BORDERS, CITIZENSHIP, WAR, CLASS:
A DISCUSSION WITH ÉTIENNE BALIBAR AND SANDRO MEZZADRA

Manuela Bojadžijev and Isabelle Saint-Saëns

For quite some time Europe has become the space for political action and reflection, on the identity and on the *borders* of Europe. Étienne Balibar has been writing on these issues for a long time, combining a 'postnational' option with a criticism of European policies, especially when denouncing the risk of a political apartheid, and proposing the project of Europe as a 'vanishing mediator'. He has also stressed the importance of the struggles of migrants in Europe, whether referring to the complete isolation of the Algerians in France at the time of the 17 October 1961 massacre, or the visibility of the *sans papiers* movement in 1996. With the category of the *national social state*, he addresses the fact that the social and political system which was underpinning a certain idea of politics does not exist anymore.

1. Sandro Mezzadra and Alessandro Dal Lago, 'I confini impensati dell'Europa', in H. Friese, A. Negri, P. Wagner (eds), *Europa politica. Ragioni di una necessità*, Roma, Manifestolibri, 2002; Étienne Balibar, *L'Europe, l'Amérique, la guerre. Réflexions sur la médiation européenne*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003; Sandro Mezzadra and Enrica Rigo, 'L'Europa dei migranti,' in G. Bronzini, H. Friese, A. Negri, P. Wagner (eds), *Europa, costituzione e movimenti sociali*, Roma, *La crisi della sovranità statale, la dimensione europea e lo spazio dei movimenti sociali*, Manifestolibri, 2003.

In his recent writings, he has established a dialogue with Sandro Mezzadra,[1] on the 'local-global' wars on migrants, on the flexibility and mobility of European borders as a key characteristic of the institutional architecture of the European Union itself: the border as the 'non-democratic' element of democracy, and *border crossing* as a substance of citizenship, but also of *border reinforcing*. Borders recompose themselves continuously, both at the exterior and in the interior of the European Union. Their function is not only one of control but also of inclusive selection. Their transformation is closely related to the development of European citizenship and the management of migration flows, and the border regime itself 'produces' the foreigner. But at the same time this transformation is an effect of ongoing migration movements from and to Europe. In the context of European enlargement, the deterritorialisation results in a double movement: on the one hand, the European border regime produces relevant effects well beyond the line defining the edge of European territory and tends to retrace itself within the European *polis* itself; on the other hand, it tries to track down and haunt the ongoing movements of migration, which transcends it.

We wanted to pursue the dialogue by framing it in a global context: on the rise of anti-Islamism, the crisis of the nation-state within the European constitutional process, the new formations of 'war', and migration as a social movement.

This discussion must be precisely situated in time: it took place on 21 November 2004, several months before the French and Dutch referendums on the Constitutional Treaty.

ISLAMISM: TORCH OR TENDENCY IN EUROPE?

Isabelle Saint-Saëns On 2 November 2004 the artist and director Theo van Gogh was assassinated in an Amsterdam street by a young Muslim. It was the beginning of an anti-Islamic outrage and a heated debate all over Europe, which at times led to attacks upon mosques, schools and churches, and assaults against Muslims. You were invited to the Netherlands to discuss your work shortly after this incident. What was your talk about?

Étienne Balibar I was invited to deliver the Alexander von Humboldt Lecture in Human Geography at the University of Nijmegen.[2] Several of the researchers there are working on the issue of borders as a political problem today in Europe and in the world, and they wanted to discuss my work on the borders of Europe, the new function of the borders, their ubiquity, etc.

2. Étienne Balibar, *Europe, pays des frontières*, in *Europe Constitution Frontière*, Paris, Éditions du Passant, May 2005, pp93-164. English version http://www.ru.nl/socgeo/n/colloquium/Europe as Borderland.pdf

I started with considerations on political spaces borrowed from Carlo Galli,[3] and sketched a typology of different contradictory visions of the political space in Europe to show the importance of the question of borders for the issue of citizenship. I suggested there were four opposing models of political spaces in Europe. First, a Huntington-like model of a Clash of Cultures. Second, a global network model, consisting of two antagonistic variants, one a more capitalist, the other a more revolutionary version, their common point being, of course, that the tendency on both sides is to view the emerging structure as a virtually delocalised system of communication, amongst capital as well as amongst social movements. Third a centre-periphery model, particularly in Europe, which is weighing heavily upon discussions about the accession process for candidate countries like Turkey, the Balkan States, etc. It is based on the idea that the centre, both historically and geographically, is the core countries of Europe. The more recently the countries have joined the European Union and the further they are on the boundaries, the more they are considered as sources of potential problems: they are less developed economically, and culturally they are supposed to be further away from the eligible system of European values. Finally, the Cross-over model, corresponding to a representation of Europe as 'Borderland': everywhere in Europe, even in Maastricht, you are at the border. The border is not on the borderline, nor can it be equated with the Schengen treaty; it is both more to the interior and also more to the exterior.

3. Carlo Galli, *Spazi politici. L'età moderna e l'età globale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2001.

Then I spoke about the regulatory function of borders as a warlike phenomenon, aiming not so much at suppressing immigration than at limiting the number of migrants and creating a state of permanent insecurity for them. After that I moved to the issue of translation, the spirit of the trans-European and the utopian, and concluded on the debate on transnational citizenship and its actors, adopting my usual *ni-chèvre ni-chou* intermediary position.

Saint-Saëns *When, referring to the borders of Europe, you speak of a warlike phenomenon, is there not a relation to what George W. Bush quite frankly called a permanent war? This issue touches the diverse expressions of anti-Islamism in Europe today; having for a long time dedicated your work to the question of racism, how do you assess these new occurrences, of which the incidents in the Netherlands seem to mark another peak?*

Balibar While in the Netherlands I read the German newspaper *Die Welt*. It was the day after the Dutch police had assaulted, with grenades, a house near the central station in The Hague, the inhabitants of which were accused of being terrorists. On the same day mosques were burned and churches were attacked. The front page was remarkable, almost 9/11: an interview with a German politician was entirely focused on the declaration of the Dutch minister for immigration and integration, Rita Verdonk, who said that they had been very innocent and naïve and had underestimated the threat. The comments circled around the question of whether that could happen in Germany as well.

