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COMMONING

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COMMONING: THE COMMON AS A PROCESS OF CRITIQUE, STRUGGLE AND CHANGE

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THEORETICAL PRACTICE

The Common: 10 Years of *Theoretical Practice*

Nearly a decade ago, the common – understood here as the basis of social, political and economic coexistence – became the starting point for the project initiated by a group of young researchers who founded the scientific journal *Theoretical Practice*. When we published the first issue in the spring of 2010, one devoted to the concept of community, we could not have foreseen that just in a few years we would be able to entice so many people into the orbit of our collective reflection. We did not realize that our "theoretical practice" could constitute an ever-expanding, inclusive project in which so many and such varied groups of theorists would grow and argue with each other.

This communal experience came into being mainly because we were never interested in building an identity, a hermetic community; instead we have always emphasized a lively and dynamic process: commoning of concepts, co-thinking, communication and joint struggle for conditions enabling the constant expansion of these practices. Years later, it is in this idea and the practice of the common – which prefigures any communism worthy of its name – that we see the cornerstone on which the project and our collective are built on. And although it is impossible to do justice to the multiplicity of the collective activities that were carried out by people associated with *Theoretical Practice* over these ten years, one event certainly deserves mention.

The Polish edition of *Commonwealth* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009), which was prepared by the editorial collective between

2010 and 2012. Hardt and Negri's book contains a project of conceiving
a radical and anti-capitalist theory and practice beyond the division into
the private and the public, on the one hand, and beyond liberalism and
socialism, on the other. It created a space for the common as a prefigu-
ration of the politics of communism always present on the pages of
Theoretical Practice. Common readings and endless polemics that took
place during the subsequent seminars on the proposals of the Italian-
-American duo undoubtedly contributed to the further development of
a common vocabulary underlying the multiplicity and heterogeneity of
activities undertaken by the editorial collective. Even if today, in retro-
spect, the proposal of Hardt and Negri for many of us needs to be
expanded, the direction indicated at its foundations does not lose any
significance for us. We are still trying to create an increasingly inclusive
interpretation of the common, which will not, however, assign value to
some concepts at the expense of others.

The basic intuition behind the notion of the common has passed
the test of time. The common has become synonymous with all those
moments in Marxist theory that, while not falling into the ambush of
modernity and its specific dialectics, remain faithful to the fundamental
task and the communist promise of going beyond capitalist social rela-
tions. The creation of conditions for this movement is not the work of
external intervention, but its possibility is immanent in the reality that
demands transgression. Read through that prism, the common is pre-
cisely a form of antagonism to capitalist social relations and a prefigu-
ration of what lies beyond them. This reasoning, although initiated by
reading post-operaistas, ultimately convinces us of the vitality of Karl
Marx's thought as the first theorist of the common in its antagonistic
form to capitalism. In order to give this concept a tangible expression,
let us, however, allow Marx to speak for himself:

> In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is
> wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures,
> productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development
> of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as
> of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentiali-
> ties, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which
> makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers
> as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where
> he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality?
> Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement
> of becoming? In bourgeois economics – and in the epoch of production to

which it corresponds – this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end (Marx 1973, 488).

The wealth of social relations that is hidden behind the commodity-form is ultimately nothing more than a synonym for the common (Holloway 2015). Therefore, we want to understand the commoning process from the title of this issue as a social practice that goes beyond particularisms and initiates the movement of building non-hierarchical relations. This movement is always a process of transforming: space, institutions, forms of cooperation, languages, affects or culture, but - above all – ourselves. Thus, commoning is based on completely different ontological foundations than that of "ownership-oriented" identification, privatization or making something public, while functioning within the existing system and accruing benefit to it. It is a process that enhances the production of new subjectivities, spaces, practices and things that takes place in encounters based on mutuality and occurring beyond the horizon of private property and the market, as well as beyond the public and the state. It is in the strength of these interactions that we see a place for the emergence of the space of the common and the germination of the seed of new, communist relations. At the same time, we are aware that this process is particularly susceptible to being intercepted by alien forces that are redirecting its energy towards activities governed by the logic of profit and identity. Therefore, we believe that in order to successfully resist the seizure of the common by capitalist and fascist forms of control and power, the movement of the common must not lose sight of the red horizon. As communing is not a way to reform the existing society, but an antagonistic form of its critique and a radical move beyond the rules of the game that govern the present political and economic order. We combine them, therefore, with the discovery of new opportunities, the occupation of territories still not included on the map of the capitalist status quo, and the creation of collective subjectivities across contemporary divisions.

Contemporary anti-communism, i.e. the regime of the multidimensional elimination of the common (from our memory, imagination and social reality), certainly does not help us to perform such a task, especially when it functions in the conditions of an individualistic ontology of neoliberalism. The individual described by Marx in the introduction on method in *Grundrisse*, the individual as the keystone of classical political economy, in which collective powers are transposed into individual

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agency and resourcefulness, turns out to be constantly gaining in strength, while remaining more and more dependent on the richness of social relations that lie at its base. It becomes all the more necessary to reverse this movement, since it erases the potential of the common and manages life through the competition that regulates individual behaviour traps social energy in the vicious cycle of exploitation. All this to prevent the constitution of subjectivities capable of facing the most pressing challenges of modern times: the crisis in the sphere of employment and production of the reserve army of labour, an ecological catastrophe or the intensification of chauvinistic attitudes. In an age when our collective powers are greater than ever, and our collective and planetary action is more urgent and necessary than ever before, the power to resist these tendencies can only be provided by the horizon of the common, as well as by the accompanying practices of communization.

In this issue, we present a variety of articles that tackle precisely the question of possible transformative practices and spaces that hold the potential for creating non-hierarchical relations. The authors – each in a different context and manner – present their thoughts on the communizing efforts and many challenges posed by the current state of things, which they have to contend with. Ewa Majewska, by asking the question "Precarity and gender. What's love got to do with it?", undertakes an investigation into the transformative role that love can play in unleashing that productive forces that are dormant in the extant patriarchal social reality. In doing so, she proposes a genealogy of love – the author eloquently analyses varied theoretical iterations, both Marxist and feminist, historical movements, and geopolitical backgrounds, in which a revolutionary concept of love can be glimpsed. This genealogy provides a counterbalance to a heteronormative, romantic, and privatized vision of law, simultaneously giving a foothold for the postulated sublation of this vision. As Majewska argues, "love should thus be seen as an inspiration, a tool and a motivation, as well as a toolbox for action, not flattened to its commodified, profit-oriented or traditional, romantic versions." In this capacity, love closely ties in with solidarity and extends to the many bonds we form as interdependent social beings. Love understood in this way has a role to play in overcoming the current inequalities in affective labor and ever--present precarity, hence aiming towards realizing a communizing mode of togetherness. Although Magdalena Popławska's explorations in „Towards producer-consumer cooperation" proceed from very different grounds – the author takes on an inquiry into the social movements behind the alternative food networks and demands for food

sovereignty – she also examines ventures geared towards more equal and communal relations. The description of transformative agroecology and many cooperatives serves to uncover the tenets behind the effort to go beyond industrialized and capital-driven food production. The focus on knowledge (often localized) exchange, mutual education, creating sustainability, and meeting the community's needs, first and foremost cause agroecological practices to "become expressions of care, as well as acts of resistance, manifested in everyday, tangible activities, and often associated with the space identified as 'home'."

The other presented articles require us to shift perspective – they draw our attention to mechanisms that create divisions within community and dissolve shared bonds. Nina Seiler in "March minusivity: Strategies of immunising and counter-immunising in the atmosphere of the Polish 1968" presents a discussion focused on the concept of minusivity as a potent tool for perceiving the process of induced distrust and the permeation of hostility throughout society. By looking into Polish literature and films, she proves that "the effects of an atmosphere of minusivity – the need to immunise against a threatening commonality – are thus autoimmunitarian reactions that cut into the immunising subject's very own flesh, destroying its sociality." Alongside this state of non--sociality there exists however a counter-measure, which is identified as a specific kind of commoning – one that works from within being-in--minus – that proves to be an apt way of counteracting its detrimental effects and rendering its power null. Aleksander Kopka, in turn, engages in a philosophically-oriented discussion around the concepts of grievability and mourning developed by Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida. In "Mourning and Grievability. Several Remarks on Judith Butler's Politics of Living Together", politics and ontology are investigated from a particular angle – the question of what exactly living together entails. Following the role that coming to terms with an imminent end to life plays within the community, author remarks on various implications it has for our co-existence. In this, he highlights the inequality hidden in the differing levels of precariousness and the vulnerability people are exposed to. The question of grievability has two purposes – it exposes the inner workings of biopolitics while simultaneously unveiling the new meaning of togetherness: "In living together, we challenge the existing norms and social bonds, cohesiveness or coherence of a *socius*, and at the same time, the phantasm of symbiotic or fusional life, the very concept of life, and the ontological arrest of being-together."

In line with the main topic of this issue and to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators

and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and
its possible futures. Therefore, the next part of this publication gathers
five voices, which attempt to tackle problems crucial for the future of
the politics of the common. These problems revolve around the following
questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles
for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist
politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles one may
see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the
common? Most of the answers are formulated from the perspective of
contemporary conjuncture, that is, remnants of the financial crisis and
austerity, on the one hand, and the contemporary reproduction crisis
accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemics, on the other. This is especially
visible in Felipe Ziotti Narita's reply, for whom the double crisis of
capitalism renders visible the commons as crucial for satisfying collective
needs and purposes. Nonetheless, the challenge remains the same. How
should we protect them from enclosures, extractivism and appropriation?
In this context, he draws our attention to the social movements from
which commonist politics may learn how to maintain the commons as
sustainable and resilient. Starting from similar premises, Sandro Mez-
zadra argues that at the time of such crisis our efforts should be directed
towards reinventing and reimagining welfare beyond the private-public
mix, and be based on the common. This task is all the more urgent, as
there is no going back to the western form of the welfare state, exposed
as a product of specific material conditions grounded in industrial mass
production of the Fordist era.

A glimpse into this process of reinventing welfare for our repro-
duction can be seen both in Eric Blanc's and Luis Martínez Andrade's
replies. While Blanc draws our attention to the logic behind recent
teachers strikes, especially in the United States, Andrade places his
answer in the Latin-American context and introduces us to the strug-
gles of communitarian feminism and indigenous movements. These
struggles take the form of a fight for the common, as they are endowed
with radical potentialities for the decommodification of sectors that
are crucial for our reproduction and putting an end to the process of
accumulation by dispossession. However, as Angela Dimitrakaki argues
in her reply, the current pandemic moment not only reveals the per-
sistence of the common but is at the same time a vivid testimony to
the extent to which capital secured control over our lives by taking
over the state and the media. To avoid repeating the defeats of the past
a counter-power is needed, one that will reclaim the state and use it
for the advancement of the politics of the common. Therefore, for

Dimitrakaka, perhaps we have too hastily rejected the idea of a political party as a mean of mobilization and connecting the multiplicity of struggles for the common.

The last part of this publication is a discussion around Martin Müller's text "In Search of the Global East" (its Polish translation appeared in the previous issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*). It gathers together the voices of Polish researchers who responded to the invitation formulated in the conclusion of this article to think together about the Eastern question and new ways of making a further intervention in the Western-centric geopolitics of knowledge. These comments, while appreciating the theoretical strengths and political potential of Müller's proposal, draw attention to its shortcomings and contradictions. Magda Szcześniak emphasizes, for example, that in avoiding class analysis, Müller disregards the dynamics of social divisions within the societies of global capitalism, and thus overlooks "similar patterns of class distinction and reproduction across (...) North, South and East". And only acknowledging their existence, she argues, can help us forge new forms of solidarity "amongst classes which are regularly oppressed by the dominant global capitalist order". Jan Sowa's remarks go in a similar direction. The author, in opposition to the strategic essentialism proposed by Müller, advocates for an anti-particularist approach – i.e. "alter-universalism" or "universalism of the subaltern". After all, as Sowa claims, our task is not to support the new version of the struggle between East and West, but to create a theoretical basis for a joint war with forces that destroy our lives, regardless of our geopolitical location. Adam Leszczyński also expresses his objections to the legitimacy of essentialising the experience of Central and Eastern Europe. In his opinion, this may contribute to perpetuating the ultimately infamous difference between the West and us – "still gray, still poor, and still authoritarian". The position of the Global East can also be problematic when it comes to its reception in the region itself. In this context, Tomasz Zarycki draws attention to the difficult fate of postcolonial theory in Poland, as well as the wider inclination of Eastern European societies to emphasize their uniqueness, which may destroy Müller's hopes of creating a single theoretical front under the banner of the Global East. The weakness of post-socialist academic institutions will not make it easier. The discussion ends with Martin Müller's response, in which he refutes some of the arguments put forward by his critics and advocates for "three ways to further intervene in the geopolitics of knowledge: revising existing concepts and theories (instead of emulating them), conducting comparative research beyond

the Global East, and extending the theory to geographic areas other than Eastern".

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By submitting this issue to your hands, we hope that the 10th anniversary of *Theoretical Practice* will be something more than a celebration of joint efforts and expression of gratitude for the work of many people who contributed to the journal over the years. We hope that the texts presented in this issue will set out further directions for the task of co--thinking and co-creating the future of the common.

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EWA MAJEWSKA

Precarity and Gender:
What's Love Got to Do with it?

This article examines the concept of precarity from a feminist perspective, focused on love and affective labour, critically addressing the gender inequalities of neoliberal capitalism. The romantic, heterosexual model of love, typical for modern Western societies, has been dismantled and criticized in various ways, leading to contradictory solutions, which include its annihilation, sublation and modification, as well as (rather conservative) efforts to preserve it. However, love – in its different versions, both as theory and in practice – still provides models and solutions, not only for the neoliberal labour market and new forms of exploitation and expropriation of care and affective labour, but also for revolutionary ideas and transformations, among both feminists and Marxists. It thus requires a theory focusing on the sublation, rather than annihilation, of love's past models. In my article I build such a perspective, signalling its potential for resistance and models for revolution in the times of neoliberal capitalism.

Keywords: feminism, precarity, affect, love, neoliberalism

But love is an un-Critical, un-Christian *materialist*.
K. Marx, *Love*, in: *The Holy Family*

Precarity, location and resistance

It is always interesting to look at the evolution of the gender division of labour in times of crisis. In recent decades, some important changes provided by feminist and minoritarian movements have reshaped the heteronormative, sexist, classist and racist capitalist patriarchy. Paternal leave, equal pay demands, sexual liberation, legal measures against sexual harassment, and access to childcare, have definitely supported new definitions of gender, in which masculinity lost a small part of its privileges (see: MacKinnon 2016; Illouz 2012; Giddens 1992). Care and affective labour have become objects of detailed studies, and the Social Reproduction Theory offered a generalized perspective on their understanding in the context of work and production (see: Bhattacharya 2017a). The egalitarian social trends are often perceived as ultimate proofs of the realization of genuine equity, which leads to unsubstantiated claims about gender equality already having been achieved. For some scholars, on the other hand, the issue of gender remains invisible, thus leading to blind spots and the maintenance of invisibility of domestic and affective labour, ignorance of discrimination etc. On yet another hand, some institutional mechanisms initially aimed at eliminating gender inequality, with the notable example of academic systems of prevention and reaction to gender based discrimination and harassment, have recently been seen as failures (see: Ahmed 2008, 2016; MacKinnon, 2016), thus leading to massive expressions of dissatisfaction and demands for justice from huge numbers of women on social media and other communication platforms (Majewska 2020). The most famous example of such a public demand for justice, undertaken massively via social media, namely the #metoo campaign, led to changes in anti-discrimination policies and ways of reacting to harassment (see: Mac Kinnon 2019; Bhattacharya 2017). These transitions show the dynamic and conflicting character of social changes in the context of gender relations, particularly in the context of sexuality, affective and care labour, as well as work relations.

In these transitions, the feminist discussion concerning love and intimacy constitutes an important element, assuming several contradictory roles at once, such as: the locus of ideals of individual success and fulfillment (Illouz 2007; Jonasdottir 2010), the model for labour relations in precarious neoliberalism (see: MacRobbie 2016; Weeks 2011), the inspiration for resistance and revolution (Ferguson 2013; Weeks 2011;

hooks 1984) and the heteronormative imaginary matrix of desiring practices to be overcome (Weeks 2017; Berlant 2011; Wilkinson 2013). It is between those and more historical perspectives on love that I would like to navigate, showing how the complete rejection of love constitutes an obstacle, rather than a liberating move for the feminist analysis of affective labour, queer utopia or feminist socialism. My effort does not attempt to defend the romantic model of love, focused on finding the significant other of a different gender, creating a family and supporting the capitalist economy and nation state with invisible, reproductive labour, progeny and monogamy. The traditional model of the family and affective relations has already been rejected by late-modern societies, and criticized for its abuse of women and children by feminists and progressive authors, queers and utopians. However, it should undergo a sublation rather than annihilation, as the affective involvement, reproduction and affective labour not only did not disappear, but in some cases became more intense and sometimes also even less visible than before, due to the externalization of some domestic and care labour to immigrant workers or peripheries. In such conditions, cultural theory cannot occupy its usual Western-centric position and pretend that colonies never happened and that all people enjoyed full citizen rights, because unfortunately this is not the case. This article is also aimed at undermining the perspective that neoliberal precarization oppresses us all equally, regardless of gender and sexual orientation; in fact it has its favorite oppressed groups, unsurprisingly fulfilling the definitions of the oppressed familiar from earlier times, such as women, the non-heteronormative, the colonized, "Europe's others", the poor, immigrants, etc.

Many scholars have already attempted to address neoliberalism's gender inequality. They argue that the politics of neoliberal precarization is not gender-neutral, neither in street politics (Athanasiou 2014), nor in the economy (Adkins 2015) or academia (Lipton 2015). Lisa Adkins puts it very straightforwardly: "It is widely rehearsed, for example, that austerity is impacting women more harshly than many men, and extending and intensifying socio-economic inequalities organised along axes of gender" (Adkins 2015, 32). Women face a new backlash in the process of the state's withdrawal from care and stabilizing functions, while being offered the same neoliberal instability, precarity and high productivity standards. However, men are not asked to fulfill the caring duties formerly provided for by the state, while women are. The key element of precarity as theorized by its main protagonists consists in the destabilization and dismantlement of state mediation between the worker and the employer. The stability of employment, care and affective assi-

The traditional model of the family and affective relations has already been rejected by late-modern societies, and criticized for its abuse of women and children by feminists and progressive authors, queers and utopians. However, it should undergo a sublation rather than annihilation, as the affective involvement, reproduction and affective labour not only did not disappear, but in some cases became more intense and sometimes also even less visible than before, due to the externalization of some domestic and care labour to immigrant workers or peripheries.

stance granted by employers in the Fordist or state communist work-places, along with their social and health insurances, are becoming objects of scrutiny in labour history research, rather than vital elements of the workers' present (See: Standing 2011; Negri and Hardt 2011 and Federici 2006).

We need to emphasize that this is largely a Euro-American perspective: in many countries of Asia and most African states these "caring" aspects of the state were absent in the last century. It should also be stressed that the concept of "precariat" is not new, and nor is its practice global. The rather popular presumption that precarity influences the life experiences of different people globally in the same ways has also been undermined (See: Munck 2013; Lorey 2015). Feminist theories of love and solidarity can strengthen this critique, with their emphasis on gender inequality, the materiality of affective labour and care, and the necessity of differentiating the experience of precarization according to gender. Black feminist analysis, such as that offered by bell hooks, clearly shows that love and family bonds, also those shaped in most traditional ways, constitute the only counterbalance to capitalist oppression on the labour market (see: hooks, 1984). Thus the axis of race and class should be considered as forming the experiences of intimacy and support quite differently for women in the upper classes and of white descent, than they do in the lives of migrant workers, refugees, the poor and ethnic minorities, hence the demand that feminist analysis should embrace intersectionality as a method (Crenshaw 1991). In post-socialist Poland, the centrality of love and family became strikingly important – as the neoliberal capitalist shock therapy swept away the state guarantees of the retired, the unemployed, the working poor and women, entire regions were thrown into unemployment and poverty levels that far exceeded those of state communist times (see: Stenning 2007). Family became central, not only in the lived experiences of those large parts of the Polish population, but also as an ideal central to the young generation's vision of a safe future. It was thus absurd and incomprehensible to see the analysis of the social survey of young people's ideals summarized as: "young Polish people are conservative" (Świda-Zięba et al., 2005). Yes, for the majority of young people right after the neoliberal transformation in Poland family was the most important element they wanted to see in their future, positioned ahead of freedom or a wonderful job in the hierarchy of their future goals. However, flattening such life choices under the common denominator of "conservative values" is a simplification, as for the majority of that generation family was the only stable, safe and providing social force they knew. Thus our discussions of family,

However, flattening such life choices under the common denominator of "conservative values" is a simplification, as for the majority of that generation family was the only stable, safe and providing social force they knew. Thus our discussions of family, values and private choices have to be liberated from such immediate, accusatory cliches as that one, which only recognizes conservatism in a larger composition of life experiences and choices, where it can very well simply signal a claim to a safe future, love and support, otherwise unknown to large sections of society.

values and private choices have to be liberated from such immediate, accusatory cliches as that one, which only recognizes conservatism in a larger composition of life experiences and choices, where it can very well simply signal a claim to a safe future, love and support, otherwise unknown to large sections of society. In particular, feminist discussions of love often become victims of one-sided version of progress, where dismantled family ties are immediately identified as emancipation, while there are perhaps different ways in which people express affect and care for each other, apart from a single person's household, polyamory or commune. As research proves, violence and abuse can take place in any kind of family/ intimacy or kinship context, and so can respect and care.

Love seems to be one of these words which need no explanation. Therefore I omitted its definition in my earlier texts on the topic, discussing the perhaps less evident moments where it appears, such as the process of accessing knowledge and formation, as in Socrates' discussion with Phaedrus, or in theories of translation, where authors usually refrain from discussions of love, but then suddenly say that "translation should proceed lovingly" (Benjamin 2004), or that love, understood as submission, should be present in the process (Spivak 1993). For the purpose of this text, love should combine its affective part – understood as emotional investment, which can become a burden, as in Lauren Berlant's analysis of "cruel optimism", but also as an inspiration to become a better person, as in Plato's *Phaedrus* – with the "love power", which, according to Anna Jonasdottir, embraces the potential to care and inspire, while constituting labour. Jonasdottir explains: "My use of Marx's method led me to identify love and love power as a creative/ productive—and exploitable—human capacity, comparable in significance to labour or labour power" (Jonasdottir 2011, 45).

In an effort to overcome what Wendy Brown aptly diagnosed as "the leftist melancholy", I would like to offer an inquiry in the gendered, geopolitically differentiated precariat, which still can be a dangerous class (Brown 1999; Standig 2011). As all analysis should be located, I will refer to the transformation from state communism to neoliberal capitalism in Poland for two reasons: to briefly commemorate the "Solidarność" independent workers unions created in 1980, 40 years ago, and to use an example of a state where the gender difference in the experience of precarization is particularly striking. As "Solidarność" demanded both democracy and socialism, which included the state's participation in the caring tasks of the family, this seems more than appropriate.

The neoliberal state of exception and the gender bias

The imposition of the state of exception upon an entire population, as Naomi Klein argued, proceeds in accordance with a discourse of "the shock doctrine" (Klein 2007). It legitimizes changes in markets that in fact enhance the crisis, leading to an extra profit for a selected group of 'big players,' while the economic deprivation of the masses deepens. The experiences of countries where neoliberalism was introduced as a general cure for the supposed disease of over-institutionalization, such as Poland, Argentina and many others, clearly support Klein's point. It should be stressed, however, that both Klein's analysis of the "shock doctrine" and Standig's analysis of precarity lack an in-depth feminist approach. While in *No Logo* a feminist perspective was still present, at least in the discussions of strategies of resistance, in *Shock Doctrine* Klein's narrative becomes supposedly "neutral" (Klein 2000). This might be because the focus here is on the oppressive measures of neoliberalism, rather than on strategies of resistance. I think it is now certain that because of the recent economic crisis and austerity measures imposed to supposedly end it, many societies have returned to traditional patterns of survival, which – as I will show below – are based on traditional division of gender roles.

The feminist scholars discussed here claim that love, intimacy, care and affective labour have been permeated by the capitalist production of value, but they also claim, somewhat in line with Michel Foucault, that they also have some potential for resistance (for other research on love, see: Bauman 2003; Ticinetto Clough 2007, Illouz 2007, 2012; Giddens 1992 and others). This difference in perceiving the nature of care/ affective labour influences how the strategies of anti-capitalist resistance are chosen – if we believe that family and love are free from capitalist influence, we might be tempted to uncritically strengthen them in political agency. Yet – as studies concerning domestic violence and the abuse of women as care-givers have shown, the sectors of social life which have been labeled as "private" still clearly require modifications that empower women (see: Majewska, 2006).

Precarity as a Form of Backlash

Austerity measures and the tendency to leave the employed and unemployed similarly alone with their health, social security and status problems, often lead to a reconstruction of traditional gender role divisions,

where women are once again designated as sole care-givers and affective laborers (Fantone 2007, Stenning 2007). The mechanisms depicted by Arlie Hochschild in her studies of the appropriations of emotional labour by capitalist corporations can now be seen as an important aspect of the current transformation of affective labour in capitalism (Hochschild 1983). Another aspect of this transformation, largely ignored thus far, relates to women being forced to perform care and affective labour when employers stop providing employees with any stability. This refers both to women active on the labour market, who – instead of nurses, secretaries and other specific personnel – have to care for their colleagues, many of whom have difficulties with handling insecurity and stress, and to women whose partners and other relatives rely on their care and support because of a sudden precarization of labour conditions. These tendencies have been emphasized in the work of the Italian feminist scholars, such as Laura Fantone, who explained that the analysis and political activism around precarity tends to produce a normative and selective understanding of subjectivity. Fantone claims: "This subject generally corresponded to a young man living in a northern Italian urban area, employed in the service sector, specifically in chain stores, customer care phone services or large distribution warehouses, and performing repetitive tasks" (Fantone 2007, 9). Her analysis clearly shows that in more traditional societies, even if they are perceived as part of the West, gender bias is consolidated in neoliberal crisis, and austerity measures can only reinforce it. Similar tendencies can be observed in Polish society, which – although state communism did encourage women to enter the labour market and definitely provided measures such as daycare or equality in education – was traditional when it comes to the gender roles. The state definitely did not suggest any reconfigurations of the binary gender roles, on the contrary – it emphasized the feminine mystique and the masculine as neutral form of subjectivity in all areas of social and cultural life. The political transition after 1989 in Poland did bring some new trends, like the wave of feminist organizations, publications and activities. However since the Catholic Church was one of the central agents of that transition, the capitalist emphasis on entrepreneurship and profit was immediately combined with a revival of traditional female roles. Thus, abortion was banned, marriage was defined as a union between a man and a woman (in the Constitution) and feminism became the public enemy for decades. In such a cluster of capitalism and Catholicism, most women work two shifts, at work and in family, in order to meet professional and family ideals (See: Stanning 2007; Dunn 2005).

The state definitely did not suggest any reconfigurations of the binary gender roles, on the contrary – it emphasized the feminine mystique and the masculine as neutral form of subjectivity in all areas of social and cultural life. The political transition after 1989 in Poland did bring some new trends, like the wave of feminist organizations, publications and activities. However since the Catholic Church was one of the central agents of that transition, the capitalist emphasis on entrepreneurship and profit was immediately combined with a revival of traditional female roles.

Socialist feminists and feminist writers of color seek a formula for love and solidarity, and do so in a spirit of understanding the necessary connections between individuals, as well as the complexities of embodiment, as well as of reproductive and affective labour, in search of safety zones away from oppression and discrimination (Ferguson 2011; hooks 1984; Davis 1999). As Marx demonstrated, one's views on love can be important for setting a context for critical theory. In this article I engage with several socialist feminist theories of love. The revolutionary love theorized by bell hooks and writings on Black blues singers by Angela Davis will also be discussed. Additionally, I focus on the relations between feminism and Marxism and briefly analyze concepts of "love-power", created by Anna Jonasdottir, and "affective production" and "global solidarity", as expounded by Ann Ferguson.

Love in Capitalism. Marx and beyond

Readers of Marx rarely examine his work in search of conceptualizations of love. However, the author of *Capital* definitely knew how to write about it and was known as a rather passionate journalist and pamphleteer committed to individuals' and groups' search for freedom. For Marx, love was often a useful element of the critique of the Hegelian left, the circle of "critical critique". In his letter to Feuerbach from 11 August 1844, Marx wrote:

> "These Berliners do not regard themselves as *men* who *criticize*, but as *critics* who, *incidentally*, have the misfortune of being men... Love, for example, is rejected, because the loved one is only an "object". Down with the *object*. It is therefore regarded as the greatest crime if the critic displays *feeling* or *passion*, he must be an *ironical ice-cold* [Sage]" (Marx [1844]).

This mixture of irony, criticism and integrity, resulting in ridiculing the absurd and reductive versions of social criticism is, I would like to argue, one of the crucial elements of Marx's legacy that is fully accurate even today, and can be particularly helpful for feminists. While granting the fulfillment of human's purposes, affect is also capable of unmasking and opposing dangerous forms of alienation.

This is the aspect of love most clearly visible in the fragments on money from Marx's *Politico-Economical Manuscripts*. Michael Hardt suggests, that in this fragment love is "equated with money", in the sense that both possess equivalent power, rather than bearing a resemblance

as ‚things'. Hardt finds it difficult to operate with such an understanding of love, since, as he argues, it cannot lead to creating new social bonds (Marx [1844]; Hardt 2011). In Hardt's view, Marx sees love solely as a form of exchange. Therefore *political* love, Hardt suggests, should extend across social hierarchies, create bonds, function not as identification, but *via* differences and, last but not least – transform the subjects it touches. I would like to argue that this is love's function in Marx's *Manuscripts*, in his letters – to Feuerbach and others – and in the short chapter on love in the *Holy Family*. Love, Marx argues, allows us to see through the alienation and reification performed by money; transforms us in such a way that we become immunized to commodification; and finally, makes us something more than a *sophos* (the bearer of wisdom, word used by Marx in the above quote). These claims can and should be read as a suggestion that love has a sort of unmasking potential: it moves both individuals and situations into something beyond the realm of reification, beyond market exchange.

It might be worth noticing that Marx presents the proletariat as a class incapable of love under the reign of capital, since in it its existence is reduced to merely reproductive functions, allowing mere survival, but not a true life. This point could be criticized from the perspective opened by Jacques Ranciere in his research on the French proletariat in 19th century (Ranciere 2004). In his dispute with Althusser since the 1970s, Ranciere argues that the Marxist image of the proletariat is in many ways petrified by the intellectuals' perspective, and thus perhaps blind to some aspects of the proletarian lived experience which bypasses bourgeois epistemology. In Ranciere's own research, this blind spot of the analysis of the proletariat is located in the invisibility of proletarian culture and education, however it could perhaps be expanded to cover the proletarian affective life, which is perhaps also more diversified and authentic than bourgeois science wants to see it as?

To suggest that love is for Marx merely a form of exchange also seems reductive. As much as I think Hardt was right to revisit the *Manuscripts* and to emphasize the necessity of using the concept of love in order to rethink politics, I think, that there exists a different way of reading Marx. In the sections dedicated to money Marx expresses a sudden interest in passion that undermine and possibly also challenges the hegemony of monetary exchange. This can be read as a recognition of a powerful affect that points to an alternative to capitalism.

It is also important to examine the chapter on "Love" from *The Holy Family*, perhaps one of the first feminist readings of popular literature. *Fleur de Marie* by Eugene Sue, a popular story published in a newspaper,

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depicts a young prostitute, who thinks she found rescue in true love, but eventually enters a convent. The main aim of "critical criticism", deconstructed by Marx under the guise of the popular novel, is to do away with affect. Marx says openly:

> "In order to complete its transformation into the ,'tranquility of knowledge", Critical Criticism must first seek to dispose of *love*. Love is a passion, and nothing is more dangerous for the tranquility of knowledge than passion." (Marx and Engels [1845] 1956).

For Hardt this kind of reference might not seem interesting, yet it never-theless could be seen as preparation for articulating a critical potential that love has – one of revealing the actual content of alienating capita-lism.

A line from *The Holy Family* aptly suggests what happens if theory is not interested in the affective: "For abstraction, love is „the maid from a foreign land" who has no dialectical passport and is therefore expelled from the country by the Critical police" (Marx and Engels 1956). In times of forced and often delegalized migration, voluntary and involun-tary nomadism, deterritorializations that do not always result in finding one's own *lignes de fuite*, theorizing love might be useful not only to theorize care and affect, but also to critically delimit the expectations connected with the freedom supposedly gained in late capitalism. The concept of "precarity" currently seen as a site of resistance, risks becoming another form of "bad abstraction", if it remains deprived of the practi-cal connections with the affective, with love understood not just as a mere sensation, but also as a set of embodied social practices informing and shaping our being with others. In order to become a challenge, a cri-tical and transformative concept, the theory of precarity should embrace the feminist analysis of gender divisions and of the persistence of tradi-tional roles, as well as the critique of the alienated vision of autonomy in which the subject has others to perform care labour for them.

Lauren Berlant's friendly reply to Hardt's article discussed above was published in the same issue of *Cultural Anthropology*. She explains that the concept of political love is yet to be invented, however she does not exclude the possibility of building one. This is where Berlant is very close both to post-operaist Marxists and socialist feminists, who, while focusing on affective and reproductive labour, also aim at a political concept of love. Berlant's issue with the "political concept of love" was summarized in one sentence: "So I fear that love asks too much or too little – I can't tell, I' m ambivalent – for it to ground a social theory".

In times of forced and often delegalized migration, voluntary and involuntary nomadism, deterritorializations that do not always result in finding one's own *lignes de fuite*, theorizing love might be useful not only to theorize care and affect, but also to critically delimit the expectations connected with the freedom supposedly gained in late capitalism.

She sympathizes with thinkers who ground their theories in love, such as Chela Sandoval, yet for her the kind of emancipatory pedagogy depicted in Ranciere's The *Ignorant Schoolmaster* almost never happens in love. An interesting interpretation of sexual love as non-sovereignty is proposed in Berlant's article as she claims: "Sex is what retains those pockets of freedom to be oneself but unsovereign; to be in nondestructive relation without requiring a full-souled performance of relationality or world-building duration" (Berlant 2011, 689). Although she perhaps could, Berlant does not see this apparent failure of the building of power as a victory of emancipation.

I think both Hardt and Berlant neglect the reproductive, care-giving and reparative dimensions of love; moreover, they also detach it from materialized existence. These dimensions are central in the Black feminist analysis of love, be it that offered by Angela Davis in her analysis of the blues legacies and Black Feminism, or the discussion of revolutionary love potential found in bell hooks' books on love and feminist theory (Davis 1999; hooks 1984). Hardt and Berlant situate love on the side of non-production, and also on the side of the non-colonized, utopian dimension of our otherwise commodified lives. In doing so they join ranks with critical theorists, such as Nancy Fraser, who recently claimed that at least some parts of affective labour has not been reified and can be a site of resistance (Fraser 2013), which, after the feminist Foucauldian analysis of biopolitics, sounds somewhat like a remnant of idealism. In the discussion of precarity and precarization, this concept of love obviously cannot hold, since it is one which, instead of strengthening the critical analysis of neoliberalism and resistance, only pushes the analysis even further away from its materialized, concrete social grounds. While inspiring, caring and revolutionary, love power, as Anna Jonasdottir argued at large, can also be commodified and alienated. Love cannot just be seen as an "existing utopia", as some critical theory thinkers would like to see it, nor as solely the abusive romantic pattern to enslave women and exclude sexual minorities. We definitely need a dialectics of love. Particularly in times when love has become a site of capital's agency and has been appropriated for the purposes of commodification. But it has also given hope, strength and support as a site of inspiration, pleasure and/or care. In this sense, love is purely heterotopic, it has all the potential for liberation and yet its conditions are always defined by the existing social structure, it can seem revolutionary, yet at the same time resembles a prison (Foucault [1967] 1984). Love can be compared to the *pharmakon* depicted by Derrida as a performative metaphor for writing, or to modernity, which – as Marshall Berman argued

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– transforms all that is solid into air, yet allows ruins, like New York for example, to rise up again (Derrida 1981; Berman 1988).

It might be interesting to see how different the feminist analysis of love is from Alain Badiou's *Praise of Love*, where he reinstalls the concept of *agape* as key element of his vision of change. Unfortunately, his narrative of disembodied, universal humans reestablishes the concept of a subject that has a clearly heteronormative character. In Badiou's account, in the process of loving, the object is always female and the loving one behaves like a man and speaks from a traditional masculine position (Badiou 2012). Although Marx argued for new notions of community and social individual, and Badiou clearly searches for such a formula, I would like to suggest that a revitalization of Christian visions of community might not solve the problems of alienation, oppression and inequality, as depicted by feminist theorists during the last 40 years. The disembodied *agape* of supposedly masculine subjects discovers a community of understanding, maybe compassion, but not of embodied affect connecting diversified, embodied and sexualized subjects, familiar from cultural studies of practice or affect.

An interesting perspective on love's appropriation by neoliberalism was provided by Kathi Weeks, who – in her article *Down with Love* – argues that the contemporary labour market introduced romantic passion as its main incentive, thus inviting workers to fall in love with their tasks or workplace, invest in it in ways shaped by the nineteenth century model of romantic love (Weeks 2017). As interesting, critical and ironic this analysis of the neoliberal labour market might be, it does not prove that there is nothing inherent to love that can be emancipatory when practiced in intimate/ affective contexts. On the contrary, it could be very well proven that the effort to once again shift love passion away from value production could become an interesting task for emancipation. However, in her focus on the exploitative dimensions of capital's appropriations of love discourse, Weeks neglects the caring as supportive dimensions love still has in families and households, particularly those whose members cannot afford daycare, health insurance or food. When she writes: "In this way, under heteropatriarchal capitalism, the ideology of romantic love born of the separate spheres, an idealized and feminized model of love, is being harnessed, not only to continue to assign domestic work to women, but to recruit all waged workers into a more intimate relationship with waged work" (Weeks 2017; 40), she is obviously right. However, a necessary question comes to mind: was all there is to love defined in the misogynist narrative of the 19th century? Such

a perspective seems reductive, as does the analysis provided by Weeks. While her rejection of patriarchal abuse of emotional labour seems perfectly justified, it should not be claimed that the processes of neoliberal appropriation of women's affective work fully cover all the "love's labour" that we can possibly imagine. On the contrary – as is evident from the narratives of Davis, hooks, Jonasdottir and Ferguson, and to some extent also in Alison Stenning's accounts of Polish families' struggles to survive the neoliberal transformation – love was and is the central power, allowing persistence, resistance and struggle of the oppressed (see: Stenning 2007).

Love and the Common

Contemporary Marxist depictions of affective labour do not usually embrace the full image of bodies shaped by social norms and the inhibitions caused by restrictive gender patterns. In Negri's and Hardt's *Commonwealth*, the description of affective labour is at times reduced to a 'smile of the hostess' (Hardt and Negri 2011). This image, directly borrowed from Hochschild's groundbreaking study of the commodification of emotion, sounds frivolous in a text aimed at uniting various forms of creative and affective work in resistance to contemporary capitalism. The concept of immaterial labour, developed throughout Hardt and Negri's writing until their last book, requires some serious reconsideration of the material, embodied social practice of gendered roles in order to address the contemporary evolution of labour conditions and possibilities for resistance emerging from them. Some authors, including Ann Ferguson, Eleanor Wilkinson and Rosemary Hennessy, have addressed these problems at length (Ferguson 2013; Wilkinson 2013' Hennessy, 2013). In the *Commonwealth* the notion of biopolitical labour replaces the immaterial labour, although this plausible change is sometimes still undermined, both by the authors and their commentators. The Foucauldian concept of 'biopolitical labor' suits the feminist analysis much better, since it does not suggest the sudden immaterialization of work, disembodied production and other problematic references. It is not defined as gendered, however, and this could perhaps be changed.

The "common" is defined by Negri and Hardt as a third version of ownership – sharing, as an alternative to private property or the state--owned "public" (Negri and Hardt 2011, 76-77). Another description focuses on what is commonly own – the air, all that is usually seen as a "resource", cultural production, including languages. Their thinking

is quite Hegelian in their insistence that both aspects – the type of relations between subjects and what is owned – are seen as "the common". Thus the relation and its involved parties all constitute the common.

Love was given a particularly important position in Negri's and Hardt's work. In Part 3 of their book, they declare that love is the "element that pulls together all other elements of their analysis", namely the multitude of the poor, the alternative project of modernity, the social productivity of biopolitical labor and the exodus from capitalist command (Negri and Hardt 2011, 179). In order to accomplish this task, love must become a kind of superpower, or at least it should be proven that it is a materialized, embodied force organizing life. In Negri's and Hardt's approach, love is mainly understood as a social force, a form of solidarity and care for others. Once again, the poor are the main reference. Love is also an economic power, as a way of organizing social production in the private. Love is ontologically productive, as a force allowing individual change. Love is also, as Spinoza noticed earlier, a way of redirecting one towards joy (Negri and Hardt 2011, 180-181). There are several forms of corrupted love, such as racist solidarity or mystical union with god, excluding any interest in the existing world (Negri and Hardt 2011, 182-184).

