Extra States: Nations in Liquidation

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extra city

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Nations in Liquidation: the Exo and Eso Workings of a Future State

ILIANA FOKIANAKI

2018 marks ten years of internal crises for the European Union, among them a financial crisis and a humanitarian crisis – caused also by the implication of the EU in conflicts around the globe – but furthermore an existential crisis of identity, in relation to the values Europe once held dear: freedom of speech, freedom of religion and a model of social welfare state that now is steadily shrinking. For many member states in the EU, we see governments often unable to defend, embody and execute the state as a sovereign, powerful formation that controls, regulates and reprimands violations against human beings and their interests. The European Union is witnessing a crisis on a supra-state level. Belgium is considered the country that officially hosts the headquarters of the Union – and somehow one could say the country that personifies its centre. It is, therefore, a great locale for us to peer into the state via contemporary art.

Directing toward a new vocabulary of statehood, this exhibition aims to look at the state today through a viewpoint that departs from the white western mandate of state-building and offers readings of current formations that transcend the state as we know it. The title Extra States acknowledges the new power formations in a contemporary globalised world vis-a-vis 'counter-state' formations – activism, collectivism, radical left politics, feminism, etc. – and how between these two poles we can begin to reconfigure and re-imagine the state through art practice. The second part of the title directs toward the concept of the nation-state and a particular model of which the exhibition will focus on: the corporate, capitalist, non-sovereign 'nation-state'. It is inspired by the writings of H.G. Wells, an outspoken socialist, prolific political commentator and for some the father of sci-fi literature. By 1916 Wells had predicted the demise of the nation-state in the book 'What is coming? A forecast of things after the War" where one of its chapters is titled 'Nations in Liquidation'.

The disintegration of the nation-state via the acceleration of capitalism, wherein multinational companies and supra-state bodies at times seem to amass power, has turned the idea of the nation-state into a liquid, fluid and opaque term – not concrete enough to describe its capabilities, responsibilities and powers, but nonetheless solid enough when it comes to borders and fiscal-legislative claims over its citizens, or when it serves as a vehicle of neo-fascism's assertion to power. With these contemporary conditions in mind, we ask: what comes beyond, beside and after the state in a contemporary globalised reality?

WHAT IS THE STATE?

The state is a modern political construction that was crystallised in Europe as a manifestation and format of power exercised on peoples; it has been

Eurocentric since its birth. It emerged from the Treaty of Westphalia and spread from Europe to the world, mainly proposing 'nationhood' and state sovereignty.

Europe is an interesting case when discussing sovereignty. From the liberal ideologies of the 1970s that tried to break with the Bretton Woods–framework of the IMF and the World Bank by proposing new formations of 'extra states' with the New International Economic Order (NIEO)[1] we observe today an accelerated demise of the powers of the state. This is manifested by way of elected supra-state formations like the European Union, or non-elected bodies that make decisions for countries, like the European Central Bank, or the transnational corporations that have a stronghold on global power as demonstrated recently in the Facebook hearings, that all challenge state sovereignty.

It is impossible to grasp firmly and unilaterally what the state really is. As sociologist Bob Jessop argues 'there can be no general, let alone transhistorical, theory of the state.'[2] The current model in the European context and beyond, at least on paper, is the nation-state. One of the main conundrums of the nation-state is that it holds on to the Westphalian mandate of nationhood while we witness populations in continuous flux, within and beyond Europe. Where some might confuse the modern nation-state with the Westphalian one, and others call this globalised era post-Westphalian, I claim that the executive agents of state power, or the White Western Westphalian patriarchal order,[3] still cling to Westphalia's nationhood. Jessop clarifies that nation and state are distinct concepts, often combined to describe an ambiguous concept: the nation-state.

In Max Weber's lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' (1918), the philosopher defines the state as a 'human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory', what is commonly now referred to as monopoly of violence.[4] His writings, widely regarded as important in outlining the modern state, have defined the basis of state theory through his three-element approach of territoriality, violence and legitimacy. In turn, sociologist Nikos Poulantzas, through his writings from the 1970s understands the state as a social relation, as a variable; not a passive tool or neutral actor, but a 'relationship of forces, or more precisely, the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions, such as this is expressed within the state in a necessarily specific form'. Poulantzas sheds light on the class character of the state, proposing it as an agent – just like capital – with already inbuilt biases, that promotes or generates social conflicts and inequalities. Bob Jessop furthered this argument, following up on Poulantzas and adding a fourth element to the 'territoriality, violence and legitimacy' approach of Weber: what he called the idea of the state. With this reading, which he named 'strategic-relational', his analysis resists to the idea of capturing 'the essence' of the state, but instead studies its changing form and function by using elaborate tools, methods and theories. Considering therefore the state as a social relation with four elements – territoriality, violence, legitimacy and its idea – I will combine Poulantzas and Jessop's thinking with that of Deleuze and Guattari, in order to recognise a particular modus operandi of this type of state.

This particular model of a corporate, capitalist, non-sovereign nation-state, has somehow maintained the Westphalian idea of territory and borders, and its nationhood fantasy almost intact, despite operating under globalisation and advanced capitalism both of which hinder its sovereignty.

When looking at the history of the state, one can argue the state establishes 'normativity', as the foundation from which to build infrastructures to regulate its subjects, for purposes of order, control, power and self-legitimisation. I have previously highlighted this state mechanism of normalisation[5] by using the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who underline the untraceable beginning of the state. What is of main importance for them is that from the moment the state appears, it seems as if it had always been there; it normalises its imposition of power as if already existing. They write: 'We are always brought back to the idea of the state that comes into the world fully formed and rises up in a single stroke, the unconditioned Urstaat.'[6] This reading, that defines in philosophical terms the normative mechanism of the state, could be connected to Nikos Poulantzas' normalisation of 'authoritarian statism'.

Poulantzas pointed out in his 1978 book State, Power, Socialism that features of the political order previously thought to be exceptional and temporary, were now becoming increasingly normalised in what he named an authoritarian statist type of capitalist state. The normalizing mechanism of the state during the 1970s was due to a world market that was slowly integrating. Forty years later it has integrated considerably more, but what remains identical is how it normalises authoritarianism. This new normal of authoritarian statism, especially after 9/11, is worked through the threat of 'terror' or danger of loss of the nation's identity. What I wish to claim is that for European nation-states, normalising 'authoritarian statism' was until recently directed outwards, by means of imposing power on the outside, fringes, minorities, foreign states, bodies, subjects or supposed external threats, but has since 2001 turned inward by affecting the lives of the subjects that are included, accepted, internalised within the state apparatus and system – what we can loosely call the 'law-abiding' state-fearing citizens.

For this particular type of state, I will bring forward two categories that highlight aspects of its profile. The eso-state, coming from the greek word έσω-, meaning inside, internal, within, and the exo-state, coming from the word έξω-, meaning outside, external, without. The eso-state defines all that the state accepts, embodies, contains, supports, and validates. The exo-state is all that the state rejects, represses, sidetracks, archives or hinders.

EXTRA STATES OF THE CONTEMPORARY, CORPORATE, CAPITALIST NON-SOVEREIGN AUTHORITARIAN STATE

Extra States is an exhibition that holds a mirror to the present malaise of the state, that occurred not only by the invisible powers of multinational capitalism and unelected supra-state bodies (either corporate or stated) but also due to the lack of vision of the political powers that have governed the EU nation-states. The exhibition aims toward an anthology of future scenarios of resistance to

this particular model of state, via art that is socially and politically engaged, and thinks of artistic practice as a performative action: one against the current condition of the western, capitalist, nation-state, one of whistle-blowing, un-masking, mocking, resisting, but also proposing, re-imagining and re-conditioning the future state and state power that remains, still, within our grasp. It is an exhibition that wishes to demonstrate another thinking of the 'extra' in the state, with an aim to see the role of the artist as agent provocateur, as author of a counter-narrative vis-a-vis the power structures of the contemporary state.

The artworks and research on display in the exhibition are organised through an architectural display that separates the space, with an imposing, strict architectural facade. The construction operates as a physical demonstration of the imposition of state power, of the defined and geometrical openings and closures of the legislative state and as a frame for the obscure side of the state apparatus.

This curatorial, positions the works between the "eso" and "exo" axis of the state. Eso including exposing the state from within (with works by Trevor Paglen, Femke Herregraven, Sven Augustijnen) and highlighting the para-state in civil society (Petra Bauer and Rebecka Katz-Thor, Goldin+Senneby) or the mechanisms of personification of the state via its leadership (Nástio Mosquito, Metahaven) and the "exo" proposing: the anti-state (Nuria Guell, Kapwani Kiwanga, Chto Delat), visualising the current state model (Sophie Jung, Dora Budor), and demonstrating the artist's speculative mechanism to imagine an oppositional state (Sanja Ivekovic, Anton Vidokle and Pelin Tan).

ESO-STATE

The eso-state in the exhibition is manifested in a three-fold manner. First, it exposes the state and its workings. In the bulk of his artistic and written work, Trevor Paglen has aimed at mapping classified sites, such as secret aircraft hangars and corporate offices, of what is known as the deep state. The term originates from the Turkish `derin devlet`, introduced in 1923 by Kemal Atatürk, with the purpose of undertaking clandestine acts to preserve the governmental structure. Deep state has since come to mean any unelected 'shadow government' operating behind the scenes of a democracy; it hints toward a democratic process that is simply a façade. The phrase is used by the US press in reference to the governments of countries like Russia and Turkey, but was recently used to describe the US government as well. Paglen, a US citizen, considers this mapping of the deep state as a 'secret geography', one not only hidden by the state but designed to exist outside the law. His work juxtaposes information that is not accessible to the public. By de-coding governmental 'public' records that might otherwise remain obtuse, he presents to the public the where, how and when of covert operations and surveillance activity. In his video installation `Code Names of the Surveillance State`, Paglen creates a massive list composed of over 4000 National Security Agency (NSA) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) surveillance program code names, exposing the vocabulary of the deep state. The NSA, possibly the most active and powerful US state organisation, has played a largely hidden role in foreign

security issues since 1949. With Paglen's series of photographs taken throughout the last decade – some of which are presented in the exhibition – he performs a mirror image of the surveillance state. He monitors and 'stalks' the state, recording its dealings, movements and operations, and so exposing it.

In a similar investigative manner, Sven Augustijnen exposes the Belgian deep state by looking into Belgian's implication in Patrice Lumumba's assassination just after the independence of Congo, most prominently explored with his film `Spectres`. During filming in Congo, the artist stumbled upon a Belgian plan from the 1950s to develop a military base and governmental city in the city of Kamina of the Katanga province. It would supposedly serve as a refuge, for protecting Belgian authorities from local communist insurgents, but would operate in fact as a mini-state that would go on to play a strategic role during political upheavals that destabilised the Congo in the years that followed the declaration of independence. Augustijnen's research into a Palestinian example that resembles the story of `Le Reduit` is still under way while these lines are being written and hopefully will be presented also.

In turn Femke Herregraven is looking into the island of Mauritius as the embodiment of 'extrastatecraft'[7]. Since 1968 when it became independent, the island embraced luxury tourism and has become a tax haven for many Western companies often refereed as the 'Mauritius Miracle'. It is a financial hub, recently in the spotlight for its role in the Paradise Papers. Mauritius was a Dutch colony and distribution centre until the early eighteenth century when the French took over to leave it in turn to the British in 1809. In 1965, before Mauritian independence, the United Kingdom sold a small part of an island constellations that were under Mauritius rule to the US in exchange for cheap military equipment. The Chagos Islands became 'British Indian Ocean Territory', a fictional colony created for the purpose of its sale to the United States, which bought the largest island of the constellation, Diego Garcia. It is until today the largest military base of the United States outside of US soil. The darkest part of the story concerns the 1700 inhabitants of Diego Garcia, who were expelled to Mauritius and never allowed back to their homeland. For Extra States, a first iteration of `Foul Footprints` is presented in the form of an installation that critically explores and displays the notion of the `island` as a zone of 'extrastatecraft' but also as a zone of expropriation of peoples. It is a story of a non-sovereign state such as Mauritius that has served two purposes: first as an escape zone for financial capital, and second as a refugee zone for the inhabitants of Diego Garcia.

The second aspect of the eso-state addressed in the exhibition is that of the state versus civil society. The Swedish artist duo Goldin+Senneby investigate the socio-economic and political histories of the state in relation to its subjects but also its soil. The artists have acquired a plot of land in Belgium's old mining territory, which they conceptualise as a theatre stage. The plot is a piece of highly polluted land on top of the former coal mine of Zwartberg near Genk, located between a business park and a slag heap for which the city is trying to gain UNESCO World Heritage status as an industrial landmark. `The Plot` unfolds as a double unearthing. The script (in the form of a poem) is written by Flemish poet Mustafa Kör, whose father migrated to Belgium to work in the coal mines.

The poem evokes the memories, hopes and desires of newcomers that arrived in Belgium as workers and helped build the economy in the post-war period. It points toward the inefficiency of the state's treatment of migrants, under the premises of integration. The work also intertwines with the deep history of Carboniferous-era plants in the region that decayed into coal over millions of years and across continental shifts. These plants date back 350 million years, to a time when the plot was located in the equivalent of today's Central Africa. Thus the work highlights a lack of care of the state in relation to ecology but also to its colonial past and the expropriation of Africa's wealth.

Swedish artists Petra Bauer and Rebecka Katz-Thor, in a newly commissioned research, unravel the grammar of civic society through the spectrum of feminist movements and their histories versus the state. In a way, self-organised women's centres can be thought of as meta-state formations that operate because of their demand for acknowledgement: they are conditioned by the state, and many times regulated by it, but they demonstrate also its lack of consistent care for its citizens. With case studies from three European cities: Antwerp, Athens, Stockholm, and three respective centres: IVCA, Melissa Network and Women's Centre in Tensta Hjulsta Stockholm, Bauer & Katz-Thor propose to look into the ways that women gather, how their centres are architecturally structured and sustained, so as to understand their 'grammar' of operations. They examine whether environments affect the way women gather and how they fortify and sustain feminist struggles. The artists direct toward the strong bonds between women in Europe and beyond, solidifying the trans-state alliances of feminisms but also proposing models of a more egalitarian, functional and politicised civic society against the rigid state.

The third aspect of the eso workings of the state, and very much in line with what Jessop called 'the idea of the state' is its self-identification process and how it presents itself to the world. This can be seen for instance, through the personification of a state through its leader, like recently Trump is thought of as the 'face of the campaign' of the US. Nastio Mosquito constructs a scenario around a fictional political figure, the despotic leader named A.L. Moore, played masterfully by Mosquito himself. The artist forms his character by employing all the cliches of the extremities of politics, including corruption, nepotism, investment in polluting business, and exploitation of so-called third world countries, combined with 'charity work'. With wit and humorous stereotypes, Mosquito uses A.L. Moore to question the global 'branding' of leadership in politics as well as in business and society, while hinting at our tendency to personify nation-states via their leaders. He also emphasises the almost-complete absence of inspirational political figures in the last decade and the rise of a real-politik that reminisces the dark parts of sociopolitical histories of the past century. Furthermore, he entertains stereotypes of what a leader must or should be, directly addressing the current discussions on political 'stars' of authoritarian statism and far right, such as Donald Trump, Robert Mugabe, Geert Wilders or Kim Jong-un.

