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Welcome Management: Making Sense of the "Summer of Migration"

SONJA BUCKEL
interviewed by William Callison

In the summer of 2015, the events in and around Europe made international headlines. The keyword was "crisis," and its sites were multiple – the streets of Athens and the backrooms of Brussels, the shores of the "periphery" and the train stations in the east and center of the continent. As the developments were reported in dramatic fashion, two issues took center stage: first, the final showdown between the Greek government and its European creditors; second, the arrival of refugees fleeing to Europe from countries ruptured by international and civil conflicts, such as Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq.

These apparently distinct developments were punctuated by an ostensible shift in Germany's political orientation and self-conception: from the leading disciplinarian of Greece's debt payments and fiscal policy (with Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble's advocacy for either harsh austerity or "Grexit") to the leading humanitarian in EU immigration policy (with Chancellor Angela Merkel's "welcome" speech on the imperative to take in Syrian refugees). Retrospectively, the developments have been variously called the "summer of austerity" and the "summer of migration."

The short-term chronology and fragmentation of this narrative is problematic, however, for it covers over the longer and intersecting histories that made the crises possible. To grasp the recent politics of austerity and immigration, then, we must account for the historical crystallization of institutional and discursive strategies that have come to govern the formation of European politics at the local, national and transnational levels.

For this we turned to Sonja Buckel, a social and political theorist whose research has critically examined European migration law and border control practices. Both her recent book and her collective research project, co-led with John Kannankulam and Jens Wissel at the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, explore various contexts and processes of European "transnationalization": namely, the shift from national migration policies to the construction of a shared "European migration politics," itself premised on the maintenance and financing of a post-colonial border regime in North Africa, the Middle East and, today, in Turkey and Ukraine. This collective research project also interrogates the internal connection between neoliberal austerity politics and EU immigration politics by focusing on Germany, Spain and the U.K., as well as on regulations and practices of border control such as Blue Card, Frontex, and Dublin II.

Thinking through the present and recalling the recent past, we met with Sonja Buckel in order to make sense of the "summer of migration" and to understand its significance for social and political movements working to forge a *different* Europe.

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WC: *Before we turn to the key discursive and institutional strategies that have shaped European immigration and border control policies, let's begin with some intersections with the politics of austerity. From the perspective of your recent research, how have austerity and migration control come together to set the stage for the double drama of the summer – the showdown between the Troika and Greece's newly elected leftist government and, soon thereafter, "the summer of migration" that took over the political stage?*

In *Staatsprojekt Europa*, we looked at four different "hegemonic projects" – neoliberal, conservative, left-liberal, and welfare-statist – that have shaped the EU border regime and immigration policies. We understood these projects not primarily as constellations of actors, but as political strategies expressing dominant social forces. With regard to European integration, the neoliberal project, whose promoters include financial institutions and transnational corporations, has clearly been the dominant one. Part of this strategy requires the public authorities of EU institutions and of the member-states to give precedence to the stability of prices over the pursuit of full employment; it entails the attempt to boost growth through austerity measures and supply-side incentives, such as privatization, lower and less progressive taxes, and deregulations of the labor and capital markets.

If we want to understand the current consensus among European elites on austerity programs, as well as the privileged role of Germany in the shaping of these programs, we need to go back to the late 1970s. This is the time when the neoliberal project started being hard-wired into European institutions. The German phobia of inflation has dominated European monetary policy ever since that time, despite France's attempts to introduce a measure of Keynesianism – with regard to public spending – into the mix.

In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty sealed the hegemony of the German perspective: first, by imposing budgetary "stability" – to wit, a "debt criterion" and a "deficit criterion" – on every member state; and second, by modeling the future euro on the Deutsche Mark. Yet, in spite of having their views inscribed in the Treaty, German authorities never ceased to worry that other European governments did not treat the common rules seriously enough. Thus, in the following years, they endeavored to entrench this preoccupation with fiscal and monetary discipline even more deeply within the fundaments of the EU – namely, in the Amsterdam Treaty and the "Stability and Growth Pact" of 1998. Though the addition of a "growth" element seemed like a concession to France, in truth, it was little more than lip service. The French authorities wanted a European economic government with some powers of social investment and redistribution, but they never got it. What they got instead—as compensation for the German-styled euro and monetary policy to which they consented—was the Eurogroup. The Eurogroup comprises the regular, but *informal and unaccountable*, gatherings of the finance ministers of the Eurozone. Though France had imagined and hoped for something very different, the Eurogroup's main purpose became ensuring that the criteria of "stability" are properly respected and enforced.