After reading the rather short passage on love and multitude, it is rather striking to discover that all the richness of affective involvements among humans (and also non-humans) is being reduced to social solidarity and individual romantic love, rather than allowing the multitude to enjoy its diversified forms of passions. In *Testo Junkie*, Paul Preciado rightly asked whether the multitude has sex, sexual organs etc. (Preciado 2013). I would add some other questions, such as: does the multitude have children, parents, grandparents, cousins, sisters, brothers? To recall the richness of affective labour, which is still predominantly perceived as women's work, and still organizing large areas of human lives (and non-human too). As we will see in further parts of this article, socialist feminists do not forget that Caliban had a mother, not only in analyzing the early days of the modern era, as Silvia Federici did in *Caliban and the Witch*, but also today (Federici, 2004). It seems clear, however, that the concept of the "common", as one built on a very clear dismantling of the private/public divide, and as one aimed at materialized, embodied social practice of conformity to social norms, but also of resistance, is perhaps the most interesting proposition of theorizing the social that has been put forward in recent years, especially in the texts of Negri and Judith Revel, published recently (Revel, 2003; Revel and Negri, 2011).

...

The common – as the process of becoming of the multitude, is depicted as composed of differently socialized individuals, who face different expectations when it comes to care.

As Negri and Hardt rightly point out, women who do not fulfill these expectations are seen as monstrous. Revel adds, that the (in)famous "feminization of labor" does not consist on the appearance of women or men in sectors of production in which they had not been seen before. The feminization of labour consists of introducing to the sector of production of all those factors that have traditionally been assigned to women and therefore excluded from the realm of production – such as love, relations, care etc (Revel 2003, 127). Therefore the emancipation of women or becoming-women in production involves a systemic change in the functioning of care, love and relationality, and the liberation of those who were socialized to perform them. In this analysis, love is one of the key elements of the project of emancipation.

Love and solidarity in socialist feminisms

Socialist feminists seem to have a more realistic and diversified vision of affective labour and love than some representatives of post-operaist Marxism. Iris Marion Young suggested that the question of the division of labour was almost as important for Marx as the issue of class, at least in the early stages of his work (Young 1981). She therefore saw a great potential in rearticulating the division of labour in view of gender and race, rather than just of class, making her much closer to Marx than many other feminists. The mode of production leads to discovering two aspects of love and affective labour: the fact that it is embedded and structured by the existing cultural and economic system (capitalism) and that even the parts of the social which are still resisting the processes of reification are not independent or external. In this sense, socialist feminists differ from those more tied to the critical theory school, who, like Nancy Fraser for example, would suggest that emancipatory theory and practice should refer to the non-commodified zones of the social (Fraser 2013), such as intimate relations or care/affective labour. However, at least in my view, the ontological status of these supposedly 'non-colonized' domains of the social seems problematic, and especially in view of Foucault's analysis of the "hypothesis of repression", Althusser's theory of ideology or Bourdieu's analysis of *habitus*.

Socialist feminist theorists focus on the gender division of labour and assume that a properly feminist socialist theory can solve the problem

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of social reproduction and reproductive labour. Anna Jonasdottir has been developing a concept of love-labour and an understanding of humans as "sociosexual" (Jonasdottir 1991). She later explained several presuppositions necessary to understand love-labor. On the most general level, she uses Marx's methodology to answer feminist questions, as Julie Mitchell suggested in the early 1970's. She is critical about the split between radical feminism, focusing on violence against women, and socialist feminism, and predominantly on labour (Jonasdottir 2009).

This division between production and reproduction, often emphasized by both Marxists and feminists, is also negotiated in Jonasdottir's work in reference to *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, where Friedrich Engels wrote about two types of production, namely labour and production of life. Jonasdottir claims that the divide between production and reproduction is a misinterpretation – again, common among both feminists and Marxists. She explains that Engels did not intend to create a dualistic vision of work but only referred to the fact that humans reproduce themselves and produce things. Rather than as a dualistic vision of human labour, Jonasdottir sees this as a description of a twofold nature of production. In line with Federici, she explains that not only both kinds of production are at the same time reproductive, but also that the tendency of simply projecting the structure of labour onto the family or vice versa is a form of unjustified reduction. Emphasizing the twofold character of labour should not be dualistic, but dialectical; intertwining nature and culture, biology and society, theory and practice.

The perspective opened by the concept of "love-labour" also shows a possible horizon of emancipation, which would be common for both sectors of production. I think this part of Jonasdottir's theoretical project is particularly important for an analysis of what was recently called "cognitive capitalism", and it is also particularly helpful in diagnosing and measuring the abuse of care labour within contemporary precarious forms of labour. It also possesses an important capacity of detecting the weaknesses of such concepts as precarity or "immaterial labour", in which the gender of the agents and the historical materiality of work is replaced by a possibly idealist concept. Although Negri and Hardt explain that only the results of immaterial labour are immaterial, yet still their later choice to discuss "biopolitical labor" seems far more interesting (Negri and Hardt, 2011). This Foucauldian concept not only allows us to recognize the oppressive systems of control and management organizing contemporary production, but it also points to the corporeal nature of production, to the embodied agency of any labour. The com-

bination of reproductive and productive aspects in all kinds of labour seems to be the only way to omit such misunderstandings.

Jonasdottir also notes that Marx discussed love as a kind of exchange that - although perverted by capitalism - can still be seen as different from value-oriented exchange. I would agree with her on this point, since the notion of communism, central for the later Marx's work, clearly follows from his concept of love. Love becomes the key element in his claims about human species and in his critique of the alienating practices of capitalist exploitation that transform the basic human biological functions into reproductive capacities. However, I would add that both Marx's and Jonasdottir's notion of love in capitalism could be further seen as 'colonized' – not only in the sense given to the word by Jurgen Habermas, when he discussed the colonizations of life, but also in the way it is used by postcolonial studies with its focus on economic exploitation based on imperialist distinctions involving ethnic differences as supposedly causal factors. The contemporary modes of capitalist production involve not only global processes, but also dynamics in which the intersections of class and gender are additionally crossed by racial and geopolitical inequalities. The contemporary Western mother is increasingly replaced by a Southern and Eastern one, just as maids from poor countries are an increasingly popular form of labour in the richer families in the global South and East. This means that affective labour should definitely not be uncritically understood as free or potentially resistant. On the contrary – large parts of it, possibly the majority, should be seen as either degrading or even enslaved. Yet still – as we have seen in Marx, and as we shall see in the feminist writers of color – there is some potential in love.

An important part of Jonasdottir's claim lies in the emphasis on the sexual capacities of humans and the tendency typical for patriarchal capitalism to promote men's appropriations of female sexual labour. Jonasdottir claims that since neoliberal societies tend to emphasize the importance of love, feminist theory should also focus more on this issue. Gary Becker, the Nobel Prize-winning neoliberal economist, stressed the importance of affect and, particularly, altruism, in organizing the family within society. Becker sees altruism as the basis for a new organization of society and combines the reinstatement of traditional gender roles with an increasing freedom… of the market. The use of women as those who should come back to their domestic duties and "take care" of men is a key element of this project of a reinstallation of the autonomy of the market (Becker 1991). It also provides a perfect legitimization for the precarization mechanisms of the labour market. In contrast,

The contemporary modes of capitalist production involve not only global processes, but also dynamics in which the intersections of class and gender are additionally crossed by racial and geopolitical inequalities. The contemporary Western mother is increasingly replaced by a Southern and Eastern one, just as maids from poor countries are an increasingly popular form of labour in the richer families in the global South and East.

Jonasdottir's theory shows the empowering aspects of care and affect, and not only criticizes the abuse of women's love-power, but also calls for emancipation.

In line with Jonasdottir, Ann Ferguson argues for the necessity of theorizing sexual and affective labour. She has developed a "multisystems approach" to social inequalities, in an effort to avoid reducing patriarchy to capitalism, and vice-versa, and a strategy informed by poststructuralism (Ferguson, 2009). She combines the sexual and caring aspects of reproductive labour and shows their coexistence in at least some household contexts, through the concept of "sex-affective production". Yet, as Young rightly pointed out, such a vision of caring/ reproductive labour is still distinct from market organized production (Young, 2005). In Ferguson's later work however this distinction is more permeable, partly due to the inspiration she takes from Deleuze and Foucault, and partly because she attempts to combine the racial and sexual aspects of affective production in a larger critique of patriarchal capitalism. Ferguson also claims that it is necessary to overcome the distinction between production and reproduction, and emphasizes the material and embodied character of affective labour.

For Ferguson, love is an affect between individuals or small groups, whereas solidarity should shape social relations in their multiplicity. As early as the 1990's Ferguson emphasized the necessity of building bridges – a metaphor popular amongst Chicana feminists (see: Anzaldua 1999), transforming the visions of development into less abusive and more inclusive ones. She asked whether a politics of liberation that polices the borders of its own membership can really succeed. In another, more recent article, Ferguson developed a more visionary account as to what love and solidarity should mean in radical feminism, and it is worth quoting at length here:

> To resolve the Solidarity/Love dilemma that haunts oppositional movements, then, feminist social justice activists will have to be prepared to combat the politics of fear, contempt, and hate in our oppositional affective economies and to network across class, race and ethnic/religious differences... (Ferguson 1998).

Ferguson sees love as an element a necessary to various forms of labour, both in the household and in various forms of political involvement and activism. Her concept of "affective economy" is a gender sensitive one, yet she is not only preoccupied with women's work. Looking into radical collectives, zones of sexual experimentation, such as the recent polyamorous experiments, and emphasizing the significance of homo-

erotic affective investments, Ferguson builds a vision of political love emerging from the resisting 'margins' of the social. In doing so she reconnects with Foucault, who revisited radical medieval communities in order to define the "heterotopias." Ferguson's theory, while avoiding the traditional affective constellations, allows a bridge to be constructed between the traditional families and alternative lifestyles, between traditional families and people following new organizations of intimacy. Ferguson uses the notion of "transformational solidarity", which expresses the ability of creating political bonds between various subjectivities learning from each other and unlearning colonial practices (Ferguson, 2011).

Another perspective on love, reproductive labour and resistance has been developed by Silvia Federici, who in an important lecture on precarious labour emphasized the complications faced by any loving mother or female partner who might refuse to provide care for her relatives (Federici, 2006). The supposed impossibility of this kind of refusal, the ultimate pain attached to a domestic strike, is an aspect of the affective labour performed in the household that is almost entirely absent from other Marxist accounts. Through the example of a mother willing to refuse to do housework, Federici addresses the dilemmas of all those performing care work, regardless of gender. Still, it should not be underestimated that many more women than men provide care and affection, and how strongly their self-esteem and confidence are attached to an evaluation of the capacity for providing care, both internalized and external. In this sense the people who "refuse" emancipation are often those whose sense of value is tied to their gender role and all the prohibitions/ exclusions it contains.

Discussing the notion of "immaterial labour" proposed by Hardt and Negri, Federici argues it is based on an unjustified presupposition as to the immaterial character of emotions. Affects are embodied; they are experienced in the bodies and shape the bodies in the processes of production (Federici 2006). Federici separates productive and reproductive labour in order to emphasize the gendered social inequalities and support feminist efforts to value this labour on one hand, and feminist forms of resistance on the other. Federici's claims about the specificity of the situation of a female worker, who – in order to resist – has to oppose the ones whom she loves, are some of the most persuasive lines in feminist writing. For Federici the experience of a refusal in the domestic sphere is a crucial form of feminist protest, but it also allows a transformation of others around the protesting woman and a process of learning that is exceptional for its particular position in the social sphere.

Decolonizing love and the precariat

The issue of translation, particularly when understood in a global perspective, allows us to look more critically at the concept of precarity. Another serious deficiency of the concept of precarity is its local, deeply Western definition and applicability. Ronaldo Munck claims, in his critical revision of the notion of precarity, that the majority of global labour is and has always been precarious; in contrast to claims by such authors as Standing and others, it is the Fordist model that constitutes an exception in the global system of labour, not precarity (Munck 2013). It should be noted that the organization of labour based on the Fordist model was also applied in the former Eastern Bloc, which constituted a large territory somehow unrecognized by Munck. Labour relations in China, although definitely distant from the comfortable stability of West European countries in the 1960's, can also be seen as problematic from the perspective of the applicability of one model – whether Fordist or precarious. Regardless of these difficulties however, the accuracy of Munck's critique of the concept of precariat should be stressed – the majority of the world either never had a stable, functional and safe model of labour, or enjoyed it only for a very short time, and selectively.

In his article Munck claims that the concept of the precariat blatantly repeats elements of colonial domination, "It also, above all, acts as a colonizing concept in the South in classic Eurocentric mode, although its proponents are blithely unaware of these implications." (Munck 2013, 753). Munck compares Standing's concept to that of "marginal worker" from the 1970s, "informal labor" and "social exclusion" from the 1980s, and even Marx's analysis of the "lumpenproletariat". Quite accurately, he points out that calling the precariat a "dangerous class" might be an unfortunate repetition of the worst upper- and middle class prejudices against the poor, which have already been criticized by Victor Hugo. His suggestion of *nihil novi* in the recent fascination with precarity bears some similarities to the critique of the fetishization of work in liberal feminism executed by bell hooks in *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center*. In the discussions in the early 1980s, hooks accentuated the fact that the majority of Black women in the US had already been working when Betty Friedan demanded access to labour for, as she thought, "women", who actually were a much smaller group consisting of the upper middle class white wives of rich husbands (hooks [1984] 2000). Munck argues, in a similar way that "From a Southern perspective work has always-already

been precarious, a basic fact which unsettles the notion that something new has been discovered." (Munck 2013, 753).

The gendered inequality resulting from precarization, yet not scrutinized in the main works on precarity, including those of Ronaldo Munck, has been particularly visible in the economic transformation in Poland in the last 20 years, when the big state-owned industrial workplaces were privatized, dismantled and eventually closed in several cities, and where at the same time the state was weakening its responsibility for social security, including health. The detailed studies of the "grey sphere" of unwaged labour done to sustain otherwise unsupported lives of the families of unemployed workers, which were conducted by Alison Stenning and her students in Nowa Huta, clearly show the dominance of work typically assigned to women, such as cooking, care-giving, cleaning and providing food, in the process of transition (Stenning 2007). The protests of nurses, repeatedly staged in Warsaw since 2001, which finally brought about a substantial pay rise only in 2015, also show, that in comparison to men-dominated professions, women had to survive on much lower wages than men (Kubisa 2014). Finally, the liquidation of alimony fund – the state support for single parents and other care-givers in 2003, suddenly transformed this group, predominantly composed of women, into one of the poorest groups in society. These examples do not cover the Polish experience of the neoliberal transformation in its full scope, but they do show how the process of precarization is gendered.

While translating bell hooks into Polish (see: hooks, 2014), I suddenly realized that her perspective, and the Black feminist perspective on love as the affective bonds preserving the poor, Black, excluded community from destruction in the hardships of capitalist exploitation, can help foster a better understanding of the role of affective labour in the processes of transformation after 1989. It is due to love-affective labour, not only to the ability to establish economic "grey zones", that entire cities survived the beginnings of capitalism in Poland after 1989. While Stenning and other authors focus on the labour dimensions, other aspects of love, such as inspiration, remain unseen. While, in turn, Weeks criticizes the abusive patterns of the neoliberal commodification of love in the service of capitalist management, the very prospect of solidarity, let alone intimacy or affection, is neglected. I believe Black feminism brings all these marginalized aspects of love back to the game, making of them the necessary yet neglected condition of resistance and revolution.

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Love in Black and Decolonial Feminism

Feminist scholars and writers of Color, particularly bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, directly refer to love and sometimes also to family as not only a space permeated by oppression, but also as a significant source of support and strength for black and migrant women. bell hooks depicts this difference perhaps most clearly, when she writes:

> Contemporary feminist analyses of family often implied, that successful feminist movement would either begin with or lead to the abolition of the family. This suggestion was terribly threatening to many women, especially non-white women (...). Devaluation of family life in feminist discussion often reflects the class nature of the movement. Individuals from privileged classes rely on a number of institutional and social structures to affirm and protect their interests. (hooks 2000, 38-39).

In her book *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, Angela Davis depicts several black female blues singers as the first black women to take the position of independent subjects, who not only overcame the conditions forced upon women in racist, patriarchal capitalism, but also became the secular public's voice of the Black community, singing about sexual love as a source of pleasure and possibly also liberation. Davis claimed, "Love was not represented as an idealized realm to which unfulfilled dreams of happiness were relegated. The historical African-American vision of individual sexual love linked it inextricably with possibilities of social freedom in the economic and political realms" (Davis 1999, 10).

This notion of love clearly reminds of one of the many definitions of communism proposed by Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology*, where they declare that it is not an "*ideal* to be established" but a "*real* movement, which abolishes the present state of affairs." It can also be seen as particularly close to Negri and Hardt's vision of love in the *Commonwealth*, discussed above. However, the fact that a woman expresses it, in the particular cultural context of the male-dominated community of Afro-Americans still suffering oppression, but – at the time the songs analyzed by Davis were written – also subjected to institutionalized violence and discrimination, makes the emancipatory potential of love far more persistent and compelling than anything we can find in the *Commonwealth*.

Davis's analysis of female singers stresses the fact that black women, who became stars of popular music in the beginning of the 20th century,

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somehow escaped the familial context. Davis claims that only a few out of some 200 songs she discusses were talking about family. In the great majority – black female singers sang about love in the name of individual, unmarried women, clearly seeking pleasure and accomplishment in their sexual relations with men. Davis stresses that the black blues female singers were also a secular alternative to the black preachers, who also referred to love as emancipatory power of the Black folk, but embedded it in traditional religious and familial contexts. From her point of view, MA Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday were the first black women to stand independently as representatives of the needs of the whole community and at the same time the ones who overcame the social, cultural and religious constraints of the patriarchal community.

The emancipatory heritage discussed by Davis also contributes to our understanding of precarity as gendered. In the highly individualized, newly segregated societies, in which more and more workers experience nomadic existence, the possibilities of experiencing love, but also of being allowed to express it as an experience of stability and fulfillment, are particularly limited. The songs recalled by Davis show women focused on their own emotional lives, not solely on the lives of others, to which they are more and more confined due to the dismantling of social and state secured stability. In the times of neoliberal transformation, of precarization and the introduction of austerity measures, these songs are a distant reminder of the liberating aspects of individual affect.

In her speech delivered during the Women Suffrage Convention in 1851, commonly known as "Ain't I a Woman?" Sojourner Truth explained the difficulties of finding a place and a form for expressing her own situation – of someone, who – as a former slave and also a black woman, and a political activist – does not fit in the gender and class categories provided for any of these positions if taken separately (Truth, [1851] 2014). Almost 150 years later, bell hooks initially finds herself in a similar position. Writing about her upbringing in a small town in Kentucky, still under racist segregation, she emphasizes the specific epistemology she developed as someone from "the margin". In *Feminist Theory*, hooks discussed the class nature of the rejection of the family in large parts of the feminist movement. She claims that most women in the US are still economically dependent on their partners, therefore it would not be possible for them to "buy services", as it is for women from the upper classes. She also writes about love as the element that makes it possible to endure the racist, misogynist class society (hooks 2000). Here a different experience of love in the Afro-American experience opens up –one in which the family sustains the individual's resistance to economic

injustices and racism, which are often intertwined. In Poland, the translation of hooks's *Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center* sparked a renewal in the interest in love, but also in class analysis and in viewing economic inequalities as necessary objects of feminist critique.

Conclusions

In the precarious societies of today, a growing tendency can be observed that obliges women to provide affective support, nourishment and care to all those whose needs ceased being the state's obligation. Thus precarity is not equally distributed among genders, as some of us – women – are expected to bear more of the costs of the transition of the state and employers, than others, i.e. men. Although there has been a large shift in gender roles and in the family structure, the traditional gender division of labour still prevails in most households, and still constitutes the major reference. Additionally, during the neoliberal crisis, be it that of 2008 or the current one, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, old patterns of the gender division of labour become dominant, resulting in a backlash and a renewal of women's obligation to fulfill their traditional roles.

All this should lead to a discussion of strategies of survival in the conditions of growing instability and insecurity; of resistance to globalized imperialist capital, as well as to prospects of changing the existing socio-political context of exploitative neoliberalism into a more egalitarian system. As I argued earlier, love can become necessary to explain the modalities of resilience and resistance against capitalist, patriarchal abuse and racism. It was portrayed in ways allowing such analysis by Marx and Engels, utopian thinkers, Hardt and Negri, hooks and Davis, as well as by various socialist feminists. Love should thus be seen as an inspiration, a tool and a motivation, as well as a toolbox for action, not flattened to its commodified, profit-oriented or traditional, romantic versions.

The feminist analysis offered here opens up a more general perspective, where elements of individual lived experiences are combined with visions of an emancipated society. Therefore they are similar to what Marx and Engels called *communism* – they are "not an *ideal* to follow", but "a *real* movement, which abolishes the present state of affairs" (Marx and Engels [1845] 1956). Not all love is lost in the meticulous ideology of neoliberal employment, where workers are lured to longer hours of labour by a vision of romantic engagement in their workplace, as Kathi

> Not all love is lost in the meticulous ideology of neoliberal employment, where workers are lured to longer hours of labour by a vision of romantic engagement in their workplace, as Kathi Weeks eloquently explains. In some contexts, love still gives the common the power to resist abuse, claim social change and to revolt against exploitation.

Weeks eloquently explains. In some contexts, love still gives the common the power to resist abuse, claim social change and to revolt against exploitation.

In the contemporary version of capitalism, love often appears either as an element of commodified affective production or as a revival of conservative family visions. It is the task of theories and practices of resistance, new feminist affective ontologies, to challenge these reductive perspectives, and offer a more nuanced vision of the social bonds structured affectively in ways exceeding neoliberal constraints and profit orientation.

We need a global theory of solidarity and resistance, not merely a globalized Western one. Thus the forms of affect and its organizing structures need not only to be viciously attacked and dismantled, but also observed, discussed, negotiated and reshaped, as perhaps there are more ways of liberating ourselves from abuse or commodification than rejecting love altogether. Perhaps such global solidarity can learn from the many ways affect, and love in particular, finds its expressions beyond the neoliberal labour market, in households, factories and dispersed sites of creative work, as well as in families and other affectively invested networks. In such a decolonized, feminist context, the concept of the precariat could be given an afterlife by recognition of the affective and material substance of the common, daily, embodied experiences of lives struggling with commodification in different cultures, class and genders. In doing so, feminist theory should not focus solely on the gender division of labour and the alienating, commodifying capitalist forces within the crisis. Love can be – as Ann Ferguson shows – a fundament for solidarity and collective acts of resistance, it can also offer, as Deleuze called them, *lignes de fuite*. In a world governed by "absent heirs", as invoked by Zygmunt Bauman, love and solidarity could build the much--needed connections.

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EWA MAJEWSKA – is a feminist philosopher and activist, living in Warsaw. She taught at the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, she was also a visiting fellow at the University of California, Berkeley; ICI Berlin and IWM in Vienna. She published four books and some 50 articles and essays, in journals, magazines and collected volumes, including: e-flux, Third Text, Journal of Utopian Studies or Jacobin. Her current research is in Hegel's philosophy, focusing on the dialectics and the weak; feminist critical theory and antifascist cultures. Her next book, *Feminist Antifascism. Counterpublics of the Common*, will be published in 2021.

Address:
Akademia Sztuki w Szczecinie
pl. Orła Białego 2
70-562 Szczecin
email: ewa.majewska@akademiasztuki.eu

Autor: Ewa Majewska
Tytuł: Prekarność i gender: Co ma z tym wspólnego miłość?
Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł analizuje pojęcie prekarności z perspektywy filozoficznej, skupiając się na miłości i pracy afektywnej oraz odnosząc się przy tym krytycznie do nierówności genderowych w neoliberalnym kapitalizmie. Romantyczny, heteroseksualny model miłości, cechujący współczesne społeczeństwa zachodnie, był na wiele sposobów rozmontowywany i poddawany krytyce, co doprowadziło do sprzecznych rozstrzygnięć – zniszczenia, zniesienia, wytworzenia się jego wariantów czy (raczej konserwatywnych) prób jego zachowania. Jednak miłość, w jej różnych postaciach, zarówno jako teoria, jak i praktyka, wciąż dostarcza modeli i rozwiązań nie tylko neoliberalnemu rynkowi pracy i nowym formom wyzysku i wywłaszczania opieki i pracy afektywnej, ale także rewolucyjnym ideom i przemianom, zarówno wśród feministek i marksistek. Miłość wymaga zatem teorii skupiającej się raczej na zniesieniu, a nie unicestwieniu poprzednich modeli miłości. W swoim artykule konstruuję taką perspektywę, ukazując jej potencjał jako model oporu i rewolucji na czasy neoliberalnego kapitalizmu.
Słowa kluczowe: feminizm, prekarność, afekty, miłość, neoliberalizm

MAGDALENA POPŁAWSKA

Towards Producer-Consumer Cooperation: Collective Learning in Alternative Food Networks as a Food Sovereignty Practice

The paper analyses collective learning strategies aimed at the transformation of food systems in the framework of food sovereignty, in the context of such key issues as environmental sustainability, socially just relations in diversified economy, and citizen participation in food systems governance. In particular, the author proposes to focus on the systematisation created by Colin R. Anderson, Chris Maughan and Michel P. Pimbert on the basis of their qualitative and action research undertaken for the purpose of developing the European Agroecology Knowledge Exchange Network (EAKEN). The network is part of the broader process of knowledge circulation led by the La Via Campesina movement, which has introduced the concept of food sovereignty into wider public debates. The main objective of EAKEN is to strengthen bottom-up learning strategies and informal education processes in the field of agroecology, which is defined through reference to sustainable farming practices and their recognised transformative potential. The author considers the pillars of transformative agroecology learning identified by the above-mentioned researchers in combination with various approaches in social movement

learning and critical pedagogy. The analysis recognises that the evolving concept of food sovereignty covers both rural and urban fields of activity, emphasising the connections between producers, workers, consumers and social activists. Consequently, this paper contributes to the discussion on the educational practices present in alternative food networks (AFNs). As studies indicate, although new AFNs in Poland are often inspired by initiatives created in Western Europe and USA, they adopt forms that depend on the local context. The analysis of learning strategies associated with such networks, taking into account different forms of power relations, as well as emerging opportunities and constraints, allows areas for future research to be identified.

Keywords: collective learning, food sovereignty, agroecology, alternative food networks, critical education, transformative potential

Introduction

The concept of transformative agroecology learning has its roots in a desire to change non-transparent and unsustainable food systems by focusing on ecology and human rights, strengthening local autonomy and democratising economic processes. With this in mind, Colin R. Anderson, Chris Maughan and Michel P. Pimbert (2019) conducted research among the activists of the global peasant movement, La Via Campesina, with the aim of contributing to the development of the European Agroecology Knowledge Exchange Network (EAKEN). The network brings together groups and organisations from different parts of Europe that are committed to implementing and supporting bottom--up learning strategies and informal education processes (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019). Researchers have systematised the methods used within EAKEN and identified four pillars of the so-called transformative agroecological learning approach: "wisdom dialogues" (*diálogo de saberes*), "horizontal learning," "combining the practical and the political," and "building multi-scale social movement networks." These pillars determine the knowledge exchange processes that, in turn, shape communication patterns, as well as decision-making, and self--organisation processes within food activism (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019). Their analysis encompasses the practices of food producers which are implemented "on the ground," but the agroecology strategies are linked to the political potential of food sovereignty, which refers to more abstract categories. Philip McMichael (2015, 193-194, 196) identifies food sovereignty as a counter-movement whose "second generation" phase combines both urban and rural initiatives at its core. The movement connects those who produce and consume, workers and activists, individuals and initiatives.

The article will use a literature review to provide a broader under-standing of the concepts of both food sovereignty and agroecology. This may allow for a deeper insight into innovative forms of food politics and the processes of a social change affecting modern food systems. Following David Goodman, E. Melanie DuPuis and Michael Goodman (2014), I assume that the spheres of both production and consumption can be sources of political agency. At the same time, guided by cultural approaches, these spheres may relate to each other in relational terms, complement each other, and create networks of dependencies. My inten-tion is to consider the producer-consumer relations that develop and transform through collective learning, in relation to the sociology of food and urban studies, as well as sociological and anthropological ana-

lyses of the countryside and agriculture. The main aim of the article is to analyse collective learning as a practice of food sovereignty with a transformative potential. I position myself as a person involved in multi-directional knowledge exchange within food initiatives, including food cooperatives and food sovereignty projects, which, in a way, also introduces a transdisciplinary approach to the subject (Klein 2014).

The above-mentioned pillars of transformative agroecology learning will be juxtaposed with the objectives of alternative food networks (AFNs), in accordance with the EAKEN researchers' conclusion that the model they have developed could be adapted to other social movements. As it operates at different levels of the food system, it highlights the role of non-producers in the process of social transformation, reframing them as "more-than-consumers" (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019, 544-545). Similarly, examples of documented activities from AFNs will be used to describe various educational practices on the basis of urban-rural relations. An analysis of these relations will be conducted to define their specific character in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. Since the transformative agroecology learning approach is rooted in popular education and agrarian movements, the paper will also contribute to the discussion on the objectives of critical pedagogy.

Within the frameworks

The birth of food sovereignty, both as an idea and a social movement, coincides with various historical processes and cannot be linked to a single geographical location – it remains a subject of negotiations and even a certain mythology (Edelman et al. 2014, 913-914). The mechanisms of the agri-food crises of the early 1980s, described by Walden Bello (2009) in relation to Mexico, China, African countries, and the Philippines, play a significant role in this context. As Bello notes, the reorientation of agricultural policy towards radical liberalisation has led to increased hunger, malnutrition and unemployment, as well as mass migration and protest movements. The systemic changes advocated by many of contemporary rural movements concern not only food security, but also working conditions and social relations that are part of food production and distribution. Small-scale producers, including farmers and farm workers, are involved in reshaping the way food systems are organised and the processes concerning access to land, water and seeds. These efforts are underpinned by the assumption that communities have the right to negotiate the relationship between global and local politics,

The systemic changes advocated by many of contemporary rural movements concern not only food security, but also working conditions and social relations that are part of food production and distribution. Small-scale producers, including farmers and farm workers, are involved in reshaping the way food systems are organised and the processes concerning access to land, water and seeds.

and to co-produce the knowledge necessary for decision making (Bello 2009; Pimbert 2017b). In the food sovereignty discourse, the possession of certain rights (e.g. the right to food and to produce food, but also gender rights, or human rights) plays a significant role, taking the form of acts of social mobilisation and practices anchored in everyday experience (Edelman et al. 2014; McMichael 2015). It leads to the emergence of debates focusing on "what food is produced, where, how and by whom" (Edelman et al. 2014, 926). Reflections on these issues include visions of food security, sustainable ecosystems, social well-being, and different "ways of knowing." As Massimo De Angelis (2017, 285) comments (referring to Bina Agarwal):

> The notion of food sovereignty has also evolved, and moved from a notion of state sovereignty (the demand that the state exercises its sovereignty with respect to food policies against the demands of the multinationals) to a notion of local and regional self-determination of farmers and consumers.

A flexible and evolving concept of food sovereignty cannot completely escape criticism. The influence of analyses of social movements and agrarian studies results in the formulation of such significant questions as:

> Who is the sovereign in food sovereignty? (…) How much pluralism is acceptable in a food-sovereign society with respect to models of agricultural production, commerce and consumption? (…) If food sovereignty is founded on ‚rights', how does it relate to the many other rights-oriented food movements that do not necessarily embrace the food sovereignty framework? (…) What impacts and implications does food sovereignty hold for transitions to a post-petroleum, post-growth and/or post-capitalist society? (Edelman et al. 2014, 913)

A critical perspective on food sovereignty may open up further discussions on the use of ambiguous concepts (such as "culturally appropriate" food) or the meanings attributed in social discourses to (transcending) regional and national borders (e.g. in the context of food-deficit regions) (Edelman et al. 2014). The complexity of the issue becomes more apparent when we take into consideration that the links between the idea of food sovereignty and the practice of agroecology are constantly reworked and updated, and that "an agroecology-centric position is but one of various possible interpretations of food sovereignty" (Edelman et al. 2014, 921). Agroecology itself has become the subject of competing definitions. Within the institutional framework (for instance, from the

point of view of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), it has been understood "as a science and a set of agricultural practices" (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019, 532), while for social movements, it represents "a way of life and a way of interacting with our surroundings [...] a process of individual and collective transformation, above and beyond specific agroecological techniques and practices" (ECVC Declaration on Agroecology). The second definition, supported by its social and ethical dimension, is based on such activities as setting up local seed houses, restoring plant species, or soil regeneration. In this context, building or renewing degraded ecosystems is based on observation, experimentation, and the selective use of new technologies, so that existing diversity (and diversified production) is not destroyed, and farming practices are not reduced to technological solutions (Bello 2009, 139-144). Thus, the implementation of agroecology includes in its scope social networks, environmental memory, social innovations and situated knowledge – the latter compiled from partial visions, embedded in the local context and based on alternative ways of valorisation. As "sustainable knowledge is often contextual, tacit, and proliferative" (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014, 190), it is supported by both expertise and accumulated experience, using discursive and non-discursive forms.

Acts of resistance and expressions of care

In accordance with the work of Anna Nacher (2019, 34), for whom permaculture is an expression of the ethics of care, the three principles of permaculture – earthcare, peoplecare, and fair shares – serve as a manifestation of a "silent revolution," which is oriented towards maintenance rather than expansion. Less destructive agricultural practices that restore soil fertility, reduce fertilizers, and other sources of greenhouse gas emissions (e.g. related to deforestation), or ensure biodiversity, become part of a broader ecological discourse and constitute a response to climate change (Bańkowska 2019; Pimbert 2017a). It is worth noting that the consequences of climate change may be seen as reflections of the practices of the so-called Capitalocene era, which are related to the processes of unlimited capital accumulation and "business as usual." Jason W. Moore places capitalism in the "web of life" and highlights the relationship between power, profit, production and reproduction, which was formed even before the eighteenth-century industrial revolution (Moore 2015, 2017). The theory of the Capitalocene replaces the anthropocen-

tric assumptions about humanity's responsibility for the problems of the modern world with an analysis of the role of capital. It emphasises the commodification of environmental resources, human labour, food, and energy (Patel and Moore 2018). In this context, agroecological practices become expressions of care, as well as acts of resistance, manifested in everyday, tangible activities, and often associated with the space identified as "home." Such practices coexist with small-scale agriculture and occur against the background of enclosures of the commons and deagrarianisation processes in rural areas (Bollier 2014; Sadura, Murawska, and Włodarczyk 2017). They also overlap with the return of the "peasant issue" to the contemporary humanities, and the social debate (van der Ploeg 2018; Ryś 2015). Nowadays, the "new peasantry" is discussed in terms of relational categories and in the context of food activism.

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Urban-rural alliances

Studying food sovereignty from the perspective of Polish domestic debates can be challenging. As Aleksandra Bilewicz (2020, 3) states: "[i]t is probably due to the dominance of the modernisation paradigm that the idea of food sovereignty is nearly absent from both academic and public discourse on agriculture and rural issues in Poland." In her work, Bilewicz analyses elements of the food sovereignty concept found in the assumptions and objectives of both contemporary rural protest movements and urban AFNs. She draws attention to the processes of combining the efforts of producers and consumers, but also highlights the significant discrepancies between their worldviews (Bilewicz 2020).

An alternative strategy for monitoring discourses on food sovereignty could consist in focusing on comparable analytical categories and related emancipatory practices. In this respect, it is worth taking into consideration the juxtaposition of contemporary food cooperatives with the pre-war movement of consumer cooperatives, which has been proposed by Bilewicz (2018). This juxtaposition allows Bilewicz to introduce the notion of countermovement and embeddedness, derived from Karl Polanyi's work, and to analyse food cooperatives in terms of mechanisms of self-protection against the domination of market forces and increasing social alienation.

A contemporary food cooperative can be regarded as a model example of AFN. It requires establishing direct contacts between consumers and food producers (including farmers) and organising group food pur-

chases. Cooperatives have been developing in Poland since 2010 and "are referred to as one of the most important informal social movements to have arisen in the country over the past few years" (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019, 586).[1] At the same time, cooperatives, which draw upon the idea of building active communities, usually opt for small-scale and informal organisations. The "shopping sessions", carried out once a week or once every two weeks in (usually temporary) spaces where farmers bring their produce, are the foundation of these initiatives. Volunteer members of cooperatives are the ones who are responsible for the coordination of all tasks, including the packing and dispensing of food. The Dobrze Food Cooperative is one of the entities that introduces new models of organisation, which at the same time provide greater stability. Registered as an association, it runs two shops in Warsaw, has employees, but also relies on the pre-agreed engagement of its members (Bilewicz 2018; Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019; Pracownice i Pracownicy, n.d.).

Aside from the above-mentioned models, the AFNs field contains various socio-economic initiatives, some of which result from short food chains rooted in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, and some of which constitute new bottom-up initiatives originating in Western Europe and the United States. They include: farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), community and allotment gardens, farm-to-table box schemes, and local brands (Goszczyński et al. 2019; Rosol 2020). The AFNs landscape also encompasses organic farming and fair trade certificates, however, the links between these standardised systems and alternative economic practices of food sovereignty are seen as ambiguous (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019, 596; Edelman et al. 2014, 916). Although AFNs are economy-oriented, their aim is to transform the interconnections in food production and consumption, and to provide an alternative to conventional food distribution chains (Rosol 2020, 53). Numerous, scattered and diverse initiatives which fall within the scope of the AFNs are associated with the notions of food citizenship, the "quality turn" in food production and consumption, post-productivism, and environmental concerns (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2015, 2019; Goszczyński, Wróblewski, and Wójtewicz 2018;

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1   Currently, food cooperatives operate in various urban centres in Poland, among them Częstochowa, Płock, Wrocław, Lublin, Poznań and Kraków. Their informal nature makes it difficult to determine the exact number of members. In 2018, it was estimated that approx. 1,100 people were active in such initiatives (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019). However, the research conducted in 2012-2015 indicates that the majority of cooperative members relied on the work of the most active people (Bilewicz 2018).

Goszczyński et al. 2019; Rosol 2020). The alternative character of these networks is described in relation to product quality (e.g. its origin or production methods), distribution systems (networks and relations between producers and consumers), and alternative economic practices (Rosol 2020, 53, 56-58; see also Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019; Goszczyński et al. 2019). The first two characteristics often attract the attention of the agri-food industry, due to their susceptibility to integration into commercial market strategies and discourses on organic, vegan, local, or regional food (Rosol 2020; see also Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2015). Meanwhile, Marit Rosol (2020, 59) notes that alternative (or non-capitalist) economic practices deserve special attention, highlighting their variety in the following enumeration:

> (…) other forms of economic transactions (e.g., barter, donation, gifting, collecting, production for self-consumption), working practices (e.g., unpaid work of members, equal pay for all employees regardless of rank), forms of economic organization (e.g., cooperatives, collectives) and forms of financing (e.g., member loans, cooperative shares, crowdfunding, and others).

It should be noted, however, that not all AFNs represent food decommodification, and most of them "are not alternative in terms of their economic practices" (Rosol 2020, 59). Nevertheless, they are all considered to be oriented towards more than pure economic profitability. They maintain the viability of local food chains, support small-scale farming, encourage social integration, and are associated with reflexivity towards eating practices and environmental objectives (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019; Kopczyńska 2020; Rosol 2020).

The researchers' interest in the AFNs in Poland can be linked to a number of bottom-up initiatives that drive a growing engagement of city residents and formulate responses to global socio-economic crises. It is connected not only with the efforts to build a fair economy and implement systemic ecological solutions, but also with taking care of one's health and a desire to celebrate high-quality food (Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2015, 2019). At the same time, the fact that small and medium-sized farms – and almost half of the agricultural land in Poland belongs to farms whose total area is equal to or smaller than twenty hectares (Baer-Nawrocka and Poczta 2018, 95) – are entering new food networks may be a sign that they are seeking some autonomy in the market, and partial independence from market fluctuations, especially in the face of crisis situations (van der Ploeg 2018). There are experts that claim that such initiatives as food cooperatives or community supported agriculture

will expand their scope, growing in line with the increasing importance of small farms and organic farming in Poland (Sadura, Murawska, and Włodarczyk 2017, 21, 33). On the other hand, the conclusions from the research on the attitudes of contemporary Polish farmers towards the concept of cooperatives indicate that the farmers' readiness to enter any such cooperation is relatively low.[2] These reluctant attitudes are motivated by, among other things, the negative experiences of older generations who remember the post-war system with its forced collectivisation of agriculture and the state's political control of the cooperatives. Young farmers are more open to experimenting with various organisational forms and are interested in their economic potential. However, in general, most of the farmers had only a cursory stereotype--based knowledge of cooperatives. More importantly for this analysis, farmers pointed out that the development of cooperatives would require greater knowledge (professional advice) in the field of legal, organisational, or financial solutions, as well as the involvement of leaders who would have to initiate and coordinate such cooperation (Nowak and Gorlach 2015).

The subsequent sections of this article will focus on presenting the basic characteristics of AFNs in their less recognised dimension – in terms of the creation and circulation of knowledge. As indicated in the systematisation developed by Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert, learning processes are not just the background for food activism. They may require contesting knowledges, rethinking beliefs and habits, and rewriting discourses (McFarlane 2016). As McFarlane (2016, 175) explains, "learning emerges as a distributed assemblage of people, materials and space that is often neither formal nor simply individual." Within AFNs, it can be assumed that learning processes and non-formal education can result in the development of tools that foster critical reflection.

