

Common



Culture of Solidarity

Ground

Content

2	EDITORIAL André Wilkens	58	Radiomakers Thomas Roueché ITALY, FRANCE, SPAIN Expanding and multiplying spoken word
4	Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining Vivian Paulissen, Isabelle Schwarz EUROPE	61	On Amazement and Borders Quinsy Gario EUROPE Of promises of peace and justice
6	The Europeans Arnold van Bruggen, Rob Hornstra EUROPE Exploring The Former Capital	66	POST-CORONA REFLECTIONS
18	Changing the Narrative Friso Wiersum GERMANY, UNITED KINGDOM Courageous citizens on adding underrepresented voices	69	The Need For a Redefined Commitment To Europe Joost van Iersel
22	In Europe Schools Friso Wiersum EUROPE A one of a kind European exchange project for students	71	European Media Ecosystem Post-Corona Maria Exner
24	Waving As An Act of Togetherness Friso Wiersum EUROPE How an anti-Brexit campaign took a new shape in the Corona crisis	73	Cultural Life In Europe, After Corona Pier Luigi Sacco
28	Rail Plans and Road Realities The Anderen EUROPE Two infographs on European connectedness	76	Collectivize Facebook Jan Fermon, Jonas Staal EUROPE Proposing new public spaces
36	Brexit Questions Thomas Roueché UNITED KINGDOM Conversations with Luke Cooper, Effie Samara, Madeleine Kay and Neal Lawson	78	The Future of Democracy? Ilinca Berinde, Jasper van den Berg NETHERLANDS, GERMANY, ROMANIA Company New Heroes explore new ways of building it together
42	Librebook Thomas Roueché BELGIUM Not your average bookstore	81	Bucharest Elena Butica, Raluca Croitoru ROMANIA Repair workshops in the Romanian capital
44	Not All Hope is Lost Anna Donáth HUNGARY A Hungarian Momentum	89	COLOPHON
48	Scherzo In B-Flat Minor Tomas Vaiseta LITHUANIA A short fiction story		

Map →



Photo by Andrei Becheru



Map

- AL Albania
- AD Andorra
- AM Armenia
- AT Austria
- AZ Azerbaijan
- BY Belarus
- BE Belgium
- BA Bosnia and Herzegovina
- BG Bulgaria
- HR Croatia
- CY Cyprus
- CZ Czechia
- DK Denmark
- EE Estonia
- FI Finland
- FR France
- GE Georgia
- DE Germany
- GR Greece
- HU Hungary
- IS Iceland
- IE Ireland
- IT Italy
- KZ Kazakhstan
- XK Kosovo
- LV Latvia
- LI Liechtenstein
- LT Lithuania
- LU Luxembourg
- MT Malta
- MD Moldova
- MO Monaco
- ME Montenegro
- NL Netherlands
- MK North Macedonia
- NO Norway
- PL Poland
- PT Portugal
- RO Romania
- RU Russia
- SM San Marino
- RS Serbia
- SK Slovakia
- SI Slovenia
- ES Spain
- SE Sweden
- CH Switzerland
- TR Turkey
- UA Ukraine
- GB United Kingdom
- VA Vatican City

On Amazement and Borders [P61]

The Need For a Redefined Commitment To Europe [P69]

European Media Ecosystem Post Corona [P71]

Cultural Life In Europe, After Corona [P73]

Collectivize Facebook [P76]

Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining [P4]

The Europeans [P6]

In Europe Schools [P22]

Waving As An Act of Togetherness [P24]

Rail Plans and Road Realities [P28]

Brexit Questions [P36]

Changing the Narrative [P18]

The Future of Democracy [P78]

Librebooks [P42]

Radiomakers [P58]

Scherzo in B-Flat Minor [P58]

Not All Hope is Lost [P44]

Bucharest [P80]

THE EUROPEAN MOMENT

How to write a magazine editorial in the middle of a generational crisis?

For more than a month the office of the European Cultural Foundation has been closed. The staff works from home via laptop, video link and telephone. Together we keep the Foundation running while also managing our quarantine households, home schooling our kids, looking after elderly family members and neighbours, and trying to stay safe and sane. It's been an unimaginable period. But it has also been a period of surprising solidarity and friendship.

Only last year the Foundation went on a tour through Europe: fourteen round-table meetings with cultural managers, policymakers, artists and activists under the title 'What Can Culture Do?'. The resulting insights shaped what we thought would be our five-year strategy. All this seems so far away now, almost like a different age. The age before Corona. Can this strategy and our plans still be relevant today and in the age after Corona? Yes, but.

Just as our Foundation's five-year strategy, this new annual magazine *Common Ground*, published on Europe Day, sits awkwardly but intentionally, between a seemingly distant past and a rather uncertain future. This moment softly echoes Robert Schuman's appeal of May 9, 1950: 'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' We need to get to a common ground. So, this is not a magazine of certainty but of opportunities. Let's make the most of them.

The Corona crisis could be a strong European moment. A moment when people understand how important it is

to have European friends who support each other, when you share vital information, expertise and supplies, and when you realise how a fundamental crisis can be managed much better through cooperation and solidarity.

There is hope. Citizens reach out to each other, practice small and often imaginative human gestures of everyday solidarity. This unites us, across balconies, social networks, cities and countries. It is human hope and shared culture without much ado that makes us feel together and that is all worthwhile! This is the culture of solidarity we ought to grow out of this crisis.

At the European Cultural Foundation we have decided to support these moments of citizen solidarity. We have launched a Culture of Solidarity Fund to which we have dedicated most of our 2020 resources. We will also advocate for scaling up initiatives that contribute to Europeans living together. This can and must be a European moment.

In this magazine you will discover European moments of hope, resilience and solidarity before corona and now, in the middle of it. You will find European photo essays, read about storytellers, about life before and after Brexit, about the challenges Europe faces, and again and again about forms of solidarity in times of crisis.

I hope you will find inspiration and hope in these pages and these European stories. We will need lots of those going forward.

André Wilkens
May 2020

Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining

Towards a Culture of Solidarity

9 May 2020, Europe Day. It is challenging to celebrate peace and unity in a world upside down. At the European Cultural Foundation we ask ourselves 'what can culture do?' to overcome the crisis and build a new now and a new future.

One year ago, we embarked on a European tour to listen to artists, cultural workers, academics and politicians throughout Europe to inform the European Cultural Foundation's next five year strategy (2020–2025). Today, we are in a different world. There will be a before and an after COVID-19 and we decided to turn our plan upside down, and adjust all our resources to best respond to the emergency while investing in the future.

The pandemic has spread fear, anxiety and despair, but also spurred a huge wave of creativity and solidarity. From new food banks for the homeless to sport animations in our streets. From circus in courtyards of elderly people's homes to opera singing and poetry reading from Europe's balconies. While the coronavirus has imposed to shut down theatres, cinemas, libraries, museums, galleries and more, culture has found new ways to open our eyes, experience differences, contemplate and act, keep us connected, on- and offline.

A CALL FOR A CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY

This situation makes us profoundly reflect on the way we live, interact, work. It is questioning our 'modus operandi' as humans. It is making us painfully aware of our human vulnerabilities and the deep societal, economic and behavioural impacts that come with it. COVID-19 calls for collective care and a culture of

solidarity beyond borders, sectors and communities. A culture of solidarity that lives up to the values of equality, empathy and inclusivity.

Being in solidarity with others is not a selective choice, opting for those who are closest to us. We should not forget the people in other houses, neighbourhoods and countries. And about those individuals and communities who already were in precarious situations before the coronavirus outbreak, and are now even more powerfully hit: migrants and refugees, the economically fragile, the lonely, the excluded.

However, far-right movements and populist governments around the world use the pandemic for ill conspiracy theories and the pushing of authoritarian legislation and practices. The elastic can quickly pull back, and the crisis risks to further deepen the European North-South and East-West divides, and bring increased fragmentation to Europe.

Therefore, it is even more existential for Europe to get its act together and speak with one voice. This is an additional challenge in times when governments have mostly responded in distinct and separate ways, pushing for 'my nation first' mode, while international coordination and cooperation are the only way to resolve this global crisis.

A CHANCE FOR EUROPE AND PHILANTHROPY

COVID-19 is an unprecedented experience for all of us that will have lasting and profound implications, regardless who we are, where we live, and what we do for work. It is an enormous challenge, but also a chance. The crisis has shown that the impossible is possible:

state rules get lifted, banks provide loans of unthinkable heights, states release billions in emergency packages and nature re-appropriates its spaces. The crisis has forced us to show courage and audacity, while giving earth a breath. The EU, after a timid, hardly visible and slow move, has stepped up its efforts and released billion-worth aid to invest in recovery.

Beyond European welfare, this can become Europe's moment. The moment to combine leadership and humanity. The moment to prove a genuine sense of global responsibility, show solidarity between states and communities, and launch new forms of cooperation and partnerships.

When European actors, the EU, national governments, foundations and civil society work together towards a common goal, they are a powerful force for the common good. The past decades have shown that we are stronger together. Our history reminds us that it is possible to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and join forces. It is the moment for Europe, and also the moment for European philanthropy to stand up to the challenge.

THE CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY INITIATIVE

The European Cultural Foundation focuses on building a European Culture of Solidarity across programmes, advocacy and communications. As part of this initiative we launched the Culture of Solidarity Fund to support big and small creative initiatives by artists, cultural workers, critical thinkers and civil society at large in Europe, and beyond. The Fund is set up as a public-private-philanthropic partnership, and the Foundation has provided initial start-up funding of €1 million for 2020.

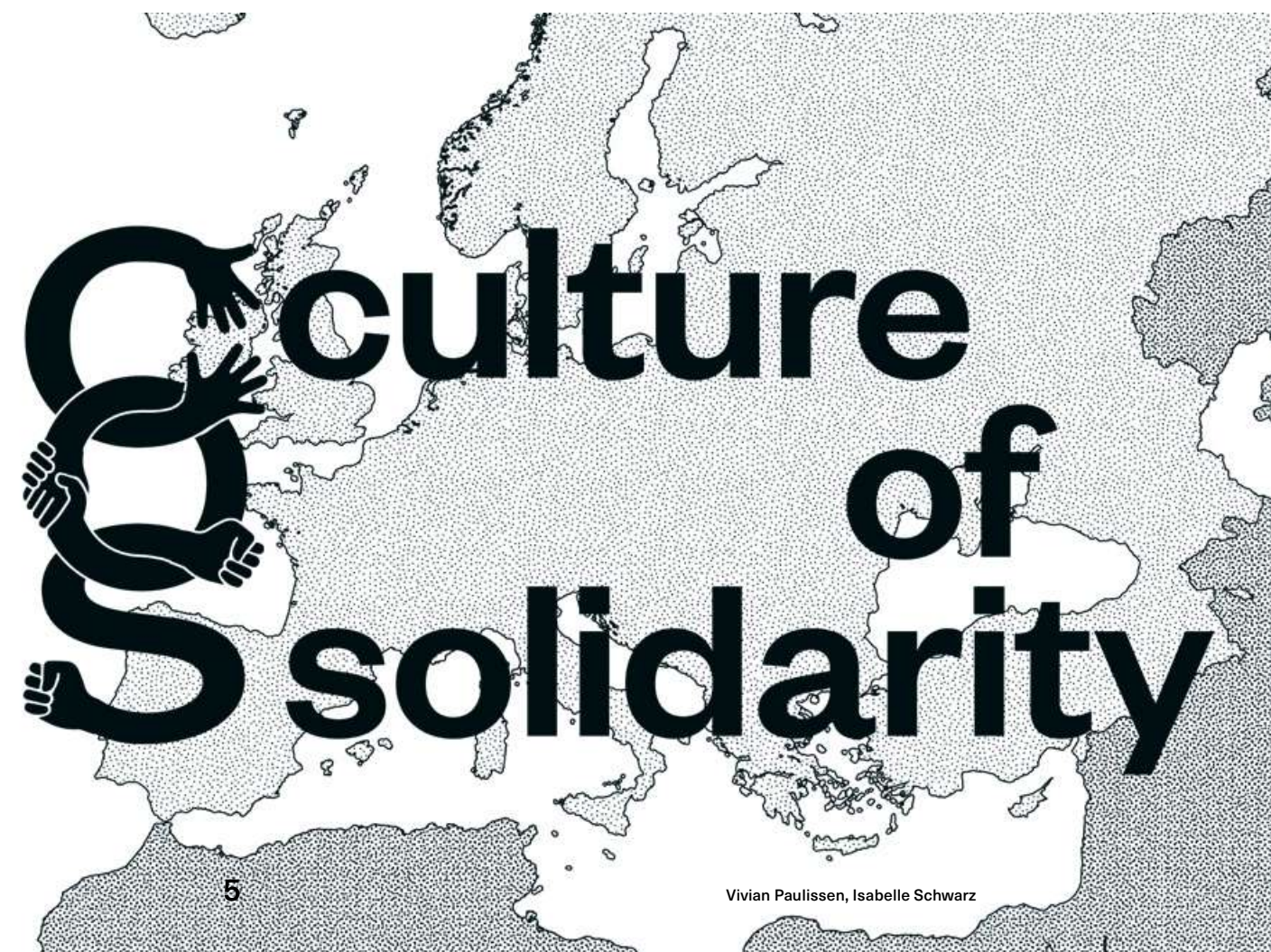
The Fund will support creative responses to sustain people-to-people contacts and human interaction, reinforce European solidarity and the idea of Europe as an open and shared public space for everybody, maintain cultural life and prepare the ground for a cultural revival of Europe after the crisis.

We will encourage other online and offline actions and alternatives that embody the key European value of collaboration. We will look at safe digital tools and practices, in a time in which the monopolies of the big tech companies are being strengthened even more than before. We will continue to build the Culture of Solidarity initiative over the coming years with (new) partners and connect it to the main thematic threads across our programmes: online and offline public spaces; networks of cities of change and solidarity; collaborations between citizens and between cultural workers for a European experience and storytelling of a future Europe.

A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

What will Europe and the world look like after COVID-19? Will Europe be submerged by a new wave of nationalism and populism, or will imagination and creativity take us from confinement and fear to a new, positive experience? The development of a global solidary system based on values such as connectedness, closeness and togetherness is not only possible but necessary. A new way of life marked by solidarity, generosity, ingenuity of states and people.

The European Cultural Foundation is a challenging optimist. We believe systemic change is needed and possible. This is a cultural challenge. We have to imagine something drastically different. This is a moment to reaffirm hope. Even the worst situation has some positive aspect: every cloud has a silver lining.



The Europeans

Welcome to Europe, Home of The Europeans



Soldiers march in the woods. Countless soldiers. They are young. It is wet and cold. The seniors march ahead of the children, leading the way. 'We're preparing for life,' says a boy wearing a pin from the local brigade. Marching, learning discipline, followed by a cup of soup and a speech from a respected veteran: life is not a game. We're in The Former Capital. Here they have enough experience with neighbouring superpowers and occupying forces to know these paramilitaries have to be ready at any time. They have to be able to survive in the wild, just like their ancestors did. At the back of the group, a heavily tattooed man in combat gear drives the support vehicle. A few years ago, he pelted a gay singer with an egg. The fight against the enemy must be fought on all fronts.

VIDAS, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

On the truck slope of a distribution centre, an early queue of men appears who have clearly lost the connection with society. Amongst them is Vidas. He tells us that he worked in the Netherlands and Norway. His father is very ill. But on the horizon there is a better future. "Two more months, two more months," he says, over and over again. "Two more months, I'll have my green card for the US! And I want to go back to the Netherlands! My back is broken, but I want to work!"



MONIKA, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

Monika, born and raised in The Former Capital, has been a dancer with the local show orchestra Ažuolynas for fifteen years. 'When you are born here, you will always carry the city in your heart. Not only the people make it special, but also the large city parks and plenty of possibilities to go out or visit cultural events. And our famous basketball club of course. Actually, this city has everything.'



JANINA, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

In a library in The Former Capital, women in traditional dress gather on Saturday mornings to sing folk songs. They explain, 'Noble, hardworking women are at the heart of every song – how they used to weave and crochet together while waiting for the men to come back from the war. But they didn't come back. The lyrics tell of life and survival; there's a lot of loyalty and strength in every song.'



BIRUTĖ, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

Birutė under a portrait of her younger self. When she was young, she moved to the city with her elder brother. Together they built the wooden house she still lives in. Birutė has fond memories of her working life as an accountant. But as it goes with age, her friends and family almost all died out. Her Soviet-era pension is not as much as promised. But Birutė doesn't complain.





BUTCHERS, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

Half an hour's drive from The Former Capital, deep in the region's vast forests at the end of a muddy path you can find Samsonas meat factory. The director guides us with pride and enthusiasm through all the departments of the company. The place where the carcasses enter, where especially strong men with freshly sharpened knives tackle the dead animals, to the large buckets of meat porridge for sausages and wooden drying rooms for hams. 'Within 50 years' time, I expect major changes in meat industry, I think we will eat more insects and worms to get our protein. Nowadays we are not that far yet. Our people want to eat 'normal' food. But you never know how fast things can change.'

JULIUS PROSKUS, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019

'Why do so many young people take part in this march? Patriotism! Love for the fatherland! So that they too – whether in the army or not – can defend us in the future.' – Julius Proškus, commander of the 202nd division of the Riflemen's Union.





GABIJA, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019



ELZE, GABRIELA, THE FORMER CAPITAL, 2019



This is Europe. A continent in a state of flux. The financial and migrant crises seem to have been averted, but the political aftermath is only now becoming apparent. Where some political forces are seeking refuge in a united Europe, others are vociferously turning away from it. The European Union is the favourite scapegoat of national politicians, even though more and more issues are regulated at European level. The media and politicians are distrusted, and this distrust seems politically well exploitable, although polls and statistics show that the majority of Europeans are often both happy and prosperous.

According to analyses, the political battle is no longer being fought over socio-economics but over culture and identity: urban versus rural; newcomers versus natives; tradition versus new norms and values; the globalised economy and culture versus the more orderly world of village, city and countryside. The call for strongmen and leaders is growing louder, both in the political and cultural domain.

Against this backdrop, we set out to travel the periphery of Europe. Drawing on our earlier experiences for the long-term *The Sochi Project*, we spend extended periods in places far from the daily news cycle. Documenting the direct causes of tensions in Europe is not the main goal of this project. Rather, *The Europeans* is a journey into contemporary Europe and an examination of what it means to be European in the 2020s. How will we look back at this decade?