There were two war-like pictures, insinuating an escalation of the conflict: on one side a burning city, on the other side a veiled woman. The Islamic threat in the form of a veiled woman figures here as an effect of a fatal political *non sequitur*. Even if the legend says *Only a small number of Muslims live in Germany*, the first things you see are the flames, the flames and the extremist, in the tricky form of this woman …

At the same time the paper heavily used the following argument: the Dutch – the most open society of all Europe, the model of multicultural politics etc. – are now suddenly retreating and discovering that they were on the verge of making the most horrible mistake, thus threatening their own society. Because the extremists are there and are dangerous, and because – this is the typical neo-racist argument – the local population is outraged, are becoming radicalised, there is said to be a danger of permanent confrontation. If this is the case in the Netherlands, a small country with a very specific history, it means that all Europe now has to be extremely careful.

I talked about that with my colleagues in Nijmegen, who confirmed what I already knew, that for the last two years the concept of multiculturalism has been universally (that is to say, from all sides) rejected in the Netherlands, perhaps because it has been over-used and in some sense instrumentalised. Multiculturalism is bound to fail because it is based on the concept of culture, which is the most confusing of all.

People have been idealising the Dutch situation when invoking the tolerant aspects of Dutch political institutions to argue against repressive and narrow nationalistic policies in their own countries, for example by saying 'in the Netherlands things we find unbelievable and impossible to implement can be implemented and can work, such as the right to vote for foreigners in the local elections'. If the 'good' example collapses the argument disappears, and the dynamic seems to be only on the populist side.

We could say that this happens because the wrong ideals are chosen: we stand for the general rule *who is permanently settled, is resident, pays taxes, should have a right to elect representatives*. What matters is not only voting for a local council, but the struggles of the migrants, the solidarity they can gather around them, like the *Sans Papiers* did once. And the final goal is a *residency citizenship*, or in other words political equality among residents in the generalised public space of 'post-national' Europe.

Manuela Bojadžijev *In your essay* Es gibt keinen Staat in Europa,[4] *published 15 years ago, you speak of a European racism, which, in a famous chapter of* Race, Class, Nation *you have defined as* neo-racism.[5] *You argue that this racism is composed of both colonial and anti-Semitic schemas, which join in anti-Islamism. In our opinion this argument contains, besides its conceptual usefulness, a criticism of two mistakes often made when talking about racism. On the one hand a criticism of the notion of continuity, which, instead of placing the contemporary racism in its conjuncture, sees it in a direct continuation of, respectively, the colonial or national-socialist, heritage. On the other hand a criticism of simplistic analogies which transfer terms from one situation to another, for example, which explain racism in Germany via terms and traditions coming from a UK background. In fact, you are talking about 'national situations', in which the particular relations of migration and racism are defined and articulated. At the same time the 'construction of Europe' supplies and accelerates the convergence of these different forms. In this context, could we not speak of the emergence of a* transnational situation, *observed when looking at the current formation of anti-Islamism?*

Balibar It is shocking to see the Netherlands turning to this populist mood, which then spreads across Europe, one country after another. It is not the pure and simple linear development of populism or xenophobia in Europe, but a burst of xenophobia. Of course, on a general level things are getting worse, partly because there are no systematic trans-European attempts, except very bureaucratic ones, at building dykes against that encounter argument. I am sorry to be such a vulgar Marxist, but as long as the underlying social issues are not seriously addressed, as long as all you have is the French Socialist party posters saying "Maintenant l'Europe sociale", nobody takes that seriously. There exists no serious way to resist.

Bojadžijev *But would you say there is an escalation? Expressions of anti-Islamism have been in existence for quite some time now, in particular in France, where it provokes a long-lasting public debate. There is of course a new conjuncture since 9/11, and all over Europe there are very different forms of articulations: in Spain since the March 2004 Madrid bombings, in Germany where part of the discussion concentrates on Turkey as an EU candidate country, and where the whole problem of culture and Islamism has been articulated through this enlargement question, while the other part of the debate is about the veil in schools. In the Balkans it is different: a year ago, in April 2004, after the pogroms in Kosovo mosques were attacked and set on fire in Belgrade and Niš. Some drew their own connections, and in demonstrations following*

these burnings banners read 'New York, Madrid, Kosovo'. The war on terrorism and its epiphenomenon anti-Islamism cast a shadow on the whole question of Europe and its constitution, and upon the question of citizenship.

Balibar I do not have an answer to most of these questions. When I see my friend Immanuel Wallerstein travelling around, I tell him 'you are inspecting the world system': that is his job, and he does it beautifully. I am not inspecting Europe as borderland, I read newspapers, and I go to academic conferences.

It started with France in the 1980s, then Germany, Austria, Spain with the pogroms against the greenhouse migrant workers, then Kosovo, etc. Not a ghost, but a torch travelling; everywhere something is set on fire, it does not necessarily become a huge fire that burns everything, but it is a permanent phenomenon. If we agree that there are some structural causes, if you add the geo-political, geo-ideological events that continuously push in the same direction, there should be no surprise that this phenomenon is not retreating.

On the other hand it is worth studying very carefully the terms of the debate in each case and in each country, and discourse-analysing their discourses. You were right in saying anti-Islamism in France proceeds from a specific discourse; in Germany it is not exactly the same, and the issue of Turkey is different. Thus, if only for tactical reasons, I think it is important to address the specificity of these discourses.

Saint-Saëns *Aren't there, in the European context and considering the process of integration, some common points in the discourses, or strategies, of the Muslims, and, on the other side, of politicians?*

Balibar I can not help thinking that, again for structural reasons, we badly lack astute Arab or Muslim leaders in Europe, who would counter attack on a democratic basis, by trying to establish some sort of hegemony. In France, Mr Sarkozy is apparently the only intelligent politician on these issues, the only one to shift the boundaries. He said, replying to the discourse of 'invasion', 'Muslims do not have more rights than others in France but it is important that they do not have less'. And the practical consequence he drew was 'I suggest that the sacred 1905 law on the separation of the state and the churches be transformed in order for public agencies to subsidise the construction of mosques in France so that they are neither clandestine nor built by Saudi Arabian money'. It is common sense.

But behind that you have a strategy, going back to Napoleon, which is to control the Muslim population itself through a pyramidal hierarchical system of leadership, like the CRIF for the Jews or for the Protestants and the Catholics. This is necessary if the state wants to be in a position to indirectly control this population through their beliefs. It is a model of obedience based on negotiations and pressure on the leadership. The result

is a competition among the Muslim organisations themselves to become the officially recognised interlocutor.

