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EDITORIAL

NEW LINES OF GEOPOLITICAL SPLIT AND REDEFINITION OF THE SPACES OF POWERS, EXPLOITATION AND EMANCIPATION MOVEMENTS

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World: North and South

The focus of this issue of our journal is on the World.

Broadening the critical lens to include the world is necessary to decipher the social and political ontology in which we live, where different yet interconnected forms of power coexist. This does not mean turning away from the world to see it as a whole. There is no whole, but many different times and spaces, which in no case form an organic totality nor a merely quantitative sum, but nevertheless qualitatively influence, contaminate and alter each other in their very coexistence. Political space is, indeed, worldwide and interdependent, but it is also striated, marked with streaks, bounds, lines. And only a transversal look at the spaces codified as generally identifiable —be they the nation states, or the macro-regions or the mythical Occident— can account for the streaks, fracture lines and reorganisation paths that are overwritten on the traditional geographical map, on the “world-systems” through which, for a long time, geopolitical and geo-economic turbulences have been understood.

Today, the scene is becoming even more complex, not only because of the growing complexity of global interdependence, but above all because the viewpoint from which we are trying to decode it includes, in the scene of power and politics, strengths (and lines of instability and change) that have not yet been covered by the geopolitical map for a long time.

The expansive power that covers the whole world, the Weltmarkt, is the same that divides it, marks it with lines of domination and subalternity, but there are also lines of resistance and struggle that ask to be recognised and, in a way, “mapped”. On the other hand, the World Market today not only influences the consolidated ethno-national and historical spaces, but also works through the single subjectivities, bending the old power dissymmetries —of gender, of colour— to its goals and summing them to the new ones. Subjects that, in those institutional spaces (which of course persist and play decisive roles) work, produce and reproduce life, and are organised and governed in such a way as to reaffirm those dissymmetries; but also subjects looking for new forms of political activism that can modify that geopolitical map of power.

That, moreover, globalisation is not simply a quantitative increase in trade, investment and relations between states, and even less a world without borders where nation-states no longer matter, but rather it is a qualitative shift in the spatial organisation of the production, distribution and consumption of commodities and services in the world economy, added to the conflictual interdependence of sovereignties vying for control of that —is, now, a self-evident fact. Globalization materializes in a new kind of territoriality: it is grounded in national territories but in such a way that it constitutes a sort of “extraterritoriality” that affects the sovereignty of the state.

A massive change is occurring —in terms of speed, intensity, extent— concerning the nature and degree of interconnection of global space. It is not a process of smoothing out differences into planetary space, but a series of complex and contradictory processes, in which the reorganisation of the world market as the reference for the capital operations (extraction, financialisation, logistics) is faced with multiple resistances and friction thresholds, economic, political, social and cultural (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2019). It is a restless and unstable cartography, where instability is (or can be) the marker of struggles for emancipation, of testing alternative ways, or marker of dark strategies of control and violent expulsion policies (Sassen 2014).

Given these processes, the meaning of space (and of the map of lines that we draw) is deeply modified.

The space/world —not in its mythical wholeness and homogeneity, but as a universality of differences that remain such, a world streaked with fractures and stresses— is now the lens for realistically deciphering the current dynamic and unstable nature of the political: movement and insurgency or blockage and enclosure, occurring as much in the sovereign settlements and economic localisations or expansions as in the moving struggle frontlines —urban and non-urban (but always localised)— that oppose them.

This streaked world is changing, according to an unruly and unequal development: North and South exceed their previous meaning and remain as place-holders of positions of subordination and dependence to domination (whether imposed through conventional borders, or, beyond them, displaced within lives). The decolonisation processes (*Softpower*, 2021, 14) are literally unfinished, the hegemonic positions (America and Europe) are faltering and from driving centres of expansion, domination and control, they slide towards defensive, securitarian, rhetorically justified positions. While other powers in the Asian or Latin American contexts weigh in with their choices. New lines of domination and colonisation emerge in the colonising North itself. Moreover, trends in economic development are highly dependent on how specific regions, states and territories are embedded in global production networks to capture value. Former geographies of production, and distribution and consumption are continually disrupted and new geographies are being created. The new does not totally erase the old; what already exists provide the basis upon which the new develops.

Spaces and territories

It is therefore a very complex planetary scene. The only thing that can be relatively generalised is the metamorphic suppleness of the production and social organisation form that is capital. Its value-extraction operations let us identify the strategic points where subaltern subjectivities are produced. Paradoxical universalism! It is varied and variable, linked to different forms of subalternity, often specific, localised and situated, structured on patriarchal, racial and religious inequalities. Here, capital crosses the particularism of states, sometimes co-operating and sometimes hindering.