Later on, with the Lisbon Treaty and the Fiscal Pact, the disciplinarian pre-

rogatives of the Eurogroup and the European Commission were formalized. These entities are now officially empowered to review the budgets of member states and to mandate "healthy" structural reforms – namely, spending cuts in the public sector and an ever-more flexible labor market.

Finally, with the onset of the sovereign debt crisis, the so-called Troika was created – essentially as a creditors' consortium comprised of the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – to take special care, or more precisely to dictate the social and economic policies, of debt-ridden member states. Together with the Troika, the Eurogroup used norms of "economic governance" and its highly *informal* status during the embattled negotiations with Syriza, the newly elected leftist government of Greece, its Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and its then Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. To recall but one example of this informality: Yanis Varoufakis was thrown out of one of their meetings. Varoufakis said: "You can't throw me out, that's not how it works here. This entity is governed by unanimity, so my voice also needs to count." The legal council of the EC reviewed the issue and claimed: "It's an informal council, so we can do what we want."

In sum, we can say that the austerity regime of the last five years is nothing more than the final stage of implementing a neoliberal project that was initiated four decades earlier. The sovereign debt crisis proved to be a major advance in this regard, insofar as neoliberal actors took advantage of it to consolidate the power of informal and unaccountable agencies. This was clearly demonstrated in the summer of 2015 with the conclusion of the six-month standoff between the Syriza government and the Eurogroup.

WC: *So we can take this as the structural background, as the institutional and quasi-institutional framework for a transnational neoliberal strategy. Throughout the negotiations with Greece, we saw that the Troika largely towed the line of Angela Merkel and German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble. At that time and still today, how can we best explain the widespread support of even the most disciplinary elements of the neoliberal project in the German media, the political establishment and, to a large extent, the German public?*

SB: Yes, this consensus in Germany has deep roots. Throughout the heated negotiations between the Syriza government and the German-led Eurogroup, the German media was an unbelievably uniform front, without almost any other positions in sight. It is important to understand here that the hegemony of the neoliberal narrative goes back to the fiscal crisis and the stagflation of the late 1970s. Just take the example of the university system: in economics departments in Germany there are hardly any Keynesians (without even speaking of Marxist or feminist political economists!). In economics classes, the neoclassical orthodoxy is not taught as one position among others, but as the economic science. This is not just national, but is also reflected in EU institutions. Yet, the very notion of debt does not have the same meaning from a neoliberal or a Keynesian perspective. For instance, the Keynesian economist Heiner Flassbeck[1] keeps on repeating that, if the rest of Europe is to have a

1. Hyperlink to Flassbeck à Flassbeck-economics.de

chance, Germany needs to run a debt. Germany needs to "live beyond its means," as the neoliberals like to say, for at least fifteen years. That his plea for social spending falls on deaf ears in his own country is an understatement.

WC: *Let's move from austerity politics to immigration policies, and specifically to the apparent disjunction between Merkel on Greece vs. Merkel on refugees (in a word: Willkommen!). Can you spell out the disjuncture? How should we understand this shift?*

SB: I will get to Angela Merkel in a moment. But there again, if we want to make sense of her stance, we need to go back in time and look at what made 2015's "summer of migration" possible. Our collective book shows how the immigration policy dimension of the neoliberal project became hegemonic a little later than the economic policy dimension – namely, in the second half of the 1990s. It was then that the neoliberal project broke through and crystalized into what we call "managing migration." Now, as a blueprint, the neoliberal project has no real interest in border control: migrants mean cheap and abundant labor that brings down labor costs for business, all of which plays into the logic of competitiveness. However, to prevail, neoliberals had to make concessions and compromises with the proponents of other potentially hegemonic projects – above all, with the conservatives, who see mobility and cultural diversity as threatening, and to a lesser extent with the left-liberals, who object to the overexploitation of the labor force. Hence the ascendance of the discourse and strategy of "managing migration," whereby migrants are not rejected as such, but are rather *selectively* taken in – according to a distinction between "good" and "bad" candidates.

