

European *Alternatives* Journal

Democracy
Equality & Culture
Beyond
the Nation State



EUROPEAN
ALTERNATIVES

Special thanks to
All the authors and contributors to this publication. All the activists that are struggling across the world.

Curated and produced by
European Alternatives

European Alternatives team
Jana Ahlers, Georg Blokus, Martino Bozzi, Billie Dibb, Taha Kasmi, Viktoria Kostova, Ophélie Masson, Marta Cillero Manzano, Niccolò Milanese, Martin Pairet, Ségolène Pruvot, Csenge Schneider-Lonhart, Gabriela Siegel, Seema Syeda and Myriam Zekagh.

Translations and proofreading
Seema Syeda, Marta Cillero

Editing
Seema Syeda

Art Direction and Graphic Design
Luca Pantorno - [studiolucapan](#)

Co-funded by the European Union
This publication reflects the views only of the authors. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This journal is available in digital format at www.euroalter.com

Get in touch with us on info@euroalter.com

Join European Alternatives on euroalter.com/join

Support us on euroalter.com/donate

Like us on Facebook.com/EuroAlter
Follow us on Twitter.com/EuroAlter
Follow us on Instagram.com/Euroalter

Imagine, Demand, Enact

Printed in Palermo, 2023

Alvaro Oleart is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science and the Institute for European Studies of the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Anastasia Gavalas is Communications Officer at the Migrants' Rights Network. She leads on content creation and managing MRN's digital platforms and marketing. As a second generation migrant, she is also heavily involved in her local diaspora community.

Anna Krenz is an artist and activist and co-founder of Polish Queer Feminist Collective Dziewuchy Berlin. Find out more on www.dziewuchyberlin.org and www.polonijnaradakobiet.org.

Beral Madra is an art critic and curator based in Istanbul. She sits on the Board of Room to Bloom, a feminist platform of emerging artists working in the field of ecological and postcolonial feminism.

Daniele Archibugi is an economic and political theorist affiliated with the Italian National Research Council, IRPPS, and University of London, Birkbeck College.

Marcela Caldas is an Italian based multidisciplinary researcher and curator working at the intersection of power relations, ecology and arts. She is curator of the Organizmo Bloom project.

John Feffer is the director of Foreign Policy In Focus as well as the Global Just Transition project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC.

Julia Tinsley-Kent is Policy and Strategic Communications Manager at the Migrants' Rights Network and is also involved with activist group Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants. She oversees PR activities for MRN and is responsible for building stakeholder relationships with local and national policy-makers.

Hanna Perekhoda is a PhD student in history and graduate assistant at the University of Lausanne, working on Russian and Ukrainian national narratives. She is one of the founders of Comité Ukraine Suisse and a member of Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialnyi Rukh.

Marina Garcés is a professor of philosophy at the University of Zaragoza.

No Borders in Climate Justice is a collective of activists based in the UK working towards connecting the movements for climate justice and border abolition.

Oliver Ressler produces installations, projects in public space, and films on economics, democracy, racism, climate breakdown, forms of resistance and social alternatives.

Paula Soli is an activist from Barcelona interested in campaigns addressing decolonisation, antiracism, diversity-equity-inclusion, feminism, queerness and migration. She is a participant on the European Alternatives Youth Movement and Campaign Accelerator Programme.

Seema Syeda is communications officer at European Alternatives.

C
O
N
T
R
I
B
U
T
O
R
S

European Alternatives is a transnational civil society organisation working since 2007 to promote democracy, equality and culture beyond the nation state. Over fifteen years ago we published the first edition of our transnational journal - a space to map out visions, ideas and pathways for an alternative, open and radically more democratic Europe.

In that first issue, Etienne Balibar set out his theses for an 'Alter-Globalizing Europe'. The theses called for a postcolonial European identity that overcomes the 'East-West' divide and the 'West then the Rest' mentality; an open Europe that invents a variable geometry, acknowledging its constitutive interpenetration with vast Euro-Atlantic, Euro-Asian, Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-African spaces; as American hegemony declines, a Europe that positions itself as mediator not a power bloc - tending towards conflict reduction, redistribution, egalitarianism and decentralisation; and a Europe whose relationship with the so-called global 'South' is characterised by a genuine *reciprocity* of possibilities of co-development.

Sixteen years later, where are we with this vision of Europe? Relaunching the European Alternatives transnational journal in 2023, this is a space to grapple with the specificities and challenges of constructing a new geopolitical imaginary.















In the realm of conflict reduction and anti-Occidentalism, the Russian war on Ukraine looms large. This issue's features include Ukrainian activist and intellectual Hannah Perekhodha who deconstructs Western-centric narratives of the war and advocates instead the recognition of subaltern agency in Ukraine. Political scientist Daniele Archibugi's complimentary piece discusses practical solutions towards achieving justice for the heinous crimes of war; punishing rulers

not peoples and depoliticising an international criminal justice system skewed in favour of world powers.

With a focus on greening transatlantic relations, John Feffer looks at Euro-Atlantic responsibility in tackling the climate crisis, advocating an approach that collaborates rather than competes with China and which implements meaningful redistribution, reparation and co-operation in support of just transition in the so-called "Global South". Drawing different threads together, our interview with Marina Garcés deconstructs the paralysis-inducing mentality of inevitable apocalypse, instead positing a renewed faith in the temporality of action and consequence, where human agency in symbiosis with nature can shape a just and sustainable world.

In our sections on assembling and organising, we explore the antiborder movement across the fight for climate justice to migrant suffrage to LGBTQ+ rights; we walk through the streets of Berlin in a lesson on decolonising the metropolis, and we explore the pitfalls and potential of democratising the European Union through citizens assemblies. In our final section on Art Beyond Borders, we showcase the potential for art to transform, inspire and create decolonial systems and radical practice, weaving a network from Matavén through to Gijón, Istanbul, Berlin and Warsaw.

We hope this journal can be a critical and accessible space where ideas and actions can interact to foster new connections, systems, temporalities and imaginaries - linking social movements, academics, civil society, artists, activists and the very earth we inhabit to build together and live the alternatives we dream.

Sections	Table of Contents					Table of Contents
DECENTRING EUROPE						
	PAGE	10	15	19	25	
	ARTICLE	On planetary crisis, building alternatives: An interview with Marina Garcés	The war in Ukraine: the agentivity of the subalterns	Can criminal law bring peace and justice to Ukraine?	Greening Transatlantic Relations	
	AUTHORS	Letizia Ybarra	Hanna Perekhoda	Daniele Archibugi	John Feffer	
Assembling, Connecting and Organizing						
	PAGE	32	36	40	45	47
	ARTICLE	Grounding 'citizen participation' in social movements	Diversity: Interest or obligation?	Decolonising Berlin: the materiality of anticolonial resistance	The weaponisation of queer rights: a migration perspective	Why we need No Borders to achieve Climate Justice
	AUTHORS	Alvaro Oleart	Paula Solis	Seema Syeda	Julia Tinsley-Kent, Anastasia Gavalas	No Borders in Climate Justice Network
Art Beyond Borders						
	PAGE	52	57	63	66	68
	ARTICLE	Art Production & Global Instability (Room to Bloom)	Organizmo Bloom	Barricading the Ice Sheets	Framework for Resilience: Ecological Empathy	Global Scream! Visual photo essay
	AUTHORS	Beral Madra	Marcela Caldas	Oliver Ressler	Artsformation	Anna Krenz

D E C E

N T R I

N G

E U R

O P E

8

On planetary crisis, Building alternatives:

An interview with
Marina Garcés



Protests about climate change in France
(2021 - Creative Commons)

We are living through an accelerated worsening of the material conditions of life. The intrinsic crisis of capitalism, based on growth and speculation, is becoming increasingly evident, both in its social impact and in the scientifically demonstrable limits of the planet and its resources. In this context, fascination with the apocalypse is the dominant narrative of our time and has strongly influenced the political, aesthetic and scientific spheres.

In her essay *New Radical Enlightenment* (Anagrama, 2017) the philosopher Marina Garcés warns that this fascination perpetuates a sense of impotence, linked to the impossibility of dealing with and intervening in one's own living conditions. Is it not precisely our attitude of surrender, she suggests, that could actually be taking our species to the edge of its sustainability?

For Garcés, postmodernity has given way to a "posthumous condition", which manifests itself in the blind belief in this story about the irreversible destruction of our living conditions. At the same time, she posits an "enlightened illiteracy" behind this: we know everything but we cannot do anything. This attitude has different effects, from the way in which power systems or identities are configured, up to the very meaning of actions. Faced with this, Garcés suggests reclaiming the vital link between knowledge and emancipation. To do so she suggests a radical new enlightenment with 'the critic' as its principle weapon.

By 'new enlightenment' the philosopher does not mean recovering the modernizing project that, since the eighteenth century and with the expansion of capitalism through colonialism, dominated the world, but enlightenment as an attitude; a critical attitude that implies asking ourselves why we believe what we believe. 'Credulity' is the basis of all domination, as it implies a delegation of intelligence and conviction. Without criticism, knowledge tends to become useless because although we access its contents we do not know how or from where to relate these strands. The new enlightenment is not about knowing what is most correct, but what is the most accurate relationship with each of the various forms of experience and knowledge.

The team of EA met with Marina Garcés at the Transeuropa Festival in Madrid to chat with her about apocalyptic discourses and alternatives to it.

As early as the 50s Günther Anders wrote in *The Obsolescence of Man* that our species has become small with respect to its own actions. Human activity, both individually and collectively, can no longer be equivalent to the level of the complexity it generates. How does this relate to the idea of the loss of the future and current apocalyptic discourses?

MG Today many speak about the non-future as if it was a kind of catastrophic objectivity. We already know that, in a way, everything tends to its own destruction by the very facts of our consumption, production, the way we expend energy or even how we psychically mistreat ourselves. But I think that what really disconnects us from the future or makes us have a relationship of loss of control over this is precisely what you pick up on in the question: this impossibility of imagining, of having a direct relationship with the consequences of our own actions, both about what I do and what we do. This is true of decisions about a neighbourhood, a city, a country or even Europe.

Every one of these types of ‘us’ is unable to perceive that an action and its consequences have a more or less direct and manageable relationship. This is how we lose the future, as a dimension of time in which the consequences of our actions are contingent on our ability to relate to them. The problem – which becomes apocalyptic – is that we tend to translate this in terms of irreversibility: it can only go wrong, because we are not able to intervene in the course of things. This is what I challenge in my writing. Since the scope and scale of the consequences of personal and collective action are disproportionate to what we are capable of thinking, deciding and doing does not mean that things can only get worse. Maybe we have to develop other ways of thinking and thinking about ‘us’ in relation to the future.

It seems that philosophy has also lost this capacity for transformation, to generate action.

MG Philosophy collects and expresses this crisis of civilization, which is not only an objective crisis but also subjective, because it calls into question the ways in which we have thought, as subjects of action. In this current

experience, philosophy finds itself without categorical frameworks to relate to these new conditions. Often it is simply reduced to a product of the past – which thankfully continues to be studied – yet philosophy can only be defended by *making* philosophy, not just preserving it. It is a discourse that *picks up* voices. But as soon as a preservationist relationship appears alongside it, it dies. It’s like enclosing a plant in a laboratory: you can end up knowing it very well, but it is not alive. It is doing something else.

After a very critical end to the 20th century, especially in the 70s and 80s, there has been a certain retreat of this kind in philosophy in recent decades. Not knowing how to think through our times has reduced philosophy to a kind of legacy, a cultural heritage of the past with which we do not know what to do. With this in mind my proposal is to look constantly for ways to continue doing philosophy. That means exposing oneself to ‘thinking what we don’t know how to think’ by creating the right situations.

Along with this sense of incapacity is the fascination with ‘everything before’. There is a tendency at the moment to glorify the pre-modern or any form of precolonial life simply by its virtue of being so. On an ecological level this can also be related to that bucolic idea, still very widespread, of a nature not yet corrupted by humans.

MG Exactly. On the one hand, we do not know how to look at that future that is falling apart. On the other hand, we cannot relate to the conceptual tools of philosophy – but also those of many human, social sciences, etc. – because even though we have access to many analyses of many things, these do not give us powerful frames of understanding. Our gaze is therefore projected towards a past, towards the authentic or the previous, to all that which has led us to the present situation.

In his book *Retrotopia*, Zygmunt Bauman refers to these as “retrotopies,” which occur when the past becomes the place where utopia is projected. Obviously they are fictitious passages. For example, it tends to praise Europe, as if it had a past of democratic egalitarian splendor. In fact the history of Europe involves endless wars with many battles as well as many wonderful crea-

tions and inventions. The utopian past, though, I do not know where to find it. As with everything nature is a key case, so sometimes I take up some things like the cities in transition, and the ecology of the poor that Joan Martínez Alier talks about in Barcelona.

I see an important shift with respect to more ‘modern’ environmentalism, a kind that still had an idea of a *different* nature, separate from society and the human and, therefore, that one could care for, preserve or defend as something ‘other’. Many of the current forms of environmentalism no longer handle this previous concept of nature; the approach is no longer preservationist but more ecosystemic, it is more about thinking about how to combine, how to live in a dynamic and, therefore, transformative way.

‘Untransformed nature’ no longer exists but, on the other hand, there are different ways of coexisting in this activity of transforming the environment as something that is not outside of us, but that we are simultaneous with. This is where the necessity of rethinking the human opens up: the humanistic tradition, the continuity between the human, the natural and the technological, capitalism... There is a struggle about how to situate ourselves in this continuity, and this feeds into very different interests depending on how the question is posed.

In fact, we now see growing trends such as posthumanism and transhumanism, and also the complaints of their detractors. In this context, you’ve highlighted the danger of delegating to the machine.

MG These are things that I’m working on right now, so I’m not an expert. But for me the problem is not in the debate between the artificial and the human, which is where precisely these humanist-type positions remain: in the fear of the machine and the robot, in a kind of neoludism; as if there were something authentic and pure to save in the human that had nothing to do with the technical. We cannot address the current transformations if we remain solely in the ‘do not touch the human’ position, in a kind of quasi-religious gesture.

From the other ideological extreme, there are two other positions that amount to the same thing as the technophobic vision. On the one hand, the idea that only artificial intelligence can bring us up to what today’s latest capitalism needs in terms of productivity, intelligence and intensive processes. Then there is the same operation in reverse, which implies the appearance of new techno-utopias of an emancipatory kind. It is the idea that only hackers, AI or cyborgs can save us from slavery, work, the precariousness of life, environmental destruction, etc.

I believe that nothing can save us, in the sense that if we think of ourselves in terms of salvation and condemnation there is no salvation. But I do not believe that we are condemned either. That is to say, I believe that critical thinking, capable of discerning and analyzing what is happening in each context and in each moment, does not have to accept this code of condemnation-salvation that both capitalism and its critics are increasingly using.

In this continuity between the human, the natural and the technological it is necessary to analyze which relations give us more capacities for emancipation and those that subordinate or subject us more to conditions of exploitation and delegation. Because mainly what hap-

pens in this disproportion between what we can do and what we imagine we can do is that the ability to think, imagine and work with what we do is so far away, that we end up delegating more executive functions than we should. Of course we also delegated the ox to drag the plough, which is to say we have always transferred part of our activity. Human societies are sets of delegations.

The problem is that in this thinking we find a kind of anthropological surrender. What worries me is the thought that as humans we cannot and do not know how to relate to what we do, that someone else has to come and do it for us. Almost anything can fit into this structure: from a super leader, the mega-entrepreneur Donald Trump, to the war robot or doctor robot. Regarding the latter it doesn’t seem a bad idea to me that they exist, but it’s another thing entirely what relationship we are willing to have with what we invent.

Artists and researchers such as James Bridle or Zach Blas warn of, for example, the false neutrality attributed to algorithms. We believe in the ‘objectivity’ of these but they already control many areas of our daily lives. We are delegating very serious decisions to them.

MG We delegate neutrality to them. In some studies that I have read about war robots, they no longer refer to the robot that is going to deactivate the bomb or the drone that is going to launch the missile, but robots designed to decide when, how, to whom and in what way they are bombing. The final decision is transferred to them under the assumption, from the ethics of war, that it will be more neutral and fairer because the algorithm does not have the biases of ideology and emotion. But the algorithm also draws ideology, emotionality, world views, assessments about what lives count and what lives don’t. Under this kind of delegation we allow ourselves to believe that their decision will always be better.

You say that every time and society has its forms of ignorance. Given the excess of information to which we are exposed, if previously credulity was based on the absence of knowledge, now it is more due to an overdose that prevents us from assimilating and elaborating. It is in the context of this paradigm shift that it becomes more evident that access to knowledge does not imply action.

MG This is one of my biggest concerns. For some centuries, the popular struggles for literacy, for the public school or for the democratization of access to knowledge were based on the idea that if we get access to what is denied to us by the corresponding monopolies – the aristocracy first, then the bourgeoisie – we would be free: “knowledge is power”. There was the belief that having access to education or literacy could make people capable of knowing, of being informed and, therefore, of acting accordingly on knowledge.