'When I was growing up, I didn't feel European at all, I felt like a global citizen,' says Kotryna, a European. 'But even if you consider yourself super global, we all come from somewhere. Growing up, I was surrounded by geezers. You know, tracksuits, trainers, cheesy techno music. Those were my neighbours and classmates. If they came from another neighbourhood, they were the enemy. In the 1990s, there was a lot of crime and violence here. Gangsters exploded bombs at the entrance of apartment buildings if debts weren't paid. It was rough. We knew which school groups of students went to from the colour of their beer bottles: red or green. If you saw the wrong colour, you had to keep moving, you weren't safe.'

'If you grow up in a small housing block, you think the other blocks are really different. Entire wars broke out between those blocks. But now we travel more, and we see the same housing blocks everywhere. I meet kids from around Europe and America who share my stories and problems.'

Our stories of the Europeans are for a large part truly interchangeable. That's because we love to focus on what historian Fernand Braudel called *le temps conjoncturel*, the level of time in history in which societal and cultural changes take place, contrary to a focus on *L'histoire événementielle*, the level of time in which politics, hypes and trends take place. A great example of this is our meeting with Birutė, a 90-year-old lady. 'I've lived under four different regimes,' she said. 'I don't care. I pay someone for my water and my wood, that's about

it.' What, we thought, would happen if you try to remove as much as possible of this *histoire événementielle* from our stories. The first big intervention we made was to skip the names of countries. Try it for yourself: we met this girl who's a real experienced smuggler of cigarettes and medicine. She comes from a family that has defied the rules of her government, always, because they believe the government doesn't work for people like them. The girl is from Italy. United Kingdom. Latvia. Sweden. France. What different stories popped up in your head, putting the same, personal story in a different country? It's incredible what layers of biases a country name brings to a story. The second big intervention will be interchanging stories throughout Europe. It's a cliché of course, but one that's interesting to find out how it works in practice: the horizontal layers of society across borders have much more in common than the vertical layers within one country.

So this is *The Europeans*. Come try us. We publish books, exhibitions, online documentaries, articles, social media. You can support us or invite us, like many who believe in our project. We have to adapt to a Europe that's more drastically in flux than we ever could have imagined when we started this project. Due to the Corona crisis our first ever exhibition moved online, you can visit in on Artsteps.com. Follow us in the coming years to see what time piece of Europe we can build up.

www.theeuropeans.fm

Changing the Narrative

With: CHERELLE HARDING
SANA MURRANI, MIO LINDNER

Over the last years, the European Cultural Foundation has launched various open calls for ideas to make our continent more culturally inclusive. One of them was the 2018 Courageous Citizens call: 'Every person living in every village, city and town is a citizen, not just a chosen few. Courageous citizens are individuals, collectives and organisations whose energy and courage help to cultivate Europe as a home.' No wonder then that projects which challenged the European self-centred narrative by offering insights from communities not yet represented in that narrative featured amongst the granted projects. Meet three of them: Cherelle Harding representing *Windrush Strikes Back*, Sana Murrani and her project *Creative Recovery* and Mio Lindner of *BuchLabs*.

FW First of all, what was your idea about?

CH *Windrush Strikes Back: Decolonising Global Warwickshire (WSB)* is a community-engaged history project facilitated by the Global Warwickshire Collective (GWC). The project is focused on uncovering the hidden histories written by British African Caribbean peoples in historic Warwickshire, including Coventry, Birmingham and the surrounding areas. The GWC mentors and trains descendants of the Windrush generations as 'Decolonial Detectives'. Through training and engagement, the intention of this project is to inspire community members to take more active ownership of and involvement in the production of our histories, and to challenge the exclusivity of historical scholarship in Britain. Together we work towards decolonising the entangled 'glocal' histories of Shakespeare's county, Warwickshire.

SM *Creative Recovery* was born out of a personal struggle and sheer intellectual interest I had with questions like: Where is home? What is home to you? And, Where are you from? All of which are questions I have been asked over the last 16 years as an immigrant here in the UK. Some people are just curious and others are interested in my background, my culture, while a few may have had ulterior motives. These questions were amplified not just for me but for all those who have crossed the borders into Europe from the Middle East and Africa in recent years. I felt I had to do something. Something that will allow them to answer these questions not just with words but with maps, photographs and collages too. *Creative Recovery* shows the narrative that the media misses from war-torn countries and others suffering from conflict. A narrative that is visually representing cultures and people from across the world and how they wish to represent their homes and homelands.

ML In *BuchLabs*, small groups of people are brought together to exchange key life experiences. Opening towards others and committing one's feelings to paper requires courage, especially for people who have experienced discrimination and hostility for their sexuality and identity. Yet literary storytelling is a powerful means to stimulate this. It encourages the development of identities, self-discovery and community building. By offering the LGBTIQ+ participants of the BuchLab a secure environment, a deeper exchange is stimulated. The awareness that a book will be printed at the end of the week, available in bookshops for everyone to read, increases the intensity of reflection, exchange and collaboration. A literary publication is something to be proud of. It is highly visible and establishes a communication link with the others. The books and their makers will be unputdownable.



FW What were difficulties you had to deal with in realising your project? And, did you overcome those?

CH Sadly, three members of the collective each lost one of their grandparents within the first six months of the project beginning. Many of the rich stories our grandparents share with us are often never documented. WSB is about preserving the histories of those that came before us, so although this time was difficult, it was also a reminder to each of us as to why we started this project.

The two launch events were a great start to the project as they were well-attended and served to communicate the project to a wide range of people. This taught us that this type of project was needed and something Black African Caribbean people in 'Warwickshire' had wanted for a long time. There is much to discover here but with very few resources and opportunity to do it. Seeing the impact that the project was having on the decolonial detectives was always encouraging.

SM The main difficulty, which was an issue throughout the life of the project, was the precarious and volatile lives that my project participants were witnessing. These are refugees and asylum seekers in different stages of their legal processes. We had to work around their court hearings, their lawyers' appointments, and with a couple their deportation cases. Even though the project wasn't designed to intervene in such processes, I felt as a fellow human, I had to write letters to lawyers and speak to local MPs as well as of course, working around these important events in people's lives to re-schedule workshops and meetings. The other difficulty was the emotional and mental investment that I found myself facing especially as I got to know well each difficult story for the 12 participants. It was hard to detach myself from their daily struggles with the UK immigration system and housing needs. But I sought support from a social worker/psychology colleague who has worked extensively with people with vulnerable situations. That helped a lot.

I suppose a sad surprise was to see refugees and asylum seekers from different backgrounds put in shared housing across cities – and while the UK expects them to integrate within the British society without meaningful steps to explain how to integrate and what integration means, they are also lacking meaningful measures to help them understand each other's cultures – yet they are expected to get along. For example, one of our participants lived in a house where five people from different parts of the world were supposed to share happily, a microcosm of multiculturalism, a house that was loaded with cultural differences, language barriers and different beliefs. This was one of the hardest facts to bare.

FW What moments confirmed your belief in your project?

ML During the first BuchLab we had a couple of moments in which we thought – exactly what we intended! Writing is such an intense and personal process, which opens doors to hardly used even undiscovered sides and memories that allow you to discover something new about yourself. People used the possibility to share and discuss very personal issues. They started to listen to each other.

Although sometimes there have been stressful discussions during the week, we experienced a united group's celebration as soon as they were holding the printed books in their hands. We received a lot of unexpected attention from German queer bookstores. The books opened up discussions, whether this approach of BuchLabs might be something to consider in other settings. We do think it could and there are uncountable occasions this approach can be used.

SM It was without doubt the moment when one of the participants, Mohammed from Gaza, made the first finding in the project as he was tracing his footsteps onto a map of Gaza where he realised the map wasn't correct. We then looked at four different Open Source maps and overlaid them on top of each other and discovered that none of these maps are identical nor, according to Mohammed, correct. We then researched this particular phenomenon and discovered that for political and security reasons you will not find an 'accurate' map of Gaza anywhere. This was sad to discover yet certainly a moment of 'glory' as I felt that it wasn't me (the researcher) but rather the participant who discovered this important point. That moment confirmed the participatory nature of the project where participants and researchers had equal roles and say in establishing the work and highlighting the findings.

CH The width of the research areas from our 'decolonial detectives'. These ranged from local politics (involving interviews with politicians), African Caribbean health care workers in the NHS, everyday material culture, and histories of community solidarity. It was great to see that they were choosing to do their research on a variety of subjects.

The biggest surprise would be the amount of support the project received. It was well received by the community and university. We had many people wanting to support or contribute to the project by means of publishing our work or delivering training.

FW Can you describe the impact you generated?

CH We have been successful in presenting at a Midlands-based history festival. Our other successes include a small exhibition and blog posts for History Workshop Online. Elements of the project entail a sustainable legacy, such as the results of training and engaging community members in academic scholarship and research skills. Another feature of the project that will be sustainable is the production of outputs that will be a reference point for other similar projects, creating an archive for Black history in historic Warwickshire.

ML We managed with 17 writers – to write 26 stories – in four different groups – assembled in four books – one message: No policy will change discrimination. Individuals will. Individuals will care. Individuals shape society.

SM I gained 12 new friends! The project has been successful in the message it wanted to deliver. The final exhibition during UK Refugee Week was the highlight. People came from up and down the country to see it. The exhibition allowed the 12 protagonists a platform to speak and show their culture, their backgrounds and how they lived their lives in their homelands. What I hadn't anticipated though was the interest of mental and community health specialists in the project. They found the methods of research used throughout the project to be empowering and are highly effective in art therapy context and recovery

from trauma. I also found that the 12 participants have grown in their aspirations for success and change within their communities. A few have taken up initiatives alongside charities to support minorities and help them integrate within British society.

2,3



Changing the Narrative



4

In Europe Schools

History caught in the act. In Europe Schools is a one of a kind European exchange project in which students film their recent history.



It sounds like the project you wanted to be involved in during your own school years: In Europe Schools. Producing your own documentary and then discuss your video with students from a school on the other side of Europe. Dutch broadcasting company VPRO teamed up with Euroclio – the European Association of History Educators – and developed precisely this. Maybe even better, they also provide schools and students with footage from the acclaimed VPRO television series ‘In Europe’. We had a coffee with Odette Toeset, the project leader.

IN EUROPE

Geert Mak – Dutch bestseller author – published his book *In Europe* in 2004. For this book he travelled our continent and dedicated a chapter to each year of the twentieth century. *The Guardian* reviewed the book as ‘a trip through our common history as a multi-vocal account as a particular view.’ A few years later the book was adapted for television by Dutch broadcaster VPRO. In 35 episodes the TV team tried catching up with twentieth-century Europe, with Geert Mak being the narrator.

The book and first series were conceived at a time when ‘the end of history’ still seemed more than an illusion. So when history re-appeared in our continent it forced the team of makers, including Geert Mak to reconsider their beliefs and the TV team and the author embarked on a new series of travels: *trying to catch history in the act*. Mak’s history of the first twenty years of our current century was published last year. At that moment the TV crew had already been filming all across Europe. The first episode of the planned twenty premiered on Dutch and Belgian television in December 2019. A second series of ten episodes is planned for broadcasts after the summer of 2020.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

‘In Europe Schools is a one of kind European exchange project in which students film their recent history, and research and compare themes like democracy, human rights, difficult histories, climate change and migration. In a time when pupils use all kinds of (social) media it is time to let them film their own recent history,’ it says on the dedicated webpage. How does such a project come to life?

‘During the 2007 airing of the first In Europe series we already received many letters from teachers writing us they were using the television series in their classes,’ says Odette Toeset. ‘That struck a chord with our makers. When they started planning for this new series they seized the opportunity to actually do it.’

It is worth remembering social media use by younger generations and the availability of formatting tools are two forces that can carry and propel this project. When many older Europeans tended to shrug their shoulders about disinformation and fake news, younger generations already were critical towards formal storytelling authorities. You can probably easily imagine a teenager sitting in a classroom secretly checking on his or her phone, while the teacher is trying to teach them about Rome and Napoleon. Well, I can, I just didn’t have a phone when I was in school.

So, then the question arises, how do you prevent this project becoming another well-intended idea, yet never striking a chord with students? Odette tells us they partnered up with Euroclio at an early stage.

A small team of history teachers who are responsible for the production of history curricula in their countries was compiled. ‘Someone from Spain, one from Germany, a Dutchman.’ They joined forces with the international team behind the television series. Together they identified four themes that would be present in the series as in the lives of students: difficult histories, migration, climate change and gender equality. In the pilot stages of the project VPRO and Euroclio closely observed what teachers reported back. ‘It helped us strip the themes to a minimum: students dislike being overfed with information. So we were really careful not to overload the tutorial videos. And we quickly learned to be careful on certain assumptions; issues around gender equality can be perceived different in Spain as in the Netherlands.’

‘We chose to approach big subjects – and the four themes are huge – via a specific example, via personal stories. Students more easily identify with such a story. In the class discussion it is up to teachers to broaden the debate, to contextualize the matter.’ Odette shares her amazement on the level of knowledge of students, and their capabilities to boil that down into small stories in the videos. The educational kit however has some inbuilt elements to prevent too much personal storytelling. ‘Role playing for example, and division of tasks. In one of the assignments in the migration theme they even are explicitly invited to interview policymakers, NGO’s, entrepreneurs or activists on migration issues, as a way to better understand that all policies are influenced by choices earlier in a process.’

Of course I wanted to know if there are differences in the approach of schools in the various countries. ‘One odd surprise is that many Dutch schools sent in videos made by a small group of students whereas most non-Dutch schools sent in one per class room.’ Bigger differences exist between school types, so Euroclio keeps account of that when matching schools. Odette continues: ‘But even then we don’t know what the outcomes of international discussions will be. That is one of the attractive elements in this project; we just don’t know what will come out of it.’

Because it should be stressed; the TV series and the educational trajectory are close to one another, yet they also differ. The student-produced videos end up on YouTube – in a growing database of #ineurope-schools tagged uploads. The television series is broadcasted on national channels. The same counts for reflections and discussions on the different outlets; many of the video clips will not be discussed outside of classrooms, the series might be reviewed in national media. But Odette has a dream in which all of the participating students will meet in real life, surpassing classroom and national divides. ‘If this project contributes to a little more imagination on Europe with the younger generations it is a success.’

Waving as an Act of Togetherness

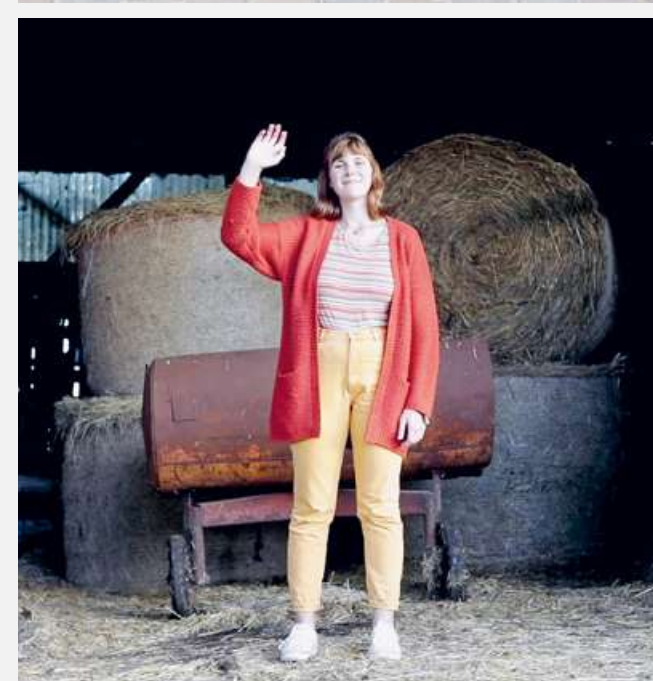
HOW AN ANTI-BREXIT CAMPAIGN TOOK
A NEW SHAPE IN THE CORONA CRISIS



In 2019 German artist Claudia Janke went on a journey across the European Union to create *Wavelength Europe* – an artwork and film that connects people through the a simple but power-ful gesture, the wave.

Being based in London Claudia wanted to create a joyful beacon of friendship and humanity in times of uncertainty and division. In the run up to Brexit she travelled the European Union in-viting people to wave at her camera in solidarity and friendship. She filmed 411 wavers in 27 countries in 2 months.

The next chapter of *Wavelength-Europe* 'Beyond the Act of Waving' was due to be launched in Kaunas, Lithuania this July, when the Corona pandemic put a temporary stop to all face to face engagement in public spaces. In response to the new situation Claudia decided to start *Wave-length-InsideOut* to ease the disconnect and isolation felt by people due to the COVID-19 measures. She is inviting the global community to wave across social distances and lockdowns, shut doors and closed borders from their homes or places they stay. So far she has captured waves from Europe, India, Russia and the US filming people in lockdown via video conference tools around the world.



FW Why waving?

CJ In 2018 I was asked to develop a project in Packington estate, a fragmented social housing community in London, UK. The aim was to foster and strengthen cohesion among its residents. As a result I came up with the idea of neighbours waving at each other. I was looking for a form of communication that wasn't too intimidating for people to take part and opened doors for the possibility of a deeper connection; waving does both.

Waving is universal, cross cultural and has a certain magic to it. We all do it – we wave at our friends, loved ones and passersby from windows, bridges and trains creating a moment of intimacy at a distance even between strangers. It's a beautiful way to acknowledge one another. It's a simple gesture, but a powerful one and something most of us can participate in.

During my research I learned that waving originated as a signal to strangers that one comes in peace and doesn't pose a threat – a fact that couldn't be more fitting for a project that intends to unite people and foster compassion, connection and solidarity.

FW What did it cause amongst the community, and do you think it can be repeated on a transnational level?

CJ Wavelength-Packington had a great impact on the community. People still talk about it today.

It inspired people to be curious about each other again. Making and screening the film outdoors and in public helped locals to see their shared communal space and the use of it in a different way. Wavelength was experienced as 'life-affirming', 'wholesome' and 'moving'. Residents and neighbouring communities fed back that it had softened their own prejudice or preconceived ideas of others and enabled them to make connections they otherwise may not have made.

It was this affect that made me want to take waving to Europe. I believe that Wavelength can disrupt divisive narratives and reignite a sense of inclusion, compassion and motivation, also on a transnational level.

