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Etienne Balibar in Conversation: Revisiting European Marxism

Abstract. In this interview, Balibar provides a number of reflections on the articulation of different Marxist traditions, including Italian Marxism and the *Neue Marx Lektüre* to his own Althusserian position. Similarly, he comments on his relationship to the readings of French theory upon Marx's oeuvre. He further develops an analysis of the contemporary challenges posed by capitalism – and its different crises – to critical theory, social sciences and social movements. Then, he argues that financialisation and the anthropocene are central issues. He concludes with thoughts on internationalism and citizenship, which he believes to be indispensable political elements in order to conceptualise resistance in this crisis context.

Charles Barthold

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Introduction

Balibar is one of the most important contemporary critical French philosophers with Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière (for a comparison, see Hewlett, 2007). However, his oeuvre is in a paradoxical situation in relation to the English speaking academy. Although he has worked with English speaking scholars, in particular Immanuel Wallerstein with whom he has collaborated extensively (see, Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991), the reception of his oeuvre in the Anglosphere has been relatively limited. In the interview, there is an opportunity to engage with him on a number of different points ranging from his relationship with Marx, views about democracy to the current ecological and economic crises of capitalism. He started his career as an assistant to Louis Althusser, where he helped develop the influential *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar, 2009). Through his association to Althusser, Balibar contributed to the creation of Structuralist Marxism. It is one of the central traditions of Western Marxism along with the Frankfurt School (for example, Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997), Gramscism (Gramsci, 1992) – and other historicist approaches such as the one inspired by E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) – and Autonomist Marxism among others (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009). This stream of Marxist scholarship developed notions such as overdetermination or the symptomatic reading of *Capital* (Althusser and Balibar, 2009). It tried to move away – in the French context of the early 1960s – from both the orthodoxy inspired by the French Communist Party and the Existentialist Marxism of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (2006). Interestingly, Balibar's Structuralist Marxism was quite pluralist as it engaged heavily not only with Structuralism, which was spreading in the French academy in anthropology (Lévi Strauss, 1966), philosophy (Foucault, 2005) and other social sciences but also psychoanalysis. Additionally, Balibar's philosophy was linked to a political praxis which consisted in trying to transform the French Communist Party from the inside and from a minority position. These two elements remained in the work of Balibar, even though he moved away from Structuralist Marxism and the French Communist Party politics. Firstly, Balibar conceptualised specifically two objects that were outside the traditional sphere of Marxism: race on the one hand and citizenship on the other hand. He provided an articulation of race and class through his work with Immanuel Wallerstein (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991) which allowed him to develop a thinking that would link the former, often related to reflections on culture and identity, to a critique of political economy. This pluralist position is quite original in that it clearly relates racial power relations to the economy, as opposed to separating them. Secondly, Balibar developed a novel political philosophy. He produced a thinking on

citizenship in relation to issues of postcolonialism in France including the undocumented workers movement of the *sans-papiers* (Balibar, 1999) and the *banlieues* riots in 2005 (Balibar, 2007a). He analysed both phenomena as being interconnected with a racialisation of French society related to its colonial heritage and political economy. Essentially, he studied how race and colonial discourse constructed the subordination of specific populations and restricted them to a limited citizenship. An active citizenship revolving around social movements and the demand of equality in the public debate would be a solution to this, as long as it is based on the autonomous organizing of the *sans-papiers* or the *banlieues* inhabitants. He sees active citizenship as the condition of possibility of an actual (radical) representative democracy, as opposed to the thinking of Badiou and Rancière where revolutionary events move beyond the very idea of democratic representation (Badiou, 2010; Rancière, 2006). Another crucial aspect of his political philosophy is his reflection on violence which further differentiates him from Badiou and Rancière and the French philosophical tradition more broadly. The latter seems to have the tendency to fetishise violence either to celebrate it on the one hand with figures such as Sorel (1999) or Alexandre Kojève (1949), or deplore it on the other other hand with figures such as Taine (Taine, 2011) or René Girard (1972). Contrastingly, Balibar (2010) develops a nuanced analysis of the politics of non-violence based on Gandhi. The idea is that political emancipation in a context of power asymmetries can be associated with peaceful repertoires of action. This resonated with the recent social movements of Occupy and Nuit Debout which explicitly refused leaders and violent confrontation with the state.