What have we proven in these last decades in Spain and elsewhere? That emancipatory effects are not derived from access to knowledge. So the question is, how has this happened? What is this critical neutralization of access to knowledge made of?

One of the answers is saturation, clearly. There are others, however, of a more political nature, of a qualitative type. Unless we implant lots of chips into ourselves, there is no human way to relate to knowledge that is not

ultimately passive, given the volume and intensity of the information we receive permanently and that, in addition, is often redundant and false. The problem is not even this, but the fact that it no longer generates any kind of relation to some kind of reciprocity. Imagine those ducks that they feed excessively to make foie gras. Sometimes I have the feeling that we are like those ducks: they tell us everything until our liver swells and it bursts.

Earlier you mentioned the ‘cities in transition’ as a new narrative that encourages action. What are these cities in transition?

MG Cities in transition is a movement that began in England and that starts from the idea that it is not so much about adopting one model or another – production, consumption, exploitation – nor thinking only about the future and of models, but of building transformation practices, not only in the present (as if this was a static idea), but in transit. In other words, if we decide to wait to not have gasoline cars to start changing the energy models, that moment will never come.

I like this idea of how criticism and transformation can coexist in time. We already know that criticism today leads us to challenge almost entirely the ways we have to live, but the fact that criticism is necessarily total does not imply that the practice has to wait to be able to relate to that whole, because then we are already once again in the moment of disproportion: you cannot relate to the whole, because you are very small in relation to it.

The cities in transition are full of examples of the first thing that you asked me, of how to begin to make you find what, by ratio of proportion, could not previously be found. The small change and the total change, the daily practice and the transformation of the world, the speed at which certain changes are imposed and the slowness of the consequences of those changes. All these are transitions that we can think of from very concrete experiences.

I also transfer this idea to the field of humanities, since the debate around these has remained stuck in an approach similar to modern environmentalism. “How to save the humanities,” “how to save culture” or “how culture can save us”. These are very preservationist, salvationist and conservative concepts and, in the end, also very purist.

How do you think the current political system relates to culture? What possibilities do you think it gives to culture?

MG I believe that the current system, against what it might often seem, does give a lot of importance to culture, but only in a way that is of interest to the system itself. It is not that it relegates culture to the sideline, but that, at least in western societies with more or less social welfare, it makes it the main battlefield: that is where the consumerist society is built, along with uncritical subjectivity. This means that today’s culture builds citizens through an attitude of consumption.

The individual consumes according to a list of possibilities among which he or she can choose, as if it were a menu: political options, lifestyles, ways of being in the world. Culture is not just going to the movies or buying a book, culture is the way in which we understand and shape the way we live together. It is through the culture

industry – which ranges from clothing design to commercial cinema, from television to social networks – that we live today as uncritical consumer citizens.

In this context, counterculture is the only one that goes some way towards breaking its own social function. Philosophers such as Nietzsche and Deleuze argued that one can only think against one’s own time. This ‘against’ is not necessarily a destructive force, but the other way around, a creative one: only by creating other ways of understanding and valuing our ways of life can we start thinking and sharing, which is what culture is supposed to be. Yet the cultural forms that the system produces are those that subordinate us more and more, even if they present to us the idea that the market and culture are in opposition. In reality, however, culture is the market, and the market is culture.

This interview by Letizia Ybarra was first published in the online magazine [La Grieta](#).

Marina Garcés is a professor of philosophy at the University of Zaragoza. This year’s Transeuropa Festival will take place in Cluj from 11-15 October.

The war in Ukraine

Hanna Perekhoda on recognising subaltern agency, abandoning geopolitics and breaking out of the Western-centric worldview



Allied exhibition - Kyiv Biennial 2021
Photo credits: VCRC

On 24 February 2022, the Kremlin launched its “special military operation”, with the announced goal of the explicit disappearance of Ukraine as an independent state and society. Over a year later, Putin’s troops are still unable to crush Ukraine. Planning to take Kyiv in three days, Putin forgot one small detail: Ukraine is not just a former peripheral territory of the Russian Empire, it is a country inhabited by a people and these people will resist to defend themselves. The denial of the agency of subalterns, a product of the colonial and elitist imaginary of the Russian ruling classes, has led to miscalculations so significant that this invasion has turned into a disaster for the Russian army.

Blind spots in the geopolitical approach to the war

The Ukrainian resistance surprised not only Putin, but also Western intellectual circles. Many observers could not, until the day of the invasion, abandon the view that Putin was a ‘pragmatic’ politician whose rationality always had to be sought on the side of political or economic gain. Putin would have been ‘far too smart’ to engage in a large-scale war. This was the conviction of John Mearsheimer, the best known representative of the neo-realist school of thought. The failure of the renowned professor to analyse reality and his inability to foresee the coming war blowing up on a scale that Europe had not seen since 1945 did not prevent his theories from spreading.

This neorealist logic dominates not only the publications in the conservative right-wing newspapers where he is a regular guest. This year we have seen that when it comes to pronouncing on the war in Ukraine, left-wing figures who are highly respected for their commitment against Western imperialism demonstrate a surprising complicity of reasoning with their counterparts in the opposite political camp. More or less inclined to denounce the brutality of the Russian invasion, the hard right and the far left are united in their identification of the ultimate culprit of the war in Ukraine: the West, personified by NATO and the US.

Those who defend such a reading share, sometimes unwittingly, a so-called neorealist perspective on international relations, which is based on the conviction that states are rational actors, seeking to maximise their national interests. Having to operate in a hostile and ruthless world, they submit to a zero-sum game logic. Russia would also be a rational actor motivated by objective security concerns. One of the problems with this type of analysis is the basic assumption on which its proponents build their arguments, namely the shared and presumed objective rationality of states.

It is clear that a state is not a person with a will of its own, but a social construct in which conflicts between class-

es with different or even opposing ‘national’ interests are at stake. Nevertheless, states are run by living beings who determine the international politics of their countries. National interests are shaped by political elites based on their own perceptions of themselves and the world. These perceptions are historically shaped and change in response to both the international and domestic political issues of the moment. Therefore, in order to understand the behaviour of political leaders, it is necessary to examine the social and political context to which they belong.

This is where it gets complicated. How many renowned intellectuals who are invited on TV shows to give their opinion on such a hot topic have ever done any field research on the politics, the economy or the history of Russia and/or Ukraine? As for the “geopolitical” approach, it does not require any expertise on the societies in question, but simply the use of a ready-made explanation scheme that can be transposed to any war on planet earth. Who would give up this temptation to appear to be an expert in everything? However, in order to understand what provoked this war of invasion, the least we can do is not to transpose a “universalist” vision (in reality often suffering from a Western-centric illusion) onto political actors whose identity, norms and values we ignore. By dint of analysing the current conflict from a strictly geopolitical perspective, often suffering from presentism, we condemn ourselves to failing to see processes that are nonetheless decisive in Putin’s decision to begin the invasion of Ukraine.

Social inequality in Russia and Western economic cynicism

The annexation of Crimea and the creation of separatist states in eastern Ukraine (2014), the crushing of popular revolutions in Belarus (2019) and Kazakhstan (2021) were not caused by any external threat. Russian interference was nothing more than the autocratic and mafia regime’s response to the threat of “democratic spread” that had the potential to move across the border into Russia. The existence of a neighbouring country where revolution succeeds, paving the way for democratic and economic development, risks awakening dangerous ideas amongst Russians.

Putin’s regime has made Russia one of the most unequal states in the world. War is a logical outcome for such regimes, as it is one of the last ways to close ranks within a country that threatens to collapse under the weight of internal contradictions between the working classes and those who are obscenely rich and virtually uncontrollable. Putin’s motives therefore have much more to do with the desire to preserve his prerogative to exploit the Russian population with total impunity than with the actions of the leaders of Europe or the United States.

Western political and economic elites are, however, among those who bear a very heavy responsibility for what is happening to Ukraine. Not because they “humiliated” or “threatened” Russia. Putin invaded Ukraine because he was convinced that the Western elites are just as corrupt and just as cynical as ever. After all, they already let Putin have his way with Chechnya, Georgia, Syria and Ukraine in 2014. For decades they had no problem trading with this regime that annexes territories of independent states, murders political opponents, legalises the hunting of LGBTQ people, funds far-right parties around the world and openly disregards international law and human rights. Ukraine is paying the price for decades of this Western complacency and economic cynicism, and it is paying with the lives of its citizens.

The existence of a neighbouring country where revolution succeeds, paving the way for democratic and economic development, risks awakening dangerous ideas amongst Russians.

European Alternatives continues to support transnational Ukraine Solidarity efforts including a series of online ‘No To War’ assemblies with Nobel prize winner Oleksandra Matviichuk and an international conference, ‘Solidarity with Ukraine: building a new internationalism’ held at the London School of Economics in March 2023.

Russian nationalist ideology and the aggressive denial of Ukrainian independence

The second aspect that geopolitical analyses fail to take into account is the history of relations between Russia and Ukraine, which is marked by a very long experience of domination and oppression. Ukraine is more than a neighbour for Russia: it is a central part of its national identity – for anyone who identifies with the dominant Russian national narrative. By announcing the invasion of the neighbouring country, Putin is explicitly saying: Russians and Ukrainians are one and the same people. The distinct national identity of Ukrainians is said to be an artificial invention, a result of the plot by Western forces to weaken Russia. A long article, published in July 2021, bearing the signature of the President of the Russian Federation, is devoted entirely to this subject. The Ukrainian state is an illegitimate invention, it has no right to exist. Under the title “On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians”, he develops this same conception, in which he “firmly believes”. Ukrainians must become Russians... or disappear.

Should we perceive Putin’s speech denying the right of Ukrainians to exist only as a discursive manipulation intended to conceal the “true” motivations of the “strategist” president? Would it be completely incongruous to admit that for this enthusiast of Russian historiography in its most essentialist and nationalist version, the will to accomplish his ‘historical mission’ could be one of the determining reasons for engaging in such a war? This does not imply, of course, that Putin’s expansionism does not have a material basis. Ultimately, all wars are fought over the distribution of resources and power. However, it is important to avoid a reductionist economic approach, which tends to see this war as only a struggle for the control of resources and markets. Putin’s ideas to justify the invasion of Ukraine do not serve to conceal his “real” interests. Distorted through the prism of pseudo-historical schemes, they are the very expression of his interests. Archaic as it may seem, national ideologies still have an exceptional performative power, they can incite the perpetuation of wars and genocides. And given the personalistic nature of Putin’s regime, his personal beliefs play a disproportionate role in his policy decisions.

Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge about the Russian national narrative, the role that Russian nationalists attribute to Ukraine, and the denial of Ukrainian agency and the legitimacy of their historical experience prevent many people outside the post-Soviet space from understanding the nature of this war and acting responsibly and appropriately.

We risk falling into a perverse form of Western-centrism that ignores inequalities, and thus the voices of the subalterns, outside the binary opposition between ‘the West and the Rest’.

With whom do we stand in solidarity?

In February 2022, the great powers assumed that Ukraine would fall in three weeks. But over a year has passed and Ukraine is resisting. The resistance of subalterns could be surprising when we fail to integrate into our analyses the agency of countries and societies that hardly exist on our mental maps. Left-wing intellectuals are right to be critical of Western hegemony. But in denouncing Western hegemony,

We risk falling into a perverse form of Western-centrism that ignores inequalities, and thus the voices of the subalterns, outside the binary opposition between ‘the West and the Rest’.

Analysing the Russian war in Ukraine from an exclusively ‘geopolitical’ perspective often leads to seeing the world through the spectacles of the ruling classes of the great powers. If one sees the world as a chess game where the real agents are the states and not the people, it follows logically that one finds oneself supporting the ruling classes of countries opposed to the United States and seeking to redistribute the spheres of exclusive domination. This type of approach renders the popular classes, the oppressed nations, the subalterns in general, invisible, denying their own capacity for action. It is therefore intrinsically incompatible with progressive political values. It leads not only to false conclusions, but also to dangerous positions. Legitimising or even praising the rise of non-Western imperialisms because they are seen as a ‘multipolar’ challenge to US unipolarity, while exhibiting overtly fascist tendencies and carrying out genocidal policies, is politically irresponsible.

The “multipolar” world promoted by Putin will be nothing but a world where one can invade; use terror; threaten the world with nuclear weapons, famine and energy shortages; where the great powers share spheres of influence to install the most oppressive regimes and plunder nature and population with total impunity. The current war is probably one of those decisive moments that call for a deep reflection on the blind spots of our analyses and that require us to take real

political responsibility. With whom are we in solidarity? With the peoples in struggle or with the ruling classes of revanchist imperialisms that seek to redistribute the planet? It is time to give an honest answer.

With whom are we in solidarity? With the peoples in struggle or with the ruling classes of revanchist imperialisms that seek to redistribute the planet? It is time to give an honest answer.

Hanna Perekhoda is a PhD student in history and graduate assistant at the University of Lausanne, working on Russian and Ukrainian national narratives. She is one of the founders of Comité Ukraine Suisse and a member of Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialnyi Rukh.

Can criminal law bring peace and justice to Ukraine?

Daniele Archibugi on the paradox of impartial international criminal justice and the Realpolitik of peace negotiations



Venue of the Kyiv Biennial 2021
Photo credits: VCRC

As with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq which opened the 21st century, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine brings us back to an anachronistic and brutal world system. It is not the continuation of politics by other means, but the inability of politics to address problems.

Not only are Ukrainians paying the consequences, forced to suffer a violent and criminal aggression, but so is the Russian population, the citizens of neighbouring countries, and all those who depend on these countries for the supply of food and raw materials.

The irrationality of war

This war, in addition to being brutal, is profoundly stupid and one wonders how a powerful government like the Russian one, which has secret services, investigative centres, forecasting tools, data analysis capabilities complete with satellites and so on, stumbled upon such a senseless adventure.

History has shown far too many cases of governments engaging in irrational warfare despite being well-equipped in strategic studies. Where no positional advantage can be glimpsed on the international scene, often the reason that leads to unleashing a conflict is sought in national political dynamics. The propensity to lash out against external enemies to better oppress one’s subjects and consolidate internal power has already been repeatedly denounced by thinkers of the past such as Erasmus of Rotterdam and Jean-Jacques Rousseau¹. Fearing an external threat helps delay arbitrary power and silence opposition. Governments use nationalistic rhetoric in these situations: “They are attacking us!”, “They want to annihilate us!”, “Let’s run in defence of the homeland!”, are the recurring slogans that the attackers use even before the attacked. With this propaganda, rulers often manage to create the rally-round-the-flag effect, which allows critical voices to be silenced and opposition to be repressed.

What are the antidotes to this propaganda? First of all, to build bridges between the civil societies of the countries involved in the conflict and to unmask the idea that there might be divergent interests between governments, but not among the peoples. But also, to ensure that the responsibilities of war fall on the governments that unleash them and not on the peoples who suffer them. To this end, legal instruments can play a crucial role.

Towards a right to protect peoples

In traditional international law, specially developed by jurists and diplomats commissioned by rulers, there is no difference between government and people. The government acts on behalf of the entire state and every action it takes must be supported by the nation. Based on the dogma of sovereignty, international law has prescribed two norms to protect those in charge. The first states that anyone acting on behalf of a state (i.e. the government and its representatives) is free from individual criminal liability. The second is that individuals who act because they carry out orders from their government are also exempt from possible faults. If things go well, the rulers credit themselves as victorious commanders. If they go wrong (for example, because they lose the war), those who exercise government are immune from liability. It is the people who pay the consequences, punished in terms of dead and wounded, sanctions, economic crises, reconstruction costs.

One could say with Adam Smith that if a people is led by a despot who causes damage to other communities, it is its responsibility to rise up and overthrow him, and if it does not, it is then logical that it is forced to pay the consequences jointly:

If the government commits any offence against a neighbouring sovereign or subject, and its own people continue to support and protect it, as it were, in it, they thereby become accessory and liable to punishment along with ‘it’ ... A nation must either allow itself to be liable for the damages, or give up the government altogether².

But, if subjugated by a despotic regime, the people may lack adequate information, or simply lack the strength to dethrone the regime. One of the advances made in the sphere of law after the Second World War was to make rulers

and their agents accountable for their actions³. The Nuremberg Trials represented a milestone because they aimed at ascertaining the individual responsibilities of a few and, in doing so, they allowed the German people to turn the page and integrate into a new international context. But those trials had two major flaws. The first is that it was the victors who judged the vanquished, the second is that the rules were written after the end of the war. For several decades, attempts have been made with difficulty to comply with these problems and only with the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998 was an impartial institution created with the competence to act against the most heinous crimes, the so-called international crimes (aggression, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity).

