

# THE MYTH OF EUROPE

DEMOCRACY EQUALITY CULTURE BEYOND THE NATION STATE

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IN THIS ISSUE

ETIENNE BALIBAR  
For an Alter-globalizing Europe

IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN  
Beyond the Crisis

DOSSIER: MIGRATION

JULIAN STALLABRAS, OLIVER  
CHARNIN & ADAM BROOMBERG  
On paradise Row

And much more...

## BEYOND THE NATION

**W**e are trying to accelerate while stuck in neutral gear. The explosion in the numbers of civil society NGOs, think tanks, humanitarian actions, international media, 'global' forums, protests and meetings over the past 20 years following the fall of the Berlin wall has refined the demands and raised the awareness of new generations, but it has yet to produce any political project that measures up to the heights of their ambitions. As more and more problems are revealed to be 'global' in their complexity and implications, and become increasingly dramatic in their effects, this impotence is likely to become more and more frustrating, the gap between aspiration and possible action ever greater. Over the past 6 months we have seen and felt a new stage in this dislocation, with the spilling-over of both hope and anger at a global level. The G7 may have become the G20, the United States of America may have elected a leader exalted at least briefly in large parts of the Western World, but even we citizens lucky enough to live in the freer and more powerful parts of the world are, when we respond to

global political problems we are passionate about, increasingly in the position of humble petitioners to our leaders, whether they are national politicians or unelected bureaucrats in international organisations. We have the feeling of rolling backwards from autonomy, rolling away from democracy, at the very moment when the interconnectedness of global society was supposed to assert itself. In a world where all the crucial political issues cross national borders, any new political project with the capacity to inspire will necessarily be transnational. And transnationalism goes hand in hand with the awareness of the increasingly cosmopolitan feel of European cities, providing a very tangible representation of the global migrations of the new century. Contributing to the articulation of such a project is one of the tasks this magazine and the organisation it represents have set for themselves, a contribution that this issue brings out over several connected articles.

SEE IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN P.4, ETIENNE BALIBAR P.5,  
& WHY EUROPE MATTERS P. 6.  
DOSSIER ON MIGRATION P.8-12 ▶

## INTERVIEW WITH NANCY FRASER



**N**ancy Fraser is one of the most radical critical theorists and champions of feminism working today. Her work on the public sphere, justice and equal participation engage with and challenge the emerging transnational political reality. In this interview Fraser talks about the challenge of transnationalism to public opinion in the fallout from the financial crisis, rethinking justice and pulling back the potential of social movements from the claws of neoliberalism.

SEE INTERVIEW P.16 ▶

Poder, Carnival Series, 1972/76

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# CHANGE

## BEYOND DEVELOPMENT: IL FAUT ÊTRE ABSOLUMENT MODERNE

**B**eyond cyclical economic crises, beyond temporary 'emergencies' dictated by the life-cycle of media scoops, and beyond periodical appeals to the emergence of a new Asian 'superpower', an underlying structural transformation of geopolitical relations is clearly underway. The outcome of this process is in many ways unforeseeable, and certainly will not become evident in a matter of few years. It is a readjustment that takes place squarely in the *long durée*, evolving over and defined by the fluctuations of time.

The catchword for the end-point of this process is 'multipolar world order', or a world where a 'system of continents', a polyphony of countries or regional associations, breaks the hegemonic unipolarity of the post-1989 global order. The main engine for such transformation is the group of usual suspects: the China of accelerated economic development and global ambitions, the Brazil of ethanol production and biofuels technology, the India of Tata and electronics.

When we take seriously the possibility of real geopolitical change on a global scale many new questions are raised and many old questions are reformulated. In a world where many 'former-developing' countries begin to play the game of political competition and economic imperialism, former distinctions between the 'centre' and the 'periphery' begin to blur. The evolution of Lula's Brazil over the

past few years is here a case in point; from hope of the new Latin American left, the country has been set on a developmentalist course with the clear aim of turning it into a regional superpower, with the priority of the 'wealth and influence' of the state silently replacing an earlier drive for social justice and equality. China, with its self-cannibalisation and self-colonisation, its neo-colonial approach to exploiting African resources, is a clearer case still.

But a multipolarity where individual nation states vie for economic and political supremacy is nothing radically new and nothing to be uncritically celebrated: the period of European imperialist expansion was in many ways a multipolar world, with the leading superpowers feuding over influence and resources.

If it has to have any value, the slow movement from uni- to multi- polarity must be accompanied by a parallel *transnationalisation* of political practice, a parallel movement that transforms the objective of political struggle and efforts at development and progress from the 'unicum' of the nation, from the loneliness of the tribe, to the *multitude* of the world's citizens.

We approach this topic, the necessity and possibility of such transnational practice, throughout this and every issue of this journal. But in these few lines we can offer a different reformulation of the problem, through the question of the project of modernity. Against ongoing attempts to relegate modernity and its sister concept of progress to a conception of mere

technical amelioration and material accumulation, it is more necessary than ever to fully appreciate and recuperate the *critical spirit* that lies at the heart of the project of modernity, its ability to *shatter* and open-up a different future.

China offers us a very good example. With the reformist course undertaken in the 1980s, which in the last thirty years transformed the country into one of the most fast-developing proto-capitalist market systems, we witness the semantic transformation of the word 'modernity' into a signifier for sheer economic development. And in a country where egalitarianism was strenuously enforced over decades, we witness forceful attempts to transform the spiritual qualities of society to suit that developmentalist project, with the ongoing dismantlement of the moral-ideological framework of the past to make room for the neo-liberal theology of the free market, efficiency, and competitiveness. The creation of a new *homo economicus* goes hand in hand with the development of a Chinese capitalist economy, the drive towards consumerism and the primacy of wealth as a source of value and personal satisfaction creates the conditions for the emergence of a competitive Chinese economy. The trajectory is clear, the path is drawn in advance: catching up with the Western 'centre', increasing production, accumulating national wealth, improving military might to compete with and challenge the main international powers of the time. A quick walk through the streets of Beijing will make us notice

the character *xin*, meaning 'new', everywhere from laundries to barber shops. But this is not the novelty of the modern, it is not the new of the unthought-of; 'new' is the skyscraper, 'new' is the luxury car, 'new China' is an economically and politically empowered nation finally able to proudly play the Westphalian game of states competing for supremacy.

But modernity is to be understood exactly as the opposite – modernity is the free flow of the spirit and its capacities to break and supersede the present limits of possibility. Modernity is the act of opening up the *never opened*, making-arise the *previously hidden*, giving-birth to *that which never was*. More simply, modernity is a process of transformation, a process that refuses to take the end as given, the route chartered.

It is in this sense that today we must be absolutely modern. We must recognise that the hidden potential of the ongoing transformations of the global system will only yield a new and better future if that new and better future is imagined and constructed, and that construction will only come to be with a concerted, transnational, and in many ways radical reinterpretation of the hierarchy of values that hold our communities together. The crassly materialist and chauvinistically national decline of progress, of development, and in the end of nothing short of the meaning of the happy life, is what must return to the centre of our questioning.



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*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.

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# UTOPIA!

## A PROGRESSIVE EUROPEAN MIGRATION POLICY IS URGENT

The absurdity and lethality of European national policies towards migration has once again risen towards public consciousness in recent weeks, without any indication that national politicians intend to do anything other than continue to promote myths of national egoism and self-sufficiency, whether or not covered by an often cynical sheen of humanitarian concern. In response to the humanitarian situation in Calais, the French interior minister disbanded the camp known as the 'jungle', without any apparent provisions for the migrants dispersed, and denied the plans for a new detention centre announced by the British home office minister who seems to believe Britain has the special right to profit from a precarious migrant class but blame failures in administering to migrants on other countries. Meanwhile, Italy and Malta played a similar, ongoing, and by definition interminable game of shifting the responsibility for migrants found at sea between them, trying to avoid adding to the numbers in already heavily overcrowded and riotous detention centres. Italy was again condemned by the European Council for deporting migrants to countries which practice torture and for various acts of discrimination, to add to its condemnation for racism and disregard of human rights by the United Nations in March. Médecins Sans Frontières produced a report on the deplorable and inhuman conditions in detention centres in Malta. Most serious of all at

least another 200 people died in a capsized ship heading towards Italy, taking the total of those killed at the borders of Europe to over 14000 since 1988 (according to the newspaper review effected by [fortresseurope.blogspot.com](http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com)).

There is nothing exceptional about any of this, nor about the public or political responses to these events. They simply add to the already convincing case for the desperate need for a coordinated European migration policy: the European Union is the only level at which the rights and dignity of the migrants could effectively be protected, the benefits and burdens of migration fairly distributed amongst the peoples of Europe, and at which partnerships for genuine development promoting both solidarity and mobility in origin countries could be most successfully run. Although there are some European policies that try to make these things a priority, the centre of political ground on the issue seems to be increasingly moving towards a securitarian agenda which has ever less to do with either human dignity or rights, and is ever more detached even from political realism.

The European Parliament adopted in April a report on a *Common Immigration Policy For Europe*, which places the emphasis on reinforcing border controls and the powers of FRONTEX, and continues to insist on the not only undesirable and unjust but also completely implausible policy that all 'irregular' migrants in Europe must be forced to return to their

countries of origin. In the UK alone there are over 50,000 irregular migrants. In Italy this figure is over 10 times larger. In the whole of the European Union there are estimated to be roughly 8 million irregular migrants, and no matter how much the powers of those who control and police Europe's borders are increased these numbers are unlikely to do anything but grow. Political priorities and political delusions seem to have changed little from the adoption of the Returns Directive in June 2008, which allows for the detention of people for up to 18 months simply for not being able to produce legitimating papers.

A small potential saving grace of the report adopted by the Parliament is a clause inserted after much struggle, and much to the consternation of the Conservative parties, to propose that migrants should be allowed to vote in local elections, and become part of political parties and trade unions. This extremely meek proposal, which many more progressively-inclined Europeans might mistakenly suppose is already the case, would do something to address the internal borders of European political society which exist for, as many have underlined, the metaphor of 'fortress Europe' mistakenly gives the impression that the borders to Europe are merely geographical. In fact, European societies are protected, insulated and policed in a huge variety of ways, such that the borders run throughout the fabrics of everyday life. Even in a non-legislatively

binding report such as this adopted by the European Parliament, however, our 'European' representatives still feel the need to specify that ultimately it is up to the member states of Europe to adopt such 'integration' measures.

According to estimates by the Migreurop group ([www.migreurop.org](http://www.migreurop.org)) there are around 180 detention centres for migrants located in Europe, and an increasing number situated in North African and Middle Eastern countries and Turkey. The majority of these centres are closed to NGOs and other observers, and there are steps being taken to make it even more difficult for access in France and other European countries, whilst access to camps in non-EU member states is almost impossible. It is therefore unlikely that a migrant detained inside will have access to legal advice for protection under even the most basic human rights laws that exist at an international level. Access for external observers to these camps is an absolutely fundamental condition for Europe to be able to say it believes in upholding human rights at all, but such access seems to have been largely ignored in the European Parliament's report.

Migration is widely recognised as the crucial worldwide political issue for the coming century, and there is no area of politics in which it does not enter. Europe is the crucible in which these politics will largely be played out – it is therefore urgent that a coalition for a progressive migration policy in Europe at a transnational level be built and supported.

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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.

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# FOR A BETTER WORLD BEYOND THE CRISIS

**A crisis liberates the imagination. The uncertainty of the future allows for the emergence of real political alternatives.**

BY IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN

**T**he real crisis we are facing today is a structural crisis in the capitalist world economy. It began about 35 years ago and it is going to go on for at least as much. We are in a transition from this system to something else. The world revolution of 1968 shook up the cultural realities of the world, but the underlying crisis is basically an economic crisis – it has to do with the fact that the capitalist world economy has had some standard measures of getting out of its repeated periodic stagnation, which have worked for 400 or 500 years, but what they have done is they have pushed the curve steadily upwards. You have to think of all systems as having a combination of cyclical rhythms which maintain their systemicity and secular trends which are the focus of continual change.

Basically it has to do with how capitalists make money. Capitalists make money essentially because they produce for a lower cost than they can sell and use it for capital accumulation. Now, the three basic costs of capital are personnel costs, input costs and taxation costs. The way we got out of each successive downturn in the world economy

was to steadily increase each of these a little bit. After 500 years we have reached a point where we are approaching the asymptote, because the price for which you sell items is not infinitely extensible: you run against people's unwillingness to buy at certain levels. There is therefore a sort of upward curve; as long as it is at the 20% or 25% level it can go up to the 30% with a mere shrug of the shoulders, but when it reaches the 60% level or 75% level then you are beginning to shake terribly. This is basically how all systems work: it is how biological systems work, physical systems, chemical systems and the universe works, and the solar system works the same way. We are in that structural crisis.

Many people misread the crisis because they misinterpret two normal phenomena as the crisis. The first is the Kondratieff B economic downturn. We've been in that since 1970 more or less, it always escalates at the end, and we are at that end point. The other normal phenomenon is the hegemonic cycle, and we are at the point where the US has more or less exhausted its hegemonic advantages. Those two things are not a crisis – all of that is absolutely normal – they happen to coincide with this other fundamental structural crisis, which manifests itself as chaos and enormous oscillations, and out of them comes a bifurcation. A bifurcation means technically there can be two ways of filling in the same equation, which you normally cannot do. But in social science terms it means the system cannot survive,

we can know that for sure, but what we cannot know is what will replace it. That is a big political struggle, it has been going on for a while, and it will now intensify and go on for the next 20 to 30 years. And the outcome is intrinsically unpredictable. No-one can say who will win that struggle, but at some point in 2040 or 2050, we will enter into some new system.

The Kondratieff A phase – 1945 to 1970 more or less – was the biggest expansion of the world economy in the history of the modern world system. And the Kondratieff B phase has been following absolutely normal patterns, with a shift to the relocation of no longer profitable major industries, a shift of attempts to acquire capital from construction to finance, rising indebtedness, rising unemployment etc. All of that led to the most incredible expansion of debt in the history of the modern world system. Suddenly the bubble burst, in fact several bubbles burst and we are all living in the consequences. Probably nothing can be done about it. It doesn't matter if we follow Angela Merkel's policies or the US policies under Obama. Neither the one nor the other is going to pull us out of this. We are going to go down in real terms for real people for a good period. This will take the form of a big deflation, and the alternative mode of deflation is runaway inflation, but that is also deflation.