It is a double system of definition, over-determined, with ideological divisions (some are more fundamentalist, others less), and a very heavy system of national dependency (some are clients of Algeria, others of Morocco, Saudi Arabia, etc.). The paradox is that this French government tactic in fact reinforces the dependency of the French Muslims upon 'cliques' which are representative of foreign forces. Of course there are security issues, I am not innocent, some groups, Al Qaeda or others, can recruit terrorists, or set up clandestine bases, it happened. But this is a problem of ordinary policing, it has nothing to do with religion, nor with controlling Islam in France and in Europe.

Sandro Mezzadra I would like to get back to the question asked by Manuela. As she was saying, there is a very long history of anti-Islamism in Europe, which can be traced back to the early 1980s in its current shape, even to past centuries if we aim at understanding it in its long-term dimension. But to discuss the current events in the Netherlands we must place them in a broader framework. There are of course peculiarities in the French and in the German situations, which are still being discussed, but in my opinion the novelty of what is going on in the Netherlands lies precisely in its European dimension. In the newspapers, not only in *Die Welt* but also in *La Repubblica* and in *El Pais* for instance, there are articles on the condition and the behaviour of Muslims in different European countries, Italy, England, Germany, Spain, and it is quite clear that the discussion about what happened in the Netherlands is framed in the context of the process of European integration. To put it briefly: the problem we seem to be confronted with is the possibility of a crisis of tolerance considered as a founding value of the European way of life, of the 'European social model' if you prefer, in a situation where a new constitution, a new citizenship, is in the making. I think that the whole discussion about the Netherlands has more to do with these constitutional aspects of the new citizenship in Europe than with the peculiarity of Dutch society.

Saint-Saëns *I would like to go back to Manuela's point on neo-racism, and how the 'classical' analyses in terms of continuity and analogies miss their target, both by emphasising the colonial heritage rather than the post-colonial conjuncture, and by ignoring, on the question of integration, the role of migration policies.*

Mezzadra It depends of course on the kind of idea you have, on the one hand, about the relation between the modern European colonial project (to quote Edward Said) and European modernity, and, on the other hand, about the very concept of a 'postcolonial condition'.[6] In a way I was pointing to this problem when I suggested that the whole discussion on current developments in the Netherlands has more to do with the concept of tolerance than with the concept of multiculturalism. To put it very briefly, I think that there is

6. See Sandro Mezzadra and Federico Rahola, 'The Postcolonial Condition. A Few Notes on the Quality of Historical Time in the Global Present', forthcoming in *Postcolonial Text*, ll, (2006),1, 2005.

continuity and a fracture between the two concepts. Both of them address the problem of the 'other', of the relation to the 'other', but while the concept of tolerance, with its roots in the European religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, framed the 'other' historically as European 'other', the concept of multiculturalism was imported from the outside of Europe (that is, from North America and Australia) precisely to cope with problems arising from an increasing presence of non-European 'others' inside the European space. It is this very presence which makes the current European condition a 'postcolonial' condition. There are of course also 'national' peculiarities with regard to the concept of multiculturalism. I'm thinking for instance of the German case, where it was introduced in the early 1980s in relation to the new situation coming out of the *Anwerbestopp* in 1973 and the fact that many 'guestworkers' decided to settle in the country contrary to the expectations of policymakers. In the German Federal Republic, the concept of multiculturalism, for instance in the formulation given by the CDU politician Heiner Geissler, initially addressed problems involving European individuals, but soon became focused on the Turkish question. And the question was raised as to whether Turkish people were or were not to be considered European. In a way, it was the beginning of the current discussion on the admission of Turkey to the European Union.

In this sense, the discussion of multiculturalism in Europe has always been in recent years a discussion about the identity and the *borders* of Europe. What does it mean, in this situation, to make the point that the crisis of multiculturalism, a crisis that was becoming apparent long before the assassination of Van Gogh, is at the same time a crisis of tolerance? It means to underscore that this crisis cannot be reduced to the relation between a homogeneous Europe and its cultural and geographical 'others'. The re-emergence of the long history of the European colonial project, which was in a way the hidden face of the concept of tolerance, tends to disrupt the 'civility' of social relations within Europe, that is, it can destroy what has always been presented as the fundamental achievement of 'tolerance'.

Of course I do not want to deny the fact that many theorists of multiculturalism were, and still are, engaged in an attempt to overcome the contradictions and pitfalls of modern universalism. But when I say that we are confronted today with a crisis of tolerance, I am suggesting that the colonial border between Europe and its outside, which was presupposed by the concept of tolerance, has been retraced within the multicultural 'common sense' which has been promoted in the last decade in many European countries. The 'whiteness' of the European citizen, to put it sharply in reference to the rich tradition of so called whiteness studies in the Anglo-Saxon world, has not been put into question by multiculturalism: it has only been rhetorically 'weakened', in order to make its coexistence with 'non-white' citizens possible, while this coexistence has been always imagined and constructed (especially by the migration policies you were mentioning) as a hierarchical coexistence. Of course what is currently discussed as a crisis of 'multiculturalism' in Europe

– that is, we must be very clear on this point, as a crisis in the coexistence of 'white' and 'non white' citizens within the European polity – opens up the space in which the danger of the radicalisation of the hierarchical character of that coexistence emerges. But in order to counteract this danger we must displace the very framing of the crisis: to talk about the current situation as a situation which is marked by a latent crisis of tolerance – that is, of what has been defined by J.H.H. Weiler as the founding value of the European constitutional tradition[7] – means to stress the fact that the problems we are confronted with are not to be understood as problems of relations between a compact 'we' and the 'others'. They are rather problems which address the very definition of a European 'we': to recognise this means in my opinion to accept the challenge which is posed by the concept of a postcolonial condition when applied to Europe.

7. See for instance J.H.H. Weiler, 'Federalismo e costituzionalismo: il 'Sonderweg' europeo', in G. Zagrebelsky (ed), *Diritti e Costituzione nell'Unione europea*, Roma – Bari, Laterza, 2003, pp22-42.

EUROPE: CITIZENSHIP AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

Balibar If I may push you one step further, would you go as far as saying, that, first, these hatreds and conflicts are purely the reverse side of the definition of European citizenship? A mere addition and integration of pre-existing national definitions of the citizen that formally ignores the novelty of the European community. Do you mean that it has to be related to the 'constitutional moment' in Europe?