Wavelength projects live through the participation and engagement of others. This was taken to a new level throughout the making of Wavelength Europe. As I made my way through each of the 27 EU countries people from all walks of life answered my call for help to make this project a success. From friends and their network of families and mates to complete strangers, people all over Europe offered to host and help me in whatever way possible. They galvanised their communities, put me up for two nights, gave me lifts and their valuable time. Complete strangers travelled across countries and borders to translate for me or guide me to remote places. People were connecting over the excitement and shared experience of creating this pan-European beacon of humanity and peace. They were uniting and celebrating the togetherness and inclusion Wavelength aims to foster. It was a powerful experience to witness the magic of the wave to unfold like this.

When Covid-19 lockdowns were implemented across the world, I received message asking, if this wasn't the perfect time to do a global Wavelength project. I loved how waving came to peoples mind in this situation, just as I was about to release the first waves for Wavelength-InsideOut.

FW Why did you want to travel the European Union?

CJ Having witnessed first hand the devastating impact that divisive politics had during the Brexit nightmare, I felt everything possible had to be done to contest the forces driving forward division and fear across the European Union and beyond. From Germany

to Hungary to Italy, Poland and France nationalist and populist sentiment has been increasingly successful in entering mainstream politics.

Some citizens have been under such pressure from these divisive forces, it can be easy to forget how much we have in common and what the benefits of a united society are. Wavelength aims to reignite this sense of unity and togetherness between people from the widest range of social, geographical and economic backgrounds possible. I think fostering a sense of connection, solidarity and positive participation in society is vital in standing up against fear mongering and alienating narratives. Wavelength creates a joyful shared experience and the opportunity to see each other in a new light. It's a cheerful antidote to the tensions threatening the well-being of our society.

FW The next stage of your series of Wavelength projects 'InsideOut' takes these ideas one step further. In our current physical distancing era, a lot of us crave for some more contact with others, including strangers. What is your next step about?

I was due to launch the next stage of WavelengthEurope 'Beyond the Act of Waving' this July in Kaunas, Lithuania when the COVID-19 measure put a stop to all public engagement.

I decided to start Wavelength-InsideOut in the interim to counter feelings of isolation and disconnection felt by people during these uncertain times. I am using video conference tools to film participants in their homes or places they stay inviting the global community to look outward and wave in solidarity across physical distances, shut doors and closed borders. It's a communal acknowledgement of our shared vulnerability and humanity and highlights our inter-connectedness and the need for unity. But apart from that, waving is a positive action, lightens the load of isolation and creates a little bit of happiness all around.

FW Waving, contrary to your hopes, can also be seen as a gesture of saying goodbye.

Yes, that's true but even if a person was to interpret the waves as a waving good bye, the gesture would still be an act of acknowledgement. You can say goodbye and still feel a sense of solidarity with someone. This was particularly true in the context of Brexit, when this question arose more often.

Seeing hundreds of people waving to you, united by the same gesture saying 'We see you, we are here' .. that's a powerful thing to witness regardless of your views.

FW So how does all of this make you feel about our future?

CJ The response to each of the Wavelength projects has been amazing and heartwarming. Having come across so many people willing to express their universal solidarity and friendship, encountering their level of kindness and generosity has only strengthened my belief in humanity and the power of community.

During my travels my experience across Europe stood in sharp contrast to the picture populist groups tend to paint about the state of our nations. I found that the vast majority of people were open, curious and happy to engage when given the chance, even when sometimes slightly suspicious at first.

It struck me how some people simply weren't used to being asked to contribute or participate in public life. This was especially true in areas usually excluded from cultural events.

Face to face engagement, the positive use of public space and creating work in public view made a real difference to people. It was great to see that

once they had overcome their initial suspicion, how much they enjoyed the experience. Usually it was enough for people to see previous participants wave at them from the screen of my phone to make them drop all doubts and wave with the greatest sense of pride and purpose.

I have so many beautiful stories about how the magic of the wave managed to melt away dis-trust and reservations. It left me feel hopeful.

I am excited return to some of these communities with "Beyond the Act of Waving" once the lockdown has finished and Wavelength can contribute to the recovery process. This time I will be working with local spoken word artists across Europe to hold workshops and create poetry about the meaning of solidarity. The results will be used as the soundtrack of the WavelengthEurope film adding layer up on layer to this ever evolving peoples-artwork of solidarity.

www.claudijanke.com
@wavelengthprojects
All photos by Claudia Janke



THE ANDEREN is an information design and graphic design studio based in Amsterdam. Karin Fischnaller (IT) and Mar Ginot Blanco (ES) joined their practices in 2019. The Anderen create visual narratives that question the current state of global systems, cultural identities, mobility challenges, technological developments and the role of the designer. Their design practice displays a strong relation between visual journalism and systematic design methods.

Rail Plans and Road Realities

A truck driver has been asked to document Europe in his everyday life along his route from Eindhoven (NL) to Milan (IT). As many freight drivers, he chose the longer, but cheaper route crossing Munich and passing through Austria to enter Italy via the Brenner pass.

On the way to Aachen



Service area at Brohltal West (A61)



Service area at Brohltal West (A61)



Allianz Arena Munich cross north



German motorway, maybe at Irschenberg. The Alps are visible on the horizon

Shortly after
Kufstein, or at Wörgl

AT



6

Toll station at
Vipiteno (A22)

IT



7

Service area Sciliar
Ovest (A22),
between Chiusa
and Bolzano,
near Campodazzo



8



9

A truck driver hangs
his laundry to dry in
the front of his door



10

Service area Sciliar
Ovest (A22), between
Chiusa and Bolzano,
near Campodazzo



11

Arrival to Milan



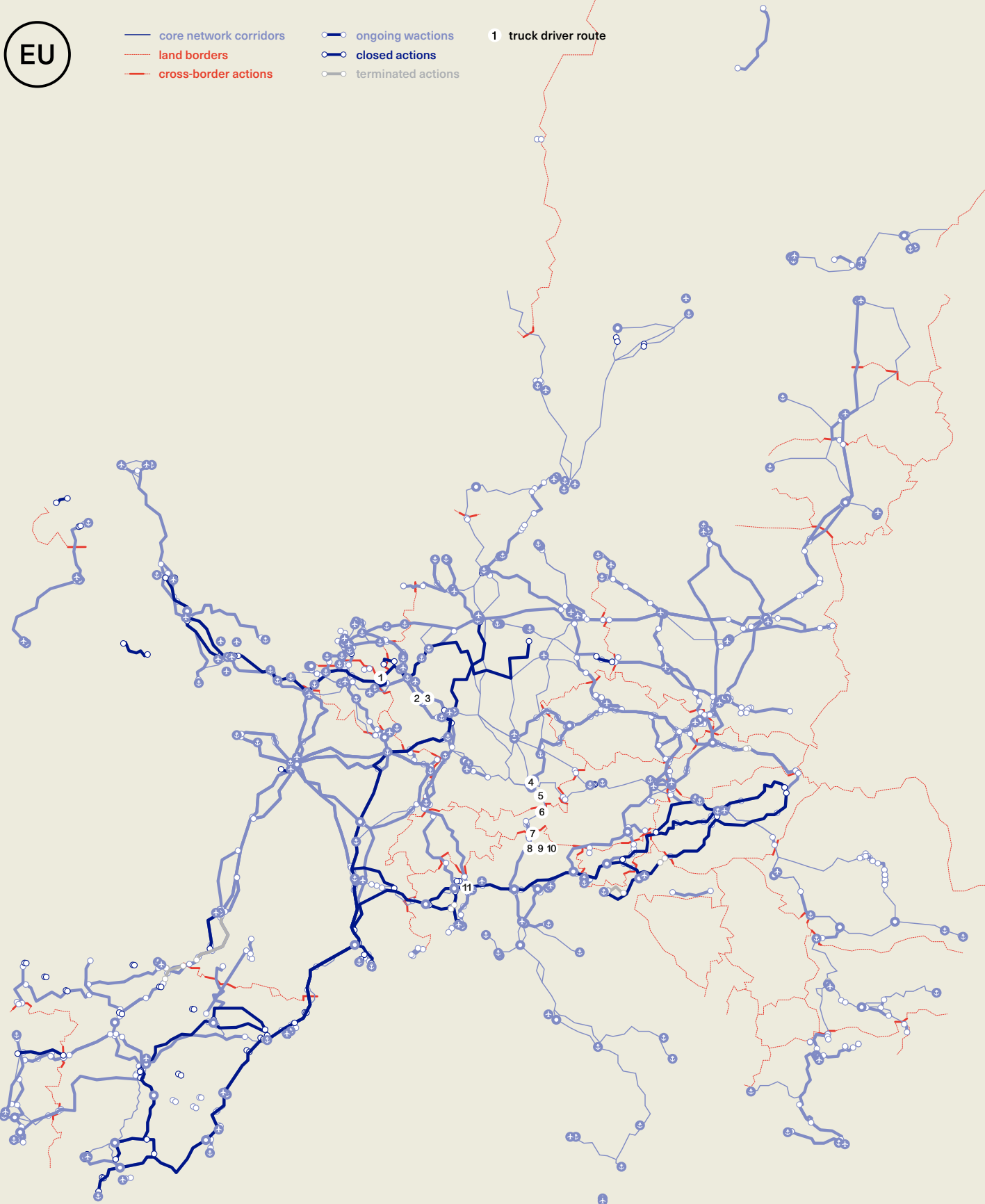
- core network corridors

land borders

cross-border actions
- ongoing wactions

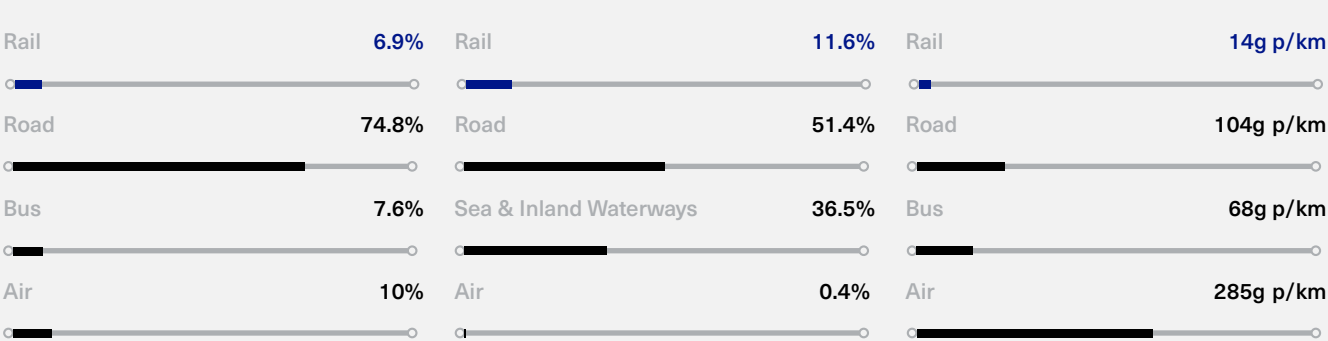
closed actions

terminated actions
- 1 truck driver route

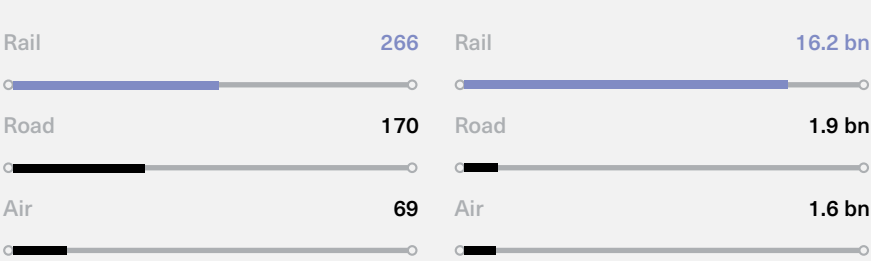


The European Union imagines a bright future for its transport network. Since 2014, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) policy aims to boost growth amongst Member States and contributes to the decarbonisation of the European economy by heavily investing in environmentally friendly transport modes. The programme supports actions to remove bottlenecks, to bridge missing links and to improve cross-border connections. Noteworthy, 72% of the total funding support actions across the railway network, redrawing the shape of the continent.

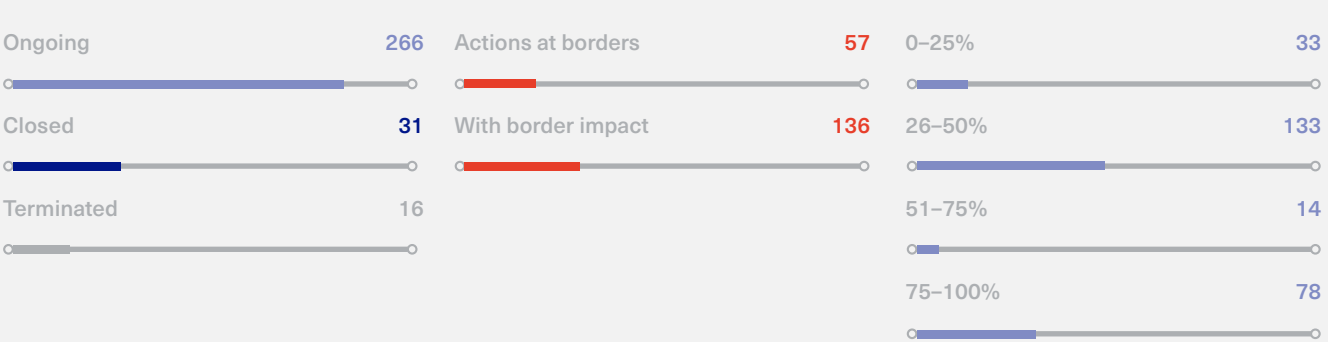
General Transport EU-28 2017



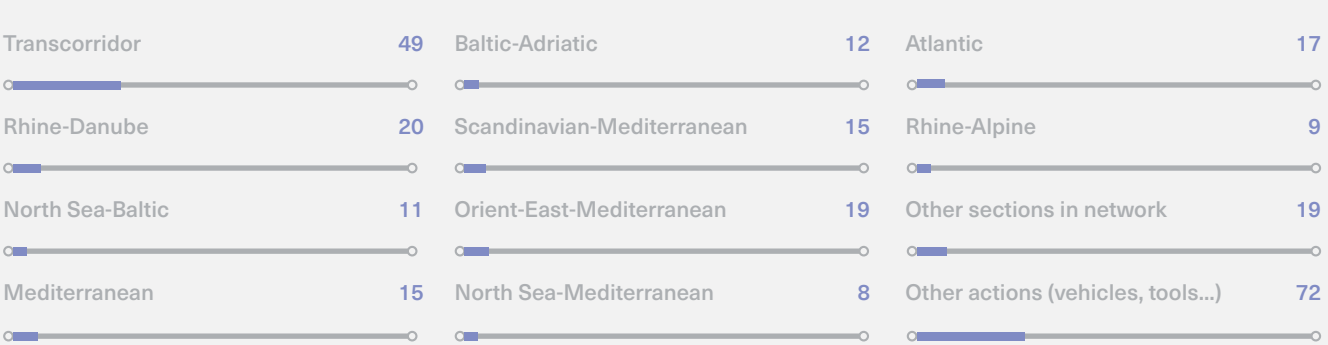
CEF Transport



CEF Rail Actions



Rail actions per transport corridor



1 European Environment Agency (EEA): Modal split of passenger transport in EU-27, 1990–2030.

2 European Environment Agency (EEA): Signals. Towards clean and smart mobility. p.57.

3 Eurostat: Modal split of freight transport, EU-28, 2012 and 2017.

4 Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA): The Connecting Europe Facility, July 2019.

5 Data on CEF Transport actions (rail) extracted online from website by Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA).



Every Thursday the young workers and trainees of European institutions meet for drinks at Place Luxembourg, Plux, in the City of Brussels.
Photo: Commission trainee, 2018 / A Commission trainee was asked to document his image of Europe

YOUTH

↑ anywhere ● the well-off ● the high-achievers ● they value autonomy, mobility and novelty ● they have 'portable, achieved' identities ● they are comfortable and confident with new places and new people: pro-international development, immigration, minority rights ● they have left the area they grew up in ● the post-maastricht generation ● the winners of globalisation ● the erasmus student, the commission worker ● share the european union's official vision: universal ideals and values

Ex-Prime Minister Theresa May popularised the terms anywhere and somewhere in the United Kingdom. These divisive expressions were used as a tool to promote the pro-Brexit speech. Many criticised its simplistic portrayal of reality. The definitions presented are taken from the book *The Road to Somewhere* by David Goodhart.

↓ somewhere ● the instinctively social conservatives and communitarians ● they value group identity, tradition and national social contracts ● they have 'rooted, ascribed' identities ● they feel uncomfortable about many aspects of cultural and economic change: immigration, fluid gender roles, reduced status of non-graduate employment ● they have strong belongings to groups and places ● this is generation identity ● génération identitaire ● identitäre bewegung ● generazione identitaria ● pan-european but anti-eu ● they reject a pluricultural society ● europe must be closed in its outside borders ● and solidary with its inner neighbours

YOUTH

The Italian and French members of the group Generation Identity meet in the Alps to stop undocumented migrants to cross the border.
Photo: Generation Identity, 2018 / Members of Generation Identity were asked to document their image of Europe





THOMAS ROUECHÉ is a writer and the editor of TANK magazine. He is the co-editor of *Lost in Media: Migrant Perspectives and the Public Sphere* (2019). He is a contributing editor at *Cornucopia* magazine. He has worked on editorial projects with the Prince Claus Fund, the European Cultural Foundation, and the Kurdistan Museum, including *Cultural Emergency Response in Conflict and Disaster* (2011) and *African Opera* (2017). He lives and works in Istanbul.

Brexit Questions



This 9 May marks the first Europe Day in which the United Kingdom, following Brexit, will no longer be a member of the European Union. It is thus a moment to pause for thought. As the continent faces, with COVID-19, the worst crisis since the Second World War, we asked four individuals from the UK, grantees of the European Cultural Foundation who have been engaged with challenging Brexit since the beginning, to offer some reflections on where this began, where we are now and where the UK is headed.

LUKE COOPER, CONVENOR, ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE

TR When and how did your work begin to engage with Brexit or the campaign to leave the EU?