The importance of meetings

The first pillar of the transformative agroecology learning approach was identified by Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert (2019) as "wisdom dialogues" which embrace various encounters and social relations that strengthen pluralism. Such "wisdom dialogues" can be set in the context of hospitality (while also raising the issue of abandoning privileges in favour of coexistence; see: Majewska 2016), experienced by city dwellers

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2   The research was conducted in 2013, among farmers who used the services of agricultural advisers (Nowak and Gorlach 2015).

when they visit rural farms, as is often the case with food cooperatives or community-supported agriculture (Goszczyński et al. 2019; Rosol 2020). For example, members of the Dobrze Food Cooperative express their impressions of the visit to a vegetable farm with the following words: "this visit gave us the opportunity to learn more about vegetable cultivation methods and the approach towards soil, resources, health, and life" (Byliśmy z wizytą, n.d.). The meeting in question took place on a 10-hectare farm that combines elements of conventional and organic farming in the so-called integrated production. The Poznań Food Cooperative organised similar trips. The participants of one such trip helped with weeding, watered vegetables with nettle-based fertilizer, and collected tiliae flos. The farmers shared stories about their use of clay and straw for construction purposes, and milking farm animals (Poznańska Kooperatywa Spożywcza 2017).

The above-noted category of hospitality may also refer to relationship-building rituals, such as participation in a common feast prepared using produce from organic farms, or in a "coffee with a farmer," to which the Jurassic Food Cooperative invites the inhabitants of Częstochowa, by explaining:

> (...) you will find out what an organic farm looks like today, whether it is still possible to cultivate the land in an environmentally friendly way, what methods are used by farmers on their farms, what they grow, and why (Jurajska Kooperatywa Spożywcza, n.d.).

It creates space for direct testimonies from people who are involved in farming – ones which go beyond the folksy narratives about work and life in the countryside. As Amanda Krzyworzeka (2015) notes, on the basis of her ethnographic research, work in agriculture does not have clearly defined working hours or remuneration, and the division of tasks often overlaps with family relations. Independence goes hand in hand with the need to maintain constant vigilance, and, sometimes, with a feeling of helplessness in the face of difficult-to-predict circumstances, e.g. dependence on weather and climate (see also Bolek 2020). At the same time, for most of the farmers studied by Krzyworzeka (2015, 145), work is a duty and an integral part of life.

"Wisdom dialogues" gain particular importance in intergenerational meetings and within uncompetitive spaces which bring together beginners and more experienced people (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019). Learning processes among cooperatives' consumers include such issues as collective conflict solving, principles of participation, self-help,

and self-governance. As developing skills related to non-hierarchical communication and collective decision-making is part of a group process, the role of a person who introduces new members, a mentor of sorts who is sensitive to changeable contexts, may prove to be crucial (Goszczyński et al. 2019; Rosol 2020). This issue was discussed during the 4th Congress of Cooperatives, organised in 2015 in Warsaw. The organizers note that the role of a leader is associated with competition, power, and prestige, and that it is often neglected in collectives which are focused on systemic changes. Yet, leadership could be redefined within a democratic collective to include cooperation, mutual understanding and empowerment (IV Zjazd Kooperatyw, n.d.).

This postulate may be applicable to the works of Paulo Freire, which introduce the notion of a humanist (and revolutionary) educator who participates in dialogic education. For Freire (2017), a dialogue should be "mediated by the world" (61) through "the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people" (68), and in connection with their "preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears" (69). In this context, the act of "naming the world" is based on awakening consciousness and leads to the transformation of the world, to *praxis*. Dialogic education requires mutual trust and avoiding slogans or manipulation, and for Freire, a dialogue is an alternative to generating hierarchies (Freire 2013, 2017). However, it should be emphasised that Freire's theses on universal humanisation are challenged by analyses indicating that the author has neglected to consider the experience of women, partly by omitting the potential for change embedded in the private sphere, and also by approaching pedagogy in terms of struggle and revolution (Kopciewicz 2011, 34-37).

Finally, "wisdom dialogues" mean openness not only to relations between producers and non-producers, but also to cooperation with research institutions, universities or organisations, as well as the use of diverse definitions of ecology and just food systems. In this context, the Agro-eko-lab – a social innovation project created in 2018 as a result of the cooperation between the Dobrze Food Cooperative and the Agricultural School Complex in Jabłoń – can be seen as an example of scaling up cooperative and agroecological ideas. This pilot project consisted of a series of training courses for students which focused on alternative ways of selling food and cultivating crops in accordance with agroecological principles. Students participated in a series of workshops and study visits to the farms which collaborate with cooperatives, an ecological market, and a cooperative-run shop. They had a chance to ask a number of questions, for example, on switching to organic farming

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or finding customers (TransferHUB, n.d.). One of the results of the project was the development of an experience-based model of education for young farmers. It had three thematic blocks: "Inspiration and knowledge," "Experience," and "Action." The scenarios of the proposed activities include such tasks as mapping the formal and informal sources of agricultural knowledge, the evaluation of selected on-line promotion strategies for farms, and identifying strengths and weaknesses of an agroecological farm (TransferHUB, n.d.).

"Wisdom dialogues" involves recognising different sustainable farming methods – e.g. organic, biodynamic, or based on permaculture (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019, 537). However, it should be noted that there are models that do not fit this framework – "less-than--ideal" farms and agricultural landscapes (Edelman et al. 2014, 922). In a broader perspective, there is a need to conduct a dialogue with various groups of farmers, stakeholders and people interested in the subject (and Agro-eko-lab is a good example of such a dialogue). It may also be important for social movements to advocate for legal and organisational solutions supporting agroecology. This applies also to the financial mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy (including grants and subsidies), as well as state-run advisory programmes. With regard to the latter, according to the research on the transfer of knowledge in the organic farming system in Poland, agricultural advisory centres lack competent advisors specialising in this sector that would work on specific, practical solutions, and maintain in-depth relations with scientists (Śpiewak and Jasiński 2019). The possible involvement of social activists in agricultural policies does not mean giving up on the transformative nature of food sovereignty and agroecology. It can, however, be an expression of a critical self-reflection on the niche character of contemporary cooperatives and an attempt to create less dispersed regional networks of connections.

Another issue to consider is the standardisation of criteria – in the research carried out by Bilewicz and Śpiewak (2019) members of Polish food cooperatives demonstrated a certain level of distrust towards institutionalised organic certification schemes. Therefore, the analyses of the "quality turn" involve considering food as healthy or organic due to its links with individual producers. This means that the acquisition of knowledge about products and production methods takes place through personal connections (Bachórz 2018; Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019; Goszczyński, Wróblewski, and Wójtewicz 2018). In the case of traditional urban food markets, trust in producers can determine the perception of the quality of the food they sell. What matters here is "purchasing

products from particular people and in particular places" (Bachórz 2018, 104). As Bilewicz and Śpiewak (2019, 590) point out, direct relations between consumers and producers can result from both the pursuit of a "just economy" and the desire to maintain consumer control over food-related anxieties. "Natural" food is generally perceived in a positive way, but at the same time it is associated with a need for vigilance, verification, and risk assessment (Kopczyńska 2015). This contradiction highlights not only certain lack of trust at the personal level, but also – and perhaps most importantly – the insufficient transparency of global food systems (Kopczyńska and Bachórz 2018).

Farmer-to-farmer, peer-to-peer

The ideas of horizontal learning do not exclude differences in experience and diverse knowledges; they assume the equivalence of all voices in dialogic education.(...) On the other hand, horizontal learning within AFNs has to be confronted with the issue of hierarchy.

"Horizontal learning," the second pillar of the transformative agroecology learning approach proposed by Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert (2019), refers to knowledge that comes directly from those who verify it through their work and then subsequently share it, on a farmer-to--farmer or peer-to-peer basis. The ideas of horizontal learning do not exclude differences in experience and diverse knowledges; they assume the equivalence of all voices in dialogic education. In principle, those who learn become trainers themselves. Often, the exchange of knowledge and experiences takes place among people who are facing similar challenges and taking part in a certain process collectively. On the other hand, horizontal learning within AFNs has to be confronted with the issue of hierarchy. The relationship between producer and consumer may be marked by tensions and barriers that result from negative stereotypes about the countryside or peasant farming – "considered 'backward' and 'inefficient'" (Goszczyński et al. 2019, 2). Ewa Kopczyńska's (2017, 650) research indicates that Polish AFNs are not free of such problems and that biases may affect the mutual trust in cooperation. The trajectories of industrial development and the dominance of a specific modernisation paradigm in public debates have played an essential role in shaping such attitudes (Bilewicz 2020; Edelman et al. 2014). Therefore, social movement learning and critical food systems education, as areas of study and research, involve recognising power relations, class- and race-based divisions, and gender inequalities (Meek and Tarlau 2016). Supporting initiatives that go beyond the interests of a particular social class necessitates reflecting on the elitist character of consumption practices present in some of food cooperatives, as analysed by Bilewicz (2015, 2018). Social relations in these cooperatives functioned as

a "selection mechanism," attracting people with similar (alternative) lifestyles or opinions. At the same time, access to healthier and "fair" food, corresponding to the aspirations of the middle class, became the priority. A further intriguing factor is the fluidity of spatial divisions, as exemplified by the "rural-rural divisions" – contemporary rural inhabitants are consumers as well, and can be both "peasants and proletarians" (Edelman et al. 2014, 918, 925).

It is worth emphasising that those initiatives and networks that developed in response to the shortage economy during the socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe also constituted alternatives to the dominant market distribution chains. Neighbourhood food exchanges which included, for example, sharing self-processed food, growing fruit and vegetables in urban allotment gardens, rural farmers supplying their family or friends with produce, and domestic cooking, constituted coping strategies, but also everyday grassroots, sustainable practices, which are still present in the post-socialist reality (Bachórz 2018; Bilewicz and Śpiewak 2019; Goszczyński et al. 2019). The "tacit knowledge" and "local know-how" (Kopczyńska 2020, 2) that emerge from such historically shaped activities, contribute to the creation or restoration of horizontal links. Therefore, while shopping, the significant moments are those when the consumer recalls vegetables with irregular shapes and rough skin, and associates fruit with defects with crops that are free of "improvements" (Kopczyńska 2017, 648). There are also consumers who judge the food offered at marketplaces "by looking at and smelling the items and by weighing up their trust of the seller" (Koopczyńska 2017, 650), and who have their own "paths, vendors, and rituals" (Kopczyńska 2017, 644). In her work on the traditional open-air food markets, Ewa Kopczyńska (2017, 648) concluded that this landscape of food practices includes a "prosumer model" of the customer. Many of Poland's inhabitants have gained experience in food production and cooking embedded in the country's agricultural history. The city dwellers interviewed by Agata Bachórz (2018) also referred to their own competences in the assessment of food products. To some extent, the prosumers, just like producers, have the ability to assess products in a fair manner. It can be stated that both those groups cultivate "informal or embodied knowledge, rooted in the past" (Bachórz 2018, 103), where "[t]he past is a resource not only in terms of evoking emotions, but also as an actual toolbox: a reservoir of skills and knowledge which could have been devalued but are now returning to life" (Bachórz 2018, 106). Such a revival is also possible due to material resources – such as tools, recipes, and their ingredients (Goszczyński, Wróblewski, and

Wójtewicz 2018). Knowledge anchored in the physical world, derived from everyday experience, allows the development of a language that emphasises the importance of the elements which are accidental, changeable, private and sometimes overlooked in social discourses (Freire 2013; Szkudlarek and Śliwerski 2010). The elements of the home distribution system – "the home itself, the freezer, bags, jars, and bottles in which food is kept and processed and which make it available to people" – are of great importance in this context (Kopczyńska 2020, 10). They mediate relations between individuals, and turn the consumer into "a reproducer of culture" (Goodman, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014, 43; Starego 2016).

Empowerment and cooperation

"Combining the practical and the political," the third pillar of the transformative agroecology learning approach, is based on the connection between individual experiences and socio-cultural reality (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019). It includes involvement in the outside world, not just gaining knowledge about it (Starego 2016, 45). In the case of agroecological farming, combining the practical and the political leads to the empowerment of peasants – as land users (identified in historical and political terms) who are confronted with the "commodification of land, labour, genetic resources, and knowledges" (McMichael 2015, 199). In turn, the political dimension of AFNs corresponds with advocating for food sovereignty, and can be expressed through support of rural protests, as was the case with the Dobrze Food Cooperative and the Farmers Protest (Protest Rolników) in 2014 (Bilewicz 2020). Further political objectives relate to the idea of redistribution – ensuring broad access to healthy and affordable food. Finally, the blurred meaning of sustainability and the selective, competitive, and city-centric character of new urban environmental regimes require effective counterproposals (Edelman et al. 2014; Rosol, Béal, and Mössner 2017). Research indicates that local (grassroots) versions of sustainability are still present in the daily experience of traditional and family-oriented food networks in Poland, while newly emerging AFNs seem to be more compatible with global discourses on innovations and resilience (Kopczyńska 2020). Taking this into consideration, the critical learning process does not follow a specific scientific model, allowing instead for recognition of the political dimension of everyday experience, differences, and new forms of knowledge (Szkudlarek and Śliwerski 2010).

According to Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert (2019), the collec-

tive character of knowledge construction is an important element of "combining the practical and the political." Their concept refers to a "collective will" – to act, organise, and struggle for collective rights (Edelman et al. 2014, 925-926). In this context, knowledge may be incorporated into the "circuit of the commons." As De Angelis (2017) explains, the circuit of the commons includes both commodity and non-commodity production. "The non-commodity circuit represents the relational, cultural, and knowledge practices [...]" (De Angelis 2017, 196) which belong to the "commonwealth" of an "associated community," and are reproduced and developed through "commoning activity" (De Angelis 2017, 192-197). This, in turn, leads to the last pillar of the transformative agroecology learning approach described by Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert (2019) as "building multi-scale social movement networks." In this context, "relational translocalism" emerges as a potential approach to shaping bottom-up networks at local, national, and international levels (McFarlane 2016, 177). Acting in a specific place, and with regard to local concerns, does not exclude reliance on non-local support and multi-level relationships, and coalitions created within the framework of food activism include inter-paradigm debates. Accordingly, the discourses on transformation and cooperation developed by AFNs overlap in their scope with debates on post-growth, which, in turn, raises the issue of the agricultural industry's dependence on fossil fuels (Rosol 2020). Researchers emphasise the correlation between "cheap food," subsidies and fossil energy, and point out that it will inevitably be transformed by climate change and its consequences (Edelman et al. 2014; Patel and Moore 2018). In contrast, as Kopczyńska (2017, 652) comments:

> (...) cooperatives as collective consumer entities attempt to undermine the balance of power of the modern economic system – here specifically the food system – but they are also happy to make wider demands and speak with one voice with other associations of consumers, customers, recipients, residents, users, and other collective entities.

Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article constitutes a response to the "call to move from a farm-level focus to a whole food system approach to agroecology" (Anderson, Maughan, and Pimbert 2019, 544), which

Acting in a specific place, and with regard to local concerns, does not exclude reliance on non-local support and multi-level relationships, and coalitions created within the framework of food activism include inter-paradigm debates.

gives rise to the need to update and expand the newly developed model in relation to other regions and social groups. As people studied by Anderson, Maughan and Pimbert (2019, 541, 544) often found it difficult to identify specific learning methods within the above-described pillars, the systematisation has to be further deepened on the basis of specific, localised social practices. Within the context of the AFNs, the transformative potential of these practices is associated with diversified, situated and "sustainable" knowledge, which can be used to strengthen pluralism and non-hierarchical relationships, and become the source of empowerment and mobilisation. These assumptions are particular significant in the context of the minimal presence of food sovereignty ideas in Polish academic discourse and public debates. What is more, the research results indicate that the stereotypical images of agriculture and elite consumption patterns are reinforced by some of the Polish AFNs.

There is a need to continue the dialogue "between universal academic models and situated knowledge" (Goszczyński et al. 2019, 4) and reflect on the narratives that dominate within the sphere of AFNs. This includes a critical approach to one-dimensional visions of modernisation. It is becoming clear that recognition and redistribution are possible responses to the narrow scope of environmental policy and spatial justice demands, including fair urban-rural relations. The research reveals a diversity of strategies: from the "silent revolution" at the level of everyday farming practices, through vernacular ways of producing knowledge and transformative learning processes, to political advocacy and new social movements. In each of these areas, the relationship between individual experiences and the socio-cultural reality requires special attention – in order to better understand the process of empowerment defined not as the acquisition of critical competences by individuals, but as engagement in a collective dialogue and action in relation to specific external conditions, problems, or phenomena (Starego 2016).

The learning processes within AFNs deserve further analysis, especially in the case of those networks that have so far received less attention, such as farmers' markets or urban garden allotments. Analysing food consumption from a socio-political perspective means presenting the consumer's choice as something which exceeds the boundaries of passivity or illusion, and the food itself as more than an object of commodity fetishism. This approach assumes that the consumers' impact on the food system may go beyond cosmopolitan market niches. Contesting and developing knowledges, besides the right to be informed, is of key importance in this context, while advocacy for food sovereignty can support the scaling-up of cooperative and egroecological models (Good-

man, DuPuis, and Goodman 2014, 33-38, 45-47). This is strongly related to the political agency of consumers, and thus to the need to explore more deeply the last two pillars of the transformative agroecological learning approach – "combining the practical and the political" and "building multi-scale social movement networks." Taking a critical look at the implementation of these assumptions by the AFNs may make it possible to overcome the city-centric framework that is ever-present in the discussions on the new social movements.

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MAGDALENA POPŁAWSKA – sociologist, PhD candidate at the
Faculty of Sociology, at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She
has published on cultural education and animation. Her current research
concerns social-ecological systems, social movements, critical pedagogy,
and social circuits of knowledge. She is particularly interested in know-
ledge sharing within food-related initiatives.

Address:
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
Faculty of Sociology
Szamarzewskiego 89
60-568 Poznań
email: magdalena.poplawska@amu.edu.pl

Autor: Magdalena Popławska
Tytuł: W kierunku kooperacji producencko-konsumenckiej. Kolektywne uczenie
się w alternatywnych sieciach żywności jako praktyka suwerenności żywnościowej
Abstrakt: W artykule analizowane są kolektywne strategie uczenia się, ukierunkowane
na transformację systemów żywnościowych w odniesieniu do założeń suwerenności
żywnościowej. Strategie te umieszczone zostały w kontekście takich zagadnień, jak
równowaga przyrodnicza, sprawiedliwe relacje społeczne w obrębie zdywersyfiko-
wanej gospodarki, a także aktywność obywatelska w ramach zarządzania systemami
żywnościowymi. Autorka proponuje przyjrzenie się systematyzacji dokonanej przez
Colina R. Andersona, Chrisa Maughana i Michela P. Pimberta, która jest rezultatem
prowadzenia przez nich badań w działaniu oraz badań jakościowych, służących
rozwijaniu Europejskiej Sieci Wymiany Wiedzy o Agroekologii [*European Agroeco-
logy Knowledge Exchange Network* – EAKEN]. Sieć ta jest związana z szerszym obie-
giem wiedzy w ramach ruchu La Via Campesina, który z kolei wprowadził koncep-
cję suwerenności żywnościowej do globalnej debaty publicznej. Głównym założeniem
EAKEN jest wzmacnianie oddolnych procesów uczenia się i edukacji nieformalnej
w obszarze agroekologii, definiowanym w odniesieniu do zrównoważonych praktyk
rolniczych oraz ich potencjału transformatywnego. Określone przez badaczy filary
transformatywnego uczenia się agroekologii [*transformative agroecology learning*]

zestawione zostały w tekście z różnymi podejściami wobec uczenia się w ruchach społecznych [*social movement learning*] oraz z założeniami pedagogiki krytycznej. Autorka uznaje, że ewoluująca idea suwerenności żywnościowej obejmuje zarówno wiejskie, jak i miejskie obszary aktywności. Podkreśla przy tym powiązania pomiędzy producentami, pracownicami, konsumentami i aktywistkami społecznymi, a także włącza się do dyskusji na temat praktyk edukacyjnych obecnych w alternatywnych sieciach żywności [*Alternative Food Networks* – AFNs]. Jak wynika z opracowań, pomimo iż nowo powstające w Polsce alternatywne sieci żywności często inspirują się rozwiązaniami stosowanymi w Europie Zachodniej i Stanach Zjednoczonych, przyjmują one postać zależną od lokalnego kontekstu. Analiza powiązanych z tymi sieciami strategii uczenia się uwzględnia różne formy relacji władzy oraz pojawiające się możliwości i utrudnienia. Określa ponadto potencjalne obszary dalszych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja nieformalna, suwerenność żywnościowa, agroekologia, alternatywne sieci żywności, pedagogika krytyczna, edukacja krytyczna, potencjał transformatywny

NINA SEILER

March Minusivity: Strategies of Immunising and Counter-Immunising in the Atmosphere of the Polish 1968

The article discusses mechanisms of social immunisation in the context of the Polish 'March 1968'. Whereas immunising strategies are a normal part of sociality, I argue that around 1968 a growing anxiety about the mechanisms of being-in-common led to an autoimmunitarian dissociation of the Polish society, which I conceptualise as an atmosphere of minusivity. Strategies to counter exclusions and discriminations were trapped in this immunitarian paradigm as well. A crisis of communication arose from the dissonance between the reality created by the official language surrounding March 1968, and the reality experienced by many people, as this latter reality was silenced and repressed. Mistrust in language resulted in an immunitarian retreat from affective communication, which was replaced by impersonal communicative scripts. This communicative crisis widely prevented the March experiences from being conveyed in the cultural production of the time; nonetheless, I will try to retrace some of the immunitarian and counter-immunitarian strategies in literature, film, and retrospective accounts.

Keywords: March 1968, PRL, immunisation, atmosphere, minusivity, commoning, language, communication

The notion of 1968 in Poland marks a specific moment that is often seen as a turning point in the project of Polish communism. Whereas up to the late 1960s, the communist project despite the Stalinist experience appealed to parts of the older and younger generations, political historians detect a general negation of the belief in communist ideas after 1968, leading to the formation of oppositional movements (Gawin 2013; Siermiński 2016; Szacki 1988). This was due to the disappointment rising gradually after 1956, when the de-Stalinisation process introduced by Władysław Gomułka seemed to promise a more liberal and prospering society. However, in the 1960s it became clear that without reforms, the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) would intensify political pressure on society while the system slid deeper into economic crisis (Zaremba 2004). Thus, youth protests for more social, cultural and political freedom broke out, but were soon crushed by political oppression and a clampdown by the militia, beginning on 8 March 1968. These events coincided with an officially encouraged anti-Semitic campaign after the Six Day War in 1967, in which Poles of Jewish descent were accused of a cosmopolitan "Zionism" that was said to be corrupting Polish socialism from within. The media discourse in the years 1967-70 closely associated "revisionism," the allegedly elitist call for reforms, with anti-Polish "Zionism." Both accusations affected the Warsaw intellectual sphere most, but reverberated in intellectual and Jewish circles throughout Poland, as they were picked up by broader sections of society. Apart from social isolation, dismissals, and sometimes the internments of suspected individuals, a generational shift in the Party's power structure and other institutions emerged (Eisler 1998; Grudzinska Gross 2011; Osęka 1999; Osęka and Zaremba 1999; Tych 2014).

The unwillingness for reform, paired with power play and a contradictory racist campaign, revealed the corruption of the socialist system in the Polish People's Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL). Many of the "March" generation's new functionaries showed a mostly careerist, socio-hierarchical interest in the system (Szacki 1988). The events known as March '68 thus reveal an instrumental intermingling of socialist class-struggle arguments with ethnic and social delineations and resentments. The image of an elite privileged and hostile to the socialist system was constructed as a negative contrast to an idealised socialist Polishness. The latter consisted of citizens of the ethnic Polish working-class or peasant lineage that were now able to socially and politically advance, occupying the positions abandoned under pressure (Checinski 1982, 229; Friszke 2007, 134). March 1968 as a dispositive

The events known as March '68 thus reveal an instrumental intermingling of socialist class-struggle arguments with ethnic and social delineations and resentments.

is thus closely tied to the image of a "proper" (Campbell 2011) community, while identities defined as improper or alien were excluded and othered. The anti-Semitic campaign and resentment against intellectual circles in the late 1960s thus furthered *ex negativo* the imaginary of a proper and "closed," ethnically homogenous nation (Michlic 2006, 248; Steinlauf 1997, 65–71; Zaremba 2011, 271–358).

Autoimmunitarian reactions

Around March 1968, strategies of social immunisation were omnipresent, both on micro and macro levels. The two intertwined strands of anti--"revisionism" and anti-"Zionism" articulated the dynamics of inclusion through exclusion, inscribing people into the categories of "us" and "them." Political arguments intermingled with identitarian definitions, as ethnic lineage figured as a proof of one's ideological stance, while political convictions could easily be understood as an indicator of improper descent. Many ethnic Poles thus felt pressed to procure their certificate of baptism (Osęka and Zaremba 1999, 237). Even though the slogans of the March campaign were rather simple and pithy, it became clear that a negative definition and exclusion could affect almost anybody, at least in the centres of power such as Warsaw. Wojtek Lamentowicz, then a student at Warsaw University and member of the party-dependent Union of Socialist Youth (Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej, ZMS), commented on this later, as follows:

> In the general climate two paradoxically complementary emotional trends dominated. The anti-repression shock reduced the issue of system change to the condemnation of the compulsion apparatus and to the demand for the rule of law; while the nationalist-communist frenzy searched for the enemy in its closest environment, tracing something alien and secret, reduced itself rather often to seeking out victims among Jews without regard to their stance. People affected by the shock of police-propaganda state aggression perceived themselves as victims of the system. The other ones, affected by the frenzy, tried to find for themselves a safe place in the institutional order by actively pointing out victims. This dramatic alternative – to be a victim or to co-create victims – produced due to its emotional consequences a whirl that drew in an awful lot of even very rational and experienced people. I perceived the emotional infection by this narrowed field of choice as something humiliating, offending reason and the elementary rules of common sense. Those who participated in the creation of victims can be divided into two groups: those who did it voluntarily and with

conviction, and those who lacked the civil courage to oppose it unambiguously. (Lamentowicz 1988, 44)

This lengthy quote is relevant for several reasons. It not only draws attention to the omnipotent division of society into two groups, the "victims" and the "victim-makers." It also points out the performative aspect this dividing had, as by pushing others into the excluded group, one could claim a space in the included group oneself. Of course, as these strategies of othering worked in many directions, this "safe place in the institutional order" was precarious and had to be continually re--created, while the "frenzy" (*amok*) lasted.

Another very important notion introduced by Lamentowicz is his term "emotional infection" (*emocjonalne zarażanie*). The notion of infection brings to mind the strategies of social immunisation that would prevent infection. However, according to Lamentowicz, preventing infection was not possible after March 1968: either one was a victim or one participated – willingly or unwillingly – in the creation of victims. Everybody was infected or affected. The immunisation then took place on the concrete level of categorising people and the self-installation on the proper side. Immunisation itself, so to speak, was the infection. As in autoimmunitarian reactions, the "disease" attacking the organism were the immunising mechanisms put into motion for protection. Thus, the enactment of divisions and delineations in the state apparatus and in society in the period of March 1968 led to a further disintegration of society, instead of a "communitarian" consolidation of the "proper" group. This social crisis was reinforced by economic stagnation, a disintegration of the family sphere and a perceived destabilisation of the gender order (Czerwiński 1969, 91–93; Kosiński 2006, 235–69; Seiler in preparation; Sokołowska 1975, 165–69; Zaremba 2004). Survivalist pragmatisms that had to be staged again and again and on almost all levels of social life made it difficult to entertain unbiased relations to others, be they family members, colleagues, neighbours, officials or complete strangers in the streets.

Yet the other component of "emotional infection," namely emotions, are just as important. The autoimmunitarian crisis of 1968 played itself out, as Lamentowicz notes, on a level that contradicted "reason and the elementary rules of common sense." Its mechanisms annulled the intentions of "rational and experienced" (*rozumni i doświadczeni*) people. The emotional level brought into play the anxiety about the self's integrity and wellbeing, thus eventually leading people to contradict their own convictions. As Sara Ahmed notes, in contrast to fear, anxiety is not tied

Thus, the enactment of divisions and delineations in the state apparatus and in society in the period of March 1968 led to a further disintegration of society, instead of a "communitarian" consolidation of the "proper" group.

to a visible object, but is characterised exactly by its non-containment in a specific object, by the delocalisation of its source (Ahmed 2017, 1318). As noted above, in 1968 the need to re-perform social delineations could arise at any time and from any direction, depending on the dynamics that the accusations developed. While the object of this demarcative anxiety dissolved, its bodily repercussions were intensified. Anxiety was incorporated; increasingly so, as the biopolitical strategies used to include people in the proper, or to exclude them from it, were also tied to bodily features and an imagined Jewish physical appearance, and to suspicious behaviour. The immunising strategies, thus, were for the most part strategies evoked affectively, in order not to be affected by othering.

The atmosphere of minusivity

While the time of the PRL is retrospectively often described as a specific "atmosphere" or "climate," both these terms appear with obsessive frequency in the time after March 1968. Wojtek Lamentowicz several times mentioned the atmosphere of events propagating "authoritarian--nationalist thinking," when he came into contact with "that which already is drawing close, stamps its feet and shouts" (Lamentowicz 1988, 44). His formulation invokes an atmosphere of threat – not (yet) physical violence, but a potentiality of violence represented in the physical approaching of something obscure, and in yet undirected gestures of violence like stamping and shouting. Lamentowicz, having experienced the atmosphere in the hall during a speech by Mieczysław Moczar – a key figure in propagating ethno-nationalism around 1968 and aspiring First Party Secretary –, intended to "transmit" (*przekazać*) this uncanny atmosphere as a warning (Lamentowicz 1988, 43). While we do not have Lamentowicz's actual report at our disposal, in his retrospective we can recognise strategies of verbally transmitting an atmosphere as well: in the reconstruction less of the content of the speech than of the bodily reactions of the audience. The literary staging of atmosphere relies on the introduction of material elements, an additional *staffage* entering interaction with its surrounding. Similar to the notion of anxiety, an atmosphere does have both a bodily dimension – it can stick to or soak into bodies and things – and an immaterial characteristic that cannot be pinned down exactly but has the most astounding effects on bodies and behaviours. According to Gernot Böhme, an atmosphere can be understood as an "indeterminate spatially extended quality of feeling" entering the "bodily economy" (Böhme 2017, 15). Around 1968, the

notion of atmosphere mirrors the notion of something invisible yet highly affective (for affect, see Ahmed 2004; Brennan 2004; Leys 2017; Shouse 2005), of a certain force that disempowered the members of society without being explicitly verbalised or embodied, and that yet found its sedimentation in people's bodies and practices. Precisely because of its effects on the mechanisms of human homeostasis (Muhle 2014, 85), the concept of atmosphere – as difficult as it might be to grapple with – is key in the analysis of the March experience.

In order to grasp the atmosphere that dominated during the March "frenzy" terminologically, I want to discuss the term "minusivity" (*minusowość*) that the reporter and writer Ryszard Kapuściński introduced in *Cesarz* (The Emperor, 1978).[1] The term "minusivity" (translated as "negativism" in the English version), as introduced by Kapuściński, perfectly describes the atmosphere of anxiety that was predominant around March 1968.

> I have trouble pinning it down, but you could feel negativism all around. You noticed it everywhere on people's faces, faces that seemed diminished and abandoned, without light or energy, in what people did and how they did it. There was negativism in what they said without speaking; in their absent being, as if shrunken, switched-off; in their burnt-out existence (Kapuściński 2006, 82).

Kapuściński portrays a general atmosphere of brooding, an atmosphere that is difficult to pin down, that wafts in the streets and affects all citizens. As a neologism, minusivity nominalises this atmosphere, thus creating a *thing* that is both striking in its conspicuous image and its abstract, mathematical vagueness. The term underscores an element of alienation, while at the same time objectifying the immaterial source of anxiety. In my opinion, the term helps to discuss the mechanisms of immunisation and commoning in the March atmosphere. In Kapuściński's definition, minusivity is physically tangible in people's faces, and "in what they said without speaking; in their absent being, as if shrunken, switched-off." They appear as if they had retreated from public life, from interacting with each other, in order to keep clear of the atmosphere. Both in its name and description, minusivity translates into the

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1   The book, though set in Ethiopia and dealing with the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie around 1973/74, was often read as a criticism on the Polish situation in the 1970s and the rule of First Party Secretary Edward Gierek (Domosławski 2012, 240–43; Ziątek 1996, 171). Kapuściński might not have had 1968 precisely in mind when writing *Cesarz*; however, his description of minusivity is embedded in the general post-March Polish atmosphere.

realm of the absent, of retreat and repulsion, in both verbal and bodily communication. To work with the concept of minusivity in the analysis of March 1968 can thus support our understanding of how media discourse, social behaviour, and bodily repercussions interacted.

Immunitarian exclusions and refusals such as those that occurred in response to the events of March 1968 in Poland are, according to the political philosopher Roberto Esposito, to be understood as the counterpart of *communitas* (Esposito 2010, 12).[2] Esposito strips both terms – *communitas* and *immunitas* – to their common linguistic core of *munus*, pointing out the two-sidedness of the mechanisms of being-together. He states that society is based on the exchange of *munus*, which knits an invisible net of ever-flowing needs, dependencies, and debts; but *munus* should not be denoted solely as a gift but rather as the debt that arises when receiving a gift or service (Esposito 2010, 4–11). *Munus*, Ruggiero Gorgoglione adds, is neither a duty nor a gift, but "the interaction of these two forms of social practices [Handeln]" (Gorgoglione 2016, 193). In discussing Esposito's terminology, Greg Bird notes the contradictory senses in the word *munus*, which at the same time denotes opening up and closing off, and thus inherently points towards "lessen[ing] (lack, diminish, minus)" both of the self and the common (Bird 2016, 161). The subjects, Bird concludes, are "each […] commonly exposed to the lack, which Esposito argues is the common" (Bird 2016, 161). The common implies a sort of negative "valency," a minus that opens the space for the relation to the other.[3] The minus derived from *munus* is thus the quality of social being as a being-with: it indicates the impossibility of completely isolating the subject that is always entangled in a network of relations and dependencies. The subject's social homeostasis is based on mechanisms of commoning and immunising, opening and closing the fluctuating borders between the self and the other, and thus installing the liminal sphere of the common and mutual affect (Massumi 2002, 214).

An autoimmunitarian crisis, however, destabilises the homeostatic balance. Whatever the motivation behind it, the attempt to reach a "pro-

The common implies a sort of negative "valency," a minus that opens the space for the relation to the other.

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2   *Communitas* figures as community installed not by identiarian similarities and exclusions, but by acknowledging affective relations and difference. While *communitas* flourishes on communication that transgresses borders, *immunitas* translates as the withdrawing from communication, as the refusal to acknowledge a common denominator allowing for interaction and association.

3   Understood in Eliasian terms, valencies determine the relations between human beings and constitute the (structured) need to associate; thus, Norbert Elias calls them "affective valencies" (Elias, n.d., 131 f.).

This spread of immunitarian processes as a response to the awareness of a common being-with is what I call minusivity – the autoimmunitarian "disease" resulting from and attacking the common being-in-minus.

per" entity inevitably works through mechanisms involving the immunisation and exclusion of the other. We are living in "conditions of unwilled adjacency" (Butler 2004, 134), and the thought of being affected, associated, contaminated, or touched by an other, of something occurring that is beyond direct control of the self, threatens the self-image of motility and individuality. Yet the struggle to disengage from the other and to function as a self-sufficient entity that has no share in the doings – and especially the wrongdoings – of others, at the same time discloses mutual interconnectedness and entanglement. The self's being-in-minus is a function of being-together. The more the common space is diminished, the more threatening it becomes; intensified immunisation enhances the impression of precariousness and anxiety about the self. Thus, the rise of immunitarian mechanisms around 1968 provoked a potentiation and branching out of further strategies of immunisation in order to withdraw from the threat of the common. This spread of immunitarian processes as a response to the awareness of a common being-with is what I call minusivity – the autoimmunitarian "disease" resulting from and attacking the common being-in-minus.

In a novel published in 1969, we can find a similar reasoning about the pathogenesis of an atmosphere of minusivity. I have in mind Wiesław Jażdżyński's novel *Sprawa* (The Case, 1969), a not very well-known text by a writer associated with Kielce and Łódź.[4] The novel revolves around a case of denunciation due to career motives; its connection to the March affairs would seem to be wholly absent, were it not for the obstinate parallels to what was happening after March 1968, parallels that lie exactly in the mechanisms of exclusion, immunisation, and anxiety about the self. The main figure Wojciech recalls: "I don't remember many details, but I remember the heavy, thick atmosphere of abandonment and probably fear; I don't even know how to call that kind of feeling." (Jażdżyński 1969, 139)[5] The quote shows how the novel connects the impalpability of the phenomenon experienced with its strong emotional dimension; it points out the almost physical tangibility of the atmosphere translated into terms of "materiality." When Wojciech muses about his case, he also reflects on the workings of a common sphere.

4   The author's position is an ambivalent one if seen in the light of the March events. Jażdżyński joined the PZPR in 1968 (Duk 2001, 203) but seems in his novel neither to follow the ethno-nationalist paradigm nor to treat the communist framework instrumentally. He directs his critique rather at society and careerism than at the state apparatus as such.

5   "Nie pamiętam, już wielu szczegółów, lecz pamiętam gęstą, zawiesistą atmosferę opuszczenia i chyba strachu, sam nie wiem, jak nazwać tego rodzaju uczucie."

I'm not an isolated and independent being […]. I'm a man who lives among people and cases. […] What limits my freedom in the most absolute way? The fear of the other man that could do me harm and procure a case? Yet in this case, the meaning of life would be the flight from people, and in the end the lonely death of Narcissus. (Jażdżyński 1969, 141)[6]

The realisation of common interdependencies is here immediately complicated by the focus on "cases" that work in-between subjects and which they might employ to "do harm" to each other. These elusive yet powerful cases separating and binding together subjects – "a negative system […] operating between people and things" (Kapuściński 2006, 83) – are moreover closely tied to the impersonal bureaucratic system that can be instrumentalised in the processes of immunisation. The fear about one's own subjectivity ("what limits my freedom?") is thus "the fear of the other man." The result of this anxiety and fear of affection would be the "flight from people" and the attempt to immunise, even though at the beginning of the quote there is the realisation that the self cannot be "an isolated and independent being." The effects of an atmosphere of minusivity – the need to immunise in view of a threatening commonality – are thus autoimmunitarian reactions that cut into the immunising subject's very own flesh, destroying its sociality.

Countering minusivity

In view of the dead end that a "flight from people" inevitably leads to, *Sprawa*'s protagonist Wojciech ultimately comes to the conclusion that "[l]ike that, of course, it cannot be." (Jażdżyński 1969, 141)[7] He turns minusivity around, stating that one has to live with the minus-quality, the fact that every subject is open to others and will be affected: "it's impossible to live without suffering failures from which you have to recover, without dragging weights. There is only one way, the way of engagement that may be painful" (Jażdżyński 1969, 141).[8] The narrator

6 "Nie jestem bytem wyizolowanym i niezależnym […]. Jestem człowiekiem, który żyje pośród ludzi i spraw. […] Co moją wolność ogranicza w sposób najbardziej bezwzględny? Lęk przed drugim człowiekiem, który może mi wyrządzić krzywdę, wytoczyć sprawę? Ależ w takim wypadku sensem życia byłaby ucieczka od ludzi, a na końcu samotna śmierć Narcyza."
7 "Tak, oczywiście, być nie może."
8 "[…] niepodobna żyć bez ponoszenia klęsk, z których trzeba się podnosić, bez dźwigania ciężarów, Jest jedna tylko droga, droga zaangażowania, może i bolesnego […]."

in *Sprawa* morphs the mechanisms of social immunisation – of distancing – into a form of immunisation that could be called biological, working through contamination, engagement and transformation (Mohan 2020, 11:07 ff.; Muhle 2014, 86). Even if the "positive" turn in Jażdżyński's novel might be narratively abrupt or even implausible (Duk 2001, 221), it shows the effort to revaluate the depressing atmosphere of the figure's "personal" minusivity into an edifying episode that allows total immobilisation to be eluded. However, if we look at some examples relating directly to March 1968 in Poland, we rarely see the effects of social minusivity really come to a halt, even if countering measures of commoning or "engagement" are undertaken.

When the writer Anna Kowalska noted on 18 May 1968 in her diary: "Call from Ania Linke. She's coming on Monday. Under these circumstances I can't refuse anyone who is a Jew," (Kowalska 2008, 521)[9] she was well aware that she was supposed to avoid inviting a Jewish person over to her place. Kowalska instead staged an ostentatious reversal of this mechanism of exclusion. Being Jewish would in this case imply automatic *inclusion*, without regard to the actual sympathies the writer had for the specific person or considering her own well-being (she was ill at that stage). Kowalska thus took over the over-signified identitarian markers, as both the social exclusion and her personal inclusion focused upon the Jewishness of the given person. Yet given the affectivity of the March categories, Kowalska's invitation to Linke would have enhanced the inviter's "otherness" and lessened the invitee's exclusion, bringing them closer and thus destabilising the ethnic delineations performed around March 1968. This case of positive discrimination was played out on a small-scale level; it was intended probably as a signal for Linke and their common social environment. Its notation in the diary might have functioned as a reminder for Kowalska herself, and as a testimony for potential readers of the diary. When viewed in terms of the general scale of the March crisis, however, her gesture was isolated in a specific and small circle of critical intellectuals who were, as a liminal group, already residing on the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion.