Mezzadra Yes, that is what I meant when speaking of a crisis of tolerance. It seems clear to me that the public discussion going on in Europe about the events in the Netherlands is eventually a discussion about the future of European citizenship, of the European Constitution. It is also a potential struggle, a potential clash around the kind of 'political anthropology' which would underlie European citizenship in the making, that is around the kind of image of the individual as citizen which is going to be inscribed in the European constitution itself.[8]

8. For a deepening of this concept of 'political anthropology', see S. Mezzadra, 'Le vesti del cittadino. Trasformazioni di un concetto politico sulla scena della modernità', in Id. (ed) *Cittadinanza. Soggetti, ordine, diritto*, Bologna, Clueb, 2004, pp9-40.

In a way, following Slavoj Žižek, we could say that what is happening in the Netherlands is a symptom of the fact that the European constitution is an empty constitution, that European citizenship is a citizenship without any content from the point of view of 'democratic progress', to borrow the expression you employ so often when talking on the future of Europe. This is the problem of populism. You were saying before that there is a problem that has to do with the social question underlying the whole situation. Well, this social question is addressed by populism, in its particular way, but not by the European constitution. There is a gap, and to recognize the existence of this gap does not necessarily mean to reject the idea of a European constitution. I rather think that the space of the 'national' opposition to European integration is a space that is structurally occupied by populism, that is, a space in which every Left (not only a moderate Left, but also a 'radical' Left, whatever the meaning of this expression) is bound to occupy a subordinate

position. Our only chance is to conquer the European dimension of struggles and the European political imagination, if I can quote from Marx's *Class Struggles in France* some 150 years later.

Balibar It is, of course, always dangerous to use the distinction, invented by right wing people like Charles Maurras and *Action Francaise*, between *legal country* and *actual country* (*pays légal* and *pays réel*), which is not entirely different from Carl Schmitt's distinction between *legitimacy* and *legality*.

But one cannot avoid the impression that the constitutional process in Europe is surrealistic, in the sense that it is not grounded, that it does not address any of the new sociological characteristics of Europe. It is based on a complete abstraction of what Europe is, as a political space with a certain social structure, with certain kinds of economic problems, with certain types of juridical and ideological traditions in different countries. It focuses upon purely formal issues: for example, the content of the fundamental rights is in fact basically treated as a question of a division of powers, in the narrowest possible sense of the term – which are the powers that the nation states will retain, and which are the powers they prefer to delegate to a more central organisation?

The funny thing is that I do not think that the President of the European Convention, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, had anything in mind like a constitutional process. These people use the term 'Constitution' because they had a juridical training, and because they also probably thought that this word would give them power by itself: 'The moment has come to give Europe a constitution, and WE are going to do that; we will be remembered as the Jeffersons and the Abbé Sieyès of Europe' – by the same token allowing them to settle some, I would not say private, but political accounts with the different parties, and party leaders in Europe.

But the fact is that the term 'Constitution' is not entirely controllable. People started thinking about what a European constitution should be – if it truly was a constitution. Jurists who talk about federalism, activists in various movements, or trade unionists, who say 'If you are to make a constitution for Europe there are problems that have to be taken into account, and the voice of the people who are concerned with these problems should be heard'. In a sense it is too late, it is a ridiculous 'false hesitation': the same people turn to their left saying 'do not worry, this is not a constitution, it is a treaty, just like all the others we already have', then turn to their right and say 'this is a crucial historical moment, for the first time we are giving Europe a constitution'.

Bojadžijev *When we talk about Europe as a political project are we not running the risk of constructing and contributing to a 'European Identity' that we set up as a 'better' project by feeding an anti-Americanism so vital to the Left?*

Mezzadra I think it is necessary to place our discussion of Europe in a global context. We are dealing with European politics in a very dramatic context on

a worldwide scale: 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, where the situation today is terrible, including from the point of view of the occupying US army. What answer can Europe give to that dramatic situation? Is it an answer based on a different model for conceiving of relationships within the European space? Or is it just a technocratic answer?

There is a way of thinking this problem which says 'we have the answer: the deepening of the integration process, and this is what the European constitution is about. We have the answer because the integration process for building up a political space in Europe is based upon a model which is significantly different from the US model'. This is what you find in many newspapers: *La Repubblica*, *Die Zeit*, *El Pais*, sometimes *The Guardian*, a European *doxa* about the integration process seen as the answer to the challenges of globalisation and to US policies.

If we take seriously what is going on in the Netherlands at the moment, this cannot be the answer. Maybe there is no possible answer without a real constitutional process, and without a process for deepening citizenship practices, in order to address the different social questions, and to open up conflicts within this space. But I agree with you that the point cannot be to take up the distinction between *pays légal* and *pays réel*, not even in the shape of an opposition between a social and an institutional Europe.

If we look closer at the European constitutional process, I think that, without denying the relevance of what you said, a different reading is also possible. I must say that I am very interested in the legal and political analyses of the characteristics of the European Union that stress the flexibility and 'openness' of its very institutional architecture. I am thinking for instance of the recent book by Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa*,[9] but also of the whole school of so called 'multilevel constitutionalism'. Legal scholars such as Ingolf Pernice and Franz Meyer stressed on the one hand that a European constitution already exists. But on the other hand I think that their analysis of the overlap between different constitutional domains which concretely shapes the European constitutional space should be pushed one step further: that is, we should take seriously the idea that the European constitutional process, which is structurally an open process, is marked by a deep transformation in some of the key concepts and institutions of modern European constitutionalism. This means that within the European constitutional process the crisis of the nation-state, which has been the subject of many theoretical discussions in recent years, takes a very concrete shape.

But this shape is very different from the one that has been imagined by a number of enthusiastic theorists of a post-national future, and here I take a radical distance also from the scholars I was quoting before. On the one hand, the nation-state itself does not seem to be bound to be progressively overtaken by the European constitutional process: it rather takes a different shape as a structural component of the new political space in the making – some of its functions are weakened, some are even reinforced. On the other hand, the process itself is not necessarily a 'positive' process. Let us think for

9. Ulrich Beck – Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa*, Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 2004.

instance of the classical problem of the relation between constituent power and constituted powers you were referring to. In European modern legal thinking this relation was always developed as a temporal relation: *first* there was the expression of the constituents' power, which was *then* bound to be silenced within the constitutional framework instituted by its action. In the case of the European constitution this model does not seem to work any more. In the European constitutional process the power of innovation, which is implicit in the concept of the constituents' power, seems to be rather fragmented on a plurality of levels and to live in permanent tension with the constituted order of powers.