LC With others, I founded the Another Europe Is Possible campaign in February 2016. We wanted to create a space and campaigning tool for critical Remain perspectives. Our view was essentially that we did not believe that the EU as it exists today is fit for purpose. We wanted to promote bold and far-reaching progressive reform. But we also recognised that for all its faults the EU had created an institutional structure for cooperation in Europe; and its difficulties reflected the problems of Europe 'as such', i.e. the practical challenge of uniting a culturally and ideologically diverse continent, and could not be solved by an exit from European structures. From an early stage, we had the foresight to see Brexit for what, I'm afraid, it has proven to be: a project deeply mired in nationalistic, nostalgic and, in some cases, authoritarian tendencies. Obsessed with a romantic view of the British past, it lacked imagination as much as it any sense of internationalism and solidarity towards our neighbours.

TR From your perspective how does Brexit look today; how has the debate shifted since you first encountered it?

LC Brexit is best seen as a social conservative reaction to cultural and economic globalisation. But in a form that embraces a still relatively open economic global economy. Its leading supporters have successfully married a hyper-neoliberal, deregulating wing of Conservative Party opinion with a sovereignty-ist and nationalistic one. This means, like other forms of right-wing populism in Europe, it is willing to marry quite eclectic economic and social prescriptions which include-ultra neoliberal remedies with Keynesian and anti-globalist ones. So, for example, the post-Brexit Tory government seek quite high levels of public spending alongside deregulatory initiatives such as 'free ports' (what in the Global South are referred to as 'special economic zones' where tax and regulations do not apply).

The recognition amongst Brexit supporters in the Conservative Party, including in the leadership, that the 'game was up' for austerity politics is probably the most significant change between now and the start of the Brexit debate. This shift allowed Boris Johnson to build a new electoral coalition in December 2019, which included a number of former Labour voters. They were backing what they now saw as an anti-austerity, pro public services but socially conservative party. The COVID-19 crisis will, on the one hand, turbo charge this transformation in the Brexit debate as it requires sweeping state interventions into the economy to save the market from collapse. But, out of sheer necessity faced with these acute economic challenges, it may also require the Conservative Party leadership to pursue a softer form of Brexit than the one they envisioned.

TR How do you see the longer term future of Britain's relationship to the EU; what are your prognostications, or what are your hopes?

LC Britain remains a very polarised country. It is divided more or less equally between people with quite socially conservative views, who are supportive of Brexit, on the one hand, and those with very socially liberal views, who are critical of Brexit, on the other.

Across this divide however there is really quite strong support for economically interventionist policies – a trend that has been developing over a long period. Interestingly, for the country of Margaret Thatcher economic liberalism or neoliberalism is now very much a 'minority support', at least in the public at large.

However, as the cultural divide becomes more important than the traditional left/right one, you would expect the groups on either side to see the COVID-19 crisis through their own lens and framework. Brexit supporters will see it as the third historic indicator – following mass immigration in the early twenty-first century and the financial crisis of 2008 – of the threat cultural globalisation represents to the social cohesion of the British nation. Ironically, of course, given Scotland and Northern Ireland's pro-Remain majority, it is Brexit that represents a major challenge for the political cohesion of the United Kingdom. On the other hand, social liberals will see COVID-19 as the consummate illustration of the need for international cooperation and multilateralism, including with Europe.

It is really quite difficult to see how these sentiments will play out and what they will mean for the eventual Brexit settlement. One could easily imagine the British government resigning itself to a softer form of Brexit, which is easier to negotiate, so as to move on and concentrate on more pressing matters. Similarly, a much longer transitional phase to manage the trade negotiations, such as five years or so, seems plausible. However, it is equally possible that COVID-19 animates, and hardens further, socially conservative, pro-Brexit sentiments.

My hope in this situation is that a sensible compromise is reached around a softer form of Brexit. This would satisfy social liberals by maintaining many of the rights and freedoms we enjoyed to live, travel and work with and across Europe. But it would also implement the decision to leave the EU. A crucial factor in this situation will be how the new Labour leadership is received in the British population, whether they are able to win demands on the government from opposition in these crisis-plagued conditions and, ultimately, build a larger enough electoral tent to recover some of their lost socially conservative voters at the next election. In any case, I suspect, the divide between multicultural cosmopolitans and more nationalist forces is very much here to stay.



EFFIE SAMARA, CHAIR, SCOTLAND IN EUROPE

TR When and how did your work begin to engage with Brexit or the campaign to leave the EU?

ES The campaign of discontent against the EU has always been intrinsic to the British ultra-conservative wing. As early as 2010, British Conservative administrations began to unravel the Human Rights, civic liberties and environmental protections guaranteed by the EU which caused alarm within the legal and academic community. My own activism with Brexit is from a Scottish perspective and started as soon as the referendum took place in 2016 when it became obvious that Scotland was on a totally different path. In both my capacities – as a doctoral researcher at Glasgow University and as an artist – the priority was to create ways of letting our differences speak.

I did this in two ways: Firstly, through theatre, by writing and producing *Lesbos*, a collaborative piece of testimony which brought together European, Syrian and African artists to what became a theatre play about exile, womanhood and Europeaness. Seeking further to create safe spaces of debate, in 2018 I founded Scotland in Europe under the umbrella of THINKING SCOTLAND. Scotland in Europe is a civic exercise in pursuing a process of shared enquiry asking ourselves what it means to be European, Scottish, excluded or silent in the context of political engagement and meaningful participation.

TR From your perspective how does Brexit look today; how has the debate shifted since you first encountered it?

ES Brexit was never one thing. It was rather an idiosyncratic British psychopathology, aimlessly seeking to invigorate British post-colonial identity. You only have to watch pre-Brexit clips of politicians pretending to ‘promise the sunny uplands’ of Brexit to see what a collective nervous breakdown the whole thing is. Promises of access to the Single Market, imaginary guarantees of ‘unbroken trade flows’ and claims that Britain would keep on enjoying every aspect of European benefit without any obligation were some of the pre-Brexit ingredients easily marketable to the wide audiences of British television and the daily press.

Four and a half years on from the referendum, it is clear that the United Kingdom will soon be disunited. The Irish and Scottish election results are resolutely pointing in the direction of Scottish Independence and the reopening of the Irish question with the Good Friday Agreement practically decimated. Brexit, the romantic imaginary of England’s imperial amputation, is now hostage in the hands of a morally questionable far-right wing government in Westminster, whose belief in ‘herd immunity’ and ‘behavioural science’ supersedes any notion of public service or national wellbeing. The sudden onset of a pandemic with the COVID-19 crisis, is bound to force them to change course but the trauma of lost exceptionalism and the psychic legacy of empire will continue to haunt the English until they find the courage to see past the illusion.

TR How do you see the longer term future of Britain’s relationship to the EU; what are your prognostications, or what are your hopes?

ES Britain and England are two separate entities. Britain as an imperial power began to die after WWII and England is finding it hard to deal with this loss. My view is that, as long as the country is led by the present

administration, there will be a period of instability, unrest and serious division. The rhetoric of resurrecting Empire Two and becoming global leaders is grotesque. It corresponds neither to the size nor to the financial positioning of England: a medium sized country dependent only on its obsession with free-market and unregulated economic and institutional tax-avoidance schemes. The Commonwealth have already distanced themselves from the folly by prioritising European trade and cooperation and the US administration’s self-absorption will only serve to highlight British smallness in a newly discovered unfriendly world.

My hope for the future is for an independent Scotland back in with her European family. This may take some time and there will be variants at play, but Scotland belongs in Europe, both culturally and politically. It continues to lead in initiatives on well-being, Human Rights and the environment. I do hope that England will remain close to both European ideals and the fairness and protections afforded by the Single Market. Whatever the short-term effects of Brexit, historically and geographically they will have to find their way back to growing together within a union of equals. Right now, they claim to be better than anyone else, too British, too exceptional to concede the obvious. In time, they will discover that behind every great Empire lies an even greater illusion.



3

MADELEINA KAY, ANTI-BREXIT CAMPAIGNER

TR When and how did your work begin to engage with Brexit?

MK I started campaigning against Brexit the day after the UK’s vote to leave the EU. I had never believed that so many people would actually support such a nationalist ideology, so I was shocked and devastated by the result. Since I found out about the illegalities of the Leave campaign and the restricted voted franchise, I have become more motivated to fight a corrupt and hugely damaging development in British politics. My activism began online, joining Facebook groups and sharing content: protest songs I had written and cartoons I had drawn. I started attending marches and performing at events and rallies. I also wrote, illustrated and crowdfunded my first children’s book about refugees, which was sold in aid of charity.

Since then I have self-published six further texts, and written and recorded over twenty protest songs, filming music videos and performing at events. I was awarded ‘Young European of the Year’ by the Schwarzkopf Foundation in 2018 and completed my tour of the EU28 in 2019 thanks to the Democracy Needs Imagination grant from the European Cultural Foundation. From my tour, I created a documentary including all the interviews I had filmed with fellow activists, and a book including all my artwork, both titled *The Future is Europe*.

TR From your perspective how does Brexit look today; how has the debate shifted since you first encountered it?

MK Now that Brexit has occurred, the situation in the UK is one of toxic euroscepticism and the media is dominated by nationalist narratives. It is a frightening time to be someone who identifies as European in the UK: anti-migrant rhetoric is commonplace, coming from our own prime minister, and there are rising incidents of hate crime against migrants and refugees. When I first started to campaign against Brexit, the movement was smaller but much more positive and hopeful of change. I was one of very few young people campaigning, and that situation improved negligibly throughout the three years. The media narrative was dominated by the stereotypical old, white, male political commentator from privileged backgrounds and the youth were quite frankly bored to death of the tedious squabbling over Brexit in the news – which was one of many reasons I tried to take a more creative and engaging approach to my activism.

However, the pro-EU movement in the UK was hijacked by the People’s Vote campaign (which was not pro EU, nor even anti-Brexit, maintaining that they were ‘neutrally’ campaigning for a second referendum). The campaign was led by the same people who organised the passionless, facts-based, failed StrongerIN Campaign before the referendum. Instead of learning from their mistakes, they continued them and actively shut down activists/campaigns who were trying to take an alternative approach. The People’s Vote campaign then self-destructed in a bitter infight just before the 2019 General Election and let down all of their supporters and the Remain movement which had put their faith behind them. This has left the anti-Brexit forces bitter, divided and ultimately devastated that we failed to stop Brexit in the narrow window we had to change the course of British history. Meanwhile,

the Brexiters gloat about their ‘success’ on and off-line, demanding that all Remainers, with pro EU values must now ‘accept’ and ‘get behind’ the nationalist ideology of Brexit. On 31 January I attended the protest in Parliament Square and immediately after leaving the Westminster tube station a man shouted angrily in my face ‘You’ve wasted three years of your life! They’re all going home now!’

I later saw Brexiters burning the EU flag on Whitehall. The media narrative is now overwhelmingly Eurosceptic, especially the BBC, which is being held to ransom by the government threatening to remove the licence fee. People who hold pro EU values are no-platformed and federalism is seen as a dirty word that can’t be uttered. As a result we are seeing record numbers of Brexit ‘fleeing’ to Europe, people I would consider ‘cultural refugees’ because their European identity is being threatened. There is also no funding for pro EU campaigning in the UK anymore so it is near impossible to sustain any activism.

TR How do you see the longer term future of Britain’s relationship to the EU; what are your prognostications, or what are your hopes?

MK Realistically, I believe our recklessly irresponsible government will pursue the hardest Brexit possible. We have already seen them leave valuable partnerships such as the EASA, against all rational argument and expert advice, in an act of contrariness driven by nationalist ideology. I expect this pattern of decision making to continue, meanwhile Eurosceptic rhetoric and anti-migrant hate will be cemented into the national culture. We might also see the break-up of the UK, reunification of Ireland and Scottish independence, with Scotland ultimately re-joining the EU as an independent nation.

I would ultimately hope that after suffering the devastating impacts of Brexit, the younger generations would come to the realisation that Brexit was a catastrophic mistake and would then lead a movement to take the UK back into the EU. But this is a very optimistic hope and not a realistic possibility for the next decade. In the meantime I would suggest all young Brits who still believe in a European vision for the future leave this toxic nationalist island, although of course, Brexit will make that escape much harder to realise.



4

NEAL LAWSON,
CHAIR, COMPASS

TR When and how did your work begin to engage with Brexit or the campaign to leave the EU?

NL Compass has worked for many years developing ideas and building bridges with progressives across the EU. Despite being very pro-European, in the year running up to Brexit we focused on the notion of what we called a 'Good Europe' rather than taking sides – there were a lot of resources behind the Yes Campaign but not much on the case for Yes. After the vote we worked on a report called *The Causes and Cures of Brexit* – to try and understand why the vote happened and how we could address the causes of Brexit other than just campaigning to hold another vote, which there were a lot of organisations doing. The scale and complexity of the UK Brexit position and the impasse in parliament led us to campaign for a Citizens Assembly for Brexit, which in turn led us to the Up to Us campaign to use an assembly to reset the UK's broken democracy.

TR From your perspective how does Brexit look today (that is, between now and 9 May); how has the debate shifted since you first encountered it?

NL The COVID-19 crisis changes everything. Brexit from being ubiquitous in UK discourse is now hardly mentioned. Leaving will now almost certainly be delayed and no one knows for how long. Whether the mood in the UK emerges the other side as more pro or anti Europe remains to be seen. We have certainly seen the return

of the nation state – but much depends what of relevance to people's lives the EU can now do to encourage a refocus around the UK's relationship with Europe.

TR How do you see the longer term future of Britain's relationship to the EU; what are your prognostications, or what are your hopes?

NL Everything is now in flux. We undoubtedly face a future of greater collectivism, but its form is up for grabs. It can be authoritarian and elitist or democratic and egalitarian. Everything will depend on who creates a new common sense and how. Likewise, the relationship between the European, the national and the local.

My hope is that the UK learns the lessons of the referendum vote and that we find ways to give people some greater control back over their lives. That this loss of control was skewed towards the EU was down to three things:

- The loss of sovereignty and democratic voice many felt;
- The skill of the Leave campaign in mobilising those concerns;
- The failure of pro Europeans in the UK and the EU to provide convincing answers to either the obvious democratic deficit as powers have passed to Brussels, or the vision and role of the EU to create better societies

We can put these things right. As a series of crises now hits everyone in Europe, whether you are in the EU or not, from banking, to housing and climate and back to other pandemics, the only hope we have is in and with each other. This new need for solidarity must be expressed in our homes and streets, our nations and across Europe.

5



IT'S BLOODY COMPLICATED

Compass works for a good society through ideas, actions, and events.

6

KICK
OUT
THE
TORIES

STOP
BREXIT

ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE

- 1 Image courtesy of Another Europe is Possible
- 2 Image courtesy of Another Europe is Possible
- 3 Image courtesy of Effie Samara
- 4 Image courtesy of Madeleine Kay
- 5 Image courtesy of brexitcentral.com
- 6 Image courtesy of Compass
- 7 Image courtesy of Another Europe is Possible

7

Librebook: Bookstore in Brussels

It's been the received wisdom for some time now that the bookshop as we know and love it, is dead. That in the face of competition from Amazon and other digital sites, the humble bookshop is a thing of the past. After all, what can a bookshop do that the famous algorithms of Silicon Valley haven't been able to replicate?

But somehow, paper books and brick-and-mortar bookstores have remained resilient. Indeed, in a world of increasing globalisation, the emphasis a high-street bookshop can place on locality and community seems ever more important. One such bookshop is Brussels' Librebook, which is fast becoming an unofficial institution in the city. Librebook, however, is not your usual bookshop, rather it attempts to channel what its founder, Antonio Parodi, calls the 'Brussels State of Mind' by reflecting the polyglot realities of Europe's unofficial capital.

For Parodi, this project is personal. He founded Librebook five years ago, after a long career working in Brussels as a European advisor. An Italian by birth, his wife is German and his children speak three languages. Librebook was for him an attempt to build a bookshop that reflected this very particular city. 'Brussels has a very particular type of multiculturalism. There are many multicultural cities in Europe – say London, Berlin, Rome or Paris – but in each there is a dominant culture and language. Brussels is different in that there is no such predominant national culture. Perhaps in some way it's a type of multiculturalism that could be a model for other cities.'

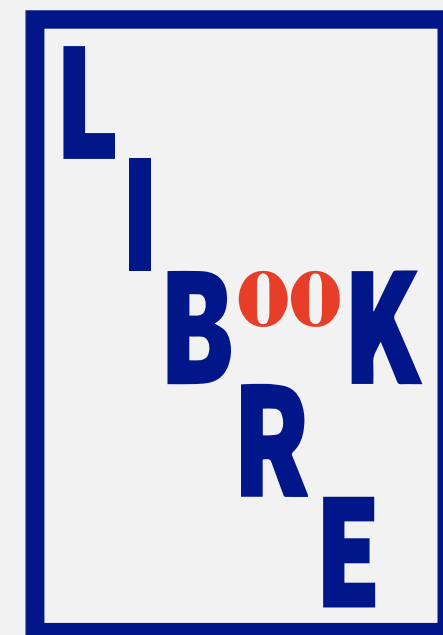
Parodi's personal touch pervades all aspects of the bookshop, something of which he has become particularly aware since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. 'Yesterday I was fulfilling some orders and I was thinking about how our diverse selection of books really competes with an algorithm. It's linked to the growth of our community as a bookshop, people who come to us to try something different rather than get more of the same. Even with the bookshop shut I've noticed we've had four or five new customers a day through word of mouth. We keep in touch with our community through social media and customers can order books by email.'

Librebook puts great store by introducing its customers and clients to new things. 'We try to work with promoting less known literary cultures,' explains Parodi, 'specifically from smaller countries. We bring together people who read and write different languages and discuss our contemporary issues – such exchange is important for us.' In curating the selection of books Parodi seeks to show literary production by country but also to show the diversity within each language. 'We stock a lot of migrant literature – that is to say, people coming from completely different languages or backgrounds who find themselves in a new country and start to write in the language of that new country.'

Beyond the remarkable achievements that Librebook has already achieved, Parodi has wider ambitions. 'My aim is to find a small but significant model that can be reproduced in other contexts. Of course there are similar international bookshops in other cities around the world. But I want to create a model by understanding what the obstacles are, and how we can improve circulation within the literary world; a model I can discuss with the European Commission. We face big issues when it comes to competition with a company like Amazon which is based primarily on quantity of sales over quality; and for whom selling data is as important as selling books. For us, the cost of shipping remains very high. For small independent bookshops and publishers there are a lot of constraints and obstacles that can only be tackled at the European level.'