It would be impossible to present to present the whole of the oeuvre of Balibar here, which also provided a relevant analysis of Spinoza (1998) or of the necessity to develop a European citizenship (2001). More than in any other point in time, in a world with grave economic inequalities between people that operate in a natural environment that is approaching collapse, it is worth reading Balibar's philosophy. It tries to articulate – without any unitarism – a rigorous critique of the political economy of capitalism with a reflection on political philosophy and the conditions of a more authentic democracy at the age of the anthropocene.

[Transcription Interview \(15.03.2017\)](#)

1/ It seems to me that you are the only great critical French philosopher of your generation to continue to work closely with the text of Marx (in opposition with Rancière, Badiou, Nancy, Derrida or Deleuze who are further from it). How do you explain this?

First, all of these people are not from the same generation. In reality, you are dealing with two generations. But, generations are always relative, of course. What I use as a point of reference, are the people with whom I have studied and those who were my classmates. On the one hand, there are Rancière and Nancy with whom I was in *classes préparatoires*¹ (original). On the other hand, there are Deleuze and Derrida. I was Derrida's student for two years. I could have followed Deleuze's courses at Vincennes University. These are two different universities. However, Badiou is in an intermediary situation. We did not meet at that time. Badiou left the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* when I started it. I heard him do a

¹ The highly competitive *classes préparatoires* allow to prepare the examination to enter the prestigious *Ecole Normale Supérieure de la rue d'Ulm*.

memorable intervention in a debate about Sartre after the publication of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (Sartre, 2006), which had been organised by our common professor, Jean Hyppolite.

Furthermore, I am grateful to Badiou on the following point because this played an important role in my life. After the publication of our work on *Capital* with Althusser (2009[1965]), Badiou joined this work collective, which took a variety of ways. He took the decision to neutralise this generational gap. In your enumeration, the name of Althusser is lacking. And there is as well Foucault. Althusser and Foucault are a bit older. But, for us it was more or less the same generation.

CB. You are right: my question is not well formulated. However, I wanted to emphasise that Marxism in French critical philosophy had been important, or perhaps central until the 1980s/ 1990s.

I do not see things this way. The problem is how you define streams of critical thought. Of course, there was a moment of powerful confrontation with Marxism in the history of philosophy. Later, things complicated, in some ways disintegrated. But each case is so specific, that it is difficult to provide a coherent picture. For instance, Deleuze during his collaboration with Guattari and the successive publications of the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* (1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) – proposed a theory which provided a huge space for the discussion and the transformation of Marx. The combination of the philosophical concepts (*philosophèmes*) of Deleuze with a central Marxist tradition, almost orthodox, plays a fundamental role in his work with Guattari. What is happening with Deleuze and which was already present in the previous generation, is the confrontation with the philosophical concepts (*philosophèmes*) of Marx, Nietzsche (see Deleuze, 1983) and Freud (eg., Deleuze, 2004).

A last remark on this point. Badiou just published a small book *Qu'est-ce que j'entends par marxisme ? Une conférence au séminaire étudiant Lectures de Marx* (2016). Badiou develops his own philosophy. However, the reference to Marx is central, not through dialectical materialism or through *Capital*, but through the communist idea (see in particular, 2010). The position of Rancière is of course more complex. He operated a great return to utopian socialism from *la Nuit des Proletaires*² (1981). I recently heard him talk in a fantastic way at the Rome conference on communism in order to see if there was a relation between political commitment and avant-garde movements in literature in the contemporary period, to which he made a nuanced response. This rectification of the judgement, not necessarily of Marx and Engels, but rather of the orthodox Marxism of the Second International and the Third International, continues to play a central role for Rancière³.