This means, on the one hand, that the European constitution is open to constant transformation and that it is logically possible to imagine the relation between social movements and institutions in the European space in a way which is significantly different from that associated with the experience of the modern State, and which is impossible to reduce to the opposition between a 'social' and an 'institutional' Europe. But on the other hand, the openness of the European constitution implies a situation in which the working of powers also produces new possibilities of freedom and arbitrariness, in which the transition from the paradigm of government to the paradigm of 'governance' opens up the space for new forms of governmentality that are not necessarily 'softer' than the ones connected to the traditional paradigm of government. If we look at the European 'constitution' in this way, and maybe I must integrate what I was saying before on the point, it does not seem to be empty or 'void': it is rather full of opportunities and 'dangers'. But there are of course specific and fundamental blind spots in the European constitution, and I think that the global context I was recalling helps us to see them in their full light, which is not a bright light: how does Europe cope with a violence which in the time of global war is entering into the very societal code of citizenship?

Balibar I agree that 9/11 has changed a lot of things. *Per se* it tends to globalise issues, it projects a powerful and terribly reductive and repressive model of interpretation on any culture, and therefore not only aggravates such situations but tends to draw them into a general pattern of confrontation. That said, I would resist the temptation to focus on what is happening in Iraq, etc. If for a minute you isolate the recent problems in the Netherlands, they are not qualitatively different from what we have been witnessing all over Europe for years, pogroms in East Germany, riots in the British or French ghetto-like neighbourhoods. The bad thing of course is that we are becoming accustomed to them.

Of course I concur with you on the fact that there is no hint whatsoever of a genuine European strategy to get us out of all these problems, not in any of the policies used in Europe today to integrate, control, repress, hide, neutralise these kinds of events. Such a strategy is badly needed if Europe is also to play a role on all the other global fronts, the Middle East or the great socio-economic problems in the world. Not only are we missing an

opportunity, but we are falling into a trap. Perhaps it is as apocalyptic as you assume.

UBIQUITY OF WAR

Mezzadra I do not know if I am apocalyptic in my way of thinking the European and world situation, but I do think that there is no consciousness in European public discourse of some of the crucial challenges which shape our present. One of these challenges is the ubiquity of war (from the standpoint of political theory).

Balibar Is it the ubiquity of war? Or is it the militarisation of politics and society? Or both?

Mezzadra I agree, it is both. The discussion we are developing on the transformation of borders has to do with the logic of war entering into political spaces which had been in a way protected from it by borders. Borders were in modern history a mechanism for neutralising war, that was their first function. Or rather, they were, in the sense suggested by Carl Schmitt,[10] a mechanism which made possible at the same time the 'expulsion' of war from the political space of the state, and the 'regulation' of war between states (of course in Europe). In 1907, Lord Curzon stated that 'frontiers are indeed the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war and peace'.[11] I think that is a good illustration of what I was saying following Schmitt. So what we are saying today about the transformation of borders should lead us to think of a situation which is marked by a different relationship between war (even in a philosophical sense) and politics. To put it briefly once again: war is playing an increasing role in shaping social relations within unified political spaces, while the 'traditional' war itself tends to develop independently of the regulations that have been set up by modern international laws and *jus in bello*.

Balibar Your own work in recent years shows that the ruling elites, both economic and political, are in a deep crisis on governmentality. They have no agenda. Perhaps the ultraliberals have, but they are not in a position to apply it. War occupies more and more space, both because of a global situation where there is a global economy of violence and where war is increasingly the direct outcome or expression of tensions, and because of the absence of a hegemonic vision. And because of the lack of an alternative. A lot of positive things can be said about the anti-globalisation movement: it is important, the dominant policies are no longer unchallenged. But, even if the idea of a global alternative to the global system makes no sense, there should be some coherence involving very heterogeneous types of critical phenomena in our society, and this I do not yet see.

Another aspect of the problem that you raise concerns the word *war* itself.

10. C. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950), Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 1997.

11. See Lord Curzon, *Frontiers [The Romanes Lecture 1907]*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908.

I accept the idea that we are surrounded by war, and more and more living and thinking and acting, or reacting, under a sort of dominant pressure which comes from the proximity to war. But what is war today? It is a plastic term, and many of us, not only Alain Joxe, would say that war is chaos.[12] I am currently working on three or four essays I want to assemble: one, of course, on what is a war, another one on the idea of conflict. What is the other of war? Is that peace or something else? From the Roman cult of Janus to Augustine to Kant to Clausewitz, the idea of 'war' and the relationship between war and politics has been governed by this metaphysical dichotomy.

Why do we say that we live in a state of war? The content of this notion has been transformed. Iraq is one type of war; the *glocal* wars you describe in your recent essays, the armed police operations used to regulate the flows of migrants at the borders of Europe are another type. The development of terrorist and counter-terrorist confrontations in different places in the world, for example in Chechnya, are wars as well. This is a very complex and confused pattern, a war without armies, at least in the old sense: in Iraq we see an American army with mercenaries, both national and private, a privatisation of war. It is a *low intensity war*, in the sense elaborated 20 years ago by polemicists, but with new features.

Bojadžijev *In a traditional understanding war defines borders, thus it constructs the political geography of a region anew. The life of a population reinserts itself into a new form and hierarchy of control – control over mobility, over resources.*

Mezzadra I am aware that when I say that our situation is shaped by the ubiquity of war, I might give the impression of using a very traditional notion of war. My point is rather the border between war and peace, which was one of the main distinctions upon which some of the most important political concepts of modern times were based, has become blurred, and this is really a radical challenge. I think this is a point that we should deepen in our discussion on the transformations which are reshaping the very institution of the border. You were talking at the beginning of our dialogue about 'Europe as a borderland', and I would like to relate your work on the subject to the point made by Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande in the book I quoted before. They see in the flexibility and mobility of European borders a key characteristic of the institutional architecture of the European Union itself. When I say that the border between war and peace has been blurred, I am referring to a situation in which the border between interior and exterior is itself being blurred. Once again: this does not mean that this border does not exist anymore – quite the opposite is the case – and the everyday experience of migrants in Europe shows this in an often dramatic way. But that border is not anymore an absolute border, be it in a geopolitical or in a conceptual sense. To talk about the ubiquity of war is another way of talking about the ubiquity of the border, which seems to me to be the logical presupposition of your discussion of Europe as borderland. The situation you describe is a

deeply ambivalent situation: to put it simply and to use the terms that have been suggested by the anthropologist Pablo Vila[13] in his work on the US-Mexican border, it opens up the possibility of *border crossing* as the substance of citizenship, but also *border reinforcing*. You have shown in essays that have been very important for my own work how the border is the 'non-democratic' element of democracy. The ubiquity of the border is the ubiquity of this 'non-democratic' element, which can take the shape of war-like technologies of governance within the European space itself.