A similar, yet more demonstratively "public" approach was shown by the Polish scholar Maria Janion. We learn from an interview published in 2012 that she was strongly affected by the immunitarian propaganda following the student protests in March 1968. This resulted in an effort of "engagement":

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9   "Telefon Ani Linke. Przyjdzie w poniedziałek. W tych okolicznościach nie mogę odmówić nikomu, kto jest Żydem."

> In the morning I was listening to the radio, I understood what was going on, the direction in which all of this was heading. I went to my courses and gave a fiery speech condemning anti-Semitism. I remember that I was really shocked; after sharing this with the students I felt a bit better. And yet a student […] told me, that she and her colleagues had been talking and had come to the conclusion that I must be a Jew after all, since I had spoken like that about anti-Semitism. (Janion and Szczuka 2012a, 1:141)[10]

Considering this quote, we can recognise two conflicting strands of immunisation: the exclusion of the "other" conveyed in the March propaganda, and Janion's subsequent attempt to immunise her students against these social mechanisms. Similar to Kowalska above, Janion's engagement resulted from the atmospheric intensification of immunitarian requests to dissociate from alleged Jewish revisionists. The radio broadcast itself intended to be socially contagious, to infect the listeners with minusivity and to set loose the exclusionary, anti-Semitic "frenzy." The news affected Janion bodily, as she felt a "shock" (*byłam naprawdę wstrząśnięta*). The state of shock, related to paralysis or a certain loss of control over bodily and mental reactions, connects to the way Lamentowicz described the effect of the March propaganda: many people who passively consented, but also the development of a "frenzy" that did not rationally connect to the convictions of the given person.

Even though Janion later also described her reaction to the March events as a frenzy (*mania*), she managed to translate the immunitarian mechanisms into a frenzy of commoning (Janion and Szczuka 2012b, 2:32 f.). Her impulse of engagement could be called "self-transgressive" (Muhle 2014, 85) as it reached out and exposed her in place of and for the ones pushed out. Simultaneously, Janion had set out to unveil and deconstruct the logic of exclusion and social categorising. Thus, her strategy of immunising from immunitarian tendencies would be not a simple act of solidarity, but a commoning that referred to a *communitas* of "infinite singularities that are plurality" (Esposito 2013, 55; Magun 2012, 142), perceiving the common being-in-minus as a chance.

If we understand Janion's resulting speech as a performative act, there are two levels of performance visible in the quote above. There are, first,

> Her impulse of engagement could be called "self-transgressive" (Muhle 2014, 85) as it reached out and exposed her in place of and for the ones pushed out.

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10   "Rano wysłuchałam radia, zrozumiałam, co się dzieje, jaki jest kierunek tego wszystkiego. Udałam się na swoje zajęcia i tam wygłosiłam płomienną mowę potępiającą antysemityzm. Pamiętam, że byłam naprawdę wstrząśnięta, po podzieleniu się tym ze studentami trochę mi ulżyło. A jednak studentka […] powiedziała mi, że koledzy i koleżanki rozmawiali między sobą i doszli do wniosku, że jednak muszę być Żydówką, skoro tak przemawiam w sprawie antysemityzmu."

transformations on the corporeal level, induced by speech acts. The inter-reaction of spoken word and bodily repercussions in the quote demonstrate the processes through which commoning and immunising work on the affective level. The radio broadcast induces a shock, but the effort of translating this shock into a speech and delivering it to the students has physical effects as well. The sharing of anxiety that Janion undertakes in her lecture, a sort of commoning of her shock and sorrow while at the same time engaging with the perceived atmosphere verbally, bring alleviation and dissolve the paralytic shock. This self-transgressive element of her reaction is however pushed back by her students in a secondary performative step that lies contrary to Janion's immunising intents. Instead of immunising themselves to the contagious propagation of strategies of excluding "others," the students immunise from being--in-common. They intuitively decide upon an immunitarian locking-up of their lecturer in the "other" group, distancing themselves from her. It seems that in the atmosphere surrounding March 1968, the categories of in- and exclusion were permeable enough to threaten everybody; to think beyond these provided categories and labels must have been almost impossible. If someone was confronted with a negative, excluding label, the first impulse was rejection. To close this line of thought, a short glance at a note by the writer Józef Hen, who was heavily pressed by anti-Semitists around 1968, confirms the effects of these immunitarian exclusions. Hen subsumes his March experience as following: "The debate boils down to defend oneself from false charges, that one is a Zionist, revisionist, cosmopolitan or someone of the like." (Hen 1992, 108)[11] Hen, confronted with this attempt to write him off, did not question the erected borders, deconstruct such labels or even embrace them. Instead, strategies of immunisation were again met with strategies of immunisation, thus in the end contributing to the spread of minusivity.

Crisis of communication

I have hinted above at the entanglement of language and the contagion with minusivity. The processes of immunising, employing the labels of exclusion and discrimination, were most effectively spread by verbal communication, as social behaviour and the occasionally displayed phy-

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11   "Polemika sprowadza się do tego, żeby wybronić się od nieprawdziwych zarzutów, że się jest syjonistą, rewizjonistą, kosmopolitą czy kimś podobnym."

sical violence had a limited range. The March discourse was performed as a socio-aesthetic method on a communicative level. It created an official reality that constantly adjusted, redefined, and hierarchically ordered certain terms and labels (Głowiński 1991, 32). Even so, the mechanisms in language worked on an affective level as they hurt people, revived Holocaust traumas and led to socio-physical exclusions. In the interplay between language, emotions, and bodily integrity, the toxic atmosphere of minusivity developed. And yet, while language translated into affect, this affect could not be practically translated into language.

The reality "told," defined by propaganda and pre-scripted communicative patterns, claimed the whole discursive space. However, the reality "experienced," as personal impression, feelings, anxieties, even certain social situations or events one participated in, could not find an expressive dimension (Lamentowicz 1988). The official March speech blurred out the expressibility of personal experiences – and thus their social existence began to vanish. Instead, they sedimented in the affected people's bodies and memories. Their "namelessness" made them into an eerie un-presence enhancing the March anxiety. Many participants in the student protests, or people affected by the media campaign against revisionism and Zionism retrospectively speak of an isolating moment and a huge uncertainty as to what had actually happened (Kuroń 1989, 306). They came to distrust their own experience and memory, beginning after some years to believe in the "official" reality.[12]

The impact of March minusivity did not leave many visible and recognisable traces in the cultural production after 1968. The atmosphere itself was co-produced by a massive coverage of March discourse and language in media; its less publicly known side manifests in snippets of denunciations and inter-institutional notes, letters and other information found years later in the archives. But there was hardly any material that reflected the March events and atmosphere from the perspective of personal experience, or as an important phenomenon of the time. The finding of a language for the events and atmosphere was difficult or impossible, precisely because of the sub- and suprarational character of the March "frenzy" playing out on emotions; but also because the immu-

The official March speech blurred out the expressibility of personal experiences – and thus their social existence began to vanish.

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12   That is what several participants who had been contemporary witnesses expressed in the symposium "Doświadczenie (auto)biograficzne a tożsamość. Zapisy literackie pokolenia Marca '68" (The (auto)biographical experience and identity. Literary notes of the March '68 generation) and the conference "March '68. Fifty years later" held in March 2018 at the University of Warsaw and POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw. See also (Modzelewski 2013, 144).

nising mechanisms had cut interpersonal bonds and the possibility for verbal exchange. Cultural, literary and film scholars have stated that the March events in terms of content appeared only later in the arts, especially concerning the "victims'" side (Buryła 2013; Majmurek 2018; Molisak 2008).[13]

The language paradigm installed in 1968 dominated the structuring of reality, of economic and political dynamics as well as "private" matters like family or friendship. It operated through communicative scripts that organised the interaction in almost every situation (Barańczak 1975; Burska 2013; Molisak 2008). "Language began to be regarded as a means of disowning reality and an instrument of political propaganda. This was […] a declaration of mistrust in speech." (Molisak 2008, 280 f.) The strongly marked semantics of the terms used by the media and officials sometimes drastically shifted; together with the official discourse's incongruity with the reality experienced by many, this reformulation of language produced an "atmosphere of absurdity and falseness" (Sitkowska 2008) following March 1968. According to the art historian and curator Maryla Sitkowska, this atmosphere had an even "stronger influence on the consciousness and morale" (Sitkowska 2008) of the youth than the very events themselves, which remained uncommunicable. If we understand atmosphere as the "common reality" (Böhme 2017, 20) of the experiencing subject and its environment, we realise that the March atmosphere was torn; it characterised by an atmospheric dissonance. The clash and dissonance of two realities was the nourishing ground for the March minusivity. The refusal to be in common mirrored in a crisis of communication; the mistrust in language as a means of interpersonal exchange was the flip side of the anxiety of being affected by an other.

Communication is a form of exposure – with communicative performance, an opening towards the world or the other is taking place – and is thus always "insecure" and at "the risk of being rejected or lost or not received" (Blanchot 1988, 12, 22). This insecurity of the communicative act became crucial in minusivity. The opening that communication created was translated as the space where the outer world could enter, where violations could happen. Hence it seemed advisable to organise communication in its most formal way, conveying as little personal "content" as possible. The scripts offered by official language

The clash and dissonance of two realities was the nourishing ground for the March minusivity.

The opening that communication created was translated as the space where the outer world could enter, where violations could happen.

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13   There are some exceptions, but they keep their alignment with the dominant language, serving the ethno-nationalist paradigm, e.g. Stanisław Ryszard Dobrowolski's *Głupia sprawa* ("Too bad", 1969) or Roman Bratny's *Trzech w linii prostej* (Three in a straight line, 1970). (Molisak 2008, 283 f.)

became the instruments of minusivity that allowed subjects to retreat from affective contagion because of their impersonal character. They shielded off the self, leaving the involved subjects untouched in their mere enactment of communication. In the late 1960s, communicative scripts not only gained momentum because official language enforced them, but also because personal affective interaction was perceived as perilous to the self and its social position.

This is vividly present for example in the comedy film *Rejs* (The Cruise, 1970) by Marek Piwowski, where an "entertaining" get-together of ferry passengers turns into a series of incorporated verbal "meeting" patterns. The passengers prefer to act out something like a badly learnt theatre piece instead of exposing themselves with personal content – when that happens, the other passengers frame it by misunderstanding or blunt ignorance. However, the bodies of the passengers in the assembly betray their unease to the film viewers in twitches, sweating, or nervous glancing about. The uneasiness of the bodies confronted with a scripted speaking in slogans, which is maintained throughout almost the entire film, produces an atmosphere of staging, where the personal information conveyed in affective outbursts is painted over at once by a scaffolding of "correct" behaviour acted out mainly through verbal reprimands. This analysis of *Rejs* thus suggests that while the official reality is present in verbal language, the experienced, affective reality surfaces solely in non-verbal communication that is harder to control (Kurz 2015; Łuczak 2002; Seiler 2019; Talarczyk-Gubała 2007, 101–11).

While film is a medium that can easily play with the dissociation of verbal (auditive) and body (visible) language, literature needs to express both layers in verbal language. Yet here, too, the split between the two communicative layers can become evident. When the protagonist in Jażdżyński's *Sprawa* wants to find out who meddled in his "case," he actively preys on non-verbal betrayals in-between verbal scripts. Neither he nor his communication partners mention his case; instead, Wojciech offers the "small talk" scripts of former friends who have not seen each other for a long time:

> – As you see, I'm still alive! Does that surprise you?
> That should have been a very clever question, cunning and carefully prepared. If he had a hand in my case, he should feel confused; after all, he's a simple lad, so something will show on his face. But nothing shows. (Jażdżyński 1969, 62 f.)[14]

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14   "– Jak widzisz, jeszcze żyję! Dziwi cię to? To miało być bardzo chytre pytanie, podstępne, starannie przygotowane. Jeżeli maczał palce w mojej sprawie, powinien się zmieszać, to przecież prosty chłopak, więc coś się zaznaczy na jego

Wojciech fails to find any decisive information either in verbal or non-verbal communication. Instead of aiding in his quest for truth, his mistrusting way of communicating intensifies his own insecurities, doubts and (false) presuppositions. The quote shows how this operating in scripted "traps" produced cumulative layers of mistrust in communication and Wojciech's paranoid state of mind. This state is even conceptualised in the book by another former fellow, now psychiatrist. Wojciech oscillates between taking the psychiatrist's explanations for what they are – a description of a "psychogenic disorder," called "negativism," (Jażdżyński 1969, 75) of one of his patients – and reading them as a hidden diagnosis for himself.

Wojciech's case is not verbalised for "us" – the reader and the protagonists – in the book until very late. Yet, it is rooted in a verbalisation: in the verbal denouncement by his former boss. Even though the information delivered to the authorities turns out to be irrelevant if not false, Wojciech's work and social life collapse, as does his own mindset or "social belief" (Duk 2001, 220). This confirms the danger emanating from verbal language and its affective power, which eludes the control of the subjects. Other than Wojciech himself, his acquaintances

> learnt immediately about my case and preferred not to meet me. […] Around me, an emptiness crept up. […] [B]ecause of this information they were somehow better than others, they could already inform further without risk, while I was hurled about by the darkest premonitions. (Jażdżyński 1969, 139 f.)[15]

Information about others, irrelevant if true or not, seems to have been the currency in this atmosphere. The ones in possession of the information had the (immunising) power over others who were worse informed, and vulnerable or already hurt. The distribution of information construes barriers between the informed and the uninformed. But these barriers are precarious. The informed are at risk of losing their temporary immunity – gained by informing on others – and to have their vulnerability realised when information about them begins to circulate, as the later downfall of Wojciech's former boss demonstrates. So, even if *Sprawa* is not a novel dealing with the March 1968 events, it retraces the immunitarian strategies used when social anxiety of being

Information about others, irrelevant if true or not, seems to have been the currency in this atmosphere.

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twarzy. Ale nic się nie zaznacza."

15   "[…] oni dowiedzieli się momentalnie o mojej sprawie i woleli mnie nie widywać. […] Wokół mnie przyczaiła się pustka. […] byli wskutek tej informacji jakby lepsi od innych, bez ryzyka mogli już sami informować dalej, a mną miotały najczarniejsze przeczucia."

negatively affected is heightened and shows the autoimmunitarian social dissociation under the conditions of minusivity.

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NINA SEILER – is a postdoctoral researcher in Interart (Eastern Europe) at University of Zurich, involved in the research project "Crisis and Communitas." Her current research focuses on mid-socialist culture in Poland from a post-humanist perspective. She graduated in Slavic Studies and Popular Cultures, and attained her PhD in Gender Studies and Slavic Literary Studies on Polish feminist criticism in the 1990s. Her book *Privatisierte Weiblichkeit. Genealogien und Einbettungsstrategien feministischer Kritik im postsozialistischen Polen* was published in 2018 and will appear shortly in Polish translation.

Address:
University of Zurich
Institute of Slavonic Languages and Literatures
Plattenstrasse 43
CH-8032 Zurich
email: nina.seiler@uzh.ch

Autor: Nina Seiler
Tytuł: Marcowa minusowość: Strategie immunitarne i kontr-immunitarne w atmosferze roku 1968 w Polsce
Abstrakt: CNiniejszy artykuł dyskutuje mechanizmy społecznej immunizacji w kontekście wydarzeń i dyskursu polskiego 'Marca '68'. Podczas gdy strategie obronne są normalną cechą społeczną, rosnące obawy wokół 'Marca '68' dotyczące mechanizmów wspólnotowości doprowadziły do autoimmunitarnej dysocjacji polskiego społeczeństwa, co konceptualizuję jako atmosferę minusowości. Również strategie przeciwdziałania wykluczeniom i dyskryminacji zostały uwięzione w tym immunitarnym paradygmacie. Z dysonansu pomiędzy rzeczywistością stworzoną przez oficjalny język Marca 1968 a rzeczywistością doświadczenia wielu ludzi wynikał kryzys komunikacji, ponieważ ta ostatnia została wyciszona i wyparta. Nieufność do języka spowodowała immunitarny odwrót od komunikacji afektywnej, którą zastąpiły bezosobowe skrypty komunikacyjne. Ten kryzys komunikacyjny w dużej mierze uniemożliwił przekazanie doświadczeń marcowych w ówczesnej produkcji kulturalnej; mimo to spróbuję prześledzić niektóre strategie immunitarne i kontr-immunitarne w literaturze, filmie i relacjach retrospektywnych.
Słowa kluczowe: Marzec 1968, PRL, immunizacja, atmosfera, minusowość, język, komunikacja

ALEKSANDER KOPKA

Mourning and Grievability: Several Remarks on Judith Butler's Politics of Living Together

In this article, I focus on the function of the notions of precariousness, vulnerability, and grievability of life in Judith Butler's writings, and reflect upon their place in a broader context of the thought of what I call, following Jacques Derrida, "originary mourning." On the one hand, therefore, I want to reconstruct Butler's task of rethinking the possibility of creating a community based on the equal allocation of precariousness and grievability. Such a reflection allows Butler to treat grievability as an insightful and unique passageway to the problematics of safeguarding of life and equality between living beings. On the other hand, by referring to the writings of Jacques Derrida, I want to inscribe Butler's notions of precariousness and grievability in a broader framework of mourning, to show how every constitution of a social bond based on the principle of shared precariousness and vulnerability inevitably has to come up against the paradox of its genesis.

Keywords: mourning, precariousness, grievability, equality, hauntology

> But at what cost do I establish the familiar as the criterion by which a human life is grievable? (Butler 2004, 38)

Introduction

When dealing with mourning, one inevitably faces at least a few insistent questions. First of all, what do we mourn? Do we mourn someone's life or death? And if we mourn life, what does this notion of life really stand for? Going further, in whose name does one mourn, one's own, or the dead's? And finally, what does it mean to mourn (this or that life) well?

To answer some of these questions provisionally, maybe even too hastily, perhaps in mourning we respond *before* and *to* some *who*, to some other who passes for life and who – regarded as a life that passes away, sometimes before our very own eyes – allows us to think of its precariousness. Thus, could thinking of life in terms of our mournful relation to it help us pave the way for the question of responsibility and politics, or for what every politics should essentially be, namely, a politics of responsibility?

The trajectories of these insistent questions meet each other in Judith Butler's texts on grievability and precariousness, in which she endeavors to rethink politics in the light of its relation to grief and mourning. As she states in her essay "Violence, Mourning, Politics," "I propose to consider a dimension of political life that has to do with our exposure to violence, and our complicity in it, with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows, and with finding a basis for community in these conditions" (Butler 2004, 19).

The above-mentioned essay is a part of a larger collection of pieces written by Butler in response to what happened in the United States in the aftermath of "September 11" – an event that revealed the country's unseen, or even incomprehensible, vulnerability. But, as Butler argues, rather than to reshape its foreign policy in alliance with the global community and in an effort to prevent such acts of terror, the United States engaged in a nationalistic narrative, hardening the "get out of our way" policy, and allowing auto-aggressive activities such as mass surveillance, censorship, the suspension of civil rights and liberties, or the persecution of political dissent.

Furthermore, the disclosure of vulnerability and exposure to loss and grief have inevitably been translated into mechanisms and strategies of even fiercer violence against enemies, both real and imagined. In this

context, Butler argues that the phenomenon and the domain of mourning and grievability have not been exempted from political influence. She does that by describing how politics, especially in the United States, has subjugated private and public mourning to its ends. Thus, for Butler, the fact "[t]he violence that [the United States] inflict on others is only – and always – selectively brought into public view" (Butler 2004, 39) is reflected in and strictly connected to mechanisms of state-regulated public mourning. Therefore, the latter must be "protracted and ritualized, stoking nationalist fervor, reiterating the conditions of loss and victimization that come to justify a more or less permanent war" (Butler 2004, xix). Thus, Butler starts from a critical approach to the phenomenon of mourning, treating it as a yet another domain of public life subjected to state manipulation and violence, by situating this critique in the context of the post-9/11 situation of the United States (cf. Butler 2016, 38) only to move later to the general question of grievability. For, according to Butler, the norms and framing of grievability imposed on people by the state apparatus with the compliant mass media aim, in general, to distinguish between lives that are worthy and unworthy of our grief, and therefore, worthy and unworthy of living since, as she argues, the derealization of loss leads inevitably to the dehumanization of potential victims.[1] Already in *Antigone's Claim*, Butler had brought

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1   The notion of grievability can be interpreted as an expansion of the distinction between worthy and unworthy victims of political violence. As Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky argue in *Manufacturing Consent*, "[a] propaganda system will consistently portray people abused in enemy states as *worthy* victims, whereas those treated with equal or greater severity by its own government or clients will be *unworthy*. The evidence of worth may be read from the extent and character of attention and indignation. [...] While this differential treatment occurs on a large scale, the media, intellectuals, and public are able to remain unconscious of the fact and maintain a high moral and self-righteous tone. This is evidence of an extremely effective propaganda system" (Herman, Chomsky 1994, 37, cf. Chomsky 2001, 10-11). However, Butler fails to indicate this quite obvious proximity of her diagnosis to Herman and Chomsky's work. Nevertheless, this proximity remains quite vivid, especially when it comes to the question of "framing" singular lives, groups, and populations by the state and mass media propaganda. As Butler asserts, "[t]he distinction between populations that are worth violently defending and those that are not implies that some lives are simply considered more valuable than others" (Butler 2020, 55). This remark is tied directly to the question of grievability: "forms of racism instituted and active at the level of perception tend to produce iconic versions of populations who are eminently grievable, and others whose loss is no loss, and who remain ungrievable. The differential distribution of grievability across populations has implications for why and when we feel politically consequential affective dispositions such as horror, guilt, righteous sadism, loss, and indifference" (Butler 2016, 24).

to the fore those relations that are denied political legitimacy and as such are considered neither dead nor alive:

> it is not simply that these are relations that cannot be honored, cannot be openly acknowledged, and cannot therefore be publicly grieved, but that these relations involve persons who are also restricted in the very act of grieving, who are denied the power to confer legitimacy on loss" (Butler 2000, 79).

Thus, how public mourning is produced and managed cannot be, in Butler's view, dissociated from the operations and mechanisms of derealization, namely, of not taking the suffering of the excluded others into account. Moreover, such a derealization achieved through prohibitions and exclusions imposed on public mourning is constitutive of the public sphere. "The public will be created on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is derealized and diffused" (Butler 2004, 37-38).

Of course, for Butler, this is not a one-way street, and both grief and mourning also have the potential to challenge the order according to which some lives can be deemed unworthy or ungrievable (and their eradication can be justified). In fact, for Butler, mourning has a transformative potential – which she identifies with the "transformative effect of loss" (Butler 2004, 21)[2] – even at the level of international relations between nation states. If mourning becomes more hospitable, if it affirms those dead or alive who are denied legitimacy by political institutions or the public sphere, then demand for recognition and new forms of living together will follow. If the reactions and fantasies of narcissistic and nationalistic entitlement and vilification can be overcome in public mourning, then

> [...] from the subsequent experience of loss and fragility [...] the possibility of making different kinds of ties emerges. Such mourning might (or could) effect a transformation in our sense of international ties that would crucially rearticulate the possibility of democratic political culture here and elsewhere. (Butler 2004, 40)

Butler uses this diagnosis as a point of departure to argue that the constitution of our communal or relational ties stems from our fundamental interdependency, which coincides intrinsically with our lives' preca-

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2   On the transformative potential of grief and mourning, see also bell hooks' *All About Love: New Visions*, pp. 200-201.

riousness and vulnerability. For Butler, it is precisely grief (or grievability)[3] that has the force to push us towards the realization of this fundamental social entanglement and communal interrelationship. The following passage not only expresses this intention but can also be regarded as a guiding thread for further reading of Butler's essays gathered in *Precarious Life*, *Frames of War*, or in recently published *The Force of Non-Violence*.

> Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility. If my fate is not originally or finally separable from yours, then the "we" is traversed by a relationality that we cannot easily argue against; or, rather, we can argue against it, but we would be denying something fundamental about the social conditions of our very formation. (Butler 2004, 22-23)

The main presuppositions behind Butler's argument are clear: the phantasm of rugged individualism and full autonomy of the subject anterior to any social bond is questioned at its core; the fundamental interdependency between human beings, along with its ethico-political injunction, is recognized and emphasized; the vulnerability and precariousness of lives are seen as the basis for this universal interdependency; and finally, grief provides an exceptional recognition and sense of this universal and essential condition of precariousness.

From Iterability to Ontology

What therefore is this ungrievable life? In various instances, Butler answers that the ungrievable life does not count as "real" (Butler 2004, 33), "living" (Butler 2020, 68), "a life" (Butler 2020, 68-69), a life that will not be mourned or safeguarded (Butler 2020, 108). It is considered

The vulnerability and precariousness of lives are seen as the basis for this universal interdependency; and finally, grief provides an exceptional recognition and sense of this universal and essential condition of precariousness.

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3   I will henceforth emphasize the difference between grievability and mourning. In doing so, I will use the notion of grievability as defined by Butler. Also, I will use the notion of mourning either in a narrow sense, that is, as a social, political or psychological response to someone's death, or in a wider sense – as *originary mourning*, namely, *the* condition *for* and *of* every response, referral, and consequently, every relation or bond between living (human and non-human) beings.

not to be a life "in any full and meaningful sense" (Butler 2016, 43), but rather "already the unburied, if not the unburiable" (Butler 2004, 34). And finally, what seems, at least from a certain point of view,[4] inconsistent with the previous examples, it is a life subjected to calculation (Butler 2020, 107). Furthermore, in *Frames of War*, Butler makes a distinction between something *apprehended* as "living" and *recognized* as "a life," which is not only an epistemological but also an ontological distinction. In fact, when confronting Butler's argument, one inevitably gets the impression of unsolvable contamination of *both* the normative and the ontological order. Still, Butler argues that there is something about "living" that does not surrender itself to this ontological and normative production:

> If a life is produced according to the norms by which life is recognized, this implies neither that everything about a life is produced according to such norms nor that we must reject the idea that there is a remainder of "life" – suspended and spectral – that limns and haunts every normative instance of life. Production is partial and is, indeed, perpetually haunted by its ontologically uncertain double. (Butler 2016, 7)

Political recognition is therefore ascribed to this normative production of the ontological status of "a life," as opposed to its spectral remainder of "life" or "living," which is not yet recognized as "a life." However, it is necessary to emphasize that we cannot prescribe a normative telos for this ontologico-political production, regardless of Butler's wish to establish a "utopic horizon within which theory and description must work" (Butler 2020, 106) as "an ideal of equal grievability" (Butler 2020, 107). At the same time, Butler states that our inability to finish such work successfully stems from the fact that its limit is "internal to normative construction itself, a function of its iterability and heterogeneity, without which it cannot exercise its crafting power, and which limits the finality of any of its effects" (Butler 2016, 7). Therefore, an ideal of equal grie-

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4   On the one hand, one could argue that in the process of the allocation of grievability, both grievable and ungrievable lives are subjected to political calculation. On the other, one could point out that even in the case of "incalculable value of a life," the passage through calculation is necessary. As Derrida points out in *Rogues*, "[c]alculable measure also gives access to the incalculable and the incommensurable, an access that remains itself necessarily undecided between the calculable and the incalculable – and that is the aporia of the political [...]" (Derrida 2005c, 52). A little bit later, he reaffirms that "[o]n both sides, then, whether it is a question of singularity or universality, and each time both at once, *both* calculation *and* the incalculable *are necessary*" (Derrida 2005c, 150).

vability would be unachievable not because of its infinite deferral, but rather due to the aporetic structure of iterability.

Jacques Derrida introduces the notion of iterability in his essay "Signature Event Context." Now, iterability, in the broadest sense, is a structural possibility of repetition through alteration. Thereby, that the mark, as a unit of iterability, can only be repeated in the movement of its own erasure. It may also retain its signifying function in the absence of its referent or signified. Moreover, the possibility of the disappearance of the referent or the signified is necessarily implied in iterability, which makes the mark a grapheme, to wit, "the nonpresent remaining of a differential mark cut off from its alleged 'production' or origin" (Derrida 1984, 318). Consequently, there can be no fixed meaning attached to and salvaged by the mark.

While iterability consists in an ever-changing address to a nonpresent other, Derrida emphasizes that "[...] this absence is not a continuous modification of presence; it is a break in presence, 'death,' or the possibility of the 'death' of the addressee, inscribed in the structure of the mark..." (Derrida 1984, 315). From the political point of view, iterability, as the general structure of experience, would be the structural condition of simultaneously producing and undoing any social bond. Furthermore, the question of mortality would be inherent to the production of a social bond. Thus, rather than treat social bonds as essentially given, iterability requires us to promise and depend on an act of faith to maintain them. As Butler points out in her text on Derrida:

> The promise must repeat, even mechanically, in order to hold firm as a bond of any kind. [...] The bond must be temporally renewable to qualify as a bond at all. [...] For Derrida, the promise, when given, becomes part of the structure of a covenant, and this social bond has no structural or necessary existence outside the memory that is reinvoked and the future that is opened up through its iteration. (Butler 2009, 302-303)

Now, since for Butler the notion of iterability is crucial for explaining the normative production of ontology (Butler 2016, 168), which, as an effect of iterability, cannot exhaust or fully explain what "living" *could be* about, then she cannot ascribe to such an ontology a fundamental character. And because in Butler's argument the ultimate point of reference is the body, then iterability must condition the recognizability of the latter's "life" or "being." But, in trying to avoid the metaphysical entrapment of thinking about the experience of life in terms of what Derrida calls "the experience of Being: so-called presence" (Derrida

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2005a, 317), Butler takes some necessary precautions by pointing out that the "being" of the body is always already inscribed – and can only be encountered – within political contexts which, according to the logic of iterability, means: "without any center of absolute anchoring" (Derrida 1984, 320). Therefore, as already exposed to forces of appropriation, interpretation, and framing, the body becomes, from the outset, a subject matter for social – but not fundamental – ontology.

> The "being" of the body to which this ontology refers is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness for some and minimize precariousness for others. It is not possible first to define the ontology of the body and then to refer to the social significations the body assumes. (Butler 2016, 2-3)

Normative production, therefore, faces an insoluble problem with ontologically elusive "living." Before any recognition can be made, we respond to living, which "falls outside the frame furnished by the norm, but only as a relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured, but whose living status is open to apprehension" (Butler 2016, 8). Thus, living exceeds the ontological frame through which we try to capture and explain it. The fact that something breaks outside of the frame, that the frame is never able to contain this living, disturbs our understanding of the world. Moreover, this problem is reproduced through the process of iterability, which, in turn, allows Butler to reject the structuralist concept of form and "to affirm something about the continuing life of poststructuralism, a preoccupation with notions such as *living on, carrying on, carrying over, continuing*, that form the temporal tasks of the body" (Butler 2016, 169). However, we have to be very careful how we interpret this "continuation" because what guarantees the sense of temporal continuity is precisely the form, which itself is subjected to the work of iterability. Consequently, the body as an iterable mark cannot be understood in terms of temporal continuity (as previously stated by Derrida, the possibility of the mark implies the rupture of presence, and therefore, the interruption of temporal continuity). Living on, surviving, carrying on after someone's death – all this involves a structural break with the dominant role of presence.

Otherwise, Butler would have to introduce a general form of temporality (like the phenomenological form of the living present) under the aegis of which one could synthesize and reassemble the bodily marks. She would therefore resort to fundamental ontology. In order to avoid

Thus, living exceeds the ontological frame through which we try to capture and explain it. The fact that something breaks outside of the frame, that the frame is never able to contain this living, disturbs our understanding of the world.

this ontological absorption, we ought to think of the mark (used here synonymously with the "trace") in terms of *différance* as an originary movement of deferring and differing, the spatialization of time, finally, as "the relation to an impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss of presence" (Derrida 1984, 19). *Différance* therefore

> [...] maintains our relationship with that which we necessarily misconstrue, and which exceeds the alternative of presence and absence. A certain alterity [...] is definitively exempt from every process of presentation by means of which we would call upon it to show itself in person. (Derrida 1984, 20)

Consequently, for the bodily mark to exceed any, even the most fundamental, form, it has to be conceived as the dis-appearing trace:

> The trace (of that) which can never be presented, the trace which itself can never be presented: that is, appear and manifest itself, as such, in its phenomenon. [...] Always differing and deferring, the trace is never as it is in the presentation of itself. It erases itself in presenting itself, muffles itself in resonating, [...] (Derrida 1984, 23)

Since the structure or movement of the mark (i.e., the trace), as pointed out before, necessarily coincides with the possibility of the death of the addressee (here, following Butler's vocabulary, I am addressing the other as formally undetermined, as far as their resistance to ontological production goes, "life" or "living"), then our response or our experience regarding this addressee is already entangled in mourning. Now, what that means is that death does not happen to us by accident, but rather has its crucial stake in the production of the mark: without the possibility of disappearance of the addressee, and therefore, of surviving the addressee by the mark, the latter would not be able to function within the movement of iterability, and therefore, it would lose its signifying ability. Thereby, the surviving of the instant, the possibility of being repeated, has to attest to mortality (cf. Derrida 2005a, 158). As Michael Naas explains:

> In the beginning, then, there is mourning – an originary mourning or melancholy that is not nostalgia for some lost presence but an affirmation that the testamentary trace and a mourning for the other is the unchanging form of our lives. [...] More originary than death or being-towards-death, mourning for the other, or at least the structural possibility of such mourning, begins not at death but already at the beginning of life, already with the first trace. (Naas 2015, 117)

From Mourning to Grievability

Thus, by connecting the question of mourning to the notions of iterability and the mark, on which Butler grounds her idea of social ontology and interconnection between precarious lives, I do not want to consider mourning as a mere characteristic attributed to life. Rather, I argue that life has to be thought in terms of *originary mourning*, which as the very condition of life's emergence extends its scope to every living (on).[5]

Similarly, Butler argues that her notion of grievability is a universal condition and can be applied not only to those who are dead but to every living being or every single body, as the "body implies mortality" (Butler 2004, 26). Thereby, grievability relies primarily on the inevitability of death: "[a] life has value in relation to mortality" (Butler 2020, 75). Consequently, she ties the notion of grievability to the validation of life and an injunction for equality between living beings. As such, "grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters" (Butler 2016, 14):

> [...] grievability is already operative in life, and that it is a characteristic attributed to living creatures, marking their value within a differential scheme of values and bearing directly on the question of whether or not they are treated equally and in a just way. To be grievable is to be interpellated in such a way that you know your life matters; that the loss of your life would matter; that your body is treated as one that should be able to live and thrive, whose precarity should be minimized, for which provisions for flourishing should be available. (Butler 2020, 59)

For Butler, therefore, life acquires its value on the condition that it is worthy of being grieved. However, we are left here with certain ambiguity about the precedence of grievability over the ontological production of a life. Is grievability (or its opposite) attributed to an already ontologically determined life? And thereby, does it require at least some ontological founding or recognition? Is grievability a ontological condition, or is the question of grievability determined only at the level of

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5   Butler's mention of living on could be treated as a reference to Derrida's notion of "living on" as synonymous with surviving. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida states: "Surviving – that is the other name of a mourning whose possibility is never to be awaited. For one does not survive without mourning" (Derrida 2005b, 13). Living as living on is therefore *originarily structured* by the necessity that someone has to die first, and someone else will have to continue to live: living on is living through death and after death insofar as one does not live on post mortem. It is living in the mode of mourning.

political (or biopolitical) decision-making? Perhaps, by introducing the notion of grievability, Butler wants to offer an alternative to a normative recognition of life based on radical exclusion as a result of which those "dying from a lack of recognition," those whose ontological status is suspended constitute "the 'shadowy realm,' which haunts the public sphere, which is precluded from the public institution of the human" (Butler 2000, 81). However, while Butler explicitly affirms that "grievability is a condition of a life's emergence and sustenance" and that "[w]ithout grievability, there is no life, or, rather, there is something *living* [my emphasis – A.K.] that is other than life," on the very same page she states that "[g]rievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as *living* [my emphasis – A.K.], exposed to non-life from the start" (Butler 2016, 15). Such inconsistencies make it more difficult to capture what grievability really means and when or where it begins, especially given that what can be apprehended as living is not necessarily recognized as a life (Butler 2016, 8).

Nevertheless, assuming its broadest meaning according to which grievability conditions apprehension of something as living (while apprehension "can imply marking, registering, acknowledging, without full cognition" [Butler 2016, 5], it is nevertheless "facilitated" by norms of recognition), one could still enquire as to where it begins and where it ends. It seems that this question is thoroughly political and strictly connected to the authority of the sovereign (i.e., the decision-maker). As Butler explains, "grievability is a characteristic attributed to a group of people [...] by some group or community, or within the terms of a discourse, or within the terms of a policy or institution" (Butler 2020, 105). It begins therefore neither with a referral to someone or something, nor with an assumption of their mortality, but rather with attributing a value to their loss, to wit, with authorization of the loss: "people can be grieved or bear the attribute of grievability only to the extent that loss can be acknowledged" (Butler 2020, 105). As such, "grievability governs the way in which living creatures are managed, and it proves to be an integral dimension of biopolitics and of ways of thinking about equality among the living" (Butler 2020, 56). Therefore, I argue that grievability, as a political perspective and a decision of the sovereign, could only emerge from a more originary field of mourning, which is already set in motion with the referral.

First of all, as I have already mentioned, every referral, every address to the other (whether we are speaking about "a life" or "something living that is other than life"), since it is structured by the trace, is already ancillary to the "logic" of mourning. Mourning begins not with appre-

Every referral, every address to the other (whether we are speaking about "a life" or "something living that is other than life"), since it is structured by the trace, is already ancillary to the "logic" of mourning. Mourning begins not with apprehension, decision, or even a question about grievability but with the trace.

hension, decision, or even a question about grievability but with the trace. Thus, it begins before any question about grievability can even be posed. Consequently, every "yes" that we express with regard to any form of living is already a response *of mourning* and *in mourning*.

> [The "yes" of responsibility] echoes, always, like the response to a spectral injunction: the order comes down from a place that can be identified neither as a *living present* nor as the pure and simple *absence of someone dead*.
> This amounts to saying that the responsibility for this response has already quit the terrain of *philosophy as ontology*, or of ontology as a discourse about the effectivity of a *present-being (on)* [...] (Derrida 2008, 213-214)

Furthermore, originary mourning installs an irreducible aporia within our "epistemological capacity to apprehend life" (Butler 2016, 3), and ultimately, it keeps grievability failing: in a certain sense, every form of living, contingent upon the originary mourning, poses an unbearable challenge to anyone who tries to apprehend something or someone as grievable. That is also why one can object to the threat of mourning and protest in the words of Derrida reading Jean-François Lyotard: "there shall be no mourning."

> Over me, the phrase says, or at least the phrasing of the phrase says, you will not go into mourning. You will especially not organize mourning, and even less what is called the work of mourning. And of course the "no mourning," left to itself, can mean the perpetual impossibility of mourning, an inconsolability or irreparability that no work of mourning shall ever come to mend.
> But the "no mourning" can also, by the same token, oppose testimony, attestation, protestation, or contestation, to the very idea of a testament, to the hypothesis of a mourning that always has, unfortunately, as we know, a negative side, at once laborious, guilt ridden and narcissistic, reactive and turned toward melancholy, if not envy. And when it borders on celebration, or *wake*, one risks the worst. (Derrida 2001b, 221)

Finally, I believe that grievability still occurs at the level of the subject's authority (or what Levinas would call the imperialism of the same). It would mean that since grievability relies on the subject's perception of other forms of living (even if it leads to the realization of certain kinship or bonding), it has to presuppose some kind of violence toward those others. As Levinas notices, "[i]f one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are

synonyms of power" (Levinas 1987, 90).[6] Since grievability relies essentially on the power of the sovereign to approach other living beings and the hegemony in attributing a value to them, then it has to involve this imperialistic violence.

In any case, violence seems irreducible, at least according to Derrida, for whom the only possible way to engage oneself with the other is through the iterable movement of the trace (which, in the context of the opposition between speech and writing, structures arche-writing).

> To think the unique *within* the system, to inscribe it there, such is the gesture of the arche-writing: arche-violence, loss of the proper, of absolute proximity, of self-presence, in truth the loss of what has never taken place, of a self-presence which has never been given but only dreamed of and always already split, repeated, incapable of appearing to itself except in its own disappearance. (Derrida 2016, 121)

Let us parse this sentence out while keeping the question of originary mourning and grievability in mind. The inscription of the other within the structure/movement of iterability is necessary to establish any kind of relationship with the other. This, of course, just like any effort of appropriation, apprehension, or recognition of the other, must involve violence. Moreover, the structure of trace (implied in arche-writing) has to, as I showed before, assume at least the possibility of the other's and my own disappearance (which would be "the loss of what has never taken place"), and by the same token, it embodies the originarity of mourning after the loss of what (or who) has never taken place within this imperial scope. Concurrently, since the condition of the trace's appearance is its disappearance, it has to signal a certain renunciation

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6   Derrida refers to the same passage from *Time and the Other* in his essay "Violence and Metaphysics." He describes there the violence and dominance which unavoidably coincides with bringing the alterity of the other to the light of phenomenology and ontology: "The ancient clandestine friendship between light and power, the ancient complicity between theoretical objectivity and technico-political possession" (Derrida 2009, 113). In the following passage from *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas develops his description of the other who "is other with an alterity that is not formal, is not the simple reverse of identity, and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same. It is other with an alterity constitutive of the very content of the other. Other with an alterity that does not limit the same, for in limiting the same the other would not be rigorously other: *by virtue of the common frontier the other, within the system, would yet be the same* [my emphasis – A.K.]" (Levinas 1979, 38-39).

of power or mastery. As Derrida points out in his eulogy for Louis Martin, "[d]eath, or rather mourning, the mourning of the absolute of force: that is the name, or one of the names, of this affect that unites force to the without-force [...]" (Derrida 2001a, 147). To approach the other in a responsible manner should then perhaps lead to the affirmation of weakness, which "implies a certain disarming quality in one's relation to the other" (Derrida, Ferrari 2001, 63). It means perhaps that in mourning one would have to surrender their ambition to master the other, and therefore, one would have to disturb the absolute power by means of which a universal understanding and a law of equal grievability could be established and enacted. Consequently, it would mean that the injunction of equal grievability would lead to the following paradox or a *double bind*: on the one hand, it would aim at weakening of the power of the sovereign over the decision as to which lives are grievable and which are ungrievable, but on the other, it would have to rely on some sort of sovereign power to establish and protect the universal law of equal grievability.