Metahaven realised Extra Everything – A Speculative Identity in 2011 for the exhibition Museum of Display at Extra City. Metahaven's long-term research on state branding is evident in their ironic translation of 'place brand-

ing', which is the branding category used for countries and cities. Evenmore, the work underlines the connection between traditional commercial branding and that of 'place branding'. Extra Everything's speculative identity for Belgium, manifested through billboards, fake banknotes and advertisements, shows how we think of a country as a brand name, and imprints visually all the nuanced traditions that gloss over uncomfortable truths, that have to do on one hand with what the country affirms but on the other its blind spots. The work stood on the following points of reference: the 'brand identity' of Belgium as a country vis-a-vis the extreme right-wing politics that emerged in previous decades and are still evident today; and a reflection on the state of governance of Belgium that was without a coalition government for almost two years at that period. The work contained aesthetic references to the cartoon 'Suske en Wiske', which had caused controversy for its all-white cast of characters and racist connotations in its storyline. Seven years later, part of the work is reproduced, offering a view of the changes that have occurred in Belgium's socio-political reality and in that of Europe at large.

THE EXO-STATE

The works here can be considered as direct counter-propositions to what the state rejects, represses, sidetracks, archives or hinders. This is indicated for instance, by exposing the mechanisms of the 1 per cent that are sanctioned by the state or by proposing counter narrations for politically positioned societies. In Núria Güell's `Troika Fiscal Disobedience Consultancy,` a small international tax consultancy is created to disobey the European troika (ECB, IMF and EC). It is an 'anti-state' manifestation that mimics the big consultancy firms that advise neoliberal corporations on their taxation systems in order to increase profit. In relation to the troika, neither the people nor the individual states of the European Union are sovereign, since economic rescue is exchanged for popular sovereignty. This project orientates itself around the use of civil disobedience as a tool, one that has been used by various independence movements, for instance India, where fiscal resistance was one of the key strategies of civil disobedience that resulted in the country's independence from the British Empire. `The Troika Fiscal Disobedience Consultancy` replicates the same strategy of response and resistance, aimed squarely at the troika, who have conducted 'coups' against several EU governments in by-passing parliamentary mandates and referenda.
Russian collective Chto Delat are delving into the philosophy of Zapatismo, and the writings of Comandante Marcos, as a proposition contra the model of the western capitalist state. They suggest Zapatismo as an international ideology that can offer alternative paradigm for a new radical-left political practice which protects the interests of subjects. In 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, which originated in the poor south of Mexico, rose up against the government. Today it still strives for the autonomy of the indigenous population and resists neoliberal globalisation. The legacy of the Zapatistas and their call for 'work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace' has since spread to all corners of the world. Chto Delat explores the idea of a fictitious 'Zapatista Embassy' situated in contemporary

Russia under Putin. The film of the installation reflects the process of being together and how the Zapatistas way of life could be practiced and questioned outside of genuine indigenous experience – how we as Europeans, with all the burdens of our political and cultural histories, can imagine change.

During her extensive research into the decolonisation of Africa, Kapwani Kiwanga selects archival photos of historic celebrations, commemorations and other ceremonial events that occurred during the period of liberation from colonial rule. Each photo shows official state functions, captured in time. In the images, flower arrangements underline the celebratory mood. The photographs serve as blue-prints for the artist who shares the images with a florist who in turn recreates the bouquets as accurately as possible. By unfolding the performative element of the states' official functions and ceremonies, the project Flowers for Africa aims to be a reflection on these histories and the lessons they offer on sovereignty, solidarity and emancipation. The flower arrangements, titled according to the name of the country that presented them, wither over the course of the exhibition, indicating primarily the loss of power of the countries themselves after the initial force of pan-Africanism. Thus the work addresses the uncomfortable reality of today: most of the African continent is liberated from colonialism, but is 'crypto-colonised' by multinationals that continue to extract the wealth from its soils, many of which are linked with governments and particular countries of former colonisers. Lastly, the work also points toward a recent resurgence of the movement of pan-Africanism as an exo-state proposition to the western model of statehood – a timely development in these turbulent times of a xenophobic European reality.

With her sculptural installation Temps Mort, Dora Budor reconstructs an image from the film L'Eclisse (1962) of Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni. The work refers to the image of a construction site that recurs throughout the film and almost becomes a character in itself. For minutes at a time Antonioni shows images of piles of rubble and architectural elements that reveal decay and alien-ation – in film frames where these elements remain sole protagonists, with none of the film's characters appearing. Budor carefully recreates this strange 'actor' that the rubble becomes, in a three-dimensional installation. What attracted the artist to create this work is how the film compulsively returns to the scene of the construction materials, all caught up 'in a progress of becoming'. Temps Mort highlights both the globalised, uniform aesthetics of architecture and its con-struction material as well as the reality of devastated conflict zones. Rubble serves as a constant reminder of our urban environments, either in the form of 'destroyed' buildings (signaling a dismantled civilisation) or in the myriad con-struction sites around the globe that mark the footprint of capitalism. It under-lines the global metropolis but also the state of disarray in contemporary poli-tics, whereby human life is disregarded and sidelined, while edifices are created and destroyed. It also captures a glimpse of the thousands of images of war that have passed before our eyes, with destroyed cities, dispersed ruins and the abolition of societal structures painting a portrait of the state apparatus, of state power, at its worst. The rubble, the collateral damage, is a rejected part of the internal workings of the state.

Sophie Jung's libretto Producing my Credentials, retrospectively titled You You Can Can Not Not Have Have Both Jung taps into the linguistic signifiers of statehood, borders and nations but also the myriad possible categorisations of identity, unruly subjects and societal divisions. Jung aims to ignite a chain reaction in the visitor, collapsing binaries and leaving them open to the possibility of imagining the deconstruction of what she calls the 'ludicrous idea of a nation-state'. Jung ends her libretto with a statement: 'I miss Pangaea'. She refers to the supercontinent that existed during the late-Paleozoic era, 335 million years ago, before the earth broke up into different continents and before the continents broke up into hundreds of nation-states. For Jung this is the only feasible scenario for a liberated state of mind: a return to Pangea, if only mentally. 'I miss Pangaea' is the perfect verbalisation of a cry against state violence that is mostly conveyed in her work through the theme of crossings – literal ones – like those of the thousands of bodies that traverse continents and oceans in the hope of a better life. But it also offers a delineated reading of all those metaphorical crossings, of those borders we set ourselves and fail to transcend – such as our lack of response to the unfolding dramas surrounding global migration or the extremities of identity politics that polarise, dichotomise and immobilise minds and souls.

In a similar position, Sanja Iveković confirms the dated idea of the nation-state. Her seminal piece Why an artist cannot represent a nation-state was made in response to the question of whether she wanted to represent Croatia at the festival Croatie la Voici in 2012 in France. In her work, Iveković consistently opposes the reactionary nationalism of the new nation-state of Croatia. For Iveković, therefore, the only way to participate in Croatie la Voici was to underscore the absurdity of the request. The text written by philosopher Rada Iveković, a close collaborator and cousin of the artist, is a declaration and testimony against nationalism. It serves as a rejection to all that the state conditions, and the power the state holds over artistic creativity and production, and addresses the impossibility of the notion of representation via a philosophical and socio-political analysis. During the performance, the deaf-mute French actress Isabelle Voizeux converts the text into sign language to represent the exo-denizens who are excluded from representation by the state. As Rada Iveković declares during the performance: 'Representation is an eternal puzzle of politics as well as of art. Art and politics revolve around these two poles – the impossibility and yet the inevitability of representation.'
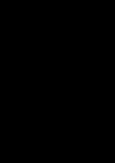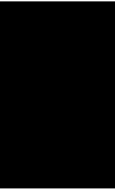
Lastly, the state is imagined and directed in the second film of the trilogy 2084: A Science Fiction Show called The Fall of Artists' Republic, by artist Anton Vidokle and sociologist and art historian Pelin Tan. They construct a future in which artists are in power – art has colonised life entirely and every aspect of daily existence has become aesthetic. For this second episode, art production has become a thing of the past, but still a number of artists – in the form of animals trapped in a cement dome – ponder questions of labour, economy, religion and art, all the while trying to come to terms with their new situation. The video was filmed on the site of the unfinished International Fair complex in Tripoli, Lebanon, designed in 1963 by Oscar Niemeyer. The construction was interrupted in the mid-1970s by the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war. The

futuristic design, with its bunker-like spaces, was a failed utopian project, and in the film by Vidokle and Tan it can be seen as a metaphor for the failure of the ideal artists' state. The work materialises the logic of science fiction in popular film by presenting a dystopian scenario where the format of the micro-state is proposed as a speculative state in which art reigns but where artistic practice is not necessarily a commercial or institutional product but a tool for socio-political change. It can be understood as a proposition for a counter state, an all-encompassing state of art that consumes the eso-state within.

This depiction of the micro-state is also evident in the selection of artefacts and material presented in the exhibition after a long research on the history and evolution of state formation. One is the example of Bulkes, a communal village named the seventh republic of Yugoslavia that existed between 1945 and 1949. It had its own currency and bank account code in the country, and was thought of as a mini-Greece within Yugoslavia, established by a communist community of guerilla partisans fleeing persecution in Greece during the civil war. The second example is the case of Neutral Moresnet, whose story begins with Napoleon and ends with World War I when the region was annexed by Belgium. The mini-state was formed at the dawn of industrialisation. It is possible that the affluence of a mine in the area informed the desire of its citizens for independence. The breadth of the state insignia they created, such as stamps and other official state paperwork, and their demonstrations advocating for the establishment of a state called Amikejo that spoke Esperanto – an artificial language devoid of nationalist connotations – was seen as the proposed solution for linguistic divides crippling the area and Europe.

This curatorial narration, by laying down parts of existing theory in state formation and proposing new additions, readings and visualizations of the future of the state, is hoping for a re-imagining of other constellations of statehood by way of artistic practice. My hope is that it critiques and transcends the current model of the corporate, capitalist non-sovereign nation-state through the informed artistic propositions in the exhibition that enable us to conceptualize the first contours of a future state, yet to be named, yet to be normalized. By employing contemporary art as a glossary, we can map and imagine the future of a new state of being, where there exist `other` ways of distributing power.

1 which in fact was never implemented but instead led to neoliberalism and more freedom to multinationals to transcend borders and state control.
2 Bob Jessop, `State: Past, Present, Future`, Polity Press, 2016, p. 5
3 Please look at my essay 'Redistribution via appropriation: Whitewashing Marbles', May 2018, e-flux journal 91, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/91/197800/redistribution-via-appropriation-white-washing-marbles/
4 Max Weber, `The Vocation Lectures`, translated by Rodney Livingstone and Edited by David Owen and Tracy Strong (2004), London and New York, Hackett Publishing
5 Please look at my essay 'State (in) concepts: Revisiting the unconditioned Urstaat', published in the catalogue of `state (in) concepts`, by Kadist Paris for the premises of my exhibition curatorial, October 2017.

6 Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, `A Thousand Plateaus`, University
   of Minessota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 427
7 after Kester Easterling

Silk Roads, Tributary Networks and Old and New Imperialism

MI YOU

THE SILK ROAD: WHAT IT WAS AND WHAT IT WAS NOT

The Silk Road is many things to many people. It is as much a series of historical trade routes connecting Europe and East Asia through Greater Central Asia as it is a contemporary political-economical trope for infrastructural projects; as much lived realities of interconnected cultural spaces as it is an imagined quasi-entity whose coinage coincides with the reign of European imperialism – it was first popularised in German as `Seidenstrasse` by geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. The aim of revisiting the Silk Road is not to go back to any romanticised origin state but to ask, in what way can the transgressive potential once seen in its history find contemporary incarnation?

According to archeological findings in Chinese Central Asia, the volume of trade along the ancient Silk Road was rather small, which stands in contrast to the image of it as a network of prosperous trade routes with numerous caravans and camels bearing heaps of goods (Hansen 2012). Few people travelled the full journey between Europe and East Asia, but goods found their way through the myriad networks. So too did the Black Death, which reached Europe in the fourteenth century during the `Pax Mongolica` – a period of relative stability after the Mongols's conquests in Eurasia. The actual insignificant amount of trade made along the route, contra popular notion, makes manifest the cultural importance of the Silk Road. What was seen was an influx of ideas, artistic forms and styles of life, which resulted in the most syncretic visual, cultural, linguistic and religious practices to be seen to date.

On the meta-level, we have an image of the Silk Road as network that takes in the various routes. For most of the time in recorded history, the various routes connecting nodal towns and cities could be said to form a greater distributed network fuelled by interactions of people and knowledge along with transactions of goods.

The old Silk Road network was distributed; there was no absolute centre. The cultural, religious and linguistic dynamics, further attest to the multiplicity so characteristic of networks. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker see this multiplicity as a question of 'a formal arrangement, not a finite count', based on which 'networks are reconfigurable in new ways'. (2007, 60)

The image of the historical Silk Road obfuscates the West and East and also the North and South divide. It reorients our understanding of history so that it may be seen as something occurring beyond borders, and deflates the attempts of various nation-states to claim figures like Genghis Khan, Timur or Al-Farabi as national heroes.

A further claim of an all-encompassing kind is the notion of Eurasia. Classical Eurasianism formed in Russia in the 1930s, focused on geocultures and assigned value outside of Western cultural worlds. In some ways Eurasianism anticipated later culturalist postcolonial discourses and, most alarmingly, the re-surfacing of the right-wing 'Eurasian' movement headed by Aleksandr Dugin and celebrating Russia's expansionist agenda to build a Eurasian sphere of influence. Curator

and artist Nikolay Smirnov's current research on left-wing Eurasianism as a synthesis of Marxism and spirituality, social activism and aesthetic practice, provides valuable insight on how claims on Eurasianism can be sustained.

Amidst potential political ramifications, what are the politics of utilising the Silk Road as a discourse today – in China and beyond? For this, we will need to backtrack to the political condition of the Chinese empire.

TRIBUTARY SYSTEM AND THE OLD CHINESE EMPIRE

The Confucian world order is based on `tianxia`, which means 'everything under heaven' and historically denotes a hierarchical world system whereby the Chinese Empire was at the centre and the countries on the periphery would enter into a tributary relationship with China. These relationships relied on the peripheral states paying tributes to China and symbolically acknowledging the central place of the Emperor, often through highly elaborate performative rituals. In return, the states were bestowed lavish gifts asymmetrical to their own offerings, and military protection when needed.

The deeper Confucian roots of `tianxia` reveal a world order in which the universal emperor acts according to the cosmological and moral order of heaven, thereby embodying the mandate of heaven. According to the dynamic reading of Confucianism, the universal king can be challenged if he does not fulfil his role, and the mandate of heaven can favour another person or even epoch (which was the case made by the Japanese in the 1930s and 1940s).

