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Né qui, né altrove—
Migration, Detention, Desertion: *A Dialogue*

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1. Sandro Mezzadra teaches the History of Contemporary Political Thought at the University of Bologna. He is an active figure in the alternative globalisation movement in Italy, and has been particularly involved in bringing the question of migration to the centre of political struggle in that movement. Sandro is the author of works such as *Diritto di fuga: Migrazioni, cittadinanza, globalizzazione* (2001) and (with Fabio Raimondi) *Oltre Genova, oltre New York: Tesi sul movimento globale* (2001). He is also a member of the editorial collective of *DeriveApprodi* magazine, one of the chief venues in Italy for the critical analysis of contemporary capitalism. We met in Bologna one foggy January afternoon to discuss the global movement, migration, and border control in Europe and Australia.

2. **(Neilson) In your talk in the seminar 'Diritto a migrare, diritto d'asilio' at the European Social Forum you emphasized that the question of migration had become a central concern for the global movement in Italy. While the issue of migration had not been a primary concern at the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, it had emerged as a fundamental question in the lead-up to the Firenze meetings, particularly in the wake of the G8 protests in Genova. Can you describe how migration became a central issue for the global movement, giving some detail about concurrent developments in border control at the European level?**

3. (Mezzadra) First it is necessary to ask what shape the global movement has taken since the first explosion in Seattle in late 1999. Clearly the central platform of the movement has been the struggle against neoliberal capitalism, and in particular against the large agencies of transnational governance such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. I don't want to deny the analytical importance of the concept of neoliberalism, which serves to emphasize some of the central transformations that capitalism has undergone in the past two decades. Moreover, the 'mobilizing power' of the concept cannot be denied, since it has played a central role in that process of 'naming the enemy' that is strategic in the constitution of a social movement. Nevertheless, the critique of neoliberalism, as exemplified in publications like *Le Monde Diplomatique* (very influential within the movement itself), has tended to depict those who suffer the effects of globalisation in the global south as mere victims, denying them a position as protagonists or active social subjects in contemporary processes of global transformation. From this perspective, migration becomes just one in a long line of catastrophes occasioned by neoliberalism. And globalisation becomes a process that passes over the heads of people, something that is inevitable and thus immune to criticism from anything but a nostalgic point of view.

4. In the first two World Social Forums held at Porto Alegre, this critique of neoliberalism took centre stage. One of the consequences was that there were no workshops devoted specifically to migration and almost all discussion of migration was filtered through the dominant discourse of global economic devastation. But then something important happened to alter this. At the protests against the G8 summit in Genova in July 2001, there was a large rally organized by migrants. Although there had been migrant protests in Italy since the early 1990s, this was the first encounter between the global movement

and grassroots migrant organizations. The rally was a big success and it resulted in a more or less permanent mobilization against the Bossi-Fini laws (conditioning migrant presence in Italy on the possession of a work contract), which were eventually introduced by the centre right government in summer 2002. Characteristic of this struggle was a high degree of migrant involvement. On 19 January 2002, there was another huge self-organized migrant protest in Rome, between 100,000 and 150,000 people, undoubtedly the largest migrant action in Europe since the *sans papiers* demonstrations in Paris in 1996. And as preparations began for the European Social Forum, the question of migration assumed a central position in our discussions and plans.

5. In planning the workshops on migration at the European Social Forum, we insisted that it is necessary not only to build a critique of the Europe of Maastrict (that is, of the 'neoliberal' principles which in 1991-1992 were established by the Maastricht Treaty as

foundations of the economic Europe) but also to build a critique of the Europe of Schengen (that is, of the new 'border regime' whose institution was promoted in 1985 by the Schengen Agreement on the free circulation of European citizens and then fulfilled in the 1990s). In other words, we argued that to conduct a struggle against the terms of European citizenship (as such a thing takes shape) it is also necessary to question the borders that define that citizenship. And we approached this very much as a matter of principle. Looking at Europe through the lens of migration yields very different results than looking at Europe through the lens of some different concept or practice--e.g., neoliberalism. Throughout the 1990s, one of the characteristics of migration politics at the European Union level was a growing harmonization of nation-state policies and technologies of border control. But this has not rendered the borders of the EU equal to those of the modern nation-state. The question of European borders (and the confines of European citizenship) is extremely complex.

6. (Neilson) Something of this complexity becomes evident in the article by Enrica Rigo entitled 'Lo spazio commune di "libertà, sicurezza e giustizia"' (2002) published in the latest issue of *DeriveApprodi*. Rigo describes how agreements for expulsion between EU nations and so-called 'safe third countries' are in turn supplemented by agreements between these 'safe third countries' and nations further afield from the powerful Western European states. For example, a migrant who enters Germany through Poland can be expelled to Poland, which in turn has signed agreements with the Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. This creates what Rigo calls 'flows of expulsion,' which are partly determined by the subjective decisions of migrants expelled from the EU.