Parodi is a case-study in the importance of imagination, culture and literature. Librebook is a very European project – one that responds to, and celebrates,

the unique context of Brussels with its combination of multiculturalism and localism. 'A bookshop contributes to human development. It's always about thinking. You contribute by not just offering certain books but by showing the crossing of culture.' But still there is work to be done. Parodi remarks that many of the best works of contemporary European literature find their way into English through American translations. 'We rely on the US to access so much European literature. Translation is important – it allows lesser-known authors to circulate more widely. This needs to happen more in Europe itself. And at Librebook we try to make a very small contribution to that.'





Not All Hope is Lost

'I've cleaned the snow from your pavement meanwhile you were protesting. Thank you for standing up for democracy on my behalf as well.' – a message found at a gate of a protester in December 2018. All of us remember those weeks when braving sub-zero temperatures, thousands took the street protesting against a proposed labour law. When day by day, more and more people went out to the streets all over the country and after almost 10 years, they were not afraid to raise their voice against the autocratic regime. It was the time when we all started believing that there's hope for change. As we are not alone and we are more than we thought.

In the midst of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late March, international media once again focused their attention on Hungary and on the so-called Authorisation Act which was pushed through the Parliament by Viktor Orbán's government. Once again, Hungary was in the spotlight, and a new item was added to the long list where the government's actions resulted in the country appearing in the negative light of increasing authoritarianism and lack of commitment to EU values. Many label Hungary as a dictatorship, others just look at it as a lost case. And while such an appreciation is valid when it comes to the government, its generalisation to the entire population is neither right nor fair.

ORBÁN DOES NOT SPEAK FOR ALL HUNGARIANS

In 2010, Fidesz regained the democratic authority to govern the country with a two-thirds majority. Voters put their trust into them and into the institution they hoped would represent them. But they have abused this trust and altered the rules of the game, making sure to remain in power even though their support has dropped during the last years. Abusing this trust and the potential of a two-third majority is particularly painful, as after the regime change in 1989 these laws were passed with the intention that decision-making, in any case, should be based on political consensus. Ever since, there was no other government which would have abused this power.

Therefore, by doing so, Orbán has put the first nail in the coffin of rule of law and has been building his whole system on the basis of abusing this two-thirds majority. What we see today instead of rule of law, by any means, seems more like rule by law. Thus when Fidesz is quick to point a finger at how the Parliament is still democratically functioning, we need to remember that they use this majority as a carte blanche to flout rule of law and erode the democratic fabric of the country. They are also undermining the integrity of democratic institutions and elected officials. From the Constitutional Court

having a majority of Fidesz loyalists to the Attorney General's office ignoring corruption cases related to the governing party, all essential checks and balances have been undermined.

This is amplified by the governmental control on public media that became a mouthpiece of government propaganda and the capture of an overwhelming share of the country's private media. As a result, a big share of the country's population, especially in rural areas, has only access to media which are owned by Fidesz oligarchs, therefore even if they would like to be informed from different sources, those are the easiest and sometimes the only ones available.

Last important piece of the puzzle: using its supermajority, Fidesz redesigned the electoral system in their favour, meaning that a smaller number of seats could be awarded to smaller and non-incumbent parties and giving more of the total seats to the victorious party. This makes it very difficult for the opposition to reach significant results as the system is mainly benefiting the strongest party at the time of voting. These are just a few examples of the measures that have allowed Orbán to cement his power and give the impression that while there are a few vocal opposing forces, the population supports him. Reality is more complex, as a big part of the population has turned away from politics and their silence strengthens Fidesz.



However, it is not a glaring phenomenon that people feel disenfranchised and lost their trust in politics and politicians, especially after the 2008 economic crisis. Thousands have lost their jobs, their homes and were left on the side of the road without any help and most of them are still not even being acknowledged by the government. On top of that, people do not believe anymore that Fidesz can be replaced through elections, as after their third landslide victory in 2018, an unprecedented dismay swept through the country.

INCIPIT MOMENTUM

Momentum was born out of the same disenfranchisement that so many other Hungarians are feeling. As young graduates, we felt like that no one was representing us and we did not believe that any of the opposition parties could be an alternative to Fidesz. We did not see any governability and credible representation. We did not want to put up with our fates, but to take destiny into our own hands.

Therefore, we decided to act instead. We felt like it was our responsibility to try for a political-cultural and political elite change. We also had the freedom to do so. We could have easily chosen to go or stay abroad, but we felt that if all the highly educated young people went abroad, then Hungary would sink even deeper. We realised that it is not us who should leave the country to live a better and more free life, but it is the government that should be ousted to be able to live the life we want to, but in our own country.

After the general elections in 2018, many people felt defeated and disillusioned. We felt the same and it was really hard to see that despite the dedication and determination, we could not prevent a 2/3 majority. However, what lifted our spirits back was that in the following weeks, many people wanted to join, which showed that our work meant a lot to people and maybe slowly, but we will make that change happen.

And what is our secret? We walk the talk.

We don't believe in cheap politicking, we don't think we can change the world from tv studios or through press conferences. What we believe in is community building, dialogues, constructive discussions instead of just telling people what they should think. We ask questions and we listen. We bring people together and show through street activism how much can actually depend on us, and just on us. So, this was the Momentum recipe: innovating and turning into an advantage the limitations imposed on us by our very limited resources and the hostile environment created by Orbán's system with no access to traditional campaigning channels. While the government was omnipresent in traditional media, we spent countless weeks touring the country, meeting local communities, and working with our amazing volunteers across the country. While the country was covered with governmental

billboards, we were out on social media harnessing the power of innovative communication tools such as specific Momentum animated GIFs, live Q&As or Instagram stories. And our community has not stopped growing because we offer an inclusive atmosphere which helps its members to grow, and shows them that doing politics is fun. Our method was confirmed during the European elections. Despite the opinion polls, what we did resonated with the people and we reached a result of 10%, allowing my colleague Katalin Cseh and myself to be the first two elected officials of the party. In the local elections of last autumn we saw further success both in Budapest and in the countryside.

LOOKING AHEAD

14 December 2018. I will never forget that date as I spent a night in police custody for holding a smoke flare while protesting. When I asked my father the day after whether he was worried he smiled and said 'Why would I? You are the third generation of politicians in our family who get imprisoned for fighting for democracy.' This was the moment when I finally understood, each generation has the chance, the right, and the duty to do it better. To fight for what they believe in.

As a new political generation, we ought to build a solid and coherent vision for our country, a vision that underpins our message and helps people embrace our identity, our new political culture and our very own way to engage with them. Our party is first and foremost a movement with activists working hard online and offline, building an enthusiastic community with a clear message capable of bringing hope to people.

During the next elections, it will be our task to spread this hope, break away from political apathy and harness the tremendous amount of discontent and wish for change present in society. We must build a future together with the Hungarian society, towards a self-confident and truly democratic country that doesn't leave parts of its citizens behind and which plays a constructive and central role at the heart of Europe.

Hungary is not a lost case. A whole new generation has grown up since the transition in 1989. Being a member of the European Union is neither questioned nor an economic issue for us but a part of our identity. We are European and we share its values.





SCHERZO IN B-FLAT MINOR

TOMAS VAISETA

ILLUSTRATIONS Sjoerd van Leeuwen

He is woken by the telephone. His head as if made of lead lies buried in the soft down pillow. The ringing doesn't stop, he sighs and turns with difficulty onto his side, feeling the wrinkled sheet move with him. The ringing stops but starts up again after a few minutes. If he manages to stay lying like that for another hour perhaps they'll lose patience and stop or think that he's not at home and become alarmed: where could he have disappeared to at eight in the morning? And most importantly – how could he have got out without being noticed? He doesn't expect to fall asleep again but needs to stop thinking about the irritating sound of the telephone otherwise he'll start to worry and break out into a sticky sweat, his bedclothes will get damp and it'll become unbearable to go on lying in the bed. But he must not get up: if they hear his footsteps, the game will be over, they will realise he's at home and not picking up the receiver on purpose. That will be enough for them to continue ringing for at least another hour or two. Boring, predictable bastards. After a break of several days the ringing had started up again this morning unusually early. Is it possible that he'd managed to fool them? He tried to remember to whom he'd explained his supposed plan over recent days, to whom and in what kind of intonation, with what kind of an expression on his face, how much secrecy he had put into his words, and how much lack of concern. And, as it happens, his plan, the real plan, and not the one he was putting about, had worked if they were phoning him so zealously.

Perhaps what gives them and their nervousness away most are the intervals in the stream of calls. They are considerably shorter, more impatient, and demanding. And then suddenly the calls break off. Even though he tries not to pay any attention to the telephone, he waits for the instrument to spread its mechanical din again after a pause of several minutes and penetrate into all the corners of the flat.



But the pause extends into the silence of Tuesday morning. A silence which consists of the usual, easily recognizable, inevitable noises of the city. What can this silence mean? That he is the winner of this morning's game? But perhaps they are still playing? Perhaps they have started another game? His need to go to the toilet becomes more pressing and he now realizes he won't be able to keep to the same tactic. His heavy body will soon have to navigate the parquet floor and someone's eardrums or the vibrating needle of the recording device will be able to determine that two feet are moving through the flat. The telephone may ring again before he manages to get to the bathroom. If it becomes impossible for him not to reveal his cards, he can make their job a little harder: he slowly manages to clamber out of the depression in the bed and, instead of turning in the direction of the door, he creeps up to the window sill. To his left, untouched by the morning light, there are three tall record towers. He knows perfectly well that what he needs will not be on top amongst the most frequently played of his records. He forces himself to bend down and begins to draw his fingers across the bottom edges of the shelves of the middle tower, trying to make out the colours in the half-light. A dark blue cover with fragments of black and white piano keys is squeezed in at the very bottom; he takes firm hold of the edge and pulls the record out carefully. The gramophone, threatening and friendly at the same time, is there, jutting out as always, next to the tower. Sometimes the desire wells up in him to stroke the curved gramophone horn as if it were the head of a tenacious, humble, faithful steed. However, he has never allowed himself to give in to this desire of his, because he strives to preserve the principle, which now seems more like a superstition, that becoming attached to things, and in particular the demonstration of affection and love for them, would be like a human being turning into a thing. Or reverting to childhood. He did not want to be either a thing or a child but the gramophone brings up warm feelings in him which he is afraid to lose.

Chopin and I are now going to play for you. He detested Chopin. The fight to the death that had taken place in Chopin's soul from birth to death between his innate Slavicism and the Westernism that had been grafted onto him caused either sadness or contempt or anxiety because every composition – he really could not find any exceptions – was witness not so much to a battle but a pre-programmed crushing of Westernism and the triumph of elemental Slavicism. In his youth he

viewed Chopin as a battlefield, as a warning sign and no more than that but now he only saw a straightforward, fatalistic illustration of his everyday existence. Chopin, desperately pressing on the piano keys, spread historical determinism which he himself had refused to accept. In the same way as he refused to allow the everyday to enter him. He hopes that they also hate Chopin, even though for entirely different reasons: he pulls a black circle from out of the dark blue paper sleeve and puts it on the flatness of the turntable. From the gramophone horn, widening out like a tulip blossom, pour out the notes of the dramatic beginning of the Scherzo in B-flat minor. The sounds, reminding one of the sound of a hammer, will not mask what he does but he hopes the sound of his steps in time with the music will make it harder for them to make out what is really happening. Or at least will raise in them the unfounded suspicion that the music is hiding something more than him moving from point A to point B. An unfounded suspicion in this game is his one and only trump card which he must not allow to slip out of his hands.

He tiptoes out of the room and, making his way along the dark corridor, reaches the bathroom. He has hardly put his hand on the door handle, when he hears a ring. This time it's the doorbell. At this time? What sort of a game is this? The doorbell rings several more times. He turns around and, dragging his feet, makes his way to the hallway. He puts his ear against the upholstered door. His friends had long ago suggested that he drill a spyhole into the door but the thought would not go away that it was possible not only to look out through it but also for someone to look in. There is nothing to hear from the other side of the door: the doorbell rings again. He takes the chain off and turns the key in the lock twice. Juliya is waiting on the other side of the threshold. As always, she is in a good mood, only with a worried look fixed on her face which contrasted with her young age, pale skin, and child-like eyes. The artificial expression on her face could make her appear beautiful. But there was no beauty in her face because there was no real concern to be seen on it. She slides in and shuts the door behind her. Why was he not picking up the telephone, she enquires, unbuttoning her short coat made of a grey-coloured coarse material which he is supposed to help her take off like a gentleman following a ritual agreed between them and hang it in the hallway wardrobe. And why had she been phoning, he asks, answering her question with a question very politely, even though both of them know that trying to get anything



out of him, even when it came to mundane matters, would only irritate him. It turns out she had other urgent matters to attend to at lunch time and had wanted to warn him that today she would be coming a good deal earlier than usual and did not want to come by unannounced. You know, he says smiling, I'm always home at this time, where else am I going to be? Besides that, I've told you more than once you should feel at home here and you could never be an unwelcome visitor. Yes, she remembered all his words and had put them into her heart but surely he did not believe that she would really start behaving as if this were her home. Julija laughs modestly. With a wave of his hand, he indicates that he has to go to the end of the corridor without any further delay and finish what he had set out to do. They can speak after that.

As for Julija's visits, which took place on every even day of the week and had been going on for over a year, he could not remember a single time she had come earlier than usual – at lunch time - without having given prior notice at least several days in advance. Over all that time she had not once been caught out at lunch time by some unplanned or urgent matter. It is true that she had been late a few times, delayed at the university or library but that was understandable. As it was, he was amazed by her punctuality and would joke that it was not she who planned her life according to the clock but the clock to her. Coming out of the bathroom he hears the sound of dishes in the kitchen, drowning out the measure towards the end of the first part of the Scherzo in B-flat minor. What urgent matters could have interfered with Julija's exemplary punctuality? Of course, there could be a hundred reasons but that does not diminish his doubts. On the contrary – his suspicions are only increased. Perhaps it really is true that Julija was forced to come to his house earlier than usual by something that couldn't be put off, and that something is him. Perhaps it was they who had sent Julija? Perhaps Julija is a part of the game? They could have decided to use new methods in order to try his patience this morning. Or the usual everyday noises he made dissolving into the music of Chopin had knocked them off track and they wanted to know what he was up to? He tried to look at Julija's recent behaviour with fresh eyes: had anything changed? Because it was not possible that she'd been working as their representative from the very beginning. That simply could not be possible. He didn't believe it. If she had been introduced into the game, her behaviour would have changed at some point – she was too young to be able to hide that she'd become a player.

As soon as he appears in the doorway of the kitchen, Julija immediately begins to interrogate him. He no longer has any doubts that this morning's game is continuing, only with new players, additional rules, and hidden twists. She'd been phoning him for such a long time since the early morning but he hadn't picked up the receiver. Why? She was frightened that something might have happened to him. At your age, if you don't mind me saying so, there are risks, and your silence can frighten people who love you. It can frighten those who don't love me as well, the words almost slip out, but he, of course, stops himself. Was he troubled by the fact that Julija has shown herself to be a player? Perhaps. On the other hand, the game has taken on a new aspect, although surprises like that are not new to him. He thinks about how far they can go and understands the most important thing now is to play today's match. You were probably asleep when I was phoning you, says Julija turning towards him for the first time from the kitchen table Perhaps it was difficult for you to get up, but you don't want to admit it? She smiles. No, he hadn't been sleeping, he hadn't slept all night because he was writing. What were you writing, asks Julija, turning her whole body around, seemingly very interested. For a brief moment he considers whether to delay things or give her what she has been sent to get. I was writing a book which I would call my intellectual testament although I'm not going to be talking in it about myself at all. And what about then, she shoots off another question quicker than an experienced player would, one who should not reveal his or her impatience. This impatience of hers finally proves to him that only scoundrels would draw children into their stupid games. He firmly presses his lips tightly together and shrugs. This was the sign they had agreed on: you understand I can't say this aloud. This was the sign agreed on yesterday when he felt he could still completely count on Julija. She nods, comes up to the window, pushes out her small head and from her mouth made into an oval shape exhales a gust of warm air. A white cloud forms on the glass which is still cold from the morning. He understands this manoeuvre from yesterday. He walks across the kitchen and tapping his finger on the glass he scrawls: *It's about Matas*. He then looks closely through the window at the half-empty café across the street: one of them had been settled in there from the early morning and that someone should now be burning with curiosity.

Julija departs two hours later, leaving behind a pot of stuffed cabbage rolls: there'll be more than enough for today and tomorrow, even if you have visitors. He sits down on a stool by the pot of stuffed cabbage rolls and can hear the gramophone in the other room still playing Chopin's Scherzo in B-flat minor. It seems the record's stuck. It's strange that he hadn't noticed that before. The middle part was now playing, full of typically Chopinesque lyricism, which was what he could not stand most of all. Even though he now remembers: some things in the composition fascinated him – the melody of the Polish Christmas hymn 'Sleep, Little Jesus' had been masterfully woven into it. Could they recognize that? Had they ever heard anything by Chopin? And what about 'Sleep, Little Jesus'? He very much wants for someone at this very moment on the other side of the wall to be listening to it, a refined music connoisseur, who would think that the composition had not been chosen by chance, that by putting on this record he is trying to needle them with gentle irony. And if that connoisseur had heard the interpretation favoured by Poles, that in writing this particular composition Chopin had supposedly been strongly affected by the uprising that had begun in Poland and that it would most probably have been seen as an open demonstration of his support, with a group of armed soldiers about to break into his home at any moment. But nothing like that is about to happen. Those blockheads aren't likely to understand anything, not even if he himself were to explain everything to them, never mind about leaving any subtle clues. They look at reality not as a literary text but as an official document and demand the same of everyone else. All metaphors, metonyms, allusions and ambiguities are a crime against the state, punishable by death.