From Grievability to Equality

Now, every effort to establish the essence of life or bond between living beings must succumb to this inevitable logic of "the trace" and originary mourning, which, in turn, would mean that its validity is relative and its emergence outside of the structure of iterability is merely a metaphysical illusion. Butler's view expressed in *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* seems to fit this framework. As she points out, "understanding something about the conditions of achieving singularity within a given field of intelligibility [...] is the question of the normative preconditions for achieving grievability. We are perhaps back to the conundrum of structure and instance" (Butler, Athanasiou 2013, 134).

This conundrum boils down to the aporia of inscribing absolute singularity into the regime of possibility, and it conforms to the "law" of spectral contamination expressed in the above passage from *Of Grammatology*, where the possible is given a chance but only at the price of giving up on its alleged purity. This aporia "installs the haunting" (Derrida 1993: 20) within the ontological precisely by what the latter's unfolding tries to leave behind. Moreover, hauntology would harbor within itself any ontology, eschatology, teleology, or archeology as provisional places or effects (Derrida 2011, 10). The haunting would give voice to what ontology leaves outside its brackets, forcing the latter to reformu-

late its approach *ad infinitum*. This would mean that politics should not only be aware of haunting but affirm it. In fact, without hauntology, there would be no reason for politics whatsoever, as Ernesto Laclau rightly notices: "[w]ithout the constitutive dislocation that inhabits all hauntology – and that ontology tries to conceal – there would be no politics, just a programed, predetermined reduction of the other to the same" (Laclau 2007, 67). The political injunction would therefore urge us to take specters into account and not to exorcise them. It would thus send us into

> [...] the instability of an anxiety belonging to any possibilization. This would submit to being haunted by the specter of its impossibility, by mourning itself: the mourning of itself borne in itself, but which also gives it its life or its survival, its very possibility. For this *im*-possibility opens its possibility, it leaves a trace, both a chance and a threat, *in* what it makes possible. (Derrida 2005a, 88)

Consequently, life's emergence has to rely on this originary haunting that corrupts any ontological category or norm. It means that life has to attest to its profound contamination by death, which conditions the constitution of any individual presence any social bond. What it also means is that we cannot simply exclude specters from the domain of politics (of responsibility) or treat them as an unwelcome or undesired residue of normative production. While in her texts on grievability and precariousness Butler expresses awareness at least of the irreducibility of the spectral and of what remains after a life emerges within the political domain, in "Finishing, Starting," dedicated to Derrida's thought, she emphasizes that "[t]he question of politics resides [...] in the encounter with what troubles the norm of sameness" (Butler 2009, 298).[7]

By the same logic, what undoes (but also conditions) any framing is the haunting by what is not identifiable as a life, namely, by an ungrievable living "that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all" (Butler 2016, 38). Butler speaks here about those "others whose loss is no loss, and who remain ungrievable" (Butler 2016, 24), to wit, "effectively, socially dead" (Butler 2020, 59). But, as Derrida points out in *Specters of Marx*, "[t]his non-presence of the specter demands that one take its times and its history into consi-

The haunting would give voice to what ontology leaves outside its brackets, forcing the latter to reformulate its approach *ad infinitum*. This would mean that politics should not only be aware of haunting but affirm it.

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7   In the same text, Butler states that we are never quite free of "specters, ghosts, traces" when freedom, as a display of autonomy and auto-mobility of a subject, is at stake. Freedom can emerge only on the condition that it is already compromised, "disavowing the sites from which it does emerge, only to have those sites reemerge as the haunted grounds of its own possibility" (Butler 2009, 298).

deration, the singularity of its temporality or of its historicity" (Derrida 2011, 126). So, once again, we return to the aporia of inscribing the singularity in the realms of possibility and subjecting the other to the hegemonic perspective of the sovereign same. But, since specters are inherently elusive to appropriation, "[t]he subject that haunts is not identifiable, one cannot see, localize, fix any form, one cannot decide between hallucination and perception, there are only displacements; one feels oneself looked at by what one cannot see" (Derrida 2011, 169-170), by someone or something that belongs neither to the essence of life nor death (Derrida 2011, 62).

While, on the one hand, in Butler's view, the frame prohibits from mourning those who do not count as lives – "there is no destruction, and there is no loss" (Butler 2016, xiii) – on the other, what Butler fails to mention is that the return of the specter also interrupts the work of mourning encompassed by the frame which attests to "the ratified version of reality" (Butler 2016, xiii). However, one could still infer this second conclusion, for example, from the following passage:

> What is this specter that gnaws at the norms of recognition, an intensified figure vacillating as its inside and its outside? As inside, it must be expelled to purify the norm; as outside, it threatens to undo the boundaries that limn the self. In either case, it figures the collapsibility of the norm; in other words, it is a sign that the norm functions precisely by way of managing the prospect of its undoing, an undoing that inheres in its doings. (Butler 2016, 12)

Nevertheless, I argue that the frame must fail in its functioning by virtue of the spectral interruption of the work of mourning to which, after all, Butler attests (Butler 2016, 7). Furthermore, it seems that the normative differentiation between grievable and ungrievable lives is violently imposed on the originary violence of iterability. On the one hand, we are facing the derealization of the other, who, thereby, is "neither alive nor dead, but interminably spectral" (Butler 2004, 33-34). On the other, we have those who fit the frames of life worthy of our grief. That is where Butler sets normative ontological production against the realm of spectrality. Since "[t]hese normative frameworks establish in advance what kind of life will be a life worth living, what life will be a life worth preserving, and what life will become worthy of being mourned" (Butler 2016, 53), then according to Butler, the exclusion to the realm of spectrality leads to violence that "leaves a mark that is no

mark" (Butler 2004, 36)[8] or "barely a trace" (Butler 2020, 75), and results in fatal political consequences:

> If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated. But they have a strange way of remaining animated and so must be negated again (and again). They cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never "were," and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. (Butler 2004, 33)

However, Butler seems to disregard the threats which might stem from reactive, organized, and successful mourning. Yet, the question of who counts as a worthy life is strictly connected to forces that organize mourning. Such mourning would mean that those who count as lives worth living are nevertheless subjected to ontological violence and treated as ancillary to politically determined norms and categories. The work of mourning may also result in turning any bereaved and worthy life into a monument which in extreme cases might serve as a justification for the violence inflicted upon those who are unworthy of being mourned.[9]

Haunting by a specter of the other would unsettle those totalizing processes, but at the same time, it would make mourning possible – however, only as a failure of successful mourning. In a similar vein, Butler admits that "mourning would be maintained by its enigmatic dimension, by the experience of not knowing incited by losing what we cannot fully fathom" (Butler 2004, 22), namely, by the impossibility of turning the other into the same, whether we are speaking about a monument, an image, a subject, or a frame. In any case, precisely in order to overcome the violence that stems from the differentiation between grievable and ungrievable lives, Butler proposes to establish a presumption of equal grievability as "a principle that organizes the social organization of health, food, shelter, employment, sexual life, and civic life" (Butler 2020, 59), which would be a response to tendencies to intensify "the

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8   However, this can be true only in a situation when ontology is opposed to hauntology.

9   Regarding the problem of monumentalization, I would like to evoke a so-called "controversy" around a remark of Chris Hayes (a political commentator for MSNBC) about Memorial Day in the USA. He stated: "I feel uncomfortable about the word 'hero' because it seems to me that it is so rhetorically proximate to justifications for more war. And I obviously don't want to desecrate or disrespect the memory of anyone that's fallen" (The Nation's Editors 2012). Eventually, and sadly, under the pressure of American public opinion, he apologized for this valid and still rather restrained remark, given the history of American imperialism.

difference among the value accorded to lives and their very grievability"
(Butler 2020, 143).

As a response to the possibility that a life may be lost and that this
loss would be mourned, grievability has to imply that such a life is not
only mortal but also vulnerable. Therefore, according to Butler, grieva-
bility has to presuppose and expose precariousness as an elementary
condition of such a life. Now, if this life is deemed worthy of mourning,
and if our ability to value life, in general, relies on "an ongoing sense of
its grievability" (Butler 2020, 76), then we also have to acknowledge
that this life needs to be safeguarded (Butler 2020, 94), namely, that it
requires social and economic conditions which would prevent its damage
and in which such a life could be livable. This leads, according to Butler,
to a recognition of life's dependency on others: "Precariousness implies
living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in
the hands of the other" (Butler 2016, 14). On the basis of this assump-
tion, Butler argues that

> [...] the unequal distribution of grievability might be one framework for under-
> standing the differential production of humans and other creatures within
> a structure of inequality, or, indeed, within a structure of violent disavowal.
> (Butler 2020, 58)

Such a realization could provide an alternative to popular liberal appro-
aches, which, in an effort to address the issue of inequalities, disregard
the interdependency between lives in favor of what Butler calls "an
ontology of discrete identity" (Butler 2016, 31). However, in order to
safeguard every life from exploitation and violence, precariousness "has
to be grasped not simply as a feature of this or that life, but as a gene-
ralized condition whose very generality can be denied only by denying
precariousness itself" (Butler 2016, 22). Therefore, the generalized con-
dition of precariousness has to function on a par with "the radically
egalitarian character of grievability" (Butler 2016, 183). Following the
presupposition of the general character of precariousness, Butler pro-
poses a shared horizon of equality as a politico-ethical challenge that
consists in establishing an imperative that every life should be grievable,
and thus, worthy of protection.

Conversely, since there is no effective interdiction of violence against
those who do not meet the threshold of grievability, violence perpetra-
ted against lives or populations would directly result from an unequal
allocation of grievability. Thus, the egalitarian injunction that Butler
proclaims has to coincide with the call for nonviolence and a radical

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critique of inequality. Furthermore, at the heart of what she calls the politics of equality we must pose a demand according to which to insist "that every life be grievable is another way of saying that all lives ought to be able to persist in their living without being subject to violence, systemic abandonment, or military obliteration" (Butler 2020, 202). This normative principle or aspiration should lead us to a "more radical and effective form of egalitarianism" (Butler 2016, xxii) which would, in turn, address the issue of economic inequalities and the unequal distribution of precariousness in a more comprehensive manner than the existing political models.

Mourning as Living (On) Together

This call for egalitarianism finds its support in shared precariousness and the interdependency of lives. Butler argues that mutual reliance and common vulnerability stem from the exposure of our lives, as bodily lives, to others. This, in turn, allows her to put the very question of survival in the context of our constitutive sociality. According to her, "we are already tied together in a social bond that precedes and makes possible both of our lives. My life is not altogether separable from the other life " (Butler 2020, 93). While she emphasizes the carnality or physicality of our lives as the domain of precariousness, Butler also mentions that the emergence of a subject depends "on the ones whose definition of me gives me form" (Butler 2020, 101), which amounts to the possibility of inheriting our identity trough language. Therefore, the constitution of a social bond should be based not solely on corporeality but on the emergence of the social body as a site of contamination of corporeality by the process of ideation which "gives birth to me as a social creature" (Butler 2020, 101). The sense of social responsibility paves the way for the acknowledgment of our collective responsibility. While "[l]oss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (Butler 2004, 20), Butler also warns of immunization against vulnerability, which would lead to the eradication of "one of the most important resources from which we must take our bearings and find our way" (Butler 2004, 30). In fact, eradication like that would stand in contradiction to what constitutes us as social beings, namely, to an address to the other or rather an address that is already a response, which Derrida calls a countersignature (an echoing *yes*, a response to the spectral injunction) carried

by the movement of iterability: "we are constituted by virtue of the address, a need and desire for the Other that takes place in language in the broadest sense" (Butler 2004, 44); the subject can be sustained only "through the formation of a capacity to sustain an address to another" (Butler 2016, 176).

However, I wonder if Butler takes all the consequences of such a radical – without a doubt necessarily radical – approach into account. If this constitutive address to the other is carried out as iterable, if it is already a response to a loss of presence, then:

(1) It cannot be based on a general conviction of shared grievability and originality of the social bond since all those ties are, in a way, already troubled and undone by the loss of the other. This social bonding, already inscribed in the movement of iterability, takes place without taking place, to wit, "[w]ithout any possible gathering together" (Derrida 2011, 2). Therefore, Butler seems right to admit that "we may need other language to approach the issue that concerns us, a way of thinking about how we are not only constituted by our relations but also dispossessed by them as well" (Butler 2004, 24). But this urgent need for a new language, a new political discourse also stems from the spectral character of every social link, which, as such, requires constant reevaluation and reformulation, if not reinvention.[10]

Because haunting becomes the exact condition of the politics of equality, social bonds, on which Butler's discourse on equality relies, cannot be exempted from mourning. Just like we mourn others, we mourn the elusive and fragile ties that have been keeping us together. To think of equality in the context of originary mourning would perhaps

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10   From this point of view, politics, as Jacques Rancière argues, would have no *arche* – it would be anarchical (which would coincide with the anarchistic aspiration of deconstruction to challenge any claim of ultimate political authority or foundation). Consequently, equality could be confirmed not by resorting to some principle of kinship but through its enactment by means of polemical verification. Therefore, social equality would be "a way of living out the relation between equality and inequality, of living it and at the same time displacing it in a positive way" (Rancière 2006, 48). This labor of conflictual verification would involve an infinite task of constructing subjectivity as "the formation of a one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to an other" (Rancière 1992, 60). It would mean that "the logic of political subjectivization, of emancipation, is a heterology, a logic of the other" (Rancière 1992, 62). Since for Rancière anarchism has to be presupposed in democracy, the latter would have to be engaged with "the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their actions, the ever-open possibility of the fresh emergence of the fleeting subject. The test of democracy must be in democracy's own image: versatile, sporadic – and founded on trust" (Rancière 2006, 61).

mean to approach an irresolvable aporia: "But it may be that I cannot give the measure of equality its true sense unless I maintain the absence of common measure that is my relation to *autrui*. An equality of what is nevertheless radically unequal" (Blanchot 2003, 64). Thus, we would be facing the impossibility of translating an irreducible difference between us and the other into a shared condition of equality. Entangled in the double bind, the chance to access "the *whoever* or the *no matter who* of singularity" (Derrida 2005c, 52) by means of calculable measure, sometimes against hegemonic powers and dominating political interests, would emerge as "an autoimmune threat. For calculating technique obviously destroys or neutralizes the incommensurable singularity to which it gives effective access" (Derrida 2005c, 53).

(2) As a response to an already lost presence, the address remains, from the outset, engrossed in mourning. In this context, I would like to touch on a sparse appearance of the notion of demography in *The Force of Non-Violence*. Butler argues there that while demography is concerned with discursive representation of lives and populations, and consequently, it is involved in the process of evaluation which lives are worth preserving and which are not, she also poses a question which undeniably takes the form of a political accusation: "By what graphic means would we distinguish between the grievable and the ungrievable?" (Butler 2020, 104). This question/accusation may be considered disarmed by Butler a few pages earlier where she argues that the principle of equal grievability could be posed as "the demographic precondition" (Butler 2020, 56) for ethics to come. Here, I would like to deepen this question and to think of *graphos* (in the sense of iterable arche-writing) as the possibility of emergence of any *demos*, and simultaneously, any apprehension of grievability. Would that not mean that what is written or traced is already in (originary) mourning? And what would the living (on) together of a *demos* inscribed in the movement of the trace or iterability, and thus already seized by mourning, possibly mean? Perhaps, in Jacques Rancière's words, the *demos* could then be "at the same time the name of a community and the name for its division, for the handling of a wrong" (Rancière 1992, 59), perceived however not as an evolutionary or teleologic project, but closer to Derrida's intention, as a disjointure always threatened by the evil "against which there is no calculable insurance" (Derrida 2011, 32).

Mourning encapsulates or stands for living together, that is, also, living together with the dead, which "is not an accident, a miracle, or an extraordinary story. It is rather an essential possibility of existence. It reminds us that in 'living together' the idea of life is neither simple

In living together, we challenge the existing norms and social bonds, cohesiveness or coherence of a *socius*, and at the same time, the phantasm of symbiotic or fusional life, the very concept of life, and the ontological arrest of being-together.

nor dominant even if it remains irreducible" (Derrida 2013, 20). In living together, we challenge the existing norms and social bonds, cohesiveness or coherence of a *socius*, and at the same time, the phantasm of symbiotic or fusional life, the very concept of life, and the ontological arrest of being-together. Because of its structural discordance with totalization, such a living together would be reducible "neither to organic symbiosis nor to the juridico-political contract. Neither to 'life' according to nature or birth, blood or soil, nor to life according to convention, contract, or institution" (Derrida 2013, 27).

Therefore, it comes down to imperious necessity to contest the authority of the whole as the ultimate foundation of all living together. Only then can we think of living together in terms of iterability, to wit, as conditioned by *différance* that, as Butler explains, at the same time "rifts the 'we' and proves its impossibility as a unity without difference [...] and there is no way around this double bind" (Butler 2009, 297).

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ALEKSANDER KOPKA – is an assistant professor in the Institute of Philosophy at the University of Silesia in Katowice. He earned his Ph.D. from the Jagiellonian University and the University of Lille. His research interest combines deconstruction, phenomenology, Marxism, and anthropology of mourning.

Address:
Uniwersytet Śląski
Instytut Filozofii
ul. Bankowa 11
40-007 Katowice
email: olek.kopka@gmail.com

Autor: Aleksander Kopka
Tytuł: Żałoba i opłakiwalność: Kilka uwag na temat polityki życia razem Judith Butler
Abstrakt: W swoim artykule skupiam się na funkcji pojęć kruchości i opłakiwalności życia w pismach Judith Butler i rozpatruję ich miejsce w szerszym kontekście myśli o tym, co za Jacques'em Derridą nazywam „źródłową żałobą". Z jednej strony zatem chcę zrekonstruować stawiane przez Butler wyzwanie, polegające na przemyśleniu możliwości stworzenia wspólnoty bazującej na równym przydziale kruchości i opłakiwalności życia, który pozwala Butler na potraktowanie opłakiwalności jako przeni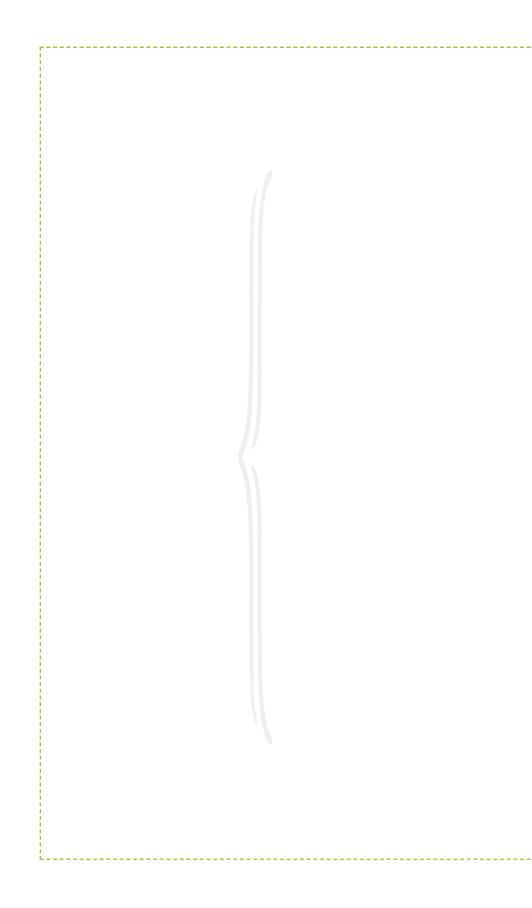kliwej i wyjątkowej ścieżki do problematyki ochrony żywych istot i równości między nimi. Z drugiej strony, odnosząc się do pism Derridy, wpisuję zaproponowane przez Butler pojęcia kruchości i opłakiwalności w szerszą strukturę żałoby, aby pokazać, jak wszelkie formowanie więzi społecznych zasadzające się na wspólnej kruchości i podatności na zranienie musi nieustannie konfrontować się z paradoksem własnej genezy.
Słowa kluczowe: żałoba, kruchość, opłakiwalność, równość, widmontologia

the common
and its futures

FELIPE ZIOTTI NARITA

Between a Double Crisis: Precarization, Extractivism and the Futures of the Commonist Politics

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and it's possible futures by posing following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading the organisation based on the common? In his reply, Felipe Ziotti Narita situates his answer in the context of contemporary double capitalist crisis, which renders visible the commons as crucial for satisfying collective needs and purposes.

1. What is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?

The current struggles for the common are situated between a double capitalist crisis: the scars of the 2008 financial crisis and the crisis of social reproduction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this crisscross, one of the most important aspects is *the sense of expanded precarization of forms of life*. The issue here is the effects of successive economic crises and austerity policies on labor, salaries, social inequalities and social insecurity due to the dilapidation of welfare policies, but also about a loss of the means of living together, for example, with the private appropriation of former public sectors and common goods (like education and health). Theodor Adorno had an interesting expression to describe the *malaise* of capitalist socialization: "damaged life" (*beschädigtes Leben*), that is, the precarization of social experiences is a total fact that extends simultaneously from work to personal affairs and from institutions to the lifeworld. Ken Loach's *Sorry We Missed You* illustrates exactly this mood: the new global norm is a kind of generalized insecurity that produces a fragmented livelihood under the pressures of flexibility, unpredictability, etc.

Here and there, some collectives are leading new moves of grassroots political conflict against the precarization of forms of life. They address a diffuse set of problems that emphasize cooperation and commons-based community management. A good example is the network of transnational social movement EuroMayDay, which started as a political platform against precarity (especially in labor relations and migrant conditions) and defends public transport and the knowledge available on the Internet as common resources for collectivities. With the COVID-19 crisis, manufacturing groups in many countries (I received some info from comrades in Greece, Spain, and Brazil) started producing facemasks and visors grounded in a community-based production – the products have been circulating for free and a good example is the network Coronavirus Makers. This kind of open-source technology questions the capitalist regime of applied knowledge (dependent on for-profit techniques) and articulates the struggle for the commons in light of the strong precarization of unequal access to raw materials in many countries.

Precarization is also connected to the appropriation of digital infrastructure. Capitalist modernizing moves unleashed a vast digital and network milieu grounded in many cooperative tasks that deterritorialized social production into circuits and, with the gig economy, offered a partial response to the crisis of accumulation in the wake of the 2008

crisis. Under the aegis of capital, and mediated by networks, the subsumption of social reproduction and labor to the valorization process has co-opted each piece of socialization. On the other hand, it also favored many experiences of peer production and horizontal reciprocity that have been challenging profit-maximization and connecting different subjective experiences of precarity. In July 2020, amidst the pandemic, workers from iFood, Uber Eats and Rappi in Brazil decided to paralyze their activities and organize a public demonstration against labor conditions in the biggest Brazilian cities – with the pandemic, they were among the most vulnerable workers to contagion and could not count on social security. Similar demonstrations already had taken place in 2019-2020 in Colombia, Argentina and Chile. In light of the need for dignity in labor process, the events connect a moral demand from workers to their material subsistence and, above all, address how the grammar of "partnership" in the gig economy is a kind of kidnapping of the network cooperative practices that have emerged since the 1990s with immaterial labor.

2. What are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?

The political agency with regard to the common is always a critical collective project. This general definition has many theoretical and practical consequences. Two topics are interesting to consider in terms of the political prospects.

Firstly, commonist politics must always reflect on the question concerning what it means to be *critical*. Alfred Schmidt holds that the critical social sciences must make a historical diagnosis of a condition to be transcended. Critique deals with the latent prospects of emancipation that remain subsumed under capitalist reproduction. A distinctive achievement of Marx's Paris manuscripts of 1844 is the critique of private appropriation *pari passu* with the impact of capitalist market relations on subjectivity and socialization. Sociality is mediated by capital and money, and it interpellates the individual with the extension of needs (*Bedürfnisse*) and moral pressures to enter into an asymmetrical relationship among owners. Over the last four decades, the expansion of financial capital and market structures through public institutions and the commons has made everything commodified, from knowledge to material goods. Individuals, thus, enter into socialization as needy subjects: their autonomy exists only precariously (*prekär*), since their

Firstly, commonist politics must always reflect on the question concerning what it means to be *critical*.

subsistence depends on market relations. In this sense, the commonist politics must deal with a critique that is also concerned with *denouncing* the precarity of human autonomy under market-oriented structures.

A major political challenge is to grasp the historical task and articulate a critical discourse that fits with it. An important dimension may be mapped according to Nancy Fraser's effort at actualizing our political grammar by complementing recognition with redistribution. On the one hand, commonist politics has to take into account the need for a positive role of social identity, since difference and pluralism are unavoidable products of capitalist globalization and will fuel political conflicts and far-right movements in national societies. On the other hand, sustainable projects for the material subsistence of individuals will demand local and transnational practices of redistribution of social goods grounded in the sharing of resources, solidarity, cooperation and open access to knowledge, trying to erode the mediations of capital.

All those practices are latent in many experiences across the world, ironically, beneath the strong expansion of capitalist network infrastructures. But it is an illusion to adopt a spontaneous view of emancipation, as if commonist politics would take place on its own or be conducted by an alleged conciliatory, reformist discourse. And this leads my answer to the second topic, which deals with what it means to be a *collective* project. What constitutes the common is not the object *per se* (water, software, etc.), but the kind of political relation that underlies the modes of use and management of the objects. It is a political contract with a new substance: not individualistic agreement, nor the relation among owners (like the liberal versions of the contract), but rather a defense of the *social* control over resources according to collective needs and purposes. The notion of the *institution* of the common emphasizes the action and the historical conditions for the implementation of a political project that dialectically creates a new social organization grounded in horizontal forces of production and the search for autonomy against the heteronomy imposed by market and state. It is dialectical, since it can emerge from unresolved capitalist contradictions: cooperative practices and network infrastructures coopted by capital contain potential transformations that confront the order of things with the consciousness of the common. As Adorno states in *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie*, the old mediates the production of the new, which maintains the old as a moment of the mediation.

The practical challenge for the commonist politics of the future is how to maintain a sustainable, perennial mobilization. In a recent article, Donatella Della Porta argues that the current multiple crises

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have opened up the need for the collective and participatory management of the commons, comprising public health, mobility, education, food policy, and housing policy. She appropriately points out that commonist politics can learn from the mobilization of civil society and the logics of social movements. Social movements tend to grow with political opportunities for gradual transformation. In times of deep crises and expanded precarization, mobilizations are fueled by the sense of drastic deterioration in life conditions, due to a much wider spectrum of problems. In this context, a single problem can pull the trigger of many other issues – and we see how current social movements and multitudinary mobilization can be operative with these logics, like Black Lives Matter and the Chilean street protests of 2019 and 2020.

However, a challenge remains open: how to direct the resources of mobilization, like skills and infrastructure, towards a commonist perspective. I agree with the recent book of Vangelis Papadimitropoulos, who states that for the commons and peer production to evolve into a tangible project that challenges the capitalist market-led policy, we need income to the commoners and common infrastructures (comprising digital and material support embedded in institutional networks). In light of the technological devices, Silke Helfrich has recently proposed the use of network technologies to connect and federate commons regarding the organization of convivial tools, that is, a kind of use of technology that is not proprietary, but rather open to community needs. In this way, instead of adapting the forms of life to technological and market imperatives, she argues for experiences grounded in how technology can *go with* collective needs of production and mobilization.

An important issue for commonist politics is how it will be able to dialogue and critically incorporate hacktivism and hacker ethics. Digital commons and open-source software, as a political defense of the autonomy of cyberspace from big-tech oligopolies, also have hacker origins (see Pekka Himanen and Gabriella Coleman). In the 2010s, with the leaks, we saw the political force of hacktivism in public opinion, treating data as a kind of political frontier for the digital commons and the openness of secrecy imposed on public data. It is an institutional dilemma for liberal democracies: civil society tends to demand more and more transparency and accountability from governments, which are reluctant and bureaucratically oriented to impose silence on data. If public policies for open data and the fair use of digital information are institutional responses, hacker ethics provides an opportunity for citizens to let their voice be heard.

This leads my answer to the digital enclosures of the commons. Here it is worth mentioning a difference in relation to the physical enclosures that unleashed capitalist development in modernity: digital enclosures are not only directed towards natural resources, but rather towards every piece of sociality in cyberspace. In this context, for example, cultural production sets many challenges for commonist politics. Since the 1990s, there have been many anti-copyright movements in artistic sub-cultures (see Dmytri Kleiner and Florian Cramer). A good example is cultural patrimony: the digitalization of physical libraries and museums in partnership with for-profit tech corporations is frightening because it can undermine the notion of cultural commons and their role in social development (especially in education and research). In the late 2000s, when Lewis Hyde and Robert Darnton stated that copyright threatens creativity, they rightly pointed to some alternatives embedded in Public Library of Science and the Internet Archive. We need to expand this logic and see how traditional cultural institutions – like the national libraries of France and Brazil – will manage the open policies of their collections as platforms for the commons.

3. Where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the common?

I would like to talk about my context (Latin America) and offer an overview on different dimensions of the potential struggles for the common. The region has been hit hard by the current pandemic, because the crisis has deepened the precarity of already unstable economic activity – even before the pandemic, our major economies (Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Mexico) were not really going through good moments. The integration of the region into the global productive chains is basically dependent on raw materials. Since the 1980s and the 1990s, deep market reforms have paved the way for finance capital to use the region as a key space for its operations and the *territory* has been the focus of continual struggles and organizations based on the commons. In 2020, the Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts mapped 92 socioenvironmental conflicts since the early 2000s, due to the appropriation of the commons and territory, comprising mining and agribusiness. The effects of extractivism go hand in hand with the socioeconomic ratio of expansion of market relations and financial capital. Sandro Mezzadra and Bret Nielson called it "operations of capital" and emphasized how extraction policies (mining, oil, clearing of forests

for the production of biofuels and foodstuffs, etc.) turn the expropriation of territory and common resources into a key issue for the precarization of life. In the 2000s, for example, commoners from the Peruvian provinces of Ayabaca, Huancabamba, Jaén and San Ignacio organized massive protests against mining extraction and its biocultural effects on local producers.

The recent modernization efforts dealing with infrastructure have also involved the expulsions (Saskia Sassen) of populations from their homes – be it via direct state intervention for eviction or due to socio-technical disasters that force populations to migrate. During the economic boom of Brazil in the early 2010s, the projects for the World Cup, the Olympics and infrastructure are good examples of this scenario: many residents in highly urbanized areas had to vacate without any compensation. In the same context, the dam disasters (in iron ore mines) in Mariana (2015) and Brumadinho (2019) forced people to leave their cities (that remain destroyed) due to the toxic mudflow, with deep impacts on collective resources (rivers and riparian zones) and local producers. Thus, capitalist modernization discourses, which promise a naïve reconciliation with development and abundance, deliver a permanent state of crisis with the expropriation of the commons. These dialectical tragedies revealed the false promises of (neo)developmentalist capitalism in peripheral countries, which combined, in the last decade, state-led interventions in partnership with finance capital (the mines were privatized in the 1990s).

Common-based practices have been spreading through highly urbanized areas, where artist collectives and urban planners have been discussing the sustainability of city life. Several legal documents had already emphasized urban territorial development and the need for commons-based public policies – Law 388 in Colombia (1997), the *City Statute* in Brazil (2001) and the Ecuadorian constitution of 2008. The right to the city *à la* Henri Lefebvre, with an emphasis on the collective use and production of urban space instead of the exclusive logics of private appropriation, implies the need for urban commons to promote welfare and mitigate strong socioeconomic inequalities and the precarious conditions of lower classes. It comes as no surprise that mobility, free parks, self-managed cultural spaces, and decent housing policy have been demanded in several street protests in Santiago and São Paulo in recent years. In times of national policies for territorial ordination, which are endorsed by United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Inter-American Development Bank, and are underway in Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica, urban commons might be

crucial for public policy and could spread many organizations based on the common.

It is also important to highlight the circulation of knowledge. In Brazil, research universities are mostly public universities, which is to say, science is funded by public investments. Here there is a tradition of open access science: the majority of our academic journals are based on the creative commons regime. Knowledge circulates freely and is embedded in databases and provides resources for the planning of public policy, for teaching, and even for public debate. Most of our journals cannot count on the infrastructure of global top-journals and publishers, partly due to the semi-peripheral position of the region (see Fernanda Beigel and Jean-Claude Guédon), but our long experience with open access is more positive than negative. Besides the strong regional circuit of peer-reviewed publications (Latindex, Clacso, Redalyc and Scielo), there are many editorial forums and research groups engaged in supporting open access as a politics for the commons. This kind of struggle is far from grassroots politics and the kind of critique that produces multitudinary mobilization and engagement, but it somehow constitutes a horizon for our public policies on education, culture and science, in times of pressures for the "social relevance" of the public costs of research universities. Especially in a context of fiscal hardship, open science might be a reasonable response that deals with the cultural and intellectual heritage, a common resource that is crucial to the development of our societies – marked by the historical exclusion of popular classes from higher education and only precariously integrated into the education system over the last 30 years.

FELIPE ZIOTTI NARITA – received a postdoctoral training in the social sciences at the University of São Paulo (USP) and the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) and all four of his degrees from São Paulo State University (UNESP). Lecturer in public policy at UNESP, affiliated editor of Theoretical Practice (Adam Mickiewicz University – Poland), lecturer in social theory at Baron of Mauá University and editor-in-chief of Cadernos CIMEAC (Federal University of Triângulo Mineiro - Brazil). His work is concerned with interdisciplinary research in the social sciences and his research interests include social theory, globalization, contemporary history, social movements, modernity/modernization discourses and history of education. Currently preparing a volume on crisis and globalization (Praktyka Teoretyczna, 2021) and a book on social media and democracy (University of Westminster Press, 2021).

Address:
São Paulo State University (UNESP)
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
email: felipe.narita@unesp.br

Autor: Felipe Ziotti Narita
Tytuł: W kleszczach podwójnego kryzysu: Prekaryzacja, eksraktyktywizm i przyszłość polityki tego, co wspólne
Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne? Felipe Ziotti Narita umieszcza swoją odpowiedź w kontekście współczesnego podwójnego kryzysu kapitalizmu, który uwidacznia dobra wspólne jako kluczowe z perspektywy zaspokajania kolektywnych potrzeb.
Słowa kluczowe: dobra wspólne, reprodukcja, podwójny kryzys kapitalizmu, prekaryzacja, ekstraktywizm

SANDRO MEZZADRA

Pandemic Crisis, Struggles for the Common and the Task of Reinventing the Welfare

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and it's possible futures by posing the following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the common? In his reply, Sandro Mezzadra draws our attention to contemporary struggles around welfare, which push us to reinvent such notions and institutions like public health or education beyond the private and the public.

Keywords: the common, welfare, reproduction, cooperation

> The common indeed provides us with an effective angle on the dynamics of the pandemic and at the same time emerges once again as a powerful alternative framework within which to articulate a panoply of struggles for a different world. To start with, just think about the radical environmental disruption of the commonality of the earth, which paved the way for spillover events and for the spread of coronavirus.

It is difficult to write about the politics of the common these days without taking into account the global pandemic crisis we are living through. The common indeed provides us with an effective angle on the dynamics of the pandemic and at the same time emerges once again as a powerful alternative framework within which to articulate a panoply of struggles for a different world. To start with, just think about the radical environmental disruption of the commonality of the earth, which paved the way for spillover events and for the spread of coronavirus. And do not forget the dismantlement of public welfare systems in many parts of the world, which has been widely discussed as a new form of enclosure of the commons and has definitely contributed to intensifying the impact of the pandemic. Moreover, the fact that the coronavirus disproportionately hit the poor, racialized minorities, and indigenous communities, sheds light on the persisting relevance of old lines of partition of the common that have their roots in histories of colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and class. At the same time, the most significant social movements and struggles that have characterized the last months – from Black Lives Matter to feminist movements, from mobilizations around the issues of public health and education to labor struggles in sectors deemed as "essential" during lockdowns – can all be read as instantiations of a politics of the common.

There would be much to say about the ways in which the common is at stake in the movements I just mentioned, as well as in many others (think for instance of migration struggles, which did not stop and even intensified in many parts of the world during the pandemic crisis). Doing that would require a detailed conceptual discussion on the common in singular, as well as on the commons in plural, in order to go beyond the fixation on the physical commons (according to the model of "common land") that often characterizes debates on the topic. Take for instance Black Lives Matter in the U.S. The common is at stake here not simply because it is a movement against "systemic racism", and therefore against hierarchical lines of partitioning the commonality of the human, and against processes of segregation that violently cross and divide common urban spaces and the very common fabric of citizenship. There is something more to be added. Black insurgency in the wake of the murder of George Floyd opened up a new common space, laying the basis for a politics of coalition that assembled a panoply of heterogeneous subjects and movements (from the *latinxs* to sexual dissidences, just to mention two of them) and gave rise to a collective power predicated upon an interplay and reciprocal empowerment of differences. This is a powerful instantiation of the political logic of the common, which constructs

subjectivity in a way that is fundamentally different from the classical modern emphasis on the bipolar structure of the "private/public."

Having said this, I would like to focus here on just one topic that I find particularly relevant in Europe today. I will do it keeping in mind the mobilizations around the issues of public health and education that I mentioned above, and I will ask whether the field of welfare can become a strategic field for a politics of the common against the background of the pandemic crisis. In order to tackle with this question, we have to note first of all that the response of European institutions to the current crisis has been fundamentally different from the one to the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007/2008 (meaning to the "sovereign debt crisis" since 2009). You will definitely remember the Greek crisis, which reached its apex in July 2015, the litany of austerity, the violent disciplinary and punitive inflection of neoliberalism in those years. And we are all aware of the huge amount of pain and suffering inflicted by such policies on reluctant populations, particularly in the South of the European continent, with the ensuing entrenchment of the plunder of the commons. It was the continuation of several decades of European neoliberal policies, now with an authoritarian twist. The point is however that it did not work, even from a capitalist point of view. The pandemic hit European societies and economies while the virus of the previous crisis continued to circulate, with stagnation and impoverishment characterizing many of them. I am convinced that this is the main reason why European institutions reacted to the pandemic crisis in a quite different way, which meant suspending the harshest neoliberal rules of the Stability Pact, covering up deficit spending through the expansive monetary policy of European Central Bank, and foreshadowing a mutualization of debt to launch the ambitious "Next Generation EU" recovery plan.

Needless to say, there would be much to discuss here. Are we confronted with a structural change in the EU or merely with a temporary adjustment? Even if we acknowledge that the measures I quickly listed imply a significant shift from neoliberalism at the macroeconomic level, what about the way in which the mobilized resources will be distributed and used? Will not the neoliberal logic of competition, entrepreneurship, and human capital continue to be dominant? These are all important questions that would deserve a detailed discussion. For now, I limit myself to noting that in the current conjuncture what we are confronted with is a hypothesis of the *capitalist* stabilization of the crisis. It is important not to forget this key point, but at the same time it is also important to note that such hypothesis implies a significant shift of the very terrain

For decades we have been struggling against and resisting cuts to public expenditure and welfare, and in the next months and years we will be struggling for the use of resources that will increase public expenditure in an unprecedented way. We will be struggling for the appropriation of significant shares of social wealth. And the common will be at the very center of these struggles.

of political action and conflict. This is of course also relevant for social movements and struggles. I will put it in a very simple way. For decades we have been struggling against and resisting cuts to public expenditure and welfare, and in the next months and years we will be struggling for the use of resources that will increase public expenditure in an unprecedented way. We will be struggling for the appropriation of significant shares of social wealth. And the common will be at the very center of these struggles.

As I have mentioned above, the question of welfare has often been discussed from the angle of the common. In particular, the dismantling of state welfare systems both in post-socialist transitions and those of advanced capitalism has been widely interpreted through the lens provided by Marx's analysis of "the so-called primitive accumulation" and as an instance of the "enclosure of the commons." Such dismantling (and the ensuing reorganization) of welfare systems actually opened up new avenues for the valorization of capital in fields like health, education, and housing. It is important to stress, however, that when speaking of welfare as a strategic terrain for a politics of the common today, I neither imagine nor uphold a "return" to the welfare state of the 20th century in any of its multiple instantiations. To put it briefly, the Western variant of the welfare state was entirely predicated upon the material conditions of industrial mass production and upon the movements of the industrial working class. While acknowledging significant social commons, the state monopolized their management, in forms that were violently attacked by social movements in the 1960s and 1970s (just think of the struggle of the feminist movements against the "family wage" and the patriarchal character of social policies). The point cannot be therefore to "return" to that welfare state, it is rather to *reinvent* social policies and the very notion of "welfare."