In this people are going to be hurt very hard, people who are at the bottom are going to be hurt the most because they have the

least fat, so to speak. The major problem for governments today is to prevent uprisings. The way they will handle it is social democratic things: more healthcare, more unemployment insurance etc – just like Sarkozy gave in to the Gueloupians ... People are starting to rebel. It hasn't gotten violent yet – but it will; it will be nasty all over the place, there will be right-wing reactions of all kinds, there is xenophobia in all societies....

What is lacking is a kind of coherent, unified response across the world of what might be called the world left. There isn't one, yet. That is part of their problem. That is part of the uncertainty of what is going to happen in the next 10 or 20 years. There is no coherent centre, it is dispersed. But that is true on the other side as well.

The thing about a crisis is precisely that it liberates the imagination, it is the simple uncertainty of the future liberates the imagination. But that is what is so impossible to predict – where will it move? To speak for myself I think we have to try to decommo-ditise things that have been commoditised. I personally do not see why a steel company cannot be run like a hospital – not for profit, but for all sorts of

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**“I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY THE LEFT THINKS THEY CAN WIN BETTER IN THEIR NATIONAL SPHERE THAN IN EUROPE AS A WHOLE.”**  
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other things. Maybe when the steel company shuts down someone will take it over and try that. I always say I don't have the solutions in my right hand pocket ... I'm only trying to say things can be done.

I also have another way of putting this: the old philosophical debate in the Western world between determinism and free will. This debate has been going on for several hundred years, the arguments have become standard, but I think that they should be historicised – it is not the one or the other, it is that when a system is operating 'normally', when it is operating according to the rules by which it was set up, then the system is very deterministic, in the sense that every time you pull away from the way things are normally done there are enormous pressures to return to equilibrium. In a structural crisis things are precisely opposite

because the oscillations are so violent and so enormous and so unpredictable, so that we are actually in a situation of free will – it is the butterfly effect, every little butterfly effects at every moment where we come out, but no one can control all those butterflies, so every action every day has some impact. Globally that is a situation of relative free will – that is the plus of being in a structural crisis, that you matter much more than before.

With regards to Europe, we should focus on the decline of US hegemony and the emergence of multiple centres of real power, of which Europe is clearly one. Europe is trying to solidify its reality. Within a European context I have always been much more on the federalist side, I think their strength requires that they create much stronger political institutions, something they have not been able to do because they have been foot-dragging at both ends of the political spectrum. From the national right, who do not want to give up national control over x, y and z, and on the left, or at least the left in the northern part of Europe, who have seen this as essentially somehow giving into the neoliberal Brussels bureaucracy and so forth. I have never understood why the left thinks they can win better in whatever their national sphere is than in Europe as a whole, but they do, or at least they do in northern Europe. The European Union is in a very curious situation right now, they have one great strength at the moment, the euro, which everyone who is not a member now wants to be a part of. Take the example of Britain: I'm impressed by the degree to which Gordon Brown has tilted towards the European end of things. The crisis is such that in order to survive Britain needs to throw its lot in with Western Europe, and it needs to become part of the euro. And I think they will, eventually.

Globally, the outcome of the crisis is a struggle between the 'spirit of davos' and the 'spirit of porto allegre'. It is a struggle between people who want to replace the capitalist world economy with a system that is also, perhaps more so, exploitative, polarising and hierarchical, and people who militate for a system that is going to be democratic and radically egalitarian. That is the political struggle the world is in. ■

A sociologist, historical social scientist, and world-systems analyst, Immanuel Wallerstein teaches at Yale University



When the Sun Goes Down, 2007  
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# THESES FOR AN ALTER-GLOBALISING EUROPE

**In the context of an evident reshaping of global relations of power, and with the European Elections approaching, it is imperative to discuss the potentials and objectives of a real transnational political practice.**

BY ETIENNE BALIBAR

**1** Now, more than ever before, politics, as Max Weber put it, can only be “global”. This does not mean that there is only one global politics possible: on the contrary there is necessarily a choice between several politics, defined by their objectives, their means, their conditions, their obstacles, their “subjects” or “wills”, the risks they involve. The field of politics is that of the alternative. If we posit that today all the possibilities fall within one trend towards “globalization”, the question then becomes: what are the alternatives to its dominant forms? Can Europe be an “alterglobalizing” force, and how?

**2** To claim that politics can only be global does not equate to saying that politics is not concerned with the condition and the problems of “people” where they live, where their life history has placed them: on the contrary, it equates to asserting that local citizenship has as its condition an active global citizenship. Every local political choice of economic, social, cultural, institutional orientation involves a “cosmopolitical” choice, and vice-versa.

**3** Europe’s place in the world today – in spite of a few vague diplomatic impulses – is that of a dead dog that follows the water’s current, devoid of any initiative of its own. If not – given its economic and cultural “weight” – that of a dead elephant that goes with the flow. Examples abound: from the reform of the United Nations to the enforcement of the Tokyo Protocol, from the regulation of international migration to the resolution of Near and Middle Eastern crises or the deployment of back-up troops to the wars initiated by the US. Consequently, Europe lacks the means of resolving its own “internal” problems, including institutional ones.

**4** That Europe has no global politics entails that there is no – or hardly any – global politics emerging

from the European nations. European nations thus have no – or hardly any – home politics presenting real alternatives. National elections function in this respect as a trompe-l’œil, but one which fails to dupe everyone: hence depoliticization. Global issues therefore re-emerge in a purely ideological form: “the clash of civilizations,” and the like.

**5** The causes of this situation are to be found within the evolution of historically inherited power relations that have been reinforced by the current state of affairs. But this evolution – that confers either a purely reactive or a simply adaptive function upon the “European construction” – cannot stand as a total explanation. We must supplement this acknowledgement with another one: there is a disastrous collective inability, amongst the majority of the European population, to imagine alternative policies and forms of politics, and this cannot be dissociated from the uncertainty looming over the political identity of Europe.

**6** European identity – with regards to the legacy inscribed in the institutions, the geography, the culture that it must maintain – is faced with two problems whose solution will only be reached at the cost of conflicts and errors. On the one hand it must overcome its East-West divide, which shifts position at different points in time, is associated with antagonisms between “regimes” and “systems” (not without its paradoxes, for example when “Westernism” spreads to the East following “revolutions” or “counter-revolutions”), but never disappears. On the other hand it must find a balance between a “closed” Europe (therefore restricted, but within which limits?) that one may wish to homogenize, and an “open” Europe (not so much a Great Europe than a Europe of borders, acknowledging its constitutive interpenetration with vast Euro-Atlantic, Euro-Asian, Euro-Mediterranean, Euro-African spaces). In order to go on, Europe must invent a variable geometry, a form of state and administration without precedent in history.

**7** Facing the decline of the American hegemony in the world (which is relative, Europe must choose between two strategies, which will gradually entail consequences in every area of political and social life: either attempting to form one of the “power blocs” (Grossraum) that will compete with one another for supremacy over a new global configuration, or forming one of the “mediations” that will attempt to give



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**“EVERY LOCAL POLITICAL CHOICE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL ORIENTATION INVOLVES A ‘COSMOPOLITICAL’ CHOICE.”**  
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birth to a new economic and political order, more egalitarian and more decentralized, likely to effectively curtail conflicts, to institute redistribution mechanisms, to keep claims to hegemony in check. The first way is doomed to failure. The second is improbable without a considerable degree of collective conscience and political will, rallying public opinion across the continent. What is certain is that the terms of the alternative cannot be conflated within a rhetoric of compromises between national and communitarian bureaucracies.

**8** Between the “North”, which most of Europe pertains to, and the “South” (whose geography, economy and degree of state integration are increasingly changing), there is not only an interdependence but a genuine reciprocity of possibilities of development (or “co-development”). It is important to recognize this and turn it into a political project. The fact that Europe was the starting-point for the “Westernization of the world”, in ways that were, to varying degrees, marked by domination but which today are universally challenged, represents in this respect both an obstacle and an opportunity to be seized: these are the two sides of the “post-colony”. Only a project such as this would allow for a balance to be found between a Europe focused on law-and-order, violently repressing the migrations it

itself provokes, and a Europe without borders, open to “unrestrained” migration (that is to say, migrations entirely ordered by the market of human instruments). Only this would allow for conflicts of interests and culture between “old” and “new”, “legal” and “illegal”, “communitarian” and “extra-communitarian” Europeans to be addressed. It is thus not an administrative but an existential priority.

**9** Against the backdrop of the uninterrupted Middle Eastern crisis, we pose the urgency of creating a political space encompassing all the countries surrounding the Mediterranean – only such a space can offer an alternative to the “clash of civilizations” in this highly sensitive and crucial region. As for the Israeli-Palestinian question that is its epicentre, the extreme anti-Zionist discourse should not be condoned; rather, concerted and without delay Israeli expansion should be stopped and the rights of the Palestinian people recognized – rights that are officially championed by European nations. More generally, this hotbed of wars and ethnic-religious hatred should be turned into a site of cooperation and institutionalized negotiation, with repercussions across the globe. It is, for obvious reasons, Europe that should take the initiative.

**10** Crucial to alterglobalization are the following legal and political projects:

∑ The democratic regulation of migration flows, therefore the reform regarding the right to mobility and residence, still marked by national interests at the expense of reciprocity;

∑ “Collective security” and, correlatively, the penal responsibility of states and individuals regarding supranational affairs, therefore the reform of the UN, still held back by its support of decisions inherited from the Second World War and the logic of power;

∑ The reinforcement of the guarantees of individual freedom, minority rights and human rights, therefore the practical and legal conditions of humanitarian intervention.

∑ The merging of the instances of economic negotiation and regulation, of those controlling tax evasion and those concerning social rights, so as to sketch out on a global scale a Keynesian model now dismantled on a national level;

∑ Finally, the prioritization of ecological risks over the other factors of insecurity

This list is not a closed one, but it demonstrates how diverse and inter-related the elements now forming, on a global scale, the substance of real politics, are.

**11** The above theses are merely propositions to orient and open a debate. Rather than presenting solutions, they are attempts to explicate contradictions that cannot be evaded. It is now a question of establishing the touchstones of rigour and integrity for a political debate in Europe today. And this debate will enable us, hopefully, to then supplement, clarify and modify them. ■

Balibar currently teaches philosophy and political theory at Paris X Nanterre and University of California, Irvine

# WHY EUROPE MATTERS

**The last 6 months have shown both the anachronistic nature of the global status quo, and the lack of a political project that genuinely changes the logic of global politics. The European project, despite certain appearances, has the potential to introduce a paradigm shift to an era of transnationalism.**

BY NICCOLO MILANESE

**W**e are trying to accelerate while stuck in neutral gear. The explosion in the numbers of civil society NGOs, think tanks, humanitarian actions, international media, 'global' forums, protests and meetings over the past 20 years following the fall of the Berlin wall has refined the demands and raised the awareness of new generations, but it has yet to produce any political project that measures up to the heights of their ambitions. As more and more problems are revealed to be 'global' in their complexity and implications, and become increasingly dramatic in their effects, this impotence is likely to become more and more frustrating, the gap between aspiration and possible action ever greater. Over the past 6 months we have seen and felt a new stage in this dislocation, with the spilling-over of both hope and anger at a global level. The G7 may have become the G20, the United States of America may have elected a leader exalted at least briefly in large parts of the Western World, but even we citizens lucky enough to live in the freer and more powerful parts of the world are, when we respond to global political problems we are passionate about, increasingly in the position of humble petitioners to our leaders, whether they are national politicians or unelected bureaucrats in international organisations. We have the feeling of rolling backwards from autonomy, rolling away from democracy, at the very moment when the interconnectedness of global society was supposed to assert itself.

The heretical question in

such a situation is to ask whether 'global society' is itself a meaningful aspiration, and whether in such a society either democracy or autonomy would be possible. There are many who see in all 'globalisations' exclusively a loss of self-determination, the rolling back of long-fought-for social rights and the emergence of, at the one end, a cosmopolitan class above the concerns of the grounded plebeians, and at the other a destitute irregular migrant class administered from one detention centre to another before finally either being propelled back to the land they came from, or disappearing into a clandestine and precarious existence on the underside of more privileged societies.

But in a world of global issues it is both cowardly and ill-advised not to have global aspirations, such ambitions are the precious threads that unite humankind. It is perhaps the 'society' element of 'global society' that needs to be questioned more strongly. For there are limits to how much social partners can achieve independently of political powers, at least in current conditions, and almost all of these political powers remain resolutely national in their constitution. This is, needless to say, even the case of that most 'global' of institutions, the United Nations, in which each nation state has a vote in the General Assembly and only privileged or elected nation states in its other organs. The World Bank and the IMF are also structured in such a way that their members are na-

**"THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS AN ENORMOUS UNREALISED POTENTIAL AS A TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IN GLOBAL POLITICS."**

tion states. In an age which takes as a primary motif the recognition of political problems which cross national boundaries, it is startling that the nation state remains so widely unchallenged as the primary locus of political authority. If international institutions seem undemocratic, if citizens feel they do not have any say over their own destinies, or choice about the world they live in, then this antinomy is surely a good place to start.

The only existing political entity which does meaningfully challenge the nation-state system is the European Union. To take a recent

example, the G20 of the world's most powerful economies, in distinction to the other international institutions mentioned, consists of only 19 nation states and the European Union. This, of course, is completely unfair (not to mention the exclusion of the other 170 countries), because it means that France, Germany, Italy and the UK are effectively represented twice. According to the logic of the aims of the G20, however, the exclusion of the European Union would have been nonsensical: it is the most powerful single market in the world, and has powers that are to a large extent independent of the nation states in how it regulates that market. What this fact alone means is that the European Union has an enormous unrealised potential as a transformative power in global politics.

As the most powerful trading bloc in the world, the European Union could be a positive force for social justice in the real functioning of the world economy. If it were to enforce decent work standards, such that it would not allow the sale of goods that are produced under exploitative conditions, whether they were produced in the EU or outside of the EU, then it would be an immense force for the positive improvement of work standards throughout the world. Likewise the European Union could enforce environmental standards so that it is impossible or very much more expensive to buy goods produced in environmentally damaging ways. At the moment a European consumer has to *pay more* if she chooses to buy a product that was not produced under conditions of exploitation, and pay more if she chooses a product that does not do as much damage to the environment – this is a damning indication of the values currently underlying the European free market.