WC: *. . . Like in the UK under Tony Blair where the official discourse was: let's welcome the "good" hard working economic migrants from Ukraine and Poland but not the "bad" or fake asylum seekers who only want to take advantage of our generosity. Or like in France under Nicolas Sarkozy who introduced the distinction between "chosen" immigration (immigration choisie) for "highly qualified" workers and "burdensome" immigration (immigration subie) for designating the beneficiaries of family reunification law. . .*

SB: Yes, these are cases that fall exactly into the neoliberal strategy with respect to migration. We found the same logic at work in our research on Germany and Spain. German authorities focused especially on the "highly qualified" migrants to make the point that immigration was "useful," whereas their Spanish counterparts also made informal openings for "low skilled" migrant workers, including undocumented workers, who play a major role in the agricultural sector. So the neoliberals, provided that they conceded to some conservative demands about still needing to repel migrants, succeeded in imposing their approach.

However, this consensus, which was not reached in Germany until the end of the 1990s, stands in stark contrast with the atmosphere of the preceding

period. From the mid-1970s to the immediate aftermath of the asylum law reform in 1993, the conservative strategy was clearly in the hegemonic position. In our book, there is a remarkable article by John Kannankulam about the various positions in the debate leading to the compromise that tightened the conditions under which refugees could seek asylum in Germany. At the time, there were no European immigration policies – every member state was in charge of its policies – and Germany was faced with a major inflow of up to 400,000 asylum seekers, mostly from war-torn former Yugoslavia. Though refugee centers are frequently the target of violent attacks today, there is really a huge difference, in terms of public discourse, between now and twenty-five years ago. Back then, the governing CDU (Christian Democratic Union) party pushed for a position that looks much more like that of the extreme right wing today than like Angela Merkel's position. There was a large consensus that Germany is not a country of immigration. Hence the two-thirds majority that was actually forged in the Bundestag and was needed to change the Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) so as to amend the article on asylum – an admittedly liberal article that reflected the demands on Germany in the immediate postwar period. So, compared to that moment in recent German history, the "managing migration" approach of the neoliberals represents a notable shift in outlook, though it also integrated parts of the conservative project.

WC: *Is there something specific to the neoliberal strategy or to the immigration discourse in Germany that would explain the somewhat surprising two phases following Merkel's welcoming gesture – the initial support of civil society, and then the political and cultural pushback that followed upon it?*

SB: There is still another piece to the story. The neoliberal and the conservative projects were not the only contenders vying for hegemony. The left-liberal alternative also played a part, and this strategy pulls from a range of different players: from the older remnants of the 1960s student movement to more recent forms of civil society activism, stemming from the Greens in the Bundestag and the European Parliament to activist groups like No Border. Until the mid-1990s, these forces were pretty much powerless to challenge the conservative hegemony, at least with respect to immigration. For instance, they could not manage to make their voices heard at the time of the debate on asylum reform.

Then things changed. Somewhat paradoxically, the influence of the left-liberal strategy increased as "managing migration" rose to prominence. With the ascendance of the neoliberal discourse on the economic benefits of immigration, a political space opened for supporters of mobility rights and cultural diversity. The left-liberal alternative – and this is where I would place the German *Willkommenskultur* – became stronger. Institutions like Pro Asyl gained steam in reaction to Germany's "asylum compromise," and it has now become a force that is financed by private left-liberal donations. In this context, refugee councils, church asylums, and other groups also came into being and gained prominence for the first time. Previously, such left-liberal pushes could hardly make a dent in the conservative hegemony. But now they have more resources, both of the economic and discursive kind.

This is the context of "managing migration": a neoliberal open-border politics has been interwoven with a left-liberal humanitarian and human rights strategy, while also needing to make concessions to the conservative project. It is important to see that what is currently happening with the immigration crisis is not a crisis of neoliberalism. Instead, "managing migration" remains effective.