Entering into operation in 2002, the ICC has so far achieved insufficient results: international crimes have continued to be committed, and the trials it has been able to speed up have been very few and mostly confined to blood-thirsty dictators who had lost the sceptre of power. In short, it acted ex-post against politicians who have now become cumbersome figures in world politics. The ICC has raised many hopes but unfortunately has achieved few results. Too many crimes have gone not only unpunished but even unreported due to lack of political interest and economic resources.

Yet once again the selectivity of the ICC’s action has emerged: it manages to investigate some conflicts but ignores others.

The ambiguities of criminal law in war times

To thwart the invasion of Ukraine, hopes arose that international criminal justice could help stem the arbitrariness. Never before have prosecutors and investigators been so active *during* (rather than *after*) a conflict. A few days after the tragic invasion and the consequent massacre of civilians in Bucha and other localities, the ICC managed to send numerous forensic experts to collect evidence about the crimes committed. The ICC did not have sufficient resources to carry out all these investigations, so much so that it was not able to send comparable teams to other parts of the planet where similar crimes are known to occur. For Ukraine it was able to do it, thanks to ad hoc funding and the qualified personnel made available by some states. France, Holland, Lithuania and other countries promptly provided numerous forensic investigators who went to war zones⁴. For the first time in the history of international criminal law, investigations were not carried out on cold cases, but on still hot corpses.

It was undoubtedly a great step that serves to establish the unacceptability of international crimes and the willingness of a broad coalition of states to identify and denounce them.

Yet once again the selectivity of the ICC’s action has emerged: it manages to investigate some conflicts but ignores others. Nor should we forget that the ICC does not enjoy a monopoly on international crimes. During the war in Ukraine, both the parties to the dispute and other states re-

1 Erasmus of Rotterdam, *The complaint of peace* (1521). Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1967; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jugement sur le projet de paix perpétuelle (1758), in Esref Aksu (ed.), *Early Notions of Global Governance*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008.

2 Adam Smith, The Law of Nations. In *Lectures on Jurisprudence*. Ed. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1766/1978, pp. 547-8.

3 The argument is further developed in Daniele Archibugi and Alice Pease, *Crime and Global Justice. The Dynamics of International Punishment*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

4 See Alessandra Prentice, French forensic experts in Bucha to help Ukraine investigate possible war crimes, Reuters, 12.04.2022, at <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/french-forensic-experts-bucha-help-ukraine-investigate-possible-war-crimes-2022-04-12/> . Government of the Netherlands, The Netherlands to dispatch forensic investigation team to Ukraine, 02.05.2022, at <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2022/05/02/the-netherlands-to-dispatch-forensic-investigation-team-to-ukraine> . Lithuanian National Radio and Television, Lithuanian team arrives in Ukraine to help investigate war crimes, 05.05.2022, at <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1688232/lithuanian-team-arrives-in-ukraine-to-help-investigate-war-crimes>

discovered the importance of the law and the courts which should protect it, often for propaganda purposes only. It is not surprising that in the last year there have been real paradoxes. We mention five:

1. Denis Pushilin, the head of the Russian-controlled territory in Donetsk, said he plans to set up what he called a Nuremberg Tribunal II to punish crimes by Ukrainian forces (which they label “neo-Nazis”) in the territories that since 2014 they have occupied⁵. That crimes have been committed following the 2014 Russian occupation, and by both sides, has been repeatedly denounced by international organizations such as the OSCE and by non-governmental organizations⁶. That said, neither Russia nor the separatists they support have moved forward, probably because such a tribunal would have signalled that even worse crimes have been committed by them.

2. President Biden has repeatedly stated that he wants to prosecute crimes committed in Ukraine through an international tribunal, without elaborating its nature⁷. Biden does not say that his country has not (yet?) joined the ICC and has even obstructed its jurisdiction in various forms. This confirms the propensity of the United States to bring criminal proceedings against its opponents, but only on condition that they themselves are exempt. If President Biden intends to strengthen international criminal justice, he should first get his country to join the ICC.

3. Ursula von der Leyen and other European leaders have suggested creating a new ad hoc court on the model of those created in 1993 and 1994 for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda⁸. The suggestion is perplexing: why set up a new court, which would once again pose the problem of selectivity, rather than using the already existing institutions? The two special tribunals of the 1990s were established by the United Nations Security Council. It is clear that this procedure would be promptly blocked by Russia’s veto. Opening another legal procedure would establish less authoritative and more partial magistracies than an existing institution such as the ICC.

4. The Ukrainian courts have already taken action to punish war crimes committed on their territory. Vadim Shshimarin, a very young 21-year-old Russian soldier, was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Court of Kiev for killing an

unarmed pensioner⁹. A war crime that was judged, in record time, by a national court without the need to resort to external courts. But the Ukrainian authorities immediately declared their willingness to exchange the soldier for other prisoners.

5. Not even the courts of the self-proclaimed People’s Republic of Donetsk, although of very dubious legality, have remained idle. Two British citizens, Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner, aged 28 and 48, volunteers in the defence of Mariupol, were accused of being mercenaries and sentenced to death¹⁰. They were then freed in record time following a prisoner swap brokered by Saudi Arabia¹¹.

This series of paradoxes is enough to understand how slippery the discourse on criminal justice can be in the middle of a war. It risks being used by the parties involved for propaganda purposes and used to turn the enemy into a criminal. None of this helps to identify and prosecute the real international crimes nor to carry out that preventive, repressive and above all necessary function for post-war peace-making. And this requires that cases be tried by an impartial third court, with rules established ex-ante and valid for individuals of all states.

If President Biden intends to strengthen international criminal justice, he should first get his country to join the ICC.

5 Andrew Roth, Kremlin mulls Nuremberg-style trials based on second world war tribunals, *The Guardian*, 28.05.2022, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/28/kremlin-mulls-nuremberg-style-trials-based-on-second-world-war-tribunals>

6 Osce, *Civilian casualties in eastern Ukraine 2016*, September 2017, at <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/a/542121.pdf> . Human Rights Watch, *Ukraine events 2016*, at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/ukraine>

7 Dan Mangan, Biden calls to put Putin on trial for war crimes over Russia killings in Ukraine, *Cnbc*, 04.04.2022, at <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/04/biden-calls-to-put-putin-on-trial-for-war-crimes-over-russias-actions-in-ukraine.html>

8 European Commission, *Statement by President von der Leyen on the establishment of the International Centre for the Prosecution of Crimes of Aggression against Ukraine*, 04.05.2023 at <https://www.ecas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/statement-president-von-der-leyen-establishment-international-centre-en?s=232>

9 Shaun Walker, Ukrainian court sentences Russian soldier to life in prison for killing civilian, *The Guardian*, 25-05-2022, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/25/ukrainian-court-sentences-russian-soldier-to-life-in-prison-for-killing-civilian-v-ukrainian-court-sentences-russian-soldier-to-life-in-prison-for-killing-civilian-adim-shshimarin>

10 Andrew Roth and Emine Sinmaz, Britons sentenced to death after ‘show trial’ in Russian-occupied Ukraine, *The Guardian*, 09.06.2022, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/09/britons-sentenced-to-death-russian-occupied-ukraine-aiden-aslin-shaun-pinner>

11 Emma Vardy and Frank Gardner, Britons held by Russian forces in Ukraine released, *BBC*, 22.09.2022, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-62986254>

Requesting the arrest of a head of state, without having the real possibility of arresting him, complicates negotiations.

The International Criminal Court for Ukraine

The advantage of the ICC lies precisely in the fact that it should guarantee impartiality and avoid the exploitation of criminal justice for propaganda. Still, it is far from being a world court since only 123 states have joined the ICC, while another 70 have been wary of it. Among them, not only the United States, Russia, China, India and Israel, but also Ukraine. Only belatedly, and on the occasion of the invasions suffered by Russia in 2014 and 2022, Ukraine accepted that the ICC could investigate crimes committed on its territory. This allowed, immediately after the invasion of February 2022, the Prosecutor of the ICC to request authorization to carry out the investigations, immediately approved by a block of 40 states (including all European countries, Canada, Australia and other allies).

A year after the start of the investigation, ICC Prosecutor Karim Kahn has decided to indict and request the arrest of Putin and his Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova for the apparently less disturbing crime, namely the abduction of Ukrainian children, transferred from war zones occupied by the Russian Army to Russia and in some cases even given up for adoption to Russian families¹². It is perhaps surprising that, with all the war crimes documented and the much more serious crime of aggression being committed, the Prosecutor focused on what appears to be a minor offence. How come?

The problem is that war crimes committed on the battlefield do not necessarily show Kremlin responsibility, unless it is proven that the government has encouraged troops to commit them. And for the most serious crime, that of aggression, the ICC has dull claws: it is in fact prosecutable only for state parties or if the case is referred to the Security Council (where such a request would not only be blocked by Russia’s

12 ICC, *Statement by Prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan KC on the issuance of arrest warrants against President Vladimir Putin and Ms Maria Lvova-Belova*, 17.05.2023, at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-prosecutor-karim-khan-kc-issuance-arrest-warrants-against-president-vladimir-putin>

veto and where other states, starting with China, would in all likelihood abstain)¹³. Which demonstrates the paradoxical situation in which the Prosecutor of the ICC does not have the possibility to act for the crime of war but only for war crimes.

As for the kidnapping of Ukrainian children, however, the Prosecutor had an easy time collecting the evidence, since Russian propaganda publicly declared that it had provided for the transfer and adoption of minors from Ukraine, presenting the facts as if they were a commendable humanitarian initiative.

The political implications of the arrest warrant for Putin

Faced with the arrest warrant issued by the ICC, the Kremlin limited itself to saying it did not recognize its jurisdiction. More provocative and picturesque in style, former President Dmitry Medvedev even threatened to hit the ICC building in The Hague with a hypersonic missile¹⁴. Surprisingly, there have also been cautionary notes from members of global civil society, including from those NGOs which have been very active in promoting the discourse of criminal justice. The President of the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal, for example, noted that the arrest warrant could delay further peace talks¹⁵.

Requesting the arrest of a head of state, without having the real possibility of arresting him, complicates negotiations. If it is necessary to treat Putin as a political interlocutor, how can he be arrested? The historical precedents speak for themselves: the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials took place after the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan. More recently, the indictment of Slobodan Milosevic took place when the war was already over and he, while still President of the Yugoslav federation, had become a burden for internal politics. Indicting him was therefore a further internal incentive to sideline him. Sudanese dictator Omar al-Bashir was also indicted by the ICC in 2008, but this did not prevent him from remaining head of state for another 11 years¹⁶.

If the ICC had the power to arrest Putin, it might as well

13 Andrii Smyrnov, We Need a Special Tribunal to Put Putin and His Regime on Trial, *Time*, 25.09.2022, at <https://time.com/6216040/putin-war-crimes-tribunals/>

14 Ketrin Jochecová, Russia blasts back at ICC over Putin arrest warrant, *Politico*, 20.05.2023, at <https://www.politico.eu/article/putin-russia-icc-criminal-case-moscow-ukraine-war/>

15 Franco Ippolito, La guerra si ferma con la politica non con il diritto penale, *il manifesto*, 23.05.2023, at <https://ilmanifesto.it/la-guerra-si-ferma-con-la-politica-non-con-il-diritto-penale>

16 Archibugi and Pease, *Crime and Global Justice*, cit., chapters 5 on Milosevic and 7 on Al-Bashir.

end the war. But its powers are infinitely more limited. The arrest warrant may perhaps inhibit Putin’s travel to the countries belonging to the ICC, but if he were ever to participate in a peace conference, he would certainly not choose to travel to a country where it could have such consequences. It can, of course, be discussed about the ethics of these peace conferences, where government officials shake hands smiling in front of photographers after they have inflicted major damages to their peoples, but this is how wars end.

The arrest warrant for Putin therefore poses the classic problem: to what extent can international criminal justice be autonomous from political choices? If one accepts the idea that the ICC is an independent judicial body, the implication is that Prosecutor Kahn has done nothing but his job. If, on the other hand, we want to consider it a sort of judicial arm of some Western countries (and in particular of European countries), there may be doubts about the appropriateness of the indictment.

The struggle to affirm legality in the Ukrainian war

Peace is not rendered a service if the instruments of criminal justice are bent by the needs of politics.

Their utility is to act as a deterrent against international crimes, also in order to reconstitute a possible dialogue between the areas that have been in conflict. After the end of the Second World War, the discourse on international criminal justice has been asleep for half a century. Liberal countries revived it at the end of the Cold War a quarter of a century ago with the ad hoc tribunals for ex-Yugoslavia and Rwanda and later on with the making of the ICC. The war in Ukraine offers the possibility to strengthen it in many respects. The ICC and more broadly the norms about international crimes are not enough to stop a war, but they can serve to carry out investigations with greater impartiality than those carried out by the national authorities, as well as to identify those responsible for specific crimes. For the discourse on international criminal justice to continue to play a positive role, a number of initiatives need to be taken.

First of all, it is necessary to widen the membership of the ICC. It is absurd that the United States, the main promoter of the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals, has not yet joined the ICC. And, as mentioned, it is even more absurd that President Biden frequently support the making of that would set back the formation of an impartial and independent criminal judiciary. Secondly, the ICC needs to distinguish, at least for heads of state and members of the government, between indictment and arrest warrant. Proceeding with the indictment is necessary to develop the judicial process, but the arrest warrant risks impeding or making diplomatic negotiations more difficult and it would be wise to postpone them to after the conflicts have ended.

Thirdly, the ICC must not be left alone in identifying the crimes committed and those responsible for them. Even without coercive power of last resort, civil society today has the possibility of gathering information on crimes committed and

identifying those responsible through the courts of opinion. Bertrand Russell promoted a major opinion tribunal of the 1960s to denounce US war crimes in Vietnam. Since then, the tradition has been revived by Lelio Basso and the Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal¹⁷. Other opinion tribunals have been held for other conflicts, such as the one in Istanbul on the 2003 Iraq war¹⁸. It is now necessary to establish a similar tribunal largely supported by various civil society organizations for Ukraine. The task of this court should also be to understand the reasons that led to the failure of the Minsk agreements and why a diplomatic solution has not been found.

Finally, we don't know how and when, but sooner or later this war will end. There will be rubble and destruction on the field, but the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, united by centuries of common history, will remain there to deal with the destruction inflicted by insane governments. These peoples have a common history and will also have a future as neighbours. This war too has fomented hatred and sectarianism, which is exactly what those who started it wanted to achieve. Peaceful coexistence needs to be re-established between the two communities. In other areas of the world, the truth and reconciliation commissions pioneered by Nelson Mandela in South Africa have played a fundamental role in identifying the atrocities committed, condemning the main perpetrators but also enabling peace-making with a view to future cohabitation. Ukraine and Russia are in desperate need of it, at least as much as radical regime change in the Kremlin is needed.

Peace is not rendered a service if the instruments of criminal justice are bent by the needs of politics.

Daniele Archibugi is affiliated with the Italian National Research Council, IRPPS, and University of London, Birkbeck College.

17 Archibugi and Pease, *Crime and Global Justice*, cit., chapter 10.

18 Ayça Çubukçu, *For the Love of Humanity: The World Tribunal on Iraq*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

Greening Transatlantic Relations

John Feffer on how the US and EU must engage with each other and the world in the planetary fight against climate change and inequality.



From a foreign policy perspective, transatlantic relations appear to have reached new heights. The United States and European Union both support Ukraine’s efforts to expel Russian troops from its territory. On the military front, NATO is enjoying boom times thanks to the reemergence of a ‘common enemy’ and the addition of new members like Finland. The United States has gone to great lengths to provide European countries with energy to substitute for Russian oil and gas imports.

But even as they shake hands and smile at each other across the table, Washington and Brussels are trading kicks underneath. The disputes range from noisy trade disagreements to a quiet competition to be the global leader in new Green technologies. Even though climate change is also a common enemy, the United States and the EU haven’t yet found a common purpose in reducing carbon emissions and addressing other environmental threats to the planet. Instead they are competing for markets and economic advantage.

A climate of threat?

After a period of tension during the Trump years, in November 2021 the trade relationship between the EU and US seemed to be heading towards calmer seas when the Biden administration agreed to lift the tariffs that Donald Trump had placed on European steel and aluminum.

But then the Biden team created new problems by including targeted tax breaks for electric vehicles (EV) in its big climate and economic stimulus bill, the Inflation Reduction Act. Americans only get the EV tax credit, for instance, if vehicles are assembled in the United States. The EU argues that the United States is effectively building up its own EV industry with subsidies and protectionist trade barriers.

In response, the EU has launched its own effort to win the race to be the leader of new clean-energy technologies. At the core of the program is a Green Deal Industrial Plan to mobilize EU funds to transform the region’s manufacturing and energy base. The architects of the plan note similar efforts by the United States, Japan, and India, but they also sound a warning about China, whose “pipeline of announced investments in clean technologies exceeds \$280 billion...Europe and its partners must do more to combat the effect of such unfair subsidies and prolonged market distortion.”