If the European Union were to introduce an international financial transaction tax resembling a Tobin Tax for all currency transactions carried out in Europe, if it were to introduce a cap on salaries, if it were to clamp down on tax havens, all of these would force real change in the global financial economy because other countries would simply be forced to react. No European nation state acting on its own has so much influence, and none of these policies could effectively be introduced at the national level alone. Campaigning for these measures to be introduced at a global level is entirely justified,

but there is no global actor who can implement and enforce them, and without a radical change to the current logics of international power, any such 'global' actor would be the puppet of the most powerful nation states behind it.

But the European Union not only has the powers necessary to enact these reforms at least in its own market, but also has the potential to change the logic of international relations and negotiations themselves. International negotiations are currently played out according to a fiction that the fate and interest of each nation state is independent from every other. Each 'national' negotiator is supposed to represent an exclusive, territorially-defined citizenry, the destiny and interests of which is supposed to be exhausted by the interests of the nation state. This is not only an increasingly untrue fiction – as more and more people have personal connections with several different countries, as multinationals operate by definition in several nation states, and as the world financial economy is increasingly interwoven – but it is

**"THE ONLY EXISTING POLITICAL ENTITY WHICH DOES MEANINGFULLY CHALLENGE THE NATION-STATE SYSTEM IS THE EUROPEAN UNION."**

also a blinkered, pessimistic and materialistic vision of inescapable human division and conflict. Furthermore, it has the implication that the more economically and militarily powerful nation states inevitably control the negotiations. If the conservative demands that the European Union should be defined by its geographical borders are effectively resisted, it could define a new notion of citizenship less anchored in the fiction of national boundaries. If the European Union were to choose to operate not only in the interests of each of its nation states (and some nation states more than others) but rather in the interests of its peoples, and if it realised that amongst its peoples are not only citizens whose lives are entirely contained in their nation states, but peoples with



connections with the whole world, that it has a citizenry in a state of continual flux and change, then the configuration of the European Union could shift the logic of global relations. It would effect a paradigm shift from necessarily unequal negotiation between nation states each based on the fiction of exclusive citizenships, to intrinsically multilateral negotiations in which each negotiator is not only representing the short-term interests of those he currently represents, but is forced to consider those he may potentially come to represent in the future, no matter where they are from. This outcome has to be fought for, and there are strong forces opposing it, but at no other level of politics is such a shift a potentiality. It would no longer make sense to try count the members of the Group of most powerful economies (be it the G2, the G7, the G20, the G180...), it would be a question of forcing each of the negotiators to think increasingly in the interests of all humanity.

These arguments for why Europe should matter for those who care about global politics could be multiplied, including environmental, human rights, gender equality and peace concerns. On the right is a box of just some of the possible policies that could be adopted at a European level, impossible at the national level, and which would

contribute to a genuine paradigm shift in the global status-quo from a logic of national compromise to a logic of transnational aspiration. It is in these senses that it is not so much of an exaggeration to say that for an individual in Europe wanting to militate for a different unfolding of our common global future, Europe is the last remaining utopia.

Yet one month before the European Elections in June, with confidence in the EU at rock-bottom and a likely record-low turnout, attaching so much importance to the Europe as a potential actor for historic change seems deluded. Not only does the European Union seem to be impotent in global politics, but when it does act it often tends to do so in favour of maintaining the status quo, even to promote a politics many would call 'neoliberal'. In the face of the financial crisis, for example, it proved incapable of agreeing on a rescue package for its more vulnerable members, such as Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, which have all had recourse to the IMF instead as guarantor for state borrowing, on terms which neither promote investment in social justice nor welfare. Several judgements in the European Courts over recent years have favoured multinationals rather than workers. In the face of flagrant discrimination

against migrants in countries like Italy, the European Union has been unwilling to enforce the standards of human rights it claims to represent. It was apparently impotent in dealing with the recent Gaza crisis, and other military crises in Congo. This list could be extended. What is important in such a situation is to understand why an institution so powerful on paper and which has so much potential for transforming the global political landscape both seems impotent and only provokes either apathy or antagonism to its very existence amongst so many people. There is a veritable new industry of research into these questions in universities, in think tanks, and in civil society, much of it funded by the European institutions themselves, but to us the answer seems straightforward: there is no visible political party or wide-ranging civil-society coalition promoting an alternative and progressive European politics at a transnational level.

This is not to say that there is no difference between the major European political parties that exist and are taking part in the elections next month. Nor is it to say that the European political parties do not have very much power in Europe and are therefore irrelevant. The European parliament effectively has the power to elect the European commission,

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 .....

and it has the right to veto legislation proposed by the Commission. The Party of European Socialists promotes a much more socially progressive European politics than the dominant European Peoples Party. The European Left and the European Green parties promote more radical policies. But all of these parties are federations or coalitions of national parties. They do not have the structure necessary to pull political authority and attention effectively away from national politics. This has the result that although it is estimated that 60-80% of legislation effecting European citizens originates from the European Institutions, it is only discussed when it enters national legislation, at which point it invariably seems like an imposition from outside.

There are also various campaigns and civil society organisations that work at European

level, but they remain issue-specific, technical and often have the dull bureaucratic outlook which many consider to be contagious in Brussels. They lack the capacity to inspire sufficient imagination of the possibilities of a new society to even effectively critique the out-moded status quo.

The political energies unleashed in recent months have shown the anachronistic nature of the global logic of political power but also the insufficient logic of 'global civil society', which lacks any project for transforming the global status quo, and remains largely issue based, even in its more popular and influential manifestations. Europe matters, then, because it is the level at which any genuinely innovative political and cultural project which seeks to change the dominant global logics of contemporary politics must articulate itself if it is launched by those of us in this part of the world. It matters because it is the only existing political engine which can drive this project beyond the exclusionary and anachronistic logics of the nation state system. And it matters because if it is ignored by those who care about global politics it will subsist in its stultifying greyness and be a deadweight on our dreams. ■

## Alternative European Transnational policies

**As an illustration of the potentials of transnational politics at a European level, here are several policies that the European Union could adopt to influence the shape of global politics. They are not a manifesto, they are simple illustrations of an alternative European politics.**

- **MORALISE GLOBALISATION:** Europe is the most powerful single market in the world. If it enforced decent work, human rights and environmental standards for all goods produced in Europe, and all goods imported into Europe, it would both improve the global situation in each of these areas and force other states to adapt.
- **GLOBAL FAIR TRADE:** Europe is the world's largest trading block, with a coordinated trade policy and a single representative at the WTO. This position is currently used to reap commercial advantages, but could instead be exercised to establish a mandatory fair trade regime for all goods imported into Europe. Likewise, a reorientation of the prerogatives of European trade policy could significantly contribute to international development through coordinated financial and know-how transfer to countries of the global South.
- **PROVIDE A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE IMF:** if the European Union agreed on a rescue package for members states of the European Union which have been victims of the financial crisis, and

made this rescue package both more democratic and more socially just than those proposed by the IMF, it would not only help people in Europe, it would also provide a positive example for the democratisation of the IMF and World Bank.

- **INTRODUCE A TOBIN TAX:** An effective transaction tax on currency speculation could only be implemented transnationally. There have already been proposals for the European Union to adopt such a tax, but they have been rejected by the European Central Bank.

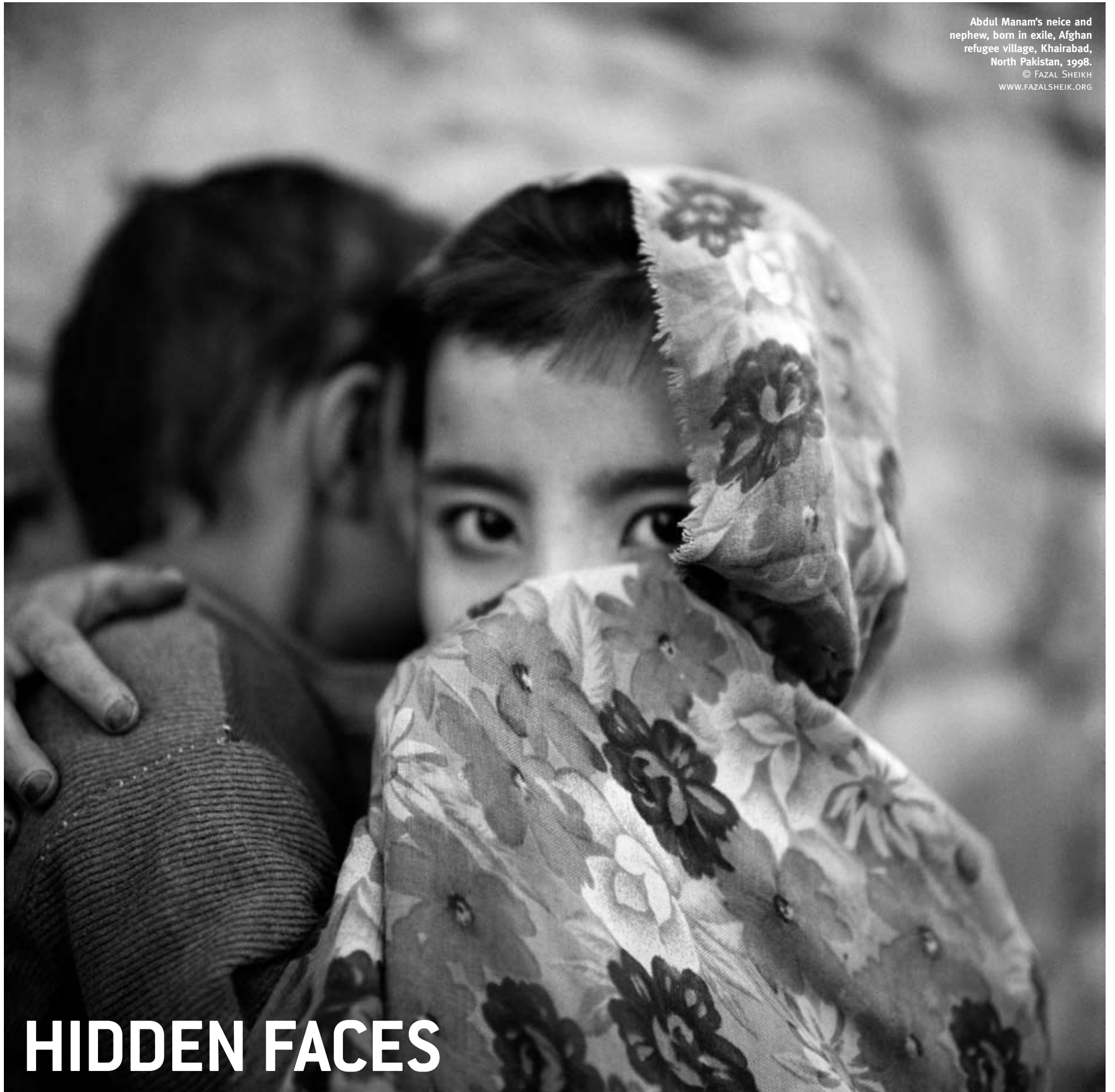
- **ADOPT AND ENFORCE A MIGRATION POLICY THAT PLACES HOSPITALITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY AT THE CENTRE OF ITS CONCERNS:** European legislation on migration and detention has been becoming more repressive, at the same time as human rights abuses and discrimination are tolerated on Europe's borders. By transforming this situation and working with home countries of migrants, Europe would show that supra-national institutions do not simply serve to protect the interests of national citizens, but that another way of conceiving politics is possible.



Both images:  
 Untitled from Submerged Series, 2008  
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Abdul Manam's niece and nephew, born in exile, Afghan refugee village, Khairabad, North Pakistan, 1998.  
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# HIDDEN FACES

BY NADJA STAMSELBERG

**T**aking up agency on behalf of personae non graate – the often nameless, unrecognised and forgotten ones – Fazal Sheikh's images put focus onto their plight. In contrast to the repetitive sensationalist mass-media depictions of humanitarian crisis that shape our perceptions of others, his personalised encounters counteract this hyper-visibility increasingly responsible for the dehumanisation of the figure of ref-

ugee and immigrant in the media. The black-and-white naturally lit images generate forms of recognition that work against identification of the refugees as the other. Repositioning its subjects as the ones who matter, Sheikh frames his own visibility to put forward their recognition as individuals. The photographs are accompanied by personal histories narrated by the subjects, which encourage us to embrace the refigured image of the refugee as a victim, as human, as one of us. By appropriating the figure of a refugee in a way that

functions to omit the differences between the ways of being displaced Sheikh sets out to contest their exclusion by revealing how it is constitutive of inclusion.

However, universalising the condition of displacement as something we all experience fetishises the figure of the refugee. This draws attention to the difference between being a refugee and the figure of the refugee. Sheikh's portraits address this critical issue by transforming the refugee, the abject underside of the already politically

existent and what Imogen Tyler calls a figurative mirror for the subject's own disavowed exclusion/displacement to the figure of the refugee that offers us resources with which we might re-imagine ourselves.

Sheikh ends 'The Victor Weeps' a book on Afghan refugees in the camp in Northern Pakistan with images of Afghan children born in exile. Differing from the other portraits in the book they are not accompanied by texts and they have no names. Their faces betray

nothing; their empty gazes offer no insight. These children are the bare life. They have no stories, no memory of home. For them home and exile is interchangeable.

Disturbingly apathetic to identities, happiness, love, life and civility, the camps they were born into are zones of indifference. The children are found within it routinely passing from order into disorder. Remaining without destination, they inhabit a limbo suffering from a penalty for which they could not make amends... ■



# THE RIGHT TO MOVEMENT AND THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

**Europe must recognise the unconditional right to visit of citizens of formerly colonised countries.**

**At the same time, it must become the motor of a new transnational drive to development and poverty reduction.**

BY GILBERT ACHCAR

**T**he centre of detention for “illegal” immigrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa has become the most infamous symbol of the ill-treatment inflicted by Fortress Europe on “boat people” coming from the African continent.