The global health crisis has increased these polarities and changed, again, the scene/world. Some features have come out more clearly: the state's involvement in investments will surely favour the executive institutional arrangements, without however committing to a new Welfare. The trade wars, with their rhetorical-ideological overtones, are

being waged, settling, with BigPharma, on survival itself; and the wars for the control of energy resources keep on going. The crisis joins the previous ones, but ways of responding could be transformed under the pressure of resistance and alternative, self-governing projects that maybe the weakening control over subjectivities (proportional to the greater direct control over lives) could favour.

Space, however, emerges as the proper parameter for these transformations: just thinking about these break lines means assuming the spatiality of relations, not only as a frame, but as a way of making them visible, of positioning them: it is the epistemic player that roots them in the material, within a reality that is never merely conceptual but concrete and geographical, and affect the very processes in favour or against (Galli, 2001). The critical geographer Farinelli speaks of the “spatial (and cartographic) production of society”.

With spaces, in fact, boundaries emerge, the lines crossing them: beyond the canonical borders or walls —performative devices that produce the effect they name— they are epistemic devices to make visible permeabilities and crossings, as well as barriers, closures, walls... (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013) Tools to think in a new and critical way the classic geopolitics of states, macro-regions or empire. Not because that does not persist and indeed is enhanced even in the continuous redefining of spaces of influence, but because, as a “method”, lines and borders highlight the many Souths of the world, the many subaltern subjectivities that support, but also fight and dynamise, the “global” scene.

States and geopolitical institutions are themselves involved in and crossed by these multipolar strains. Moreover, many of the most complex elements of globalisation have been formed within the state apparatus as technical and institutional infrastructure capable of producing the geographical spaces for economic globalisation. However, it is clear that its capability to manage differences, tensions and centrifugal drives seems to be failing today. Deliberately or not.

Moreover, with the political move of denationalisation, it is the state itself that has produced and legitimised new legal frameworks, essential to the economic global processes of corporations, “working” to build a globalised space for the capitalist economy (Sassen, 2006).

The epistemic use of a space streaked with multiple and transversal boundaries beyond the canonical ones, lets us avoid the emphasis on financial deregulation, which in fact always has its material roots, as bank cities and offshore areas show.

The point is that —alongside geopolitical and geoeconomic macro-processes— there is also a plenty of micro-processes that divide, fragment (and denationalise) political

space: identity subjectivities, urban spaces, cooperative managements of commons... We need to avoid the blind alley of focusing only on global forms that prevent us from recognising some new strategic elements, which are not or will not always become global, even if from the struggles emerge continuities and alliances that overcome fragmentation and identify common antagonistic goals.

There are spaces that are neither global nor national: *other* spaces, driven by the multiplication of non-formalised or only partially formalised political dynamics and actors. New informal political practices exceed the boundaries of traditional ones and perhaps prefigure new forms of self-government and citizenship. Of course, this space does not coincide with the territory of the state drawn in different colours on geopolitical maps. The territory has always been a non-neutral, organiser of relations between space and power, very active player in the global space construction: both if it is marked by confinements and exclusions, and if it is articulated in diverse zones and regimes with differentiating and hierarchising effects. However, it takes part in the political technologies for social organisation, in the proliferation of partial legal systems, in extractive enclaves or in different wage regimes, but it also comes into play in localised resistance and self-management experiments in the commons. These localised, territorial links mean that political and economic powers are forced into unstable alliances with private or public institutions and other semi-formal actors, adapting to contingencies in order to achieve their goals of value extraction or control. There is assemblage, there is network and therefore not totalisation, but there are also continuous lines of exploitation and subalternity that an overly unstructured approach must not obscure.

According to the essays in this issue of the journal, the production of singular and political subjectivities along old and new break lines is the main battlefield where alternative forms of power try to get organised.

Break lines: the monographic section

We need to analyse the lines that compose and divide the geopolitical space, crossing it and breaking its continuity in an always specific way.

The map of the world that is emerging makes any overly general and dichotomous narrative impractical (development-underdevelopment; expansion-depression; hegemony-chaos; authoritarian and populist democracies - liberal democracies).

The plurality of dividing lines - some emphasised by propaganda, some built by politics to force shaky institutional balances, some emerging in a contingent way from ontological indeterminacy and complexity - can be traced as much in the effects of hierarchisation as, and better, in the concrete traces of subjectivities struggling for emancipation along the multiple lines of inequality and exploitation in which states of subalternity overlap.

Therefore, the symbolic polarisation north/south remains valid only if the two terms are pluralised and become markers of these fronts, these lines of division and quest for alternatives.

Although it is impossible to foresee political choices on a planetary dimension, the centrality of social reproduction, of life and its infrastructures, means that the battlefields against profit and inequality are spreading, even within lives themselves.

So, this issue, beyond the great game of geopolitical powers, is also open to the break lines that divide the global space, producing - within a radically enlarged and self-governing notion of politics - new political subjectivities, from municipalism to global protest movements, to cooperation and solidarity experiences, that overlap and intersect the legal claim of human and humanitarian rights. If the Weltmarkt pivots on the production of subjectivities which it wants to be functional to the different, always situated, exploitation and valorisation contexts, these material subjectivities, are rooted in the territories, even if they are open to the universalization. Their political action and mobilisation breaks up consolidated local relations and challenges the fences, creating new institutional button up forms, new alliances, on the innovative front of aggregations and self-government to reply to the endemic crisis of conventional representation.