7. (Mezzadra) This is an interesting example of the complexity of European borders. Unlike the institutional version of Europe (created through agreements such as those made in Schengen and Dublin), the Europe of migratory flows is a global political space, a space characterized by movements that continually decentralize or provincialize Europe, to use an expression that has become popular in postcolonial studies. Migratory movements throw into question the possibility of identifying an inside and outside to Europe, which was essentially the purpose of the Schengen and Dublin agreements. As Rigo shows, there is no simple distinction between Europe's inside and outside. Rather it is a matter of degrees: Poland is less external to the EU than the Ukraine. In this sense, the borders of the EU are much more flexible than those of the classical nation-state, and this flexibility is directly proportional to that of migratory movements themselves.

8. What is involved is really a double movement. First, there are migratory flows that render the borders of Europe porous, making it possible to see how much of Asia there is in Europe, how much of Africa … how much of the world. Second, there are regulatory movements that seek to govern these flows, to contain them within structures of administration. And this means exporting technologies of border control outside the official borders of the EU. For example, the border between Germany and Poland is to date an external EU border, which has been continually forced by migrants. But rather than seeking simply to reinforce this border, the German authorities have involved Poland in its management. Having been identified as a 'safe third country,' Poland must accept all refugees and migrants expelled from Germany that entered through its territory. But Poland has in turn concluded a series of similar agreements, for example with the Ukraine. As a result, there are now plans to construct detention centres in the Ukraine on the German model, which already exist in Poland. The point is that this path of expulsion--Germany, Poland, Ukraine--follows in reverse the path established by the migrants themselves. Many Asian and African migrants (Latin Americans less so) enter Germany

through the Ukraine. In a certain sense, the migrants are in control, since their movements establish this geographical route, relegating the exclusionary measures to the status of a mere response.

9. (Neilson) In Australia too migratory movements have established a new geography, leading to a certain ambivalence of space. The Border Protection Act passed by the parliament in 2001 subtracts certain territories from Australia as far as boat arrivals are concerned. Consequently places like Christmas Island and Ashmore Reef become non-places of a certain type, neither Australia nor not-Australia. Also, following the *Tampa* incident of August 2001, the Australian government began to pay foreign governments to establish detention centres on their territories: places like the Pacific island of Nauru or New Guinea's Manus Island. Administered by private security firms, these offshore detention centres register a transformation of sovereignty since, in a certain sense, what it is for sale in these transactions is sovereignty itself. By contrast the relation between the EU and say Poland or the Ukraine seems determined more by political power than by market relations. Insofar as the decisions of these nations are shaped by their ambitions to become part of the EU, however, the question of the market must reemerge.

10. (Mezzadra) One can certainly say that due to these border technologies a certain piece of German sovereignty is displaced into Poland or the Ukraine. For both these countries, the decision to adopt these technologies of border control is linked to their desire to enter the EU. The groundwork for these agreements was laid in the early 1990s, essentially through bureaucratic channels. But the situation is again complex, since the Schengen agreements of 1985 were really concluded between national police forces, and only later (and gradually) signed into European law. In this sense, 'bureaucratic channels' have been built which are partially outside of the central sphere

bureaucratic channels' have been built which are partially outside of the control sphere of the main institutions of the EU. It is also important to understand the details of the 'safe third country' concept. This came into force in 1997, in the frame defined by the Dublin Convention, which laid down criteria for the determination of states competent to examine an asylum application. Under this principle, a number of states contiguous to the EU have been identified as 'safe third countries,' meaning that if a migrant passes through one of these territories on their way to the EU, they can now be returned to that country, since theoretically they could have lodged an asylum application there. The concept applies not only to Poland but also to a number of other states whose 'democratic' nature is at least questionable. In the case of Germany, Poland, and the Ukraine, however, one can see very clearly how the system functions. Germany is a wealthy EU state that exports its border technologies to Poland, a candidate state for EU entry. In turn, Poland exports these technologies to the Ukraine, a state very much on the backlist for EU integration. This pattern is directly related to differences in political power, and economic power too (since the price of labour in Poland is about three times less than in Germany, and about ten times less in the Ukraine).