In relation to Derrida, the situation is reversed. Derrida played a non-negligible role in the putting back in the spotlight of Marx, through his presentation which led to a book *Spectres of Marx* (1994) in which he proposes a critique of contemporary capitalism. In addition, he talks about a messianism without a messiah. This intervention was helped by a thinking on the work of Althusser and his group. I wrote a short text on this published in the journal *Lignes* (Balibar, 2007). The question is to know if the work of the group around Althusser did not have a blind spot preventing from distinguishing a teleological discourse from an

² In English *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*.

³ A good illustration of this is provided by Rancière's contribution in the *Idea of Communism* (2010).

eschatological one dealing with the future (*a-venir*) and the ends of history. In summary, I do not really see radical ruptures, but rather crossings of personal biographies and revitalisations of questions.

2/ Could you say a word on the Autonomist tradition and the work of Negri (eg., Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009)? Do you think that debt is at the heart of the capitalist process of production and exploitation as, for instance, Lazzarato argues (2012)?

Both of these questions are connected in a way. Lazzarato is one of the most interesting representatives of a tradition coming from *operaismo*, *post-operaismo* and autonomy. There is a problem of generation and of distinction of national spaces. Are you talking about Autonomism?

CB. Indeed, I mean the whole of these three traditions and their contemporary uses. I am using the Anglophone phrasing.

This is an important question. The history of Italian *operaismo* is being written by Cavazzini (for instance, Cavazzini, 2011) and others (see also, Melegari, 2011). They are trying to operate a connection between what was done in Italy, France and Germany in the mid-1960s. I am forced to confess that we, the Althusserians, at the time of Althusser's seminar, had a paradoxical and partial attitude. We were only interested in the epistemological debates about Marxism in Italy, in particular around the reading of Gramsci (1992). On the other hand, we were interested in a critique with a positivistic tendency whose main representative was Galvano Della Volpe (1980), who greatly influenced Tronti (1972) and not Negri. We knew about debates around Marx in Italy but not *operaismo*. This ignorance is related to the fact that the hegemony of the French Communist Party – even when one was outside of its sphere of influence and in the student movement like us – determined our reception of the Marxist debates abroad. This does not mean that we were totally ignorant. I had connections with the group *Il Manifesto* and the left of the Italian Communist Party with people such as Pietro Ingrao. Furthermore, I continue to be interested by someone like Bruno Trentin who theorised self-management (*autogestion*) inside trade-unionism.

The great book of Italian *operaismo*, *Operai e Capitale* (1966) by Mario Tronti, was published the same year as *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar, 2009[1965])⁴. I thought later about this simultaneity and this divergence. I participated in a conference two years ago, where I did a contribution about this theme which was published by the journal *Période* (Balibar, 2016). I tried to describe this back-and-forth relationship (*chassé-croisé*) between Althusser's Structuralist Marxism and the post-Lukácsian Marxism of Tronti for whom class antagonism is the central category, and who divides the whole of society from the factory. I continue to be interested by this debate and the trajectory of Tronti. I have a friendship with Negri, but it seems to me that the most important representative of *operaismo* is Tronti; even though he is accused, perhaps accurately, to have adopted an aesthetic and pessimistic attitude in relation to history (see, 1998), because he thinks that the great class battle of the 20th century was lost by the proletariat, which is, by the way, not entirely wrong. This leaves us in a nihilist attitude, whereas Negri is the historical optimist *par excellence* (original), for whom communism is still achievable. This does not mean that I am considering seriously the questions raised by Negri on the one hand and Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) on the other hand, for instance on the transformation of work (*travail*). The radical critique of the

⁴ In fact, Tronti's book was published in 1966 and *Reading Capital* in 1965.

transition from socialism to communism is also interesting. This relates to the work of Althusser.