As part of the Net-Zero Industry Act and other measures, the EU is, in effect, implementing its own version of

“unfair subsidies and prolonged market distortion” by using tax breaks and subsidies to scale up the production of solar panels, batteries, and wind turbines. It also aims to increase the domestic sourcing of critical minerals and processing of these key ingredients in clean technologies. Through the Horizon Europe Program, meanwhile, the EU is allocating nearly \$100 billion euros to support, among other things, “innovations with potential breakthrough and disruptive nature with scale-up potential that may be too risky for private investors.”

With its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, the EU will also penalize carbon-heavy production, whether by domestic or foreign producers. The United States has taken a different route by slapping tariffs only on “dirty” overseas production. These two approaches can be reconciled, but the two sides are more likely to clash both bilaterally and in their trade policies with other parts of the world.

These disagreements have huge consequences. Together, the United States and the EU represent about one-third of the global economy. In terms of carbon footprint, the combined emissions are now less than China’s but represent the lion’s share of historic emissions since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. By virtue of size, economic power, and shared responsibility for the climate crisis, the United States and European Union have an obligation to sit down and figure out a joint approach to saving the planet—and they should do so with China, not against it.

The United States and European Union have an obligation to sit down and figure out a joint approach to saving the planet—and they should do so with China, not against it.

For collaboration not competition

The press releases issued by Washington and Brussels paint a positive—and very Green—picture of transatlantic cooperation. For instance, when President Biden and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met in Washington in early March, they identified ways to “deepen our cooperation on diversifying critical mineral and battery supply chains” and strive for greater transparency in the way the two sides subsidize new technologies. The two have also pledged close cooperation on preserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable fisheries, reforestation, and so on. A proliferation of institutions—the Clean Energy Incentives Dialogue in the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, the US-EU Task Force on Energy Security, the Partnership for Transatlantic Energy and Climate Cooperation—attempt to harmonize the policies of the two partners.

But for all these pledges, declarations, and confabs, the United States and European Union have not really linked arms to fight climate change. At one point during the Obama years, the United States and China formed a joint partnership, the US-China Clean Energy Research Center, that brought together state actors, businesses, universities, and banks to explore new clean-energy technologies. So intent on competing with one another to become the world’s leader in clean technologies, the United States and EU haven’t come up with anything comparable. Indeed, there was more active cooperation across the Atlantic during the Trump era, albeit

But perhaps the most important obstacle to greater transatlantic cooperation on climate change is an ideological faith in markets.

at a sub-national level and in response to Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement. California and the EU, for instance, collaborated on carbon markets and zero-carbon transportation alternatives. That level of concrete cooperation is still lacking at the federal level.

Money, politics & ideology

The reason why competition, rather than cooperation, shapes US-EU relations boils down to three factors: money, politics, and ideology.

At the political level, the United States can't agree with the EU on major climate initiatives because it can't even agree with itself. California and Brussels see eye to eye because liberal Democrats are firmly in control in Sacramento. At the federal level, Republicans have joined a few conservative Democrats to block the Biden administration from breaking firmly with fossil fuels. The European Union has its own internal divisions to navigate as well, particularly between members in the east that are more dependent on dirty energy and manufacturing than members in the west.

The money side of the equation exerts an even more powerful influence. The clean technology market is large — over \$300 billion globally in 2020 — and growing at a rapid clip of over 5 percent annually. Only by expanding the domestic production of solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars, and the like can advanced economies manage this transition without dooming workers in sunset industries like coal mining to a future of joblessness. No wonder the United States and EU are jockeying to grab a larger slice of the pie. But perhaps the most important obstacle to greater transatlantic cooperation on climate change is an ideological faith in markets.

True, the EU is beefing up its industrial policy, and the Inflation Reduction Act similarly marshals federal money to pick winners and losers in the clean energy field. But Brussels has largely relied on its cap-and-trade system—the EU

Emissions Trading System—to reduce carbon emissions, which means that reductions within Europe can be offset by “carbon leakage” as dirty manufacturing relocates overseas or outsources key components. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is one effort to plug these leaks.

The United States doesn't have a federal cap-and-trade system (though some states like California do). Moreover, the U.S. government has generally relied on market mechanisms to reduce carbon, such as Green bank financing or a proposed carbon tax. Meanwhile, markets continue to favor fossil fuel companies, which have reaped record profits and still take advantage of state subsidies that keep prices low for consumers. But whatever policies the transatlantic partners prioritize at home, they clearly are competing with each other at the global level. By the time markets have “decided” that dirty energy is no longer profitable, it will be too late for the planet.

There is one important asterisk to this competition between Washington and Brussels. Both agree that China is a threat, whether because of its enormous carbon emissions—which have yet to peak—or because of its dominant position in the global market for clean energy technologies. China reportedly controls 80 percent of the manufacturing of solar panels, generates 46 percent more wind power than second-place Europe, and is leading the patent race by a large margin to develop a replacement for lithium-ion batteries.

Despite their faith in markets, the United States and EU are losing out to a putatively communist country in the battle to become the world's leading clean tech giant. A shared fear of China may in the end push the United States and EU toward closer cooperation despite their free-market instincts.

Grassroots resistance

Civil society organizations—Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, #FridaysforFuture, Extinction Rebellion—have coordinated activities and campaigns across the Atlantic. They have linked arms to derail the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, protest the Energy Charter Treaty, and block new fossil fuel projects. The Climate Emergency Fund and the Equation Campaign have funded a new wave of transatlantic activism. Looking ahead, the most promising collaborations are in the realm of climate justice that connect transatlantic actors with the Global South.

To begin with, the world faces a resurgent debt crisis, with twice the number of low-income countries at high risk of default today compared to 2015. Many middle-income countries in the Global South, too, are dangerously burdened with debt. Much of this debt is held in Europe and North America, either by governments or private banks. A strong transatlantic push from below for debt restructuring along climate-friendly lines is a promising front for civil society campaigning.

At the last COP in Egypt, richer countries agreed to a loss-and-damage fund that would go toward compensating poorer countries for the costs already associated with climate change. A Transitional Committee has been established to work out the details, meeting for the first time in March. As with other financing mechanisms—like the Green Climate Fund—richer countries are angling to shirk their loss-and-damage obligations by providing money through new loans, rather than outright grants, and thereby contributing to the debt crisis. Here again is an opportunity for civil society organizations in Europe and the United States to hold their leaders to account and demand sustainable solutions.

Finally, the issue of trade looms over all of these discussions. Even as the United States and the EU squabble over bilateral trade, they are both negotiating agreements with countries of the Global South to access raw materials and gain preferential terms for their own exports. Activists in the Global North have successfully challenged investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in these agreements that allow corporations to sue governments for regulations that affect their profitability. This kind of activism can be expanded to address a wide variety of trade stipulations that are both climate-unfriendly and disadvantageous for Global South countries.

The United States and EU have managed to reduce their carbon footprints over the last 20 years. By 2020, EU-27 emissions were 31 percent lower and U.S. emissions 7 percent lower than 1990 levels. But these reductions are largely meaningless in the face of the 53 percent increase in global emissions over the same period. If Brussels and Washington don't see that they must up their game through mutual coordination and climate justice policies toward the Global South, civic movements will just have to work harder to correct their vision.

Looking ahead, the most promising collaborations are in the realm of climate justice that connect transatlantic actors with the Global South.

John Feffer is the director of Foreign Policy In Focus as well as the Global Just Transition project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC.

Assembling Connecting and Organising

Grounding ‘citizen participation’ in social movements

Alvaro Oleart on how to build effective transnational democratic institutions.

The article is derived in part from ‘The political construction of the ‘citizen turn’ in the EU: disintermediation and depoliticisation in the Conference on the Future of Europe’ by Alvaro Oleart, published in the *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* (14 February 2023, copyright Taylor and Francis), available online [here](#).

During the past two years, the European Union has ‘experimented’ with new ‘citizen participation’ mechanisms, primarily in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE). The European Citizens’ Panels (ECPs) used sortition as a way to bring together a ‘representative’ group of ‘everyday citizens’ from across the EU to put forward their views on the future of Europe. However, intermediary actors (civil society, trade unions, national parties) were not sufficiently integrated in the political design of the ECPs, there was very little ‘politics’ in the public sphere (e.g. through the media); and they were insulated from wider societal debate. The insulation of European citizen panels from the European public spheres reminds us that ‘the link-

ages between democracy and deliberation are contingent rather than necessary’ (He and Warren 2011, 270), and thus not all forms of deliberation have a democratising potential, particularly when conceived in such a narrow way.

This depoliticised approach to democracy has a demobilising effect, since political parties, trade unions and civil society actors are discouraged to participate and may actually deepen the hollowing out (Mair 2013) of EU democracy through processes such as the CoFoE (see Oleart, 2023, for a normative critique of the underlying philosophy with which the CoFoE was organised and constructed).

Participants of the Transnational Assembly of Solidarity in Palermo (2021) - Photo by Maghweb



What does the experience of the ECPs in the CoFoE tell us about the possibility of mobilising ‘citizen participation’ mechanisms to foster transnational democracy? First, while there are good reasons for expanding citizen participation in the EU as a way to foster transnational democracy, citizen assemblies should not be conceived as a silver bullet. As Curato and Böker (2016, 185) have argued, a systemic conception of deliberative democracy ‘underscores that minipublics do not play a constitutive but rather an auxiliary role in deliberative democratisation’. Second, a key element to assess normatively democratic innovation exercises is how they link up with the ‘deliberative system’, and to what extent conflictual dynamics are fostered in the public sphere. It is precisely this micro-macro link that is rel-

Transnational Assembly of Solidarity in Palermo (2021) Photo by Maghweb



Not all forms of deliberation have a democratising potential, particularly when conceived in such a narrow way.

evant for EU democracy. Discussing the role of minipublics, Olsen and Trenz (2016, 663) argued that

the claim for democratic legitimacy of a deliberative mini-public relies on processes of political mediation and public contestation where sufficient degrees of publicity can be generated through which the private (and often experimental) space of small-scale deliberation (the micro) can be meaningfully related to the public spaces of mass democracy (the macro).

From a public sphere perspective, the focus ought to be on the extent to which participatory mechanisms are embedded in a broader political field of action and interact with existing intermediary actors that play an influential role in the European public spheres, which is mostly missing in the case of the CoFoE. This process of Europeanisation of politics requires the mediation of intermediary actors, including the media, social movements, trade unions, civil society or political parties from both the transnational and national levels. In this way, the Europeanisation of politics involves an interaction between the national and the EU level, encouraging both horizontal connections (e.g. between Italian and German trade unions or political parties) as well as vertical ones (e.g. between national and EU-level trade unions). Mediation in the EU plays a double role: first, mediator organisations ought to be a space of political socialisation with EU politics, an open door for actors not previously socialised with EU politics; sec-

This depoliticised approach to democracy has a demobilising effect, since political parties, trade unions and civil society actors are discouraged to participate

ond, they ought to channel that energy vis-à-vis EU institutions. Intermediary actors are essential for the socialisation of citizens with institutions, and are key to structure political conflict in the public sphere.

This process of mediation is central for the democratisation of European and transnational politics, insofar the political and democratic empowerment of vulnerable social groups at the transnational level requires intermediation through collective organisation. It is difficult to imagine that a factory worker or a refugee fleeing from war as an individual citizen can have as much political weight as a banker that has the relational, cultural, economic, political and symbolic capital to participate and shape EU politics. This is why collective actors such as trade unions, political parties or civil society organisations, both at the national and EU level, ought to play a meaningful role as mediators, who should constitute the infrastructure of a democratic European public sphere.

The traditionally depoliticised understanding of democracy in the EU, largely illustrated by the CoFoE, is fundamentally opposed to an agonistic public sphere approach to democracy. As Chantal Mouffe has long argued, the

[b]elief in the possibility of a universal rational consensus has put democratic thinking on the wrong track. Instead of trying to design the institutions which, through supposedly 'impartial' procedures, would recon-



Transnational Assembly of Solidarity in Palermo (2021)
Photo by Maghweb

It is difficult to imagine that a factory worker or a refugee fleeing from war as an individual citizen can have as much political weight as a banker that has the relational, cultural, economic, political and symbolic capital to participate and shape EU politics.



Installation The Soft Layer by Jozef Wouters in the context of Between Land and Sea, Palermo (2021) - Photo by Maghweb

cile all conflicting interests and values, the task for democratic theorists and politicians should be to envisage the creation of a vibrant 'agonistic' public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted (Mouffe 2005, 3).

This is not to say that citizens' assemblies are inherently a depoliticising tool, but rather that the underlying philosophy with which the EU has deployed them in the case of the CoFoE poses fundamental normative problems. There are alternatives to this approach, as there are ways to include democratic innovations in a way that is coherent with an agonistic democracy logic. While there is a tension between making such exercises oriented towards political institutions or to the public sphere, the Irish citizen assemblies that meaningfully influenced the discourse on abortion and same sex marriage in the public sphere (and the assembly itself was influenced by the broader public debate) provide a good example of how the micro-macro link may be established, as well as the 'Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat', which heavily contributed to shaping public discourse on climate change in France. Similarly, the 'Bürgerrat Demokratie' exercise in Germany offers some interesting lessons, as it was initiated, funded and run by civil society organisations (see Dean et al. 2022), rather than by executive actors. Unlike the way in which the citizen panels post-CoFoE are planned (organised uniquely by the European Commission), a key lesson is to have parliaments or other non-executive actors organise these exercises. This will facilitate fostering political pluralism within the micro process, but, most importantly, a clearer connection between the citizen assembly and the public sphere, including a wide range of mediators in the process. Thus, 'policy responsiveness' should not be the main indicator of 'success' of democratic innovations, but rather its embedding in the democratic system and the public sphere.

More broadly, however, the key lesson is to ground 'citizen participation' in ongoing social movements. In this way, 'new' methods ought to be anchored in existing institutions and intermediary actors in a way that transnational politics are in constant interaction with national politics, feeding each other. Ultimately, the main challenges we are facing in society (climate change, wealth inequality, racism, economic precarity,

sexism) are not 'naturally' suitable to be addressed by nation-states.

An interesting example in this direction is the recent Transnational Workers' Organizing Summit (16-20 November 2022) organised in Bremen by European Alternatives, which began with the following questions: "How can we build a powerful transnational ecology of movements based on the local struggles and issues we face? And how can we ecologize our struggles in order to build the power which allows us to have control over our lives, workplaces, and futures, and to care for ourselves, our communities, and the planet as we would like to?". The Citizens Take Over Europe coalition is another attempt to build a grassroots transnational movement connected with civil society organisations across Europe.

In order to foster transnational democracy, facilitating spaces where ongoing movements meet and find ways in which they can connect their shared struggles ought to be the main task of 'citizen participation' mechanisms.

While corporate actors have transnationalised, democracy has not.

Alvaro Oleart is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Political Science and the Institute for European Studies of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. He is the author of the book *Framing TTIP in the European Public Spheres: Towards an Empowering Dissensus for EU Integration* (Palgrave, 2021), and has been involved in the Citizens Take Over Europe coalition in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

References & Further Reading

- Curato, N., and M. Böker. 2016. "Linking Mini-Publics to the Deliberative System: A Research Agenda." *Policy Sciences* 49 (2): 173–190. doi:10.1007/s11077-015-9238-5.
- Dean, R., F. Hoffmann, B. Geissela, S. Junga, and B. Wipflerb. 2022. "Citizen Deliberation in Germany: Lessons from the 'Bürgerrat Demokratie'." *German Politics* 1–25. doi:10.1080/09644008.2022.2088732.
- European Alternatives (2022, 8 November). TRANSNATIONAL WORKERS' ORGANIZING SUMMIT. Available online: <https://euroalter.com/syndical-transnational-workers-organizing-summit/> (accessed 2 January 2023)
- He, B., and M. E. Warren. 2011. "Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development." *Perspectives on Politics* 9 (2): 269–289. doi:10.1017/S1537592711000892.
- Mair, P. 2013. *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. London: Verso books.
- Mouffe, C. 2005. *On the Political*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Oleart, A. 2023. *The political construction of the 'citizen turn' in the EU: disintermediation and depoliticisation in the Conference on the Future of Europe*. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. doi: 10.1080/14782804.2023.2177837
- Olsen, E. D., and H. J. J. Trezn. 2016. "The Micro–Macro Link in Deliberative Polling: Science or Politics?" *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 19 (6): 662–679. doi:10.1080/13698230.2014.983363.

Diversity: interest or obligation?

Paula Soli reflects on intersectional feminism and the harsh realities of claiming space in a world shaped by coloniality.

It is not unusual to notice that the words diversity, equality and inclusion are on everyone’s lips at the moment. It also seems that this inclusive agenda only comes from minoritised groups who reject systemic discrimination because they want a fair, real and effective representation in all societal spheres.