11. (Neilson) As you indicated earlier, this question of border control raises important questions about the nature of political space in globalisation. You talk of the 'third safe country' principle establishing degrees of externality, but due to the porosity of borders, this externality never really shades into a pure outside. At the same time, you speak freely of an 'elsewhere.' Certainly you were active in organizing the large demonstration of 30 November 2002 against the *centro di permanenza temporanea* (detention centre) on Corso Brunelleschi in Torino. This protest was conducted under the slogan 'Né qui, né altrove' (Neither here, nor elsewhere). Can you explain the significance of this slogan, which obviously simplifies a great deal of thought (and practice) but also undoubtedly crystallizes something important?

12. (Mezzadra) The 30 November protest in Torino was probably the largest political action ever held against the detention system in Europe. By using the slogan 'Né qui, né altrove,' we wanted first to emphasize that we were taking action against a particular detention centre in a particular place. This was important since as far as the Italian government is concerned the centre in Torino functions particularly well. We also wanted to acknowledge the specificity of the situation in Torino, which is extremely sensitive at the moment due to the crisis at Fiat: the massive insecurity of the workforce, the ongoing actions of the unions, the bailing out of the company by GM, and so on. Certainly this kind of perpetual capitalist restructuring (and the accompanying precariousness of labour) is by now generalized, but its effects are particularly acute in old corporate-industrial cities like Torino. We wanted to recognize this, and in so doing, to point to the connections

between such labour market reorganization and the role of detention centres in restricting and controlling labour mobility. In other words, we were asserting that the appearance of the detention centre on Corso Brunelleschi and the crisis at Fiat are mutually implicated at a deep structural level.

13. To see this connection, however, one has to think beyond the purely local circumstances in Torino, to understand the interaction of capitalist restructuring and labour mobility at the global level. Thus the importance of opening the protest to the global dimension, of taking a stance against all such places that strip people of their rights: the detention centres in Poland or in Australia, for instance, as much as the one on Corso Brunelleschi. This is also necessary to avoid some of the ambivalences that have characterized the struggle against detention centres. Often one hears criticisms that suggest a particular centre ought to be closed because the conditions there are inhumane, as if centres were conditions are better would be perfectly justified. Or one finds protests against detention centres from people who would prefer not to have so-called clandestini (illegals) in their neighbourhood. By using the slogan 'Né qui, né altrove,' we were indicating that the protest was a matter of principle, a stance against the system of detention as such and not just against one particular centre.

14. (Neilson) One certainly finds similar ambivalences in the struggle against detention centres in Australia. For instance, one prominent platform involves the fact that children are held in detention centres. Thus a common slogan is 'Kids don't belong in detention centres' (as if such places are fine for adults). Another popular slogan is 'Refugees welcome here,' which effectively takes the same stance as the government with respect to asylum seekers, but just reverses the response (yes you are welcome, rather than no you are not). This slogan assumes that Australian citizens have the right to welcome or exclude, and to this extent it does not recognize what you have called the *diritto di fuga* (the right to escape, the right of the migrant to control his/her own mobility). A similar ambiguity is found in the argument that the detention system degrades Australia in the eyes of the world (a point often made in the wake of UN reports about the inhumane conditions in the Australian camps, most prominently the one at Woomera). Here the stance is more narcissistic, as if the detention policy should be stopped to maintain some imagined vision of Australia as a benevolent and humane place. Groups such as 'Australians against racism,' which place prominent advertisements against detention centres in newspapers, tend to affirm this logic. I would suggest that the phrase 'Australians against racism' is somewhat oxymoronic, given that the nation was built up on the seizure of Indigenous lands, indentured coolie labour, the historical exclusion of Asians … to oppose racism, it seems to me, one first needs to question the constituted power of the Australian state and its correlate forms of identity and subjectivity. At the same time

Australian state and its correlate forms of identity and subjectivity. At the same time, it is vitally important that such actions are organized at the national level. Your slogan 'Né qui, né altrove' registers the importance of local and/or national mobilizations, but it also signals the necessity to open such struggles to the global dimension.

15. This raises another issue about the function of detention centres in maintaining and re-asserting national sovereignty in an era of increased migratory movements. As you noted earlier, these places strip people of their rights. In the Italian campaign against detention centres the word *Lager* is very prominent. In Australia, the references have more generally been to the penal colonies established by the English (the slogan 'We are all boat people' suggests a homology between convict transportees and present-day asylum seekers) as well as the various camps, missions, and 'homes' in which Indigenous people were interned (and separated from their families) during the prolonged colonial genocide. Nonetheless, the thought of one Italian thinker, who privileges the example of the *Lager,* has been instructive for thinkers in Australia who have sought to understand the political structure of the camp. I am referring Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2000) essays on 'bare life.' Agamben's influence is evident, for instance, in Suvendrini Perera's (2002) essay 'What is a camp?' (published in the first issue of *borderlands*). It seems to me that this concept of 'bare life' is not very present in your thought and writing. Indeed, there are key thinkers in the Italian tradition of operaismo or autonomous Marxism who have polemicized quite strongly against Agamben's understanding and use of this concept. I am thinking of Luciano Ferrari Bravo in *Dal fordismo alla globalizzazione* (2001) or the essay by Antonio Negri in *Il desiderio del mostro* (2001). Is the concept of 'bare life' useful or not for understanding the political structure of the camp?

