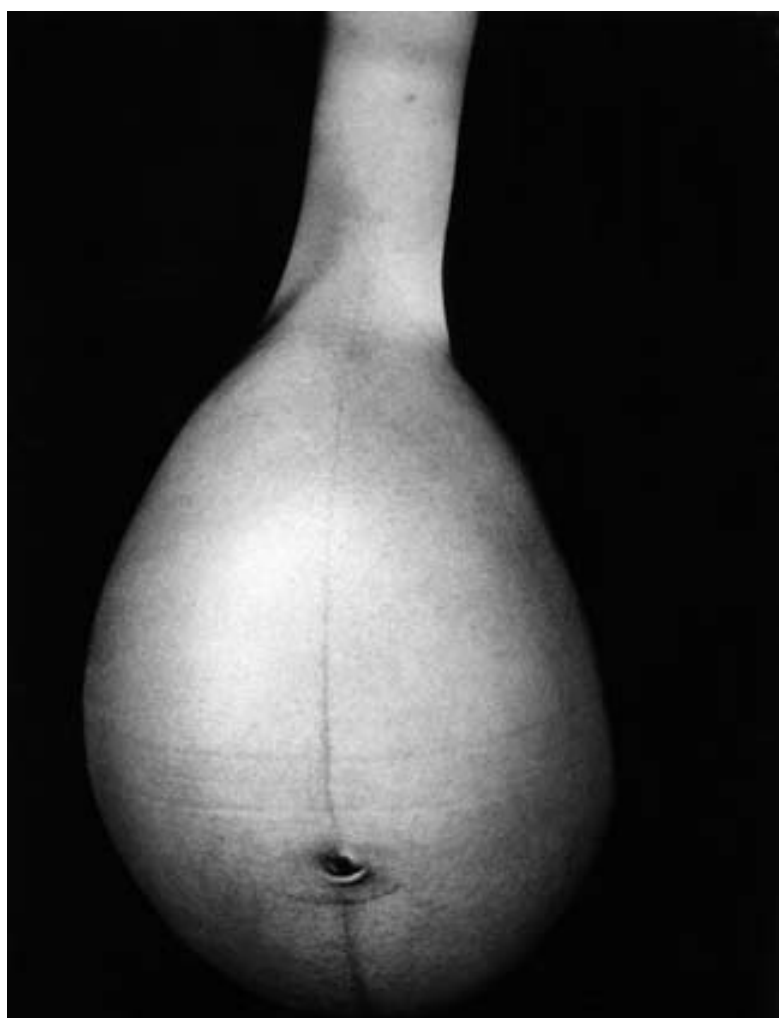
The work on superposition helps expressing the fact that nothing is totally "acquired" and defined for good. Superposition reflects the link and meeting between two realities, two worlds, between vegetal and human, between tradition and the contemporary "me". It allows playing with and addressing the question of roots, frontiers.

What are your sources of inspiration?

The artists that have marked me are too numerous and various to be all named. They range from Robert Mapplehorpe to Rodin and sculpture. Most of my inspiration comes from my African heritage and from the fact that I miss Africa. The audience often believes my photographs have been taken in Africa, but 95% of my work has been realized in my studio in Amsterdam. I photograph people I meet in the streets. They are also people who are in between, in between two worlds. ■

Angèle Essamba's photographs form part of the Femmes dans les arts d'Afrique exhibition at Musée Dapper, 36 Rue Valéry, 75116 Paris until 12 July.

Her work can be visualized on her website www.essamba-art.com



ECOAESTHETICS: ART BEYOND ART

A Manifesto for the 21st Century



Photo by Aurélien Rivière

Artists must return to occupy a central place in the social and political evolution of our common destiny.

BY RASHEED ARAEEN

Art is today trapped in the facile idea of individual 'freedom of expression', which merely produces the banality of media scandals and sensationalism, further widening the gap between art and life. Art now operates purely as a commodity. The tremendous success of the artist today has inflated his narcissistic ego, turning him or her into a celebrity able to entertain the public but devoid of any transformational power.