The “illegality” of these immigrants is not what the label proclaims, or what other terms such as “foreigners in an irregular situation” pretend. It is an illegality decreed according to a categorisation worked out by a European Union that has all but abolished the “legal” immigration of people originating from the African continent. It is not the violation by interned people of a legality that respects human rights, but rather the consequence of a denial of human rights by the sovereign power. The people detained at Lampedusa, like those in other European detention centres, are denied from the start the “right to hospitality”, i.e. the central element of cosmopolitan right according to Immanuel Kant, who defined it as the “right of a stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives in the land of another”.

The “right of visit” (*Besuchsrecht*), in other words the right to free circulation, which Europe grants citizens of rich countries whom it welcomes without the prerequisite condition of a visa, is denied to nationals of poor countries – those same countries which Europe had annexed under colonial status, subjugating their populations until as recently as a few decades. To be sure, Kant explained, the right of visit does not amount to a right of settlement: in other words, the visitor cannot invoke a right to settle permanently in the visited country and to benefit thus from the advantages enjoyed by the natives. Note, how-

ever, that those who argue against the idea of a right of immigration in accordance with this distinction do not demand in general the recognition of the right of visit, or “right to hospitality”, which they do not call into question.

On the other hand, when it comes to nationals of the African continent it is not a matter of a general right to settle – which Europe recognises *de facto* for nationals of rich countries. Europe does this for the latter under the pretext of a reciprocity which it does not accept as a sufficient condition for the numerous poor countries that would gladly agree to a reciprocal right to settle. But then instead of reciprocity, what should be invoked is a right to reparation, in compensation for the pillage of the African continent by the Europeans, whether in the guise of direct pillage carried out during the long colonial ordeal or in the guise of indirect pillage by means of unequal exchange since decolonisation. It is this combi-

**“WE NEED A MASSIVE PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDING AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER BENEFITTING FORMERLY COLONISED COUNTRIES.”**

nation of pillage and subjugation that has created “underdevelopment” as a lasting condition, which it is difficult for Africa, just like the rest of the formerly colonised world, to overcome solely by their own efforts within a global system that is hierarchical by essence.

In compensation for the long pillage and the crimes against humanity which Europe and its offspring in the Americas committed against the countries and populations of colonised continents, elementary justice requires the combination of two actions: an unrestricted right of visit for nationals of impoverished continents (as well as the strict respect for the right to asylum for persecuted people) and a massive plan of development funding and technology transfer benefitting formerly colonised countries, along with the massive education of their nationals inside their own countries as well as in Europe. Short of recognising a right to settle to the people it colonised formerly, –

that is to say the obligation to give them a job or a minimal revenue upon arrival – which would represent anyway a poor compensation for the historical injustice since it could concern only a minority of the formerly colonised people, Europe has the obligation to provide these countries with a massive amount of aid, and not the derisory crumbs which it gives them presently (much less than 1% of its GDP), so that they can overcome their underdevelopment.

By putting as only conditions of this aid the respect for human rights and democracy, Europe would finally fulfil the “civilising mission” which it hypocritically assigned itself when it imposed its barbarian yoke on its colonies. The development of former colonies is the only way, both just and efficient, to reduce the human haemorrhage from which these countries suffer – a haemorrhage which is particularly costly because, as we know, those who emigrate are in majority people who are most

needed for local development. This loss is hardly compensated by the monetary remittances of the migrants to their countries of origin.

A Marshall plan for the former colonies would be in the interest of Europe itself and of humanity as a whole. In these times of grave global economic crisis, a crisis which many are predicting to be of the same intensity, if not worse, as the Great Depression of the interwar years, there are two sure ways out: either a new world war similar to that which put an end to the depression of the 1930s – this option is fortunately impossible because it would annihilate humanity – or a global “war against poverty”, a true effort on the same scale as a world war, and not the masquerade that Tony Blair and his homologues thus christened. This would be, of course, a “war” of a very unusual type, since it would have to begin with a massive reduction of military expenditure and the recycling of these funds in the benefit

of global development.

Resuming its economic growth, Europe would then be able at the same time to welcome once again the masses of immigrants from the third world that are indispensable for its own development as a consequence of its demography. ■

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*On Fortress Europe and the way it treats immigrants, see the remarkable multi-language website:*

<http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/>

**Hamid Reza is a homeless Iranian asylum seeker sheltering in a bus stop in northern England. Hamid believes if he returns to Iran he will face the death penalty.**  
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# THE STATUS OF HUMANS AND THE SENSE OF WORK

**Instead of speaking of a global humanitarian catastrophe, we should speak of political phenomena humans control. We need the terms of *de-globalisation* and *de-democratisation*.**

BY MARIE-CLAIRE CALOZ-TSCHOPP

In the contemporary stage of globalisation, immaterial financial capitalism has succeeded industrial capitalism, while the production of global capitalism is characterised by the absence of a world government, of a global political schema, of laws, of constraining rights, and is instead administered by the 'shock treatments' of economists, politicians and the military. Neither charters nor conventions can cover over the political emptiness and absence of laws, even if, step by step, they are the way in which a global political schema, law and rights are being constructed. The deregulation of rights in the world of work has been carried out by private agreements between multinational enterprises, which are trying to undermine the State system and rights in relation to work, leading to the transformation of work relations into simple precarious mandates. In these conditions what happens to human kind, called to constitute itself and its world? What happens to *work*, which was considered by Marx as the possibility of human emancipation? What happens to the common goods necessary for human survival?

The actual stage of globalisation, which Zygmunt Bauman calls 'liquid capitalism', has brought about the instability, the fluidity of labour relations, precarity and economic and political chaos. Financiers speculate on sub-primes, gold, primary materials and even foodstuffs, causing the prices of even elementary foods to rocket. We are seeing hunger riots in Argentina, in Mexico, in the Philippines, in Egypt, in Burkina Fasso, and so on. In these riots hunger shows its real face. It is not a question of lacking food, it is a question of lacking the right to access to food that is necessary for life. Even humanitarian action is

coming to its limits. "Instead of giving a bowl of rice to a hungry child, we are now giving him only half" declared a spokesperson for the World Food Program, who has seen the price of food soar (+57% since June 2007).

Must we then speak about an 'economic and humanitarian tsunami', to use the terms of Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for development? The choice of words is not neutral in debates surrounding the politics of development and immigration. Such a vocabulary suggests that the problem is thought of according to categories which can be called the 'metaphysics of catastrophe'. But instead of talking in terms of natural disasters or the punishment of gods, we should talk in political terms of phenomena which are under the control of man. We should talk of *de-globalisation*, and *de-democratisation*.

De-globalisation refers to *cosmos*, to *globe* and means in philosophy the *loss of the world*, of a relationship to the world, an expulsion from the world. Passing over the interrelatedness, the closeness and diversity of the debates about the words *cosmos*, *world*, *universe*, let's look at the characteristics and traits common to all three terms. What is striking to the reader is the tension between the abyss of chaos and the permanent concern to construct an order by politics (regime), by philosophy (sense), by science (truth). The *cosmos* indicates a universe thought of as a well-ordered system. *World* indicates a collection of all that exists, which is formed by the earth and the visible stars thought of as an organised system. Opposed to the order of the cosmos, the totally disordered multiplicity is called 'chaos'. In ancient philosophy the world is an organised and meaningful totality inside of which each thing finds its natural place. Each ancient philosopher, from Heraclitus to the Stoics, searched for this unique law. The world is also the habitat of man, it is the location and the symbol of human life. Since the 18th century, the universe is the collection of all that exists, considered by philosophers as the totality of all created things, the totality of beings, the collection of things perceived, whether or not understood by human consciousness. Essentially, the three words

sum-up the project to avert chaos by different attempts to unify a dynamic totality which may be ordered by a transcendent power or instead be ordered by man himself (in the democratic view of things).

De-democratisation leads to the impossibility of trying to realise a democratic regime (*demoscratos*, the power of the people) for social life. De-democratisation means therefore, in brief, the privation, the deficit, the democratic absence in society. The theme of democracy (Greece) and its republican side (Rome) is, following Kant, present in the debate over a world government and the limits of universalism. The vision that has dominated international relations is an anarchic, chaotic, authoritarian vision of the international sphere linked to an equilibrium of force (war-making) without even the possibility of imagining the project of genuine democracy. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the questions of the transformations in the relationships between economics and politics, of the nature of political regimes and the status of the state, have become research questions in international relations. Alongside this, the development of civil society and of social movements has underlined the limits of tyrannical regimes, imperial authorities based on force, exploitation, submission, corruption and chaos which claim to be an authoritarian democracy ensuring security. After 1989, quite against the hopes of democracy, theories of polyarchy (selection of the leaders) have tried to weaken the substance of democracy (the will of the people, the common good defined in terms of justice and social equality). Between maximalist and minimalist practices and visions of democracy what is at stake is the capacity of the dominant liberal discourse to impose its own interests whilst depending on a facade of consensus, leading to the reification of the effects of capitalism and political apathy.

The birth of the modern state (Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes, Locke) articulated the displacement of power to a sovereign state over a delimited territory, systems of representation in which a limited citizenry was envisaged (in the dominant currents of political philosophy). But when we find ourselves in a stage of globalisation which has repeated crises of modern capitalism and of international

relations, and facing heterogeneous histories and spaces which cover very different realities, a political project can no longer define itself starting from a vision that is sovereigntist, national and territorial, from a vision of the hegemony of the civilisation of industrial, imperial and financial capitalism that encourages identical replicas and blocks-off the possibility of a pluriversal political schema one which would bring together the societies of the planet and respect their heterogeneity. Democracy cannot reduce itself to the procedural and formal approaches which have been imposed. Democracy is not in effect reducible to more or less rational rituals which try to efface antagonisms by the institutionalisation of a forced consensus around a hegemonic and securitar-

**"A POLITICAL PROJECT CAN NO LONGER DEFINE ITSELF STARTING FROM A VISION THAT IS SOVEREIGNTIST, NATIONAL AND TERRITORIAL."**

ian order. Democracy envisaged in a substantive manner is the re-appropriation of a new concept of positive power implying the radical displacement of our vision of migration and of international relations.

But in what way is the situation and place of migration in politics relevant to this? In March 2007, the 120 member states of the United Nations chose migration as the most important tool for socio-economic development. But this link proposed by numerous international organisations, states, NGOs, social movements, researchers, etc between *migration* and development and more specifically between *globalisation*, *migration* and *democracy* is a long way from being obvious when it is put in comparison with the contemporary construction of a new worldwide order of migration. Today, the politics of migration, caught in the mechanisms of international competition and the obligation of profit, combines a cynical utilitarianism and a war-like approach. Migration is one of the terrains where the processes of de-globalisation and de-democratisation are most visible and have been at work for a long period, and that it is also one of the terrains of the most political innovation at the borders of democracy.

Briefly, in countries of immigration we have a choice of two kinds of migration policies, which relate to two kinds of choice of society:

1) the maximal appropriation of social riches by the class of owners who recommend the intensification of work for larger numbers of the national and immigrant population, implying busier, more intense and longer hours of work for all, rigid divisions between legal and illegal, the lengthening of the time of work, the extension in the amount of time spent at work by women; at the political level, this choice relates to a politics of securitarian apartheid.

2) a repartition of social wealth to all those who produce it (in the future, at the present time, and in





the past), and the real and free circulation of peoples, the redefinition of the economic and international relations in order to be able to survive, work and migrate in decency; this type of choice leads to the construction of a democratic project and the fighting of certain conflicts (xenophobia, racism, sexism).

This fundamental link between migratory policy, economic-socio-political situation and political regime is too often hidden.

The politics of the new world migration order are the object of numerous researches in Europe and on other continents. I am not going to make a presentation and a detailed analysis of these here. I will just consider questions of a philosophical and anthropological nature. What new hierarchies in the relations of force are there? What historical hegemonic bloc in the new world order has taken the place of the hegemonic structures following the Second World War which came to an end with the fall of the Berlin wall? What place for migration, what status

for migrants?

The proposition of the simplification and stabilisation of contracts (replacing their annual renewal, the putting in place of mechanisms for the regulation of a right to "come and go" in the form of a permanent visa for those with a university degree in Europe in order to meet the competition of the United States of America, the opening of national labour markets to those coming only from the European Union) are selective and discriminative regulations. This highly targeted vision of regulation is anchored in the principle of "selective migration".

In the *lex migratoria* there is not a unique principle to envisage the situation of migration in its totality. Two principles in fact govern the management of the two categories of migrants: on the one hand there is *ordered migration*, on the other there is *the right of peoples to stay in their countries of origin with the means and the tools which combine practices of the police and those of private multinationals*.

Against these tendencies in

the migratory policies political theory and philosophy can formulate three questions of a political order. The first question concerns the place and the transformations of the political schema, of the public space, of the relationships between the public sphere and the private sphere. What is the public political statute of the zones of liberty (of the market) and of security (the perimeters of security) where competition, where inequalities in fact privatise public space, economic activities and the police without public control (states, social partners, trade unions)? What happens to the public space in these conditions? Who controls these new privatised zones? What

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**"MIGRATION IS ONE OF THE TERRAINS WHERE THE PROCESSES OF DE-GLOBALISATION AND DE-DEMOCRATISATION ARE MOST VISIBLE, AND ONE OF FIERCE POLITICAL INNOVATION AT THE BORDERS OF DEMOCRACY."**  
 .....

is the place, the role of the system of states, of international organisations and of other social partners? How should we define the responsibility of businesses and the rights of workers? What becomes of the law? Who governs, who imposes the rules with what references and with what prerogatives? Can we accept that private economic actors impose their laws on other actors, that intergovernmental police themselves control the movement of populations outside of all democratic control?

The second question concerns the transformation of human kind by the transformation of work itself. How to analyse and evaluate the transformation of human activity from *work to service*? In other words, are human workers themselves assimilated to services, to things? What was previously a human work, which constructed a relationship with oneself, with others, with the world, protected by conventions, the law of work, social rights etc., now becomes a service limited in time in a market space outside of public control. Work transforms itself and even disap-

pears in the form of work, in such a way that the product of work is a service and no longer the expression of the essence of the worker. From being workers humans become simple servicers who disappear with that which they have produced after their services are caught in a precarious statute.