He sits for a good half hour but during that time not even the middle part of the Scherzo in B-flat minor has ended. It's not even half-way through. His thoughts about Chopin have put him into such a reverie he has missed the fact that the composition is being played once again and not for the first time. He re-focuses and tries to follow the whole composition. It has been a long time since he had listened to it carefully. It could be that since his return from exile he has never devoted any time to Chopin, even though it was out of his passion as a collector that he acquired this recording. He tries to recreate the composer's notes which had been engraved on the staves of his brain in his youth and tries to guess which chord will follow the one now playing. The lyrical

part of the composition is proceeding at a normal tempo – not too fast and not too slow. But somehow never finishes. A more dramatic sound interferes with the gently flowing notes but the music does not continue to the final fragment in which, as in all of Chopin's scherzo compositions, expressive, sharp chords heard at the beginning return with greater force. He sits there for an hour, for two, and, it seems, he does not even lose his concentration for a moment, even though at his age that requires a huge effort. The middle part is followed by the second half. But that's all. The fragment itself, which without any breaks, repetitions, or prolongation does not last for more than five minutes, continues, coming out of the gramophone horn for at least two hours. Even though he does not turn toward the window, he can sense that the bright morning has changed into a cloudy and windy January afternoon. The pale reflected shafts of light jump around the kitchen as if they cannot grasp the complex rhythm of the music. It will soon be getting dark.

He hadn't listened to Chopin for as many years as he hadn't seen his brother. It seems to him it would be accurate to say that even though he didn't know where that comparison would be likely to lead. Most probably nowhere, absolutely nowhere. He is surprised to realize that the middle part of the Scherzo in B-minor is finally coming to an end and, perhaps, it would finally be followed in a couple of hours by the coda. He is used to sitting in one spot for hours on end and searching for answers. For the thousandth version of an answer. He would sit as he sat the last time with his brother in a café on a hot day in June until nightfall, and then all night until dawn. He would sit and look for one more answer to his question, to which he had failed at the time to give an answer. However, today for the first time it occurs to him how pointless it is to look for that answer. Is that somehow connected to Chopin? Hardly. His sitting there this afternoon becomes just sitting. A pointless killing of time. Like all those other times when frozen in one position, he would voluntarily return to the closed circle turning in his head. Running in a closed circle became the only possible way of escaping from them. Even though he often could not shake off the feeling that he was running for them, because of them, with them. That the game with them is the only answer that he had been able to come up with over several decades. That by playing with them he is continuously answering his brother. But if it was pointless to look for an answer, it would seem that to play with them is also pointless, his plan to

From Tomas Vaiseta's collection of short stories *Paukščių miegas* (Sleep of the Birds. Vilnius: Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla (Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing Company), 2014), p.72–81

© Tomas Vaiseta, 2014
© Lietuvos rašytojų sąjungos leidykla (Lithuanian Writers' Union Publishing Company), 2014

© Translation by Romas Kinka, 2020

Translated from the Lithuanian by Romas Kinka

constantly keep up the tension, falsely raising their suspicions that he is writing something, something very powerful and dangerous – was also just as pointless like everything else, as pointless as letting them think that he has become addicted to this futile game, has become dependent on the deceitful acts that he meticulously plans every day, on listening if they were listening to him, as if he is dependent on them, who – without him noticing it – had planted this answer, perhaps even the other question, perhaps even the way he has viewed the world all of his conscious life, perhaps even his life story. He feels that he has turned everything upside down in his head and is trying to explain the causes by way of the consequences but this explanation seems the only correct one since 'correct' here means only that only one of the truths exists. All the reflected shafts of light have died away and darkness is entering his apartment from the city as if projected from a cinema screen. He even flinches when he understands how closely his ears are following the sounds of the piano snaking their way in from the other room and how he had been waiting for the final part of the composition which has just burst into the kitchen, bringing with it a tragedy which has not been blunted over the last century and a half.

More of the music comes flooding in, becoming fiercer and fiercer: how spacious must his rooms be if the sounds flooding in in an ever-wider stream are unable to fill them, if the notes disappear as if thrown into a boundless wasteland. He would like the final chords to pile up in his apartment and not leave the slightest space, not allowing him to stand, move, breathe, live. He wants the notes being thrown out like sharp knives to pierce the walls and cut down all those who are being forced to listen to Chopin with him. However, even the tiny kitchen, in which it is difficult for even just two people to move around, seems to swell, and having devoured the darkness, is getting ready to devour all of the music as well. The pot of stuffed cabbage rolls is still standing there. He hasn't eaten anything all day but doesn't feel hungry. He stands up slowly, using the edge of the table to support himself, and shuffles out of the kitchen. Using the walls to grope his way in the darkness, he passes through the corridor and steps into the room where a torrent of sound is coming out of the gramophone with wild force. Even if the composition takes all eternity, he knows that these will be the final chords. He stretches out his hand and strokes the neck of the gramophone horn.



Radiomakers



Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, which, at the time of writing, has sent much of Europe into lockdown, radio and particularly podcasts had been experiencing a golden age. Perhaps in this form, more than any other, the digital revolution has allowed the spoken word to expand and multiply, forming new communities across the continent, indeed across the world. Three such podcasts from across Europe were supported by the European Cultural Foundation's Democracy Needs Imagination call for proposals, each in their own way contributing to lively discussion across Europe's public sphere.



The Europeans is a podcast hosted by Katy Lee and Dominic Kraemer, two friends who met at university. Lee is a journalist in Paris, while Kraemer is an opera singer in Amsterdam and since 2017 they have tried to challenge the misconception – particularly widespread in the UK – of Europe and the EU as dry and wonkish, by celebrating the continent's culture and exploring its politics on a deeper level. Recent podcasts have featured the Bulgarian writer Kapka Kassabova, the Finnish novelist and playwright Saara Turunen and activist and migration researcher Apostolis Fotiadis.

For Lee, 'Podcasts can be a really useful tool in democracy that we didn't have until about fifteen years ago. One really important thing is that young people are disproportionate listeners of podcasts, which is really important because there have been constant problems across Europe in terms of getting young people to engage in politics and in particular with party politics and vote in elections.'

The podcast's audience skews young, something that Lee and Kraemer are conscious of. 'In our series Bursting the Bubble the first episode we did was ahead of the European elections in May how exactly the European Parliament works and why people should care; why it matters to you as a young European citizen. Our audience is pretty young, most of them are new to politics. So having a podcast which you listen to anyway explain these systems in an accessible way I think can be a really powerful democratic tool.'

Alexander Damiano Ricci worked at EuVisions, monitoring political conflicts in Europe before establishing his podcast Europa Reloaded. Dealing with six social movements across six European countries, the framework of the podcast comes from his research at EuVisions, an observatory established in the context of a research project (RESceU) financed by the ERC and conducted at the University of Milan. Europa Reloaded

aims to discuss social issues that are relevant to the future of the continent. As Ricci puts it, 'Social movements are often banalised by mainstream media; they tend to focus only on the nature of the protest.'

The movements that Europa Reloaded explores allow it to interrogate bigger questions. Thus an episode on the anti-Airbnb movement in Lisbon allows Ricci to ask related questions around housing; an episode on Exarchia in Athens touches on issues



such as squatting and migration; a deep dive into Save Kresna in Bulgaria carries a focus on the tension between environmental conservation and the economy; an analysis of Scottish independence also explores questions around regional autonomy and an episode on Gilets Jaunes in France begins to approach the related issues of inequality and centralisation.

Ricci, who previously worked on a podcast series, *Jungle Europe*, in the lead-up to the 2019 European elections, believes that podcasts and radio have a unique role to play in Europe: 'Radio works as a tool for democracy mainly thanks to its non-intrusive nature. People are more comfortable to speak into a microphone, rather than on camera. Radio is intimate. People connect more easily with a voice. I would claim that radio and podcasts have a greater potential to create synergies across borders and national identities. Ultimately, a podcast tends to spur the listener to focus on the content of the message rather than on the medium itself.'

Numu S. Touray started making podcasts in 2017 in Palermo as a direct response to the migrant crisis. At the time, Touray ran a radio programme, *What is Happening*, in a migrant camp, inviting the newly arrived into the studio to play music from their home countries or speak about their lives. The show had a broad impact; as Touray puts it, 'I found out it was helpful to them in their everyday life and integration process by releasing stress.'

When Touray moved to Marseille in 2018, he continued with this work. The podcast he started there, *Open Mic!*, covers social issues related to marginalised people, and advocates for their inclusion in

the public sphere. In so doing it hopes to raise awareness and change the perspective of local people towards excluded groups. Touray is clear on the benefits of the form: 'For me, radio is a pedagogical tool for allowing the expression of unheard voices (that is, voices and opinions of people from marginalised communities who appear less in mainstream media) and to learn new skills such as public speaking and audio technology in a safe learning environment.'

Touray's approach takes a social issue each episode, discusses its meaning and shares experiences before brainstorming ways of fighting the problem. 'The topic of racism comes up very often because the participants of the workshop I run are in majority migrants, coming from various countries with big cultural differences.' According to Touray, 'Radio gives voice to the people, and freedom of speech is fundamental in democracy. For the people who are not used to appear in radio, having a first experience gives them confidence and allow them to speak out loud their own points of views. They will feel like their voice and opinion matters and will be more likely to take part in decision making and stand for what they believe in.'

With the uncertainty unleashed by the COVID-19 crisis and its incipient lockdowns, the power of radio and podcasts feels particularly tangible. As the world pauses to reflect, the appetite for ideas and their discussion become ever more important. As Lee puts it, 'We've had a bunch of messages over the past week from listeners asking, 'you're not going to stop are you? You have to carry on!' And our response is don't worry, it's literally the only thing we can do right now – we have plenty of time to podcast.'

TEXT Quinsy Gario



QUINSY GARIO is an award-winning performance poet and visual artist from the Dutch Caribbean. His work centres on unsettling colonial practices and how they're normalized in everyday culture. Gario is a graduate of the Master Artistic Research programme of the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, a 2017–2018 BAK Fellow and a member of the collective Family Connection.

On Amazement and Borders

I'm still amazed by the fact that the European Union received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. The organization was hailed for the fact that it was an achievement towards peace on the continent. It assured that the wars of the previous centuries between the various states would be a thing of the past. The prize was not awarded for peace dashed elsewhere by the initiation or participation of its Member States in wars elsewhere, but for peace here. In our direct vicinity. In the proximity of where the Nobel Peace Prize gets handed out every year.



There's much to be said about the prize, that was also awarded to Martin Luther King Jr in 1964, a year later he would receive an honorary doctorate from the VU University in Amsterdam, and Barack Obama in 2008, 8 years before he would drop 26.171 bombs during the last year of his presidency in the name of hunting terrorists on soil that was not American or European. Bombs, software infrastructures and guiding systems that were most probably developed and/or built in Europe. When the prize was awarded to the European Union it was also on the eve of the wider acknowledgment of people fleeing war and famine and the hostility of the Union towards their plight. This was a year after the Arab Spring and the ensuing civil and proxy wars would lead to a mass mobilization towards safety by those being bombed and caught in the crossfire. Mobilization towards safer soil and to the borders of the Union that are being heavily guarded by Frontex and expanded further and further beyond the geography of Europe itself.

Due to the activities of the past and the present the borders of the European Union extend well into the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the African continent. They're there in through the existence of European colonies now classified under different names and refugee detention centres in countries that have been paid to stop the migration of people into Europe. When commenting on the racist terror that has been Trump's presidency in the United States and his rhetorical reliance on a border wall to shield the conglomeration of the former Dutch, French, British colonies, that also house Scandinavian, Baltic and Eastern European colonists, that is the US, we in Europe forget our own institutions of harm. The presentation of the Union as a beacon of peace within its borders is hypocritical and offensive.

The solidarity among the Member States during the economic meltdowns and the way in which especially the Dutch and German governments responded was appalling. An entire generation in the Southern European nations was sacrificed to balance the books. The hypocrisy was also apparent when taking into account the simultaneous expansion of European borders mixed with the animosity, anchored in fantasies of white supremacy, towards borders of others. This, coupled with the restriction of the movement of people whose borders are being violated, is striking. The logic underpinning this hypocrisy of the European Union is a colonial logic that I have been trying to interrogate and trip up in my art practice and writing.

When considering the European Union as the continuation in another form of the colonial logic that pushed for the expansion of European nation states, I have to think of Gurinder Bhambra. Funnily enough she raised this point in Amsterdam in 2018 at the University of Amsterdam's university theatre. When she said it, it felt like another call to remember that the

honorary doctorate for King was entangled with the Dutch signing an habit of deflecting conversations on race relations within the Kingdom by showing solidarity with struggles elsewhere. In 1964, the Netherlands signed a recruitment treaty with Turkey for Turkish laborers, but there had been laborers here since 1960, and five years later the Dutch would sign one with Morocco as well. These contracts were an echo of the Dutch contract laborers that were shipped from the then British colony India to the then Dutch colony Surinam after the abolition of slavery in the Netherlands in 1863 to fulfil the work on the plantations. Of course we should not gloss over the agency of these laborers but the repetition of the procedural steps taking by the Dutch government to facilitate the procurement of cheap labour for their industries is eerie. Also considering the fact that this was a widespread practice among European countries that were still rebuilding after Nazism and fascism tore through Europe.

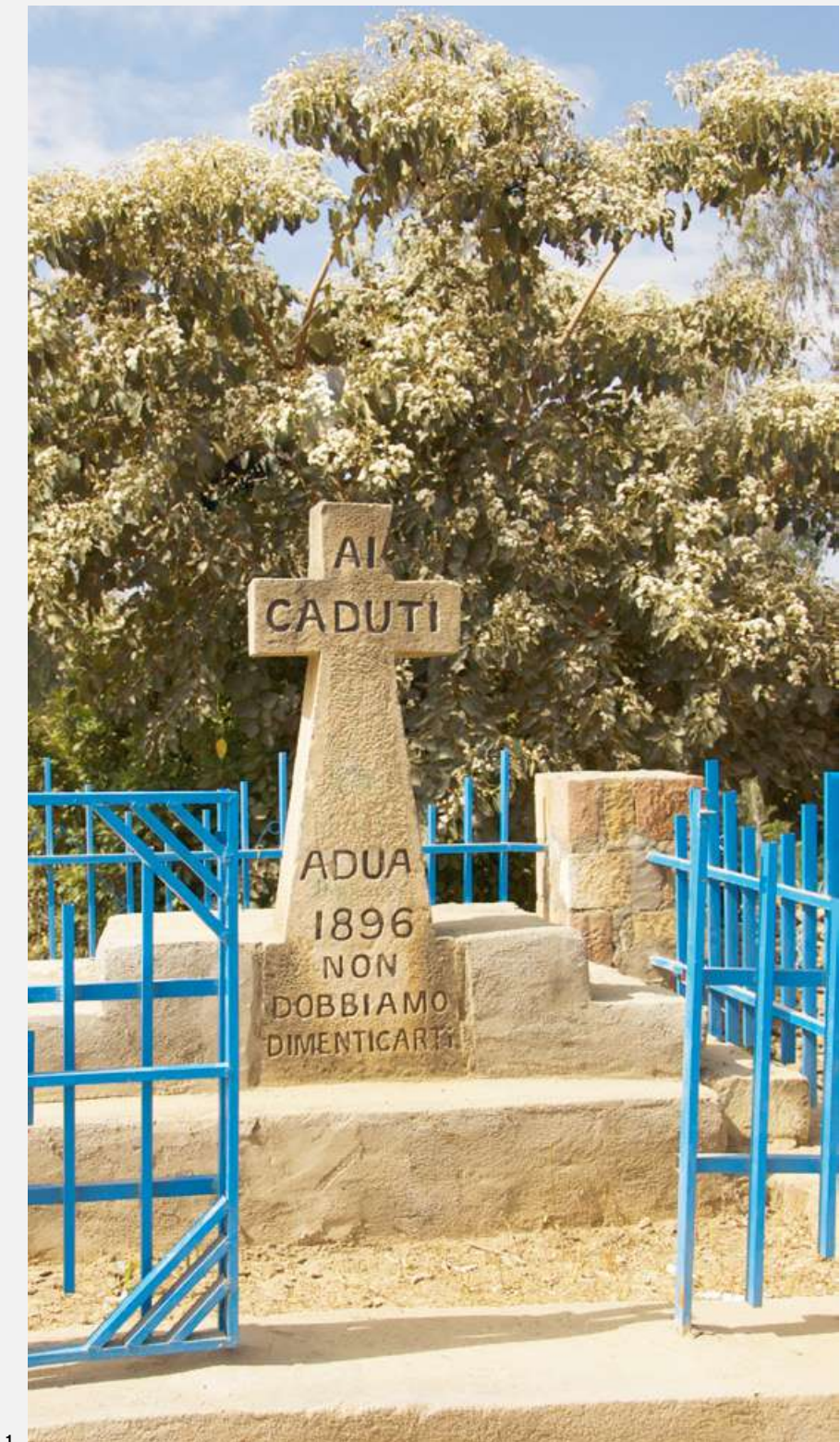
Bhambra's statement was something that she had been working on for a while and has been publishing about quite extensively. I first met her in 2013 in Berlin at the Black Europe Body Politics conference curated by the late Alanna Lockward. Bhambra was there for several editions and I have been a fan ever since of her sharp, meaningful and insightful scholarship. It was a groundbreaking series that continues even after the untimely death of Lockward in 2018. Lockward had scoured Europe finding people who were contributing to critical practices concerning decoloniality, Marronage and Blackness via academia, the arts and activism. Setting up a curatorial group together with, among others, Walter Mignolo, Rolando Vázquez and Jeannette Ehlers, she set out to provide a challenging space to have these conversations and push for a necessary criticality. Each edition had it's own thematic focus and the series ranged from looking at decolonial aesthetics to decolonizing the Cold War to coalitions facing whiteness. The editions included returning voices and had a generative quality in that Lockward's magnetism and determination ensured constant additions of refreshing insights and practices beyond the core group.

Congregating in Berlin on a subsonic level felt like an attempt to repair the damage done by the Berlin Conference of 1884. That was a reorganization of live and death across borders that reduced the heterogeneity found on the African continent to the parameters set by the Belgians, British, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Italians. The Dutch had already traded their occupied territories of the Dutch Gold Coast to the British through the Second Sumatra Treaty of 1872 for the exclusive rights to the territory. A war ensued that lasted from 1873 until 1904 when the Sultanate of Aceh, which had been an Ottoman empire protectorate since the 16th century, refused to acquiesce the Dutch demand for full control of the region. The war ended up

consolidating the islands under Dutch rule but also solidified the opposition to the Dutch colonial presence. The Sumatra treaty also included the permission to recruit Indian contract laborers for Dutch plantations that was referred to earlier.

The Black Europe Body Politics conference however attempted to decentralize the European understanding of the world, of living, of the arts and the ways in which we contemplate about what we do.

In those conversations and exchanges during the conference I found not just the energy to continue with my work in the Netherlands but also obscured knowledge. It was Robbie Shilliam, whom I also befriended through the Black Europe Body Politics conference series, who told me about the Negus Menelik II hall in Nova Scotia where Marcus Garvey gave his speech about mental slavery that Bob Marley references in *Redemption Song*.