Doesn’t sound too bad, does it? But what are we currently facing when we try to create a more diverse and inclusive vision? Forced inclusion, indoctrination; treated as a threat. But a threat to what? Well, we are a threat to the status quo, to “normality”, to whiteness, to cisheteronormativity, to colonial practices and ideals among other things. My very existence is seen

as a threat. Our existence (appealing to minoritised groups) has the potential to threaten what is grudgingly defended. Because it has been decided that my body, my afro, or my life are political causes. Isn’t it ironic? And we assume it, we assume the extra work that we have to do, the search for excellence, the “I am not like the rest”, the defense and survival mechanisms, to unseat ourselves from the “bad heap”, and with luck; perhaps with a little self-love and community love, we will manage to make peace with ourselves and return to that “bad heap” in which we recognize ourselves. Weaving networks from the pain, and trying to free ourselves from the common rage.

My interest in diversity is, in a way, a given. It is intrinsic, implicit, and I could even consider it as obligatory, imposed. To talk about racism, sexism or other discriminations, we only approach those who suffer from them, and of course, those are the only people legitimized enough to speak in first person about personal experiences that should not be counter-argued. However, social justice encompasses cross-cutting issues, from which no one is exempt: whether to their detriment or benefit. If there are people who benefit per se, why aren’t they involved in change-making? They are given the wild card of looking the other way because it doesn’t touch them closely. How easy, isn’t it?

With this I want to state that we cannot, nor should we, champion each and every one of the existing struggles, especially those that we do not experience, but it is our duty to be informed when other people’s rights are violated. But for that to happen, I believe that a voluntary critical exercise is needed; but again, even being an activist and standing up for what we believe in is a huge privilege.

We are a threat to the status quo, to “normality”, to whiteness, to cisheteronormativity, to colonial practices and ideals

Activism, to a certain extent, is still a privilege. I am writing this article for the European Alternatives project I am involved in called Youth Movement and Campaign Accelerator. It is a proposal that brings together young activists from various countries of the

Feminist Marc h2023



European Union to learn how to mobilize our local communities around participatory democratic proposals, on issues of special individual and community interest.

When I was invited to the first meeting, without even knowing if I had been accepted into the programme, my first reaction was, how diverse is this programme? I don't know if I am going to be very comfortable in a European programme in which no people of colour participate (understanding that racial diversity, which is the part that affects me most directly as well as gender, is part of a wider range of representation that also includes sexual identity, religious confession, age, abilities, etc).

What kind of fair representation would it be of the current demographics of the region? One might somehow think that this is a “problem” that I bring upon myself, however, my answer is that I don't actively seek to feel excluded, on the contrary, I seek to create mediated connections. To know how many people there will be who will be able to understand my experience.

Because I speak from discriminatory experiences. Not only my own, but collective. Let's call it a defense mechanism. There were two events organized with the programme. The first one in Paris in December, the second one in Berlin in March. At the first event that was organized in Paris, I felt comfortable to see that, visibly, there was diversity. Not just the kind that exempts minority groups from being in decision making positions. During the stay, I was able to learn about the work that other participants are doing with their respective groups in various countries, ranging from the fight against climate change, movements in favor of abortion, mental health, the visualization of bisexuality or the right to euthanasia. The aim was to learn, through workshops, how to organize a people's assembly that would help us with our issues of concern - from identifying stakeholders to targeting beneficiaries.

During the stay in Berlin, we came together once again to discuss our assemblies, learn more about each other and our work, in a full week programme including activist workshops and exchanges. It was very interesting to see what the other participants had done, and to meet new people that got involved later. As in the previous one, I felt comfortable being surrounded by peo-



Activism, to a certain extent, is still a privilege.

ple that practice collective care at a first instance. The fact that everyone was on the same page made it easier to connect without having to be wary about people's reactions. In effect, this is what happens in some activists movements; there's the advantage of comfort because you are seen for what you are and, most of the time, there's no need to go any further explaining your struggles. They understand, or are willing to do so.

With the help of the Here to Support team in Amsterdam and friends, I organized an event in Amsterdam on 5 March in preparation for International Women's Day. The event was entitled: Feminism, Women and Migration. The aim of the event was to highlight the importance of having an inclusive and intersectional view on feminism, as there is still a clear under-representation of POC and migrant women's groups. Undocumented women shared their experiences with the rest of the participants, who, by being there, were showing an interest in the issue.

However, how can we influence a more humane migration policy if the people who can exert that

Feminist Marc h2023



weight are not interested, or simply, as it is an issue that does not concern them, they can use their privilege to look the other way? Returning to the idea of creating more diverse, equitable and inclusive spaces, how can we do this if the people who hold the most power do not share any discrimination against the people who “should” be included?

To continue with the irony, there would probably be noticeable changes in this area if people from privileged groups did something, however small. That's just the way it is.

I wish we could get past the stage of asking people who suffer any kind of oppression/discrimination why

Paula Soli is an activist from Barcelona interested in campaigns addressing decolonisation, antiracism, diversity-equity-inclusion, feminism, queerness and migration. She is a participant on the European Alternatives Youth Movement and Campaign Accelerator Programme.

If we make people uncomfortable, so be it.



diversity is important, to stop asking why we have the right to step out of the margins and write our own stories. Because that would imply that we are only being done a favor by being given a space to speak. No, that space belongs to us as much as it belongs to anyone else, but it just so happens that now it's up to us to prove it. So I appeal to individual critique to think about what space we should occupy, and what our role in it is.

And if we are visible, and if there are more of us, and if more and more people see themselves represented, as is the real reflection of our society, and if we make people uncomfortable, so be it.

Let's continue to make people uncomfortable.

Decolonising Berlin: the materiality of anticolonial resistance

**Seema Syeda on the lessons of a walking tour led by
Berlin-based cultural project Dekoloniale.**

German colonialism and its enduring impacts have long been hidden from public discourse. Dekoloniale, a cultural project that seeks to critically deal with the history of colonialism and its consequences, is challenging this erasure. Led by communities at the forefront of anticolonial resistance, the project seeks to resurface the invisibilised history of empire and campaigns for justice for those impacted by its violence.

The material history of German colonialism is spread across the city of Berlin and remains entangled - through buildings, objects, human remains and memories of trauma - with other parts of the world. Berlin Postkolonial e.V., an organization that forms

part of the Dekoloniale project, led a walking tour and workshop in Berlin for participants of European Alternative's Youth Movement and Campaign Accelerator Bootcamp, to raise awareness about this past and the continuing resistance to its consequences.

Anton Wilhelm Amo Strasse

The tour started at Anton Wilhelm Amo Strasse, a site of symbolic victory for the decolonial movement. This street used to be called 'Mohrenstrasse', drawing from the racist term 'Mohren', used to describe people with Black and African heritage in the colonial era. Germa-

© Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City.



ny was involved in the slave trade in the 16th and 17th centuries and owning black bodies, usually by forcibly deporting people to Europe as slaves and servants, was seen as a sign of power among white society. At the time the area around Anton Wilhelm Amo Strasse was inhabited by German nobility who often kept servants obtained in this way. As it was common for black people to be seen on this street, authorities gave it the racist name 'Mohrenstrasse' in the 18th century. Thus black bodies were used by the German empire to showcase their colonial power to the outside world.

Now, after campaigning and pressure from the Black Lives Matter movement, civil society organisa-

tions and a petition signed by 14,000 people, the street has been renamed after philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo. Amo was brought to Berlin as a child slave from what is now Ghana in 1707. Anton studied law and wrote a thesis entitled *The Rights of Blacks in Europe*, now lost. The renaming of the street signifies the beginning of the German state's acknowledgment of the enduring legacy of colonialism, the violence of which continues to be reified in the architecture of the city to this day.

Following its involvement in the slave trade, Germany later established colonies in East, West and central Africa including present-day Burundi, Rwanda, Namibia and Tanzania. German rule was characterised by brutal genocide, deportation and resource exploitation.

Searching for human remains

Our tour guide Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, from Tanzania and founder of Berlin Postkoloniale e.V., had relatives who still remembered the horrors of this time, for whom acknowledgement and apology alone does not equate to justice. Mboro told us how his grandmother recalled the brutal killings of her local chieftain and other members of her tribe, with bodies and bones being transported back to Germany for show or for ‘anthropological research’. These human remains were kept in Berlin, with no humanity accorded to the remains themselves or to the families whose loved ones were brutally killed. To this day, the remains have not been returned to their families, and for Dekoloniale, the process of campaigning and negotiating for their return is an ongoing battle. Thousands of bones originating from former German colonies remain archived in the Berlin-based Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.

Mboro told us of countless instances and sites across Berlin where colonial history and violence took place, but the evidence remains buried out of sight. Despite reluctance and outright resistance from state and local government, Dekoloniale managed to fund the installation of some plaques and information boards in key locations highlighting elements of that history, from the 19th-century colonial exhibition and ‘zoo’ in Trepower Park, where over a 100 Africans were deported

for exhibition from former colonies, to Bismarck’s Berlin Africa conference of 1884, where European powers divided up Africa amongst themselves for resource and labour exploitation.

The work of Dekoloniale is far from complete. It is a complex project just to convince institutions and authorities to acknowledge the brutal colonialism ingrained in their own history and foundations, let alone for reparations to be made. While small steps have begun through the renaming of streets, the reclaiming of objects stolen and hoarded in the European museum and the general raising of awareness, justice for centuries of European colonialism can only really begin when stolen wealth and resources are returned, and the power and systems of oppression built across centuries are dismantled.

Seema Syeda is communications officer at European Alternatives.

Dekoloniale is engaged in a wide range of cultural anticolonial projects. Visit www.dekoloniale.de for more information.

The weaponisation of queer rights: a migration perspective

Julia Tinsley-Kent and Anastasia Gavalas on homonationalism and the British empire’s legacy of queer repression.

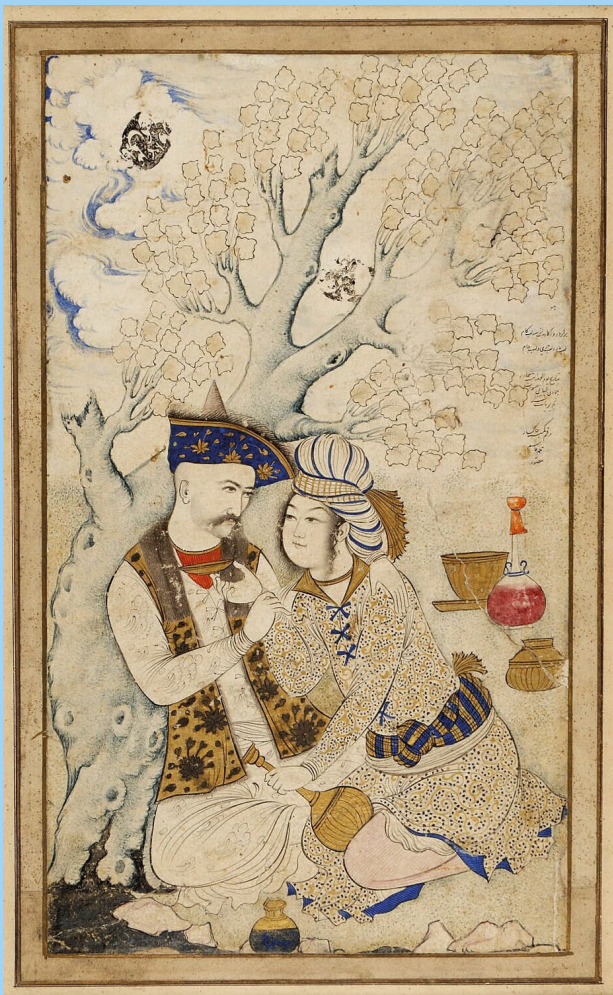
Understanding migration means understanding history. At the Migrants’ Rights Network, we look at migration and displacement through an intersectional lens, and are attentive to wider political events and legacies.

Queerness and the experience of LGBTQ+ people are frequently weaponised and twisted to suit a multitude of agendas. The State’s migration narrative is no exception. Whilst using LGBTQ+ rights as a tool to exclude certain groups of migrants and refugees or promote the West’s geopolitical interests, it also then subjects queer people to the very same violence it claims to want to protect them from: queer asylum

seekers are subjected to the UK Home Office and Immigration Enforcement’s ingrained disbelief culture and homophobia.

Colonial context of homophobia

Before diving into the British Empire’s homophobic legacy, it is worth noting the experience of queer people has varied across time and space. Histories of tolerance and inclusion have given way to erasure and persecution as a result of colonial legacies and geopolitical power battles. Homophobia was one of Britain’s most successful exports.



Homophobia was one of Britain's most successful exports.

If we examine the present-day attitudes in the Commonwealth towards LGBTQ+ people, the shadow of British colonial-era legislation is evident. Out of the 69 countries where homosexuality is criminalised today, 36 of them are former British colonies.

As a result of European colonialism, and the legislation it inflicted on its colonies to assert its power, the prevailing sense of gender and sexuality that was imposed in the Commonwealth was largely based on Western perceptions and 'morals'.

Let's take the Indian Penal Code and section 377. These laws, which were imposed on colonised territories in an attempt to set "standards of behaviour," led to widespread discrimination and persecution, as well as marginalisation and stigmatisation. They not only undermined personal privacy and freedom but also created an atmosphere of fear and mistrust.

Today in many Commonwealth countries, the societal pressure to conform to "traditional" gender roles and heteronormativity forces many LGBTQ+ individuals to hide their identities or face persecution and violence from their families and communities. We spoke to a member of our Network about their experience as a queer asylum seeker who is seeking sanctuary in the UK as they flee the colonial-era homophobic laws still in place in their country of origin. Not only are many denied basic human rights, such as access to employ-

Portrait de Shah Abbas Ier et son

Specifically, homonationalism is a method by which the State uses sexuality to legitimise counterterrorism or exclusionary measures against Muslims or People of Colour.

ment, healthcare and education, there is little or no protection in the law from persecution and harassment.

Homonationalism

Homonationalism was a concept proposed by Jasbir Puar in 2007, which explains how Western LGBTQ+ movements are often bound up with upholding the racist ideology of the State.

Specifically, homonationalism is a method by which the State uses sexuality to legitimise counterterrorism or exclusionary measures against Muslims or People of Colour. The West frames itself as an inherently progressive force, and frames Muslim and Global South communities as inherently 'backwards' and 'homophobic' groups that it must fight against. LGBTQ+ groups in the West are often complicit in the demonisation of Muslim, racialised and migratised groups. Britain is an expert in homonationalistic ideology.

Let's look at Qatar as an example. During the World Cup, there was a widespread condemnation of Qatar's record and stance on LGBTQ+ rights by the West. As an organisation with both Muslim and queer staff, we were concerned by the homonationalist rhetoric and how LGBTQ+ rights were appropriated by state actors for geopolitical purposes, specifically towards majority Muslim countries.

This has been particularly evident in the wake of 9/11. The United States and UK have attempted to construct themselves as "gay safe" in comparison to the Middle East, ultimately bringing homosexuality into the "us-versus-them" nationalist rhetoric. However, this narrative is problematic and harmful as it ultimately ignores the fact that queer Muslims and queer people of South West Asian and North African (SWANA) heritage exist, and have always existed.

As with all religious texts, queer-affirmative interpretations of the Quran do exist, and allow for a beautiful reconciliation of queerness and Islam.

This false idea that the West is a queer utopia in contrast with other parts of the world ignores the fact that there are still many issues facing LGBTQ+ communities. In the UK, the queer community, along with migrants, are one of the targets in the growing

LGBTQ+ rights were appropriated by state actors for geopolitical purposes, specifically towards majority Muslim countries.

culture war. Hate crime and hostile rhetoric towards trans people is on the rise while far-right demonstrations are taking place outside drag queen story times. Throughout time, different groups have always been constructed as a threat in order to justify violence, and we must spot that this is a pattern intended to distract from Government failures. The Government has come for migrants, and has come for queer people, and there is nothing to stop them coming for anyone else who doesn't conform in some way.

Queer spaces in the West are also plagued by racism and whitewashing. Queer and queer POC communities are under attack from property developers, and Pride has become increasingly corporate and inaccessible to many in the community.

Culture of disbelief

The facade of Britain as an LGBTQ+ safe haven is even more problematic when examining the treatment of queer refugees in the UK's immigration system. Disbelief culture and homophobic stereotypes of sexuality are ingrained within its structure.

Numerous accounts of traumatising treatment by Home Office officials have come to light. LGBTQ+ people are required to provide 'evidence' of their sexuality in order to be granted asylum. At the Migrants' Rights Network, LGBTQ+ people have relayed sto-

queer Muslims and queer people of South West Asian and North African (SWANA) heritage exist, and have always existed.

ries of being denied sanctuary based on Home Office claims they are lying about their sexuality or identity. In August 2022, Home Office data showed out of 1,050 initial decisions only 677 people were granted asylum or other forms of leave based on sexual orientation claims in 2021.

This is not only symptomatic of a wider systemic issue within the UK's asylum system that is ultimately hostile, it exposes archaic, binary Western conceptions of sexuality and gender identity.