An important angle for a critique of the welfare state is provided by the concept of class composition. I already stressed the role played by the industrial (Fordist, if you wish) working class in the welfare state of the 20th century in the West. The power of the working class was both acknowledged and mystified here, while the role of workers as consumers was crucial for the general equilibrium of capitalism in an age of mass production. The fact is that today we are confronted with a completely different class composition, and a reflection upon the issue of welfare cannot but take it as its necessary point of departure. Writing with Brett Neilson, we have often emphasized the heterogeneity of contemporary living labor, what we call the "multiplication of labor." We have also attempted to grasp its new composition from a conceptual point of view,

speaking of a gap between living labor and the social cooperation crisscrossing it in many parts of the world. What we mean by that is that labor as a whole is increasingly characterized by a cooperative dimension while the embodied experience of labor is separated from that dimension (which means that for workers is often difficult to gain control of the cooperative power in which their daily activity is immersed). To this one should add that the boundary between work and life is becoming increasingly elusive today for many people, as well as the boundary between production and reproduction. Following the lead of feminist movements and thinkers, I consider the latter question particularly relevant, and I am convinced that the notion of reproduction (which is of course linked to the question of cooperation) provides us with an effective angle to rethink the whole issue of welfare.

What I called the cooperative dimension of labor is today at the very center of social policies. And this cooperative dimension can be managed in a purely individual and disciplinary way (as it is the case in neoliberal systems of workfare). But it is definitely possible to imagine a full acknowledgment of social cooperation, through systems of protection able to acknowledge the multiple differences constituting living labor today but at the same time enhancing its productivity and power. This is the horizon within which we have to frame struggles for welfare in Europe. And we have to imagine and promote a politics of coalition to nurture and support those struggles. The most significant social movements of the present have outstanding roles to play here. I have already mentioned the feminist critique of the patriarchal character of social policies, which is no less important today. Environmental movements and struggles raise crucial questions regarding the quality of development underlying the expansion of welfare, while they politicize in new ways the issue of territory, in particular with respect to the organization of public health. Migrant and antiracist movements politicize the borders of welfare, and more generally its relation with citizenship, while their struggle against racism in society continues to be crucially important. Needless to say, each of these movements has a lot to say also on other aspects of struggles for welfare. And this is what makes the politics of coalition in this case particularly promising and engaging, in a way following the example of Black Lives Matter discussed at the beginning.

It should be clear that struggling for welfare challenges us to test and reinvent such notions and institutions like public health and education, which are crucial components of any concept of the common. But struggles for welfare are struggles for the common also in another sense. Just think of the mix between public and private that characterizes

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contemporary welfare systems in many parts of the world. As I was writing before, we have been insisting for several years now that the common has literally no place between the two poles of public and private. The common points indeed to a different principle of organization, which can nurture the proliferation of specific institutions of the common. And what characterizes such institutions is the principle of self-organization and autonomy. While we contest the private-public mix in welfare systems, we do not want to return to the monopolization of the commons by the state that we experienced in the 20th century. A politics of the common in the field of welfare will necessarily work toward the creation of autonomous institutions capable of coexisting with public institutions, prompting the formulation of social policies, struggling for their implementation, negotiating and, when necessary, conflicting with public institutions. This is of course a big challenge, and I can only outline its implications and even pitfalls here. But I think it is worth taking it up in the current conjuncture in Europe.

SANDRO MEZZADRA – teaches political theory at the University of Bologna. His scholarly work has centered on borders and migration, contemporary capitalism and globalization, Marx and workerism. With Brett Neilson he is the author of *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Duke University Press, 2013) and of *The Politics of Operations. Excavating Contemporary Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 2019).

Address:
University of Bologna
Department of the Arts
email: sandro.mezzadra@unibo.it

Autor: Sandro Mezzadra
Tytuł: Kryzys pandemiczny, walki o to, co wspólne i wyzwanie wynalezienia na nowo welfare
Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne? Mierząc się z powyższymi pytaniami Sandro Mezzadra zwraca uwagę na współczesne walki wokół welfare, które zmuszają nas do pomyślenia i stworzenia na nowo takich instytucji jak opieka zdrowotna czy edukacja poza podziałem na publiczne i prywatne.

Słowa kluczowe: to, co wspólne; welfare; reprodukcja; kooperacja

ERIC BLANC

Teacher Strikes and the Fight for the Common

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and it's possible futures by posing the following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the common? In his reply, Eric Blanc draws our attention to contemporary teachers strikes as a movement with radical potentialities that greatly exceed merely reversing the privatization process of education.

Słowa kluczowe: the common, public education, strike, privatization, decommodification

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In the United States, and across the world, the fight in defense of public education is a central aspect of the fight for the common. At a time when labor militancy continues to decline in the private sector, educators and their unions have thrust themselves to the fore of struggles against privatization and for the common good.

Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the United States, which has experienced an unprecedented wave of teachers' strikes since 2018, in "red" (Republican-led) states like West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona, as well as "blue" cities like Los Angeles and Chicago. Hundreds of thousands of teachers and support staff have walked out, closing schools for literally millions of students. Through grassroots organizing and militant tactics, they won more concessions from their employers in a few short months than labor unions in these states had won over the past two decades combined. In the process, educators placed themselves at the front of the fight for a society that works on behalf of the many, not the few.

Regarding the common, there are some critical differences between the current revolt and the last great round of rank-and-file radicalism in the US and Europe, the strike wave of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Whereas labor struggles four decades ago came in the wake of a postwar economic boom and the construction of welfare states, this labor upheaval has erupted in a period of virtually uninterrupted working-class defeats and neoliberal austerity. As such, the political scientist Corey Robin (2018) was right to call 2018's educator upsurge the "most profound and deepest attack on the basic assumptions of the contemporary governing order."

The stakes are high. Public education remains one of the few remaining democratically distributed public goods in the US. For that very reason, corporate politicians have done everything they can to dismantle and privatize the school system. As professor Gordon Lafer documents in his book *The One Percent Solution*, this isn't only about immediate profit-making. Big corporations, he writes, are trying "to avoid a populist backlash" against neoliberalism "by lowering everybody's expectations of what we have a right to demand as citizens":

> When you think about what Americans think we have a right to, just by living here, it's really pretty little. Most people don't think you have a right to healthcare or a house. You don't necessarily have a right to food and water. But people think you have a right to have your kids get a decent education (Lafer 2017).

As in the rest of the United States, spending cuts have gone hand in hand with a push for privatization (Blanc 2019). The corporate playbook

is not complicated. First, you starve public schools of money, then you insist that the only solution to the artificially created education crisis is "school choice" — i.e. privately run (but publicly funded) charters, as well as government sponsored "vouchers" for private schools. In Oklahoma, there are now twenty-eight charter school districts and fifty-eight charter schools. "Is the government purposely neglecting our public schools to give an edge to private and charter schools?" asked Tulsa teacher Mickey Miller.

This nationwide offensive to take education out of the public sphere has undoubtedly advanced furthest in Arizona (Blanc 2018). About 17 percent of Arizonan students currently attend a charter school — more than three times the national average. Many of these schools generate millions of dollars in private revenue.

Like many other parents in Arizona, Dawn Penich-Thacker questioned the state's priorities: "If there's so little funding for education, why should it be given to profit-making businesses?" In 2014–15, for example, BASIS charter schools made almost $60 million for the private BASIS corporation that services its schools. "Business is business," noted Owen Kerr, who was formerly employed at BASIS. "So I can see that though a number of charters try to do things differently, most are set up to make money."

One of the strikers' secrets to success was that they consistently raised political demands – for example, massively increased school funding – on behalf of the commons and the common good. The defense of student interests was consistently put front and center. At the press conference announcing their impending work stoppage, Noah Karvelis explained that "we are underfunding our students every single day — every single student in the state of Arizona is being underfunded. And by doing so we are throwing away an entire generation's opportunity for academic success." And in Oklahoma, the work stoppage focused almost exclusively on demands for increased school funding, since the legislature had already passed important salary concessions in a last-minute attempt to prevent educators from walking out.

Fighting for students, and framing their struggles as a defense of essential services for the public, went a long ways towards undercutting the Right's constant harping that striking teachers were hurting children. Educators made a compelling case that they weren't walking out *from* the students, but *for* them. As one West Virginia teacher explained in a March 1 letter to her students: "I love you and that's why I'm doing this." Posts from Arizonan strikers conveyed a similar message:

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I educated my students the best way I know how, and that's by taking that stand and showing them that they're worth that time and effort. If we can get them to believe they're worth us walking out then maybe they can be our loudest advocates.

Students reciprocated the support by taking matters into their own hands. During each of the strikes, high schoolers organized massive rallies in defense of their teachers and public education. Together with her classmate Juliana Purdue, Jazmine Aliff of Seth, West Virginia made a last-minute Facebook event in the hopes of getting a hundred students to demonstrate their solidarity. "The reason we did it was simple," she said. "Our teachers do so much for us and we know that a lot of them felt down during the strike, like they were failing us by not being in class. We wanted to show that we supported them – and we wanted to fire them back up." To the organizers' surprise, over 2,500 students joined the rally.

In Oklahoma, Edmond Memorial High senior Gabrielle Davis similarly initiated a thousand-strong student rally in less than thirty-six hours. For her, this action was about students standing up for themselves:

I want to be heard, but Oklahoman students haven't been heard. We've finally reached a breaking point because our education needs to be funded. We have real power to influence policy, to influence public opinion. The protests have taught me and my classmates how to stand up for what we believe.

One of the major upshots of the 2018 strikes in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona was that opposition to privatization has spread widely. To quote Kerr, "this grassroots movement could very well be the first step towards reversing privatization in Arizona and beyond." Penich-Thacker explained how the state's Red For Ed movement had boosted anti-voucher sentiment in the state:

Red for Ed has more people paying attention to education than ever before. Even last year, a lot of people hadn't heard of the funding crisis, let alone vouchers. Now you can't go anywhere in Arizona without talking about this. Red for Ed is an incredible "force multiplier" for efforts to put a stop to increased privatization: it makes all of our tools more powerful. Now every conversation we have about vouchers and charters is amplified across the state.

Though the initial pay and funding demands of these education movements may seem relatively modest, each walkout raised a question

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with radical political implications: should our society's wealth and resources be used for human needs or corporate profits?

A small, but not insignificant, number of strikers concluded that systematic solutions will be needed to resolve our society's underlying crisis of priorities. When asked about her favorite moment of the strike, Morgantown teacher Anna Simmons recounted the following anecdote from the day West Virginian educators turned their strike "wildcat" (i.e. by disobeying orders from union leadership to return to work):

> At a mostly unoccupied mall in Morgantown we met to discuss our options. Ultimately, in a nearly singular voice, we stated that we were not willing to accept the same empty promises our politicians have given their constituents for decades. It was a spontaneously planned meeting with short notice, but our school employees showed up in huge numbers.

> I realized that night that I wasn't the only one feeling as passionately as I was feeling about what the work stoppage meant. It was the moment I realized that it was about more than just insurance premiums and salaries. It was the continuation of a movement that started with Bernie Sanders and is going to result in a power shift from the elite wealthy to the working people.

Though the initial demands in these education battles remain relatively modest, the movement has radical potentialities. If working people across the US are able to reverse the privatization of education, there's little reason to assume that they'll stop there. Key sectors of our economy — from health care to transportation to energy production — are ripe for decommodification.

At its heart, the school strikes are not just about the fate of public education. They are strikes for the common and for democracy — against the plans of a tiny clique of capitalists to unilaterally impose their vision for the world upon the working-class majority.

In this way, teachers have posed the central question of our time: Who should determine governmental policy — the workers or the rich? The billionaires are right to be worried.

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ERIC BLANC – author of the books *Revolutionary Social Democracy: Working-Class Politics Across the Russian Empire, 1882-1917* (Brill 2021) and *Red State Revolt: The Teachers' Strike Wave and Working-Class Politics* (Verso 2019), Eric Blanc is a doctoral candidate at NYU Sociology. He has appeared on Democracy Now, Rising, and writes for Jacobin, The Nation and The Guardian. During the West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Denver, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Chicago public education strikes, Blanc was Jacobin's on-the-ground correspondent.

Address:
New York University
Department of Sociology
email: ebb356@nyu.edu

Autor: Eric Blanc
Tytuł: Strajki nauczycieli i walka o to, co wspólne
Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne? Eric Blanc, skupiający się na przebiegu strajków nauczycieli w Stanach Zjednoczonych, zwraca naszą uwagę na radykalną potencjalność tych walk, które przyjmują postać walki o to, co wspólne.
Słowa kluczowe: to, co wspólne; edukacja publiczna, strajk, prywatyzacja, dekomodyfikacja

LUIS MARTÍNEZ ANDRADE

Communitarian Feminism in Latin America

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and its possible futures by posing the following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the common? In his reply, Luis Martinez Andrade situates his answer in the Latin American context by drawing our attention to the contemporary struggles of communitarian feminists and indigenous movements.

Since the sixteenth century in Latin America and the Caribbean, we can observe the existence of three mechanisms that have configured "the coloniality of power" as the formation of a dependant capitalism. They are 1) land concentration by the landowners; 2) the practice of monoculture, aiming to satisfy the demand of the external markets (once also represented in the plantation regime), and 3) mining (expressed in the gold or silver cycles and, currently, in the raw material extractivism). As a result of these practices, we can observe a despoilment of natural resources, causing terrible levels of inequality and social exclusion, but also an unprecedented environmental deterioration. Furthermore, the modern/colonial dynamics of capitalism installed indigenous and Afro-descendant populations at the lowest level of the socio-economic pyramid.

For Breny Mendoza, the Honduran political scientist, the transition to neoliberal democracy implied more a continuity than a break with the ancient structures of exploitation, resulting in the configuration of the *coloniality of democracy* (Mendoza 2014, 249). Indeed, the transition to democracy sharpened the process of NGOization in the region and accelerated the process of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2005), creating the conditions – objective as well as subjective – for commoner riots, popular uprisings and ethnic/class revolts. If the *Caracazo* of 1989, the indigenous mobilizations of 1990, the Zapatista uprising of 1994 and the Cochabamba Water War in 2000, had already expressed a rejection of the policies of the *Washington consensus* applied by neoliberal governments, during the decade 2000-2010, popular movements continued to confront the extractivist logic imposed in Latin America. In this context, specifically in Bolivia and Guatemala, the proposal of *communitarian feminism* emerged at the end of the decade.

Founded in the city of La Paz in 1992, the anarchist collective *Creating Women* has been one of the main organisations responsible not only for the *decolonization of feminism*, but also for the emergence of *communitarian feminism*. From the public provocation, through the slogans (graffiti) painted on the walls of Bolivian streets ("Take your rosaries out of our ovaries", "There is nothing more similar to a right--wing macho than a left-wing macho", "The land is not for sale, the land will be defended", "Disobedience, because of you I will be happy" or "Because Evo does not know how to be a father, he does not understand what it is to be a mother" (Cúneo & Cascó 2013, 108-111), to the production of their own theory – which de-patriarchates the forms of social organization, some militants of this group, each in their own way,

have denounced the dire consequences of "the technocracy of gender". Although some of them took different paths in 2002, their criticisms and approaches continued to confront the ideological and historical bases of patriarchal violence.

Distancing herself from the supposed theory of harmonic complementarity between men and women that reigned in pre-Columbian societies, Julieta Paredes argues that a "patriarchal connection" occurred during the colonization of the Americas, when white men established a sort of a *masculine pact* with indigenous men to subdue the women of their respective communities, and thus exclude them from the political arena. In 2010, the Bolivian Aymara feminist Julieta Paredes, in her work *Hilando Fino. From communitarian feminism*, made not only an epistemological break with Western feminism, but also demystified of the notion of chacha-warmi, through a reconceptualization of the complementary couple. In this regard she writes that: "The community is made up of women and men as two essential, complementary, non--hierarchical, reciprocal and autonomous from each other halves. Which does not necessarily mean compulsory heterosexuality, because we are not talking about a couple, but about political representation, we are not talking about family, but about community" (Paredes 2013, 87). Without falling into simplistic oppositions, I consider that Julieta Paredes' proposal is fundamental for avoiding the *essentialisms* of some political perspectives.

It is important to mention that in Julieta Paredes' text the question of social interventions from the body is central both for the de-patriarchalization of social relations and for the defence of the conditions of social reproduction. Indeed, the theme of corporality (and its care) is closely linked to the issue of defending the territory. Hence, it is not fortuitous that in the struggles of popular and liberation movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, the body/territory link occupies a privileged place. From the city of Esquel, located in Argentinian province of Chubut, to the sacred territory of Wirikuta (Mexican state of San Luis Potosí), passing through the Peruvian city of Cajamarca and San José del Golfo in Guatemala, we can observe that conflicts over mining projects have increased in recent years. However, we also observe a relationship between socio-environmental and feminist struggles. In that sense, Lorena Cabnal recognizes that: "the defence of the territory-land so that it is free from mining is very generalized, but within it live the bodies of women, which are experiencing oppression and violence. Hence the approach to recovery and defence of the very first territory; territory--body" (quoted in: Cúneo & Cascó 2013, 363).

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It was precisely during those years that the mining consortiums increased their presence in the region, and by 2009 the conflict between the government and the communities had become unavoidable. In this way, the slogan "recovery and defence of the territory", central in the fight against mining projects, also became the basis of community feminism.

The Mayan communitarian feminist Lorena Cabnal, after having studied psychology at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala, in 2002 made the decision to go to the mountain of Xalapán. Two years later, with other colleagues, she founded Amixmasaj (association of indigenous women of Santa María de Xalapán), an autonomous organization that under the idea of "defense of the land-body territory" carried out a very important awareness-raising work in the Guatemalan department of Jalapa. It was precisely during those years that the mining consortiums increased their presence in the region, and by 2009 the conflict between the government and the communities had become unavoidable. In this way, the slogan "recovery and defence of the territory", central in the fight against mining projects, also became the basis of community feminism. Although Julieta Paredes and Lorena Cabnal agreed and exchanged views on patriarchal domination during the celebration of the VIII Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Lesbian Meeting organized from October 2010 in Guatemala City, it was not until 2012 that they began to share common ideas focused on communitarian feminism (see. Falquet 2014).

For his part, David Harvey proposes that the new dynamics of capital should be understood through the notion of "accumulation by dispossession", where the *enclosure of the commons* and the liberalization of markets become the main features of neoliberalism. The violent character of capital is expressed through the expropriation of land and knowledge of indigenous and peasant communities. According to Harvey, the general expansionist logic of the capitalist system tends to take refuge in new territories or spaces, in order to continue the incessant search for profit. That is why the struggles in defence of the territory – or even of common goods - represent a moment of rupture with the system. It is not coincidental that Harvey identifies the 1994 uprising of the indigenous Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Mexico with the fight against the privatization of the commons.

In Guatemala, for more than five years now, the National Movement of Weavers, led by the *Asociación Femenina para el Desarrollo de Sacatepéquez* (AFEDES), has fought for the recognition of the collective property of indigenous peoples against the merchandising of the Mayan culture and of textile art and, therefore, faces the logic of privatization of the neoliberal model. One can also mention the Mayan indigenous movement that opposes the process of "accumulation by dispossession" expressed in the "Renace Hydroelectric Complex", which was built by a Spanish emporium and pollutes the Cahabón River. It goes without saying that the ecological and feminist dimension is present in these

struggles. In this sense, the defence of the commons by communitarian feminism is important not only for the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles in this new millennium, but it is also a key piece in the design of an *eco-socialist project* which, paraphrasing the Marxist thinker José Carlos Mariátegui, will be a *heroic creation*.

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In this sense, the defence of the commons by communitarian feminism is important not only for the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles in this new millennium, but it is also a key piece in the design of an eco-socialist project.

LUIS MARTÍNEZ ANDRADE – is currently a visiting postdoctoral fellow at the Collège d'études mondiales, as part of a Gerda Henkel Fellowship. He works under the direction of Françoise Vergès and Geoffrey Pleyers on the subject „Social progress and global justice through the prism of the 'Epistemology of the South': The theology of liberation and the 'decolonial turning point" in Latin America."

Address:
Collège d'études mondiales
54 boulevard Raspail
75006 Paris
France
email: luisma_andrade@hotmail.com

Autor: Luis Martínez Andrade
Tytuł: Wspólnotowy feminizm w Ameryce Łacińskiej
Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne? Luis Martinez Andrade umieszcza swoją odpowiedź na powyższe pytania w kontekście Ameryki Łacińskiej, zwracając uwagę na współczesne walki ruchów feministycznych i rdzennej ludności.
Słowa kluczowe: to, co wspólne; feminizm, Ameryka Łacińska, akumulacja przez wywłaszczenie

ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI

Breaking the Vicious Circle of Defeat: The Common and the Revolutionary Practice in the Pandemics

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and it's possible futures by posing the following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the common? In her reply, Angela Dimitrakaki reflects on possible means of transition to the common as a radically different socio-economic paradigm.

Keywords: the common, social reproduction, the state, revolutionary practice

1. What is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?

There would be two interpretations of 'aspect' in the above question.

First, if by 'aspect' we mean the *site* that current struggles should be taking as their focus, I would say that land, energy, and the media are the three salient aspects to be territorialised as commons through the common as a political principle. Land and energy should be obvious references. The media less so, and yet the ownership of the newspapers and TV stations, as well as social media platforms, by capital is a serious impediment to any prospects for an ideological shift of large populations. Even a Netflix documentary such as *The Social Dilemma* (2020) can highlight how tech capital has moved to determining social 'types' on a behavioural level in ways that serve submission not just to the market but to capital as a social relation. Control of the formal avenues of information flow by capital (indeed, by the owners of the means of production) should be seen in relation to this. The two things taken together - mass media and social media - create a Gargantuan obstacle to any prospects of opposition to the logic of capital.

Second, if by 'aspect' we mean the *feature/characteristic* of current (as in *actually existing*) struggles of the common, then this is (a) the lamentable delinking of such struggles from what communism might be as a renewable idea, (b) the inability of agents to organise transnationally and transcontinentally such struggles as precisely 'grand narratives' of revolutionary potential, and, consequently, (c) the low expectations of such struggles. There is a persistent banalisation of struggles for the common as struggles for 'common kitchens' or for 'common gardens', or any other neighbourhood-level initiatives. The system's opposition to such issue-based struggles is not, of course, to be underplayed and underestimated. Yet, the carrying out of struggles of this kind in such a way lets the common as a political principle come to the service of the extant system by *offering a politics of care in terms of ethics rather than politics* - that is, in terms of pacifying power temporarily rather that claiming power. I think this is why such struggles have been seen to fill in the gaps of public provision and care generated by the withdrawing state of neoliberal governance.

2. What are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?

Clearly, the biggest challenge is the prospect of a manufactured age of pandemics or, more broadly, 'states of exception' and how this prospect

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would fast-forward totalitarian techno-capitalism rather than the 'communicative capitalism', to use Jodi Dean's important idea, we are used to.

We are used to associating commonist politics with actually getting together *physically*. In art, when the digital field was getting to be dominant in the 1990s, there was a notable turn to an art of social relations in physical space. Irrespective of the criticisms the institutional face of this art has received, the intention to make art 'with lots of people' (as an artist put it), or to have *on site* dialogic exchanges as art, was a deliberate, purposeful act of resistance against the social isolation - the atomisation, if you will - of the digital condition. I think that the attack, at the time of writing, of almost all capitalist governments to uprisings that involve taking to the streets, which may or may not be accompanied by serious efforts by the state to limit free speech on social media (spaces already compromised through tech-capital control), and overall, the formulation of an undeclared police state in many countries, speak volumes about where defenders of the *status quo* see the threat: the street.

To say that we can have commonist politics within activated police states is wishful thinking, because in such cases we don't even have public space from which commonist politics would try to enact a commonist space. Writing from Athens, where on November 17, 2020, the right--wing government unleashed proper state terror to break the antifascist non-crowd (the demonstrators were very in few number, wearing medical masks, and moving at least two-meters apart from one another) that sought to honour, like every year, the student opposition to the junta in 1973, was indicative of broader tendencies - as is the new law in France that sends you to prison for a year and gives you a fine of 45,000 Euros if you photograph or identify police in action.

3. Where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling up and spreading the organisation based on the common?

Given the severe limitations of our pandemic moment and all it brings, I think we need to render visibility to the social reproduction commons that is developing alongside the public health sector. But this must be done with political caution so as not to allow for a further withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities. You can't have a state that controls science, and medical science, together with private capital, and see an empowering social reproduction commons by default.

> To say that we can have commonist politics within activated police states is wishful thinking, because in such cases we don't even have public space from which commonist politics would try to enact a commonist space.

But, if I must be honest, spreading the organisation of the common, as a political principle, can only happen in the context of a contemporary revolutionary practice. We are however very far from that. We see that the uprisings tend not to be durational, tend to be issue-based. And also, we see that the state manipulates the people's fear for their own life to keep them off the streets: many people accept and welcome lockdowns rather than demanding the great expansion of public-sector health care and a re-organisation of production so as to contain the virus, and anything like the virus, which is guaranteed to appear in the future should the current production model continue.

We are at an extremely counter-revolutionary moment because capital controls both the media and the police - that is, both the means of ideological determination and the body that has the monopoly on actual violence. So, unless there is a mass realisation about where this is leading, I am not optimistic. Effectively, when we talk about the common we talk about a different socio-economic paradigm, and this cannot be embraced before there is some kind of consensus on the current paradigm being a disaster. Getting organised within anti-capitalist political parties is the one thing that can offer protection from the state and coordination, in my view. The parliamentary system of bourgeois democracy must be turned to our advantage, because it's all we've got. A political party can organise its members, bring them to the streets, offer legal fees in cases of arrest, and fight at the parliament, and have its own newspaper, etc. And if such political parties do not exist, they need to be set up - for there is extremely little popular support at the moment for anything looking like a revolutionary uprising. Political parties can coordinate political education towards that, and they can also spearhead alliances against the onslaught of the right wing.

It must be appreciated, then, that the party form is the one through which state power can be accessed - though we know that there are in place mechanisms that run deeper than the façade of the state. Nonetheless, I think we all know what capital can do, how far it can go to secure its reproduction, and I don't see any other way apart from forming a counter-power that can claim the state. Striving for change from below but 'without taking power' will always end in our defeat by power. This vicious circle must be broken.

Effectively, when we talk about the common we talk about a different socio-economic paradigm, and this cannot be embraced before there is some kind of consensus on the current paradigm being a disaster. Getting organised within anti-capitalist political parties is the one thing that can offer protection from the state and coordination, in my view.

ANGELA DIMITRAKAKI – a writer and SeniorLecturer in Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Edinburgh where she directs the MSc Modern and Contemporary Art. Her scholarlybooks include Gender, ArtWork and the Global Imperative: A Materialist Feminist Critique(Manchester University Press 2013), Art and Globalisation: From the Postmodern Sign to the Biopolitical Arena(Hestia 2013, in Greek), ECONOMY: Art, Production and the Subject in the 21st Century(Liverpool University Press 2015, co-edited with Kirsten Lloyd), Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions(Liverpool University Press 2013, co-edited with Lara Perry). She sits on the editorial board of Third Text and is a Corresponding Editor and a former Editor of Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory. Her award-winning fiction work in her native Greek includes six novels and a collection of short stories for which the most recent distinction was an Athens Academy award in 2017.

Address:
School of History of Art
University of Edinburgh
Room 0.52, Hunter Building74 Lauriston Place,
Edinburgh EH3 9DF\
United Kingdom
email: angela.dimitrakaki@ed.ac.uk

Autor: Angela Dimitrakaki
Tytuł: Przerwać zaklęty krąg porażek: To, co wspólne i praktyka rewolucyjna w czasach pandemii

Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne? Mierząc się z powyższymi pytaniami Angela Dimitrakaki roz-

waża możliwości przejścia do porządku opartym na tym, co wspólne, rozumianego jako radykalnie różnym paradygmacie organizacji życia społeczno-gospodarczego.

Słowa kluczowe: to, co wspólne; społeczna reprodukcja, państwo, praktyka rewolucyjna

GIGI ROGGERO

To Avoid the Farce of the Common

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Praktyka Teoretyczna* journal, we have invited our long-lasting collaborators and comrades to reflect once again on the concept of the common and it's possible futures by posing the following questions: a) what is the most important aspect of the current struggles for the common?; b) what are the biggest challenges for the commonist politics of the future?; and c) where in the ongoing struggles do you see a potential for scaling-up and spreading organisation based on the com- mon? In his reply, Gigi Roggero draws our attention to the necessity of maintaining the link between the common, subjectivity and class composition, if we are to preserve the revolutionary potential of the concept and the practice it implies.

It is a long time since we discussed the political concept of the *common* at a conference organized by Polish comrades in Warsaw. It was 2011, in the middle of the «occupy» movement cycle – from Spain to Us, before there were the university struggles and the insurrections in North Africa, the mobilizations in Turkey and Brazil would follow. Embodied in that context, the common we discussed was not a generic allusion, it was not a natural good to be defended, it was not a juridical technicality. The commune was a matter of relations of production, hence of relations of force and antagonism. It was not a timeless aspiration, but a historically determined battlefield.

So ten years have passed, but it is not just a question of chronology, or simply time in a quantitative sense. The matter is first of all a qualitative question. During this time, in fact, on the one hand that cycle of struggles has exhausted its power of autonomous expression, leaving sedimentations or legacies of different types; on the other hand, the economic-financial crisis (within which those movements were born, within and against) has deepened and changed, transforming the context. As political militants, we know very well that a concept is like a tool we use to interpret and force the reality: if it works for this purpose, fine; if not, we have to forge a new tool, or at least modify it. We must therefore retrace the genealogy of the debate on the common in the light of the present and its contradictions – whether actual or potential – in order to arrive at answers to the questions that our Polish comrades are asking and asking of us. We will do so stenographically, in the attempt to mention some unresolved issues and open problems.

Different visions of the common

We can schematically identify different visions of the common (and the commons) developed in the international debate.

First, there is a *naturalistic* view of the commons declined in the plural, that is, the commons imagined as pure and uncontaminated things to be defended from the appropriation of capital, understood as an external subject and not as an overall social relation. They would constitute an «outside», something that comes first and – it is not clear how – would not be subsumed and commodified. Disembodied from historically determined relations of production, the common here becomes a fetish that leads to nostalgia for a mythological past, swept away and destroyed by the development of capital. Regardless of how much the struggles themselves have often, in their own way, destroyed that

past, this view can be described as romantic, in the far from positive terms in which Marx spoke of it.

Then, there is an *institutionalist* vision of the common and commons, according to which they are determined by institutional recognition. This juridification of the common, on which at least in Italy there has been a certain amount of initiative some years ago in relation to mobilizations particularly of art workers, ends up inverting the materiality of the relation between struggles and law: it is no longer the former that determine the latter, but viceversa. Foundations and charters of the commons were not proposed as an eventual tactical step of the movements for the common, but rather as their strategic objective. It is not juridical technicalities that are put at the service of struggles, but the opposite. In this separation between *benecomunisti* [*goodcommonists*] experts and the bearers of the need for the common, a class identification of the common is also produced, which ends up corresponding to specific figures and behaviours, mostly those of the intellectual and professional classes in search of political recognition on the one hand, and of the proletarianized middle classes on the other.

Now it is necessary to problematize what we can define as an *essentialist* vision of the common, into which a significant part of what has been defined as «post-operaismo» (a term to which we will return later) flows. Although starting from a correct critique of *goodcommonist* naturalism and the assumption of the common as an element of production, in this vision there is the risk of falling into a new naturalism, this time an ontological one: in fact, it is assumed that from «cognitive labor» automatically and immediately comes free social cooperation, and from this the common. But the common is rooted in a historically determined ambivalence: the cooperation that constitutes the material framework of the possibility of autonomy, is at the same time cooperation for capitalist exploitation. And in social cooperation the form of capitalist organization does not disappear but is redefined, while within capture there is commanded living labor. Even when we talk about the «capture of the common», we must not mean the transition to a parasitic capitalism: the company must organize the work of the capturers. Social cooperation is therefore not exclusively self-organized, just as it is not organized exclusively by the master. Capital, in fact, is a social relation: since cooperation is located within this relation, freedom and autonomy are always at stake and never given as a starting point. In the absence of elements of antagonism and rupture, formal technical independence does not correspond to political autonomy.

Let us be clear: we are not proposing a vision that is fideistically

entrusted to the spontaneous development of struggles. On the contrary, we are criticizing a vision entrusted, fideistically, to the simple recognition given by an external subject, be it the State, local or supranational institutions, or the academic community. In these visions the materiality of class compositions and relations of exploitation and struggle disappears; it remains only a disembodied utopia. Certainly, fundamental to the definition of the common is its capacity to produce institution, as organization of autonomy, new collective norms and power. But who institutes the common? From a revolutionary point of view, it is the process of subjectivation and the potential for breaking with the given forms of social cooperation; today these forms belong to the capital, or at least are primarily used by it. In fact, most of the visions outlined above lack an interpretation of the formation of the subjectivity that produces the common. For us, what is decisive is not the element of the recognition, but rather the process of producing a subject of the common that is capable of breaking with and overturn the capital social relation. Otherwise, the risk is to imagine the common not in a strong sense, as a dualism of power, but in a weak sense, as something that is created in the interstices of capitalist accumulation, a sort of free and unpaid reproduction, which thus becomes compatible subsidiarity, governable marginality, or functional outburst. This is the goodcommonism of capital. In this case, the tragedy of the commons is followed by its farce.

Common, class composition, subjectivity

Class composition and subjectivity are two key political concepts. Let us begin briefly with the first, which has its roots in the tradition of Italian revolutionary operaismo. It is constituted by the relation between technical and political composition, i.e., between the capitalist articulation of labor power in its combination with machines, and the formation of the class as a collective subject. Be careful, however: we must not understand either of these terms in a static way. That is, technical composition is not simply a photography of the structure of exploitation, nor is political composition the indication of an autonomous subject already realized. The articulation and hierarchization of labor power are set in motion by workers' and proletarians' behaviours, while the political formation of the class lives in a permanent tension between autonomy and its subsumption. The social relation of capital, insofar as it is antagonistic, is internal to both the technical and the political composition; it determines and transforms them. What subjectivity is, we say

with Romano Alquati: «it is the system of beliefs, visions and conceptions, representations, knowledge and culture for certain aspects and values; and of desires, certain aspects of the imaginary and also of passions and wills, options, etc. It is a system characterized by historicity and sociality, and therefore evolving in a processual manner. In fact, the formation also contributes to producing and transforming subjectivity.» Over the last few decades, on the wave of mainstream Foucaultism and post-structuralism, when the term has become commonplace in political debate, the subjectivity has been imagined as a positive quality *in sé*. This is a mistake: subjectivity is produced within the capitalist social relation, it lives within a clash and a relation of forces. Subjectivity is a battlefield. The point is to transform subjectivity into *counter-subjectivity*, breaking the extraordinary machine of subjectivation of capital. We must even go so far as to hate ourselves, that is, the relation of capital that is embodied in our labor force and our subjectivity, and which we compulsorily and acceptingly reproduce.

Similarly, starting from the banal assumption that the relation between technical and political composition can no longer be thought of in the same way as it was in the coordinates between the Taylorist factory and the Fordist society, the erroneous conclusion has often been reached that it is necessary to erase these terms and, above all, the problem of their relation. In many cases, this has led to technical composition being read immediately as political composition, i.e. looking away from the capitalist formation of subjectivity and the command over the transformations of labor. Without a process of recomposition, i.e. of conflict and counter-subjectivation, singularities float in the flows of capital and do not condense into a collective autonomous subject. And the common captured by capital is confused with the common conquered against capital. Mario Tronti argues that there is no class without class struggle. In the same way we can say that there is no common without a struggle for the common. There is no struggle for the common without subjectivity of the common. And there are no institutions of the commune without a break with existing institutions.

Starting afresh

The definition of post-operaismo was born in Anglo-Saxon and American universities as an attempt to capture the power of operaismo, depoliticize it and abstract it from conflict and class composition. To make it good for the academy and the political economy of knowledge,

that is, good for nothing. Now it has become «Italian theory», to complete the process of fencing off and putting a value on a thought that has been purposely emptied and disarmed. International conferences are organized in prestigious universities, people are specializing in post--operaismo, small and large enclosures are built, and academic careers are attempted. Goodbye «post-operaismo».[1]

This generic and not at all neutral definition is used to refer to the common, albeit differentiated, space that arose at the end of the 1980s to analyze the forms of production and work that had risen from the crisis of Taylorism-Fordism, seeking to overturn the annihilating images of the end of history and single thought. The polemical objective was and remains correct, the practical development not always up to scratch. This gave rise to the theorization of so-called «post-Fordism,» and then gradually to attempts to identify new subjects of conflict that incorporated knowledge and social cooperation. Some of these attempts were problematic from the outset, others have been extremely productive and can still be, provided they are rethought within the changes that have occurred in the crisis and the exhaustion of an overall model. Today, it is not possible to reintroduce the concept of cognitive work (or rather the cognitivization of work, thus underlining a process of cognitivization of exploitation) in the same form as in the early 2000s. In the midst of this there is a crisis that has become permanent, the explosion of the middle class, a radical stratification of cognitive labor, the banalization, serialization and impoverishment of the labor power, in other words an acceleration of the process of industrialization of knowledge.

The point is precisely this: we must make a Machiavellian return to principles. Otherwise we run the risk of ossifying the categories, of transfiguring them into dogmas, of making operaismo become what it never was: a school and not a movement of thought. We should therefore perhaps say that post-operaismo is over. Now, just as the operaisti returned to Marx against Marxism, we must return to operaismo in order to move forward, in order to put that revolutionary method back to work in and against reality.

Therefore, having gone through the concept in its entirety, having tested it against reality, having passed it through the thread of critical problematic interpretations, the common must now be reworked – or decomposed and recomposed – within the capital-crisis, that is, the

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1   For more on this and other topics analyzed in this text, see the interview available at https://viewpointmag.com/2020/04/30/a-science-of-destruction-an-interview-with-gigi-roggero-on-the-actuality-of-operaismo/.

crisis as a form of political command and device of war, within the historically determined relation between class composition and processes of subjectivation. The common must be identified in the possibility of building institutions of autonomy and counter-power (i.e. dualism of power, nothing to do with the checks and balances of today's politics). The traces of the common must be found within the materiality and ambivalence of class behaviour and struggles, and must be collectively organized and transformed.

Once it used to be said: starting afresh is not the same as going back. There we go. I remember that in 2011, in a debate in a museum in Warsaw, I spoke of a contradictory feeling: the power of that common beauty to re-appropriate, the instinctive desire to set fire to that universal exhibition of beauty-commodity. Reappropriation and rupture go together, unless one simply wants to become a functionary and manager of the capitalist institutions of the common. In short, after the decades of postmodern weak thought and the years of diatribes between scholastic ideologies, we are shown here how there is no constituent power without destituent power, to act for without to act against, the desire without the hate.

Can we still call this research with the label of the common, or do we have to mark a discontinuity also from the point of view of the political lexicon? I don't know, and I don't think it is a decisive question. What is decisive is to prefigure new elements which, within movements that are constitutively ambiguous, contradictory and spurious, can allow us to identify the traces of possible ruptures to come.

GIGI ROGGERO - is a militant in the Hobo collective, is part of the editorial board of Commonware, and is an autonomous researcher. Among his various books and essays, he is author of *The Production of Living Knowledge* (Temple University Press, 2011), *Futuro anteriore and Gli operaisti* (DeriveApprodi, 2002 and 2005), *Elogio della militanza and Il treno contro la Storia* (DeriveApprodi, 2016 and 2017), and a most recent book, *L'operaismo politico italiano: Genealogia, storia, metodo* (DeriveApprodi, 2019).

Address:
DeriveApprodi
srl. Piazza Regina Margherita 27,
00198 Roma, Italy
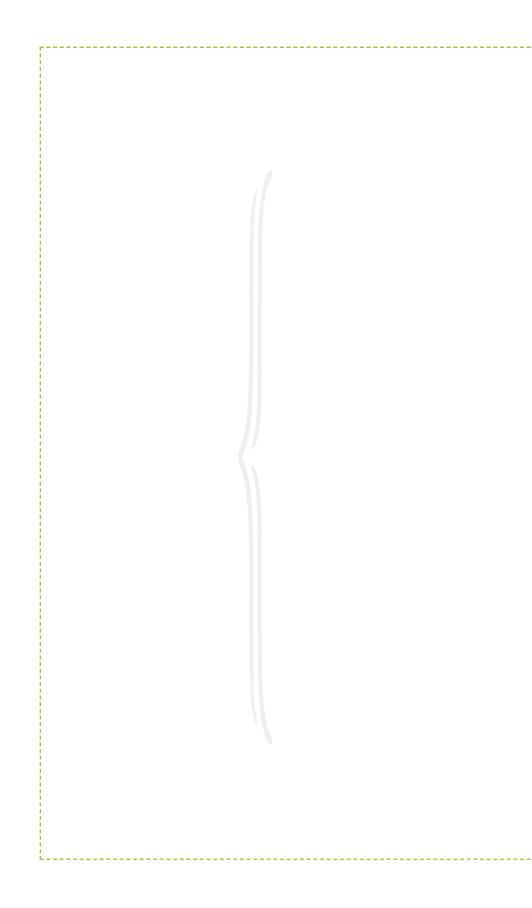**email**: conricerca@hotmail.com

Autor: Gigi Roggero
Tytuł: Uniknijmy farsy tego, co wspólne
Abstrakt: Z okazji 10 urodzin *Praktyki Teoretycznej* zaprosiliśmy naszych wieloletnich współpracowników i towarzyszy do wspólnego rozważenia przyszłości tego, co wspólne. Poprosiliśmy ich o zmierzenie się z następującymi pytaniami: a) co jest najważniejszym aspektem współczesnych walk o to, co wspólne?; b) jakie największe wyzwania stoją w przyszłości przed polityką tego, co wspólne?; c) gdzie w ramach toczonych walk wiedziecie potencjał na rozwijanie i poszerzanie organizacji opartej na tym, co wspólne?

the global east:
disscusion

MAGDA SZCZEŚNIAK

Fake it Till You Make it: The Trouble with the Global East Category

The article engages in a discussion with Martin Müller's article In Search of a Global East through the categories of class and class distinction. While recognizing the potential political value of the "Global East" project, the author questions the ideological mechanisms which naturalize the stereotype of "Eastness as forsakenness." As she points out, one of the effects of the "political and epistemological project" of the North–South divide (as well as stereotypical categorizations of the East) is obscuring the internal class dynamics of Northern, Southern and Eastern societies. In contrast, introducing class analysis – which includes examining such practices as producing and buying counterfeits of original, luxury-brand commodities – allows us to uncover similar patterns of class distinction and reproduction across global capitalist societies of the North, South and East, and perhaps also to forge solidarities amongst classes which are regularly oppressed by the dominant global capitalist order.