The third question concerns the existence and the status of a political schema for laws and rights tightly linked to the imagination and to the democratic project. Ours is a finite world where on the one hand the right to the auto-regulation of the market and of the labour market is affirmed by competition, or where it is affirmed that political regulation must intervene but without putting into question the market (for we haven't found anything better), and, on the other hand, where the dangers and the chaos of our historical époque are denied, an époque in which domination by force at any price has become the norm. Today, the partisans of economic and political auto-regulation affirm that the market economy functions by perfect competition, whilst at the same time claiming that "everything has been broken in the world and everything needs to be reinvented". They think that economic chaos must stabilise itself, must rule itself rationally. George Soros claims that "markets are made of men just like regulators, and therefore they are imperfect... we must take account of the new paradigm and be ready to adapt constantly the controls. We cannot neglect the incertitude which belongs to markets." Faced with the incertitude of the markets, George Soros predicts the integrations of a flexible mechanism of regulation and control. We could cite Paul Valéry who, during the war of 1914-18, declared that we must learn to live in a finite world. Kant already said this two centuries before. He already underlined that after the conquests there are no more desert zones which can serve as a territory for deportation for evading tensions and wars. He concluded that the principle of hospitality was indispensable to peace and it was the basis of the development of international law. ■

Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp lectures at the University of Lausanne

.....  
 Water is Life, 2007  
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The Mwelu Foundation is working with young people living in Mathare, the slums area of Nairobi, Kenya to help them realise their potential through photography, film production and the building of life skills. For more information and donations check www.mwelu.org





# BEYOND FORTRESS EUROPE

## CONTRADICTIONS OF EUROPEAN MIGRATION POLICY



Sangatte, North of France, December 2002  
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### Contemporary migrations are an opportunity to challenge and redefine our understanding of citizenship.

BY MANUELA BOJADŽIJEV

The metaphor 'Fortress Europe' seems at first sight to provide a catchword for a very real situation, decrying the fact that migration is prevented through an increasing militarization of the borders towards the exterior and a massive deportation from the isolated interior. Similar in nature is the idea of a unified European immigration policy and corresponding talk of a global border regime with a wall around the West. All these terms refer to a very important aspect, and namely the violence required to maintain borders at all.

At the same time, however, these ideas imply a constancy and impenetrability of the borders to the outside and a consistency of EU migration policy on the inside, suggesting that there indeed exists a closed "European Space". These aspects are helping create and maintain a certain myth compatible with the desire for a "harmonisation" of the "European Space of freedom, security and justice", but they don't correspond so well with the historical form that Europe today actually holds. The use of the term in critical discourse can thus bring unforeseen affirmations with it. It is not surprising that the term is sometimes used in places where there is a desire for

accountability – as a metaphor for the successful strategy to keep immigrants away and to connote a single immigration policy. Is using this metaphor in a critical way (still) useful at all?

#### EUROPE AS A "CROSS-OVER MODEL"

If the focus of our research is directed too much at external borders alone, even if they are depicted as walls, then there is a risk that one loses sight of the situation and the societal relations in the interior, relations which produced these boundaries and their political space in the first place. I refer to Henri Lefebvre's definition of the social production of space and the representations of space. The concept of "borders" is related to the idea of a territory (or a process of territorialisation), which has historically grown in both a constitutive relationship with a certain population and is connected to a specific form of sovereignty. This has significantly changed, not least in Europe, as Étienne Balibar understands: this concept "tends to be replaced by various forms of mobile equilibrium between 'internal' and 'external' conflicting forces, and substituted by stronger and broader 'global borders', which appear as territorial projections of the political World Order (or disorder)".

Balibar has created a typology of various conflicting visions of the political space in Europe, encouraging a model that he has named the "cross-over model". This can be read as criticism of the metaphor of 'Fortress Europe', but should also serve as a warning for those whose attention

is focussed too much on the external borders of the EU. Balibar's approach tries to think laterally of the resulting space, as a superposition of different geographical, political, social, cultural, religious and linguistic reference systems, as a "series of composite peripheries", as he writes referring to Edward Said. The model corresponds to the representation of Europe as a "Borderland"; anywhere in Europe, you are always at the border.

#### CONFLICT AREAS WITHIN MIGRATION POLICIES

What about the ongoing attempts within the EU to represent a space of common immigration policy? Which areas of conflict are emerging? The declared primary objective is to attempt to adjust future immigration with the so-called needs of the labour market. To suit this purpose, the concept of the "Blue Card" has been created. This is a European work permit planned to have a duration of 10 years. It is also planned that by 2012 a single procedure for asylum seeking applications will have been adopted. In addition to this, a continuation of the deportation policies is planned, which aim at largely avoiding and discouraging the undocumented migration and any mass legalization through repression, control and surveillance. Furthermore there is an evident strengthening of the border management agency, FRONTEX, whose budget increase is among the largest within the EU. All these points were agreed in mid-October 2008 in Paris as part of the "European Pact on Immigration and Asylum". This is, however, initially

only a "work plan", which is to lead to concrete measures for implementation by 2010, at which point the Hague Program, which governs the regulation of EU immigration policies, also expires.

Within this context, there are however several general areas open to contestation:

1. The attempt to unify, or the idea of the controllability and the measurability of migration, is highly problematic. Here a relatively static picture of society is assumed, which blatantly falters given the current crisis of capitalism, and also collides with the ongoing transformations of statehood, which has evolved over the past couple of decades. Today's EU migration policy is not uniform and will obviously not become uniform with this pact.

2. The idea that migration can and must be globally controlled in accordance with economic criteria for competitiveness and economic growth is often put into question. Immigration policy is increasingly synchronised with development policy, with a significant role played by money transfers from migrants to

.....  
**"EUROPE IS A BORDERLAND;  
 ANYWHERE IN EUROPE, YOU ARE  
 ALWAYS AT THE BORDER."**  
 .....

their countries of origin. The basic idea is that these remittances will form the main contribution to poverty reduction and development in the countries of origin<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the policy aims to influence what the respective funds will be used for, and profits on money transfers by adding transfer costs. It is, however, highly debatable whether and to what extent development aid has any influence on migration, as the desire to migrate might even rise along with economic prosperity.

3. The trend towards a strengthened circular migration is accused of causing a brain drain to countries of origin, as the intention of the Blue Card is to allow immigration of skilled and highly skilled workers from countries of the global South. The official response is to see the Blue Card in the context of "circular migration"; this scenario predicts that by means of the temporary work permit, the migrants in the EU will subsequently return to their countries of origin bringing acquired knowledge, which in turn contributes to a better development.

4. But states already have relatively little impact on migration move-

ments, and usually underestimate the subjective factor and the tenacity with which migration is organized despite all restrictions. The idea that circular migration can be organised tries to make use of and manage the flexibility and mobility already demonstrated by the migrant workers; this flexibility is recognised, but at the same time there is a belief that it can be brought under control.

5. Lastly, we still do not know what impact the current crisis of capital will have upon migration movements generally and migrants themselves specifically. The classic argument would be that in an economic crisis nationalism and racism will intensify, as jobs will be demanded for locals first. This argument, however, has always been questioned in the critical theory of racism, because no such automatic behaviour exists. Examples abound, as in the case of the economic prosperity at the beginning of this decade in Russia, where racism did not cease, but in fact intensified. Several historical conditions and social realities are therefore determining: What level of organization do those who oppose racism have? How developed and established is the understanding of anti-racism in society? Finally, there is the question of how such arguments will fare under new conditions of global interdependence and established immigration societies.

#### OUTLOOK

Due to the mobility of labour, the new function of civil rights and the production of transnational spaces, a new kind of segregation is installed in the context of the postcolonial condition of Europe. A breakdown of humanity, central to any form of racism, is completed in a single political space, which leads to the emergence of what Balibar terms a "European apartheid". Taking these points together, efforts must go in the direction of critical and political work, continuing to develop institutions and practices of citizenship not bound to the territory of the nation state. Undocumented immigrants must not only be thought of as objects of exclusion, but their practices of appropriation of civil rights should be understood as an opportunity to challenge and redefine our understanding of citizenship. ■

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#### Footnotes

1. The World Bank estimates the volume of these transfers are three times the official development assistance even exceed in some cases the GDP to the respective recipient countries.



# WAR, PHOTOJOURNALISM AND ART PHOTOGRAPHY

**T**he continuing War on Terror has done much to highlight the role of the media in wartime, the limits of acceptable and publishable critique, and the remarkable success of state and military propaganda machines in producing an image of the conflicts that was clean and heroic. Published photographic images of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan often reinforced such stories, showing spectacular displays of military might, the faces of stoic and expert warriors, and poetic pictures of soldiers in picturesque situations, shot against the setting sun, for example. It became clear that the critical function of the press, and its essential service to democracy, had become deeply undermined. The kind of consistent publication of critical imagery that so challenged the US establishment view of the Vietnam War seems impossible now, and it has led many to wonder whether photojournalism

has not become institutionally complicit with the waging of war. Perhaps the images made by embedded photojournalists, confined to their assigned military units, are not so different from the propaganda produced by military photographers; perhaps even the work of the independent photojournalists, in showing the tremendous destructive power of the US military, serves the purposes of the black propagandists, the psyops units, in clearly delineating the fate of those that dare to resist.

One common response by photographic artists to these questions about photojournalism has been to make images, often with large view cameras, of war zones, producing photographic prints to the scale of history painting, which encourage viewers used to flipping through photojournalistic cliché to slow down, examine the image in detail, and question the aesthetics and the rhetorics of

making photographs in such situations. As part of the Brighton Photo Biennial of 2008, which I curated, we showed an exhibition of such works, called 'The Sublime Image of Destruction' at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea. It included the work of Simon Norfolk, Paul Seawright, and Broomberg and Chanarin. The Biennial, though, also mounted a defence of photojournalism, making visual arguments that it still had a critical role to play, and showing examples of work—even that made by embedded photographers—that showed things that the military would not have wanted seen.

In the conversation below, I talked to the artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin about these issues. At the Paradise Row gallery in London, they were showing a series of works that they had made on an embed with British forces in Afghanistan, by taking long

pieces of photographic paper to the war zone and exposing them to light without using a camera. The results were streaky coloured traces of the light of a particular place, which were captioned with an event taken from the news on the day that they were exposed. Broomberg and Chanarin also showed a video of the progress of their box of photographic paper from London to the Afghan area of conflict, as it was manhandled by artists and soldiers alike. ■

Julian Stallabrass is a curator and lecturer at Courtauld Institute of Art

**Tim Hetherington,**  
The remains of the burnt village of Singhetao that was attacked by Sudanese and Chadian Janjaweed militia in mid April. Over 109 villagers from here and surrounding areas were massacred over a period of two days.  
Singhetao, Chad. May 2006



# JULIAN STALLABRASS, OLIVER CHANARIN, AND ADAM BROOMBERG

**A conversation on the position of the photographer in situations of conflict, between the impossibility to represent war and the risk of collusion.**

BY JULIAN STALLABRASS

**JS:** You have presented us with some extraordinary objects in the next room and perhaps you could tell us how they were made?

**OC:** This started way before we went to Afghanistan. Adam and I were invited to visit Hedley Court to photograph and interview soldiers who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq having lost limbs. We learned

because, in the conflict, they had a greater sense of control, even if it was just over when they died. Whereas those stuck in the trenches had a passive sense of waiting which led to a particular type of trauma. This is the kind of shock we encountered in Hedley Court. As you know, we have spent the last few years navigating conflict zones, always concerned with how to represent trauma in those zones and how complicit representation is in these conflicts.

**JS:** Are you going to use those images of the amputees?

**OC:** We realized immediately that the images failed and would always fail to represent any of the trauma. They were hopeless as representatives of that experience.

**JS:** Your previous response, as in *Mr. Mkhize's Portrait*, for instance, would

were commissioned by The Constitutional Court of South Africa; a relationship that turned out to be fraught with problems. Our strategy there, the approach you describe of presenting portraits and interviews, feels naive to us now. Nevertheless, compared to Afghanistan we were relatively free. As embedded journalists there are hundreds of restrictions. We were forbidden to photograph soldiers who were injured or even the results of enemy fire.

**JS:** Is that one of their stipulations?

**OC:** Yes, we also couldn't photograph in the morgue, in any of the hospitals or officers tents. You are actually forbidden to photograph anything which resembles a sign of war.

**JS:** Can you talk about the experience of embedding and what the army was expecting of you and how you did or

down their priority list. At a certain point, they made sure they got us to Kandahar which is basically like being nudged out of the war. As they realised what we were doing, they slowly manoeuvred us away from the frontline.

**JS:** Where there any soldiers who were curious about your project? Or some to whom you manage to explain it?

**AB:** There were. The head of media operations, Colonel Matthews, was hilarious. The class system in the British Army was astounding, probably more for us as outsiders. It feels like the nineteenth century. Colonel Matthews would swing between being completely intrigued to completely paranoid and suspicious. On the third night we were there, he barged in and asked us: "Do you actually have MoD clearance?"

D3. They are on the frontline, spending up to three weeks on patrols, their first duty being to take photographs and their second to engage combat. When the combat shooters get back to the base they hand over their digital chips to Media Operations and anything deemed unnecessary or too contentious is deleted and the rest is held on file or made accessible to the public, but they don't own anything. This is remarkable because photography is so concerned with ownership and copyright.

**OC:** If you think of a sliding scale of witnesses, with a soldier on the one end and a journalist on the other, the combat shooters inhabit this ambiguous zone in the middle. This starts to raise questions about the role of the embedded journalist in that situation. What became clear to us is to be an embedded journalist inevitably involves more collusion than col-



there that there are more amputees in Britain now than there were even during World War I. This is because military medicine has become so advanced that more are surviving. We met a number of soldiers, some of whom as young as 19, who had come back from Afghanistan some just a week or two before, some had lost an arm, some both legs.

**AB:** It wasn't just the type of physical injuries that intrigued us but also the psychological; the type of conflict that they are experiencing is also similar to WW1 in the particularly passive nature of injury or death that they experience. During WW1 they compared the psychology of fighter pilots to those who were stuck in trenches. Even though the fighter pilots had a greater chance of dying every day they would return emotionally more intact

have been to interview them, and use extracts alongside the photographs'. There were people who were quite badly brutalised in that book. You now felt that inadequate?

**AB:** It's a different setting. Here we were talking very much about a conflict zone in which photojournalists are the image-makers. That is something we have never claimed to be, and it is a language we were taking head-on for the first time.