I think that *The Making of the Indebted Man. An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition* (Lazzarato, 2012) is an important contribution. Generally speaking, I am not a fanatic of the generalisation of the category of rent. The question, at the end, is to know how financialised capitalism reorganised the process of production, on the one hand through incorporating questions of education, health and the environment – which is a fundamental question –, and on the other hand through subjecting the whole of accumulation to the mobility of financial capital, which supposes that this mobility prevails over long-term investments. This introduces a dimension of risk and of permanent speculative risks, for example through derivatives. However, there is also a technique of permanent subsumption of all human activities under financial capitalism. From this perspective, Lazzarato is right to say that debt is central, and that there are changes in the temporality of capital as well as society as a whole. I would insist on the fact that this power (*empire*) of debt goes from public finances to the debt of individuals. This corresponds to an objective structure of the development of capitalism which is neoliberalism. I was doing a conference at Birckbeck a few days ago in which I said that according to Marx proletarians are bound to capital by invisible chains, in opposition to serfs and slaves. Now, chains become once again visible as debt materialised by contracts to which an increased number of individuals are subjected (*soumis*) for their studies or their health and which transforms them into dependents of financial capital⁵.

3/ What are the readings of *Capital* which would be the most adequate to interpret contemporary capitalism?

Can you explain your question?

CB. There are several reading traditions of *Capital* (symptomatic reading, *Wertkritik*, autonomism). Which one or which ones are the most efficient to think the financialised capitalism to which we are currently confronted?

I understand what you are saying. I will mention the readings of *Capital* with which I work. I am really aware that I am missing some of these debates. For instance, I am interested in the lively debates taking place inside the tradition of the *Neue Marx Lektüre*. Some of its founders are dead such as Backhaus (1997). This is a continuation of the Frankfurt School with lateral figures such as Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1997) and Alfred Schmidt (2011), but not Adorno and Horkheimer who are the central figures. This brought about a new reading of Marx taking on board the debate on the collapse of capitalism, on the one hand with Michael Heinrich (2012) on the question of money, and on the other hand Robert Kurz (1999) and his current follower Anselm Jappe (2013). This latter position is the most catastrophist. This debate seems very interesting to me because of its standard and of its relevance. National traditions are still important, and hence this German tradition continues the Frankfurt School and Lukács. It privileges the first section of *Capital* and the question of the fetishism of the commodity. In parenthesis, Althusser and the Althusserians did not develop this point. The fetishism of the commodity was problematised by French sociology around the question of the society of consumption as a subjection (*assujettissement*) of the collective imaginary, with for instance Jean Baudrillard (1998). However, the Germans emphasised more – with

⁵ See Balibar (2013).

David Harvey (for instance, 2017), for instance – the commodity-form of human activities. This was accelerated by financial capitalism.

I think that there are still interesting categories in the work of Althusser as the symptomatic reading or the society effect at the end of the introductory chapter of *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar, 2009 [1965]). What is fruitful is to return to the debates of this epoch through fictional dialogues, for instance between Althusser and Tronti. The big question is to know to what type of prolonged crisis we are living in, and which perhaps reverts the traditional capacities of political intervention from the perspective of classical Marxism. This implies to confront two traditions that do not share many common points. On the one hand, there is a tradition which is interested in the analysis of the autonomisation of the sphere of finance and to the production processes. There are many people who work on these topics: Lapavistas (2009), Milios and Sotiropoulos (2009). On the one hand, there is Robert Meister (2017) who works on liquidity and the means to disrupt (*gripper*) the stock market from within. On the other hand, there is another tradition. From the beginning of the 1980s, I collaborated with Wallerstein (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991). Within this framework, capital is an organisation of hierarchical relationships of population and of dependency at the global scale, and not simply a logic of accumulation (Wallerstein, 1979). A fundamental point is that capitalism was always already globalised. This point is, in the same way, from Braudel (1995) and from Marx. The question is to understand the moments (*stades*) of globalisation. The World-systems analysis (English in original) insists on the real economy, whereas the financial analysis insists more on fictitious capital. However, a few authors were able to combine them. Arrighi (1994) did it and I find very interesting the way in which he articulates sites of capitalism and speculation. Of course, I follow David Harvey as well.

4/ It seems to me that in the same way as in philosophy a phenomenon of separation from the oeuvre of Marx has taken place in social sciences, at least in France and in the Anglophone world: Marx was marginalised in favour of Foucault, Bourdieu or more recently Latour. Is this not a problem, to a certain extent?