Keywords: post-socialism; Global East; counterfeit; neoliberalism; class analysis

"How to best recognize a counterfeit? By its owner." This quote from a member of the Polish business elite, owner of a chain of high-end supermarkets (since gone bankrupt) and importer of luxurious brands, became an – admittedly unusual – guiding thought of my book on the ideological framework of post-socialism in Poland and its leading social actor: the new middle class. Through the counterfeit – both object and figure – I began to grasp the discriminatory logic of the transition from socialism to capitalism, its simultaneous lure and futility, its potential and insurmountable obstacle (Szcześniak 2016). Counterfeit commodities started appearing at Polish marketplaces in the late 1980s – Uma and Abibas sneakers, four-stripe tracksuits, Leviis jeans, Lorelaj cosmetics and many others. Not recognized as fakes in the beginning, they were instead treated as attractive, Western-looking commodities. Several years into the transition, counterfeits began to function as a prime example of our inability to practice capitalism properly. Either willingly buying fakes, and thus maliciously failing to abide by the (supposedly logical) rules of capitalist markets, or unintentionally mistaking counterfeits for originals, and thus lacking a skilled enough eye to recognize the (supposedly obvious) difference between them, Poles were regularly chastened as immature consumers. Admonished by corporate representatives, journalists and fashion experts, Poles were schooled in the necessity of always choosing the branded commodity over its cheaper cousins. At the same time, the counterfeit – and its synonyms: fake, copycat, knock-off, imitation – became a popular insult used in the new liberal media against all those who, while aspiring to be "European," failed to meet "European standards". Polish democracy, Polish politicians and businessmen, Polish fast-food joints, Polish action films and advertisements, the Polish artworld, Polish marketplaces and other public spaces were all accused of being mere counterfeits of Western modernity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both discussions were steeped in East-phobia: fake sneakers, jeans and perfumes were routinely described as "made in Asia" and now "flooding our markets" (as if Western brands were actually produced in the West) or as "cheap and kitschy chinoiserie". To describe an institution or space as Eastern or Asian was an obvious affront. During the transition, much discursive energy was geared towards forcefully separating ourselves from the East and proving our historical connection to the West (Kiossev 2008). The counterfeit became a symbol of unsuccessful transition.

Constantly accused of faking it, were we ever going to make it? If Western 'normality' was the original, could we ever become 'the real thing'? The answer, of course, was no. As many theorists of the post-

-socialist transition have pointed out, the game had been rigged from the start (Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002). The East could not become the West. Not only because the West's long and exhausting road to late 20th century capitalism could not be re-performed (even if many of its elements, such as rapid industrialization had paradoxically been carried out by the socialist state), but also because structurally the East's position as peripheral in relation to central capitalist economies was, in many ways, beneficial for the latter (e.g. as a source of cheaper labor). And thus, as Martin Müller writes in his in his intervention into the conceptual geopolitical map dividing the late capitalist world into the Global North and Global South: "countries in the East may be on the way northward, but at the same time seem stuck in eternal transition towards an elusive modernity" (736). By introducing the category of the Global East, which "encompass[es] societies that took part in what was the most momentous global experiment of the twentieth century: to create communism," Müller hopes to question "the political and epistemological project" of the North–South divide, drawing attention to a region that doesn't neatly fit into this widely accepted scheme. The Global East is neither as wealthy and advanced as the North, nor as poor and under-developed as the South (the parameters for demarcating these areas remain somewhat traditional, or at best vague, in Müller's article). Although the East undoubtedly exists within a network of global relations, it enjoys relatively little interest from either academics or the general global public. The fascination once kindled by socialism as a counter-project to capitalism – one fueling either admiration or disgust – has been withering away with every consecutive anniversary of the "fall" of the Berlin Wall. Today, as Müller shows through his – again, rather subjective and generalizing[1] – emotional and sensual geopolitical mapping, the East evokes only lukewarm feelings and associations. If the South is considered "cool," "sexy," "dynamic," the East is perceived as "dull," "grey" and "boring" (737). Like many well-written interventions into established academic disciplines and reified beliefs, Müller's essay is an enjoyable read, delivering a necessary correction to the obvious omission or even exclusion of the East from the "circuits and conduits

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1   One such generalization is a comparison of the recognizability of randomly chosen Southern (Coetzee, Marquez, Vargas Llosa) and Eastern (Alexievich, Müller, Szymborska) Nobel Prize in Literature Laureates. According to the author, the three Southern authors have a "ring of instant recognition", while the Eastern names "sound outlandish". If we even were to agree with this weakly founded statement, perhaps we should then also take into account the gender of the mentioned authors as a factor playing into the level of their popularity.

of Western knowledge architecture" (737). For those of us devoted to researching these swaths of "grey" lands and various micro- and macro communities in the East, it provides a sort of compensatory pleasure, a well-deserved (so we think) appreciation of the specificity (if not uniqueness) of our objects of interest.

But while I did experience a pleasant tingle of recognition, I also couldn't shake the feeling that Müller's search for the Global East has somewhat unspecified goals and is modelled on generalizing claims. Perhaps because the author doesn't seem interested in uncovering the ideological mechanisms behind stereotypical categorizations which allows the North to see the East as "gray", to define "Eastness as a feeling of forsakenness and of disconnection" (741). Although Müller seems conscious of the contrived character of these associations, the unobviousness of sensing "Eastness" in "highway overpasses, waiting rooms of neglected bus stations, basements" located in the Global North, he doesn't ask what kind of work of erasure is being performed through this sensual pairing of neglect and "Eastness". The sight of trash in potholes brimming with dirty water, the heaviness and murkiness of smog-filled air, the stench of over-flowing garbage bins, the on-and-off buzzing of flickering, half-working street lights, the faded colors and threadbare feel of upholstery in public transport – these are not elements of a sensual map of the East, but of neglected spaces of a failed modernity, both post-socialist and capitalist. Associating them with "Eastness", as if they were branches of some "Museum of the East" unexpectedly popping up in the public spaces and institutions of the Global North, conceals the structural conditions of the proliferation of neglected spaces over the last couple of decades, which – unsurprisingly – appear primarily in neighborhoods occupied by working class communities or their workplaces. Perhaps then, one of the effects of the "political and epistemological project" of the North–South divide (as well as stereotypical categorizations of the East) is obscuring the internal dynamics of Northern, Southern and Eastern societies. Aided by such indexes as GDP, or even traditionally calculated unemployment rates (which fail to account for the everyday tragedies of the "working poor"), we're prevented from seeing the poor of the North and the wealthy of the East and South.

Meanwhile, uncovering the dynamic of seemingly obvious and innocent generalizations, their power to determine what we categorize as Northern, Southern and Eastern, can bring into view the structural similarity of inequality within these supposedly radically different realities. Even for those still cherishing an idealistic visualization of the developed North, images of encampments of homeless people in San Fran-

cisco, reports from overburdened hospitals in working class New York City neighborhoods during the COVID-19 pandemic, or documentations of the strikingly powerful gilets jaunes protests, have to bring home the realization that the defining partitioning lines of the contemporary world do not only run along lines of regional borders, but primarily along divisions of class and race. Although undisputedly class dynamics have their national and regional manifestations (the European ones brought into view recently by Cédric Hugrée, Etienne Pénissat and Alexis Spire (2019)), thinking of the Global North, South and East cannot avoid engaging in a strong theorization of class dynamics.

Let us try and see how introducing a class perspective – absent in Müller's article – broadens and problematizes our view of the post--socialist transition, a process often visualized as a road leading from backward and dilapidated socialism to modern capitalism. Müller recognizes the weakness of this metaphor, portraying the East as "stuck in eternal transition," as if the road we were ushered on in 1989 was a bypass with no exits, constantly circling the West. However, although the transition was never realized as a universal project[2], the professed riches did materialize for some social groups, resulting in a reorganization of class structure and hierarchies. Although class proportions in Eastern and Western Europe differ, with Western Europe (but not the European South!) closer to achieving the self-professed dream of "a Europe without proletarians" (Hugrée, Pénissat, and Spire 2019), over the past thirty years the East has in fact produced an upper and a middle class, which is in many ways similar to the dominant classes of the West. To stretch the tired traffic metaphor even further – some were in fact able to take the express lane to the West.[3] Ideological work was an essential element of the transition and its class reorganization – introducing and naturalizing the new worldview, centered around middle-class values; critiquing the old system and shaming its institutions, practices and lifestyles; foregrounding some groups (the new middle class) and obscuring others (the industrial working class which wanted to be heard and yet was structurally silenced, *and* the dominant

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2   On an ideological level, the transition was advertised as a model of creating an almost all-encompassing middle class – in reality though it seems that the planners of the transition must have accounted for (and accepted) class hierarchies and inequalities as an obvious element of every capitalist society. See Szcześniak 2015.

3   The conditions of this ability were rooted both in the class structure of the previous system, as well as in the conditions set by influential actors of the new system. See: Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley 2000; Kennedy 2002.

upper class which preferred to remain invisible). Although dabbling in class analysis was considered outdated and inappropriate – including in academia where Marxist theory was thoroughly eradicated – in reality class hierarchies and distinctions were under constant debate. To return to my opening example: the counterfeit became one of the categories used to produce class differentiation without every really using class language. Those who could afford original Western brands were deemed as appropriate members of the capitalist society, subjects who had already transitioned; those who couldn't (or didn't care to) were seen as stuck in the past (see the popularity of the derogatory phrase *homo sovieticus*). The transition, in all its globality, played itself out on individual bodies, which either looked like the modern well-off owner of original Adidas shoes and Levi's jeans or didn't. After all, a counterfeit can be easily recognized by looking at its owner. Of course – and here Müller's global categories come in handy – this valuation system was far from natural and, in fact, benefitted precisely those who set its terms: global capital. In the early 1990s, one of the few life savers of local Eastern textile factories was a quick adaptation to the new valorization systems: either by producing counterfeits of Western brands or by creating new Western-named brands which were able to *pass as* Western without "borrowing" already existing logotypes.

The heated temperature of post-socialist discussions focused on the counterfeit shows that the belief in the unequivocal superiority of West (and Western originals) over the East (and Eastern knockoffs) was necessary for maintaining the domination of Western capitalism, which had emerged victorious from the long Cold War. Simultaneously, the possibility of an Eastern fake successfully *passing as* a Western commodity destabilized these seemingly obvious and natural categories, the basic tenets of contemporary consumer practices in global capitalism. If — the counterfeits seemed to be asking us — we look so much like the "real thing" then what is it that makes the original worth a small fortune? What makes Pumas better than Umas? As I discovered in my research of ethnographies of counterfeiting, it is in the Global East and South that alternative practices towards commodity capitalism emerge, ranging from the in-your-face aesthetic irony of Indian garment makers who adorn clothes with a collage of logotypes of well-known Western companies (Nakassis 2012), through complex new value systems of commodities based either on the quality and longevity of products (Vann 2006) or their place of production and its distance from the place of consumption (Pine 2002), to a straightforward and unashamed embrace of counterfeiter identity as a subversive actor in an unjust economic

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system (Crăciun 2014) and a tactical use of fakes in infiltrating the separated off realms of the dominant classes (Brandtstädter 2009; Pinheiro-Machado 2010). Of course, counterfeiting and consuming counterfeits constitute one distinct set of practices in the semi-peripheral economies of the Global East and South. Could uncovering more practices and identities, denaturalizing the seeming obviousness of global capitalism and its hierarchies, be one of the projects carried out under the banner of the strategically essentialist Global East, as proposed by Müller?

I'm speculating, since the author of *In Search of a Global East* does not provide us with an answer to what "the political project of reclaiming a voice for the East" (743) would look like. What is to come of "embracing liminality" (750)? What would be the essence of our emancipatory project and what elements would a strategically essentialist Eastern identity be comprised of? The fact of participating in global relations and networks – an obvious trait of all societies participating in the neoliberal order – does not seem enough. If a common Eastern identity is meant to serve a strategic goal larger than the reframing of (admittedly oppressive) architectures of knowledge, then the ground on which it is sown must be fertile. In other words, we must try to imagine the Global East as a sphere of productive and positive projects of the commons, not only as a space of a shared aspiration to "be like the West". The attempt to carry out "the most momentous global experiment of the twentieth century" could be seen as such, regardless of our assessment of its outcome. Searching for other elements could entail looking at the peasant revolts across centuries of gentry domination, workers' movements of the 20th century, the queer counterpublics of socialism and post-socialism, as well as such seemingly minute practices as consuming counterfeits. Such a conceptualization of the Global East, while acknowledging its location in the global system and local specificity, could perhaps forge solidarities amongst those groups which are regularly excluded by the dominant global capitalist order – in the Global North, South and East.

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MAGDA SZCZEŚNIAK – Assistant Professor at the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw. Author of *Norms of Visibility: Identity in Times of Transition* (Warsaw 2016) devoted to Polish post-socialist visual cultures and the ideological framework of the transition into neoliberalism. Currently working on a book devoted to the politics of representing upward and downward social mobility in socialist Poland. Recipient of grants and awards from the Fulbright Foundation, National Science Center in Poland, Ministry of Higher Education and Science and the "Polityka" Academic Award.

Address:
Institute of Polish Culture
University of Warsaw
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw
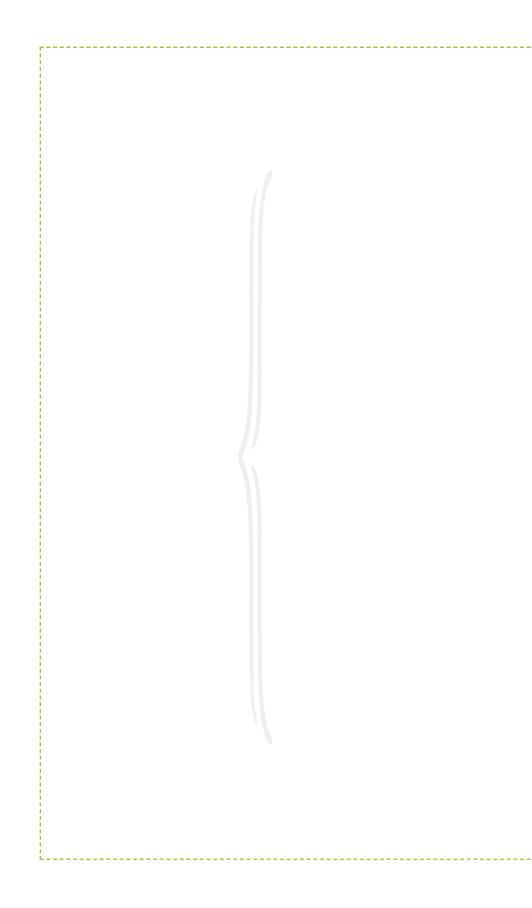**email**: magda.szczesniak@uw.edu.pl

Autor: Magda Szcześniak
Tytuł: Udawaj, aż stanie się to prawdą: Problemy z kategorią globalnego wschodu
Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje dyskusję z tekstem Martina Müllera, wprowadzając do namysłu nad pojęciem „globalnego wschodu" kategorię klasy i dystynkcji klasowej. Uznając potencjał polityczny projektu proponowanego przez Müllera, autorka podważa – częściowo powtórzone w jego artykule – ideologiczne mechanizmy naturalizujące stereotyp „Wschodu jako poczucia opuszczenia" (*Eastness as forsakenness*). Autorka zwraca uwagę, że jednym z efektów „politycznego i epistemologicznego projektu" podziału na Globalną Północ i Południe (oraz stereotypowych ujęć Wschodu) jest zaciemnianie podziałów klasowych wewnątrz północnych, południowych i wschodnich społeczeństw. Wprowadzenie analizy klasowej – uwzględniającej również takie jak praktyki kupowania i produkowania podróbek luksusowych marek – pozwala odkryć podobne wzory klasowej dystynkcji oraz reprodukcji klasowych hierarchii społeczeństw globalnego kapitalizmu. Może również pozwolić na zadzierzgnięcie opartych na solidarności relacji pomiędzy klasami regularnie prześladowanymi przez dominujący porządek globalnego kapitalizmu.
Słowa kluczowe: postsocjalizm; Globalny Wschód; podróbka; neoliberalizm; analiza klasowa

JAN SOWA

The Essentialist Masturbation:
Can the Global East Get any Satisfaction?

While agreeing with Martin Müller's intent of filling the gap in contemporary social sciences that the lack of interest in the Global East constitutes, the article engages in polemics with solution postulated by Müller. The Author argues for a conceptualization of the Global East that would not be based on its essence, but rather on its place in the global division of labor. The "strategic essentialism" postulated by Müller is refuted for three reasons: a reactionary character of identity politics as such, its capture by the Right and doubtful value of socio-cultural identity of most societies of Global East. Instead an alter-universalism is proposed that would be different from the colonial universalism of the West and focused on constructing a common front of progressive-
-emancipatory struggles.

Keywords: Global East, identity politics, capitalist world-system, essentialism, universalism, progressive politics, revolutionary politics

Although the tricho-
tomy of "center – semi-
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nity in a manner that is
both interconnected
and critical.

There's a bunch of proverbial anecdotes that you can hear every now
and then among East European social scientists: ask an average person
in "the West", where the center of Europe is – a French person would
point to Lyon, a German will hesitate between Frankfurt-on-Men and
Nurnberg, while a Brit would probably believe it is – alas! – in Brussels.
In Poland many hold that the geographical center of Europe is near
Łódź and even if it is not a universally accepted fact, this instance of
Polish patriotism is, surprisingly, closer to truth than what "people in
the West" claim. Ask the same people what the biggest ethno-linguistic
group in Europe is. A French person could reply that the Romance
peoples (those speaking Roman languages deriving from Latin), a Swede
would hold that it's the Scandinavians, while for a Brit it would be
Anglo-Saxon. As a matter of fact, the Slavs are the biggest.

Anecdotes like these and many others provoke a mix of disbelief in
Western ignorance and a resentment that has become more and more
articulate in Eastern Europe: so here we are, the biggest ethnic group
in the center of Europe and... and nothing. These are a popular, unsophi-
sticated symptoms of the same problem that animates Müller's article
In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South: there are
big chunks of land, populated by large groups of people with their own
unique cultures ("culture" here is understood in practical terms, as a sha-
red way of life) that seem to occupy at best a marginal place in the
imagination of privileged groups inhabiting "the West", "the North",
"the center", "the developed countries" "the first world" or whatever you
want to call the countries belonging to the core of the capitalist world-
-economy. What is sometimes referred to as "the East" (or "former East")
provides us with a paradigmatic – even if not the one and only – exam-
ple of such a "twilight zone" of the global imagination: a place everyone
knows exists, but very few can say anything more than that.

There should be no disagreement with Müller that the geographi-
cal terms we are using to denote various "zones" or "spheres" are impre-
cise at best and misleading at worst: the global East would not be in
the East only, just as the global North is also... in the south, like
Australia. Obviously, patterns of social differentiation, though not
completely detached from physical and spatial arrangements, do not
follow neat geometrical divisions. The distribution of a given group
always responds in some way to the immediate surrounding environ-
ment, but is also shaped by processes and factors that are of human
making themselves. A great example is provided by James C. Scott in
his investigation of Zomia, a mountainous zone of South-East Asia
that was historically shaped by exodus from large state machines in

the lowlands. As Scott demonstrates, the spatial distribution of various tribes and groups seems to be bizarre and senseless when looked only in the horizontal dimension, as if people inhabited chaotic chunks of land whose shapes bring to mind rather Rorschach's test than any meaningful boundaries of any social entity. It looks very differently though when analyzed in the vertical dimension: it turns out that the given group inhabits lands laying at a certain altitude, which they settled when fleeing from the oppressive state apparatus controlling the valleys (for obvious reasons, the state likes flat areas, as it makes control, supervision and circulation much easier) (Scott 2009: 40–63). Thus although "territory" as a term evokes rather horizontal distribution, the territorial arrangements of Zomia are mainly operational in the vertical dimension, and their geographic logic is shaped much more by social than geometric circumstances. This is a typical example of the social production of space that has been explored by many authors in various domains, especially in the field of urban studies.

Thus if we want to understand the curious and problematic fate of the Global East, we need to think beyond geography and turn towards more systemic or structural explanations. The approach put forward by so-called dependency or system theories is an attempt to engage precisely at this point. Müller refers to Immanuel Wallerstein, but there are other theorists: Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank or – from the younger generation – Jason W. Moore. Of course, although the trichotomy of "center – semi-periphery – periphery" has many downsides, it remains the most elaborate and advanced shot at explaining the current fate of humanity in a manner that is both interconnected and critical. The fact that the structure does not mirror geography does not seem puzzling at all for the system/dependency approach, as "periphery" is more of a structural position than a spatial relation. This kind of approach that inherently and purposefully reveals hierarchizations and that diagnoses inequalities seems to be better poised for explaining the status quo than post-structuralist theories that stress horizontal dispersion, diversity and interconnectivity, like the ANT paradigm, for example. For a very simple reason: these hierarchies and inequalities constitute the absolute key element of the conundrum that we need to explain: the problem of the Global East is not to acknowledge its existence and affirm its unique identity in the horizontal plethora of cultures and societies, but to conceptually grasp its inferior status. Critical evaluation is necessary just for merely posing the problem and understanding it.

Another major advantage of adopting an approach similar to the one taken by Wallerstein is that it closely links the fate of the Global

East with the dynamics of capitalism (in Early Modern times it was the first "Third World", since it provided raw materials, unprocessed goods and indirectly added cheap, unskilled labor to the production chains in the capitalist world-economy). This does not explain everything when it comes to the particular state of the societies of the Global East (I'll return to this point later), but attempts at completely eradicating this materialist perspective are doomed to fail. The historical dynamics of the capitalist economy might not have been the only factor shaping global divisions, however, it has been constantly present and always exerting influence on every single human society in recent centuries. It is intriguing, for example, that the emergence of global electronic communication, which was supposed to be such a disruptive and revolutionary factor, has not reshaped the global redistribution of resources in any important way. It is not by accident that the major share of the profits generated by the digital economy are accumulating where capital was accumulating before: in the rich areas of the core economies like the US, Japan or Western Europe, and not in Mongolia or Chad. Free, uncontrolled communication has not generated a more diverse and balanced semiotic landscape but rather contributed to levels of centralization and standardization hitherto unseen in the history of humanity: a handful of companies – almost all of which are uniquely located on the West Coast of the US, with the leading five being Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple – are the conduits of communication, labor and leisure for half (or even more) of the world population. Every time anyone uses a smartphone, makes an internet search, sends an email or accesses pornography, the profits accumulate in very narrow zones of the highly developed economies of the global North. The center-periphery divide is articulated more clearly than ever before, despite the celebrations of horizontal rhizomes so popular in progressive academic circles.

While material conditions are always there, and always intervene in any human practice (and in this sense materialism constitutes an unsurpassable perspective in the human and social sciences), of course the economic perspective does not explain everything, all the time. Müller is right that in order to understand the fate of the East we need to address its particular circumstances and not only universal material forces. Once we do this, the picture becomes more complicated; that which seems to belong to the same category of rather neglected than dominated societies (which differentiates, according to Müller, the Global East from the postcolonial Global South) turns out to be very different in its particular position, especially when it comes to the possible autonomy of the

local vs the global. One case that I have examined very closely is that of Central-Eastern Europe being different from both the West and the East (mainly Russia) (Sowa 2011). The debate about "going with the West or sticking with our own culture", which Clifford Geertz (1993) labeled as the conflict between "epochialism" (let's go with the Zeitgeist of the epoch) and "essentialism" (let's cultivate our unique, authentic identity regardless of what is going on elsewhere) was the very core of the debate between Westernism and Slavophilia in the Russian civilizational zone for much of the 19th and part of the 20th century. Poland, dominated by Russia until 1918, took part in these debates, however it was virtually impossible for Polish intellectuals to assume any positions in a meaningful way, since for Poland both eventualities entailed some kind of subjugation: to the West in the first instance or to Russia in the second. Thus, although both Poland and Russia seem to belong to the same category of the Global East (which is confirmed not only by their geographical proximity, but also by their shared experience of most of the 20th century events, such as the October Revolution, the Second World War, Bolshevik rule, and the transformation of the 1990s), their situation is very different. For complex historical reasons, Russia, with its recent and splendid imperial past, can reflect upon autonomy and authenticity, while Poland can only choose who will dominate it. So, obviously the very same heterogeneity that complicates neat divisions into the Center and the Peripheries also destabilizes the category of Global East. On the other hand, the core problem on the social and cultural level seems to be exactly the same as what the system theory diagnoses as the main economic obstacle: dependency. One of the key features of the Global East is its inability to assume its own and autonomous position. The Global South, although poorer, seems to be in a better situation in this respect because it is much further away from the dominating metropolitan areas, not only in terms of physical space, but mainly due to cultural affiliations (Kiossev 1999). The post-colonial, peripheral South is the "poor Other", while we, the Eastern Europeans, are the "poor Same", and as such we are ultimately unattractive: poor and un-sexy (because not exotic and different enough).

I believe it is symptomatic (and a very good thing) that voices like Martin Müller's are becoming more and more articulate. Recent decades have brought a very mixed blessing to what we may provisionally label the Global East. When you look at the economic statistics, we are doing well or even very well – when it comes to Poland, for example, the 2020 coronavirus crisis broke almost three decades of constant, uninterrupted GDP growth, which is an amazing achievement on any scale, be it

The post-colonial, peripheral South is the "poor Other", while we, the Eastern Europeans, are the "poor Same", and as such we are ultimately unattractive: poor and un-sexy (because not exotic and different enough).

There is a widespread sense of defeat, resentment, disappointment and frustration, and other similar affects in Polish society. Apparently, the Global East can't get no satisfaction.

European or global. On the other hand, there is a widespread sense of defeat, resentment, disappointment and frustration, and other similar affects in Polish society. Apparently, the Global East can't get no satisfaction. Many find it puzzling that a booming economy goes hand in hand with such a lack of contentment. A Marxist finds it less surprising: the belief that smooth-functioning capitalism solves all problems is the key part of ideological screen of phantasy that capitalism builds to hide a much more inconvenient truth. But it goes further than that. What animates the right-wing populist revolt is a "What-the-Fuck???" kind of fury that is animated precisely by a feeling of inferiority, unimportance and lack of recognition. As was diagnosed by Martin Müller, the Global Eastern condition means that we went through painful economic reforms, we adjusted our institutions to the Western standard to be able to join the EU, we patiently went through humiliations of the so-called "accession process" when we were told by Western leaders like Jacques Chirac that our best option is to shut-up and not to comment on international policies adopted by Western powers. At the same time, we have achieved a brilliant macroeconomic success (or at least that's what the official propaganda says), we have the deepest diving pool and the biggest amusement park in Europe, and now are even building the highest building in the EU—but still, they (i.e. "the West") do not love us! They either remain ignorant of us and our great achievements (just think of Chopin – yes, he was Polish! – or Marie Curie – yes, she was Polish! – or John Paul II – at least everybody knows he was Polish!) or they actively affirm our civilizational inferiority, treating us only as a source of cheap labor (just think of "Polish plumber" in France, or the entire army of Polish migrant workers who constitute nowadays the biggest foreign-born group on the British Isles)[1].

Ironically, and deconstructibly, it needs to be acknowledged that our "achievements" in the last decades are intimately linked with our "failures'": it is precisely the way we won our "prosperity" and "freedom" that is the source of our malaise and our unsatisfied need for recognition: we have done it by imitating. After all we just copied everything – our institutions were modeled after the Western liberal democracies, our laws were adjusted to EU standards, our economic transformation of the 1990s was designed by Jeffrey Sachs and David Lipton along the lines of the so-called Washington Consensus, we built malls and highways

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1   By the way, it could be interesting to compare the discourse about "the West" of Polish right-wing populists and the German AFD – most likely they would share a lot of similarities.

"just like the West" and our popular culture neatly imitated the Western (mainly American) model. This giant exercise in imitation was justified by the sociological thought of the time, namely the so-called moderni-zation theory that affirmed it was normal and beneficial for some to lead and others to follow. Nevertheless imitation, as was recently argued and analyzed in detail by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes (2020), is a very tricky procedure – being a Xerox boy may allow you to succeed (after all, the history of life on Earth as such is a string of imitations and usurpations), but the amount of recognition and satisfaction (or *jouissance* if you want to put it in a more elaborate way) it can provide is very limited. Especially nowadays, when the hysteria of internet celebrity culture made everyone eager to be recognized for what they are (both left and right agree on that, differing only in their opinions of what should be an acceptable source of pride: one's suffering and subjugation, combined with impeccable moral virtue, for left-wing identity politics; and tradition, combined with once's particular culture, for right-wing identity politics).

The crucial question remains: What do we do with it all? Martin Müller also asks this question, citing Gayatri Spivak's concept of "stra-tegic essentialism" as the answer. It's here that I rather disagree. For three reasons. Firstly, the practical effects of the essentialist-identitarian turn of critical theory and activism are really regrettable. It has taken us to a painful cul-de-sac of identity politics that makes linking our struggles more and more difficult[2]. Everyone wants to talk only about themselves and their particular predicaments; as a result, essentialist divisions have become unsurmountable frontiers pitching various subjugated groups against one another. Secondly, the tools and strategies of identity politics have been appropriated by the right. Right-wing populism is identity politics of the white. Fighting political, social and economic oppression with such tools nowadays is like organizing a marketing campaign to advertise the end of capitalism. The more success we have talking about our particular suffering and advancing our particular grievances the more attractive it becomes for the right to talk about their suffering and their particular grievances. It ends with Charlottesville and Portland: a bunch of the so-called white-trash and poor people of color killing one another while Wall Street thrives (or in another context: Hindu and Muslims aiming at mutual extermination while their land gets devoured by international capital). Don't get me wrong: struggle is necessary and

Firstly, the practical effects of the essentia-list-identitarian turn of critical theory and activism are really regrettable. It has taken us to a painful cul-de--sac of identity politics that makes linking our struggles more and more difficult .

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2   For an inspiring analysis of Black Lives Matter movement in this perspec-tive, see Johnson 2017.

legitimate, revolt is absolutely essential, antagonism is unavoidable, but
a combination of essentialism and antagonism ends not with a revolu-
tionary movement but with fascism. Marx claims that the proletariat is
the revolutionary class, because, unlike the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy
and all other classes before it, it aims not at remodeling the whole of
society after itself (so that everyone should be a proletarian), but at such
a structural transformation that would eliminate the position of the
proletariat altogether. There is no room for essentialism here, no affir-
mation of the sanctity of labor, the worker's identity etc. Actually, such
an attempt at "strategic essentialism" also happened within the workers
movement and it gave birth to pathetic and corrupt syndicalism that
was challenged by the workers themselves in the 1960s and 1970s (it is
symptomatic that the biggest French trade union CGT chose to support
de Gaulle against the revolt in May 1968). That's precisely where "stra-
tegic essentialism" ends: with essential strategic failure.

There is yet another obstacle — maybe the biggest one — in resor-
ting to strategic essentialism when it comes to the Global East: is there
really so much of essence in the societies of this zone, and is it enough
for any viable alternative to be built on it? Being a member of such
a society I strongly doubt it. It has become fashionable to act along the
lines of epistemic justice and to look for solutions to our problems in
the so-called indigenous knowledges. For sure, there are valuable insights
to be found there but "indigenous=valuable" is hardly a general rule.
In most parts, traditions tend to be fundamentally problematic while
essentialism always needs to rely on the past (the essence of every cul-
tural and social identity is, after all, shaped by past events and interac-
tions). These pasts do not offer us enough to construct any meaningful
strategy in any aspect, not even one of symbolic recognition and attrac-
tiveness. All they may offer is some sort of consolation: we know how
great and morally impeccable we are! That is, however, a socio-political
equivalent of masturbation – if nobody wants to have sex with you, you
can always jerk-off. As long as you enjoy it, it is perfectly OK. However
building lasting relationships based on masturbation does not seem to
be the best possible idea.

What other option do we have? Trying to be faithful to the best
traditions of critical thought and action, I'd say the very same one as
those who struggled before us: to look for some kind of universalism in
the practical form of internationalism. I understand that the very term
"universalism", along with "modernity" or "reason", is unacceptable for
the mainstream of contemporary critical theory, which is still shaped,
much more than is acknowledged, by the central tenets of post-struc-

turalism. A lot of criticism directed towards them is entirely legitimate and, of course, there can be no going back to any kind of colonial universalism. But just as there is alter-modernity – a minoritarian current that can be traced back to Spinoza and radical enlightenment – and anti-capitalist struggles undertaken over centuries can be understood as attempts to counter the fatal elements of capitalist modernity not with an anti-modern, but with an alter-modern project, there may also be a possibility for what we may label as "alter-universalism", or for a "universalism of the subaltern". The pertinent observation made by Martin Müller that the Global East is not only in the geographical East, can be a perfect starting point for building such an alter-universalism. So the question would not be how the East can fight against the West, but how people in the East and in the West can fight together against forces, institutions and arrangements that are detrimental for all of us, no matter what our skin color, gender or sexual orientation is. This new universalism of the subaltern is what the political meaning of "Global East" may become.

In most parts, traditions tend to be fundamentally problematic while essentialism always needs to rely on the past.

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JAN SOWA (born 1976) – is a dialectical materialist social theorist and researcher. He studied at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland and University Paris VIII in Saint-Denis, France. He holds a PhD in sociology and a habilitation in cultural studies. His research and teaching assignments took him to several universities in Poland and abroad, including University of São Paulo, Academy of Arts of the World in Cologne and Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. He was a member of the Committee on Cultural Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2016–2019) and the curator for discursive program and research at Biennale Warszawa (2018–2019). He currently works as associate professor at the Chair of Theory of Culture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. He has edited and authored several books and published numerous articles in Poland and abroad. A collection of essays *A Joy Forever: Political Economy of Social Creativity*, that he co-edited, including articles by Luc Boltanski, Massimiliano Tomba, Isabelle Graw and Gigi Roggero appeared with MayFly Books (London) in 2015. He recently edited a volume dedicated to participatory democracy entitled *Solidarity 2.0 or Democracy as a Way of Life* (2019).

Address:
Katedra Teorii Kultury ASP
ul. Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie 37/39
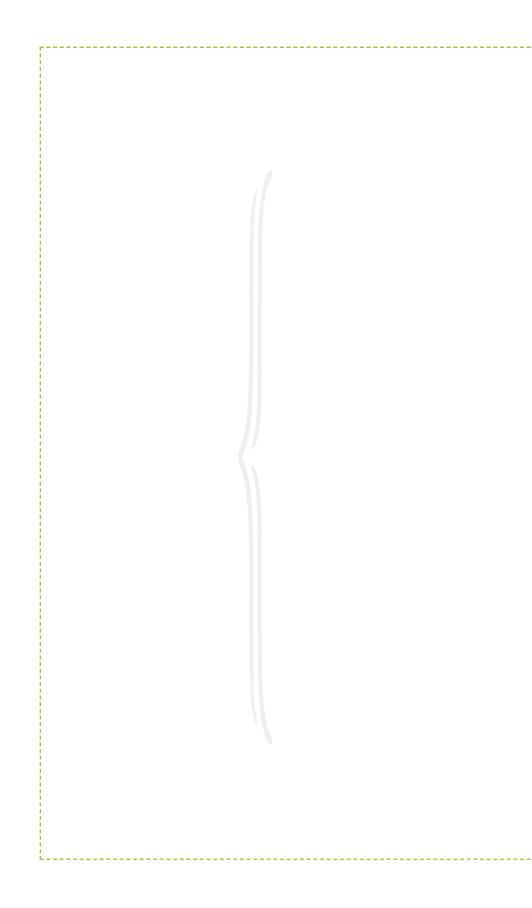00-379 Warsaw
email: jan.sowa@asp.waw.pl

Autor: Jan Sowa
Tytuł: Esencjalistyczna masturbacja: Czy Globalny Wschód może zaznać satysfakcji?
Abstrakt: Zgadzając się z postulowanym przez Martina Müllera uzupełnieniem luki we współczesnych naukach społecznych, jaką stanowi niewielkie zainteresowanie kondycją Globalnego Wschodu, artykuł podejmuje polemikę z zaproponowanym przez niego rozwiązaniem owego problemu. Autor proponuje spojrzenie na Globalny Wschód nie w kategoriach esencjalistycznych, ale poprzez pryzmat jego miejsca w międzynarodowym podziale pracy. „Strategiczny esencjalizm", za którym opowiada się Müller, jest zdaniem Autora błędny ze względu na trzy związane z nim problemy: reakcyjny charakter polityki tożsamości jako takiej, jej przejęcie przez środowiska

prawicowe oraz wątpliwą wartość sporej części rozwiązań społeczno-kulturowych stanowiących historyczną tożsamość społeczeństw Globalnego Wschodu. Zamiast tego tekst proponuje konstrukcję alter-uniwersalizmu, który dystansowałby się od uniwersalizmu kolonialnego Zachodu, koncentrując się na budowie wspólnego frontu walk postępowo-emancypacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Globalny Wchód, polityka tożsamości, kapitalistyczny system--świat, esencjalizm, uniwersalizm, polityka postępowa, polityka rewolucyjna

ADAM LESZCZYŃSKI

Martin Müller's "Global East": The Next Episode in Central Europe's Failed Quest to Be Something Other than it Is

Central Europeans have very rich language for describing their own countries in unflattering manner and very, very long tradition of doing so. In this article author proposes a hypothesis for unusually low collective self-esteem. It is deeply rooted in the region's peripheral relation with the West. It is a by-product of a yawning gap between rich, powerful, industrialized West and stagnant Central Europe. Müller's "Global East" is, from this perspective, one of the (many) attempts to overcome region's peripheral status.

Keywords: Global East, Central Europe, Zachód, collective self-esteem, semi-periphery

"Grey place". This was the first and foremost impression of Martin Müller's students about ex–Soviet countries. They perceived Central Europe as "terra incognita of the world, where Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Molvania blend into an amorphous mass". This shows the difficulty of the task that Müller attempted — to establish the "Global East" as a geographical and political concept, to rival the "Global South". Brazil is fun, Kenya is exotic, India is spectacular: Central and Eastern Europe is just dull and grey. A lot of people — including many Central Europeans — think so. The Polish writer Ziemowit Szczerek, who wrote a number of books about self-perception of Poles and other Eastern and Central Europeans, noted that there are innumerable words and expressions in their languages used to disparage their homelands (which they declare to love, by the way). For example, Croats use the word *vukojebina* (literally "the place where wolves fuck"), which is a rough equivalent of the Polish *zadupie* ("the place behind or below the arse") (Szczerek 2018). *Finis terrae, anus mundi*, the place where the "dogs bark with their asses" — Central Europeans have very rich language for describing their own countries in an unflattering manner and very, very long tradition of doing so.

Of course there is also a hierarchy among the damned. We have better and worse places, even in our beloved Central Europe. In one of the Szczerek's novels–reportages (the relationship between facts and author's imagination is never completely clear in his works) he quotes a young Ukrainian woman:

> Why do you come here, you Poles […] You come here because in other countries they laugh at you. And they think of you the same way as you think about us: as a backward shit-hole you can sneer at. And feel superior towards. […] Because everyone thinks you're impoverished, Eastern trash. […] Not just the Germans, but also the Czechs, even the Slovaks and the Hungarians. You only think the Hungarians are such fucking awesome pals of yours. But in fact they make fun of you just like everyone else. Not to mention the Serbs and the Croats. Even the Lithuanians, pal. Everyone thinks you're just a slightly different version of Russia. The third world. It's only here that you can be patronizing. Here you make up for the fact that everywhere else they wipe their asses with you (Kalin 2018).