The routes travelled by tributary states to fulfil the tribute-paying routine often coincided with the routes of the merchants along the old Silk Road networks. Though theoretically unequal, the tributary system afforded a degree of informal equality to tribute states as it allowed for fair exchange and trade driven by the self-interests of the parties involved.

The tributary route, especially toward the end of the Qing Dynasty in the early nineteenth century, was increasingly 'appropriated' by tributary states as a means through which to trade with merchants en route to Beijing. A further political and geopolitical consequence was that the tributary system enabled greater security for those involved without engaging in arms races. (Kang 2010, 55) In this way it contributed to the peaceful coexistence of different peoples and polities.

The historian Takeshi Hamashita has shown how as the Qing court's power gradually waned, the overseas Chinese trade network successfully transformed the official tribute system into a private trade system at the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Hamashita 2008) Furthermore, studies suggest that the form of trade activities in Southeast Asia at the time included smuggling and arms trafficking. This discovery signals a 'breaking out' of the tributary system for the pursuits of self-interests, be it commerce or military prowess, or a combination of both. Here, the historical development of networks is precisely the result of shifts in the existing relations between centre and periphery. (Wang 2007, 21-22) Spanning the medieval to the early modern period, this is an example of how the Silk Road trade route became a long-lasting cultural token via the flexible, decentralised networks that coexisted with and were transformed by the official tribute networks.

ALL THE IMPERIALISM(S)

With the recent pushbacks of Western democracy, China has emerged to capture the imagination of both the left and the right in the West. Some say that the transference of the `tianxia` political ideology to today's context would provoke new meanings into diplomacy and coexistence.

Here we need to differentiate a couple of terms that relate to states: China as an old empire, the notion of European imperialism, to be followed by the modern imperialism of the nation states.

European imperialism follows the Westphalia model – which was based in part on the theory of equality between states, yet it perpetuates a territorially expansionist and economically exploitative mode of operation.

The peak of European imperialism was late-nineteenth-century British India, when the economic model of the colony shifted from one of revenue through resource extraction, to a more active cultivation of economic potential of the large interiors of the subcontinent by the extension of public infrastructure. This signalled the transition from traditional forms of production to the capture of 'heterogeneous subject-formations into abstract human labor', from 'mercantile maintenance to full-time administration, from patching up the shards of the decrepit Mughal infrastructure to active construction of new infrastructural networks.' (Dutta 2007, 105-6) Already back then, the colonial government saw the mobilising force of such proto-Keynesian infrastructure projects, a lesson to be learnt by the Japanese and the Chinese, as we will encounter later.

While such economic expansionism (economic imperialism, or 'hard power') went hand-in-hand with a 'civilising mission' (cultural imperialism, or today's 'soft power'), it would be mistaken to view the civilising mission as the condition of colonialism. Indeed, this is Vivek Chibber's contention with Edward Said's Orientalism. Chibber outlines how the argument of Said inverts a system of domination that creates its justifying ideology, to how an ideology creates the power relations that it justifies. In other words, Orientalism displaces traditional interest-based explanations for colonialism and pushes toward one relying on civilisational clashes. (Chibber 2018) The repercussions of such civilisational discourses are manifested in various aspects of social life today: in the reservation about or hostility to migration, or in the popularisation of conspiracy theories.

MODERN IMPERIALISM AND MANCHUKUO AS A CASE STUDY

In the early twentieth century, the Bolsheviks propagated the 'Declaration of the Rights of Peoples', in which people of the empire were bestowed the rights to national self-determination and, essentially, to form sovereign states. US President Woodrow Wilson took notice. He embraced the self-determination principle and popularised it as the fundamental way for a post-imperial world.

However, imperialism took on new faces. As Michael A Reynolds rightly points out, the principle was accommodated when it served the interests of the great powers and bent when it did not. Consequently, backed by the British and French, Poland was strategically attributed a region that is ethnographically one-third non-Polish so to create a buffer zone between Germany and Russia. In the Middle East, in the interest of connecting with the overseas colonies as

well as creating a power balance against Russia, the British and French created 'mandate' zones and effectively took control over Iraq and Palestine, and Syria and Lebanon respectively. (Reynolds 2011, 254)

From this point in time on, we can observe how regional imperialistic blocs were structurally embedded in nation states. Take for instance the Germans with the Lebensraum ideology, the Japanese with the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, and the postwar standoff between the United States and the Soviet Bloc, each representing its own ideology through hard and soft power configurations.

The Japanese puppet regime of Manchukuo is exemplary of the new imperialism of nation states. Manchuria, the modern name designating the vast area that encompasses roughly what is northeast China today, has been entangled in various geopolitical tussles since the late-nineteenth century. Japan infiltrated their influence into the region and in 1932 they installed the last Qing Dynasty emperor, Puyi, as emperor. Manchukuo was established as a constitutional monarchy, though it was run de facto by Japanese technocrats and the military.

The state-building project of Manchukuo and its quest for national identity were born of the post-World War I international order and the institutional consequences of imperial nationalism in an emergent postcolonial time of mobilisation and identity politics. (Duara 2003, 7) The Japanese profiled Manchukuo as a nation based on the alliance of five ethnic peoples – Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Manchurian and Mongolian. Despite the rhetoric of a polyethnic alliance, however, Japanese privilege could be seen in their wages and access to goods. Further to this there was the wartime fascist mobilisation of non-Japanese labour – whereby the Japanese essentially treated others as slaves.

At a larger scale, the ideology that fuelled Japan's expansionism was the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere: an economic, cultural and political collective-entity encompassing parts of Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. With rhetoric of brotherhood and common culture, the nations were to rid the rule of European colonial powers under the guidance of Japan. The gargantuan infrastructure projects undertaken or planned by the Japanese and in cooperation with their partners saw railway connections from Japan to Western Europe and throughout Southeast Asia. This regional integration plan through infrastructure coincided with the territories in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

A key player in the economic history of Manchukuo and postwar East Asia was Nobusuke Kishi, who served in prominent Manchukuo positions as the vice minister of industry and deputy chief of the Office of Administrative Affairs from 1936 to 1939. A strong believer in state-led industrial capitalism, he used Manchukuo as his test ground and organised its economy with guided investment plans, utilising forced labour and funds from drug trade that largely provided for the Japanese war engine later. Big conglomerates such as Nissan made profits by following the governmental guidance to invest in key sectors. Having observed industrial organisations in Western countries, Kishi admired American economic planning, Taylorist labour management and industrial rationalisation, as well as Germany's technocratic management, whereby technologist-engineers participated in business management and planning. Combining these methods with a Soviet-style five-year plan, Kishi's 'industrial rationalisation' kickstarted Manchurian industrialisation.

Prasenjit Duara says that Manchukuo reconfigured the question of imperialism. 'The new program involved more alliance, autonomy, investment, development,

identity, and competitiveness. In many ways, Manchukuo prefigured the phenomenon of a junior partner or a client state dominated by hegemonic states such as the United States and the Soviet Union in the postwar period.' (Duara 2003, 78)

After World War II, Kishi was imprisoned as a 'Class A' war-crimes suspect but was never indicted for he was believed to be capable of steering the country in a pro-American direction. He made his political comeback and became Prime Minister in 1957. His post-war vision for Japan followed the same logic of state-led capitalistic economy to make the country's economy strong and, ultimately, he wished to seek rearmament for Japan so that it might achieve true independence from America's influence – something that his grandson Shinzo Abe is committed to.

The Korean military dictator Park Chung-hee, father to the impeached Korean president Park Geun-hye, trained in Japanese military academy in Manchukuo. He befriended Kishi in the post-war period and normalised Korean relations with Japan, through which Korea received aids, loans and commercial credits from Japan to kickstart the economic rebuild. Southeast Asian countries – Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, among others – followed suit and Japanese investments in the 1980s kickstarted strong growth in the region.

Ultimately, Kishi's model of state-guided capitalism is exercised to the maximal scale in today's China, which has become the world's second-largest economy within three decades of economic reform. At national and international levels, Chinese capitalism has the characteristics of both fully-fledged market economy and strong state-intervention with state-owned enterprises and state-guided public-private investments in strategic sectors.

CHINA AND THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

At the 2017 World Economic Forum, China came under the spotlight as a defender of globalisation. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), announced in 2013 as a platform for regional multilateral cooperation, interlinks China with regions along the ancient Silk Road, the trade routes through Greater Central Asia, and the maritime trade routes connecting East Asia to Africa and Europe. To date, the BRI has expanded to around seventy countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Oceania, incorporating one-third of global GDP and one-quarter of global foreign investment flows.

The financial backbone of the BRI is a mixture of state-owned and commercial enterprises, big commercial banks and 'policy' banks. Mediating between the state and the market, policy banks like the China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China offer a form of finance as distinguished from concessional loans or development aids and commercial loans. They aim at long-term returns and often come with more favourable conditions for the debtor. On the political side, China keeps a stance of non-interference when it comes to internal politics of the partner states, as opposed to development aid that comes with political conditions.

In Sri Lanka, China funded the construction of the Hambantota Port at the southern extremity of the country, which strategically overlooks the vital pathways of the Indian Ocean. When the Sri Lankan government debt ballooned to among the highest in Asia, it was made to sell assets to write off its debt to China. In

the 2017 debt-equity swap, Sri Lanka sold a 99-year lease to China Merchant Ports Holdings granting rights to the Hambantota Port, which China may turn into a dual use commercial/naval base.

The pre-modern Silk Road and BRI are often mentioned in the same breath. Yet the two contexts are of a different nature. What warrants linking the BRI with the `tianxia` or the Silk Road should not be taken for granted; specification and examination of the historical contexts are in order.

The following questions necessarily arise: To what extent does the old Chinese empire with its tributary system inform the BRI operations? Can it present a win-win solution for everyone? Is it possible to provide the desirable goods and values without the threat of using military power? If we draw intellectual resources from the `tianxia` system and the old Silk Road to chart today's BRI developments, the question then becomes, How to keep it a dynamic network, and to what extent can it (not) be effectuated from the centre?

Not infrequently, the infrastructural projects encounter bottom-up resistance as they often disregard local interests and favour allegiances and alliances with the local elites.

FOR A SLOWER SILK ROAD

The dynamic, decentralised network of the historical Silk Road and the flexible tributary system point to the strength and resilience of such networks. The current frenzy of infrastructure projects, though created to maximise a flow of labour, capital and commodities across the region, may not provide the engine for such dynamism.

At the height of scientific explorations of Central Asia during the second half of the nineteenth century, when cartography serviced the military and the designs of roads and railways met the interest of capitalists, French anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus saw geology and geography being mined for geopolitical leverage. He attempted to write the story of the earth and of humanity as one, or as he terms it, the story of 'nature becoming self-conscious'. Integral to this history is an account of the forces of domination that emerge in human history, only to restrict the future self-realisation of both humanity and nature. (Clark 2013, 6) Reclus proposed a 'slower Silk Road', 'a geohistorical marker not of maximised commodity flow but of humanity's collective self-awareness of "forming one body with the planet itself."' (Chin 2013, 218) Incidentally Peter Kropotkin, the Russian founder of anarcho-communism who befriended and was influenced by Reclus, was also a geographer before he turned a social activist. Kropotkin's greatest contribution to geography was working out the main structural lines going through Central and Northern Asia. He also contributed to the study of biology by proposing the idea of 'mutual aid' instead of the Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' as the principle underlying evolution. Both anarchists explored the parallel territories of geographical movements and social movements and attempted to debase social domination by creating self-organised bodies of communities.

Reclus and Kropotkin's thinking may help us in mapping – and at the same time, unmapping – the various discourses and projects in the name of Eurasia or Silk Road. The Silk Road is discussed here not just as the matrix of study, but also as the very ethics of studying it. With it, we could question existing borders

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Difference and the Universal in Legacies of Feminism

MARINA VISHMIDT AND ZÖE SUTHERLAND

It has been well documented that the history of feminist struggle has given rise to ongoing problematics of unity and separation, a series of movements between the affirmation and organization around a common, unified political identity – for example, 'woman' – and the subsequent negation of that identity, through its expansion and its internal differentiation. Within emancipatory forms of politics, such wagers of unity name and affirm a cohesive, shared narrative of subjugation for a social group, which targets those aspects of so-called larger society that reproduce and benefit from such subjugation.

While liberal feminism has been criticised for orienting itself around the 'bad universalism' of formal equality, by affirming a common identity through self-relating women's groups against the wider patriarchal society, sexual-difference feminism – for example, the Italian feminist movement of the 1970s–80s – effectively produced a theory of ontological difference via the category of gender. Marxist feminism appears to offer the potential for the displacement and contextualisation of this conflict, by its appeal to a more unifying theory, which seeks to articulate the reproduction of gender within the 'social totality' – framing the problem at the scale of capitalist value relations as a whole – its specific historical developments of the 1960s–70s have been notoriously criticised for producing their own versions of bad universalising. While in some cases gender itself was subsumed under more 'total' concerns, the tendency of such theory to universalise and essentialise the category of woman produced issues of sexuality and race as localised and particularised, as supplementary elements that appeared as issues of 'identity politics'.

Intersectional responses to second-wave feminism sought to overcome this dual problem of universalisation, on the one hand, and supplementation, on the other, by destabilising the notion of identity, theorising how experience of individuals is made up of mutually constituting and interlocking systems and structures of oppression. However, such approaches have sometimes had trouble articulating the relation of these different systems and structures, thus formulating the individual as a localised site of oppression, the locus through which these distinct forms of oppression intersect, and, in doing so, tend towards an elision of the question of the reproduction of such structures. The resulting disavowal of the need for a totalising horizon to mediate particular struggles can have the effect of collapsing struggle down into individual 'rights-based' issues, admittedly of a now more variegated nature.

Current debates within Marxist feminism, and more widespread intersectional perspectives, attempt to see beyond the divide between socioeconomic analysis and identity critique by both assuming an intersectional premise while insisting upon the mediation of so-called identity struggles through a more critical conception of the 'social totality'. (Kevin Floyd, Cinzia Arruza, Endnotes, Marina Vishmidt, etc.). For Kevin Floyd, for example, critical 'totality thinking' can be

used to define a set of structural logics that render social relationships both unifying and contradictory. This paper will pose a few central questions: (1) does a concept of totality, as the articulation of a structural logic, remain necessary for a feminist theory and struggle that aims to navigate the inherent tensions and fracturing of identity-based political struggle, and if so (2) what formulation of the notion of totality is adequate to this aim? And in relation to this (3) does such mediation through the totality offer a different picture of this tension between universalism and difference, which prevents them lapsing into fetishisations? Could it potentially assist in the understanding and navigation of movements and unity and fracturing within movements?