**OC:** It's interesting to compare *Mr. Mkhize* with this more recent work. There are some similar concerns in terms of the role of photography as evidence, the power relations between us and our subjects, representation of human trauma and in particular the navigation of authority. In the case of *Mr. Mkhize's Portrait* we

didn't fulfil those expectations

**AB:** Olly and I have done a lot of lying in the last few years. When we worked with the Israeli Defense Force we spent 8 months phoning once a week, speaking what Hebrew I could muster up and trying to win them over. After 8 months of negotiation we got half an hour access to Chicago, a fake Arab village in the middle of the Negev desert built for military training?. Because we are Jewish they expected a sympathetic representation of their crisis. We approached this project in a similar way – we were not totally upfront about what our real concerns were.

**OC:** As the soldiers who were chaperoning us realised we were more interested in our box than the spectacle surrounding it, we started to slip

**OC:** Watching that mechanism at work was fascinating. Despite the fact that we were there, on the ground, in the midst of a war, events still came to us like distant newspaper headlines, and that disjuncture was surreal. For example, we heard about that hundredth death not from the military or the colonel but from a journalist from *The Sun* newspaper, who had heard about it from his editor back in London. Where had this information come from? It was shocking to discover that the newspapers have their own intelligence network in the Army, a network of spies that is gathering information all the time.

**AB:** The MoD [Ministry of Defence] use Combat Shooters. The British military have around 40 professional soldiers who are also professional photographers. They carry an M16 and a Nikon

laboration. You work together with the army to create images. The strategy we adopted – to not show anything – felt like the most subversive way to engage.

**JS:** At the Brighton Photo Biennial, there is a show that displays many of these US Army photographs, and again, although all the photographs are credited, they're copyright free because they are part of the state archive. They are fascinating because many of them say things which you would think the Army wouldn't quite want to communicate. There is an amazing image, for instance, of American troops in an occupied house, photographed through a tarnished mirror. It is a very sinister image, and there it is on the US Army site available for download. More typically, these photographs are very generic,



as you would expect, with lots of pictures of US forces being nice to Iraqi kids or playing football. Anyhow, I am still unclear of how you go from interviewing these amputees, realising they were in incredibly dangerous, traumatic and passive situations, and then get it into your heads to say we are going to put ourselves in that same situation.

**AB:** We have always skirted around conflict, the show we are in that you curated at the Brighton Biennial is about what has become known as “aftermath photography”, images made just after the fact. We went to Iraq during the war but not to the centre of the conflict, the same with Rwanda, Darfur. We felt it was time to place ourselves in the centre to examine how representation is produced in that space.

**OC:** This year we were invited to be on the jury of the World Press Photo Awards which are very much an award for photojournalists, awarding news images. There we looked at thousands and thousands of images of war. One was particularly interesting, it won 1st prize in the ‘Spot News’ category, and was taken during Bhutto’s assassination by a photographer who was right there at the scene of the explosion, only a few yards away from the detonation. It all happened so quickly he hadn’t been able to focus, the camera was askew. The picture is not really a

**OC:** Nachtwey is a good example. Nachtwey doesn’t call himself a war photographer but an anti-war photographer. We feel, quite strongly that that is a conceit because as a journalist embedded in a conflict you are essentially part of that machinery, you’re a cog...

**AB:** Not only embedded journalists suffer this. Nachtwey I would imagine, resists being embedded but even so he is inevitably a part of the war-waging machine. Image-making and war-waging are congruent activities. Now to get “good images”, whatever that means, of combat means you have to collaborate with the military. If you want real access, you need to be embedded which brings with it a whole set of obstructions including self-censorship. This collusion gives you remarkable access and the possibility to create spectacle, images the public and photo-editors demand: like a soldier silhouetted against a desert sunset.

**OC:** I don’t think our project is intended to be set up in opposition to Nachtwey or even in opposition to photojournalism. We are not trying to undermine photojournalists who go to war zones, who risk their lives trying to bring back images of war. What we are asking photographers in those situations to do is to think a little about the kind of images they are making and what aesthetic rules

which is what we have tried here. To collude, but to expose that process of collusion.

**JS:** We should also talk about the viewer. With the Bhutto image, there is an abstract spectacle of light and colour that you project into because of the caption. Your work seems to be similar in that you are given a caption, so how do you see this projection working? Is it something you want to encourage or frustrate? What do you expect people to get out of looking at these? Visually, they are quite curious, looking a bit like Morris Lewis’ abstract paintings. They have colours which are redolent of the sky but also of blood. So where do you want to put the viewer?

**AB:** I have had my mother walk around them going: ‘Ooh, that looks so violent or that is so exquisite.’ Let’s face it, these show the marks of light on paper. Of course we are playing on the pictorialist and sublime notion of beauty, that there is something beautiful about it or violent because red denotes blood and therefore violence. But for us the most important part of the work is not what the viewer sees in

.....  
**“WE REALISED IMMEDIATELY THAT THE IMAGES WOULD ALWAYS FAIL TO REPRESENT ANY OF THE TRAUMA.”**  
 .....

**AB:** Our images are not wholly useless though. They are not useful because they are beautiful, or useful as a blank canvas onto which you can project. They are useful because suffering does require a witness. To bring back a piece of paper that has been right there. To bring back that piece of paper, not a photograph but that same piece of paper and to pin it to the wall is to bring back some visceral form of evidence, more than that Bhutto image constitutes evidence.

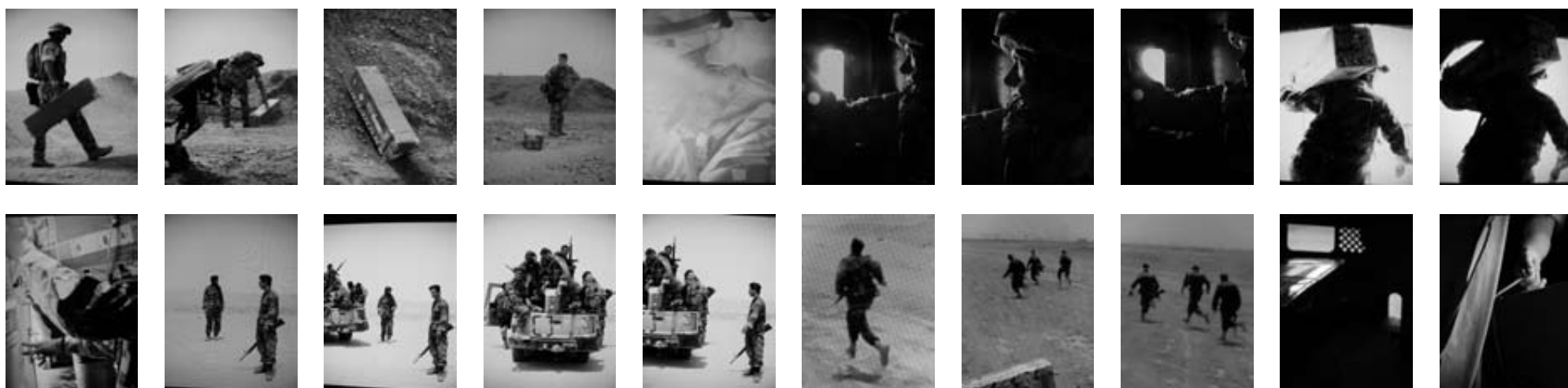
**JS:** Maybe you would like to elaborate on that more. Talking to people at the opening was an interesting experience because some were very taken by the images and intrigued by the combination of text and image, and others were quite angry. One woman described it to me as a ‘conceit’ which I thought was an interesting phrase because it was not necessarily condemnatory. You could see it as a literary conceit, an 18th century game with words or images, maybe an allegory. The reactions were mixed and so it would be interesting to hear why you think that evidential character or the presence of the paper at that place was necessary or interesting. You could have exposed these things right here in Hoxton and no one would have been any the wiser.

**OC:** I think it would be useful to go back to the experience of being there and to carrying this box around with

them buying the newspaper, so of course editors won’t publish pictures showing the real effects of war on civilians. What they do publish are all these inoffensive images. There is an agreement between editors and advertisers which allow only certain images – none of which would anger people.

**JS:** There is a performative element in all of your work, and you are made to think, not only about the image but your goal in recording it and what you do with it. One way of looking at the images on show here would be to project into them a sublime spectacle of violence and destruction or even of the appalling progress of the war in Afghanistan and all that has occurred in the last few years, but the video puts a very different light on it and almost presents you as latter-day surrealist jokers. Would you talk about the contrast between these two things?

**AB:** We discussed it in Brechtian terms, the way his epic theatre was based on a series of interruptions. That the performance was so obscured that you became aware of the mechanisms, the workings behind it. An actor plays out the script but also makes you very aware that he or she is an actor. The fact that the box carrying the photographic paper appears in each scene undermines the spectacle. The unfolding of the conflict is constantly interrupted by this mute,



picture – more a blur of colour and light, there was nothing to discern in it. It was interesting because it was mostly evidence of the witness having been there. We started to think about what constitutes a photojournalistic image.

**JS:** We know of some photographers, James Nachtwey would be a good example, who if they had been there, would have got it right, would have made a record.

**AB:** But what does that mean, ‘got it right’?

**JS:** He would have done what he is professionally engaged to do, maybe produce something interesting formally but certainly produce something which could have been used as evidence.

they engage. There are a whole set of aesthetic rules that Nachtwey or any Magnum photographer uses.

**AB:** I think we also need to look at the relationship between photographer, photo-editor and the market. Maybe we can put some responsibility for the problem on the market. Thomas Hirschhorn is an artist that you also included in the Biennial. His piece is an 18 foot-long banner which is a collage of images showing the effects of modern munitions on the human body. The most horrific thing you have ever seen. For me the best way to make radical work now is to construct a two-pronged attack. The first is what you have done, to display images that the media is not prepared to show, to show the reality of the war and the physical effects it has on the body. And the other is to withhold images,

the rolls of paper but rather their reaction to the film. I don’t think we would ever show one of those rolls without the film which describes the process of production, this performance is most important. I don’t care what the paper looks like.

**OC:** Images of other peoples suffering are designed to elicit a sense of shame. But in this project we are questioning that... What use do these images actually have, other than to act as a catharsis of some kind? Looking at images of war can actually short-circuit any kind of immediate call to action. We get this every time we turn the page of the newspaper. One aim of our work is to try to put the burden of looking back on the viewer. To rob the viewer of the cathartic effect of looking and ignoring images of human trauma.

the British military. Of course the word ‘conceit’ comes to mind. You have a war going on, soldiers risking their lives and there we were asking them to carry this heavy cardboard box around while we filmed them. There is something subversive about that. There was an article in the Times about this project. When the journalist first arrived for the interview she was really angry about us having made soldiers engage in this absurd performance, about us having co-opted the military. The journey of the box shows the mechanism, the workings of the war.

**AB:** I think anger is an important response. Why do images in the paper not anger them? What range of emotions could they go through looking at an image of the war: they could go from total revulsion, which will stop

Images from the film shot by Oliver Chanarin and Adam Broomberg to accompany and document their project.

.....  
 comical witness that literally blocks your view during the whole journey.

**OC:** The box acts as your proxy, takes you on this journey and shows you this war that you would never normally see in a journalistic context. To see the mechanisms is to see something ultra banal, the way the whole machine is constructed to allow the war to function.

**AB:** The editing was very important; we made the takes as long as possible. None of the montage decisions were based on trying to entertain, the same way the images are not, but it’s actually about drawing it out so you feel the mundanity and the banality of war. ■

# INTERVIEW WITH NANCY FRASER

**Nancy Fraser is a celebrated critical theorist and a feminist. Europa asks her about the transnationalisation of the public sphere, radical justice and the crisis and pulling feminism back from neoliberalism.**

**EA: You are one of the leading theorists trying to develop the notion of the public sphere. In what ways has globalisation affected the public sphere? Has the public sphere become more transnational?**

**F:** Today, the flow of public political discourse does not respect borders, but is often transnational. The result is a serious challenge to public-sphere theory, as originally developed by Jürgen Habermas. What made Habermas's idea of the public sphere a critical concept was the tacit assumption that the arena in which public opinion circulated and in which it could gather political force was a territorial state - a bounded national community. Thanks to that "westphalian" assumption, the public sphere could serve as the civil-society counterpart of the modern state. So it seemed that each of those indispensable two tracks of politics (the informal civil-society track and the formal-institutional track) were in place and well-matched, isomorphic

to one another. Given those presuppositions, the theory could offer a relatively clear critique of actually existing democratic states: These democracies were flawed insofar as their public spheres lacked legitimacy and efficacy—that is, insofar as the communicative processes through public opinion was formed were restricted and not accessible to all on equal terms; and/or insofar as public opinion lacked the political force to influence state actors and hold them accountable. In this way, the theory supplied a clear benchmark for evaluating social reality. But the clarity evaporates when we consider the complex transborder circuits in which public opinion circulates today. Where are the institutionalized public powers to which transnational opin-

ion is addressed and which it should hold accountable? Where are the public powers with the capacity to solve transborder problems, such as global warming or financial meltdown, in the general interest of transborder populations? Where is the shared political status (analogous to shared citizenship) that positions members of transnational publics on terms of parity with one another, with equal participation rights and equal voice? All these things are lacking today, and the match between publics and states presupposed by public-sphere theory is nowhere to be found. Without a correlation between the scale of public opinion, on the one side, and the scale of public powers, on the other, it becomes hard to envisage what the critical ideals of public-sphere theory could mean today.

but what did it accomplish? A few weeks later Bush ordered the troops and tanks into Iraq. There existed no institutionalized transnational public power that could implement that anti-war sentiment, no institutionalized agency that could make the opinion efficacious. Here, then, is a case in which the transnational scale of public opinion outstripped that of global governance. In the absence of transnational institutions that could translate anti-war opinion into actual policy. Bush felt free to simply ignore it: there was nothing to constrain him.

Until we come to grips with such mismatches of scale of both types, until we figure out how to overcome them, the theory of the public sphere will lack the kind of critical force it had before, when it presupposed the national frame.