I have the impression that there is a decline in your enumeration. I am not a sociologist or an historian. Of course, at times intellectual history mentions a hegemony of Marxism on the 1960s and 1970s⁶. It is more interesting to analyse the individual relationships of authors with Marx, rather than knowing if overall there is a separation or an articulation. Latour (for instance, 1993) seems anti-Marxist. However, he collaborates with people who think in dialogue with Marx, and he is interested about a fundamental question such as the anthropocene. There is an interesting book (Hache, 2014) with Stengers and Bonneuil. As far as I am concerned, I think that Dipesh Chakrabarty is very interesting. He wrote *Provincialising Europe* (Chakrabarty, 2000). He is interested now in the question of the relationship between geological time and historical time. This is an example of current thought on the environment in dialogue with Marx and Latour.

I have written at the conference on Foucault and Marx a year ago at the Collège International de Philosophie, that the thinking of Foucault was organised around a series of settling of accounts with Marx⁷. This was done first within an epistemological framework. Later, this was more political with the course at the Collège de France *Society Must Be Defended* (Foucault, 2003) and the book *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977). Foucault killed the

⁶ Cusset makes this point about French intellectual history (2008).

⁷ Balibar developed this point in *La Crainte des Masses. Politique et Philosophie, avant et après Marx* (1997).

Marxist tradition in a sense. In another sense, this was operated through a form of critical appropriation of the thinking of Marx. For instance, *The Punitive Society* (Foucault, 2016), his course at the Collège de France of 1972-1973, was a reworking of the question of primitive accumulation. The one of the previous year, *Penal Theories and Institutions*⁸, of which we only have notes, implies a form of important dialogue between Marx and Althusser. I have written a text on this (Balibar, 2015). Therefore, I understand that scholars want to use together (*ensemble*) Foucault and Marx.

It is probably possible to say the same about Bourdieu, with whom I am less familiar. His work on symbolic capital in education as a discriminatory element is very interesting. This entails that in addition to an economic domination, there is a cultural domination (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu is not the only one to mention it (see, Gramsci, 1992). There is as well the whole question of reproduction. There are sociologists or anthropologists in the Anglo-saxon world who have an eclectic and rather dialogic use of Marx and Foucault. For example, Ann Stoler on imperial domination and its traces on current culture is fascinating (1995).

5/ You recently produced a fascinating work on violence (Balibar, 2010). To what extent corporations and the logic market (for instance, the privatisations of public services and common goods) are responsible for the violence of capital?

I will insist on the point that there is an intrinsic heterogeneity of extreme violence. I was calling this ultra-subjective violence and objective violence in my book. I was drawing in particular on *L'Homme Jetable* from Bertrand Ogilvie (2012). It seems that Saskia Sassen goes strongly in the same direction in her book *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (2014). On the other hand, after my initial work on the question of racism (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991), I tried to analyse the conscious and unconscious factors of exterminatory drives. I continue to think that it is necessary to study superpositions, mutual intensifications, passages from one form of violence to another, but one should not simply identify them. Therefore, I am sceptical (*réticent*) about the theories of Alliez and Lazzarato in *Guerres et Capital* (2016). There are propositions to which I cannot not subscribe such as the articulation of war through Clausewitz, one the one hand, and on the other hand of capital through Marx and Lenin. However, I cannot adhere to the idea that there are unique mechanisms or an inverted Leviathan, whose essence would be the capitalist logic of infinite profit and the manifestation of a generalised civil war. This does not allow to analyse the complexity of the contemporary world and this ends up by constituting a form of reductionism. As much as I think that it is important to look for intellectual resources in Marx and Rosa Luxemburg to conceptualise an expropriatory violence, I think that it is important not to bring back this logic to the psychic dimension of extermination.

6/ A number of authors drawing on Agamben (for example, Sørensen et al. 2012) think that violence produced by management and corporations are related as well to logics of sovereignty and not only of capitalism. Other authors drew on Foucault's disciplinarity and biopower (for instance, Raffnsøe et al., 2014 ; Knights, 2002). Does this make sense?

What do you mean?

⁸ It was published in 2018 after the interview (Foucault, 2018).