16. (Mezzadra) Let's begin with the question about the use of the term *Lager,* since this is something that we discussed very seriously within the Italian movement. Clearly it is necessary to be very careful about the use of this term in the context of the struggle against detention centres. The danger is that one might be seen to confuse current forms of global control with the forms of rule that dominated under European fascism in the early 20th-century. It is thus necessary to affirm that the term Lager is not simply reducible to the camps that existed under European fascism or indeed under Nazism. In fact, the Lager has colonial origins in places such as Cuba and South Africa … or indeed, as you point out, in Australia, which in a certain sense was one enormous *Lager.* So in using this term, we first want to point to the persistence of colonialism and colonial power relations within contemporary models of government and metropolitan societies. Next, it is necessary to recognize that even the Nazi *Lager* cannot be immediately equated with the extermination camps at Auschwitz or Treblinka. Beginning in 1933, the *Lager* were administrative camps established throughout Germany for the internment of political opponents and of the so-called *Asozialen* (people like gypsies, the mentally ill, or homosexuals) … and not immediately or only the Jews who would eventually be exterminated. So in identifying contemporary detention centres as *Lager,* we are not equating them with extermination camps (which clearly they are not). This is extremely important, since such an identification would seriously banalize the Nazi genocide. And I think it is also interesting to note that an important book, *Autobiografie negate. Immigrati nei Lager del presente,* about the detention camps as *Lager* has been written in Italy by Federica Sossi (2002), a philosopher and activist who has been and is seriously engaged in confronting the heritage of the *shoah.*

17. The *Lager* is an administrative space in which men and women who have not committed any crime are denied their right to mobility. In this sense, it is perfectly legitimate to identify present-day detention centres as *Lager.* It is also valid to point out that such spaces, which are associated with one of the blackest periods in European history, have not disappeared from the contemporary political scene. To the contrary, they have experienced a general diffusion throughout the so-called West (and also in other parts of the world). If one recalls Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), which is one of the most important sources for Agamben's notion of 'bare life,' it is significant that she recognizes the colonial origins of the *Lager* and traces the first appearance of such places in Europe to the concentration camps that appeared after the First World War. These were not extermination camps but places for the internment of men and women who, due to the changes to the map of Europe following the war, had no clear national citizenship (the so-called *apatrides* or *Heimatlosen*). In this sense, it is also appropriate to speak of contemporary detention centres as *Lager,* since they also serve to restrict the movement of people with no clear juridical connection to a particular nation-state or with the "wrong" citizenship.

18. To move more directly to the question of 'bare life,' it is important to say that Agamben's work provides a very powerful set of concepts with which to understand the political structure of the camp. Certainly, his arguments have proved fundamental for activists involved in protesting the existence of detention centres in Italy. I think especially of the description of the peculiar dialectic of exclusion and inclusion which is put to work in the camps. A subject who is not at all recognized by the legal order (the 'illegal alien') is included in that order (through the 'inclusion' in the detention center) just to be excluded from the space to which the legal order itself applies! This is really a very important contribution to the understanding of the logic of the camp. At the same time, I have the impression that Agamben risks emphasizing too much the *exceptional* character of the camp (this is an element of his work that derives from Carl Schmitt). The problem is that the logic of domination that functions in the camp is a logic that also

operates in other social spaces. This type of domination is really diffused throughout the comprehensive structure of society. You mention some objections to Agamben's concept of 'bare life' from exponents of Italian operaismo such as Antonio Negri and Luciano Ferrari Bravo. But it is worth considering what they have to say. Ferrari Bravo finds the concept of 'bare life' ambiguous because it excludes the question of labour from the sphere of theoretical observation. Luciano asked himself if one should not look, besides Auschwitz, also at Ellis Island to understand the logic of the contemporary camps. Another exponent of *operaismo,* Paolo Virno, points out polemically in his book *Il ricordo del presente* (1999) that the best example of what Agamben means by 'bare life' is *labour power,* labour power as defined by Marx as a form of potentiality. It seems to me that this approach calls to attention the fundamental relation between contemporary detention centres and the comprehensive restructuring of the labour market under global capitalism.