Now, this is why I think Angela Merkel can advocate for her current position. But one can also think that, of course, personal reasons play a role in Merkel's persistently welcoming stance – even in the face of growing opposition from the ranks of her own party. Surely, her Protestant upbringing and her youth in East Germany could be quite significant for her sense of duty to people who seek refuge in Europe. At the same time, however, these personal sentiments do not seem to contradict her unwavering attachment to austerity programs in Germany and throughout the Eurozone, regardless of the pain they cause to the peoples of Southern Europe. For Merkel, then, the perennial pursuit of balanced budgets (the *Schwarze Null*, so famous in Germany) is not in contradiction with the *Wilkommenskultur* for which she stands. But this sometimes makes it terribly hard to fit together the pieces of the puzzle. I watched Merkel's New Year's address to the nation, for example, when she reiterated her determination to welcome refugees. For a moment, I was taken in by her message, and I wondered to myself: Have I been brainwashed? Merkel is sympathetic and progressive! But we need to understand that her stance signals no break with, or crisis of, the neoliberal project.

WC: *What a strange situation we find ourselves in! Given this simultaneous boon to both neoliberal and leftist strategies, how would you characterize the new situation of the left after the so-called "summer of migration"?*

SB: As I mentioned earlier, the left, or the left-liberal project, contains many alliances and ranges from liberal human rights organizations to No Border activists who reject borders altogether. Before and especially after the "summer of migration," the convergence between the left-liberal and the neoliberal projects has had the effect of reinforcing and advancing both. In turn, the intersection of neoliberal and left-liberal projects also produces a reaction, which is part of the strident resurgence of the conservative project: for example, in Germany, with the right wing AFD party ("Alternative for Germany") and the Pegida movement ("Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident"). Yet the reason why these conservative surges are so aggressive and violent is precisely because they no longer hold the hegemonic position.

Right now, for the left-liberal project, the dominant discourse is clearly one predicated on human rights but also on empathy and care. In comparison to a few decades before, there has been a massive shift toward progressive, humanistic arguments. In Germany, we are seeing thousands of people who were never politically active but who suddenly decide that it is their mission to help out with refugees. Even though these people might not have identified with it consciously before, these are overlaps with the left-liberal project and they represent a remarkable discursive shift.

WC: *. . . And so, should we understand what's going on here in Germany primarily along the lines of humanitarianism and the supremacy of human rights discourse? Despite or because of this, are there sectors of society that are being politicized in new ways that may have long lasting effects? In other words, what are the prospects for left-liberal politicization in the near future?*

SB: In the last few years, it is true that many of us who are on the left have been somewhat jealous of what has been happening in Spain, with the Indignados and Podemos, or in Greece, with the Syntagma movement and Syriza. Just before these movements erupted, their future success was anything but foreseeable. The old Spanish cadre of activists told us that nothing was happening in Spain. Then, only three weeks later, new activists came and invigorated democratic politics from the bottom up, and a strong movement grew. The fact that activists there could not only join forces but also win elections – or at least hope to win elections – certainly caused joy and envy from leftist onlookers. So, our first reaction here was: "this could never happen in Germany." But I don't think this is necessarily true. For what we see in Germany right now, around and prompted by the refugee issue, are people who were not exactly apolitical before, but who did not feel represented by the existing political parties and system. Like the Indignados in Spain, in 2011, who shouted just that to the political class: "you don't represent us!"

Now, one could say that this is all just a humanitarian or empathetic reaction, and not a real political mobilization. However, I would respond that when forces from civil society decide to take action, something deeply political and important is happening. And so, it is up to left-liberal activists who, sometimes on the verge of depression, have been waiting a long time for something to happen. It is up to the left to draw on the potential of the present moment. This is what happened with the citizens, activists and intellectuals in Spain: "indignation" begot a new political movement when the left joined and worked together with the people who were politically active. This is what needs to happen. What must be avoided, meanwhile, is a deeply entrenched tendency of the left to look at the *Wilkommenskultur* activists and say: "they are not politicized or leftist enough, they are acting out of the wrong motives, and so on." While the potential here is great, this tendency always remains a great danger.