UNIVERSALITY VS TOTALITY (OR, 'THE RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS' [ARENDT] VS 'BETWEEN EQUAL RIGHTS FORCE DECIDES')

The difference between liberal feminism and socialist or Marxist feminism can be succinctly encapsulated through their different approaches to the category of universality as a horizon for political articulations which have their own histories and contradictions. Universality is held to be the keystone of a rights-based approach concerned with social inclusion, with gaining recognition in civil society and representative government. The conception of the whole which animates this perspective is comparable to a bourgeois public sphere, and the universal is accessed through a formal – and, ideally, substantive – equality of rights. The radical democratic perspective of someone like Hannah Arendt, who draws a sharp line between the visibility that correlates with the publicity of the political in the agora and the inconsequence and repetitiveness of the private realm, would fit into this trajectory, as well as the work of political theorists such as John Rawls and Martha Nussbaum, or even the post-Marxists Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. What takes the form of a substantive rights frame-work is often summed up in Arendt's pithy aphorism that she used to describe the situation of displaced 'stateless' persons after World War II. They lacked 'the right to have rights' – that is, they were deprived of access to the means of recognition issued by nation-state or international agencies that would enable them to exercise the 'human rights' which as the only legal instrument in their possession as refugees, was a very abstract one. This legislative, contractual framework – which has been subjected to critique not only by Marxian social theory but by Marxian theorists of law such as Evgeny Pashukanis, as well as socialist feminist legal scholars such as Carol Pateman and, more recently, Angela Mitropoulos – is the basic architecture of liberal universalism that unfolds in the realm of formal political demands, which is our chief concern here as it relates to social movements and their formulation of demands. There are important conversations to be had of course with regard to philosophical universalism/s, such as those emanating from eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy and its Kantian legacies, and their relationship to racism, colonialism and indeed the constitution of gender and sexual normativity in modernity.

From this, the chief line drawn by Marxists to separate their analysis as a materialist one from this formalist one is the preference for the category of 'totality' over the one of universality. Totality refers to a certain logical notion of synthesis

that is constituted of antagonisms, contradictions and structural determinations mediated in various ways. This synthesis is commonly understood to be capital, as a relation rather than a thing, a process articulated differently in different geographical and historical circumstances and for different subjects and collectivities, but with certain distinctive patterns (commodity, money, class, labour) that distinguish capitalist societies historically and spatially. The category of totality is drawn from Hegel via Marx, thus describes society as a set of interlocking parts whose relationships are mediated through some axioms of social and economic power that are able to dominate the whole – that is, capital. No aspect of this social whole can be understood in isolation from the rest. The category of the totality permits us to view the 'surface appearances' of capitalist society in ways that understand those appearances to arise from the deeper workings of the social whole, and this serves to reinforce the importance of viewing capital not as a thing, but rather as a social relation.

Finally, carrying on from the aphoristic summary of universalism as the right to have rights, we can sum up the shift to the more materialist viewpoint in Marxism as going beyond that notion of rights, or the ability to exercise presumptive rights, with the phrase 'between equal rights, force decides'. Which is to say, the legislative framework may dictate formal equality, whether in allocation or exercise of rights – and here we may place side by side Arendt's Ancient Greek stage of the agora as the proper site for politics to Marx's comments on the clear, open light of the marketplace as being the stage for formal equality among buyers and sellers of commodities – but it's what happens in the hidden abode of production (or, for Marxist feminists, also the hidden abode of reproduction) that sways the matter of whose universal rights can concretely be actualised. In this way, does a critical grasp of the totality allow us to understand the distinction between formal rights and the uneven distribution of their realisation? A totality is composed of uneven power relations from the beginning – equal rights, in other words, arise out of a social field that is always already contradictory and based on exploitation, not a level playing field in which rights may be accessed by nominally equal actors.

So, the rights-based frameworks characteristic of universalism do not seem equipped to address the public/private split that most radical and materialist feminisms sees as the ground zero of gender oppression (that is, the maintenance of a public sphere [of politics] and a sphere of nature to which women and other non-men and non-whites are allocated and where their labour is made invisible and devalued). Many Marxist feminists in fact argue that Marx himself maintained that split by not giving political or theoretical significance to reproductive labour, and here we could point to 1970s and 1980s Marxist feminists like Leopoldina Fortunati and Lise Vogel as thinkers who tried to provide a systematic account of this significance, albeit from the very distinct analytic departure points of autonomist Marxism and a structuralist/Althusserian-influenced socialist feminism. Contemporary writers such as Endnotes have continued the project of theorising gender using the optic of value relations to flesh out the role of gender in a totalising capital relation, rather than as part of separate system called patriarchy, for example.

The fact that 'totalising' or 'unifying' theories have been privileged by Marxist feminism, then and now, puts them at a remove, at least programmatically, from intersectional approaches. The analysis afforded by keeping a horizon of totality in view is deemed to be stronger than the 'locational' method of intersectionality, which has trouble articulating different moments of oppression together, and ends up falling back on different systems (racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ableism, classism). Although a distinction can be drawn between additive and dynamic models of intersectionality, and the distinction between Marxist feminism and intersectional approaches is often quite blurry on the strategic level of organising in the recent period (such as the example Feminist Fightback collective) it is clear that the need for a totalising horizon is not experienced in the same way by proponents of intersectionality, however critically acute their discussion of the historically and spatially various modes of oppression and the resonances or co-determinations between them might be. Also, intersectionality's origins in a legal framework can, though does not necessarily, mean that the universalist rights-based horizon remains the ultimate target of demands informed by this kind of analysis. We can say that intersectional approaches do now form a certain baseline of common sense in many forms of radical theory and political movements, including critical race theory, queer theory, trans theory, as well as de-colonial and indigenous theory and politics, and are explicitly articulated in movements such as Black Lives Matter. This is due in part to the fact that the legacy of Marxist feminism, while attractive for its ability to offer a totalising analysis that mediates the different locations and experiences of social violence and systematic exclusion, is one that has shown great difficulty, historically, in theorising race and sexuality, and this boosts the case for intersectional approaches. In her argument for social reproduction feminism's totalising capacities, Sue Ferguson contends, however, that the historical and sociological complexity of many contemporary intersectional approaches remains abstract since it cannot point to a logic that brings the different instances of oppression into relation. Thus intersections can only ever be random, without an integrative logic, and supplementing the analysis with historical exegesis is not enough to resolve this – history without logic is still just random. For Ferguson, importantly, while capital may form the lynchpin of the totality for Marxism, for social reproduction feminism the unifying category is labour – what she calls an 'integrative ontology' of labour. (This of course can also be problematised.)

Thus we can say that the Marxist feminist suspicion, of universalism as a horizon for making political claims in for example, liberal or equality feminism, is in some senses recapitulating Marx's doubts about the substantiveness of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, then yields a commitment to the category of totality. However, in its turn, the commitment to the irreducibility of different situated struggles does not necessarily imply a commitment to difference, be it theoretically or strategically, as we can see with Kevin Floyd's recuperation of the category of totality in his book "The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism"– this as a means, in part to avoid the 'reification' and normalisation of desire which he suspects politics informed by difference end up succumbing to, just as they end up succumbing to universalism/the state as the de facto mediator of particular differences in the pursuit of rights-based claims.

'INDETERMINATE' AND 'DETERMINATE' TOTALITIES

Despite the apparent potential of the category of totality, it is precisely this emphasis within Marxism upon thinking a totality of social relations – especially in its more orthodox and/or strictly logical formulation – that has produced deep scepticism towards the capacity of the Marxist feminist framework to meaningfully articulate issues of race and sexuality. The image of 'totalising' systems has accrued famously negative theoretical and political connotations. It is associated with a tendency within modernism towards the total organisation, management and control of societies, which are conceptualised as a unified and coherent whole constructed of universal subject-citizens, a tendency seen to have reached some kind of logical conclusion in and around the political movements of the twentieth century and its 'total' war. The theoretical framework of totality operative within Marxist and socialist feminist theory and the politics of the 1960s–70s led to an eventual large-scale rejection of totality thinking, and to the subsequent emergence of social movements oriented more explicitly around gender, race and sexuality. This was of course facilitated by the consolidation of the neoliberal order in the 1970s–80s and the following retreat and relegation of unifying frameworks, which determined the shape of politics to come.

Regarding sexuality, the theorist Kevin Floyd has suggested that it was precisely this Marxian tendency to subordinate questions of sexuality to more 'total' concerns, representing these issues and their politics as already localised and particularised, which to a large extent framed and conditioned queer thought as it emerged in the 1990s. And a similar story could be told of the emergence of specific forms of radical, black and materialist feminisms in the 1970s, some of which developed and consolidated into dominant theoretical position in the 1990s. The Combahee River Collective, which emerged in response to the subsumption of their concerns under a supposedly neutral, class-focused movement within the socialist-feminist movement (with a clearly white agenda) turned to a materialist analysis of the specifically gendered and racialised body, leading later to an analysis of what Patricia Hill Collins called the 'matrix of domination' within capitalism via theories of intersectionality.

This dual movement in the 1960s–70s – the subsuming character of totality thinking within Marxist and socialist feminism, on the one hand, and the resulting theoretical and political divergences, on the other – resulted in the production of the latter to localised 'identity' issues. Issues operating under 'capital' – their politics presented as identity politics and neatly subsumed under class. This production of so-called identity politics as isolated and marginalised supplementary moments operating under the object of capital, turns the latter into an abstract and thus fetishised totality – what Marx calls an 'imagined concrete' or a 'chaotic conception of the whole'. In other words, rather than seeing these particulars and their interconnections as constitutive of, and as systematically produced by, capital, both 'capital' and 'identity' get produced as fetishised forms, the mutual interrelation of which becomes difficult to articulate. This not only produces a misrepresentation of the operations of gender, race and sexuality, for example, but also of the character of capital itself, producing it as an entirely abstract and indeterminate totality, what Marx calls an 'imagined concrete'.

While the everyday understanding of totality simply designates the 'all' or 'whole' of some thing, this can often lead to overly vague formulations that can stretch the definition of the term to oblivion. 'Capitalism' is perhaps the most susceptible to this conceptual slippage, often utilised to designate not merely a mode of production, but literally everything there is. This capacity for slippage and endless extension is encouraged within theories that also assume – consciously or subconsciously – some notion of the 'total subsumption' of life under capital. If the global triumph of capital over its previous antagonists in the last few decades has generalised capital's domination to all spheres of social life, it confronts us as the sole basis of our very reproduction.

This is not simply an issue of theoretical precision. Rather, in its capacity for a unifying theory, this concept seems to bring with it the risk of radical indeterminacy when thought in relation to concrete politics. For the framework to be meaningful, it needs specifying what is included within this 'all', not simply as a list of overlapping aspects, but as the unity of distinct but interdependent moments. The totality is not a pre-given object existing separately over or above it. Striving to make visible the various determinations thus de-fetishises an abstract and vague conception of a whole, reproducing it in the process as internally differentiated – that is, concrete. It is this equating of concretion with internal differentiation that renders Marx's critical method amenable to thinking totality as the 'unity of the diverse'.

For Kevin Floyd, via György Lukacs, totality is an epistemological category, and one that needs to be rethought as 'speculative and critical' rather than simply assumed. For him, it's crucial to counterpose 'totality' to 'difference' as the chief axiom for what is often dismissively termed – by Marxists, as well as mainstream liberals – as identity politics. In Floyd's account, the greatest producer of difference, of atomisation and reification, are the social relations of capital, which means that no radical materialist politics can afford to dispense with a 'rigorously negative practice' of totality thinking, one opposed to the kind of positive imposition of totality of which Marxism has long been accused. Floyd reformulates the role of totality thinking as a 'regulative political category', which operates at the level of epistemological transformation. By starting from our discrete positions and experiences, yet retaining a firm theoretical and political commitment to unify all those moments of social life that have been atomised by capitalist relations, we can avoid an overly static and stultifying conception of totality. For Floyd, this process has to be ongoing and is ultimately imperfectible.

Given everything we have said here, what implications might this have for political strategy? The way in which we conceptualise and give shape to the horizon of struggle, whether explicitly or implicitly, has bearing on how we navigate moments of unity and diversity within such struggles. Does the way we prioritise certain modes of oppression/domination/exploitation in analysis generate a specific praxis, one which might face challenges in practicing solidarities? The divisions proliferate. If identity politics is accused of dividing class politics, class politics are just as prone to 'dividing' identity politics. In fact, there exist a number of criticisms that the relationship of class politics to the totality can be quite superficial, rendering class politics merely a form of identity politics in

its exclusionary sense. Or can we project a horizon of totality in which different forms are experienced as inseparable aspects of a geographically and histori-cally rooted unifying logic, rather than as contingently in relation to each other?

Could totality then be thought as a missing dimension that is capable of knitting together the tendencies of movements to splinter and fracture around their exclusions? Or is the problem rather of articulation of analogous but irreducible logics, as intersectionality would argue? We can reframe the question if we consider, as Hannah Black says, 'how a gendered and racialised capitalism pro-duces and deploys individual subjects as part of the violent apparatus of value.'

In current debates between some varieties of Marxist feminism and the more widespread intersectional perspectives, the framework of totality allows us to define structural logics that produce social relationships as both unifying and contradictory, rather than allowing us to define the intersection of identity categories of oppression. However, at the same time, there are problems in seeing socially transformative politics as hinging upon the presence of structural unities rather than a contingent, subjectifying process that comes out of a social field characterised by division. As Chris Chen has argued: 'From the point of view of emancipation, a social order freed from racial and gender domination would not necessarily spell the end of identity as such, but rather of ascriptive processes so deeply bound up with the historical genesis and trajectory of global capitalism that the basic categories of collective sociality would be trans-formed beyond recognition.'

Final Note: To Keep the State

ARYANÀ FRANCESCA URBANI

The processes of evolution and involution of a social phenomenon are said to represent the best moments to acknowledge and analyse its essence. As an observer, as an artist or as a political scientist, when stripping a phenomenon of its contingent features, what you are left with is what lies deep at its core. You can then conceptualise it, hopefully without error, enlarge its reach and further investigate how it interlinks with its varying. Then isn't a society at war the best setting to scrutinise the social practice that we call state? A civil war is indeed defined as a situation of retreat or withdrawal of the state, disputed by one or more armed groups.[1] According to Pierre Bourdieu's prudent suggestions, the scenario of today's inter- and intra-state conflicts can lend itself perfectly to an in-depth analysis of what the state represents at its essence.

> 'All my work has consisted in showing how a State is formed, but one could
> have done the same work, almost as well, by looking at the dissolution
> of the State. Genesis and involution, as coined by certain evolutionists,
> have the same virtues of de-trivialization: the dissolution of a State
> enables to see everything that is implicit in the functioning of a State
> and what is evident, such as borders and everything that is unified. The
> dissolution of a State enables to see that the construction of the na-
> tional unity is made against secessionist tendencies, that could be
> regional in nature, but could also [stem] from [social] classes.'[2]

Even more so, analysing the efforts made multilaterally by the international community to keep or rebuild the peace in countries affected by conflict can offer an insight on the mutually agreed conceptualisations of the state on a global level. The United Nations Security Council establishes peacekeeping operations across the world – currently fourteen – to prevent the outbreak of conflict, stabilise conflict situations after ceasefires, assist in the implementation of peace agreements, and to lead states through their transitions to stable governments. This last transition phase represents the delicate moment where peacekeeping missions, in view of their drawdown and exit, ensure that countries progress towards sustainable development and long-term stability, thus preventing a relapse into conflict. In the transition phase, a variety of peacebuilding activities are undertaken by UN peacekeepers in countries recovering from war, such as the support for the restoration and extension of state authority; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants; security sector reform and strengthening of the rule of law; electoral assistance; mine action; protection and promotion of human rights; and promotion of economic recovery and development. These multilateral activities and operations that touch upon the concept of state and its authority during political crises illustrate the ways in which member states of international organisations converge, compromise and cooperate on the matter within the common ground they create between them.