Not verticality vs. horizontality: it would be a mistake not to give due weight to the effort of organisation and institutionalisation (often also juridical) that alternative self-government movements and experiments implement today.

The starting point of our analysis cannot but be devoted to a realistic and critical look at geopolitics, moving from both the conceptual and material function that space - which has been a crucial ordering category in modern political philosophy - takes on today. Its unstable relationship with politics - of which it determines the partition, the orientation, the production itself, while being conditioned by it - is the focus of Carlo Galli's essay. The modern dichotomous lines that split spaces: inside-outside, high-low, movement-stability, are now replaced by fracture lines that cross codified spaces, first and foremost the state, without erasing them, each time producing a battlefield,

traversed by tension lines. Sovereignty is not eroding as a consequence of economic globalization and supranational organizations but being transformed. There is plenty of it around, but the sites for its concentration have changed. Hence, sovereignty and territory remain key features of the international system. But they have been reconstituted and partly displaced onto other institutional arenas beyond the state. Genealogical analysis reveals the materiality and concreteness of these geopolitical spaces, where political, economic, theological and governmental drivers for action overlap, changeable and yet somehow persistent. Critical geopolitics fits politics as it is: realistic, strategic, complex and dangerous because of the network of powers, state or macro-regional sovereignties that fight for control, helping or preventing the economic interdependence trends.

In Langford's essay, the restless world scene on which the widespread neoliberal rationality is overlaid, looks locked in its own centripetal game. Langford questions whether it is possible to use the concept of Empire to understand this scene in a "juridical" way. He measures its theological-political implications, the depoliticising effect of its neo-liberal and proprietary model, and the formula of "private regimes" of ruling and conflict resolution of Teubner's legal sociology. By noting the limits of the concept of empire, the proposal emerges to juridify the "common". But this requires a new, radical critique of law.

The essay by Federica Giardini deals with the politically active line of feminism, renewed by the Ni Una Menos movement by building a new intersectionality and a planetary front. This is an experience that marks a real paradigm shift, a new materialism that asserts itself by means of real practices of resistance to different forms of oppression and exploitation. The "conflict" becomes the conceptual operator that allows us to identify new inequalities that would remain invisible, new north-south borders and new political actors not yet recognised, arising within the process of feminist, decolonial and environmental struggles. The very concept of the political is thus dynamised, as it brings about new forms of associated life, networks of cooperation and intersectional fronts of mobilisation.

The city and the self-government of municipalist spaces are the focus of Kioupkiolis' essay, which follows the line of friction they implement against state centralism, which stifles autonomy and obeys neo-liberal dictates, thereby reducing solidarity and cooperative practices. The emphasis is on cities like Barcelona, which call themselves "fearless" or "cities of change". These municipalist experiences act directly and pragmatically a innovative democratic praxis, an alternative model of democratic and really inclusive

self-government against elitism, patriarchy, expropriation for profit. They are bottom up institutional forms, land-based, embedded in the local areas, sharing new management frameworks of resources and services.

The reference horizon of Guadarrama's essay on Latin American emancipationist political thought is broader, even if more traditional, and it involves the colonial divide line. Classic authors such as Bolívar Montesinos, or Martí and Mariátegui, have always closely linked the instance of anti-colonial liberation with social justice: a link that was then disarticulated and stifled by the post-independence conservative oligarchies.

Referring to anti-colonial movements, the focus of Kassis' essay is the complexity and extreme harshness of the fracture line that 'literally' splits Palestine. It is law, or rather human rights, that are taken as an ambiguous and nonetheless meaningful reference point for the border that cuts through the country, not only shattering legal compliance with treaties, but undermining the very political capability of the dominated from within. The persistent colonial situation, worsened by economic dependence, by the conversion of liberation into market freedom and by humanitarian aids always conditioned by the blackmail of the renouncing of real self-government, and lastly by the impossibility of criticism that is not branded as anti-Semitism, highlight a very painful wound in the world space. In this essay, it is called to witness the need for a rewriting of human rights that is no longer colonial and today neoliberal, but egalitarian and anti-colonial.

Quarta's essay reflects on the very concept of border in the current security turn (worsened by the pandemic). It underlines not only the coexistence of closed spaces and the flows that cross them, but also the current reterritorialisation that locates the borders within human bodies themselves, both in digital and in direct and biometric control. The warlike rhetoric supports these new blocks and confinements.

The monographic section ends with an unedited interview with Ursula Huws, carried out by Into the Black box, in which Huws focuses on the way that advanced digital technology has opened up new fields of capital accumulation, accompanied by the dramatic restructuring of work arrangements, opening the way for new contradictions and new forms of labor solidarity and struggle around the planet

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