1



2

Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican American activist who, among other actions in the 1910s and 1920s, attempted to charter voyages back to Africa for people of African descent in the United States and the Caribbean gave speeches in various venues. In Nova Scotia the Black community there named their community venue after Negus Menelik II, the Emperor of Abyssinia who defeated the Italian forces in 1896 when the Italians attempted to colonize what is now known as Ethiopia. This was a loss that the fascist regime in Italy remembered forty years later when they returned to occupy Ethiopia in 1935, slaughtered 30.000 people in three days in 1936 and erected a monument to commemorate their fallen soldiers at the Battle of Adwa.

In 2013, in the Italian town Affile, a monument was erected to honour Rodolfo Graziani, Benito Mussolini's war minister and the one who ordered the massacre that is still remembered every year on Yekatit 12, 19 February. It was this history that my brother and I tried to remember publicly and repair with the building of a temporary monument during the Salone del Mobile manifestation in 2016. In between two olive trees, three times a day, fifteen minutes each time and for six consecutive days. It was a multilingual dissection of conflict around the Treaty of Wuchale that led to the war that also revealed that back then in 2016 the majority of the refugees who were reaching the shores of Europe came from the former Italian colony of Eritrea, the territory that Menelik II gave to the Italians after the war. That the majority are now being smuggled out via Libya, another former colony of Italy, one of the original Member States of the European Economic Community, should be remembered as well.

In 2018, Gurminder Bhambra was in Amsterdam as one of the three keynote lectures for the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis conference

Dissecting Violence, together with Étienne Balibar and Zeynep Gambetti. After all three gave their keynotes over the course of the conference there was a plenary questions round with all three. This was also at the height of the academic purge that was happening at the time in Turkey and Gambetti made sure to keep us aware of the violence that ensured the suppression of dissenting voices. Criticality was being attacked and patriotism was being presented as the most important quality to have in a time of crisis. When Balibar called upon Kant's writing as a prism to understand our current situation Bhambra eloquently demolished the offhand manner in which Kant and his ilk are recalled. It was astounding how she was able to simultaneously present Kant's thinking better than Balibar and expose it as utterly racist and thus a tainted well of knowledge.

My brief description of the encounter between Bhambra and Balibar does a bit of a disservice to the care and sophistication with which she handled the situation, but it was a moment that I'm forever grateful to have witnessed. Here a thinker had the quickness of spirit to respond succinctly with wit and a depth of knowledge that opened up other wells of complexity. Not only did she diligently offset the excessive time that Balibar had taken up with his intellectual manspreading on the panel, but it was also a call to all of us present to sharpen our critical and reparative focus.

When I was invited, in what seems like a lifetime ago, to be part of the Another Europe Is Possible podcast hosted by Luke Cooper and Zoe Williams I wanted to emphasize this notion of reparations when thinking of that other Europe. Repairing the damage done by Europe needs to be at the forefront of the conversation. What caught my ear as well in the invitation was that it would be about the fall of the Iron Curtain

thirty years earlier. Together with András Bozóki, Alena Ivanova and Mary Kaldor, we were in the Amsterdam Public Library near Amsterdam Central Station on a Wednesday evening in December. This was a day before the elections in Britain that would bafflingly cement Boris Johnson as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and before the bad and necropolitical policy decisions around health care, by governments far and wide, allowed the SARS-CoV-2 virus to lead to a horrifyingly large number of preventable deaths. The parasitic neo-liberal logic made mainstream in the 1980s through policies pursued by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, that pushed for the privatization of public utilities such as the healthcare system and cut down funding for healthcare, as part of demands for economic packages to repair the damage done by the economic crash of 2008, was sowing what it reaped; it was taking the lives of those it classified as expendable.

On the sixth floor we were sitting with a distance to each other that was closer than the now ubiquitous meter and half and talking about the moments leading up to and after the actual fall of the Iron Curtain. During the podcast taping it were Kaldor and Bozóki who recalled how they planned and organized for another Europe in the 1980s. They were intimately involved in the activist movements and political roundtables that came before the fall of the Soviet regime and spoke about on-the-ground specifics and recalled names and organizations that painted a vivid picture. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the response of the Soviet regime at that moment in time was completely different than the iron fist approach displayed during the Tiananmen square student protests in China six months earlier. And this difference of approach was also felt in the Soviet satellites that were regaining their sovereignty.

Growing up in post-Soviet Bulgaria, Alena Ivanova noted that for her as a child she didn't know any better than to have regular picnics. She later learned that the choice to have picnics were actually creative solutions by her parents to deal with scarcity that came with the sudden and all-encompassing collapse of the state-run systems around them. For her it was a world in which anything was possible.

Just before coming on the podcast I was in Latvia, another post-Soviet country, for an upcoming exhibition entitled Communicating Difficult Pasts, curated by Ieva Astakova and Margaret Tali. Latvia joined the European Union in 2004 after a referendum in 2003 in which two-thirds of the enfranchised population who cast a ballot voted to join. Two years before the vote the musical Tobago!, written by Māra Zālīte and composed by Uldis Marhilēvičs, opened and retold the story of the participation of Latvians in European colonial expansion and occupation in the Caribbean. Although Latvia as a country only came into existence in 1918, the achievements of the Duchy

of Courland have been claimed in an attempt to foster a national identity to counter the violence of the Soviet occupation. Connected to this search in the past for possible futures is the rebuilding of the House of the Blackheads in Riga immediately after the Soviet Occupation. The Blackheads were bachelor merchants who took the Roman Theban army commander Saint Mauricius as their patron saint and have the head of an African man in their seal. Walking through the museum I was struck by how it was filled with 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century slavery iconography while not mentioning anything about the Latvian slave trade or occupation and colonization of Tobago and Kunta Kinteh island, formerly called James Island, at the mouth of the Gambia River.

Even this new European Union Member is explicitly connecting itself to the European project through its violent colonial past, however brief it may have been. The question then is can we fundamentally conceptualize another Europe Union and alter it beyond the complaints of bureaucracy and towards the understanding of peace as a plea for justice? Can we change this Union to see justice over profits? Will the current conditions provide us with the opportunities to seize the momentum away from the fascist tendencies that seem to be bubbling back up? I hope so and will continue to make work and speak up.

POST- CORONA

Producing a magazine takes time. You need to draft a desired list of contributors. Ask your preferred designer if she is available to work on the magazine with you. Make plannings. Ask editors to reserve time. And work towards that deadline.

And then COVID-19 drastically changed everything everyone all around us was working on.

Predicting what the consequences of this pandemic on Europe might have, takes time too. One needs to imagine possibilities, desired ones and unwanted ones. One needs to rethink future scenarios. Make changes on changes.

We are very happy we have found five experts willing to share their reflections on what Europe could be after Corona. We hope their reflections will invite you to think again. To – possibly – make change. Because building Europe, together, that really takes time.

REFLECTIONS

The Need For a Redefined Commitment to Europe



On 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman gave a speech that would change Europe. For Europeans, who were for centuries accustomed to fratricidal wars, it was the start of living together in peace with a *common sense of purpose*. The outcome of this long-lasting process has been a tremendous political, economic and social success. Since the beginning of this century, however, Europe is facing entirely new challenges that require a new mind-set. From the devastation of the Twin Towers on 9/11 onward, we are confronted by extraordinary developments that put the significance of the European integration process in a perspective that was unheard of before. Both the deep financial-economic crisis of 2008 and the economic crisis in 2012, the nearly catastrophic issue of the refugees, the inescapable need for adapting consumer behaviour and the economy due to climate change, and the digital revolution created new, and sometimes insurmountable hurdles to effective decision-making.

DEVASTATING SHOCK

Since a few months the world is confronted by the worst of all, the horrendous Corona virus. From China it has spread fast. Europe as an epicentre is severely hit, in particular in hotspots like Lombard, Madrid, and north-east France. No country escapes from the devastating consequences. The initial reaction of countries was fully predictable, notably because the intensity of the outbreak of the crisis in Europe took place at different speeds. As, from the start of European integration, the health sector has been deliberately excluded from any Community interference, national health authorities took fully charge of combating the virus. From one day to the next Europe returned to the fragmented landscape of decades ago. There was very little international cooperation, let alone coordination.

This became visible in the divergent approaches to the lockdown that dominates the continent for months. Borders were closed, like we have seen in the refugee crisis, while national equipment – ventilators, testing and other medical devices – is stocked and kept in national reserve. We all witnessed the long traffic jams at the borders that are also reinstalled to stop free movement of persons. A striking difference is the quality of health care between European countries. Quite understandably, the distinction between countries and regions reflects in most cases the level of the economy.

On top of that, competences in health are often also decentralised within countries, what complicates well-driven actions in voluminous emergency cases. One notices in the United States similar structures with substantial differences between individual states. These divergent developments may seriously hamper conducting policies in parallel, when the crisis will phase out. All these factors create uncertainty and ambiguity among people and authorities. The European Union is not prepared. Once again, we are entering uncharted waters.

RESPONSE OF THE EU

Are we facing a Great Depression? The economy suffers from a sudden and very heavy shock. Important sectors (retail, transport, airlines, tourism and others) and many businesses in any sector are seriously losing ground with bankruptcies across the board. For 2020 the IMF foresees in the Eurozone a dip of 7% in GDP! Meanwhile the Commission tries to be helpful to the health care sector in bringing health authorities together and in coordinating and stimulating the private sector to fill up shortages in medical devices by targeted investments. Governments are thinking ahead, how the impact of the crisis can be minimised.

Amidst the turmoil a rescue plan has been worked out at short notice to get the wheel running again as soon as the economy makes a restart. The EU economic and financial rescue plan is unprecedented as well. For the moment strict rules on competition policy, state aid and public procurement are set aside. The financial supportive programmes are gigantic. In parallel to very big national support programmes, the ECB is funding €750 billion and the European Stability Mechanism, that has been set up for exceptional circumstances, has €540 billion (with low conditionality) at its disposal.

Together with EU structural funds, soft loans of the EIB as well as the upcoming Multi Financial Framework all will be brought into action to support business, in particular SME's, and research and innovation in the

health sector. A new instrument, SURE, will provide pan-European support for short-time work arrangements. And much more – over 1 trillion € (!) – is to come. Future support mechanisms will depend on the length and depth of the crisis and on a reliable vaccine that is expected in January next year. The recovery to a stable situation will be a long process anyway.

A CALL FOR A SHARED EUROPEAN IDENTITY

The European Union is again put to the test. As usual, each country started on its own to respond to the crisis. Changes for the better are slowly underway. Common threat implies a common destiny. Common destiny requires common responses and strong coordination. Current exceptional circumstances prove how difficult it is. A robust European architecture that channels national policies and actions is simply lacking. Countries remain reluctant. Will political forces consequently return to old habits, leading to inward looking, protectionist attitudes, and additional tensions, or will the current development be an incentive to a closer Union?

The successive challenges of the last ten years – each of them a critical game-changer – and, again, the current horrendous pandemic, seem to leave us with no choice. European social, economic and political realities are so much intertwined that only mutual trust, based on a shared identity, can lay a firm foundation for the next phase. The global economic landscape will be radically affected. Europe will be further challenged by unpredictability and trends to economic autarchy among world players. The race about economic dominance can get fresh impulses, undermining the position of Europe that is under pressure anyway.

The current crisis can be exemplary, with the need for setting up a strongly coordinated European approach to health care and diseases as well as with very substantial and unorthodox financial and economic measures on the way back to normal and to a stable future. The initial decisions of the European Council are more promising than in the crisis of 2008. But we have still a long way ahead of us. In *this moment of truth*, the qualification of President Macron, Europe stands again for the choice between nationalism and communality, in which economic and social interests and values are interlinked.

However, a shared European identity is not deeply felt. Due to different traditions and cultures, perceived self-interest as well as values like mutual trust, democracy and the rule of law, solidarity, human dignity and the European concept of social market economy and of open, transparent markets, differ between Member States and are under pressure. These differences should be overcome so that interests and values will unite us properly in a worldwide perspective. It is a huge agenda with still more questions than answers.

In the course of European post-war history the incentives to a common way forward have changed considerably. The reasons why and how must be clarified. There is a need for redefinition of mutual commitment anyway, in which an unequivocal political *common sense of purpose* in a radically different context is a key element.

TEXT Maria Exner



MARIA EXNER Since 2015, Maria Exner has been Deputy Editor-in-Chief for ZEIT ONLINE. She works at the intersection of journalism, technology and democracy. She co-initiated the award-winning political dialogue project 'Germany Talks' and its offshoots 'My Country Talks' and 'Europe Talks.'

European Media Ecosystem Post-Corona

I've been asked for a vision, but I've never felt more myopic than right now. This crisis has taught me many things, and my inability to foresee how dramatically things can change over the course of just a few weeks, even if clear indications are staring me right in the face, is one of them.

1





At the end of January, I simply couldn't imagine that a complete lockdown of all social life and the closure of almost all borders in Europe could follow from this seemingly local coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, that I was busy covering with my colleagues in our Berlin newsroom back then.

Here we are, only a few weeks later, in the midst of a massive public health crisis that has vast implications for the economy and society.

The media landscape in Europe will almost certainly be hit hard by the economic downturn currently unfolding. While the interest in quality information on the pandemic has risen sharply in March and April, the loss of advertising revenue will weaken many local and national newsrooms around Europe. For many of the smaller, independent or non-profit journalism projects that had just begun to flourish across Europe in recent years, this pandemic could prove to be a death blow.

In this regard, the coronacrisis is having the same effect on the media landscape that it is on all domains of life: All that was fragile, weak or worn before has now, under the extreme stress of the crisis, been stretched to its breaking point.

I believe this to be true for private relationships just as it is for health care and social security systems across Europe. And it is also true for our European identity and for solidarity among Europeans.

This became apparent when the rapid outbreak in Italy was not immediately followed by a pan-European outcry and an outpouring of solidarity and international help. Journalists across Europe, to be sure, jumped into action, covering the latest numbers of infections and deaths in their home countries and critically evaluating the measures taken by their national governments to address the crisis. They are producing maybe some of the best journalism in the history of European news. But we collectively missed the moment to pressure these same national governments and the governing bodies of the EU to act quickly and organize the help that the Italians so urgently needed. And I cannot say it is a source of pride that two months into this pandemic, there are still no more than 200 critically ill patients from other European countries being treated in German hospitals.

From a German perspective – and from today's perspective – it is comfortable to feel safe in the warm embrace of a national government that has handled the past few weeks comparably well, effectively slowing down the spread of the virus while at the same time implementing rescue packages to stabilize the economy and help small businesses survive. But it feels like a fragile safety simply because Europe is – and hopefully always will be – a deeply interconnected system. If the Germans or the Swedes or the French alone make it through the crisis relatively unharmed, but many other countries don't, it will have severely negative consequences for our future welfare and well-being.

As deeply interconnected as we are on an economic level, with global and pan-European supply chains and logistics, we suffer from relatively weak social ties. While we know that our vegetables are grown in Spain and parts of our cars are manufactured in the UK, we experience a social connection through everyday encounters only with those that live close-by or work with.

And herein lies a potential – maybe even a responsibility – for media companies across Europe. Newsrooms can bring people together. The media can use their outreach to foster connections that otherwise wouldn't come into being, thereby making a significant contribution to a feeling of belonging to this continent and a feeling of solidarity and togetherness with people in other countries. Last year, we were joined by the UK's *Financial Times*, *Morgenbladet* from Norway, Italy's *La Repubblica*, *Gazeta* from Poland and many other newsrooms from across Europe to organize 'Europe Talks', introducing more than 16,000 Europeans to each other for a one-on-one conversation focusing on pressing political issues. They met in pairs, either in person or through video-calls. For many of the participants, it was the first time they had discussed the 2015 refugee crisis or the question of fiscal fairness within Europe with a fellow European from another country. Many sent us selfies and a short note about their experience afterwards. One of them read: 'It seems that we're not different at all, looking for the same for our children, sharing the same values. Only our perspective is different.'

To care for someone, you must know them. And what we are missing during this crisis is learning about each other's fate beyond the impersonal statistics on infection rates and fatalities. What we need is the ability to engage in a conversation about how this crisis will affect our way of being with each other in Europe. And it's especially the young generation that will be both hardest hit by the crisis and most dependent on a Europe where people care for each other.

In cooperation with colleagues across Europe, we are now beginning to organize a second edition of Europe Talks in 2020. In a world after Corona, one potential for media companies is to embrace the need for meaningful connections and present it's readers with the opportunity to engage in conversations within which everyone's voice will be valued and heard – bridging the local, national and international divides that the Corona crisis has so painfully highlighted. The current experience casts doubts on the existence of a sound public sphere stretching across Europe and the media has an important role to play to foster a sense of European belonging. I believe this is where its future lies, and where a reinvention of a European identity and a truly European public sphere might begin.

- 1 EuropeTalks 2019, Welcome by Maria Exner, photo by Lena Mucha
- 2 EuropeTalks 2019, Participants, photo by Lena Mucha

TEXT Pier Luigi Sacco



PIER LUIGI SACCO is amongst others Professor of Cultural Economics at IULM University Milan, senior advisor and Head of the Venice Office of the OECD. He has been the Special Adviser of the EU Commissioner to Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and currently is a member of the scientific board of Europeana Foundation. He works and consults internationally on culture-led local development and policy design.

Cultural Life in Europe, After Corona



Although we are still in the middle of the crisis, it is clear that the situation we are living in is the most disruptive event in the postwar period in both economic and social terms, let alone the public health dimension. If this is true for the whole economy, it is especially true, among others, for the cultural and creative sectors, which have an extremely fragmented structure (they are almost entirely made of small and micro companies as well as of freelance professionals), have limited access to credit, and are extremely dependent on short-term cash flows to be able to survive. As a consequence, it is natural to focus on securing short-term solutions that are able to tackle the crisis by fixing as quickly and effectively as possible the criticalities that are currently affecting so many producers.

However, despite the undisputable urgency of such measures, which are currently being adopted on the basis of a considerable variety of approaches and of a substantial lack of coordination across Europe both at the national and regional levels, it is also important to realize that what is at stake now is not simply a bunch of temporary measures to support culture during a troubled transition to the old status quo, but a wave of change that will permanently affect so many dimensions of the life we have grown accustomed to over the years.