In 'The Limits of the State', Mitchell criticises essentialist and dualist visions of the state existing as opposed to society; on the contrary, the distinction between state and society is a discursively constructed line, historically created, and constantly drawn and re-drawn politically.[3] 'The state is a strangely metaphysical effect', shifting and eluding according to the different practical arrangements existing within political systems. This dynamic usage of the concept allows for an interpretation that goes beyond the essentialist and binary structure it often assumes in contemporary debates. When discussing overly dramatic concepts such as the demise of state power, Mitchell's views can feed into a broader reading of the phenomenon. Transnational dynamics such as financial regulations and international political mechanisms have witnessed an ever-shifting role of the state in the last decades. The outsourcing of state tasks does not imply a total and perpetual delegation of state authority, as a state remains the principal and commissioning body in the power structure. As we are witnessing, the partial delegation of sovereignty by states through their accession to supra-national political unions is not carved in stone, but reversible at any time. Now more than ever, what resonates is the importance of a dynamic and diachronic under-standing of the power relations within and beyond the state, and this over political systems, over centres and peripheries, and throughout peace and war alike.

1   A. Baczko, G. Dorronsoro, A. Quesnay, `Civil War in Syria: Mobilisation and Competing Social Orders`, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016.
2   Pierre Bourdieu, `Sur l'État: Cours au Collège de France (1989–1992)`, Paris, Éditions du Seuil-Raisons d'Agir, 2012.
3   Timothy Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics', `The American Political Science Review`, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), pp. 77–96.

States of e-flux—A Decade
Metahaven
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Brand States: Postmodern Power, Democratic Pluralism, and Design

In the New Europe

A rainy autumn day in Tallinn at 10 am. Between twenty and thirty experts convene in a tiny classroom. Their meeting is about the national brand of Estonia. A former Soviet Republic, independent since 1991 and now a member of the European Union and NATO, Estonia sits between Scandinavia and Russia, and it is only partially happy to be doing so. Almost everyone in the room thinks that Estonia doesn't say the right things about itself to the world. No one likes Estonia's current national brand and its trademark, "Welcome to Estonia." Allegedly, an Irish proxy for the Interbrand corporation "created" it and ran away with an excessive amount of money. An official in charge moans that Estonian citizens should be programmed to say better things about their country when interviewed by foreign travelers (Estonian humor tends to be self-deprecating). Someone suggests that Estonia may not be a place where many things started, but it is the place where a lot of things came to – an end. Everyone laughs.

Estonian promotion mainly leads to Tallinn, the capital. But what about the country's unspoiled countryside? Estonia has inherited heavy industry and massive shipyards, but what about its emerging IT sector? The current president considers Estonia a Nordic country along with Finland and Sweden, but the country doesn't boast anything close to a social-democratic Scandinavian welfare state. For geographers, Estonia is part of a belt of former Soviet states stretching all the way to Murmansk, many of which are little known to international audiences. For the British, Tallinn is a target destination for stag parties, thanks to EasyJet's direct flights from London Stansted; no-holds-barred drinking and misbehaving on the safe ground of foreign soil. For the Russians, Estonia is contested ground. With a renewed faith in the politics of Russian empire, many Russians living in Estonia refuse to speak or learn Estonian, clanning together while dreaming of an *Anschluss*. Estonia is the birthplace of the composer Arvo Pärt. Andrej Tarkovsky's seminal movie *Stalker* was shot in a derelict Tallinn warehouse. And the massively popular Internet phone and text messaging application Skype is from Estonia.

The discussion began with a logo, "Welcome to Estonia," which nobody found attractive or inspiring. Soon however it was no longer about that but about the way Estonian citizens should behave on the streets. The person in charge of the logo made no secret of her ambition to change that behavior if she could.

Consequently, our meeting was open to the public. That alone, however, didn't make it democratic. We had all been invited because of

our proximity to the issue of nation branding and not because of our capacity to represent the Estonian people. We were part of a network of experts.

In recent years, branding has come to be considered as appertaining to a much wider arena than one of commercial trademark alone. This has made it both easier and more difficult to discredit branding. While it is easier to condemn it for its hegemonic role across the spectrum, it becomes harder to pinpoint exactly what that hegemony implies. Beyond the commercial logo, the "place brand" – signifying a nation, region, or city – is a trademark for a place. Branding, in this situation, is both less autonomous and more elusive in its role and position.

A place brand is essentially little more than a first impression. It is the first two, three thoughts people have when they think about a place. To change these assumptions in a more "favorable" direction may require a stylish (or terrible) logo, but it may also consist of more fundamental policy shifts which affect the lives of people: "defining the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for a country, region or city; this vision then has to be fulfilled and communicated," as the place-branding expert Simon Anholt describes it.[1] What makes place branding slippery in terms of its politics is that it increasingly stands as both a visual practice and a modality of governance.

In this article we will examine two political concepts that currently inform place branding, focusing on nation states. "Soft power," the first of these two, is already widely identified with branding. "Network power," the second, is not yet fully considered as such. We will argue that in its current stage, state branding has not yet seen critical, alternative, or counter-hegemonic approaches. We will conclude that the recognition of network power as a form of structural coercion provides the best starting position for the development of such alternative approaches to state branding.

Soft Power and State Branding
It is a widely accepted idea that place branding draws on attraction and legitimacy in a transnational network of relations. What is employed is a genuine form of power called "soft power" – the ability to obtain the outcomes you want by attracting others. Joseph Nye, who coined the term, says that, "power today is less tangible and less coercive among the advanced democracies than it was in the past. At the same time, much of the world does not consist of advanced democracies, and that limits the global transformation of power."[2]

Not surprisingly, soft power blossomed after the end of the Cold War. It specifically worked for the United States during the Clinton administration, across the spectrum of political ideas, cultural products and commercial brands, as well as in the field of diplomacy. For example, someone like Richard Holbrooke was able to put international conflicts to an end in volatile and playful ways, replacing Henry Kissinger's Cold War-style "chess" with what Holbrooke called "jazz." In subsuming cultural factors, soft power is understood to have included the Hollywood film industry as well as commercial brands like Coca-Cola and Nike in its overall objective of gaining influence and legitimacy.

Soft power's single most important asset is its allegedly non-coercive nature, the capacity to reach desirable outcomes without involving force, threat, or payment. Political theorists such as Chantal Mouffe would have problems with such a claim, on the grounds that there can be no political order that does not exclude alternatives, and indeed soft power is strongly premised on the American possession of military and economic hegemony and thus on a form of structural coercion. Of course, the idea of structural coercion is more recognized in the theory of network power, which we will explore at a later stage.[3]

Peter van Ham asserts that "like commercial brands, we talk about a state's 'personality,' describing it as 'friendly' (i.e., Western-oriented) and 'credible' (ally), or, in contrast, as 'unreliable' ('rogue state')."[4] Van Ham's idea of a successful and attractive corporate brand personality consists in an explicit attraction to the West (the U.S. and its European allies). He classifies soft power and state branding under the wider umbrella of postmodern power, which "exercises power (generally considered to be the ability to alter the behavior of others to get what you want) without using coercion and/or payments."[5] Van Ham's 2001 essay "The Rise of the Brand State," published in *Foreign Affairs*, opened up the field of political science to the topic of state branding (subsequently, Van Ham became involved in a project to create a national brand for The Netherlands). At the same time, his article having been written prior to the September 11 attacks – prior also to what is perceived as a global decline in American hegemony giving way to the end of the post-Cold War unipolar model – some of the most elementary assumptions may need to be reexamined in light of an emerging geopolitical situation.

Van Ham's extensive article on the topic, entitled "Place Branding: The State of the Art," examines three case studies: the European Union, the United States, and Kazakhstan. Van Ham's most substantial departure from his initial ideas concerns the EU, which he now suggests

should promote itself more assertively as a security brand capable of wielding military power.[6] Secondly, he states that the U.S. needs to rebuild its soft power resources. "For the United States, it has proven difficult to brand itself as a force for good and democracy, with stories about torture and human rights abuses in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo hitting the headlines of newspapers all over the world."[7] Here we are reminded of Joseph Nye's own reapplication of the soft power concept during the Bush administration.

Van Ham's third example is Kazakhstan. Being unknown and unbranded makes a state vulnerable to negative branding and image hijacks by third parties. This happened to Kazakhstan with the release of the film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*.[8] *Borat*, played by comedian Sacha Baron Cohen, makes use of the fact that global audiences are unaware of what the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan looks like. The film reshapes Kazakhstan's image into that of a grotesque backwater inhabited by village idiots, interpersed with Soviet-era footage of agriculture and heavy industries. Van Ham's analysis concentrates on the controversies following its release. The Kazakh government felt obliged to hire public relations firms, running advertisements in major international newspapers and on television, to tell the world what it "really" was – a fiction of an entirely different kind, of course. Van Ham concludes that "Cohen could have easily made a fool of other unknown countries (like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), pointing up the fact for all unbranded countries the risk of not being in charge of their image and reputation and the inability for a country to be in full control of one's own brand."[9]

Negative Brand Value and Peripheries
As much as *Borat* was fictitious, everything about it produced real effects. Sacha Baron Cohen recorded the greater part of the Kazakhstan scenes in a remote Romanian village.[10] It is sometimes claimed that *Borat* confronts Western audiences with their own deeply held prejudices about foreign places and peoples. But much of *Borat* is itself representative of this attitude. The new nations that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union continue to inspire mockery on the part of the West, interrupted occasionally by declarations of intent to help these nations move forward.

In 1999 the British branding expert Wally Olins wrote in a book chapter called "Putting the unknown nation on the map" : "How many people – apart from real specialists – can tell the five

former Soviet Central Asian 'stans' apart? In reality, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzystan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan are very different. Some large, some small, some have huge resources, others don't, some are old-style communist dictatorships, others are evolving in a more or less democratic direction and, of course, they all dislike each other. But they've got a real problem in establishing who and what they are in a world increasingly cluttered with 'new' nations."[11]

At present, the negative brand value of many of these entities, some of which have split up into breakaway regions, is expressed by terms like quasi states, pseudo-states, and hollow states. The geographers Vladimir Kolossov and John O'Loughlin identify pseudo-states by their partial governance, possessing transitional or incomplete statehood.[12] Francis Fukuyama speaks about "weak states," in whose poorly governed regions terrorism and anti-Western practices flourish.[13] But for Wally Olins, the issue is invariably a simple one: emerging nations all have problems with their brand, as no one really knows or cares what they are. In 2006, when Olins was asked which would be his favorite nation to brand, the same ambiguity that had previously befallen the former Soviet "stans" now applied to new EU countries. Olins replied that he would like to brand "almost any Central European country. Who the hell knows the difference between Slovenia and Slovakia?"

When we asked Simon Anholt to respond to this quote, he wrote that, "Olins was trying to emphasize the indifference that most people feel about most countries, especially smaller and not very famous ones. I don't think he was expressing his own views." Anholt continued, "he was parodying public opinion."[14] However, it is this alleged "indifference" of public opinion, combined with offhand jokes about countries' names and their marginality, that keeps the engine of revenue running for some of the world's branding agencies. Branding experts and marketing gurus may have a vested interest in telling peripheral and unbranded countries how hopelessly obsolete they appear without a state brand of their own, but the threat to an unbranded state is a serious decline in visibility, legitimacy and social capital. However positive and friendly the idea of state branding may sound, it seems that there is a structurally coercive force in the background, leaving the unbranded nation no choice but to "join the brandwagon," as Van Ham calls it.

Network Power and State Branding
States which have acquired a large amount of social capital in the form of positive ties within networks of other states, non-governmental

organizations, corporations, and other actors are more likely to be seen as legitimate and authoritative than those operating on their own, without many friends. In order to fully grasp the consequences of such a condition, we need to understand state branding in the context of globalization and look beyond soft power. We need to approach state branding, as it were, not from the position of the former sovereign ruler but from the vantage point of the networks that decide the standards of sociability. In the process of globalization, networks become social structures that tie parts of the world together, independent of sovereign borders and even independent of "international relations." While indeed, sovereign coercion may have become a thing of the past in this new situation, there may be structural coercion involved through the *standards* which networks adopt. According to David Grewal, "network power" is a dynamic that centers around certain standards (conventions accepted and used by many), and potentially leading to "the progressive elimination of alternatives over which otherwise free choice can effectively be exercised."[15] While networks cross sovereign power divisions, the paradox is that network power is granted by a popular vote, expressed by the "voluntary" subscription to a network standard. This vote however acts like the value of capital under an interest rate. Many subscriptions generate more capital. They gradually, but steadily, suppress the viability of alternatives, as these progressively lose their benefits.

Grewal offers a compelling analysis of these power structures. While Van Ham mentions thinkers like Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci as part of a constructivist view of power,[16] Grewal asserts that both theorists share a view of power that is heterodox: it is not exerted top-down but instead works "through the structure of social relations." These theories can, however, "have trouble locating or articulating the role of agency in social structuration."[17] For what concerns Grewal is the real freedom of choice made under network power. He argues that, under network power, formally free choices ultimately become forced choices made without authoritative command being needed:

> Two features are relevant for the consideration of choice in situations of network power. First, the consequences of an individual's choice are determined in coordination with the expectations of others who face similar, interdependent choices. Second, since network power grows through the operation of choice, as individuals must choose to join networks, it

must always involve consent of a formal kind, at least. I ignore here cases in which networks move to ascendancy through the forced conversion of outsiders because the more interesting case is not when direct force brings about conformity to a dominant standard, but when the structural condition of formally free, interdependent choice drive communities to that point.... The concept of network power reveals complexities in the connection between the idea of consent and the idea of freedom. Beyond what I earlier called the threshold of inevitability, a standard is pushed toward universality, and its network becomes poised to merge with the population itself. It is "pushed" by the activity of people evaluating consequences and, ultimately, choosing to adopt a dominant standard because of the access it allows them to forms of cooperation with others.[18]

Soft power, according to Joseph Nye, is "the ability to get the outcomes you want without having to force people to change their behavior through threats or payments."[19] What complicates this premise is that a "payment" could be made in the currency of social capital rather than in money, while a "threat" could be made by controlling or restricting access to social capital rather than through an economic sanction. If for Nye a payment belongs to the category of hard power because it is based not on attraction and free subscription but on the issuance of cash to achieve an outcome, forms of reward and punishment *implicit* in networks are still left unconsidered; that is, on occasions or in situations where subscription to a standard was necessary rather than voluntary.

Pluralism and Standards in State Branding
Most state brands are designed under the power of consent, the impact of which we have attempted to illustrate here with brief explorations of soft power (which is already linked with place branding) and network power (which comes relatively new to it).