A few years ago I wrote a book about the Polish collective self–image — based on hundreds of literary works, journalistic articles, and private letters (Leszczyński 2016). I concluded that the negative self-image of Poles has been surprisingly constant since at least the late 18th century

and was fully formed by the middle of the 19ᵗʰ century. It has not evolved since. The rightists and the leftists; conservatives and modernizers; men and women; all of them, despite many differences, had very similar list of perceived Polish moral faults and social defects. Let's list them: a low level of personal hygiene; bad roads; ugly and chaotic cities; low level of education among the citizenry; elites that are poorly educated, intellectually shallow and uncurious; uncivil and unpleasant social life; a public administration which is unfriendly to citizens; and overall poverty and hopelessness. The high achievements of science and civilization are not to be found here, in Poland — they all come from the West. In the words of one of the most famous Polish writers, Bolesław Prus (1847–1912), Poland does not contribute anything to the treasury of human civilization. We are freeriders; we just take inventions and ideas produced elsewhere (that is — in the West). We, Poles, only try to implement them here, in our land, and we do it usually poorly. Prus repeated this accusation many times during the 40-plus years of his journalistic career.

  What lies beneath this unusually low self-esteem? What are the reasons for it? Polish nobles in the early modern age — before the Enlightenment — had a rather good, if not excellent, opinion about themselves and their sociopolitical system. My theory is that the real reason for this decline in self-perception was the discovery of growing gap between the rich, powerful, industrializing West and stagnant Central Europe. In the terms of Immanuel Wallerstein, Polish lands were the first semi-periphery to the West – the center of the world system. We were close and similar to the West, but at the same time also distant, poorer, weaker, infinitely less important in the magnificent game of geopolitics. The Polish elites were aware of this in the 1750s. The mass exodus of poor peasants from Polish territories to the West, which started in the 1870s, brought ample possibilities to compare the quality of life between the "old" country and "new" one. The results were disastrous for the collective self–image.

  When one reads the letters and memoirs left to us by Polish immigrants — many of them have been published — it is hard not to notice the deep feelings of alienation and contempt for the homeland. Let's discuss one — but representative — example here. In 1929, an emigre visited Poland after many years spent in the USA. He published his impressions from his old village (near Rzeszów) in the periodical "Ziemia Rzeszowska". Let's quote:

Self-image of Poles has been surprisingly constant since at least the late 18ᵗʰ century and was fully formed by the middle of the 19ᵗʰ century. It has not evolved since.

After arriving in the village, I experienced various contradictory feelings. I was offended by the old customs of our people, I was stunned by the barefoot, dirty, sunburned legs of girls, elderly women, children and men, legs red like baked crayfish. It looks so archaic to me now, so reminiscent of slavery, just so poor and unsightly that it really felt offensive. Not everyone walks like this out of necessity, for lack of shoes, but simply out of habit. However, the emigrants, those who returned to Poland from the world, they do not live like this anymore (Duda-Dziewierz 1938, 141-142).

In the author's eyes there was an opposition between Poland and the "world", where he now lived and where life was better. The peasant women, he wrote, looked like "our [American] Indians". The smells of his village were a mixture of "heavenly aromas" of fields and meadows with a terrible stench of unwashed human bodies. The visitor noted:

In Western countries, especially in America, bathing has become an almost daily necessity in every season of the year, and here they don't bathe in the villages for years, and some people don't know what bath is! (…) The people use the same spaces for barns and pigsties and human dwellings (…) This makes the proverbial fresh air in the countryside an extremely stupid joke, paradox or irony, because while the fields smell like divine aromas (…), the nasty killing stench of stables and henhouses and pigsties in country huts makes you sick (…). Imagine what it feels like in summer, when billions of flies hatch, when all of them fly to the dung, and then swarms into open doors, windows and apartments, sit on food, draw in pots and milk (Duda-Dziewierz 1938, 141-142).

It would be very easy to fill not just a book, but a library with the records of such experiences.

This is the local perspective on "Global East". From the Western perspective, Müller's "Global East" — meaning Central and Eastern Europe — was also a no–place, an empty space between Germany and the three Oriental capitals: St. Petersburg, Moscow and Constantinople. Let's quote one such description from a Western traveler. In 1784 the British explorer William Coxe published, in London, a well–received description of his travels to Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Russia. He described Poland as a fallen, once-great nation, but at the same time uncivilized and primitive.

The nation has few manufactures, scarcely any commerce; a king almost without any authority; the nobles in the state of uncontrolled anarchy; the peasants groaning under a yoke of feudal despotism far worse than the tyranny of an absolute monarch. I never before observed such an inequality of fortune, such

sudden transition from extreme riches to extreme poverty; wherever I turned my eyes, luxury and wretchedness were constant neighbours. (...) The peasants in Poland, as in all feudal governments, are serfs or slaves; and the value of an estate is not estimated so much from its extent, as from the number of its peasants, who are transferred from one master to another like so many head of cattle (Coxe 1784, 122, 129).

While local elites wanted to compare their capitals to Paris — for example, both Warsaw and Bucharest liked to call themselves the "Paris of the East" — foreign visitors saw no Paris, but something more similar to a dirty eastern bazaar. The Polish historian Błażej Brzostek wrote an excellent book (2015) about both local aspirations and the experiences of Western travelers. It is a very worthwhile read — even if rather sad.

In 1994, the American historian Larry Wolff (1994) subjected the Western experience of Central and Eastern Europe to a thorough deconstruction (Coxe, quoted earlier, was one of his heroes). In their description of our land, it is impossible to distinguish projection from observation — so Wolff argued. In the 18th century, the Western European Enlightenment projected Eastern Europe — a vast area stretching between Berlin and Vienna in the west, and St. Petersburg and Istanbul in the east — as its opposite, as the antithesis of Western "civilization" (this word held a special place in the vocabulary of the Enlightenment). Bad roads; poor and oppressed peasants, living in conditions close to those of animals; dirty inns; sophisticated elites living in palaces among general poverty; widespread violence and brutality mixed with elements of dress and manners brought from the West — these were the common elements of these descriptions, regardless of whether they related to Wallachia, the lands of the Commonwealth or Hungary. In this picture, Eastern Europe played the roles of the distant periphery of the West and its oriental mirror. It was the "place between" the proper Orient, that is Russia and Turkey, and the actual West, whose border ended in Germany and Austria.

This image of Eastern Europe, Wolff added, was a great political tool for the predatory empires — Prussia, Austria and Russia — which, in the name of "civilization", colonized this territory. Comparisons of the inhabitants of the Commonwealth to peoples from distant non-European lands were an open invitation to conquest. "A country as virgin as Canada" — Jean-Emmanuel Gilbert (1741–1814), a French naturalist whom Coxe met during his stay in Grodno, wrote about Lithuania.

Wolff wrote his book in the early 1990s, when Eastern Europe was emerging from decades-long communist rule. His story (like any histo-

In this picture, Eastern Europe played the roles of the distant periphery of the West and its oriental mirror. It was the "place between" the proper Orient, that is Russia and Turkey, and the actual West, whose border ended in Germany and Austria.

It is very difficult to change the "mental map" (in Wolff's words) of both the local people and Western elites. Also, it may not be worth trying, especially when the "Global East" nowadays seems to be the place of rising authoritarianism and intolerance, a social space wholly different from liberal Western societies.

rian's narrative) was shaped by the time it was written, its hopes and fears. Wolff's message — namely that the image of Eastern Europe as a region of wildness, oppression and darkness is a projection of the West in which its imperial needs were expressed — was associated with hopes for the return of the countries between the Elbe and the Dnieper to the true European family (they had never belonged to this family before, but this did not matter to Wolff). The Soviet Empire fell; the dawn of civilization was coming to Central Europe again. Although Wolff does not question the literal truth of the quoted Westerners, he suggests that their perception of Central and Eastern Europe was flawed: the structure of their narrative (and, therefore, its conclusion) was imposed on what they saw. The sad perception of Central and Eastern Europe was an ideological construct; the place deserved a better reputation. In the 1990s it seemed far-fetched, but possible.

Let's now return to Müller's idea of the "Global East". It is very difficult to change the "mental map" (in Wolff's words) of both the local people and Western elites. Also, it may not be worth trying, especially when the "Global East" nowadays seems to be the place of rising authoritarianism and intolerance, a social space wholly different from liberal Western societies. In 2018, the American economist and influential political commentator Paul Krugman summarized the disappointment of the Western elites with Central and Eastern Europe in an anecdote which is worth quoting.

> When the Berlin Wall fell, a political scientist I know joked, 'Now that Eastern Europe is free from the alien ideology of Communism, it can return to its true path: fascism.' We both knew he had a point (Krugman 2018).

Changing this perception is going to be difficult and I am not sure it is really worthwhile at present. The "Global East", meaning Central and Eastern Europe, is still grey, still poor, and still authoritarian (the roads have improved though, thanks to the European Union). Does this make the "Global East" a special place, worthy of its own distinction between North and South? I am not sure. It may only make the difference between us and the West even more pronounced.

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ADAM LESZCZYŃSKI (1975) – historian, sociologist, journalist. Professor at SWPS University in Warsaw, where he teaches journalism and history. Co-founder of OKO.press, an independent media organization dedicated to monitor the state of democracy in Poland. Recently published *People's History of Poland* (2021).

Address:
Institute of Social Sciences
SWPS University
ul. Chodakowska 19/31, room 202
03-815, Warsaw
email: aleszczynski@swps.edu.pl

Autor: Adam Leszczyński
Tytuł: „Globalny Wschód" Martina Müllera: Kolejna z wielu nieudanych prób podejmowanych przez Europę Środkową, która chciałaby być czymś innym niż jest
Abstrakt: Ludy Europy Środkowej mają bardzo bogate słownictwo służące umniejszaniu i deprecjonowaniu własnych krajów – i długą tradycję jego używania. W tym artykule autor proponuje pewną hipotezę mającą wyjaśniać nadzwyczajnie niską zbiorową samoocenę. Jest ona głęboko zakorzeniona w peryferyjnej relacji regionu z Zachodem. Stanowi ona produkt uboczny przepaści pomiędzy bogatym, potężnym, uprzemysłowionym Zachodem i pogrążoną w stagnacji Europą Środkową. Kategoria „Globalny Wschód" Müllera, z tej perspektywy, jest kolejną z wielu prób przezwyciężenia peryferyjnego statusu regionu.
Słowa kluczowe: Globalny Wschód, Europa Środkowa, Zachód, zbiorowa samoocena, półperyferia

TOMASZ ZARYCKI

Comments on Martin Müller's "In Search of the Global East: Thinking Between North and South"

The text starts with a supportive opinion on the concept of the Global East, evaluating it as a convincing and useful tool for the development of critical studies on the so-called post-communist or the second world in a wider global perspective. In the remaining comments, several reasons for possible problems with the broader implementation of the proposed concept are discussed. They include both the resistance which it could encounter in Central and Eastern Europe, and broader, structural reasons why introducing it as a frame parallel to the Global South paradigm may be problematic. Among the examples of similar issues with new theoretical projects, the experience of the complex and not always enthusiastic reception of the post-colonial theory in Poland is briefly discussed.

Keywords: post-colonial theory, critical theory, orientalism, post-communism, area--studies, peripheries

I find Martin Müller's proposal to promote the Global East paradigm alongside the already established Global South concept to be an important, highly stimulating intellectual idea, but at the same time politically, or even practically, not a very feasible one. On the one hand, I could probably say that it is a proposal I have long been waiting for, at least for such a coherent and robust statement of support of this highly desirable thread of intellectual activity in modern social sciences. However, on the other hand, I am afraid that this is a proposal that is impossible in practical terms, at least for the foreseeable future. The reasons for its impossibility may be as interesting as the project itself, so let me briefly mention how I see at least some of them.

First, the question of the liminality of the region, so rightly mentioned by Müller, is not only one of it interesting features, but is also a major obstacle in the given context. As many other authors pointed out, it makes the question of belonging to Europe or to the West a key political stake for the actors related to that part of the world. At the same time, of crucial importance in this context are symbolic hierarchies within the region, which are again — as we know pretty well from several authors, many of whom are mentioned in the paper under discussion — related to different degrees of supposed Eastness/Westness[1]. Being perceived as even slightly more or less Western and/or European than others, particularly one's close neighbors, is an issue of crucial concern for most actors in many corners of the East, especially those who happen to be located closer to the core of the European West. This often makes the closest neighbors the most ardent enemies and leads to a high degree of fragmentation in the region, which is also characteristic for the Balkans and known after that area as Balkanization. Therefore, lumping together so many countries and nations under one umbrella of the Global East, as proposed by Martin Müller, even if justified by analytical rationalities, will hardly be acceptable for most of their contemporary representatives. Being Eastern, less Western than our significant others in the region also implies being seen as peripheral, which is a taboo notion in the region. "They (that is our opponents or neighbors) are eastern and peripheral; we belong to the West," is what one can hear from most of the so-called central Europeans. Poland's case proves very well how much the notion of peripherality is unacceptable, both in public and academic discourses. "East" and "peripheries" are

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1   In this context, among authors who were not mentioned in the text under discussion, works by József Böröcz (2006) and Atilla Melegh (2006) seem to be of highest relevance.

usually considered stigmatizing labels, making it quite challenging to write about Poland as a country of the periphery even in purely analytical terms. Also, in the case of social theory and social theorists, what is usually expected by the public of countries like Poland is that they will be recognized as part of Western European theory and circles of European social theorists. The very idea of imagining Poland as part of the Global East, while quite convincing to me personally from an analytical standpoint, is unlikely to be acceptable for most Polish intellectuals and social scientists. The use of such a label would contradict both the liberal narrative on Central Europe as part of modern Western Europe defined through the frame of EU membership, as well as the conservative narrative of Central Europe as part of the West defined through common Christian heritage. Most Poles will also not accept being put in a basket with many of their significant others, above all Russians, and for several other reasons, not only them. One good recent example of this lack of enthusiasm for the common Eastern identity is the current resistance in Poland to a joint memorial project in Berlin devoted to East European victims of Nazi Germany. Most Polish commentators expect a separate monument in the German capital, one which would be dedicated uniquely to Poles (or more precisely Polish citizens). Lumping Polish victims with other Eastern Europeans is widely seen in Poland as a devaluation of what is seen as exceptional Polish suffering, also from the hands of some of the other East European nations' representatives collaborating with Hitler (Haszczyński 2020).

It would seem that several important lessons highlighting potential problems with the proposal under discussion could be learned from debates surrounding the application of post-colonial theory in Poland. First of all, we could note that, overall, post-colonial theory was not very enthusiastically accepted in Poland. If used, it was more often employed to attack opponents rather than to challenge the Western hegemony over the region, in particular on the deep, ontological level of criticism, which lies at the core of this approach. As I have argued in several places, among them in my book (Zarycki 2014), post-colonial theory has been adopted in parallel by selected representatives of conflicting intellectual and political camps in Poland. Among them are the main adversaries in the current political conflict in Poland, who can be labeled as conservatives and (left)liberals. The left-liberals consider uses of post-colonial theory by conservatives as an example of its "misuse" or "hostile takeover" (e.g. Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012). In any case, both camps employ the theory to promote their political interests and attack each other, rather than critically analyze Poland's subaltern status. Conservatives, in par-

Conservatives, in particular, refer to post-colonial theory to justify their agenda, including, among others, re-traditionalization and resistance to "progressive" Western ideologies. Left-liberals see conservatives rather as the key colonial agents, portraying them as trying to subdue the country's minorities in the past and present. I am afraid that once Eastern theory is developed within the Global East paradigm, it will again become an object of similar political "abuses" and "takeovers," that is, internal confrontations among Polish actors, producing at least two, if not more, conflicting variants.

Most nations, but also ethnic groups and some regions in Eastern Europe, are founded on ideologies of their uniqueness and essentialized distinctions. Sonderweg thinking is also prevalent in highly nationalized historiographies, as well as other social sciences, of most of the nations of the region. One could thus say that not everyone in our region wants to be emancipated, particularly to be emancipated together with some of our significant others, as well as to be emancipated with the assistance of the Western scholars, in particular of left-liberal orientation.

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In some respects, the current configuration of Western academia, with the dominant role of "area studies" or, in fact, the former Sovietology, in which responsibilities are clearly defined, with the West being in charge of the production of knowledge concerning the region is easier to tolerate for many. Area studies, with their clear separation from national academic fields of countries of the region, which are treated as fieldworks rather than intellectual partners, avoids at least the unavoidable

hypocrisy which may surround the political roles of Global East studies when they emerge. This is because we have to admit that Eastern theory would still be a Western theory, just like Southern theory is. As is also the case with Southern theory, the project is supposed to facilitate the inclusion of scholars from the region into the Western elite, or at least increase the visibility of Eastern intellectuals among the Western elite. Who gets included and who does not will be defined, as usual, by the elite of Western academic institutions. What may thus change with the advent of Eastern theory may be a blurring of the power relations, in particular the command the West exerts over that knowledge area will be less obvious. However, what new meanings will be ascribed to the region will still be decided in the West, now mostly through a selection of Easterners considered worthy of speaking on the global stage in the name of the region.

One could also speculate on the emancipatory power of critical theory in this context. I tend to have a view on critical theory and political action as rather weakly related at most of the times. Critical theory is, above all, a tool for describing and deconstructing different forms of inequalities. Such descriptions may become meaningful acts of socially conditioned cognition but usually have a minimally direct impact on the "real world". Of course, they may lead to the politicization of some of the inequalities, and as a result, stimulate action directed towards their alleviation. Nevertheless, on many occasions, such political activity is often taken even without prior problematization of specific inequalities by critical scholars. Any possible political action will be, in my view, conditioned first of all by a favorable configuration of political forces in the region, in particular a possibility of the emergence of broad trans--national coalitions. Second, the emancipation of the region would require the accumulation and consolidation of tangible material resources. Mere intellectual "recognition" by Western scholars will neither significantly change the place and the region's overall visibility, nor will it make up for the weakness of its academic institutions, rightly mentioned by Müller. Any projects that would not involve their strengthening based on local scholars and intellectuals and that did not mostly rely on local resources should be considered compensatory, in my view, and thus not very effective in the long run. What I would personally dream of, and what will not come with the establishment of Global Eastern studies, would be the possibility of working at and travelling between well-funded, thriving intellectual academic institutions in cities like Kyiv, Moscow, and Warsaw, as well as other intellectual centers of the region. Such institutions would have the status and resources compara-

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ble to at least the lower part of the top 100 universities in Europe and
would not be mere subsidiaries of Western universities, such as CEU or
the European University, which are considerably alienated from the
context of the academic fields of the countries in which they were loca-
ted. I also dream of a situation in which, in such a network of high-
-ranking academic institutions in the region, we, academics from Cen-
tral and Eastern European countries, would be able to discuss ideas of
common interest without the usual mediation of our Western colleagues
and their institutions. This would also require some political and eco-
nomic integration of the region, which is currently hardly conceivable.
In fact, one of the critical mechanisms reproducing region's weakness
and dependency is its constant fragmentation. It results in benefits for
the West, similar to the effects of what could be called a strategy of the
"rule and divide" type. One could recall here Larry Wolff's *Inventing
Eastern Europe*, in which he reconstructed two primary roles prescribed
to the Eastern Europeans by intellectuals of Enlightenment (Wolff 1994).
The first was the role which Voltaire suggested to the Russians, in par-
ticular Russian leaders, which was one of a strong, authoritarian ruler,
seen as the only adequate model for the conducting modernization in
the difficult conditions of the East. The other was proposed to the Poles
by Rousseau, who supported the Polish anti-Russian rebels and called
on them to resist Russification and remain "European at heart". In fact,
the West continues to support both of these roles to this today, thereby
sustaining continuous conflicts in the region. This can be seen in prag-
matic relations maintained with the regime of Vladimir Putin, as well
as in the parallel support of Ukrainian or Belarussian democratic move-
ments. However, what I also see as a condition of any tangible emanci-
pation of the region on the global scale is its economic integration, one
which would allow decreasing high economic dependence on the West,
in particular of the so-called Central Europe, which is currently prima-
rily owned by the West in the most direct sense of the words (e.g. Myant
2018). Let me, at the same time, remind readers that it was Rosa Luxem-
burg (1898) who argued that the existence of a viable Polish state, that
is, one which would be based on a healthy economic system, is impos-
sible without its access to the Russian market. Interestingly, however,
she is rarely quoted on this crucial observation today, even if we can see
a kind of renaissance of interest in the Luxemburg's thought on the
Polish left.

In such contexts, it's also important to reflect on why we, Easterners,
appear to be so uninteresting to the Western core, as Martin Müller
rightly noted. I would argue that Eastern Europe's dullness should be

seen as structurally conditioned. The role of the region, in particular its more Western part, largely comes down to a reservoir of cheap labor for the Western core, both in the form of migrants as well as those working in assembly plants and call centers in the region. However, that labor force is not expected to comment on its role in the global system or, in particular, on the state of Western societies. Müller also pointed out that in contrast to the Global South, the Global East has no exotic allure; we could also add that it is not a major global tourist destination. One could note that there is some structural similarity of this situation in Eastern Europe, to one in which peripheral regions of the West found themselves. What I have in mind here are its inner peripheries, in particular the poorer, working-class suburbs of the metropolitan areas, which are also primarily cheap and "domesticated" labor force providers. One such specific inner periphery is the so-called "inland empire," also known as Inlandia, that is, the Eastern peripheries of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Even if located next to Hollywood, the global entertainment industry's hub, they are almost absent from the American and also a global map of "interesting" places. It is quite telling that in the movie by David Lynch entitled "Inland Empire," even if it was named after the region, no scenes were actually shot in the Inland Empire. Ironically, a major part of the movie was shot in Łódź, Poland, another far-away, little interesting "Eastern" region with no clear identity for the average member of the global audience. In any case, Eastern Europe's history teaches us that as long as the region does not threaten the West, either militarily or as its economic or political competitor, it appears as uninteresting to the global public. Once moments of exceptional economic growth or military consolidation take place in the region, it becomes visible for some time, as it was the case at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, when an economic boom in the Russian empire occurred. Interestingly, this was also discussed by Rosa Luxemburg in her aforementioned book, in which she suggested both Poland and Russia should have more global relevance for Western audiences. This period of dynamic economic growth also resulted in the global visibility of Russian art and literature from that period. Later, a comparable moment could be observed in the late 1950s and 1960s, particularly until 1968, when the communist block attracted considerable attention and interest, often turning into a fascination with what has been considered an alternative modernization path. Later on, however, the entire region was increasingly orientalized. In the same way, the West's internal peripheries remain little known and are considered uninteresting, as long as they remain impoverished and, at the same time, relatively stable politically.

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Despite these conditions, which make the project of the Global East currently impossible, as I have argued, I find debating it an intellectually stimulating exercise. One of its potential advantages seems to be that it may allow one to theorize a qualitatively different type of dependence on the Western core from the one which is studied in the framework of post-colonial theory. It may also stimulate new and original methodologies and insights into the workings of the global economic system. Probably the relationships between the so-called second and third words, or in the current vocabulary the global South and global East, will also be an exciting topic for that new prospective field, which could take a closer look in particular at instances of direct interaction between these regions (e.g. Ginell 2018; Mark, Kalinovsky, and Marung 2020). In conclusion, one could also note that Müller's project had its precursors; however, their fate, that is, lack of broader interest for similar initiatives, also seems quite characteristic for how little interest for such initiatives both within the region and outside it can be mobilized. One such proposal, which, while it was not mentioned by Müller, is worth particular attention, namely Maxim Waldstein's article on "theorizing second world" (Waldstein 2010). Of particular interest is his suggestion to look at what he called in a more traditional way the second world, but in fact largely corresponds with the scope of the Global East, as a model and resource for nonessentialist and non-Eurocentric theorizing. He also argued about the need of a "move of the area from deep provinces of the contemporary intellectual universe to a position as one of the key 'labs' for producing nonessentialist knowledge about (not only second world) culture and society" (Waldstein 2010, 104). Moreover, he saw the region as "an obvious source of analogies, comparative cases and (…) theoretical insights that are useful for understanding not only Russia and/or Poland but other regions as well, ultimately, human society and culture per se." (Waldstein 2010, 115). The fact that Waldstein's highly stimulating manifesto did not have much resonance, especially outside the circle of Russian origin scholars, is once again very telling and seems to support my pessimistic prognosis.

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TOMASZ ZARYCKI – is Professor and Deputy Director of the Robert Zajonc Institute for Social Studies at the University of Warsaw, Poland. He holds "habilitation" degree in sociology from the Institute for Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. His research focuses on sociology of politics, sociology of culture, sociology of knowledge, critical sociology and discourse analysis with particular focus on Polish and Eastern European societies. His latest book in English is *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2014). His earlier books include among others: *Gra peryferyjna: Polska politologia w globalnym polu nauk społecznych* (A Peripheral Game: Polish Political Sciences in the Global Field of Social Sciences, co-authored with Tomasz Warczok, Warszawa 2016), *Totem inteligencki: Arystokracja, szlachta i ziemiaństwo w polskiej przestrzeni społecznej* (An Intelligentsia's Totem: Aristocracy, Nobility and Landowners in the Polish Social Space, co-authored with Rafał Smoczyński, Warszawa 2017), *Peryferie: Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferyjnych* (Peripheries: New Approaches to Centre-periphery relations, Warszawa 2009).

Address:
Robert Zajonc Institute for Social Sciences
University of Warsaw
Stawki 5/7, 00-183 Warsaw

Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study (SCAS)
Thunbergsvägen 2
SE-752 38 Uppsala, Sweden
email: t.zarycki@uw.edu.pl

Autor: Tomasz Zarycki
Tytuł: Komentarz na temat tekstu Martina Müllera „W poszukiwaniu globalnego wschodu: myślenie między północą a południem"
Abstrakt: W pierwszej części tekstu przedstawiono wspierającą opinię o koncepcji „Globalnego wschodu" Martina Müllera jako przekonującej propozycji użytecznego

narzędzia rozwoju studiów krytycznych nad tzw. światem post-komunistycznym czy też dawnym drugim światem w perspektywie globalnej. W pozostałej części komentarza wymieniono jednak szereg powodów dla których wdrożenie danej koncepcji napotkać może poważne bariery. Należą do nich po pierwsze możliwy opór w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej oraz szersze przyczyny strukturalne ze względu na które wprowadzenie do międzynarodowego obiegu koncepcji równoległej do „Globalnego południa" może być problematyczne. Wśród omówionych krótko podobnych problemów z prowadzeniem nowych koncepcji teoretycznych przedyskutowano doświadczenia złożonej i nie zawsze entuzjastycznej recepcji teorii post-kolonialnej w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: teoria postkolonialna, teoria krytyczna, orientalizm, postkomunizm, area studies, peryferie

MARTIN MÜLLER

Global Theory Does Not Believe in Tears

This text is Martin Müller's response to the comments on his article "In Search of the Global East" by Adam Leszczyński, Jan Sowa, Magda Szcześniak, and Tomasz Zarycki. The author defends in it the perspective of the Global East, advocating for three ways to further intervene in the geopolitics of knowledge: revising existing concepts and theories (instead of emulating them), conducting comparative research beyond the Global East, and extending the theory to geographic areas other than Eastern.

Today I received an e-mail from a large publishing house, asking me whether I wanted to edit a *Handbook of the Global East.* One can move from marginal critique to establishment in less than two years these days. Apparently, the term 'Global East', experimental as it is, has enough sex appeal to convince publishers that it will sell. This e-mail could serve as the serendipitous occasion for a triumphant riposte to the doubts of Adam Leszczyński and Tomasz Zarycki (both this issue) as to whether the Global East can work: 'yes, it can!' But it might also confirm Jan Sowa's (this issue) worst fears, who I see quipping that it is akin to 'organizing a marketing campaign to advertise the end of capitalism' (177). After all, editing a handbook with a Western publisher risks reinforcing the very practices and hierarchies it seeks to challenge.

I am under no illusion that the publisher contacted me because of the intellectual value of the project of the Global East, or because of its emancipatory thrust. They contacted me because they smelled a net positive return-on-investment. But will it be an epistemic and intellectual project worth pursuing? Will it create new ideas, stimulate debates and make space for new voices? These are central questions of the Global East and I thank the four commentators for their time, thoughts and the good grace with which they engaged with my work. Thanks for sharing dreams (Zarycki), as envisioning a conceptual utopia was part of the exercise that I engaged in. Thanks also for sharing disillusionment and the feeling that the Eastern *zadupie* (Polish for 'godforsaken land', if I read Adam Leszczyński well, and a possible precursor of the Southern--German *Hinterdupfing*?) might be beyond redemption. Thanks for pushing me further to think through class (Szcześniak) and global capitalism (Sowa).

For this reply, I have distilled three main questions from the four commentaries. I have phrased them in a pointed fashion, even if the commentators express them with much more eloquence and nuance.

Do we need to think the Global East (more) through class and capitalism?

Any analysis of the postsocialist East must grapple with the violent force of integration into global capitalist relations. The extent and trajectory of this integration have varied, of course, from the posterchildren of the capitalist transition – Poland and the Baltics, to the wayward children of Russia and Central Asia. The brandscapes of the high streets and peripheries in Eastern European cities are a familiar neon-litany of

Western labels and corporations. Questions of class and class aspirations through consumption, as raised by Magda Szcześniak, and of who calls the shots in global capitalism, as Jan Sowa enquires, are important. They receive a marginal treatment in my article – not, however, because I thought them negligible. The ample literature on the topic attests to the contrary (Boatcă 2006; Cabada 2020; Vliegenthart 2010, as just a few among many).

But my purpose is a different one. My piece intervenes in the global geopolitics of knowledge: who produces knowledge for whom, and with what consequences? The global geopolitics of knowledge is not a direct mirror of capitalist power relations. Economic heavyweights such as Germany, France, China and Japan are minor players in knowledge production and are outflanked by much smaller countries such as New Zealand, as I have shown in a recent study in the field of human geography (Müller 2021). Postsocialist countries, such as Poland and Russia, punch far below their economic weight in this game (Trubina et al. 2020).

Who dominates the geopolitics of knowledge is not just a question of economic power and excellent universities, although it is this as well. It is more a question of language, and of sign systems and affective attachments more generally. The hierarchies of desire and knowledge are more obdurate than those of money and wealth. The Czech Republic now has a higher purchasing power per capita than Italy (here and below, reference is to IMF 2020 Gross Domestic Product in purchasing power parities per capita for 2020). But will we soon be reading *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* instead of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and listening to Smetana's *Vltava* instead of Verdi's *Aida*? No. An average Lithuanian now creates more comparative economic value than a Spaniard. Will we soon flock to Vilnius instead of Barcelona? No. The average Pole produces more wealth in purchasing power terms than the average Greek, but does that make us crave *pierogi* and *gołąbki* more than *gyros* and *moussaka*?

None of the economic indicators above turn the Czech Republic, Lithuania or Poland into centres of global capitalism, of course. The headquarters of blue chips are elsewhere, as Sowa remind us. But many countries of the East have nevertheless become rather wealthy countries in global terms. The OECD, for example, lists Romania and Russia as high-income countries, Bulgaria as an upper-middle-income country. (There are, of course, significant domestic inequalities that such averages disguise, as Szcześniak remarks.) Yet, in the geopolitics of knowledge, these same countries are perhaps more peripheral than the much poorer Global South (Waldstein 2010; Petrovici 2015; Tlostanova 2015). This

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situation is exacerbated with the Southern and decolonial turn in global
theory (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011; de Sousa Santos 2014). In other
words, Warsaw will soon have the highest building in the EU, speaking
not least to its economic prowess; but the Varso Tower (what a subtle
play on words) is still designed by the British Foster + Partners. The
vectors of desire and knowledge are much more inert than the centres
of the economy.

If we talk about economic forces, the most persistent, I think, is
where desire meets the economy to create an affective economy (Ahmed
2010; Schurr and Militz 2018). In an affective economy attachments
and detachments, attraction and aversion create or annihilate economic
value. Much of the East is enveloped in a negative global affective eco-
nomy – that of neglect, greyness, blandness, boredom. Magda Szcześniak
rightly draws our attention to how these are linked to the perception of
a failed modernity. What is interesting is that this negative affection also
holds for many people in the East themselves, as Leszczyński demon-
strates with his list of vernacular nicknames.

Is the Global East too diverse to hold together?

The thirty countries (or thirty-and-a-half, if one counts East Germany)
that emerged from the dissolution of state socialism have taken widely
different economic and political trajectories in the past thirty years; to
the point that I have argued elsewhere in favour of abandoning the
concept of postsocialism (Müller 2019). Yet, the Global East, as a con-
cept, does not seeks to build political or economic unity. That would
indeed be a tall order. Somewhat more modestly, it seeks to create a move-
ment towards epistemic emancipation. That is difficult enough, but
there is a chance, I believe, to succeed.

The societies of the Global East share at least two predicaments in
the global epistemic space. First, an exclusion from the hemispheric
categories of North and South that are increasingly used to frame
debates in global theory and decolonialism. Second, an external status
in (Western) European colonialism as neither direct colonisers nor
direct colonies. Incidentally, these predicaments are shared by a num-
ber of other imperial formations, notably those of the former Ottoman,
Chinese, Persian and Japanese empires. For that reason, I have started
to write of the Global Easts in the plural (Müller 2020b). I hold that
these commonalities do create a shared epistemic position from outside
the (Western) European colonial dyad and its culmination in Western

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nor direct colonies.
Incidentally, these
predicaments are
shared by a number of
other imperial forma-
tions, notably those of
the former Ottoman,
Chinese, Persian and
Japanese empires. For
that reason, I have
started to write of the
Global Easts in the
plural (Müller 2020b).

modernity. That epistemic position enables what the Russian literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky (2005 [1923]) called 'The Knight's Move'. Like the chess piece of the knight, this move is not straightforward, but forward and sideways, 'our tortured road is that of the brave'[1]. It is this sideways glance on Western modernity – its achievements and theories – that the epistemic position of the East can proffer (see also Boym 2017).

To be sure, the Global East lacks the shared Other of European colonialism that is so powerful in similar movements in the Global South. Power relations do run every which way, as Sowa writes. What is more, many scholars in Eastern Europe welcomed the dissolution of socialism as a (re)turn also to the academic community of (Western) Europe. As such, the priority has been to attain recognition in European scholarship rather than to criticise it, as Zarycki and Szcześniak remark. Waldstein (2010, 100) senses a danger of provincialism in this European allure: 'After all, the hunger for outside wisdom, just as intellectual xenophobia, is itself a sign of provincialism.' The status of Western Europe is therefore far more ambiguous for the Global East than it is the case for the Global South, where it was, for the most part, the colonial Master. Rallying against a common oppressor is therefore less obvious for the Global East.

Is the Global East possible?

But there is also a strength in that awkward position vis-à-vis (Western) European colonialism. The surprise turn of the knight's move entails that 'the strength of the semi-periphery resides primarily in the cultural and epistemic sphere' (Boatcă 2006, 320). I am confident that we are at a historical juncture that will allow the Global Eastern project to take flight, contra Zarycki's and Leszczyński's doubts. What makes me so hopeful is the turning tide on both sides. In global theorising, the Southern and decolonial turns have created propitious conditions for theories from outside the core to be heard and to make difference. Certainly, much of this centrifugal movement still focuses attention on the former (Western) European colonies, but it does not have to stay this way. In the East, a new generation of scholars has come of age, producing outstanding research (Gierat-Bieroń, Orzechowska-Wacław-

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1   The full quotation in Russian goes: Наша изломанная дорога – дорога смелых, но что нам делать, когда у нас по два глаза и видим мы больше честных пешек и по должности одноверных королей.

Yet, global theory does not believe in tears, to recoin a popular Russian proverb. Self-pity will not get us far. Many interventions have deplored the peripheral status of the East in global theory, and explored reasons for it. Now is the time to get up and get going. The project of the Global East, as I have started it, is meant to create an opening for new, Eastern voices in global theory (e.g. Müller and Trubina 2020b).

ska, and Kubicki 2020; Kajdanek, Pietraszewski, and Pluta 2018; Kusiak 2017; Zysiak et al. 2019 as just a small, and hopelessly partial, selection of what I am aware of in my field, urban studies, on cities in Poland). This is a generation more at ease with English and often more critical of the European forefathers and – mothers – whether this is Durkheim or Weber or Deleuze. Too often, however, their contributions are read only within a narrow circle of specialists.

Yet, global theory does not believe in tears, to recoin a popular Russian proverb. Self-pity will not get us far. Many interventions have deplored the peripheral status of the East in global theory, and explored reasons for it. Now is the time to get up and get going. The project of the Global East, as I have started it, is meant to create an opening for new, Eastern voices in global theory (e.g. Müller and Trubina 2020b). Yet, if the Global East is going to become an emancipatory project, it will have to be carried first and foremost by scholars from the East. After all, feminism did not come about because men were advocating for it, critical race studies did not arise thanks to white scholars and indigenous studies is not indebted to settler colonialists. This means speaking up and speaking back in global theory. It implies contesting the regional framing that limits the East to 'special cases' and to deviations from the implicit (Western) norm, while still remaining grounded in the multiple places of the East.

I see three ways of going forward, each equally valid and equally necessary (see also Robinson 2016 for further inspiration). First, **revising concepts and theories** instead of emulating them. We are all keenly aware that concepts in the social sciences and humanities are context--dependent. A concept that works well to describe urban change in New York will often not work well in Warsaw. This calls for revising concepts and, in the process, flagging that these concepts are not as universal as they are sometimes taken to be. Scholars have done that for the concept of gentrification, highlighting the limits of applying it to cities in the Global East and proposing modifications (e.g. Bernt 2016; Gentile 2018; Kubeš and Kovács 2020). Another fruitful avenue is to weigh into global debates on postcolonialism. Eastern scholars have rightly interrogated postcolonialism for its potentials and limits when it comes to shedding light on social and political processes, and for its uses and abuses in the Global East (e.g. Grzechnik 2019; Janion 2006; Snochowska-Gonzalez 2012; Tlostanova 2012; Waldstein 2010). I have done this by questioning the framing of mega-projects through urban entrepreneurialism, using the case of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics (Müller 2011). This act of revising and speaking back requires a careful

choice of audience, aiming not primarily at regional specialists, but at theorizing with a global reach. It is for this reason that I chose to first publish "In search of the Global East", the article that is translated into Polish (see previous issue of *Praktyka Teoretyczna*), in the journal *Geopolitics* (Müller 2020a). This is an interdisciplinary journal read by political scientists, political economists and geographers, without a specific regional orientation.

The second way forward is to **engage in comparative research** beyond the Global East. The goal of this move is to destabilise regional and area studies framings, and to generate new conceptual insights through unexpected comparisons. Why not relate informality across Estonia, Germany and Guinea-Bissau (Tuvikene, Neves Alves, and Hilbrandt 2017)? Why not juxtapose urban activism in Eastern Europe and China (López and Yip 2020)? Why not examine cultural flagships in Ekaterinburg, Rio de Janeiro, Abu Dhabi and Hong Kong for their qualities as global buildings, as I am doing in a new project? Such comparisons would also deepen the links with scholars from other places who seek to decentre global theory and forge alliances, whether in the other Global Easts or the Global South.

The third avenue is to **extend theory**, to start here and move elsewhere. Scholars have done this by looking at temporality in urban development in Łódź and diagnosing an asynchronous modernity (Zysiak and Marzec 2020). A series of interventions seek to draw lessons from the East to analyse the populist and 'illiberal' turn in several Western countries, not least the US and the UK (Dzenovska and Kurtović 2018). Another effort looks at (post)socialist infrastructures and draws forward-looking lessons for building and analysing infrastructures around the world (Tuvikene et al. 2020). I have worked with a colleague in Russia on reconceptualizing 'improvisation' as a practice of making do with uncertainty (Müller and Trubina 2020a). On a different note, I would be curious to see a theorization of the emergence of portals such as Sci-Hub and LibGen in the Global East. Could this be a counterpoint and minor resistance to the corporate giants of the American West Coast that Sowa mentions?

Editing a handbook, as I was asked to do, would help advance along all of these three avenues. But it might also prematurely stake out the territory and smother an emergent discussion whose outlines we have barely started to discern. My experimental piece "In search of the Global East" appeared just two years ago – too short a time to move from experiment to institutionalisation in the form of a handbook. So I have said 'no' to the publisher. At least for now.

I see three ways of going forward, each equally valid and equally necessary (...). First, **revising concepts and theories** instead of emulating them. (...) The second way forward is to **engage in comparative research** beyond the Global East. (...) The third avenue is to **extend theory**, to start here and move elsewhere.

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MARTIN MÜLLER – is a professor in the Department of Geography and Sustainability at the University of Lausanne. He heads the research team M3 (Materialities | Multiplicities | Metropolis). He co-founded and co-directs the Center for Global Urbanism at Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg, Russia. He is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham.

Address:
Department of Geography and Sustainability
University of Lausanne
Quartier UNIL-Mouline
Bâtiment Géopolis
1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

Center for Global Urbanism
Ural Federal University
51 Prospekt Lenina
620142 Ekaterinburg, Russia
email: martin@martin-muller.net

Autor: Martin Müller (ORCID: 0000-0002-0734-4311)
Tytuł: Globalna teoria nie wierzy łzom
Abstrakt: Niniejszy tekst stanowi odpowiedź Martina Müllera na komentarze do jego artykułu „In Search of the Global East", autorstwa Adama Leszczyńskiego, Jana Sowy, Magdy Szcześniak i Tomasza Zaryckiego. Autor broni w nim perspektywy Globalnego Wschodu, opowiadając się za trzema sposobami dalszej interwencji w geopolitykę wiedzy: rewizją istniejących pojęć i teorii (zamiast ich naśladowania), prowadzeniem badań porównawczych poza Globalnym Wschodem i rozszerzaniem teorii na inne niż wschodnie obszary geograficzne.
Słowa kluczowe: Globalny Wschód, postsocjalizm, geopolityka wiedzy, globalna teoria