We need to dismantle ideas that sexuality sits within strict and rigid definitions or criteria. Sexuality is unique to the individual which people experience based on a multitude of intersecting factors.

For instance, orientations that are not legible within the framework of Western LGBTQ+ identities are automatically dismissed as inauthentic and invalid. The West uses 'coming out' as a stamp of legitimacy, however in many contexts it may not be desirable, or even possible, for a person to come out. This does not make an individual any less queer, or their sexual orientation or gender identity any less valid. Queer people don't owe the world performance or proof. They are queer because they say they are.

Other sexualities that defy binaries, for instance bisexuality, pansexuality and other fluid or expansive sexualities, are often dismissed as invalid by the Home Office. And an asylum seeker shouldn't have to pres-

ent intimate details about their relationship histories or sexual lives in order for their sexuality to be believed.

At a time where both queer people and migrant communities are being used as scapegoats in the culture war, there is strong resistance amongst grassroots groups and young people to archaic and damaging narratives on homophobia and homonationalism. Alongside MRN, groups like Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants and African Rainbow Family are two of many groups resisting these ideas while Queercircle or the LGBT Centre are creating much needed safe spaces. There's a lot of work to be done, but it is clear solidarity and supporting lived experience-led groups can make a huge and long-lasting difference.

Anastasia Gavalas is Communications Officer at the Migrants' Rights Network. She leads on content creation and managing MRN's digital platforms and marketing. As a second generation migrant, she is also heavily involved in her local diaspora community.

Julia Tinsley-Kent is Policy and Strategic Communications Manager at the Migrants' Rights Network and is also involved with activist group Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants. She oversees PR activities for MRN and is responsible for building stakeholder relationships with local and national policy-makers

Burn Borders Not The Planet *Why we need No Borders to achieve Climate Justice*

**By the No Borders in Climate
Justice Collective**

As we wade through a cluster of crises we bear witness to the deterioration of our ecosystem and the destruction of our communities. In the UK, a new bill has just been proposed by the Conservative government which will prevent people seeking asylum if they have arrived through "illegal" routes. In a similar vein, across Europe, draconian policies towards migrants have intensified, creating murderous conditions for those seeking refuge. These imperialistic practices which govern our ability to move freely have also shaped the abuse and exploitation of the living world for hundreds of years. The fight to destroy borders is part of our struggle to reimagine the relationships humans have with nature. At the end of the summer 2022 a group of activists in-

involved in both migrant and climate justice movements created a collective called 'No Borders in Climate Justice.' We recognised that the two movements needed to be even more intertwined because in order to achieve the scale of transformation necessary to confront the climate crisis, we need to build a shared conceptual framework between movements. Since then we have been putting on workshops and using social media to disseminate our message.

Our demand is clear. We need no borders to achieve climate justice. We believe that people should have the freedom to move and the freedom to stay. This means we fight to end the climate crisis so that people will not

No Borders in Climate Justice is a collective of activists based in the UK working towards connecting the movements for climate justice and border abolition.

Follow us on Instagram for information about upcoming workshops:
[@no.borders.in.climate.justice](https://www.instagram.com/no.borders.in.climate.justice)

If you interested in organising a workshop for your group or collective email us:
nobordersclimatejustice@gmail.com



be forced to move, and also we fight for the abolition of borders so that as the climate crisis inevitably exacerbates, people will be able to seek safety.

It is important to note that the relationship of domination between humans and nature is inseparable from relationships of domination between humans. It is impossible to transform our relationship with the earth, from a relationship of domination to one of mutuality, if we legitimize a system where the earth is divided into nation states according to colonial logic. It is those who are most targeted and impacted by this colonial violence who are most impacted by the climate crisis and whose voices are the most ignored.

Borders are the physical manifestation of the systems of domination and racist hierarchy that have also fueled the climate crisis: a colonial mindset that renders the natural world and human beings as resources to be commodified, categorized and disappeared in the pursuit of power and capital. We recognise how the border facilitates the polluting industries that exacerbate climate chaos. Countries like the UK use their dominance to outsource production across the border, along with the blame for resulting emissions and ecological destruction. By linking climate and border abolition struggles more directly, as well as giving power to each other as we react against this violence, we can strengthen our shared analysis and fight against the

root causes of both borders and climate change - white supremacist, patriarchal capitalism.

As more people are forced to flee we see the violent and discriminatory nature of borders. They exist to keep poorer and racialised people out of richer countries and they preserve the privilege of the wealthy at the expense of the poor. But borders do not really stop people from moving. All they do is make it more dangerous for people to move. Over 20,000 migrants have died in the Mediterranean region since 2014. Across Europe people are beaten by police, locked up in detention centers and forced to stay in camps. In France thousands are at the border waiting to cross to the UK, left in dire conditions without access to adequate food, water or shelter. As the climate crisis worsens and more people are being forced to move, the same countries that are most responsible for the climate crisis are the ones who are further militarising their borders. The power of borders to control who can move will become a power to decide who lives and who dies. We must abolish borders because we cannot allow this power to be in the hands of states and national governments, because we know who will be left to die.

One of our aims is to take the conversation around migration in the climate movement beyond the framework of 'climate refugees'. The call for climate refugees to be recognised is the main way that borders have come into mainstream climate campaigning. Although we recognise the importance of this focus, we also know that creating another category, which, within our current regime will inevitably be aggressively gatekept and difficult to access, legitimises the idea that only certain people deserve to move. Categorizing migrants into "deserving" and "undeserving" legitimizes the border, and feeds into outdated colonial practices that influence how to interact with each other.

Demands for safe and legal routes for refugees to enter Europe and the UK are important but they are also at risk of legitimising this categorisation, and are not demanding enough in their scale. As states in the global north are becoming less democratic and more authoritarian, and global elites are being greedy in their demands for further destruction of the planet for the sake of their bank accounts, our demands for justice must be even greater.

We are fighting for the abolition of borders because we want an end to hostile environments, to detention, deportation, militarisation and surveillance. We want people who have recently arrived, or who have been living without documents for many years, to have the same rights and access to a home, a family, community, work, education and a dignified life as everyone else, whether they were forced to move or chose to. We want a world where all people have the freedom to move and to stay. We want a world where a person's worth is not based on the passport they carry, and as the intersecting crises of climate and capitalism worsen we will not accept a world where arbitrary lines on a map will have the power of life and death over people.

We are told it is a pipe dream to have no borders, but Capital, big business and the super rich already live in a world without borders. Multinational companies cross borders to avoid paying taxes, set up factories that destroy the planet, and exploit cheap labour by pitting workers of different countries against each other in a race to the bottom. The world's richest can also buy citizenship in different countries. It's one set of rules for them and another for the rest of us. In order to really achieve climate justice we must have a world without borders for people, not just for money. We must have a world where we are fighting to change the conditions that produce the need for people to move, but also for a world where people can move freely without the risk of violence.

As the climate crisis worsens and right wing governments continue to treat those who cross borders as less than human, we are committed to embodying a liberatory and abolitionist practice. The fight to end the climate crisis must include the fight to abolish borders to ensure that those on the front lines of climate breakdown are able to move freely to seek safety. In order to achieve the scale of transformation necessary to confront the climate crisis, we will continue to build a shared conceptual framework between movements and work from a shared paradigm. Join us in our abolitionist practices by coming along to a workshop, organising one for your networks and integrating a no borders approach to the way you view climate justice.

Borders

51

50

**Art
Beyond
Borders**

Crises & Culture: the impact of global instability on contemporary art production

Beral Madra



HAIR installation by Plataforma UMA in the context
of Transeuropa Festival 2022 in Porto

(1) Ricardo De Querol, 'Interview: Zygmunt Bauman: "Social media are a trap"', *El País*, 25 Jan 2016, accessible at https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/19/inenglish/1453208692_424660.html

(2) Chris Harman, *Zombi Kapitalizm: Kuresel Kriz ve Marx'ın Yaklaşımı* (Turkish) Paperback, Antikapitalist Yayınları (2012).

(5) Bauman, Ibid.

We constantly examine, interpret, and criticize the basic connections, relations, intersections and interactions between art production, politics, economy, religion, traditions, and all other issues related to human life. From the Paleolithic cave painting that visually defines the intellectual existence of man on earth, his relationship with nature and his social activity, this relation is an eternal discussion.

When a question is asked about contemporary art, a long list of sciences, such as history, theology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, economics, law, political sciences, language and philology, logic, aesthetics, ethics, technology, physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, statistics etc. enters into the sphere of discussion, information and knowledge.

The relationship of art with all these sciences, information and knowledge can be examined in different ways, but when art, politics and economy convene, it is useful to focus on the following features: relations and intersections between political history and art history; the relationship and interventions of political power and economic systems with art production; the political and economic dimensions of the production processes and results of art production; and the position and function of art production within the parameters of the current global political, economic and cultural order.

Firstly, the historical process in which this question is asked is decisive in terms of the answers produced,

Power has become global, and politics is still local. The hands of politics have been cut off.

even if the question is asked today. I would like to remind you of the effective depressive features of this process by quoting from an interview given in 2016 by the wise sociologist of the period we live in, Zygmunt Bauman. Attracting attention with his theory of "liquid modernity" in the 1990s, Baumann wrote that 'all agreements are temporary, fleeting, and valid only until further notice.' He defines this as a crisis of democracy: trust has collapsed and political leaders are believed to be not only corrupt but also incompetent. He continues:

Power has become global, and politics is still local. The hands of politics have been cut off. People no longer believe in the democratic system because it does not keep its promises. We follow this in the migration crisis; it's a global phenomenon, but we're still narrow-minded. The current crisis is the crisis of democracy, the crisis of democratic institutions. (1)

In *Zombie Capitalism* (2012), Chris Harman also outlines the economic crisis :

The economic crisis that started in 2007 is sustained by ghoulish economic institution systems and zombie banks that threaten the world. According to this, the capitalist system does not provide any benefit to people, on the contrary, it creates constant chaos and crisis by directing political systems (democracy as well). The future of the system is not in the form of a return to stable growth, but of recurring instability and upheaval with an escalating ecological crisis. (2)

While Baumann and Harman criticize this period, new definitions or ideologies have been given to the existing order: Post-truth and Artificial Intelligence (AI). It has been announced that the power centers of global politics, economy and technology are manipulating the truth, which is one of the primary mental and spiritual needs of humanity in the traditional context, towards their own interests and removing the border between lie, truth and imagination. This undoubtedly points to a situation that coincides with the crisis of democracy that Baumann stated. Social media has also been cited as the nurturing ground for all these actualities.

Bauman in an interview on social media says:

Social media does not teach us to have a dialogue, because it is very easy to avoid discussion... However, many people do not use social media to unite, to open up horizons, on the contrary, they find themselves comfortable only where they can hear the echo of their own voices and what they see is the reflection of their own image... Social media is very useful because it provides pleasure, but it is a trap. (3)

Today, art production takes place in the environment created by these multifarious crises: democracy, economy, post-truth, techno-feudalism, and social media. A global pandemic of almost three years has been added to these crises; and its future implications are still being discussed.

This is not a new situation in terms of the meaning and functions of Modern and Post-modern art productions. The art movements of the 20th century, which form the

(4)“Against the Loss of Memory.”, Lecture by Professor Umberto Eco at the UN Headquarters, New York, (October 21, 2015) accessible at: <https://www.whileiremember.it/against-the-loss-of-memory-umberto-eco/>

(5) Hitler’s 1937 Speech, accessible at <https://comicism.tripod.com/370130.html>

(6) Claire Brandon, ‘Abstract Expressionism and the Global Impact of the Venice Biennale in the 1950s’, in Andrianna Campbell (ed.), *In Focus: Cathedral 1950 by Norman Lewis*, Tate Research Publication (2018), <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/in-focus/cathedral/venice-global-impact>, accessed 3 March 2021.

(7) Fatma Erkak, ‘Walter Benjamin’de Sanat, Estetik Ve Politika İlişkisi’. (Ankara, 2019), accessible at <https://dspace.ankara.edu.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12575/69076/588656.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

basis of the aesthetics, forms, and function of today’s art production, were also produced during the great political crises that formed the mass wars.

Here, the most important tool we can use to evaluate the situation well is memory. On 21 Oct 2013, Professor Umberto Eco spoke on the subject of the loss of collective memory: .

Mass media is mainly interested in the present... Unfortunately, such a loss of memory is at work even in the scholarly world. ... Societies have always relied on memory in order to preserve their own identity ...and when some act of censorship wipes out a section of a society’s memory, this society undergoes an identity crisis.(4)

The 1917 revolution created two unique and influential art movements, Constructivism and Suprematism, and paved the way for the formation of the great political revolution. There were multiple instances during the 20th century where political leaders’ involvement in the arts did not support the arts and artists. Indeed, the interventions of Lenin and Stalin seemed to have erased Constructivism and Suprematism from the art map prematurely. Adolf Hitler, on the other hand, censored all kinds of art products that did not resemble his own Kitsch paintings under the title of “Entartete Kunst” (degenerated art) and tried to destroy the entire production of German Modernism; except for the pictures that his generals smuggled out and hid in underground warehouses.

Hitler’s 1937 speech is published on the internet. I present for your information a few sentences that spew hatred:

National Socialism will purify Germany and our people from any influence that is dangerous to its existence. This cleansing will not happen in a day; so those who create these dangers should have no doubt that sooner or later the hour of their annihilation will strike... These prehistoric, stone age cultivators may return to their ancestral caves to make those primitive international scribbles...

It is a fact that today there are politicians in non-democratic countries who make speeches that evoke this speech! (5)

In the 1950s, art production was used as an effective means of diffusion for US global political-cultural activity . The fact that the USA brought its art to the world through Europe starting from 1947 and

throughout the 1950s is an interesting example of the use of art as a tool for nationalist political interests. In particular, the production of Abstract Expressionism led to the emergence of individuality and free expression in art, which the USA advocated in terms of national cultural identity, and the development of modern art museums and galleries. (6)

The fall of the Berlin wall allowed the pioneering art productions in Eastern Europe and Russia, which were not observable during the Cold War, to be visible, and to write an integrated history of European art production. The communication and exchange between art movements in Western and Eastern Europe started the redirection of the principles and contents of Modern art towards the Globalization ideology.

While writing in exile in France, Walter Benjamin proposed the conscious politicization of art as opposed to the aestheticization of politics, which in the last resort inevitably turns into war. For Benjamin:

Aestheticized politics interfered with art; for this reason, a distinction should not be made such as art with political content and art without political content, all art should be political and created by socialist actors. There were two options: continuing to produce aesthetic products that take their place in the functioning of the dominant order by hiding their political nature, or to oppose the dominant order by producing relations that will create a new order. (7)

Throughout the 20th century, art continued to do so with various aesthetics, forms, and strategies. These tides and positive-negative developments in the 20th century art-politics relationship are an important memory for interpreting the current situation. When art is politicized, the barren, shallow and narrow minds of anti-art politicians and the bureaucrats who follow them reach for authoritarianism. They leave no gaps in social life, controlling creativity and preventing all kinds of art and cultural events that give the audience the power to comment and criticize. When these minds shrivel up in the face of the indirect expression and sealed content of modern art, such powers think that they can save the situation only by attacking; if they have power, they are not afraid to use it. Authoritarian governments, which adopt ideologies against free thought and expression, see nations as a homogeneous society. While adopting populist politics and determining who is an artist and who is not, they do not intend to leave a single gap in the field of art that is beyond their control.

Artistic performance by Lena Chen in Palermo in the context of Room to Bloom residences



“If an artist can freely question, criticize and comment on a political problem, a social trauma, or a massacre, in his country or in the international environment, then there is a healthy relationship between art and politics in that artist’s country.”

In the first quarter of the 21st century, while these contradictions and relations continue with fundamentally similar features, new forms of art production emerged. Art productions often appear as a critical, stimulating and resisting aesthetics through the complexity, contradictions, and crisis eruptions of politics-economy-media relations. Political and social responsibility and visual and auditory performative language are used to stimulate society. Adopting the fact of truth, art production keeps this kind of negative politics in custody.

In EU countries where freedom of expression is relatively more protected by progressive democracy and constitutions, the production of contemporary art is a tool to confront the profit-making power of neo-capitalism and the culture industry and keeps adverse policies under surveillance, relatively competently. In so-called non-democratic countries these interests and principles do not apply effortlessly.

For example, for authoritarian governments in Turkey and many non-Western countries, there have been two dangerous types of art during Modernism: literature and cinema. Countless artists from these fields have been sacrificed. On the other hand, the paintings produced in the field of visual art until the mid 1970s were critical of the order in low doses. Socialist contents in figurative painting were mostly visual material that leftists used as a tool. Abstract

(8) Daehyung Lee, 'ART, The Super Vaccine',
Artreview, 25 September 2020, accessible at
<https://artreview.com/art-after-pandemic/>

painting was outside the sphere of interest of political power. While verbal and literary art and moving image became the nightmare of ruling governments, painting was seen as harmless material. In the 1980s, during Post-modernism and later during Globalization, the private sector embraced art and culture as branding. Yet, keeping the brand on the agenda triggered a kind of monopoly. In countries where authoritarian governments are dominant, the private sector had to create its cultural policy according to the imposed political order.