State brands signify a communications standard of sorts – they are about the diplomatic and aesthetic requirements of post-sovereign and transnational networks identified with the term "globalization." These networks involve various forms of temporary and long-term coalitions between states and non-state actors such as NGOs and corporations, as well as flows of tourism, information, and foreign investment. On the other hand, state brands are also still firmly rooted in the idea of promoting distinct places on the world map where "an otherwise

disorderly and disoriented world"[20] is kept at bay by rendering distant (and potentially unattractive, illegitimate, and scary) places into reliable, welcoming, and indeed, "attractive" destinations.

Overlaps between places and information networks are already present in some of these brands themselves. States as varied as Belgium and Italy use their country's Internet domain name suffix as a national brand. While Belgium has more fully embraced its ".be" suffix as a networking protocol, Italy's ".it" is still reminiscent of traditional tourist brands in the vein of Joan Miró's famous 1980s trademark for Spain.[21] Scotland is well on its way with ".sco," an Internet suffix of its own. The Spanish region of Catalonia boasts an independent image with its newly acquired suffix ".cat" . Such a proliferation of sub- and supranational domain suffixes becoming place brands may indicate increasing overlaps between the soft power of attraction and the network power of standards.

For Van Ham, establishing a state brand is a matter of supranational competition. "Although many places offer the same 'product' – territory, infrastructure, educated people, and an almost identical system of governance – they must compete with each other for investment, tourism, and political power, often on a global scale."[22] Van Ham suggests that place brands need to be distinguishable precisely in order to surpass their structural similarity, which in the global marketplace could be regarded as a kind of redundancy. In practice, this idea of competition does not result in a great variety of approaches to state branding, but to a stalemate situation of relatively uninspired "safe" choices. The iconography as well as the ideology of state branding has become so constrained by marketing and so identified with promotion that, indeed, many place brands are now becoming demonstrations of their own *incapacity* to assess a difference of place with a difference of approach.

Either this diversity is, in reality, not genuinely experienced as such (indeed, some brand experts do seem to identify more with the general public's alleged disinterest than with any intimate knowledge of distinct geographies) or such diversity is genuinely nonexistent and perhaps obsolete (i.e. globalization and its "non-places," "spaces of flows," or "junkspace" are becoming more and more alike). If the latter is the case, then a higher degree of supranational *standardization* of nation brands would at least do away with the quasi-choice and inequalities currently on offer. A patented state branding standard – perhaps according to the Internet domain suffix or to the DIN system – would at least generate a new sense of networking

rationality operating parallel to, for example, the realm of national flags.

Another option altogether would be to explore pluralism in state brands, based on new global redistributions of political power, both sovereign and in networks. Much of the former "unipolar" global dominance that informed soft power is now in disarray. This is not to imply that soft power is now ineffective, but only that it is underwritten less by a single hegemony. We could also say that some of the ideas theorists such as Foucault and Gramsci had about power being distributed through social relations are to be increasingly observed in the geopolitical arena instead of merely in the former "private sphere" of social relations.

Richard Haass writes that "power is now found in many hands and in many places," giving way to a geopolitical spectrum he calls "nonpolar":

> There are many more power centers, and quite a few of these poles are not nation-states. Indeed, one of the cardinal features of the contemporary international system is that nation-states have lost their monopoly on power and in some domains their preeminence as well. States are being challenged from above, by regional and global organizations; from below, by militias; and from the side, by a variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and corporations.[23]

While the unstoppable maelstrom of globalization does away with many of the former assets of sovereign power, Haass speaks of how "difficult and dangerous" nonpolarity is.

On a different theoretical premise, Chantal Mouffe has argued for a multipolar world – a geopolitical spectrum seemingly less obsessed with the flows of power in networks than with a distributed and "plural" sense of local, regional, and national sovereignty. Mouffe asserts that we have to:

> "...take pluralism seriously instead of trying to impose one single model on the whole world, even if it is a well-meaning cosmopolitan one. It is therefore urgent to relinquish the illusion of a unified world and to work towards the establishment of a multipolar world. We hear a lot today about the necessity of an effective "multilateralism." But multilateralism in a unipolar world will always be an illusion. As long as a single hegemonic power exists, it will always be the one that decides if it will take into consideration the opinion of other nations or act alone. A real multilateralism

requires the existence of a plurality of centres of decision and some sort of equilibrium – even if it is only a relative one – among various powers."[24]

It seems that the theoretical battle concerning which kind of polarity applies to the current situation remains unresolved. For Haass in 2008, models of unipolarity and multipolarity already belong to the recent past, while for Mouffe in 2005, unipolarity hasn't ended yet and multipolarity remains an emerging future prospect. Haass recognizes the rise of regional sovereign power hubs across the continents as an important part of his nonpolar model, but still places more emphasis on the many kinds of elusive networked agents as well as the withering away of traditional structures of diplomacy, accountability, and coalition.

Typically, a place brand is created by think tanks, focus groups, consultancies, and other public-private alliances.26 Often, in order to gain public support and sympathy, additional promotional campaigns are initiated to appease its stakeholders (the citizens). Some place brands have used open-ended opportunities for citizens to become part of the brand message, such as in the case of the current brand for the city of Berlin.[25] Though this provides an incentive to enhance social capital for citizens, it is not necessarily democratic: while offering an opportunity, the brand creates new inequalities (just as acquiring an "employee of the week" status at McDonald's is not the same as unionizing to get a pay raise). Once again, the dynamics at play look more like a networking protocol. That protocol itself is privately crafted – it is not open to public deliberation.

State branding ultimately requires a new paradigm that goes beyond soft power – one less focused on promotion and indeed more concerned with both the structural standardization implied by network power and a pluralistic understanding of decentralized and distributed political alternatives being developed on various scales. The involvement of designers and other branding experts becomes necessary to take state branding out of its current singularity of approach and into an engagement with its theoretical and political premises, as well as its application. What was revealed by the Estonian branding session described above was that the complexity of Estonian representation and self-image – combined with the reality of its position between Russia and the Nordic countries – makes mere promotion of its desirable assets an impossibility. Rather than regard state brands as promotional tools, we should perhaps see them instead as diplomatic and journalistic "accounts" of a nation's own

self-reflexive awareness with regard to the multi-faceted reality of globalization.

The latest news is that the Unites States now identifies its soft power more fully with network standards. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy James Glassman has announced that as part of its state branding efforts, U.S. public diplomacy now sneaks into forums and social networking platforms on the Internet to promote the positive aspects of U.S. democracy. When asked by a journalist about the freedom to have ideas other than those favorable to the American point of view, Glassman responded, "We're not using Facebook to launch a war. Absolutely not. In fact, what we're using Facebook for is to invite exactly what you're talking about, which I tend to call the – maybe too grandiosely – the grand conversation. We want a conversation."[26]

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Images in this article are from Metahaven's project *Blackmail*, 2008.

Metahaven is a studio for research and design based in Amsterdam and Brussels, consisting of Daniel van der Velden, Vinca Kruk, and Gon Zifroni. By "research," the group intends a gathering of data, inquiry, imagination, and, ultimately, speculation, which informs their work in graphic design, branding, and iconography, as well as in architecture. Metahaven has previously created a visual identity for the mini-state Sealand, for research projects around the former House of People in Bucharest, and for the European Internet search engine Quaero. Metahaven's work is exhibited as part of the traveling exhibition "Forms of Inquiry: the Architecture of Critical Graphic Design" at the Architectural Association, London, and in "On Purpose: Design Concepts" at Arnolfini, Bristol, "Since we last spoke about monuments" at Stroom, The Hague, and "Affiche Frontière," a solo exhibition at CAPC, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux. At the 2008 Venice Architectural Biennial, Metahaven was represented with a lecture at the Dutch pavilion. In addition to design, research, and writing, Metahaven lectures widely, and its members teach at institutions including Yale University in New Haven, the Academy of Arts in Arnhem, the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam, and the School of Visual Arts in Valence, France. www.metahaven.net

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Simon Anholt, "Branding Places and Nations," in *Brands and Branding*, ed. Rita Clifton and John Simmons (New York: Bloomberg Press, 2003), 214

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Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 30.

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Peter van Ham, "Place Branding: The State of the Art," in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 616 (March 2008): 130. See http://ann.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/616/1/126.

5
Ibid., 132.

6
It seems like the spirit of Van Ham's analysis has already translated into Eurobranding. Casually messianic, the French slogan for 2008 EU presidency is *l'Europe qui protège* (the Europe that protects).

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Van Ham, "Place Branding," 141.

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Nye, *Soft Power,* 15.

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Van Ham, "Place Branding." 129.

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Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity," in Foreign Affairs 87 (May/June 2008), see http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080501faessay87304/richard-n-haass/the-age-of-nonpolarity.html (accessed November 1, 2008).

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Mouffe, *On the Political,* 116.

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For example the Paris-based Fondation Europe Plus. Mission: to make Europe more attractive and competitive; see http://www.europeplus.org/ (accessed 1 November 2008).

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Jon Rich

The Communal Rift: The State Must be Defended

The perpetrators of the crime against the French weekly *Charlie Hebdo* were French citizens. The fact that they are not foreigners is an irony and does not explain much, as many mistakenly perceived, about the factors leading up to the current (historical) moment. The fact that Western cultures see this as a paradoxical trait of modern societies points to a deeper flaw in the structure of modern societies themselves.

For the criminals at hand to qualify as French, one expects all apparatuses of the state and society to treat such a heinous act as an isolated, individual case – or at worst, an action connected to a narrow, exceptional local community concerned with local events. This expectation also requires that the perpetrators not presume they are struggling for a cause that matters to millions of people beyond their national borders. Nor does it exempt the French public, and more generally the European public, from understanding what happened as a matter that doesn't extend beyond their own borders. Otherwise, what would it mean to attach such an identity or belonging to a homeland?

A modern state presumes equal loyalty from all its citizens and an equal submission to its laws. Any violation of the law is to be treated as an isolated, individual case. To this day, modern (Western) societies have failed to integrate all inhabitants as citizens. It is most likely that touristic postmodern philosophies, which for years have celebrated this civic fragmentation in the cosmopolis as a huge achievement, have, due to their intellectual laziness, paved the way for the destruction we witness today. Every metropolitan center is comprised of religious, sectarian, and ethnic cantons. In our intellectual downtime, we muse on the idea of a Koreatown in New York and a Chinatown in London as ideal backdrops for souvenir photos. Yet we forget to concern ourselves with the following question: Why haven't modern cities been able to break down groups into scattered, law-abiding individuals?

Some of modernity's hallmark beliefs, such as citizenry and individuality, have perhaps continued to be subordinate to historical formations of identity – as long as the borders between states remain solid and hard to penetrate.

Numerous technologies have emerged since the early waves of immigration. Meanwhile, nation-states seem to prefer to look away from social harmony as their foundation. Let us not forget how nation-states in Europe have historically created clear rules and fortified borders to ensure their social, religious, and ethnic harmony. The European Union, since its inception, has been in essence an attempt to reorganize prehistoric divisions into a new

European whole. Today, Europeans are Roman, Germanic, Gaul, Catalonian, Celtic, and Slavic. They are also Turk, Kurd, Arab, Tatar, Chinese, and Japanese.

Have we tried to mend the ensuing rupture that divides modern societies and threatens to destroy them? I don't think so. The *Charlie Hebdo* attack is a harbinger of things to come. And not for the amount of blood spilled. On the same day that the Kouachi brothers killed thirteen people in Paris, an explosion in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa ravaged more than one hundred lives between the dead and the injured. The Yemenis die as if they never lived. This is true mainly because the French blood flowed in a place full of light, in the City of Light, while the Yemeni blood flowed in darkness. By pointing out this contrast, it is not my intention to pay respect to the Yemeni blood at the expense of the French, nor is it an attempt at Maoist equalization. The irony is in the fact that the murder in Paris did not only befall a few individuals – among them some celebrity cartoonists. Rather, the effects are much more widespread: what happened in Paris could destroy the entire world. It is a warning that the entire ship is about to sink. The Yemeni casualties are larger in number than the French. Yet the Yemenis were floundering in the midst of a turbulent ocean while the French ship was supposed to be safe and stable, even capable of rescuing the Yemenis themselves.

The *Charlie Hebdo* massacre is far more horrific than that of 9/11. Once again, this is not a game of comparing numbers. It also has little to do with whether it took place on the "brighter" side of the world. Thirteen years ago, there were forces within Muslim and Arab societies that were connected with modernity and that amounted to sufficient number and influence to make a considerable and lasting contribution to their societies. Back then, it would have been possible for the Western intelligentsia to lend its full support to these nascent movements in order to effect an outcome worthy of modernity. Today in the Arab and Muslim world, however, this modernist machine is completely broken. There is no doubt that the Western intelligentsia will have to take on the thankless task of rescuing the sinking ship entirely on its own. That is, if such a rescue is at all possible. The Western intelligentsia should at least try to urgently save the countries where the rule of law and the need to uphold the ideals of the modern state still carry some weight. This intelligentsia should also speak loudly against all plans to combat terrorism carried out by Western countries in the region today. It makes little sense to anyone who possesses a modernist mindset that a plan to confront ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates should involve arming and

supporting the main tribes in Syria and Iraq – or that the Shiite Militia is trustworthy enough to be pitted against the "ominous" Sunni forces. General Petraeus's failed plans in Iraq have only succeeded in transferring the aggression from one front to another, since his main strategy was to aid structures and networks that, by all standards, are far more primitive than the terrorist organizations they were supposed to eradicate. I say this because I want to try to move the needle in another direction and to not cease confronting evil entirely. General Petraeus might have succeeded, militarily speaking, in eliminating a clear, immediate danger. But he most certainly couldn't prevent the resurgence in a nearby region of a far deadlier evil.

Sadly, there is no magical recipe to follow to lead us out of the darkness that is about to engulf us. There is no hope of any authentic, meaningful public condemnation of the Paris tragedy coming out of the Middle East. Therefore, we cannot sit idly by and watch modern society in Western democracies drift into the tunnel of mob thinking. On her Fox program *Justice*, Judge Jeanine Pirro instigated viewers to "murder them all." Anger is understood, but so is idiocy. The question that Judge Pirro failed to ask was: Who are those people to whom the invitation to take revenge is being extended? Is Judge Pirro completely certain that American whites, Christians, Protestants, or those in the Bible Belt all form an ISIS-like angry mob? An amorphous group that possesses no response to difference other than mirroring what they perceive ISIS does to people who are different than them, with indiscriminate killing being the only viable punishment? In reality, even ISIS tries to switch its punishments around: sometimes severing a hand is appropriate, and at other times flogging sends the right message.

One wonders about the depth of the abyss that Western public opinion sinks into sometimes.