WC: *These promising developments also undercut some of the internal accusations among the left, namely that "the actors and movements simply aren't there." But there are serious problems any potential actor faces, such as the "neoliberalization" of social democracy or the "common sense" of fiscal and economic austerity. In Germany, for example, the CDU-SPD government coalition (above all Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble) love to tout their balanced budget politics, their Schwarze Null. So even if Merkel's Willkommenspolitik has opened up new paths for left-liberal activists, what do you see as the key obstacles or problems that remain for the left?*

SB: That is exactly right, austerity politics has indeed shaped the social reality

we live in. Practically, the endless pursuit of balanced budgets has certainly deprived civil society of important resources. Culturally, the phobia of inflation and the cult of fiscal discipline still prevail. To gesture toward the depth of this neoliberal logic, here is a good anecdote: Heiner Flassbeck, whom I mentioned earlier, was once a State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Finance and advised members of the government on reforms to the European Monetary System, among other things. Over time, Flassbeck has had discussions with politicians, such as key party members of *Die Linke* ("The Left"), and repeatedly urged them to take a very public position and argue that Germany needed to run a deficit for the next fifteen years; this would improve not only the condition of Germany, but all of Europe. But they would always reply: "sorry, but if I say such a thing about debt on television, people will change the channel immediately." So, yes, the lasting consensus on the economic dimension of the neoliberal project clearly stands in the way. It prevents a full-fledged politicization of social movements created by the crisis of the European border regime. Yet, I don't give up hope.

WC: *Your recent work endeavors to show how the EU border regime operates through practices of "externalization" and "invisibilization." After the recent deal between the EU with Turkey was signed, you also claimed "Erdoğan is the new Gaddafi." Could you elaborate on these observations and explain how "managing migration" is working at the moment?*

SB: My thesis is that the EU border regime operates with two rings of externalization.

The first ring runs through southern and eastern member-states and comprises agencies such as Frontex, as well as various national border police forces, and relies on the Dublin agreement on asylum. According to this so-called Dublin III agreement, every asylum seeker must file for asylum in the country where he or she has entered the EU. Effectively, this means that southern and eastern European countries are bound to get the overwhelming majority of demands – while northern and western States, like Germany, are largely spared. And, indeed, there was a major drop in applications between the end of the Bosnian war and the 2011 Arab springs – leading to the dismantlement of refugee accommodations and shelters, infrastructure which is badly missing today.

The second ring of externalization, which I believe to be the decisive one, depends on post-colonial border enforcement in North and West Africa as well as in Ukraine. Its purpose is that people seeking refuge don't get to Europe in the first place. In the past, Gaddafi's Libya was a key player in the operations of this second ring. The Libyan regime would take care of locking up migrants – whether coming from sub-Saharan Africa or expelled from Europe – in terrible internment camps partly financed by the EU. In exchange for such service, European countries and institutions increased their foreign aid to Libya. In 2007, Italy went as far as pouring large amounts of cash into Libya, allegedly as reparation payments for colonial injustice. Yet, this was just a pure tit-for-tat deal. Word for word, Gaddafi famously warned: "if you don't pay, Europe will turn black." In short, the EU and its member states just paid so-called transit countries to prevent migrants from entering Europe and to keep the bad treat-

ment inflicted on them out of (European) sight. Thanks to this arrangement, EU states could continue to pretend that, while firm with regard to the protection of their external borders, they nonetheless remained respectful of fundamental rights and the rule of law – on their own territory.

Though there were rulings by the European Court of Human Rights that condemned the outsourcing of such dirty work, what really put an end to the EU-Libya deal was the fall of the Gaddafi regime, as well as others in northern Africa, in the wake of the Arab springs. Since then, the second ring of externalization has been in a state of disrepair – enabling larger numbers of asylum seekers to cross the Mediterranean and reach Italy, and more specifically the Italian island of Lampedusa, on ships. Additionally, with the war raging in Syria, many refugees also moved from Syria through Turkey, which is not part of the EU, before crossing the sea to Greece.

WC: *How do you see the future of the European border? Is the second ring being reconstituted – and how?*

SB: First, let's go back to the first ring of externalization for a moment. Because it is important to remember that we can only truly speak about "European immigration policies" since the Amsterdam treaty of 1999. Until then, immigration management was under the exclusive care of the member states. But from 2000 on, European institutions started to intervene in everything from the regulation of asylum – with Dublin III – to border control – with the creation of Frontex, the European border agency. The fact that the European regime is still young (barely 15 years old) partly explains why it functions so poorly. Moreover, rules and decisions at the Union's level must always be negotiated among member states with different priorities, which means that they tend to express the lowest common denominator and thus lack coherence and efficiency.