13. Pablo Vila, *Crossing borders, reinforcing borders: social categories, metaphors, and narrative identities on the U.S.-Mexico frontier*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2000.

Balibar I know philosophers tend to connect very different realities across time and space, to produce a philosophy of history. Pierre Clastres started this new discourse on the contradictory relation between State and war, 'territorialisation' and 'de-territorialisation', which has been expanded further by Deleuze and Guattari.[14] There have been eras in the history of mankind, Western but not only Western, when war was something permanent. It was not the state of nature, but something very institutional, very codified. The idea of perpetual peace was invented by Augustus, in fact by his chief ideologist, a genius, Virgil, who provided the justification for the imperial doctrine of *pax augusta* with the great symbol of closing the doors of war, whereas each year for several centuries, closed and open, it had been in a permanent cycle. Of course the Romans did not stop waging war all around the periphery of the empire, but it was no longer called war. Rome was the *pax romana*, and *pax romana* would anticipate the universal peace. Then the Christians came, then Kant, who said that perpetual peace does not work, cannot be the work of an empire but has to be the result of a spiritual conversion, and this will come only with the redemption of mankind. But the idea was there. There were collective subjects, call them cities or states, and people were waging war, which was different from insecurity and violence, something more codified.

14. Pierre Clastres, *La société contre l'État : recherches d'anthropologie politique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1974; Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1989.

One can live in a totally different pattern: the idea is now that war will go on and on, and the problem becomes how to interrupt it, how to wage it. Every time a great event happened, World War II, the creation of the United Nations, decolonisation, we could think we had got rid of a bit of the main cause of violence, and that it would be possible to build a perpetual peace. But a number of our contemporaries have exactly the opposite impression: not only are we not approaching the moment where the obstacles are removed, but the causes of conflicts are increasing everywhere. And there are no longer collective subjects as clearly defined as in the past around which to organise people, to build patriotism, sacrifice, etc.

This is where the Americans are not that stupid in their war on terrorism. They could reverse Alain Joxe's argument: it will be chaos for a long, perhaps a long-lasting era, and the nation states will not be able to regulate this phenomenon, because violence arises from the religious (this is the US mystique: the enemy is Islam). People can master that situation only if they rally behind a dominant power, which is probably unjust but it is the only one representing a supremacy or a capacity to

provide arbitration in the world. Of course it is a self-fulfilling prophecy, because the Americans are continuously developing what they claim to be fighting, they need an enemy.

Mezzadra They need the Antichrist. Herfried Münkler, in *Die neuen Kriege*,[15] argues that what we are experiencing nowadays is the return of the kind of warfare which shaped the European situation before the modern state. In the chapters of his book about the Thirty Years War he says that what is happening in some Asian and African countries is just the repetition of this kind of experience. What impresses me is that he takes for granted that there is a space in Europe, in the Western world, which is not at all affected by this tendency, which is the space of peace. How can he be so sure? The USA in a way have already accepted this blurring of the border between war and peace within the country itself.

Balibar There is another phenomenon: the affluent world, which has huge spots of poverty inside the USA and Europe, perceives very accurately that the world around is insecure. They are desperately listening to any political leadership that promises to set up fences, protection, walls, anything preventing this endemic violence and war from entering. This is why they are so shocked when they see a political Islam, a political assassination here, a riot there: they suddenly realise that the fence is porous. This is of course a self-defeating process, because this panic prevents us from thinking not only about the causes, but also about the circumstances behind the tensions that may arise in our countries, and pushes people into the arms of law and order policies which are themselves violent.

I agree when you say that the borders have been blurred to a considerable extent, but not everybody is ready to accept that. A lot of people, including very poor people, are obsessed with the idea that now it is time to protect our borders. Several of us have always emphasised that security and insecurity are complex notions which include not only murders, assaults, but also social security, unemployment, etc; and we insist that it is paradoxical to target those who in fact live the most insecure lives as being primarily responsible for the growth of insecurity. A lot of people experience their lives as more and more insecure, yet at the same time they are ready to believe those who claim 'we are going to protect your security '.

Mezzadra This is precisely the ambivalence of the situation that I was stressing. The fact that borders have been blurred does not mean that they tend to disappear. Instead we are confronted by a situation in which they tend to be ubiquitous. And if we agree that the tracing of borders has to do with the foundation of citizenship and politics, pointing among other things to the 'non-democratic' character of democracy itself, this is the problem we are confronted with at the very level of everyday life in Europe.

Bojadžijev *That reminds me of something, maybe over-simplified but pointing to some of the things we were discussing, one of them being the question: What is the other of war? In Foucault's collected lectures* Society must be defended *(Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76, Penguin Books, 2004) there is the idea that war has been pacified in two main areas: race struggle and class struggle. One of his questions is: when we conceptualise history like this – class struggle and race struggle are both coming, again simplifying, from below – how would we have to write* history from below *today? How would we conceptualise the actual conflicts under the given circumstances that to a certain extent we are at the end of a classical concept of class struggle, and obviously we face a different concept of race struggle, when – very roughly – both aspects find a new convergence in this war on terrorism? What would be the future of class struggle in this new context? Can the concept of the autonomy of migration, in which the notions of citizenship and of borders are contested, and the constituency of Europe is questioned, figure as one indication?*

Balibar Society must be defended is a fascinating book which raises interesting questions, but it is also uncontrolled. Foucault says that we should reverse Clausewitz's formula: it is not war that is a continuation of politics, it is politics that is a continuation of war. That, to put it quickly, involves an ideal type of pure politics in a sense that is neither caught in ideology nor in economy. That is his utopia, which he locates of course in the Classical age, or perhaps in its margins. And he certainly does not say let us return to that, but rather let us understand why we moved away from that.