Alain Touraine reaches one important conclusion in his latest book *The End of Societies* – which sadly has not been translated into English yet – namely, that Western countries still exclusively possess the power and authority to prevent dying societies from self-extinction. The modern state is still capable of shifting societal violence from direct physical contact towards the domain of the verbal with full punishment, and within the limits of the law. The state also has the power, through institutional and official bureaucracy, to create clear-cut structures of equality by reducing the notion of "the public" to clerical consistency. Yet today, one state is under a real threat of renegotiating such a promise and authority. In Canada, thousands of immigrants had their citizenship revoked on the grounds of

alleged violations of immigration law. And in the US, approximately five hundred US citizens with direct ties to terrorist organizations are denied rights and protections under any law, even in cases where their own lives are threatened. In post-*Charlie Hebdo* France, strict rules have been instated to curb speech, regarding any verbal or written justification of violence as a punishable crime. This abandonment, limited as it is, of the basic rule of equality among citizens foreshadows a larger threat to the integrity of the state. It comes at a time when the state sees a free and orderly society as a threat to its own existence, treats core members of its citizenry as suspects, invades their private thoughts, and demands a public declaration of their innocence. When the state forces individuals to reveal private thoughts, it violates their identity as citizens; having an external persona that is coherent, consistent, and compliant on the one hand, and an interior persona that is protected and free on the other, is one of the defining attributes of what it means to be a citizen. Isn't this duality of internal and external life precisely what ISIS is fighting to destroy in the areas under its control? Isn't ISIS, at the end of the day, a triumph of the mob against the notion of the state, irrespective of the identity of this mob, its embrace of modernity, and its ability to accept and tolerate the other?

Total equality is yet to be attained by the modern state. There have always been areas in which safety and security prevail more than elsewhere. These are neighborhoods that big cities are unenthusiastic about bringing into the fold of care and control, as Jean Carbonnier has observed.[1] The issues around the North African presence in France, the Turkish presence in Germany, and the African-American presence in the US are not new. In spite of that, the state has always been vigilant in upholding, at least in writing, a strict code of no overt discrimination based on color, gender, religion, or ethnicity. And yet, the state finds itself today deferring crises and limiting their damage by willingly compromising its core values when confronted with potential threats from its citizens. Despite all of the aforementioned signs, the state must be defended and protected because its weakness and eventual fragility, or its domination by a deadly mob, will only lead to more hot and cold civil wars in states that have miscalculated the means of transcending utter brutality under the terms of their admittance into the modern era and into the force of history.

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See Jean Carbonnier, *Flexible droit: pour une sociologie du droit sans rigueur* (Paris: Broché, 2001).

Irmgard Emmelhainz

Geopolitics and Contemporary Art, Part II: The Nation-State as the Possible Container for Global Struggles

Continued from "Geopolitics and Contemporary Art, Part I: From Representation's Ruin to Salvaging the Real"

One of the consequences of globalization and the deterritorialization of financial capital has been that the decisions that affect world citizens are now made by representatives of a corporate oligarchy untethered from the direct interests of nation-states. Secret negotiations and treaties have taken the place of constitutions and other forms of social contract, becoming the dominant method for managing natural resources, transnational security, copyright, privatization, food autonomy, financial fluxes, drug patents, and so forth. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Group of Seven, the GATT, and other organizations and agreements, like the TTIP and the TPP, make up our de facto global government, one designed to serve the interests of transnational corporations, banks, and investment firms. What does the loss of national autonomy mean for the project of self-legislation more generally? What sort of sovereign practices remain available to nation-states when most of their historical mandate has been remanded to the coordinating committee for transnational accumulation?

At the peak of the antiglobalization movement in 2000, Frederic Jameson argued that despite its faults, "the Nation-State today remains the only concrete terrain and framework for political struggle." This was so despite "the recent anti-World Bank and anti-WTO demonstrations" which, although they seemed "to mark a promising new departure for a politics of resistance to globalization within the US," nevertheless left it "hard to see how such struggles in other countries could be developed in any other fashion than the 'nationalist' [one]."[1] This was the case because the only apparent alternatives to national struggle were cultural forms of resistance based on religion or a general defense of "our way of life." And these are limited by the lack of a universalizing frame.

In other words, for Jameson, the struggle still boiled down to a conflict between the "social" and the "economic," and, for this reason, the forms of social cohesion that preceded globalization, alongside national myths and narratives, remained an indispensable precondition for any effective and long-lasting political struggle. But twenty-five years into neoliberal reforms, the liberalization of the market, and the global homogenization of culture, it is worth asking if the nation-state can still serve as such a framework. Can the nation-state still be the container for defending the commons – infrastructure, biodiversity, natural resources, traditional knowledge, the means of

production and reproduction – against the ravages of transnational corporations?

As the nation-state has become a proxy for global corporate and oligarchic interests, what precisely is at stake is the legitimacy of governments and their institutions. Following the Invisible Committee, must we wage war against any and all infrastructure that organizes life by suspending and sacrificing worlds, in order to delegitimize institutions which rely on our consent to operate and oppress? This would involve creating zones of dissent and then establishing strategic links to other dissident zones so as to pursue secession through a different geography than the nation-state – not by revindicating the local, but against the global:

> As the Zapatistas have shown, the fact that each world is situated doesn't diminish its access to the generality, but on the contrary is what ensures it. The universal, a poet has said, is the local without walls. There seems, rather, to be a universalizing potential that is linked to a deepening per se, an intensification of what is experienced in the world at large. It is not a question of choosing between the care we devote to what we are constructing and our political striking force. Our striking force is composed of the very intensity of what we are living, of the joy emanating from it, of the forms of expression invented there, of a collective ability to withstand stresses that is attested by our force.[2]

This would mean exerting the power of society over the state – not to free the individual from the social (one of the main principles of neoliberalism), but to take seriously the idea that the individual can be freed only through the social. That is to say, the individual's well-being always depends on the collective's well-being, and vice versa. As Castoriadis put it,

> to abolish heteronomy does not signify abolishing the difference between instituting society and instituted society – which, in any case would be impossible – but to abolish the *enslavement* of the former to the latter. The collectivity will give itself the rules, knowing that it itself is giving them to itself, that these rules are or will always at some point become inadequate, that it can change them.[3]

Undoubtedly the nation-state arose as one such set of self-given rules. The question today is whether these have become inadequate, and thus how and in what way they should be changed.

The Impossibility of the Nation-State

A remnant of the anti-imperialist and decolonizing struggles from the 1960s and '70s, the Palestinian struggle is one that is still being fought within the horizon of the nation-state, as ending Israeli occupation is understood to mean the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign, self-determining nation. In this respect, the so-called "two-state solution" is really a "two nation-state solution," and it is interesting to consider the way this struggle has been variously framed over the decades as political vocabularies have changed.

In the 1960s, the armed struggle of the Palestinians was posited as a manifestation of anti-imperialism in the service of national liberation, and it elicited the corresponding solidarity from the international Left. In the 1980s and '90s, the Palestinians were cast as seeking recognition on the way towards the restitution of their human rights, including the right of return.

Today, and in contrast to the 1970s, militarism and armed struggle are almost always perceived as "mistaken" or as a suspicious form of politics because of their association with terrorism and dictatorship. Instead, solidarity with the Palestinian cause is expressed through the International Solidarity Movement, as activists around the world act as human shields protecting Palestinian houses slated for demolition and document abuses on the ground in an effort to give visibility to the numerous injustices perpetrated in the Occupied Territories. There is also the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel, a form of putting pressure on Israel inspired by a similar movement against apartheid in South Africa.

In spite of the fact that the idea of nationhood, cultivated through memories passed on from generation to generation, is what unites Palestinians inside and outside the Middle East, facts on the ground make it increasingly difficult to envision a two-state solution. According to many observers, Israel-Palestine is a binational state governed by Israel in two distinct ways. Israel governs Palestinians not as an occupying power – which, according to international human rights law, would imply being responsible for providing services such as healthcare, education, and so forth – but through differential governing, with Palestinians as "impaired citizens," according to Ariella Azoulay. In her account, Israel actually governs Palestinians differentially through a set of mechanisms that deny them citizenship by treating them as exceptions to the rule.[4]

Azoulay shifts the paradigm of analysis by

highlighting the discrepancy between considering Palestinians as citizens of a hypothetical Palestinian state and considering them as citizens of the actual state of Israel that currently governs them. From this perspective, in the territory in which Palestinians live, power is programmatically deployed to create a state of suspension premised on violence and the threat of violence. Through targeted assassinations, the destruction of infrastructure and homes, violent arrests, restrictions on travel, bombings from the air, nighttime raids, expropriation, and the prohibition of demonstrations, the existence of Palestinians remains on the threshold of catastrophe, a chronic and prolonged situation which is known to the locals in the West Bank and Gaza as "the tyranny of incertitude."

In fact, the way Palestinians are governed by Israel is less exceptional than characteristic of nation-states in the era of neoliberalism. Nation-states often resort to the logic of exception as a way of obscuring their own relative powerlessness. According to Aihwa Ong, neoliberal governments treat different populations differently, creating a diversity of zones, each with different regimes and levels of exception. She calls this model "graduated sovereignty":

> The model of graduated sovereignty shows that it is not so much a question of market versus the state, but that market society at our particular moment in history entails the existence of some areas in which the state is very strong and its protections very significant, and other areas where it is near absent, because these zones must be flexible vis-à-vis markets, or else they become structurally irrelevant. What we see then is a system of displaced sovereignty, a model of galactic governance that may be traceable back to premodern roots in Southeast Asian trading empires.[5]

The differential governing of Palestinians in Israel, as an extreme form of graduated sovereignty, is thus different only in degree from the rest of the world's experience, rather than different in kind. The Palestinian case is simply one of the more extreme examples of differential governing, which manifests as episodes of targeted violence against a backdrop of manufactured precariousness justified by an underlying ethnic and religious narrative. But just as the Palestinian National Authority is sometimes described as a proxy for non-national interests, the same is said, for example, of the Mexican government, which has been described as a "failed state" because it is not fully sovereign in its own territory. If Palestine is

governed according to foreign and Israeli interests, Mexico is governed according to the interests of transnational corporations and organized crime, two pillars of the international oligarchy that are often difficult to distinguish in practice. Arguably, neither is a case of state malfunction, but rather, they exemplify the way in which nation-states operate under neoliberalism, as instruments for denigrating or even exterminating forms of life in accordance with the needs of oligarchs.

This model of governance emerged alongside new regionalizations and territorializations that began in the 1960s and '70s as a response, arguably, to the success of the workers' movement in leveraging first-world national communities to raise the price of labor. The resulting capital flight arranged the world into clusters of innovation and progress, or alternatively, of destitution and poverty. With its ability to go beyond national divisions, the globalized market integrated first and third worlds, forcing certain areas to "develop" by creating pockets of wealth and cultural sophistication within the third world, and areas of destitution and misery within the first. The result is that it is increasingly difficult to think in terms of first- and third-world nations – or even developed and underdeveloped ones – rather than in terms of territories and zones connected in various degrees to global processes. There are thus zones where the extraction of surplus value is particularly intense, coexisting side by side with abandoned zones or pacified spaces: Milan and Campania, Tel Aviv and the Gaza Strip, San Diego and Tijuana, Los Angeles and Skid Row. The question then arises: How can the destitute territories and enclaves be politicized? What would that politicization look like?

New Forms of Commonality

In the 1960s, the notion of underdevelopment served as a frame uniting the disparate efforts of third-world countries to utilize state intervention as an instrument of development and progress. In contrast, current "underdeveloped" areas are not abandoned by the state but governed differentially (as targeted neglect, strategic betterment, cultural intervention, violent dispossession, and so forth), and according to the demands of the global market. Through programs geared at "developing" these areas in the name of progress, international financial organizations, governments, and NGOs systematically undermine subsistence by subsidizing agriculture in the form of transgenic seeds and chemical fertilizers, and by creating forms of labor – whether on industrial farms, in tourist complexes, or in sweatshop factories – that destroy traditional forms of community

organization, seeking to transform native peoples into consumers. These kinds of state and nonstate intervention reproduce global discrimination and poverty. "Development" nowadays means dispossessing peoples of their lands, providing differentiated (low-quality, in this case) access to healthcare, education, and employment, destroying traditional knowledges, and undoing communal forms of living and the idea that life can be independent and individualized. Contemporary "development" creates novel forms of intolerable interdependence, destroying the environment and transforming resources into privileges to which part of the population has access based on the dispossession or destruction of communities elsewhere.

If in the 1960s and '70s emancipation meant an alternative to capitalism and a means to overcome colonized identities, realize equality of rights, and de-repress sexuality, today emancipation means equality in the sense of achieving equal rights of access to goods, services, a living wage, and other kinds of privileges like water, electricity, and infrastructure. And yet, access to these kinds of commodities and their corresponding infrastructure implies an impossible model of development, since the Earth lacks enough resources for everyone to live modernized lives. Evidently, the main problem is the logic of development and progress driving extractive capitalism. Perhaps emancipation and equality must now also mean taking into account the ethical dimension of the intolerable forms of injurious dependency – that is to say, the exploitation, dispossession, and destruction of many within what Naomi Klein calls "sacrificial zones" – for the benefit of a few.[6]

It is no longer the nation-state which is at stake, but life itself, and what is needed is the self-organization of our common life against neoliberal forms of social engineering. More than anticapitalism – which, embodying the everyday dialectic of leftist common sense, condemns capitalism without imagining anything else – what is urgently needed are new forms of collective organization. According to Sylvère Lotringer, we are just beginning to experience the consequences of savage industrialization and the massive exploitation of natural resources – mass extinctions, permanent war, climate change – and these do not fit into our existing idea of politics and critique. Thus, critique is not an answer to capitalism, because it introduces distance where there is none.[7] What is needed – and this is where art can play a crucial role – is a form of struggle that would elicit a long-term shift in values, leading to systemic change.