CB. Sørensen et al. 2012 think that corporations exercise a power of sovereignty and not only of domination within the framework of relations of production.

There is a passage of Marx in relation to automatism, fabric (*fabrique*) of the factory (*usine*) where Marx uses a vocabulary almost Hobbesian in order to explain the move from the industrial automaton to the capitalist autocrat in his or her domain. This latter crossed the doors of the factory towards all sorts of spheres of activity. Therefore, it is possible to think that a logic of entrepreneurial sovereignty is exercised. I would have to think about it.

7/ What is the role of the organisation in relation to resistance to capital? Is it necessary to organise in order to resist with a sense of duration, and is it necessary to rethink the types of organisations of the labour movement (*mouvement ouvrier*) and of the left connected to Fordism such as the trade-union and the political party (even though it entails hierarchies and the reconstitution of a State embryo)? However, Occupy Wall Street or Nuit Debout seem to point towards organisational processes without hierarchies, which might be more appropriate to a more fluid Postfordist mode of production? Do we not go back, ironically, to the 1870s debates between Bakunin and Marx?

You are right to ask this question. Anarchy is, generally speaking, a current topic. My friend Patrice Maniglier just edited a special issue from *Les Temps Modernes* (2016) on Nuit Debout related to the idea to reconstitute the anarchist tradition. When one knows the history of the labour movement (*mouvement ouvrier*) and of communism, one is immunised against the idea to demonise anarchism for two reasons. First, because the intention to eliminate the anarchists coincided with the darkest times of the internal repression of the communist movement with Kronstadt or the Spanish Civil War. Furthermore, it is clear that Marx (and the Marxists after him) was caught in a dilemma which he confronted but from which he was never able to move away. Indeed, perhaps it is impossible to move away from this dilemma? There is on the one hand the organisation of the labour movement (*mouvement ouvrier*) as counter-State. At times, there are moments in which there is a tendency for the latter to be incorporated by the State, even if it can exercise a tribunician function, as Georges Lavau (1981) mentioned in relation to the French Communist Party. Or, in contrast, this counter-State becomes the instrument of control and use of the State by a new hegemonic class or caste, as this was the case in China or the Soviet Union. At the time of Marx, this corresponded to the tendency of Lassalle. On the other side, there was Bakunin, with whom Marx had also fought. The notes of Marx on the book of Bakunin *Statism and Anarchism* (1990), which is contemporary to the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1970), are also important in quantity and quality and have, unfortunately, not been published in France. It happened to Marx to say that – we do not know if it was ironic or a reflexive question – he was the true anarchist. This was a way to say that it is not possible to ask the question of the disappearing of the State without asking the question of the transformations of the economic bases of the existence of the State. This corresponds to orthodox Marxism. It is not by chance that the commentaries on the Paris Commune in the *Civil War in France* (1900) were used by a number of readers of Marx as Castoriadis (1975) and Absensour (2004) in order to show that there was an anarchist or spontaneist tendency in Marx. I do not think that the labour movement (*mouvement ouvrier*) ever sorted out this problem. This does not mean that there were not breakthrough moments of the labour movement (*mouvement ouvrier*) when this contradiction was mobilised. The problem is to know how the question is reformulated at a time which is neither anymore the one of the great organisational forms of the great industry, which were used as basis by the great trade-unions and political parties from the past, neither

the one of the isolation of political struggles within the framework of nation-states. I would have the tendency to think as my friend Wallerstein that the principal question which was posed by the Global Social Forum is the one of the *Global Left* (italics and English in original) and the anticapitalist struggles (Wallerstein, 2002). Anyway, this dilemma of organisation and spontaneism brought about by the anarchist tradition will be constantly asked again.

8/ You have done a considerable work on the concept of citizenship (*citoyenneté*) (Balibar, 2001, 2011). Resisting capitalism without an articulation to citizenship (*citoyenneté*) seems illusory?