**EA: Can you give me any examples of how public opinion and state institutions no longer seem to match up?**

**NF:** There are two equal and opposite problems. In one case you have administrative powers that operate on a transnational scale, but you don't have comparably broad transnational public spheres, where civil society actors can form and mobilise public opinion. This is the case in the European Union today, where you have a relatively powerful administrative apparatus in Brussels, but no genuinely European-wide public-sphere: debate is still national. We saw that in the French 'no' vote for example, which was driven largely by domestic considerations. In this case the scale of institutional power outstrips that of public opinion. European public

**EA: Do you think the global financial crisis calls for new transnational institutions?**

**NF:** Yes: there won't be any lasting and secure solution until we create democratically accountable transnational - in some cases global - institutions with the capacity to regulate markets, banking, finance. In this area, there exist deficits at both ends at the same time: public opinion is not adequately scaled up, but the regulatory institutional capacities aren't there either. That is what makes the present situation so difficult. Normally, the process of democratisation works when institutions already exist, and publics and social movements clamour to democratise them. So first you get monarchies, and then you get republics, right? Now our situation is a situation where we don't have the global transnational public powers - we have to build them and democratize them at the same time. We have some powers like the IMF and the WTO, and those we need to democratise for sure, but other necessary public powers don't yet exist.

**"OUR SITUATION IS A SITUATION WHERE WE DON'T HAVE THE GLOBAL TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC POWERS - WE HAVE TO BUILD THEM AND DEMOCRATIZE THEM AT THE SAME TIME."**

opinion is not sufficiently transnational to hold European administrative powers accountable.

But we can see the opposite problem, too, for example, in the worldwide demonstrations of February 15 2003 against the impending US invasion of Iraq. There could not have been a clearer global outpouring of public sentiment, the culmination of tremendous flows of communication and argument in the preceding months. There something approaching a genuinely transnational - even global - public sphere did develop,

**EA: Let's move on to your thoughts about justice. You have written about the popular theme of 'recognition' in political theory, and how this should be understood. How do you understand the category of recognition?**

**F:** My interpretation goes against the standard view of recognition as a matter of identity. In contrast to that view, I construe recognition as a question of status. For me the issue is not whether others affirm my personal or collective self-understanding, but rather whether the institutionalized norms that regulate our interactions



Decadence  
by Marco Sanges,  
03 APRIL - 03 MAY AT EVERYMAN CINEMA  
HAMPSTEAD, LONDON, UK  
© MARCO SANGES WWW.MARCOSANGES.COM



permit me to participate as a peer in social life. On my view, then, the politics of recognition should not take the form of identity politics. Rather, it should aim to deinstitutionalize hierarchical patterns of cultural value that prevent some people from participating on a par with others in social interaction and to replace them with value patterns that foster parity. It should aim, in other words at dismantling status inequalities and establishing status equality.

Thus, I distinguish the politics of recognition from the politics of redistribution. In my view, the latter is a response to subordination and stratification in terms of class. Here the question is whether or not everyone has the resources they need in order to participate fully in social interaction on terms of parity with everyone else. But even when they have sufficient resources, people can still be prevented by participating on terms of parity in social life if they suffer from status inequality. In that case, the injustice is not maldistribution but misrecognition - an injustice that is every bit as serious, as material, as the former. Thus, I propose to understand the politics of recognition as aimed at combating status inequality and status subordination. Whether we are talking about women, racialised immigrants, ethnic minorities, or religious minorities, struggles against injustices of misrecognition are every bit as central to modern politics as struggles against injustices of maldistribution. For me, in other words, class and status constitute two orders of subordination, analytically distinct but inter-imbricated in modern societies.

**EA: When you talk about 'status injustice', what is the notion of justice behind that?**

**F:** I have a very demanding notion of justice as parity of participation. It is not enough, in my view, to have formally equal rights, or formally equal opportunities. It is not even enough to have the exact equality of resources or primary goods if that were even possible. What is necessary are social arrangements that do not entrench systematic institutionalised obstacles to parity of participation. So justice for me is about dismantling obstacles to parity that are institutionalised in unjust social arrangements. If you ask me how I justify this rather demanding, radical democratic interpretation of justice, I will give you a conceptual argument. I will say that the view of justice as participatory parity is a radical democratic interpretation of precisely that famous norm of *equal respect for and equal autonomy of all human beings*. As I interpret it, equal respect simply means participatory parity. Anything less makes a mockery of the notion of the equal dignity of all human beings.

I can also give you a historical argument. Over time, our notions

of equality have become more demanding. For one thing, these notions have become broader, in the sense of applying in more and more spheres of life. Originally, equal respect had quite a narrow meaning, namely, equal access to the courts and freedom of conscience in the sphere of religion. Later, people came to see that it applied also in political life—hence the demand for political voice, the expansion of the franchise. Still later, came the notion that equal respect applied in the marketplace, that it entailed economic and social rights. Then with feminism came the idea that equality applied also in the family and in personal life. Historically, then, the norm of equal respect or equality has come to apply in more and more spheres, and the burden of argument has shifted – it is now incumbent on those who think that it shouldn't apply in some given domain to explain why. Equality is the default position.

At the same time, the idea of equal respect has become less formal and more substantive. So to take TH Marshall's famous example, it is not enough to say that in theory everyone has the right to sue in a court of law. To make that right real, everyone must have the means to exercise it: If you cannot afford an attorney, you will be provided with one. Here we see that equality has a material dimension. Thus, the career open to talents require not only the absence of external impediments but also the positive means, such free public education and an equitable division

.....  
**"FEMINISM COULD REASSERT ITS CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM'S ANDROCENTRISM."**  
 .....

of domestic labour. These examples show that the meaning of equality has become increasingly substantialised and demanding. In effect, it has come to mean parity of participation.

**EA: Isn't there a danger that by putting the emphasis of your critical theory on 'removing obstacles' it sounds like you have quite a *lassiez-faire* attitude to the historical process? You have commented in some of your writings on the phenomenon that the political right seems increasingly to be able to dominate ideological argument, and you associate that phenomenon with a decline in utopian thinking on the left.**

**F:** As a theorist of justice, which is to say of *injustice*, I am interested in diagnosing the forms, structures and mechanisms of injustice in our society. But I do agree that social movements have another side – that is that they project what we can call an 'utopian imaginary' of a better life. That is simultaneously a necessity and a risk, as the utopian element can go bad and become authoritarian.

But I do agree with you: if we think of justice purely in procedural terms of fairness then this does seem too thin to really motivate and inspire. So the question is how do we see it connecting up with other elements of a utopian imaginary?

**EA: Let us ask you about one of the terms that may or may not be used by social movements, and that is the term of 'feminist'. You are often described as a feminist, and I have the sense that you have no problem with the term. However there are those who seem to see the term as a barrier, many who were part of the feminist movement in the 70s who now are no longer happy to see themselves described in that way. I wonder what you have to say about the idea that the term might be problematic.**

**F:** I am more concerned with the opposite problem. Everyone claims to be a feminist now. People like me who have long identified with feminism as a social movement aimed at combating injustices of gender find that we don't own this term any more. Others claim the term too, in the service of other agendas. So, for example, Sarah Palin claims to be a feminist, as do elements of the Christian Right in the United States, the very people who not so long ago ranted and railed against 'femi-nazis.' In general, feminist ideas have become so broadly disseminated that they have become part of common sense. Just about everyone claims to be feminist now, but what does that mean? And what does that have to do with the social movement that I was part of?

I have recently explored the hypothesis that feminism is part of the new spirit of capitalism, that it has become an ideology that legitimates neoliberalism. We know that neoliberalism involves the massive entry of women into paid work all over the globe. What motivates these women? What gives ethical meaning to their daily struggles? It seems to me that feminism serves as the necessary moralizing force, at both ends of the spectrum, whether it is the professionals trying to crack the glass ceiling, or the temps, the part-timers, and EPZ workers who undertake wage work not only to earn their living but also in search of dignity and liberation from traditional authority. If that's right, then we have the confusing circumstance in which a movement that once posed a radical challenge to capitalism's androcentrism is now serving to legitimate, even glamorize, wage labor. And this poses a huge problem for feminists in the narrow sense like me. As our ideas are disseminated and resignified, we find ourselves facing our uncanny double, whether in the guise Sarah Palin or Hilary Clinton or Segolene Royal. If everyone is a feminist now, then "feminism" has become a term like 'democracy' that can be used for any



purpose, including purposes which run directly counter to gender justice.

**EA: if it is the case that the feminist cause has been hijacked by the right how should the feminist respond to that?**

**F:** First of all, this hijacking is a sign of feminism's success. But the experience is not unique to feminism. Other emancipatory movements, too, find their ideas hijacked for purposes at odds with their own.

**EA – the environmental movement for example?**

**F:** Yes, and this takes us back to our earlier discussion about the public sphere. Any discourse that gains a certain amount of currency in the public sphere becomes available for articulation to a variety of different political projects. As feminist discourse becomes mainstream, it becomes a token in ongoing struggles for hegemony. Thus, the question arises: Who will win the soul of feminism? Will feminism be articulated to the left or to the right?

And yet, just as neoliberalism may have hijacked some feminist ideals, so its current crisis presents an opportunity. This is a moment where feminists in the original sense can try to reactivate the movement's radical emancipatory potential. We might try to break the spurious links between our critique of the family wage and marketisation, between our critique of welfare-state paternalism and privatisation. In other words, this is a moment when the "dangerous liaison" of feminism and neoliberalism could be broken. Feminism could reassert its critique of capitalism's

androcentrism, for example, by reopening the question of wage labour's proper place in a humane form of life. We might ask: what role should wage labour play in a modern society? How should it relate to care and other forms of social participation?

**EA: We're in a time of crisis as you've said. There seem to be very few alternatives being proposed by public intellectuals or anyone else, if you compare it to earlier crises in the 20th century for example. I wonder what your diagnosis is for this slightly depressing state of affairs?**

**F:** It is still very early in the crisis. If you think back to the 1930s, it took quite a long time before a real Left emerged and became self confident and developed a culture and a discourse that could generating alternative ideas. Today, however, we are facing an historically new situation, given the apparent delegitimation of socialism in the wake of the collapse of communism. Until '89 there still seemed to be an alternative to capitalism, but everyone is understandably more agnostic about that now. I wouldn't say that we *know* that there is no alternative to capitalism, but the pictures we had before of what that alternative might be like were much too simple and possibly unworkable. On the one hand there is a big question mark about political economy – what would the political economy of a just society look like? On the other hand, both feminism and environmentalism are powerful world-pictures which are now available, and it seems to me that those are both good starting points and ... well, we all have to get cracking thinking about these things! ■

# GLOCAL ART AT THE MARGINS OF EMPIRE

**For an alternative artistic approach between an ephemeral global village and a reactionary appeal to tradition.**

BY BHASKAR MUKHOPADHYAY

**T**he emergence of art as a global institution (backed by a global art market) as one of the consequences of the process of financialisation, is an epochal event of our times that has rarely been commented upon. Commentators on New Capitalism have waxed eloquently about ‘informatization’ and ‘dematerialisation’<sup>1</sup> and, about the ability of capital to valorise processes and objects which were outside the erstwhile value circuit (affect and art are two prime examples) and to invent new, intangible, objects (e.g., financial derivatives), but what remain unsaid in that account is the fantastic concordance of artistic flows with financial flows leading to a certain Saatchification of contemporary art. In the mid-90s, Thierry de Duve wrote about an epochal transition – from Modernism to Postmodernism – premised upon art’s becoming a wholly self-referential category defined entirely by circulation rather than by some extrinsic criterion (beauty or truth).<sup>2</sup> While the tendency towards dematerialisation<sup>3</sup> has been exacerbated in the subsequent innovation of ‘Conceptual Art’ followed by more ‘ephemeral’ forms of non-representational art, a parallel process in geopolitics culminated in art’s globalisation or biennialisation which would remove the last vestige of art’s anchorage in specific places and times. Despite Clement Greenberg’s expansive claim about art as such (art did not go global until the late twentieth century) around the middle of the last century, think how localised was the context of his pronouncements – determined largely by his own location within the US ‘culture industry’ and the Cold War ideology which shaped it. And when you contrast him with comparable figures of today who can make claims on behalf art as such (rather than this or that – American or Japanese – art) – say, someone like Nicolas Bourriaud or any other curator/theorist of stature who shuttles across the globe with the ease of a business traveller and negotiates with non-western or even ‘tribal’ artists with a flourish, it becomes quite clear that the

law of general equivalence (which is not the same thing as homogenisation) has permeated what can be called *The Global ArtWorld Inc.*<sup>4</sup> Art’s de- and reterritorialisation in recent decades calls for a radical departure from theories (Bloch or Adorno) which valorized artwork’s transcendent qualities.

In our radically *delocalized* world, upholding the claims of a tradition is bound to sound hypocritical and reactionary. In the context of the ongoing Tate Triennial, Bourriaud (the curator) has rightly asserted that Postmodernism, which was obsessed with the idea of an indetifiable origin and tradition, is no longer relevant for the world we inhabit. The state of the artistic world today is such that one has to, of necessity, start from “a globalized state of culture – [the artists] not anymore working as logotypes of their own culture, or their own tradition. The question is not anymore where you are coming from but where you are going to?”

Yet, no one, except a miniscule and privileged minority of jet-set globetrotters, actually *lives* in the famed global village – it is counter-intuitive. While lived places are pulverised and undercut by centripetal global forces, there can be no denial that groups to benefit from this mobility are usually the privileged ones – it is the powerless underdogs whose fate is to remain localized. In fact, the same forces that engender mobility and movement also create enclaves, ghettos and camps where the ‘dangerous’ populations are confined, trapped and un-homed. Glocal art does not espouse a certain fetishism of place, instead it destabilizes the very fixity of place by asking: who makes places out of spaces?

.....  
**“THE SAME FORCES THAT  
 ENGENDER MOBILITY AND  
 MOVEMENT ALSO CREATE  
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 .....

What are the stakes in this? What is the politics of place today? And it is precisely in these ‘zones of exception’ – refugee camps, borders, ghettos of illegal immigrants, deprived slums, zones crisscrossed by petty smugglers who cross borders regularly for making a living and other ‘dangerous’ subaltern population groups who are being deprived of their mobility and livelihood and are being steadily localized by the operation of the global surveillance ma-

chinery – that the politics of place manifests itself. *These* places have nothing to do with the sense of sheltering autochthony associated with the erstwhile idea of place.