Despite the uncertainty that still substantially obfuscates our foresight of what is to come, one of the most notable aspects that are already clearly gaining relevance is the growing importance of the digital sphere in a social world where social distancing will rule for a possibly long time. Many cultural producers have promptly reacted to the lockdown by posting lots of content online on a voluntary basis and for free. Although this reaction has a strong symbolic value and has been generally appreciated, it is clear that in the absence of a new, viable model that allows producers to post their content on platforms that guarantee them some form of income, and especially that are able to elicit some paying demand from audiences, this new situation is essentially driving cultural producers out of activity unless they are able to rely on alternative sources of income that are not related to their cultural work.

The point is that the existing, successful platforms for cultural content are strongly informed by the by now familiar logic of extracting substantial value from customers while at the same time offering very meager compensations to content producers. And if this is true for highly industrialized forms of cultural contents such as music, movies and tv series, such a logic would be even more prohibitive for producers working in non-industrialized sectors such as the visual arts, most of the performing arts, heritage and museums, and so on.

On the other hand, one of the most apparent social effects of the crisis is that it has become apparent to a large share of the public opinion that the availability of cultural and creative contents has played, and is still playing, a fundamental role in preserving the mental health of many people in critical lockdown situations, and in a sense even social cohesion by inspiring people to spontaneously engage in collective cultural activities that powerfully restated a sense of community and of social connection. There is therefore a clear public interest in supporting culture in this moment, not only because of the economic impact of cultural activities as one among the many sectors of the economy that need to be supported to contain the negative effects of the crisis, but as an emerging area of socio-technical innovation that could play a key role in the future economic and social scenarios. In particular, this means that, especially for non-industrialized cultural sectors (but to a significant extent also for certain parts of industrialized ones), there is an important opportunity ahead: that of designing and launching new digital content platforms based on public rather than private initiative.

Such public platforms could allow the dissemination of content that is selected not only on the basis of its commercial potential, as it happens in the current content economy, but also in terms of its social and innovation value. Such platforms could also lead to strong complementarities between the provision of cultural content and the development of innovative methods and models in fields such as education (at all levels), welfare, or e-public services. It is therefore not only the economic dimension of the support to non-industrial parts of cultural sectors that motivates the use of public resources: the social impacts of this support may be

even more relevant both in their indirect economic effects (think for instance of the contribution of culture to health and wellbeing), and in terms of their socio-behavioral effects in building a thriving knowledge society, in fostering social cohesion, promoting cultural diversity and social exchange, and so on, in addition to providing a strategically crucial R&D lab for the development of innovative content for the more commercial sectors.

In this regard, tackling the crisis from a strategic long-term angle could lead to focusing on culture as one of the most promising drivers of change in the years to come. The development of a public side in the digital content economy would also create a natural counterpart to the private side, thereby improving the standards of governance in key socio-economic spheres that today are still largely plagued by inconsistencies and ambiguities in the collection and use of user data and user-generated content.

Despite that the crisis is hitting hard and that it will for a while, this is therefore a once in a lifetime opportunity for culture to embrace a path of radical innovation, supported by a new logic of public funding, and with a much broader scope. Policymakers are at the moment generally unaware of this perspective, as systemic approaches to the crisis generally disregard culture or assign to it a very marginal role. It is our task to explain why this time it is different, and culture can really make a difference at so many different levels. Let's seize the opportunity, while of course fighting to preserve the viability of our creative businesses, organizations, and professionals.





Collectivize Facebook

The coronavirus pandemic is an ideological arena where a battle takes place about the causes and responses to the crisis. Ultrationalists see it as a chance to double down on their border walls, equating refugees and migrants with the virus. Corporations maximize on government subsidies and handouts to maintain a system that, in various ways, is the cause of this crisis to begin with.

Emancipatory politics and culture must lead this ideological struggle. Never before has the world seen more reborn socialists, as suddenly everyone understands the importance of universal health care, well-paid care workers and cleaners, or the need for a basic income. The spread of the virus, for all to see, is inherently linked to a hyper fragile global capitalist system that cares for nothing but its own survival. The time for bailouts is over, the time for collectivization is now.

This is why we launched the *Collectivize Facebook* lawsuit this March, on which we have worked the past year, not despite the coronavirus pandemic, but exactly because now there is an added urgency to confront current models of ownership over what should be considered as our commons. With millions of people in quarantine, our dependency on corporate 'social' media has only increased, just as other trillion-dollar companies such as Amazon see their profits skyrocket further. Their monopolies were already an existential threat to the precariat before the pandemic, and this will only increase in the months to come.

The demand for the collectivization of Facebook is based on our claim that the model of ownership of the corporation fundamentally infringes upon the right to self-determination of peoples and individuals, as it is enshrined in various international human rights treaties.

A lot has been said and written about the threat Facebook poses to our right to privacy, enshrined in many international legal instruments such as Article 8 of the European Human Rights Convention or Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted through United Nations General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December, 1966. Of course, the threat posed by Facebook and similar data mining- and processing giants is real. It is even very highly underestimated as the examples referred to in the Indictment drafted for the *Collectivize Facebook* lawsuit show.

However, the threat posed by Facebook to privacy is only the tip of the iceberg. Other threats to fundamental rights are much more significant. Facebook, while collecting, storing and processing our data and ultimately selling them to third parties, poses a threat to the right to self-determination. The right to self-determination as enshrined in the common Article 1 of the two UN covenants of fundamental rights, is often interpreted too narrowly as the right to secession of minorities. In reality the right to self-determination

is about the possibility for each people to choose freely its political system, the institutions it wishes to establish, the economic, social and cultural life it organizes. In a worldwide data driven economy ('data as the new oil'), the control over data by private interests impacts immediately and negatively on the capacity of people to choose freely their destiny.

Facebook has the capacity in an unprecedented way to steer peoples movements, to accelerate the waves, or, on the contrary, pour oil on the fire, and to control the exchange of information needed to allow people to make conscious choices about their future to shape their own destiny. Facebook is used in various surveillance capacities that undermine our freedom and impacts democratic elections in disproportionate ways, of which data capture and targeted campaigns by Cambridge Analytica are a recent example. And the corporation has willfully advised authoritarian regimes such as that of Duterte in the Philippines.

Facebook has also an impact on labor relations and rights, and has even invented a new form of forced labor. The corporation instrumentalizes users as neo-feudal data workers. Through their activity, Facebook users unintentionally create the raw material. Facebook then takes possession of these resources and processes them. The 'new oil' is taken away for free from those who produce it. Since we are in a position of dependency towards Facebook, we are mechanically led to generate data for the algorithm, as we just need to connect, talk with our friends or post a photo. In short, we are forced to provide Facebook with an activity that has value.

The coronavirus pandemic will trigger a major economic crisis. Private corporations are already standing in line for trillions of handouts. As during the bank-crisis in 2008, the question will be 'who will be saved, the banks and monopolies or the people'. Control over the new oil – data – is decisive for the question how we can build in a world economy that protects the majority, based on solidarity and cooperation. But it is also important for the immediate questions arising from the coronavirus crisis: how jobs can be saved, incomes and savings protected and new medicines and vaccines produced and made available to all. How can this be achieved if the essential raw material of the new data-based economy is under the control of a few private owned monopolies?

Big pharma and the securitization complex see this crisis as nothing but another resource to make profits. Now is the time to not just nationalize them, but to cooperatize them. And as we're at it, let's not forget about the trillion-dollar companies driving our increasingly precarized existences, all of which we subsidize through massive tax cuts and public infrastructures. *Collectivize Amazon. Collectivize Apple. Collectivize Alphabet.* This crisis is neither the moment to support private industry,



1

nor to blindly expand the powers of the nation-state: this is the moment to claim new cooperative forms of ownership to enable a habitable world for all of us.

Currently, we are campaigning our *Collectivize Facebook* indictment to gather as many co-claimants as possible, before we submit this collective action lawsuit to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, to demand the recognition of Facebook as a public domain and to ensure that the 2.5 billion active users of Facebook become its owners. So, for us, collectivization does not necessarily mean nationalization. Rather, we aim to transform Facebook into a *transnational cooperative*, in which members own and collectively govern the platform. Only shared ownership can socialize social media.

We are obviously aware of the challenges ahead when it comes to our collective action lawsuit against Facebook, and the further indictments that will be necessary to challenge the ownership models of other trillion-dollar companies. National courts, no more than governments or institutions such as the European Union, can impose such public control over Facebook. National courts can at most impose some restrictions on the most outrageous excesses committed or made possible by Facebook. And we also know that in a global market-based economy where the principle of private ownership of production means is sacrosanct, controlling transnational corporations is anyhow extremely difficult or impossible.

That is why we turn with our indictment to the United Nations Human Rights Council which has been designated by the international community as the guarantor of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two subsequent International Covenants.

We certainly do not have blind confidence in the Human Rights Council, nor are we particularly fond of the liberal ideologies underlying the dominance of the individuated 'human' in the concept of 'human rights'. Therefore we will submit our indictment to this body, but we will not give it out of our hands.

We demand that the Human Rights Council includes our indictment in their agenda and adopts our argumentation to recognize Facebook as a public domain and subsequently recognizes the need for common user ownership over the platform. But we are also aware that only a protracted social movement throughout the world will create conditions in which states and international bodies will effectively act. Our aim with this indictment is to contribute to these two lines of struggle: the legal struggle on one hand and the social one on the other. If we bring this case forward as a movement, we simultaneously make clear to the council that we are ready to collectively govern Facebook as a movement.

There are plenty of voices out there that tell us that due to the severity of the crisis, it is no time for ideological propagations, but this is of course, in and of itself, an ideological position. The beneficiaries of global capitalism want nothing more but to return to their criminal 'normality', and to use this moment of panic and fear to promote themselves – once more – as the guardians of the best of all possible worlds. But this pandemic is nothing compared to the climate crisis-fueled pandemics yet to come, the largescale crop failures and millions of climate refugees. It is not after the crisis, but within the crisis that we have to enforce our battle lines to guarantee a new politics of care that makes a common future possible and inhabitable.



The Future of Democracy?

Let's Build It Together

It's another day in Marseille. But today, the city's local parliament is the scene of a public encounter. Politicians out, audience in. A young woman steps towards the microphone, to speak to the 180 persons in the audience. "Our democracy doesn't work because parliaments are mostly full of highly educated white people; it's time to work on a democracy that really reflects the people."

1 This is just a snapshot of In Search of Democracy 3.0, a performance by New Heroes, a professional creative company based in Amsterdam, driven by the necessity to create vulnerable encounters in public space. Together with ARSENAAL, *Het Zuidelijk Toneel* and *IN SITU*, we hit the roads of Europe. With an artistic project – a mix between live research, performances, documentary and online knowledge platform – we are in search of stories that can help us tackle the current crisis of democracy.

IS DEMOCRACY IN DANGER?

Wait, what? Crisis? Yes, the current democracies are in crisis, suffering from lack of trust and not representing the real societal needs. For many, democracy is a concept that is formal, hard to grasp and practice in everyday

life. Why? Because the main misconception people have about democracy is that it is the same as politics – a job, an exclusivist field only for those with expertise and access, mainly white, highly educated men. This feeling makes people less interested and determines them to self-isolate from it, which further translates into a lack of engagement and involvement. Therefore, our democracy requires a long-term solution!

LET'S ASK THE PEOPLE!

We want to do more than a lecture, to create an experience which breaks the stigma around access to democracy. Our aim is to 'make the audience talk, see and feel democracy as it is; make them feel engaged and empowered to generate the change' explains Lucas De Man, the artistic director of the project.

Each evening begins with an introduction to the history of democracy, from its beginnings to the modern world. Afterwards, the public is the one who takes the lead of the show.

2. By democratising the debate over democracy and experiencing the vulnerability that comes with it, we can make sure everyone feels seen and heard. Combining information with hands-on activities, our live performance focuses on reshaping the rigid image of the democratic process to something entertaining, easy to digest, full of energy and humor. A journey that people can feel part of. For this, we use the concept of *deep democracy* as the core element – a process of dialogue and inclusiveness that makes space for all. Moreover, it sets acceptance of differences as an unbreakable standard of the process.

corruption and power abuse in the political system was visible in their necessities. Transparency, separation of powers and systems of checks and balances for institutions and politicians were on top of their list.

Here and there, approving or disapproving sounds. One can feel the excitement, while the differences of opinions are starting to come out. "This is Democracy – just like love. You cannot agree on everything and you don't have to. As long as you find a way to talk to each other, you are still contributing together," adds Lucas De Man about the audience dynamic.

'What are the core elements for a democracy as you would like it to be?'

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Since the beginning of our journey, we asked people in more than 100 live performances from all around Europe, in a live research:

OUTSIDE THEATER HALLS

A volatile concept like democracy is hard to put into practice. But that's also the beauty of it – it doesn't have to be the same all the time, giving societies the freedom

When asked, people start naming all the aspects they believe are crucial for a democracy. The rest of the audience gets to democratically vote on them. All ideas are available in front of the public, with the size of the word depending on how many votes it got.

3–4 The combination of time pressure, speaking in a large group, making it clear whether you agree or disagree with something makes the audience think about 'what is important to me?'. It thus became very clear to us that people strive to be engaged in the democratic process. It seems already a pattern to blame the citizens' apathy for the failures of the system. But in fact, people want to be seen as part of the decision-making process, their opinions to be heard. They are searching for an opportunity to do so. We are delighted to offer it to them, as their insights are a powerful input to the image of democracy we are looking for.

Of course, democracy is a very fluid concept, understood differently through the lens of subjective experiences. Connecting all the elements people find essential for democracy, we realised that opinions are rarely the same. Some answers come up across multiple audiences – separation of powers, rights and freedoms of the individual, freedom of the press, equality. These traditional parts of our common understanding of democracy occur first, with a major consensus of their role. However, there is also a wide number of unique, visionary answers across groups, which usually arise after a couple of minutes of discussion. In The Netherlands, we observed a significant role of education on democracy, together with lowering the voting age and counting young voices more heavily than older ones. This portrays them as a constantly progressive country, valuing future generations. In Germany, people seem concerned about freedom and equality of individuals, protection for minorities and social justice. Asked what needs to change, the idea of more direct democracy came up several times. What does this mean for a pragmatic people, also strongly divided on ethnic considerations?

It was also interesting to analyse an Eastern European country, with a more challenged history of democracy. We had the chance to talk to a group of Romanian people, whose constant struggle with

of creativity in designing a system that fits their own needs and space for democratic innovation.

And that's what many communities and individuals are doing. Driven by their desire for change, they begin initiatives to reshape the face of democracy as it is today. From lottery selection for better representation in Belgium to rewriting a whole constitution in Iceland, from games to teach children democratic values to legal representation of nature in the decision-making process in the Netherlands, both in Europe and all around the world, democratic innovations are booming. During our performance, we use these as examples of non conventional approaches towards the democratic processes. Reform is a long way to go, but an inspired audience is what brings it forward.

At the end of the night, the audience – whether we're talking about youth, old, regular citizens or those in positions of power – leaves the hall with some new ideas, more excitement, empowered to make a change and convinced they are not alone in this journey. Yes, democracy is in a crisis and we won't solve it alone. But together, we can shape the political landscape of tomorrow.

insearchofdemocracy.com



PROJECT Elena Butica
Raluca Croitoru
PHOTOS Andrei Becheru



ELENA BUTICA has directed one short movie, writes for the next one, wanders the streets of Bucharest (Romania) as a professional tourist guide and hopes every day to be an OK mum.

RALUCA CROITORU is a visual artist and performer. She currently lives in Rotterdam (the Netherlands), where she graduated in 2016 from the MA studies of the Piet Zwart Institute. She has been one of the co-founders of *ONONO* project space and is currently a participating artist in Open Access Transmedia, a Creative Europe residency.

Bucharest

Elena Butica and Raluca Croitoru wanted to increase the visibility of repair workshops in Bucharest. These workshops include tailors, cobblers, watchmakers, furniture and tapestry restorers, amongst others.

Why? To revive these local repair workshops through site-specific interventions and to connect the different communities that are connected to them. They also wanted to encourage the act of repairing, by introducing these workshops as an existing alternative for those that wish to live in a more sustainable way.





For the first part of their idea, they focused on mapping and then visiting all the repair shops they could find in Bucharest. Gradually, they interviewed the craftsmen and began building an oral and visual archive.

They started the online platform, www.palier.ro, which includes a map and essential information on all repair workshops collaborating with them. It also hosts a library full of external articles and resources related to the act of repairing.

The start of their project was challenging as the repairmen firstly met them with reluctance and distrust, because what Elena and Raluca proposed to them – in their own words – ‘was something very new for Bucharest people that have grown up in the Communist 50s and 60s – the concept of being an active citizen.’

It was the enthusiasm of participants in their guided tours that helped the project kick off, as participants were responding in a very positive manner. Elena and Raluca realized that most of Bucharest inhabitants, no matter their age or occupation, hold a personal

attachment to these repair workshops – either from childhood memories, personal experiences, or an interest in the city.

Another great part of their story is that other organizations and professionals heard about them by word of mouth and became interested in joining. Elena and Raluca, in collaboration with local urbanists and sociologists, developed a series of public events that helped them reach a wider audience. Now they are an established project in Bucharest, being covered in lots of media. They believe their project has a great potential in being replicated in other cities in Romania as there are numerous repair workshops in all cities in Romania.

They hope their online presence will continue: to draw attention to the precarious situation of these repair workshops; to encourage the act of repairing and the importance of living a sustainable life. The photos of photographer Andrei Becheru play an important role in achieving their goals.







Colophon

Common Ground is the annual magazine by the European Cultural Foundation celebrating Europe Day. We kindly thank all contributors for their work!

If you want to share, republish or print any materials from the magazine, please contact:
communications@culturalfoundation.eu

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Friso Wiersum
EDITORS	Ashley Thompson Bas Lafleur Eva Barneveld
DESIGN	Lyanne Tonk
PRODUCTION	Tim Beijer Producties
LITHOGRAPHY	Wilco Art Books
PRINTER	Wilco, Amersfoort
BINDER	Wilco, Amersfoort
PAPER	Tintoretto Ceylon Sesamo, 250 g Recystar Nature, 80 g Munken Premium Cream 1.95, 80 g Multi Art Gloss, 100 g
TYPEFACE	Neue Haas Unica Pro, ? Tiempos Text, ?

Amsterdam, 9 May 2020

www.culturalfoundation.eu