It also has something to do with his attempt at conceptualising power and resistance, the whole issue of, he would not say struggle, but *agon*, conflict. I would easily acknowledge, like many others, possibly Jacques Rancière, that I am working along the same lines. We are trying to imagine a form of political life that is fragile, contingent, where the opposite of repression, domination, is not consensus but the continuity, or the periodic beginning, of political antagonism or conflict. Now we have enemies on both sides: we see the possibility that politics is destroyed on the one hand by war, in the sense in which Sandro was referring to it, or extreme violence, pure and simple, and on the other hand by consensus, policies and ideologies. Just like romantic philosophers would see the Greek *polis* as a sort of work of art, we see the Foucaldian politics as war, or politics as conflict, as a sort of work of art that should be preserved from enemies, from dangers on all sides.

16. Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente: politique et philosophie*, Paris, Galilée, 1995

Saint-Saëns *Would you, nearly fifteen years later, agree with the analysis of consensus developed by Jacques Rancière, in* La mésentente[16] *of course, but also in a paper on the 1992 Pasqua immigration laws?[17] The capacity of a society based on conflict to welcome alterities has been destroyed, and the question is now to construct the 'other', to take measures against him, and this is what the consensus is about: not between, but against. (*Consentir, c'est d'abord sentir ensemble ce qu'on ne peut pas sentir*).*

17. Jacques Rancière, 'L'immigré et la loi du consensus', *Libération*, 12/07/1992. http://bok.net/pajol/debat/presse/libe/ranciere0.html

Mezzadra In this sense I do indeed tend to be a little bit apocalyptic. When we say that the problem is to save politics from the enemies of extreme violence on the one hand, and consensus politics on the other hand, we take it for granted that there still exists a politics to be defended. Would it not be more productive to start from the fact that this kind of politics does not exist anymore? Of course it has to do with the major question Manuela raised, of class struggle in this situation. I am not talking about class struggle in the 'objective', traditional Marxist or sociological sense, but, in a sense that I think is very close to Marx himself, of the political problems the concepts of class and class struggle address, that is, the foundation of politics within a reality which is crisscrossed by lines of divisions, lines of conflict which raise the political problem of the constitution of political subjects. Maybe we should once again put at the centre of political theory, of political philosophy itself, this question of the foundation of politics in a social dimension criss-crossed by lines of divisions. Or, to put it another way, it could also be addressed in terms of a difference between what I could call the concept of society, and the concept of the social. I think we could see the concept of society as a concept which has been the basis of a certain way of looking at politics and at its relation with society: the society as social space, which was of course crisscrossed by lines of divisions, lines of relations, modes of cooperation, conflicts, but which eventually was conceived as a fixed system of roles. But the social is something else, a dimension which cannot be analysed in terms of spatial categories, of a cartography of society. It is from this point of view that the political concept of class, which is always a concept of struggle (as has been for instance recently pointed out by Stanley Aronowitz in his fascinating book on this issue[18]), can be used to reintroduce the dimension of time in social and political theory. Maybe this kind of model could be re-inscribed in our situation by starting from the fact that the social and political system, which underlined a certain idea of politics, does not exist anymore. This is, I think, the problem Étienne addresses with the category of *national social state*. The national social state was based on a certain relation, we could even say 'dialectic', between State and society, each of them defined by precise 'national' borders.

My question would be: does it make sense to think of politics in terms of defending politics from its enemies, or should we rather think of a new politics to be invented in radically new conditions?

Balibar You probably think that I have become neoclassical, Arendtian? (*laughter*) What I have in mind, when speaking of the dangers threatening the very possibility of politics, is the possibility of political action. Many people, including you, are more inclined to use a Foucaldian terminology, where it is a question of subjectivation, of processes of subjectivation. And I understand that subjectivation is not something apolitical, it is already the differential or permanent tension between subjection and subjectivation, which is at the heart of what Foucault wrote. Probably what several thinkers in

18. See Stanley Aronowitz, *How Class Works. Power and Social Movement*, New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 2003.

this constellation – call it post-modern or post-structuralist – are looking for is this unstable but crucial difference between resistance and power, or subjection and subjectivation, and that is the heart of their concept of the political, which in fact is probably at some level the same as war and politics etc. If you shift from subjectivation to action or agency, which is more Arendtian than Foucaldian, the difference lies in the institutional aspect. I am not presenting that as an absolutely irreconcilable position in itself. Although it is not the time for self-analyses or confession, I was never a spontaneist; a number of my friends interpreted that, and probably quite rightly so, as a lasting influence of the good old Leninist, if not Stalinist, conception of politics, where you cannot do politics without a party and you cannot have a party without a party apparatus. Of course you realise that you can not keep that model, so you start criticising from the inside, bringing in critical elements, insisting on the necessity to democratise the organisation, etc. In the end what you reach is radical democracy in Europe, as a problem involving the unstable or 'fragile' interplay (not even equilibrium) of conflict and institutions, which I referred to as the 'Machiavelli Theorem' in my recent book[19] and which had also been addressed in their own way (in fact earlier) by Laclau and Mouffe.[20]

This problematic turns around the double bind of how emancipatory struggles or movements are going to free themselves from the institutional instruments they need. The issue of defending politics against the twin enemies of extreme violence and consensus is not very different from the issue of advocating democratic politics, or recreating active citizenship within an institutional framework.

Mezzadra My point has precisely to do with the very concept of institution, and with the transformation of institutions in recent decades. I was talking about that before, referring to the European constitutional process. The problem to be addressed here, in my opinion, can be framed once again in terms of a process of the blurring of borders. In this case, it is the border between the 'social' and the 'institutional' which appears to have been blurred. If we take a look at the whole debate that has taken place around the concept of 'governance' in the last decade, it seems to me that it is focused on just this process. But I think we could and should radicalise the problem: if the border between the interior and the exterior is being blurred, this means that it does not make sense anymore, from a conceptual point of view, to think of politics and democracy in the terms suggested by the category of 'integration'. From this point of view, I think that the condition of migrants in Europe is particularly meaningful for us. To borrow the concepts used by the postcolonial feminist Nirmal Puwar in a recent book, migrants are at the same time *insiders* and *outsiders*.[21] But this is a situation which is increasingly becoming common in large parts of 'autochthonous' European citizenship. I think that the whole discussion on the precariousness of labour could be reframed in these terms. And once again, both in the case of the migrants' condition and in the case of precarious labour (which are different conditions,

19. Étienne Balibar : *L'Europe, l'Amérique, la Guerre. Réflexions sur la médiation européenne*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003.

20. See in particular Ernesto Laclau – Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985), 2nd edition London, New York, Verso, 2001.

21. Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders. Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, Oxford, New York, Berg, 2004.

but nonetheless share elements of commonality), we are confronted with an ambivalent situation. We are talking about 'subject positions' which can be defined at the same time as insider and outsider, on the one hand because of specific policies which are making rights themselves precarious, on the other hand because certain kinds of 'belonging' which were among the presuppositions of what you call the 'national social state' have been – and continue to be – criticised and deconstructed by several social movements which put into crisis the 'national social state' long before the start of 'neoliberal' policies. These movements shape, on the level of social behaviours and desires, the actual composition of 'living labour', and this is the reason why I tend to be very critical of the theoretical and political positions which frame the criticism of 'neoliberalism' in terms suggesting a return to the welfare state as the only possible 'critical' solution.

Balibar I am thinking of what you wrote in your introduction to *I confini della libertà*,[22] particularly the question you raised concerning the institution of a social movement of migrants who are not the Third World traditional population on the one side, and clearly not the stabilised working class on the other side; they are a new type, they are occupying a new social site. If they are to influence the social in the kind of political space where we are living now, I insist, they need consciousness, organisation and institutions – of course not a replica of the First, Second or Third International.

What you tend to suggest is that the global ruling classes already have a practical agenda for controlling them, and they have already accepted the idea that what is permanent is the flow. Borders, or a certain use of borders, is one of the instruments that can be used to control. To control is not to institutionalise. The question would become: what are the alternative propositions? There is no simple answer to that. It is a combination of rights, forms of representations, a framework for negotiations, where of course something of the subjectivity can be heard in a way powerful enough to prevent it from being purely and simply in the hands of NGOs, state agencies etc. There is an institutional aspect to the question of this new form of citizenship.

I will add one thing, which perhaps sounds like a reactionary reference, but in fact I think not, it has a great future. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 says 'the right to nationality should be granted', and 'the right to change nationality should be granted'. We are saying the same thing. The right to freedom of movement has to be expanded and protected, particularly in this period where it is threatened in all sorts of ways. The right of residence has to be granted and protected, in the South as well as in the North. Institutions, rules and codes, transnational institutions and procedures are needed in order to implement this double right.

Mezzadra The issue of the institutions has always been an important one for me. I wrote my BA thesis twenty years ago on Thomas Hobbes, and I have

22. Sandro Mezzadra (ed), *I confini della libertà. Per un'analisi politica delle migrazioni contemporanee*, Roma, DeriveApprodi, 2004.

been deeply influenced by this kind of 'classical' political thinking (and I would like to stress the fact that Lenin is part and parcel of this tradition that has influenced and continues to influence me). Institutions are always related to the question of security. In the last few years I began to feel the limits of some Leftist discourses against the rhetoric of security: it is clear that we need to deconstruct and criticise the 'securitisation' of political language which is promoted by neo-liberalism and by the far Right, but sometimes you are really confronted with issues of security which need to be addressed, to be politically developed and articulated. For example in Argentina, where I have spent some time in recent years, in some neighbourhoods of the great Buenos Aires *conurbano*, the *piquetero* movement is trying to develop a strategy to cope with the new issue of security in a social territory which is really devastated by insecurity. The experiences they have been building upon, for example with the *pibes chorros* (the 'bad boys'), are very interesting, because they tried in a way to develop a kind of social institution in a territory deeply shaped by the fact that traditional institutions, that is, 'state' institutions, retreat from it, do not exist. The possibility of a new articulation of social and political institutions seems to emerge here, at least theoretically. This kind of social institution could indeed be the basis for a reconstruction of the political institutions within their territory, but under the norms and the control of the social institutions built up by the movement itself.

Theoretically it is important and absolutely necessary to deepen our understanding of institutions. I tried for example to do this from an anthropological point of view, not only from the kind of researches and investigations you were quoting before, for instance the ones by Clastres, but also by using some of the 'reactionary' investigations on the subject of institutions, for example Arnold Gehlen; the young Günter Anders (at the time still under the name Günther Stern) also tried to develop the same kind of insights, but in a less conservative way. These are perspectives that could help us in our reflections on the issue of institutions. On the one hand, we should recover an anthropological side to the discussion of institutions, which would bring us back to the founding subject of security in its fully political, even philosophical, sense. And on the other hand, as I already stressed, we should try to read critically the whole literature on the issue of governance. If you take that kind of literature seriously, what they are describing is that in the actual functioning of many key institutions once again the border between the inside and the outside of the institution is blurred. Maybe it has once again to do with the fact that a new institutional environment is in the making, that a new kind of relationship between the environment of institutions and the environment of society must be invented, which opens them up to social movements and to the Left. Here the issue is more to create a new political space, a new political institution, new political concepts, than to defend politics. I also think that the concept of subjectivation can be very useful in this direction.

23. Étienne Balibar, 'Les universels', in *La crainte des masses*, Paris, Galilée, 1997; first published in English as 'Ambiguous Universality', now in *Politics and the Other Scene*, London, Verso, 2002.

Balibar I was not rejecting it.

Mezzadra I'm sure of it, since I took the concept from Foucault, of course, but then I tried to develop it in another way, and for that your *Essay on the universal*[23] was very important. Subjectivation is crucial because it has to do with the situation in which a new articulation between objectivity and subjectivity, between institutions and social movements, must be created. That would be a whole research project.

Saint-Saëns *When you relate this to the experiences in Argentina you were just describing, the experiences of building institutions out of the movement – how would you relate this question to migration, to the autonomy of migration?*

Mezzadra Well, on the one hand, the recent literature on migration (I'm thinking, for instance, of the so-called 'new economics of migration' but also of the works which employ the concept of 'transnationalism'), has pointed out that a set of 'social institutions' – family and 'ethnic' networks for instance – play a key role at every stage of the migratory process. But, on the other hand, we cannot be uncritical towards these 'institutions': they can function as means of resistance, and the whole history of the struggles of migration show that, but they can also function effectively as sites of reproduction of old and new mechanisms of domination and exploitation. The relation between a new reflection on the issue of institutions and the autonomy of migration can be developed only within a broader conceptual and political framework, focused on the construction of a new political space which tries to develop in a positive way the challenge posed by the process of the blurring of borders that we have already discussed here. And maybe, in doing that, in trying to develop in a new way the question of self-government, of the construction of the 'common' (to borrow the term that has been used frequently by Toni Negri in recent years), we shall be once again confronted, although on a radically new basis, with the whole set of problems Etienne was talking about when referring to his Leninist legacy.