## **EmFacing the Defaced: The Art of Portrait in the Era of Displacement**

Paradoxically, some of the most prosperous zones of the globe have enclaves teeming with the disenfranchised. Squeaky clean Singapore happens to be one of the wealthiest states of Asia (in terms of per capita

income) but its red-light district, Gaylang, has a large population of immigrant, illegal sex-workers from China, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Thailand and Malaysia. Many of them are not even professional sex-workers: they are housewives, daughters, young factory workers and college students from the large Asian hinterland where the operations of a globalised, ‘disorganised’ capitalism in recent times have brutalised, ravaged and disoriented traditional life-style and patterns of expectations. They all worship the

mighty Singapore Dollar and cross borders to make some fast buck. The heat of poverty and the dust of dis-possession have driven them to such extreme alienation that traditional notions of honour, shame, wellbeing – have all been forgotten. Theorists of ‘affective labour’ do not adequately recognise the degree of dispossession and degradation entailed in sex-work in the squalor and brutality of the Asian sex-industry. Joan Marie Kelly, an American painter who teaches drawing and painting at the Nanyang Technological University



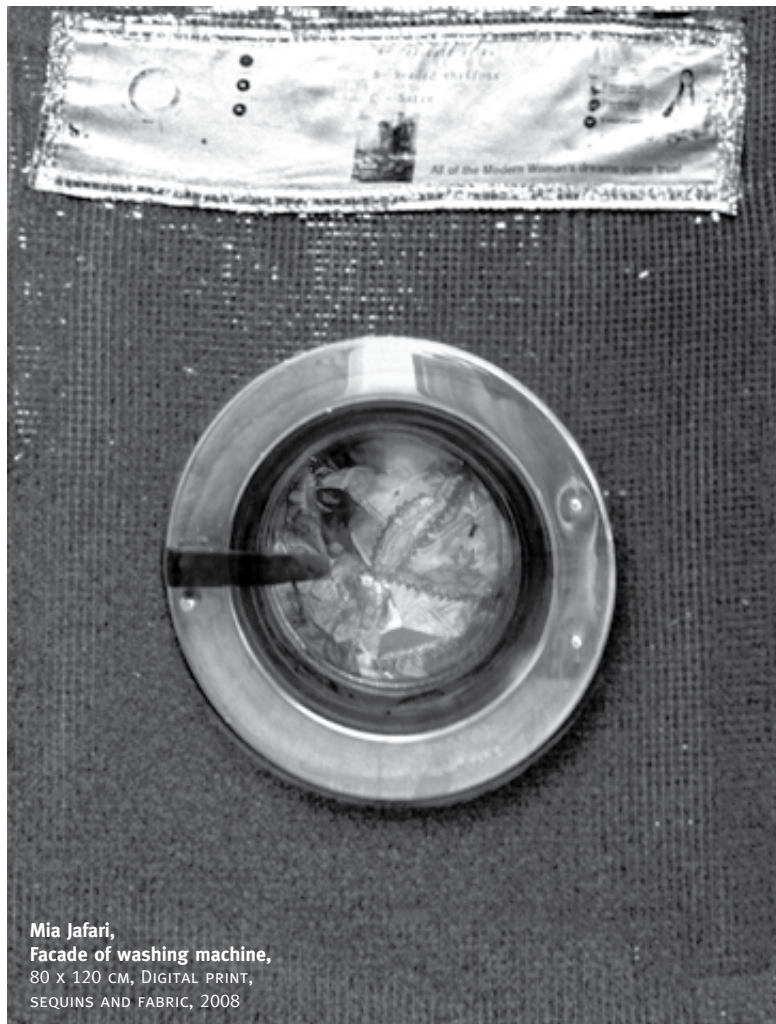
Joan M. Kelly,  
*Throw the Lilly Under the Couch*,  
 175 x 114 cm, OIL ON CANVAS, 2008



(Singapore), was shocked to find out that painting these sex-workers was not easy. The resistance came from the sex-workers themselves who felt inadequate and were reluctant to be represented: they felt that they are merely part of some anonymous and commoditized 'flesh'!

In this era of 'conceptual art' and 'performance art' when painting has almost been relegated to limbo, experimenting with portrait painting would appear to be anachronistic. The end of art-as-we-knew-it is a logical outcome of the exhaustion of the classical (post-Renaissance) problematic of representation whose aim was verisimilitude. The advent of photography and cinema in early twentieth century not only made painting, (*qua* representation) somewhat superfluous but also gave rise to a certain reflexivity which, instead of thinking of painting as a window to the world, began experimenting with the materiality of the surface of the canvas, with the nature of colour and lines -- without any reference to the 'world'. Around mid-twentieth century, this tendency exhausted itself, culminating in high abstraction, 'ready-mades' and minimalism.

The wheel has come in full circle and today artists are asking, once again, with Nicholas Bourriaud, whether, through art, "it [is] still possible to generate relationships with the world" in a way that would circumvent the problematic of 'representation'. Joan Kelly is a self-conscious practitioner of 'relational aesthetics' (an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space).<sup>5</sup> She looks at portraiture more as an ethnographic encounter rather than a mimetic activity: the purpose is not simply to paint a face but to generate an *encounter* between the artist and the social milieu of the subject to be painted. The idea is to use portraiture as a form of 'conceptual art' in order to engage with marginal communities in different parts of the world -- illegal sex-workers in South and South East Asia, the unemployed and the homeless in the US, the refugees and the immigrants in Europe, factory workers in China who lost their limbs in accidents and were thrown



Mia Jafari,  
Facade of washing machine,  
80 X 120 CM, DIGITAL PRINT,  
SEQUINS AND FABRIC, 2008

out of their jobs -- living on the margins of society. As is well known, the purpose of traditional portrait is to *re-present* a person's inner persona. Kelly's portraits, far from wanting to capture a subject's expression, seek to valorise the process of interaction itself (between the artist, the model and his/her milieu) and the resultant portraits are the material remains, or witnesses -- to this inter-subjective exchange and the resultant establishment/reinforcement of sociality.

The face is what represents the person. To be human is to have a face. To be a person, to be acknowledged as a person, means to be acknowledged through one's face. It is not possible to contemplate a relationship of love, hatred or friendship with a faceless person. Human beings without faces are not quite humans. And yet, social marginality -- professional sex-work and the kind of affective labour it entails -- is precisely a way of rendering the sex-worker faceless. To concentrate on the *face* of a sex-worker is thus to redeem his/her humanity on the face of a 'reality' which seeks to reduce him/her to mere flesh. Kelly's invocation of Levinas' ideas on 'the face of the other' (he wrote about the 'defenseless nudity' of the face of the other -- the 'widow, orphan or stranger') -- is significant. According to Levinas, in the human face is found the original ethical code. From a look into the face of the Other we become aware of basic human responsibility and meaning.<sup>6</sup> To *emface* the faceless through artistic encounter (Kelly attracts crowds of onlookers whenever she paints the sex-workers in public)

is thus to restore the human in the dispossessed other.

### Lipstick Jihad and the Sex of Things

By now it is widely acknowledged that the commodity is ontologically heterogeneous: it does not mean the same thing everywhere. Mia Jafari is a British-Iranian artiste who has been drawn to Iranian public commodity culture and her artistic work (textiles and photomontages made from staged photographs taken in Iran) on Iranian women's engagement with mundane, mass-produced western consumer goods deserves critical interrogation as glocal art. Iran is one of those few places in the world where a self-conscious anti-globalization, anti-consumerist agenda permeates the state ideology and public culture. Predictably, most Iranian art (diasporic art included) today is undergirded by a certain artistic angst about the illiberalism of the Islamic regime.

As is well-known, the Islamic regime of Iran is critical of consumerism and for some strange reason consumerism is viewed as 'western' (while the crassest of the consumerist dystopias are located in the Middle East and South East Asia). While it would be difficult to brand Jafari's work either as pro- or anti-consumption, what is clear is that a certain irony about the semiotic status of mass-consumer goods in Iranian feminine imaginary is pervasive in the textiles she makes. The subtle perversity of the façade of a washing-machine made from shiny, shocking-pink rough fabric (with a golden door and instructions written in Persian) arises out of a shrewd play with the politics of gender in contemporary Iran. The transposition from cold, smooth white metal to warm but rough pink not just feminizes this mundane gadget but also seeks to characterise the defiance of young Iranian women whose affili-

"THE GLOBAL / LOCAL BINARY IS NO LONGER ADEQUATE."

ation with visible markers of westernisation (loud make-up, flashy clothes, shiny trinkets, high heels etc.) shocks the conservative public.<sup>7</sup> It is chic, wry and simultaneously disturbing and attractive.

Jafari's photomontages depict staged scenarios of semi-veiled young Iranian women in colourful clothes playing with replicas of various mundane gadgets. What gives these scenes a certain dream-like quality is the background: a derelict but rugged and picturesque landscape (rural, sparsely inhabited areas outside of Tehran) reminiscent of absence, emptiness and aporia. It is in this utopic non-place that the romance of young Iranian women with western gadgets unfolds.

Jafari's Iranian works compels us to rethink not just Islam but also the ontology of commodity. The received binary of use- vs. exchange value is of little use in making sense

of Islamic feminine engagement with consumption. The thrust of feminine consumption is on mass-produced mundane gadgets of quotidian use (the regime disapproves of 'conspicuous consumption' -- western cosmetics, for example) whose semioticity is nearly zero because these are use-values -- utilities. Yet, as modest and non-spectacular metonyms of the western commodity imaginary, these do not remain mere passive things. It would not occur to anybody here in England, for example, to ask: what does a washing-machine *mean*? Our quotidian familiarity with household gadgets has rendered them banal: a washing-machine or a refrigerator *does* things for us (washing and cooling, respectively) -- these have no *meaning* beyond their functionality. The ontological precariousness of the branded washing-machine in Iranian feminine imaginary arises out of the fact that its semioticity surpasses its functionality. Their artistic re-presentation in Jafari's artworks becomes doubly enigmatic when she characterises her own work as 'kitsch'! In sum, her work on commodities in other places makes us rethink not just the problem of alterity but of our engagement with things as such.

Glocal art at the margins of empire is not about the ethnographer or the activist taking over the artist. These artists claim no 'authenticity', nor do they have any hang-ups about 'tradition'. They are plain outsiders in the terrains where they work. But in important ways their engagement with life-worlds embedded in specific places -- passages of coming and going, territories deterritorialized by the violence of states and wars -- marks a clear departure from a line of thinking that would attribute an unthinking homogeneity to art practices. The global/local binary, conceived under the Enlightenment episteme which opposes universality to autochthony, is no longer adequate for articulating the planetary experience of unhomeliness: *our* world is no longer double, it is many. ■

Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay lectures in the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths

#### Footnotes

1. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, 2000.
2. Thierry De Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, 1996.
3. See *Ephemera* 7:1, 2007 (theme issue: Immaterial Labour).
4. Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Artworld Inc.*, Uppsala, 2004.
5. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 2002.
6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, 1969.
7. See Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran*, 2007.

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# London Festival of Europe 2009

April 30 – May 10, London

## CITY 2009: BRINGING DOWN THE BARRIERS

### APRIL 30: CITY 2009 OPENING SYMPOSIUM

The Festival opens with a discussion between curator and Serpentine Gallery director Hans Ulrich Obrist, architect and editor Stefano Boeri, and architect Markus Miessen on the European and the global city.

Courtauld Institute of Art, 5.30 – 7.30pm, FREE

### MAY 1: THEATRE, ART, SOUND LOCUS SOLUS

Locus Solus is a intermedia project and performance-based installation exploring the idea of science in relation to accounts of contemporary and historical utopic imagination.

Shunt Vaults, London Bridge, 8.00 – 11.00pm, £10

### MAY 1: WALKING, WORDS, THEATRE MIDNIGHT PROCESSION

Concluding the performance of Locus Solus, artists, musicians, poets, and philosophers will move from London Bridge towards Shoreditch for a midnight walk including readings recitals and performances.

London Bridge to Shoreditch, Friday Midnight, FREE

### MAY 3: DISCUSSION AND TOUR AROUND THE OLYMPIC SITE UTOPIA CITY

Join us for films and discussion on urban art and a guided artistic walk near the Olympic Site, followed by a picnic and video projections after sunset.

Arcola at 5pm for film, discussion & walk  
or Hackney Wick Station at 7.30pm for only the walk, FREE

## MAY 8 FRIDAY DOUBLE BILL

### KAPUSCINSKI AND THE OTHER

Literary discussion of the legacy of Ryszard Kapuscinski (d.2007), celebrated journalist and photographer and one of Europe's most cosmopolitan writers.

Purcell Room, Southbank Centre, 7.45pm, £10 (£5 concessions)

### KEYNOTE POLITICAL DEBATE EUROPEAN CHOICES

Senior figures from the leading European political parties come to London for a lively debate one month ahead of the European elections, discussing the different political alternatives available at the European level.

Old Theater, London School of Economics, 7.00 – 9.00pm, FREE

## MAY 9 AND 10 TRANSNATIONAL CONGRESS:

The Congress for new transnational politics and culture is an annual appointment exploring the meaning and potentiality of a post-national approach to the most burning political, philosophical, and artistic questions of our time.

Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Road, (top of Brick Lane)  
Saturday and Sunday, all day, FREE

### MAY 9: CONGRESS DAY ONE TRANSNATIONALISM, NEOLIBERALISM, GLOBALISATION

DAY 1 PROGRAMME: Saturday May 9th

10.30am: Opening Address / A Utopia of Change and Changing Utopia  
11.00am: Opening Plenary / Transnationalism, Internationalism, Globalisation and Europe  
1.30pm: Europe and the Neoliberal Inevitability  
3.30pm: Session 1 / Europe: Transnationalism and Solidarity  
5.30pm: The North and the South; Transnationalism and Global Justice  
7.30pm: Performance Art and Music

### MAY 10: CONGRESS DAY TWO ART, FEMINISM, POLITICS OF THE LEFT

DAY 2 PROGRAMME: Sunday May 10th

11.00am: Opening Plenary / For a Transnational feminism  
1.30pm: Session 1 / New Geographies of Art  
3.00pm: Session 2 / Migration and Artistic Strategies  
4.30pm: Session 2 / Environment  
6.00pm: Closing Plenary / For a Transnational Left  
7.30pm: Artistic Closing

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The London Festival of Europe is organised by European Alternatives, organisation devoted to promoting intellectual and artistic engagement with the idea and possibility of a new transnational politics and art.

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