What kind of relationship should there be within these conditions? If contemporary art, and especially contemporary art with a critical and political content, has entered the parliament of a country, it means that there is a healthy relationship between art and politics in that country. The most authoritative example of this is exhibited in the Federal German Reichstag building. The entire building is equipped like a contemporary art museum. In the Middle Court Hans Haacke's installation *Die Bevölkerung* (peoples) is a major example. If an artist can freely question, criticize and comment on a political problem, a social trauma, or a massacre, in his country or in the international environment, then there is a healthy relationship between art and politics in that artist's country.

In countries with damaged democracy, the change in the culture and art industry should be as follows: culture and art centers belonging to state and local governments should be restructured as independent enterprises; specialists should manage them. All productions related to contemporary arts should be extended to the most remote corners of the countries. State and local governments should stop protecting the function, intruding on decision-making and commenting on contemporary art aesthetics, forms and discourses. Promotion of contemporary art and cultural productions to international art environments should be free and independent; however, state, and local governments should support these initiatives financially. Balanced budgets should be supportive, rewarding and encouraging for creative people rather than activities.

Covid-19, the global pandemic and quarantine has dealt a further blow to the crises that non-democracy, Zombie-capitalism, social media, and post-truth have created and continues its own uncanny crisis without political-economic-cultural discrimination. As one stands on the threshold between the recent past

and the future, one can perceive this change with amazement. The global pandemic rules also faded the inequality between global culture and art industries. The preconditions for the as yet unpredictable change are set in motion. However, after the pandemic, since February 2022 the war between Russia and Ukraine has created a new instability in terms of culture and art not only between these two countries, but also in the whole EU and related countries. Artists and art experts had to resign or leave their homeland.

“The production of art can affect people’s lives for the better; giving them the power of perception, interpretation, and criticism, and helping them make positive decisions about the future.”

Will the features that have been valid and invalid in culture and art systems until today be valid in the future? The current article by Daehyung Lee on *Artreview* answers this question very optimistically:

The future is not a utopia that comes inevitably. It's an extremely fluid landscape that changes constantly depending on what we imagine. And whether it is a dystopia or a utopia depends on the dreams and actions of people living now. (8)

Let's join this optimism and assume that even if the future is uncertain, based on the examples so far, the production of art can affect people's lives for the better; giving them the power of perception, interpretation, and criticism, and helping them make positive decisions about the future despite the difficulties imposed by politics and economy.

Beral Madra is an art critic and curator based in Istanbul. She sits on the Board of Room to Bloom, a feminist platform of emerging artists working in the field of ecological and postcolonial feminism. Room To Bloom is a partnership project coordinated by European Alternatives.

Organizmo Bloom

Curator Marcela Caldas reflects on a British-Columbian artist residency project intended to disrupt and transform existing coloniality and border structures.



Marcela Caldas Mataven



Back in November 2021, while putting together the Room to Bloom's program in Palermo, we were decoding a complex chart of tension with a myriad of centres and peripheries layered along the western border space. It was a time of questioning how a cohort of international artists of diasporic backgrounds, dealing with post-colonial, decolonial, and ecofeminism practices, could briefly intertwine with the local arts scene and activists to induce enduring disruptive effects for all. The British Council international collaboration grant open call seemed an excellent opportunity to geographically and institutionally expand this inquiry.

As an associate curator, I am interested in promoting strategies to explore the subversive potential of the arts as a conduit for related fields of action. Drafted with our Colombian ally Organizmo, our project proposal claimed room for radical imagination, creating alliances and conditions for a counter-displacement through the scope of arts. Collectively venturing into the unknown and encouraging encounters beyond the comfort zone of our perspectives, the liminal space and tensions within the so-called margins were to be the primary place of inquiry.

We were keen to explore new strategies for interpersonal, regional, and north-southern alliances to ethically reach alternative self-guarded forms of resistance, values, and dreams. To explore jointly the creative potential of in-between space of multiple cultures, sensitivities, and perceptions and how art can engage in fostering new modes of coexistence.

If separation stands as a binding condition, we were willing to interrogate the forms of exclusion and fragmentation intrinsic to the notion of enclosure, structuring the nation-state framework and the ruling power relations of our time. To further emancipatory practices for reciprocal care, to reappropriate time-space from profit, disrupting the linear time of logic of progress. Given the current crisis driven by an apocalyptic lack of individual agency, we acknowledge the urge to cultivate common interests and lead the process into action, igniting proactive forms of advocacy.

Process-oriented, the focus will be on how, rather than an outcome, counter-sensing the disciplined mechanisms of production of meaning of the self-referential space of arts. Unlearning by doing will reveal forms of undisciplined togetherness: forcing us

to shift perspectives and resignify our positions and imaginaries. To reclaim the possibility for self-growth, renewal, and transformation while contributing to empowering and strengthening the singular ongoing processes.

This slow curatorship engages a relational open-end process embracing failure, redirecting, observing, self-reflecting, and witnessing while remaining critical. Holding space for fluid transformation, digestion, and committing to the mobilizing agencies at play. The following offers a singular point of view out of the multiple perspectives gathered in this journey.

Building a Transborder Residency

Being aware of the challenging risks of appropriation, exoticization, and fetishization that would reaffirm the geographical and epistemic gaps we aimed to bridge; outreach towards locally established networks of trust was fundamental.

Organizmo was invited to carry on-site mediumship in the frame of its 'Body, weaving, territory' art residencies. Organizmo is a ten-year private organisation in Colombia that focuses on cultural exchange and ecosystemic regeneration and research: local pioneers in low-impact construction techniques, alternative technologies, ecological restoration, and knowledge-transfer scenarios. The first phase foresaw European Alternatives meeting their Colombian allies for a vision session to align values and the concrete residence unfolding. We gathered daily at Casa del Pensamiento – the house for common thought – around a fire, a non-human agency that was a host during the entire process, a space of focus to discuss and fine-tune the collective vibrational intentions in a sort of contemporary ritual.

As a result, the invite expanded to two Colombian artists making for a trans-disciplinary community with a more resourceful set of sensitivities, different languages, backgrounds, and trajectories intersecting. Selection of artists was crucial to the journey: among a large group of practitioners on both shores whose interest delved into textiles, water thinking, non-human agencies, spatial research, and knowledge ecologies: Dan Coopey, (UK) Daniella Valz-Gen (Peruvian, twenty years UK based), Siu Vásquez and María Buenaventura (Colombia), were selected.



Dan Coopey

Locating the project

La Urbana is a 140-inhabitant Piaroa settlement located in the tropical rainforest transitional floodplains of the Orinoco River, at the Colombia and Venezuela border. It belongs to 'Resguardo Unificado de la Selva de Matavén', a protected area of 1,849,613 hectares inhabited by 12,000 indigenous people of seven different ethnic groups, granted collective property title and autonomous self-governance.

Etnollano, an organisation that has long supported different communities across the region, had previously invited Organizmo to accompany the construction of the Matavén Matawani association's self-promoted House of Guests over the last few years. The communal device targets autonomy, self-governance, territorial regeneration, and custody of their living archive, involving all talent in the community. A layout of critical hospitality and relational identity.

What could have been an exotic extractive model serving the travel economy regime has been strategically repurposed into a resilient strategy reinforcing circular economy and self-identity across exchange.

Characterised by their organisational faculties and resilient female leadership, La Urbana and Pueblo Nuevo - twin villages- were willing to extend an invitation to host our program for a month.

The river

Each territory holds a complex multitude of maps. Orinoco River is a line, a border on a political map, and the backbone of regional trade. However, its basin spreads a hyper-sea of myriad bodies of water entangling deep geological, cosmological, and atmospheric time. Younger sources spring from Los Andes mountain ranges, and the black and red waters source from the earth, mingling into la -Estrella fluvial-river star. Sonic fluidity runs through magnetic fields of frequencies: all life breathes in continuity, symbiotically exhaling with it. Its temporalities dictate life's calendar. Amid shifting atmospheres, we navigated among tree canopies, emerging sand, and stones, meandering a fluctuating horizon of undrawn confinement. La Urbana stands protected as a refuge in constant transit of presence, surrounded by amphibious cartographies.

Bodily Technologies: Deep Listening

Once we met in Organizmo, silence, awareness, and presence were strongly encouraged.

Juanita Delgado, an artist who delves into sound and deep listening as a political practice, generously joined. Other members of Organizmo's larger community contributed: Rafael Duarte artist, Mateo Hernandez Schmitt empirical naturalist, and Barbara Santos electronic artist and researcher, shared insights directing our awareness to the countless co-existing agencies surrounding us. Inviting our bodily agency to rehearsal, to re-enchant matter through our senses: wind, water and fire, pollinators, birds in migration, a ruache (an endemic tree), a frogs' choir, and the toroidal space to name a few, proved silence to be an abundant place for resonance; for multiple voices to arise and to belong.

The methodology introduced the body as our primary tool for transformation, seeking to counterbalance the bias of logocentric knowledge, preconceptions, and the streams of noise and flow of mediated images circulating at high speed in ego tech echo chambers. Fine-tuning our bodies, opening space to resonate around the fire to who we were and what was next.



Marcela Caldas Mataven



Marcela Caldas Mataven



Kinship: collective time

Making our way to Matavén, flying into Puerto Inírida, we were welcomed by Eneido, and boated along riverways to meet our hosts, enthusiastic about sharing their way of life and learning new languages. Delcia, Gladiz, Gloria, Yelitza, Yolanda, and Nury, were allocated resources to guide this encounter. We introduced ourselves, our interests, and each artist's competencies to contribute to any purpose they would assess to identify. Spiralling around their guesthouse, each trajectory and space of action would organically find its way into day-to-day life: cooking, weaving, painting, and storytelling would work as open fields to relate: seeding curiosity, involvement, and constant daily negotiation along the process.

One can travel far and thus travel deep: secluded and disconnected from referential frames, with no compass and no internet, the artist's self-engagement, endurance, and generosity spanned another pace, sense of place, and time. They were recent acquaintances plunged into uncertainty, contradiction, conflict, and marvel while seeking momentary connection. To show up daily for brief moments of submission: standing thoroughly across others' routine, relating with no anchor but oneself, displaced and misplaced; while local daily life was disrupted by foreigner's committed gaze, presence, and labour. To offer and to receive, weighing to maintain, to adapt, to adopt, or reject, portrays the footprint of a unique blend of togetherness harbouring vulnerable threads, each hosting the other within themselves.

Recipes as thresholds

María, whose practice centres on local food production systems, was called to exchange recipes in diverse kitchen typologies managed by women. The yuca brava, a poisonous tubercle and its by-products,

constitutes the Amazon-Orinoquian region's base diet, similar to wheat or corn. We joined the processing of the yuca brava, a refined technology performed over thousands of years of laborious process and joint effort to seed, harvest, ferment and roast.

The larger traditional collective unit activated during our stay and, a few household units altogether hosted a diffused alchemical laboratory merging flavours into daily routines. Eating and cooking are connection rituals: the daily fishing, hunting, and fruit picking would provide a full spectrum of bodily exchange circulating an entire landscape through our bodies. For María all ingredients hold a story and stand as memory-keepers, gathering a living archive, thresholds for a territory-entrenched dance.

Food becomes an act of resistance, a place for nurturing and celebrating life, and of offering. It takes a river and its entire supporting life system to perform a traditional recipe. It takes a sense of risk, knowledge, and great curiosity to attempt an unprecedented sourdough of yuca brava that María brought to life and fermented with daily care.

Weaving

Later on, a Catumare – a yuca brava back carrier- was our introduction to weaving hands-on: a technique the elders Gloria and Gladys taught. While remembering, younger women became aware of its loss. Local fibres were for decades intensively deployed, the fibre source was three day's distance away. Working as memory-coding and devices for environmental management, craftsmanship throughout the year provides a source of income. Most importantly, it prevents younger women from leaving, disrupting the rooted circularity intertwining domestic nurturing, learning, and care. To have had the opportunity to journey to collect the living matter radically shifted our tactile and spatial



Marcela Caldas Mataven

perception of the amount of labour and nature weavers pour into their craft. Despite Dan's limited Spanish, weaving allowed a quantic bridge, a cross-cultural language regardless of precedence or gender role identification, serving as a medium for exploration, earnestly exchanging each other's techniques. The power of shared expertise seeking to solve common questions revealed collective intelligence to a lonesome weaver, as Dan has never experienced before. Informed by the tension between the hard fibres at hand and their bodies, the quest brought to life artefacts unique to this encounter, to its time and place, not without struggle.

Piaroa's way of life. Daniella stood lost in translation but rooted in presence: actively listening while holding space, vulnerably surrendering to the unbridgeable gap of translational grey-zones. The foreigner condition entails a continuous search for identification and bonding. The effort to channel continuity in a broken line of transfer between generations, seeking to identify brief glimpses of women's universes was insightful, yet significantly challenging. Intimate dialogues would nurture empathy, a feeling of bareness.

Stone and clay: deep time

We are the stories we tell

For Daniella, an artist and oracle, a migrant, a weaver of the non-tangible, the river was her main interest. The fluid entity portrayed resonance for her unique blend of critical sensitivity and ability to articulate words as vessels.

She was requested directly by young Melissa to support the transcription of her grandmother's stories. Storytelling retrieves wisdom demanding responsibility to learn. Hector, the local professor and translator explained how Piaroas' language beyond discourse animates life: an encrypted memory system written across a vast territory. Stories are not myths nor old; they are circular communication of the memory of all existing things. Navigation charts for the present, given in the past and orally passed into the future. Orality is constantly risking its loss; the lesser stories told, the more knowledge gets forever lost. To remember –recordare in Latin-, to pass back through the heart becomes essential.

The written word practice may not be as visually laborious from a gender role perspective, considering the feminine relies on strong physical performativity in

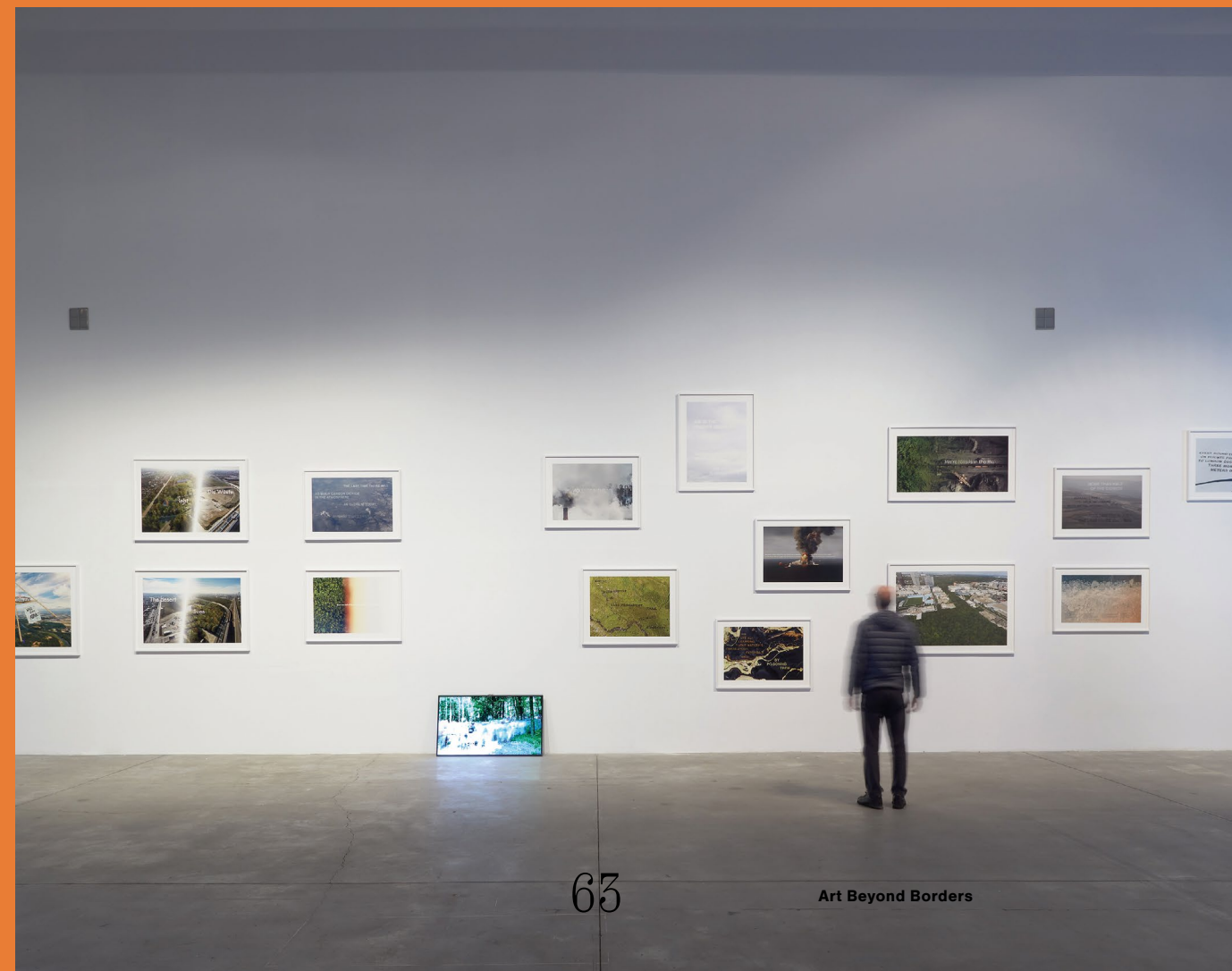
Marcela Calas (Bogotá 1977) is an Italy based multidisciplinary researcher and curator working at the intersection of power relations, ecology and arts. She is curator of the Organizmo Bloom project.

supported by



Barricading the Ice Sheets

An investigation
by Oliver Ressler



Barricading the Ice Sheets is an exhibition about global warming, the climate justice movements and its relationship to the arts.