Consequently, when the number of migrants rises, tensions among member states are quickly exacerbated: Greece and Italy complain because their load is disproportionally heavier, especially under Dublin III; Eastern European countries, which have become a major point of entry, refuse to share the burden; the UK refuses to be included in the European regime; France, in the wake of the November 13th terrorist attack, has become even less welcoming than before; and so on.

In this tense context, Merkel's strategy is to stick to the "managing migration" approach: on the one hand, she continues to claim that we – we Germans and we Europeans – are under the obligation and have the capacity to accommodate a large number of refugees. But on the other hand, she understands that she has to make concessions to conservative forces, domestically and at the EU level: these concessions involve getting tougher with economic migrants and increasing the number of "safe" countries – that is, countries whose citizens cannot claim that they suffer persecution or are exposed to war. But this also means making new deals with transit countries, such as Turkey, so as to reconstitute the second ring of externalization.

Whether Merkel's strategy will prove successful largely depends on the out-

come of the negotiations with Turkish authorities. And the Turkey issue is a delicate one: for if convincing Ankara's government to cooperate is essential to keep immigration politically manageable at home, at the same time, the Chancellor cannot seriously claim that Turkey is a "safe" country either for refugees or for its own citizens.

WC: *This brings us to the new predicament surrounding "intra-EU transit countries." Greece is about to become, like Turkey, a designated warden-nation full of detention camps for migrants, manned by Greek guards but financed by the EU. In the fall, Angela Merkel was actually praising Greece – at first – for taking on that new mission. But now some European officials are threatening to expel Greece from the Schengen zone. How should we understand these ostensibly paradoxical developments? How do you think the EU border regime will "manage" these zones at the edges of public visibility?*

SB: Several weeks ago, the EU made a deal with Turkey, and on the next day the Turkish authorities prevented three thousand migrants from leaving the country to reach the Greek border. These people were swiftly relocated and then deported, while large numbers of refugees who were waiting for a passage to Greece were pushed back inland. Turkey has used illegal measures to detain both its own citizens and refugees within its territory. Yet, in spite of the stepped up efforts to police the EU external borders, about three thousand asylum seekers continue to arrive on the shores of the Greek islands every day. Securing and closing off the borders are impossible tasks – if only because the Turkish coast is so long. And living conditions continue to get worse in Syria, so people will continue to flee. Because they don't see a future for themselves in Turkey, a country that already hosts two million refugees and whose internment camps are hardly appealing, they will keep trying to get to Greece. This is where the inner and the outer rings meet today. The border between Greece and Turkey represents the interface between them.

Now, Greece, which was hard hit by the Great Recession and then radically impoverished by five years of harsh, EU-imposed austerity, is hardly in a position to receive large numbers of refugees: yet every day they come by the thousands, if only because crossing from Turkey to Greece is slightly less dangerous than trying to enter Europe by other routes – even if two thousand people have drowned in the Aegean Sea in the past four years.

Although European and member states officials knew full well that Greece was overextended, they had no qualms about telling Greek authorities: "these refugees are your problem, you should take care of it." And when it became clear that the government of Athens could not cope, its "partners" started to speak of a "Schexit" – of forcing Greece to exit the border-free Schengen zone, just as the country had been previously threatened with a "Grexit," an exit from the Eurozone. So far it has been nothing more than an empty threat.

However, the new idea is to deprive Greece even further of its sovereignty by way of endowing Frontex with the power and responsibility to police the Greek border. At this point, Germany, Austria and also Poland are backing this new development. Until now, despite the European Commission's insistence

that immigration policies should be transferred to the European level, the representatives of a majority of member states have not been ready to let go of their national sovereignty. Currently, however, the critical situation faced by Greece may be an opportunity for the promoters of an integrated European border police force to overcome the longstanding resistance.