All this is due to the failure of the historical avant-gardes. This failure was not inherent in the ideas of the avant-gardes themselves, but lied in the way the criticality of the avant-garde was appropriated by the very forces it wanted to confront and change. The potential of the avant-garde to intervene in life and transform it is still there. But it must first liberate itself both from the artist's ego and from where this ego leads art: the bourgeois art institution. Art must now go beyond the making of mere objects that are displayable in the museum and/or sold as precious commodities in the market place. Only then can it enter the world of everyday life and contribute to its collective energy.

Historically, the struggle of the avant-garde was to integrate art with life, to find ways by which individual creative processes could enter life's own dynamic processes and become part of them. But it was only during the Land art movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s that there emerged, though paradoxically, a means of abandoning the making of objects in favour of an art of concepts. It was then that art went

beyond Duchamp's object-based gestures and became engaged with the land or the earth itself – indeed, in a dynamic reversal of the readymade.

The land had always been an object of the artist's gaze, but this time the gaze did not produce landscape painting. On the contrary, the conception of land as art itself became an artwork. This was achieved by intervening in the land and transforming it as something that continued to remain part of the land, either as a stationary object or what would transform itself continually. But, again, what should have become part of the living process ended up in the museums as photographic artwork, as an object of the gaze

Some ten years later, Joseph Beuys tried to resolve this difficult paradox by suggesting that his tree-planting work (Kassel, 1982) could in fact become part of people's everyday work. It offered a social model for the transformative power of art, but his proposal of planting trees failed to go beyond the idea of art legitimised and contained by the bourgeois art institution. And although Beuys' work opened a new space for art to move forward, it failed to resolve the problem of art trapped within both the artist's narcissistic ego and the institution that will not allow art to become part of collective life.

Although such radical ideas of the avant-garde failed – inasmuch as they were legitimised and contained within the individualism of artists – the ideas themselves are still there to be taken out of their institutional closures. The ideas were of course appropriated and their true significance aborted, turning them into institutionally manageable objects, frozen in their temporalities. But ideas as knowledge can never be frozen or trapped, either as the absolute property of an individual or the institution. They can always be salvaged from history, given a new context and made to move forward within the dynamic of

new times and spaces. They can indeed be made to perform a radically transformative social function in the situation of humanity today.

But in order to perform this function art must go beyond and integrate itself within the collective struggle of life today, and recover its true social function.

A piece of land can now be conceived as an ongoing, self-sustaining dynamic process with a movement generated from within, by its own agency, legitimising itself. This agency is not that of an individual, but is the collective work of those who work on the land. It is this *collective work* of the masses, not of nature as perceived by American Land artists Smithson and Morris, which continually transforms the land, producing an agency which is not only creatively productive but posits, philosophically, a progressive idea.

The phenomenon of climate change can be studied by scientists in their ivory towers, but the reality of its disturbing consequences is faced by all life on earth. The solution to this problem lies not in the theories of the academics but in the productive creativity of people themselves, which can be enhanced through the intervention of *artistic imagination*. What the world now needs are rivers and lakes of clean water, collective farms and tree planting all over the world – something that was in fact initiated in Kenya by the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Wangari Maathai, a few years before Beuys' proposal. The aim of *Ecoaesthetics* is to bring both Maathai's and Beuys' visions together, in a unison that fills the gap between art and life.

Although it is extremely important to protect existing rain forests, they alone cannot reduce the greenhouse effects in the atmosphere. Only planting more trees can achieve this, for which enormous water is required. This can be achieved by conceptualising the process of desalination of sea water as an ongoing continuous artwork, with its own dynamics and agency. The establishment of desalination plants around the world – which can be millions – would provide enormous quantities of water. Desalination of sea water as art is based on its potential to transform things. It comprises a complex cycle of continuous transformations of the sun's energy; when brought into contact with water it becomes steam, which runs the desalination plants and produces fresh water, which in turn fertilise the earth, producing trees and plants.

This phenomenon actually happens in nature. But when it is replicated through the combination of art, science and technology, its controlled results enhance the very phenomenon of nature that is replicated. The role of the artistic imagination here is to think, initiate and create not what is self-consuming by the ego from which the idea emerges, but what can transcend and transgress narcissism and become part of the collective energy of the earth.

Art must, ultimately, liberate itself from the romanticism of anarchic confrontation, from the prison of facile irony (Baudrillard), from the regimes of representation (Ranciere/ Deleuze), in order to become a continuous movement in life's natural processes and part of its collective cultural endeavours, finally becoming truly egalitarian. ■