It is not only illusory but impossible. The word which was missing in the previous question was democracy. Of course the question is to know, how you articulate democracy and citizenship. I observed in a way the emergence of a problematic of citizenship, that is to say the widening of citizenship. The idea of the emancipatory sense of the idea of citizenship in relation to nationality (*nationalité*) is equally essential. The English *citizenship* (italics and English in original) does not distinguish well these notions, as opposed to French. This was the case with the *sans-papiers* (original) struggles in a constantly embryonic and contained way (*refoulé*), but in a way as well unstoppable and impossible to eliminate. This deals with forms of demands and affirmation of collective rights in which the criterion of nationality is replaced by the notion of equality on more universalistic bases. There exists a second aspect to this notion of citizenship (*citoyenneté*). It is the strong coming back of the idea of active citizenship (*citoyenneté*). It is the critique of passive citizenship which was frozen by the systems of representative democracy, in which we live. This is connected with the proposition made by Rancière (2006: 54), and I agree with it, that we live in oligarchies. It is clear that this crisis can have nihilist consequences, including through Fascist forms which are coming back to the foreground, under the euphemistic term populism.

We need to revive the notion of citizenship (*citoyenneté*) through keeping both of these objectives. First, free citizenship (*citoyenneté*) from its equivalence with nationality (*nationalité*). Second, we need to emphasise active citizenship (*citoyenneté*) not to fall into post-democracy. Therefore, I like the works of James Holston in the US comparing Brazil and California with *Insurgent Citizenships* (2008) or Engin Isin, who works in the UK, and his collaborators with *Acts of Citizenship* (Isin and Nielsen, 2008). The problem is to know if we identify active citizenship (*citoyenneté*) with the assembly form, for example with the squares movement. From this perspective, I am perhaps a bit too paleo-Marxist (*vieux marxiste*) or Weberian to believe that it is possible to sort out as easily the question of power, that is to say who holds it. The direct democracy initiatives are fundamental. However, my position is that it is necessary to be eclectic. Indeed, it seems to me impossible to totally cast away the question of representation and the question of confrontation with State power as they were posed by the Marxist tradition and the Weberian tradition. It is possible to say that citizenship (*citoyenneté*) is one of the fundamental works in progress of the revitalisation (*remise en mouvement*) of the political against the current neutralisation of the latter by capitalism.

9/ Do the notions of life or resistance, for example through Zones To Defend (*Zones à Défendre* (ZAD)) or ecological communities outside of capital, make sense? Can we really be outside of capital or is it necessary to bring back the notion of totality? A number of authors mention capitalocene (Moore, 2011) to express the fact that the destruction of the environment by capitalism deeply transformed geology and

ecosystems. Is it possible to say, from this perspective, that capital determines us entirely?

I participated in Germany last year to a discussion on this theme, because I am a member of the collective that publishes the *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (original). Wolfgang Haug is the founder of it. He is a non-communist Marxist, academic at the *Freie Universität* of Berlin who was involved in the 1960s and 1970s student movement, but who was not linked to the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF). He was the victim of a *Berufsverbot* (original), during this frightening McCarthyist time in West Germany. Wolfgang constructed a huge dictionary on Marxism with volumes that are published little by little. I am currently writing the article on *Mehrwert* (original). Last year, the annual conference was dealing with the question of the environment and the anthropocene in relation to Marxism. Elmar Alvater (2016) thinks that it is necessary to replace the term anthropocene with capitalocene. I told him that it was not possible to impose this latter term because of questions of power relations (*rapport de forces*). All sorts of things are at stake. It is possible to ask the question of the link between capitalism and the accelerated degradation of the environment. Then, this crisis is perhaps the opportunity for a radical transformation of the relations of production, or, on the contrary: capitalism can use the ecological transition or the degradation of the environment, more broadly, in order to increase its profits and constitute a supplementary source of accumulation. This is very different. There will be debates on the carbon tax, but also on the taking into account of negative externalities. When Joseph Stiglitz questions national accounts (Stiglitz et al., 2010), the question of the global cost of the degradation of the environment then arises. Indeed, if the capitalist logic and its degradation of the environment are totalised, it is necessary to understand the anthropocene as a problem that addresses the totality. However, this does not tell us where the anthropocene comes from, and this makes me ask the question of the genealogy of the idea of progress.

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