Regardless of whether Frontex is actually empowered to run border policing in Greece, I still believe that the evolution of the relationship between the EU and Turkey is more decisive. To put it bluntly, what is primarily at stake is whether the Turkish President, Recep Erdoğan, will accept to take on the role once assigned to Gaddafi's Libya – and what he might get in exchange for its assistance. Without Turkey's cooperation, Europe in general and Angela Merkel in particular will not be able to externalize and to render invisible the sordid underside of their immigration policies.

Now, from what we know, what has been offered to the Turkish President includes 3 billion euros in development aid, Schengen visas for Turkish citizens – a longstanding and legitimate demand, hitherto denied because German authorities were against it – and the resumption of negotiations on Turkey's eventual EU membership. These would be positive developments – were it not for the fact that they will bolster the standing and legitimacy of the Erdoğan regime, whose human rights and civil liberties record is appalling.

WC: *If this whitewashing deal were to be more widely perceived as such in Europe – say, if and when Erdoğan continues these disturbing measures in Turkey – what consequences might follow for the deal or for the European border regime more generally? Additionally, this raises a complicated question for activists and leftist movements: if the deal fails – whether through politicization or internal rupture – who might ultimately end up paying the price?*

SB: I haven't heard much about the ongoing negotiations in a while, I must say. Angela Merkel traveled to Turkey and signed an agreement at the beginning of December. Immediately thereafter Turkey ostensibly closed its borders. However, the border is too big for such a measure to really be efficient. Since then, however, not much news has filtered thought. The terrorist attacks in Beirut and Paris, as well as the anxiety created by the Cologne events on New Year's Eve, seem likely to encourage European leaders to overcome their scruples and reinforce their cooperation with Erdoğan's regime.

Regarding your second question, it's really difficult to speak to these problems from a highly normative perspective. One good thing that the "summer of migration" brought to us Europeans is the realization that we are not living in some kind of protected island, where everyone can live in wealth and prosperity so long as European territory is surrounded by huge fences. If anything, the inflow of asylum seekers forces us to reckon with the fact that our (economic, ecological, etc.) ways of life have an impact on the conditions under which people elsewhere suffer. The time of colonialism, in different phases up to the present, still lays out the most elementary conditions for these crises. Even today, our individual and cultural practices, Western foreign policy, and the strategies of corporations play a role in sustaining these conditions. The "sum-

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mer of migration" has forced us to understand this entanglement. Now, of course, there are people like Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian Prime Minister, for whom the problem raised by the "summer of migration" can only be solved with even higher fences, combined with suppression of democracy at home. But one can hope that the current exacerbation of tensions may bring us closer to a more lucid assessment of the world we live in.

WC: *Given the EU's border strategy of externalization and invisibilization, what kinds of left-liberal activist work have, in your view, become effective in this context? What, if you will, is to be done?*

SB: I think that what needs to be done is exactly what people are already doing. First, here's an example of local politics taking place right here and now. In Frankfurt, last December, there was a meeting called *Frankfurt für Alle* ("Frankfurt for Everyone"), which gathered an interesting mix of people: organizations such as Teachers on the Road and Medico International, labor unions, "right to the city" activists and No Border activists, as well as refugee initiatives and homeless initiatives. All these people came together for a progressive migration and border politics, even though they neither knew one another beforehand nor necessarily shared the same political outlook (since the participants ranged from labor union officials to anarchists) – perhaps a realistic version of Negri's "multitude." Beyond discussing concrete ways of helping refugees in Frankfurt, they were able to make a collective statement and to integrate the issue in a larger and politicized perspective. This is what I hope continues, this way of establishing networks but also of reclaiming the city of Frankfurt as our city, as a collective good that should be there for everyone – affordable housing for all, Germans and refugees alike. Meanwhile, there is a similar initiative in Berlin.

Aside from acting locally, international solidarity is also essential, and crucial initiatives are underway as we speak: activists from all over Europe are traveling to support refugees in Greece and in Idomeni, for example, which is on the border of Greece and Macedonia. Working together with people who are fleeing to Europe and helping them at each point of their struggle are exemplary modes of activism. For these initiatives are about engaging asylum seekers not simply as objects in need, but as political subjects. As such, and at the risk of sounding overly ambitious, these modes of political action are part of a collective European project – namely, the project of constructing a different and more just Europe.

Translated by William Callison

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