What is key here, as Jaime Martínez Luna

suggests, is to plant the seeds for a new form of political organization, not through political identification or democratic participation, but as a form of *belonging*: a concrete relationship that presupposes commitment, obligation, and agreement. Identity (or common interest, which gives cohesion to a political cause) is an abstraction that mutates depending on the political action executed, while belonging is what is concrete. Belonging is the site for identity, and can help us create assemblages based on respect, work, and reciprocity. In the context of such assemblages, the relationships within social cells become concretized; as Martínez Luna puts it, such assemblages "exist to create life: that is movement, action, realization, intervention."[8]

A key concept that would be useful here is "*comunalidad*," a notion from Oaxaca, Mexico that emerged in the 1980s. It describes communal being in traditional ways of organizing, opposing capitalism and colonialism in favor of an ethical reconstruction of peoples. Communality is a way of being in the world that revolves neither around a commons administered by bureaucrats, nor some transient, ephemeral, and nonbinding postcommunism. Rather, it is a pact that considers the commons less as common *property*, as something owned in common, *but as a common way of life* – without forgetting that communality implies new forms of inhabiting territories *from the other side of modernity*. According to decolonial thinking, modernity and coloniality are inextricable: two elements of the same movement, which involves establishing truth at the expense of different forms of knowledge. In this regard, decoloniality is the outside of modernity and embodies other forms of feeling, making, thinking, being, and inhabiting the world – forms which are nonmodern and non-Western. Following decolonial theorist Rolando Vázquez, the recognition of nonmodern geo-genealogies and trajectories would reveal the movement of exclusion, violence, invisibilization, and forgetting that are inseparable from modernity, and would open up new forms of politicization – for instance, the notion of "*buen vivir*," or living in plenitude, which orients indigenous communities and organization.[9]

According to Vázquez, this axial principle from outside modernity encompasses and recognizes the participation of human beings in a vital collectivity of close relationality, in the sense of mutual dependence and shared vulnerability. The notion of *buen vivir* also provides a different conception of the human, where the human is always in relation with the cosmos and with nature, beyond modern modes

of appropriation and representation. The survival of humanity might depend on taking up a conception of the world beyond the dichotomy between humanity and nature in order to surrender the anthropocentric point of view. In this regard, I am not advocating a romanticized, ultraleft politics based on a return to the pastoral, as exemplified by the Zapatista experiments with autonomy. Rather, we must understand the role of the nonhuman world in helping us to construct more livable worlds by translating the autonomous forms of organization pioneered by indigenous peoples into urban contexts. For instance, in parts of Mexico citizens organize and arm themselves for the sake of their safety under a legal practice recognized as indigenous peoples' "*usos y costumbres*" (uses and customs). In this way, vigilante and community police forces have proliferated throughout Mexico as a means to stop organized crime and its complicity with differentially governing state institutions, or to prevent political powers from auctioning off the commons. Currently, there are self-defense groups in the states of Hidalgo, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Michoacán, Tamaulipas, Quintana Roo, and areas of the State of Mexico; and although they are indeed recognized by the law as *usos y costumbres*, the government has begun to criminalize them.[10] These forms of autonomy point at the urgent need to experiment with means to build radically different socioeconomic relationships, instituting communal defense, property, and commons-management regimes. Another example would be the Territorial Land Use Law in Cuetzalan, in the State of Puebla, Mexico, which implies citizen participation in defining and diagnosing land use.[11] Thanks to this law, the municipality of Cuetzalan has recently been victorious in insisting that the area remain free of mining exploitation, hydroelectric plants, carbon extraction, and the use and exploitation of water by private entities.[12] This model of autonomous organization sets an important precedent in the struggle against neoliberal destruction.

We must take into account that autonomous community organizing in cities tends to be transitory and cut off from the means to satisfy immediate needs or the capacity to control territory. This is because relationships in cities tend to be highly stratified, as capitalist modes of organization create fictitious communities through hierarchical social structures, concentrating decision-making mechanisms in a few hands; therefore, it becomes difficult to establish authentic dialogues and long-lasting relationships. As I mentioned in Part I of this article, one of the strategies of neoliberal governance is to implement fictitious inclusion and participation mechanisms, hiding the fact that political decisions affecting citizens are taken in secret and are extremely remote from our influence. Is it possible to build autonomous spaces and to recuperate the immediate bases of social reproduction in cities? This is a difficult question. It must be remembered that if, in the countryside, what is at stake is territory, in cities the key is the materialization of forms of power and their distribution in space.

Moreover, autonomy is a communal and relational form of organization and thus, an alternative to the state and the market. In this regard, the "common" is a vague and yet necessary concept for today's struggles; it needs to be posited as an alternative horizon contesting the mercantilization of life and the seduction of the collective imaginary by capitalism. Communality is everything we share, but it also means rejecting our five-hundred-year-old system of socioeconomic relationships. It implies building new relationships outside the logic of capitalism and the market, which people all over the world are attempting to do through an array of experiments with cooperatives, collective work, solidarity, urban gardens, time banks, and free universities. These experiments are the beginning of the production and sharing of wealth in common, which would also fund, plan, project, establish, and organize something that already exists to institute forms of autonomy that are different from the forms of participation offered by neoliberal governance.

These experiments happen within the folds of institutions and against institutional fascisms that oppress and make decisions against our interests. Their aim is to disperse and transform power relationships. Autonomy means creating sites where rules different than those imposed on us by the neoliberal system can be applied to construct different political, social, and economic relationships. To build autonomous spaces is to recover the immediate bases of social reproduction in urbanized areas. What is at stake is the materialization of forms of power and how they are distributed in space. In that regard, art has been, and can continue to be, a privileged laboratory for studying fields of power and for experimenting with sociatry, therapy, and new models of assemblage, organization, exchange, and the reproduction of life, not of capital. But without a social base, without establishing long-lasting collectivity in relation to a political project, it is difficult to begin building and inhabiting the world differently.

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Jonas Staal
Transdemocracy

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The EU Buffer State

Asking ourselves the question "Are we human?" in the context of Istanbul today forces us to confront the inhuman design of the European Union. Only a few years ago, Turkey was still in the race to become a new EU member state, a bid that was blocked due to, on the one hand, the regime's brutal crackdown on press and any other form of opposition, and on the other, the strengthening wave of European xenophobia that distrusted a future member state in which Islam was the predominant faith.[1] Instead, in the context of the current refugee crisis, Turkey has been turned into an EU buffer state: the outer frontier of the supranational project which now operates as the new extralegal border. Only 72,000 preselected Syrian refugees, out of the 2,700,000 currently in Turkey, have been allowed passage through.[2]

This transformation of Turkey into an EU buffer state comes at a high price. First, there is the three billion euros that the EU has handed over to Erdoğan's regime to stop the flow of asylum seekers. The second cost is that of our supposed "humanity." Creating a political dependency on the regime of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) means that the EU is directly implicated in the legitimization of a regime that has long waged a ruthless war against its Kurdish population in Bakûr (Northern Kurdistan, in southeast Turkey), while shamelessly persecuting all civil opposition: from activists and comedians to journalists and academics, to its opposition in parliament, whose immunity from prosecution was recently lifted.[3] And after the failed military coup of July 15, lists for a large-scale purge of the legal and academic professions were ready to be deployed instantly. It should not surprise us that Erdoğan has occasionally sidestepped the messy work of caring for refugees and proceeded directly to shooting them instead, all in order for the EU to keep its claim as protector of human rights intact by simply outsourcing violations to its buffer state.[4]

The three billion euros handed over to the regime perversely suggests that it provides some kind of safe haven. It might not have been intended to bolster Erdoğan's ever growing military apparatus, but it does provide for its ethical legitimacy. The EU sponsors regional human rights for its member states while sponsoring bullets for its buffer state. And while ultranationalist and fascist parties within the EU

take every occasion to frame Erdoğan's regime as "Islamofascist," the authoritarian governments of Hungary (led by Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party, which already in 2014 declared its model to be that of "illiberal democracy") and Poland (which changed its judiciary overnight after the Law and Justice Party won elections in 2015) effectively emulate the Turkish regime, rather than distinguishing themselves from it.[5] The EU's buffer state shows what we can expect when the governments of the French Front National and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) take charge. The buffer state is not an exception to the EU: it is the prototype of the new European authoritarianism to come.

Transdemocracy Rising
The design of Erdoğan's EU buffer state is a paradigm through which we can understand the changing design of the European Union as a whole. While ever growing ultranationalist and fascist parties within the EU pretend that the Erdoğan regime is their nemesis, little differentiates them. The abuse of the "War on Terror" to implement systematic racist administrations, the disregard of an independent judiciary, and the relentless drive to isolate if not simply eliminate the opposition is common to far-right regimes on both sides of the Union's border. The annual trips of representatives of European ultranationalist parties to a personal audience at the Kremlin are a further sign of how the far-right is uniting.[6]

But there is a counterforce to the Erdoğan regime as well, one that does not simply oppose its current rulers, but questions the very structures of power the regime represents. It is not by chance that it is the People's Democratic Party (HDP) that led the Erdoğan regime to lift parliamentary immunity. Ever since its founding in 2012, HDP representatives have been targeted by the Erdoğan regime as members of a party with links to "terrorist" organizations, and much of the harassment and disappearances of its representatives and members, the campaigns of intimidation and even bombing of the party's headquarters, have been revealed as having links to the regime.[7] This oppression has only worsened since the party endured the regime's violence through two elections, in June and November 2015, when the HDP managed to pass one of the world's highest electoral thresholds of 10 percent both times.[8]

So what exactly does the supposed "terrorism" of the HDP consist of? The first charge relates to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a guerrilla struggle against what it considers as the Turkish colonization of Northern Kurdistan since the PKK's founding in 1978. That the HDP strives for

the protection and recognition of the political and cultural rights of ethnic minorities – such as Kurds, Alevis, Armenians, Yazidis, and Roma peoples[9] – and is partly inspired by the political philosophy of PKK founder Abdullah Öcalan has proven enough for the regime to declare the HDP and PKK one and the same.[10] Nevertheless, membership and voter turnout has proven that the HDP has the potential to unite a radically diverse constituency consisting of social groups that until now were left a political vacuum: progressive Turks as much as progressive Kurds; religious constituencies as well as secular ones; rural traditionalists and urban youth.[11] HDP co-chair Figen Yüksekdağ describes the attempt to create a party that could unite these various social segments in the face of increasing authoritarianism:

> The HDP was established as the party of all oppressed and all peoples. All factions find a voice in the HDP … It is difficult to bring together sections of society so different from each other, but as the HDP we always believed in a unified movement of the oppressed in these lands. That is why the HDP was established, so our success and effect on society is a result of this unifying power.[12]

The HDP mediates between the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan and the regime, and also directly engages with Öcalan's political philosophy. For these reasons it would be easy to suggest that the HDP and PKK were indeed one and the same. But the fact remains that the HDP itself is not an armed movement. It wishes to achieve what it refers to as new forms of "democratic autonomy" on a nationwide level, through a combination of parliamentary representation and intersectional grassroots mobilization.[13] And this is the real "terror" that Erdoğan fears: the combination of emancipatory ideology and popular mobilization that drives the HDP's agenda for democratic autonomy, women's and LGBT+ rights, and radical ecology. In its political program, the HDP describes its ideal for an intersectional "we":

> We are women, We are youth, We are the rainbow, We are children, We are defenders of democracy, We are representatives of all identities, We are defenders of a free world, We are protector of the nature, We are builders of a safe life economy, We are workers, We are laborers, We are the guarantor of social rights.[14]

Erdoğan doesn't fear an opponent who merely wants to usurp his power; rather, he fears one who rejects the very organization of power that

his regime represents. In other words, Erdoğan's biggest dream is for the HDP to come to parliament armed to the teeth, for this would allow him to dismiss the opposition easily. But the HDP's agenda is one that aims to challenge the design of power all together.[15]

What the HDP describes as "democratic autonomy" cannot be achieved through parliamentary elections in a nation-state alone. Instead, democratic autonomy aims at a new ideal of democratic self-governance that takes multiethnic and multireligious municipal constituencies as its political foundation.[16] This is what the HDP refers to as the "local assemblies in our neighborhoods," which it considers the foundation of a future decentralized network of self-governing municipalities that could effectively resist the increasing centralization of power by the Erdoğan regime.[17] The aim is to establish a decentralized confederation of self-governing neighborhoods and municipalities, represented in regional assemblies within a democratic Turkish state. This is a "dual-power" vision, consisting of parliamentary representation on one hand, and local assembly-based representation on the other[18]:

> The party wants to shift from Turkey's current centralized structure to a highly decentralized one, with elected regional assemblies that incorporate the principles of "self-administration" and representation of "all ethnic identities." HDP-advocated new Turkey should be based on the equality of all peoples and religions, and should signal the end of state nationalism.[19]

The HDP requires that 50 percent of its representatives be women and 10 percent of its membership come from LGBT+ communities. In this way the HDP takes responsibility for the structural recognition of a plurality of political subjects, rather than catering to a specific ethnic group.[20] Essentially, the HDP is a transitional party: on one hand, it aims to "transition" politics from an identitarian foundation to an intersectional foundation; and on the other, it aims to transfer state power to local municipalities in order to make the project of democratic autonomy a reality. The goal is not to take power as a party, but to establish – through the party – a confederation of local assembly-based structures of self-governance. It is this paradigm of democratic autonomy that is articulated in the HDP's "We," which breaks with the repressive identitarian nationalist politics that has plagued Turkey ever since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The HDP's vision opens a realm for a new diversified culture of the demos – or, in

plural, *demoi* – to emerge.

It is this shift from the politics of nationalism and statism to a politics of the demoi and democratic autonomy that reveals the ideological frontline we in Europe face as well. If the Erdoğan regime is the equivalent of Orbán's authoritarianism in Hungary, or the Law and Justice Party's shameless takeover of the judicial system in Poland, or the regimes-to-come of the Front National and the Freedom Party, then the equivalent of the HDP are the new forms of political parties and pan-European platforms emerging from the continent's crises: from the rise of Podemos, which has replaced the "party" with the "circle," to the Icelandic Pirate Party's support of a new crowd-sourced constitution; from the rotating co-presidencies of Catalunya's Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) to the project for a new borderless Europe propagated by the Swedish Feminist Initiative.[21] In the same spirit as the HDP, these movements have interrogated the very structures of power they are up against, refusing to replicate the oppressions of their opponent. They no longer take the form of the party, state, or capital – they are the demoi of a rising transdemocratic movement. That is why Yüksekdağ, well aware that she stands on this new frontline, generously said:

> Given the crisis of the capitalist system, we see that suppressed people in Europe are also seeking alternatives. That is how Syriza and Podemos emerged ... In an increasingly connected world, all these social movements influence each other and are connected. The victory of Syriza in neighboring Greece influenced the workers of our country.[22]

New Unions

The crises of the European Union are amplified in the crisis of its buffer state on the Bosphorus. We are confronted with two competing scenarios: on one hand, authoritarianism, racism, and fascism; and on the other, new intersectional forms of democratic autonomy and transdemocracy.[23] The first road is one we have walked many times before: it is that of regression in the form of brutal economic exploitation and ultranationalist rule. Regimes and parties across Europe are lining up to follow this historic example. The second road is one we have hesitated to walk many times, for it is one with an uncertain outcome.

In the past we have called this road "revolutionary socialism" or "internationalism." It has left its mark all over world history, from the Paris Commune to the early Russian soviets, from pan-African liberation movements to the

alliance of workers and students in May '68. Today, social movements such as the Gezi Park uprising and Nuit Debout in France are the sparks that remind us of its promise of egalitarianism and collective emancipation. The HDP's gesture of solidarity towards progressive movements in Greece and Catalunya, Basque Country and Spain, shows us the possibilities for new transdemocratic alliances – *new unions* – and raises hopes for forms of being-human that cannot be reduced to a degraded humanity that sells us regional human rights under the auspices of authoritarian regimes.[24]

The question of whether the HDP's new political paradigm of democratic autonomy can be shared across Europe needs of course to be addressed. One cannot negate the specificity of the history, geography, and culture that led to a complete rejection of the nation-state in a region where its construct is interlinked with a long history of colonization, one-party rule, and religious doctrine. Nonetheless, the HDP's transitional-party strategy – moving power from government to municipalities, while remaining faithful to larger ecology of new transdemocratic movements throughout Europe – initiates a process that can help us *unionize anew*.

This process revolves around the possibility of a self-questioning form of politics, one that does not take power for granted, but ceaselessly interrogates its very foundations. As Judith Butler wrote, this process seeks to "devise institutions and policies that actively preserve and affirm the unchosen character of open-ended and plural cohabitation."[25] While one union is disintegrating, the possibility of a new union is right in front of our eyes, ready to be embraced. The HDP and its allies tell us loud and clear: we collapse or we unionize. Europe will be transdemocratic, or it will not be at all.

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