From the first COP (United Nations Climate Change Conference) in Germany in 1995 to the last one this year in Egypt, 27 years have passed in which global carbon emissions have not been reduced at all. As a result, global temperatures continue to rise. This inaction on the part of nation states has led people to act on their own, without representation. Horizontally organised climate movements have sprung up all over the world. These collective action movements have carried out blockades of fossil fuel extraction industries and transport routes, organised mobilisations against airport expansions, conducted successful divestment campaigns and stopped drilling in the Arctic. Or, as we have seen very recently, they have carried out protest actions in front of works of art in Europe's most important museums.

The title *Barricading the Ice Sheets* refers to the scale of the emergency facing the climate justice movement and the scope of what it sets out to do. To barricade ice sheets as they melt is physically impossible, but the movement is attempting something historically unprecedented, because the planet has never in recorded human history confronted so absolute a threat. When Arctic ice melts, sea levels rise everywhere; islands and cities flood and sink, agriculture and fisheries falter and human life is compromised.

The exhibition *Barricading the Ice Sheets* presents films, photographic works and installations resulting from a decade of research by artist and filmmaker Oliver Ressler recording and documenting exemplary mobilisations, activities, assemblies and working meetings of climate movements around the world.

The exhibition has travelled across the globe and can currently be viewed at LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón (28.01. – 09.09.2023), and The Showroom, London (18.04. – 24.06.2023).

Oliver Ressler produces installations, projects in public space, and films on economics, democracy, racism, climate breakdown, forms of resistance and social alternatives. He has completed forty-one films that have been screened in thousands of events of social movements, art institutions and film festivals. Find out more at www.ressler.at



Credits: Oliver Ressler, *Barricading the Ice Sheets: Repossess the Plant, the Planet*, LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón (ES), 2023. Photos: Marcos Morilla

Framework for Resilience: Ecological Empathy

Hosted by Lesley Taker (Exhibitions Manager at FACT), mediated by Dr. Luiza Prado de O Martins (Artist, Researcher) who are joined by Dr. Edna Bonhomme (Historian, Writer, Interdisciplinary Artist), Céline Semaan-Vernon (Founder of Slow Factory Foundation, Designer, Writer, Activist) and Shonagh Short (Artist, Socially Engaged Practice).



Framework for Resilience is a three-part series of online conversations which bring together activists, artists, researchers and educators to think about the world we are creating, the world we are destroying, the systems which will fall, and those which should prevail.

The first episode of the series focuses on the dismissive and destructive ways colonial powers have overtaken the natural world, extending the same attitudes to those who call these spaces home. Foregrounding the importance of empathy and practices of care, the speakers discuss the effects of taking a more mindful and generous approach to the places we live, and our neighbours.

Framework for Resilience is a three-part series of online conversations, organised as part of the project [Artsformation](#), bringing together activists, artists, researchers and educators to think about the world we are creating, the world we are destroying, the systems which will fall, and those which should prevail. This online event is part of The Living Planet, FACT's year-long season which focuses on the non-human, and deals with themes such as climate change, ecology and communication, as well as the violence of 'othering'.



Kuai Shen, Ohmi gas (2012). Image by Rob Battersby. Installation view at FACT, 2020. Exhibited as part of And Say the Animal Responded?



Performance "Voices" and Global Scream
in the Botschaft der Polinnen* at the
Brandenburger Tor, International Safe
Abortion Day, 28.9.2020, Berlin.
Credit: Oliver Feldhaus

Global Scream!

Anna Krenz

Polish feminist protest art in Berlin

Since the election victory of the populist PiS party in December 2015, Poland is well on its way to becoming an autocracy. The policies of the government controlled by Jarosław Kaczyński have led to the collapse of the separation of powers, important institutions such as the Constitutional Tribunal, and led to the division of Polish society. From the very beginning, tens of thousands of Poles protested against these changes, also in Polish communities abroad. This was also the case in Berlin.

Performance “Ein und...” by Gosia Gajdemska during the opening of the exhibition “Thousand and one words. Polish protest art in Berlin” by Anna Krenz, featuring photographers: Wojtek Drozdek, Oliver Feldhaus, Monika Saczyńska, Maciej Soja, Marian Stefanowski and Michał Żak. Galerie Schau Fenster, 5.2.2017, Berlin.
Credit: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography



International Women’s Day, 8.3.2019, Berlin.
Credit: Camilla Lobo



17.1.2021, Berlin.
Credit: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography



When many of us, active but also hitherto uninvolved, casual people, stood on the streets in April 2016, a new stage of the struggle for women’s rights in Poland began. The protests and mass disgust were a reaction to the first attempts of the conservative PiS party government and ultra-catholic organisations to tighten the abortion law. The process of building a new relationship in Polish- German civil feminist circles has also begun. Since April 2nd, 2016, as Dziewuchy Berlin (Gals Berlin) we have been active in Berlin organizing demonstrations, pickets, and artistic actions in solidarity with the Polish cause - from reproductive rights to free courts. We write articles for the press, write letters, sign petitions, speak at demonstrations and take part in discussions about Poland, and we constantly inform people in Germany about women’s and LGBT+ struggles for their rights and the situation in Poland. At the same time we stand in solidarity with other migrant women on the streets of Berlin, we engage in campaigns in the fight for women’s rights in Germany (e.g. Paragraf 218 and 219a).

One of the main activities of the collective has been political art - visual arts, literature and performance. As an artist, I believe that being „against” (something) is not enough, that is why my share and my workload at the collective has been the creative process and art. Art serves as a tool and medium to address challenging issues, offering a way to reflect, evoke and express collective emotions, needed especially in times of the rise of authoritarian regimes. Artistic activities can also help to build communities, to bring people together across differences when unity, strength and solidarity are most needed. Political art is part of Polish culture and tradition, also for the Polish diaspora abroad.

In my artistic work I have always referred to political and social themes. Getting involved in activism, I have been making posters and graphics for actions and demonstrations, painting banners using the same tools, materials and methods as I use in my professional work. For each protest or action I come up with a separate visual concept specific to the theme, sometimes referring to previous works I have created (and still am) in the context of the art and gallery world. I perceive demonstrations as spectacles, as theatre, with „actors” (speakers, musicians, performers), with a stage and scenography (public space), dramaturgy (speakers’ list and program) and the audience (participants of demonstration).

Polish migrant women are often discriminated against on many levels - on the basis of gender or being foreigners, while in their homeland they become redundant and unimportant because they left it behind. Through artistic and political activism, reaching back into history, we aim to create HERstory, to change the pattern and perception of Polish women as „inferior sisters” or “victims” (of history, the system, patriarchy, nationality) and to build a strong position for Polish women in Berlin. When we started our actions in 2016, we called for solidarity with women and LGBT+ in Poland, later, by engaging with women’s rights and LGBT+ in Germany, we called for the opposite solidarity (unfortunately without success). Our artistic actions became our signature sign, our activities recognized in Germany - we were awarded prizes for our actions: Feminist Green Pussyhat Prize in 2018 and Clara Zetkin Frauenpreis in 2021. At some point, we consciously took the decision to abandon the role of „inferior sisters from the East”.

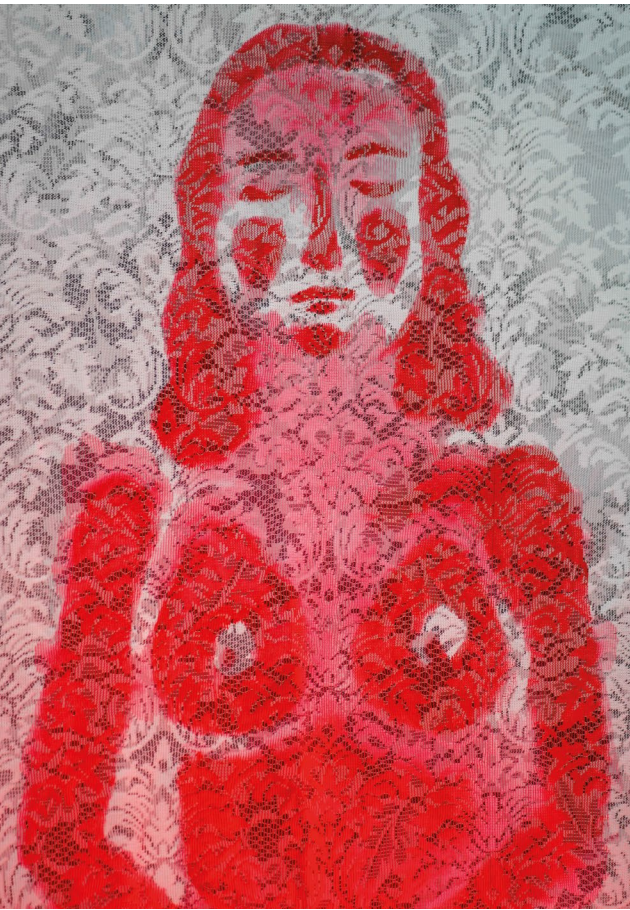
In 2022, we were the ones to recognize and honor other activists with our own prizes - Siostry*! Preis for Good Sisterhood and Feminist Collaboration.

So what did this paradigm shift in the perception of Polish migrant women in Berlin look like? Here are some important milestones of this process:

Images: Black Protest in Berlin, 3.10.2016,
Foto: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography

2016 - Black Protest

Black Monday was a women's strike across Poland, a culmination of the nationwide Black Protest campaign against the proposed abortion ban. For the demonstration location I chose the stairs of the Warschauer Brücke, which became the stage, surrounded by the audience - demonstrators dressed in black, who created the scenography for this "spectacle". Just like in the theatre. The Black Protest showed the power of Polish women, it was the beginning of a new wave of international solidarity across borders. It was also the first and largest protest about Polish women to date.



The Feminist Shroud for the 21st Century,
lace banner by Anna Krenz.
Credit: Marzena Zajączkowska, 2022

2018 - Sisters in arms

We are part of many networks and coalitions in Germany, Poland and abroad. We are part of the Alliance for Sexual Self-Determination (Bündnis für sexuelle Selbstbestimmung), with which we actively work for reproductive rights. The history of legislation concerning pregnancy termination in Poland and Germany is partly common (partitions of Poland, Nazi regime) and partly similar ("compromises" of the 1990s) and also concerns contemporary Polish women who come to Germany to terminate their pregnancy.

2019 - Global Scream

Berlin is a city still divided. Every year for Women's Day there are several marches (more every year), which unfortunately take different routes, due to ideological differences. In 2017, we managed to accomplish almost a miracle – to make both marches meet in one place – at our Polish protest in Oranienplatz. In 2019 it was not possible to gather the divided feminist marches in one place. Therefore, as part of the newly-founded Feministischer Frauen*streik (Feminist Women's Strike), I proposed 2 artistic actions: symbolic strike #IchStreike and one minute of screaming #GlobalScream to unite us, at least for 1 minute (a year). Global Scream is a scream of rage, anger, regret – each of us knows these emotions, even if their causes differ. Anyone can scream. We don't even have to speak the same language to become one voice. The voice of women. Since 2019, we perform Global Scream every year. In Poland the action was popularized later by an activist from Warsaw, unfortunately without crediting and without the Berlin origins of this idea.

Global Scream, poster, 8.3.2019.
Concept and illustration: Anna Krenz



2020 - Botschaft der Polinnen*

Since PiS party took over power in Poland, it has taken over institutions, state offices, state-owned companies and of course state offices abroad – including embassies. With huge funds, the ruling party is also opening new institutions (for example, the Pilecki Institute in Berlin), universities or museums, some of which are duplicating existing ones.

That is why I decided to open our own embassy – Botschaft der Polinnen* (double meaning in German, Botschaft as an embassy and as a message). Botschaft der Polinnen* is an artistic concept, based on my previous work called „Polish Wife”, but also a physical structure for exhibitions, performances, meetings, discussions and art. All people are and can be ambassadors, regardless of gender, nationality or beliefs.

Official opening of the Botschaft der Polinnen* on 22nd June 2020, at the Haus der Statistik, Berlin.
Credit: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography



2020 - Bloody Weeks

After the announcement of the verdict of the Julia Przyłębska's Constitutional Tribunal on 22.10.2020, banning abortion in the case of lethal fetal defects, again, thousands of people took to the streets in Poland. In Berlin we organised the "Bloody Weeks" of solidarity actions with Poland. Since it was in the middle of the Corona lockdown, we offered many different forms of protests and civic political engagement - from huge demonstrations, marches, „instant theater”, visits at the Embassy or Julia Przyłębskas residence, to online actions (writing letters, reading Polish poetry), etc. It was actually a political activist art festival - not #BerlinArtWeek, but Berlin Bloody Weeks. It was originally supposed to be one week, but it came out to 9 long Bloody Weeks (20.10.2020 till 13.12.2020). We organised all in our free time, for free. And we paid the price with health, private lives and our own finances. Nevertheless, it was worth it.

Reviving memorials - "All Saints" (Dziady / Totenfeier) instant theatre as part of the demonstration during Bloody Weeks, 1.11.2020, at the Monument of the Polish Soldier and German Antifascist, Volkspark Friedrichshain, Berlin.
Credit: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography

2021 - International Council of Polish Women+

During the exhausting Bloody Weeks, we all needed care and sisterhood. Gosia Wochowska (Łódzkie Dziewuchy) and Kata Waniek (Dziewuchy Switzerland) proposed an informal online event for Polish migrant activists "Feminist Wine". At this meeting I proposed to establish a council of Polish women abroad. I noticed that regardless of the country we live in, Polish women are left for themselves. „Polonia” organisations abroad are often outdated, run by elderly men and unresponsive to the needs of younger generations, especially women. So we needed one that would take care of us and one that we could identify with. So we made it. On March 8th, 2021 the International Council of Polish Women+ was officially initiated. We have about 40 members from about 13 countries. If something is missing, we make it. This is what artists do.

2022 - Why do we need heroines?

In September 2022, together with Ewa Maria Slaska, we organised a project on herstory, Polish memorials and war, based on the biography of the Poznan anti-fascist activist and writer Irena Bobowska and relating to the present day and feminism across borders. Everyone knows Sophie Scholl, but little is said about the Polish heroines who fought against Nazism, lost their lives for freedom, and are forgotten today. Bobowska was murdered in Berlin in 1942, aged only 22. She wrote poems, drew, and rode a wheelchair; despite her disability, she was full of life and energy. In Poznań she published the opposition newspaper "Pobudka" and it was for this that she (and members of the editorial board) were sentenced to be beheaded by guillotine.

We remind you of the missing half of history. In our actions, we often talk about forgotten women, anonymous heroines, because in a civilization based on patriarchy, history is written by the victors - men, monuments are erected for men. In order to make up for the lost years, we should give HERstories faces, write and speak about heroines, including unknown ones. Nobody will do it for us.

2022 - German-Polish Sisterhood

On September 28th, 2022, we awarded Siostry*Prizes to activists from Berlin and Poland. The prizes were based on the new German-Polish treaty I wrote in February 2022 - Treaty for Good Sisterhood and Feminist Collaboration, as the 1992 Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation, signed by Poland and united Germany, did not seem to cover all aspects of German-Polish friendship - the grassroots bottom-up one, the feminist cooperation for modern times nor sisterhood for the future to come.

Portrait of Anna Krenz, Global Scream, 2017.
Credit: Michał Zak



"Missing part of History. Irena Bobowska, the forgotten heroine" project. One of four events, with performance by Karen Kandzia, exhibition about Irena Bobowska, discussion with experts and concerts. Event "War" at the Monument of the Polish Soldier and German Antifascist, Volkspark Friedrichshain, 13.9.2022, Berlin.
Credit: Maciej Soja / Soja Photography and Ela Kargol





EUROPEAN
ALTERNATIVES

Join
European Alternatives