19. The detention centre is a kind of decompression chamber that diffuses tensions accumulated *on the labour market.* These places present the other face of capitalism's new flexibility: they are concrete spaces of state oppression and a general metaphor of the despotic tendency to control labour's mobility, which is a structural character of 'historical capitalism,' as has been stressed by a number of recent studies. It seems to me more important to speak of the camps in this way rather than in terms of 'bare life.' This is the case even if the concept of 'bare life' has brought to light something of the fundamental logic by which these spaces function. Certainly, as Agamben argues, the camp performs a violent act of stripping. But this stripping should be understood in relation to the new forms of life that are produced in global capitalism. If, as many have argued, global capitalism gives rise to new forms of flexibility, then the continuous movement of migrants shows the subjective face of this flexibility. At the same time, migratory movements are clearly exploited by global capitalism, and detention centres are crucial to this system of exploitation. This is one of things that becomes clear in the important book by Yann Moulier Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat* (1998), which has just been translated into Italian. Taking a wide historical view of the capitalist world system, Moulier Boutang argues that forms of indentured and enslaved labour have always played and continue to play a fundamental role in capitalist accumulation. Far from being archaisms or transitory adjustments destined to be wiped out by modernization, these labour regimes are constituent of capitalist development and arise precisely from the attempt to control or limit the worker's flight. In this perspective, the effort to control the migrant's mobility becomes the motor of the capitalist system and the contemporary detention centre appears as one in a long line of administrative mechanisms that function to this end.

20. (Neilson) In *Diritto di fuga,* you emphasize the importance of recent efforts to rethink the concept of citizenship for understanding migration in the contemporary world. In Australia, the question of citizenship was very present in our discussions during the 1990s, particularly due to the efforts of the so-called 'cultural policy' school, which deployed the Foucauldian concept of governmentality to argue for the importance of collaboration between intellectuals and state institutions. For some years during the 1990s, the theme of citizenship was one identified by the Australian Research Council as a priority area for government research funding. Citizenship studies began to appear quite a mainstream form of intellectual and political inquiry, even if many of the studies that came out emphasized the ways in which citizenship is no longer exclusively attached to the nation-state.

21. In the wake of the *Tampa* incident of August 2001, however, some Australian thinkers began to tackle the questions of migration and detention more through the concept of sovereignty than through that of citizenship. I'm thinking of works like 'Sink the Tampa,' the postscript to Anthony Burke's book *In Fear of Security* (2001), McKenzie Wark's piece 'Globalisation from below: Migration, sovereignty, communication' (2002), which was published on the *fibreculture* email list, or the second issue of *borderlands,* 'On What Grounds?' (2002) (for which I was part of the editorial collective). The concept of sovereignty seemed important for three reasons: (i) after the Tampa incident the Australian government began to pay to establish detention centres on foreign territories; (ii) new legislation of border control subtracted certain territories from Australia as far as boat arrivals are concerned; and (iii) after the failure of the official reconciliation process that lasted ten years, Indigenous groups issued a new call for sovereignty through the signing of a treaty. Certainly it is difficult to speak of sovereignty without also speaking of citizenship (and vice versa), but these differences also seem important. To what extent has the issue of sovereignty (and its transformations under globalisation) been a central issue for those involved in the struggle for migrant rights in Europe?

22. (Mezzadra) I would say that in Italy things happened the other way around. The concept of sovereignty has always been central within Italian political discourse and theory, while that of citizenship has played a marginal role. One way to resigster this is to consult the well-known *Dizionario di politica* (1983), edited by Noberto Bobbio, Nicola Matteucci and Gianfranco Pasquino, which has no entry for citizenship. Not until the early 1990s did people like Giovanna Zincone (1992) and Danilo Zolo (1994) begin to write seriously about citizenship, and the debate in Italy has always been closely connected with that surrounding immigration. In *Diritto di fuga* and in some other writings (2002), I tried to offer a radical rereading of T.H. Marshall's (1949) classical text on citizenship and

tried to offer a radical rereading of T.H. Marshall's (1949) classical text on citizenship and social class. This meant identifying two faces of citizenship: the first being citizenship in the formal institutional sense, and the second associated with social practices, that is with a combination of political and practical forces that challenge the formal institutions of citizenship. In this second sense, the question of citizenship raises that of subjectivity. And while I obviously value the Foucauldian criticism of the concept of citizenship, pointing out that this subjectivity is constructed by a number of disciplinary practices, I also stress that there is an autonomous space of subjective action that can force significant institutional transformations. For me, speaking of citizenship is above all a way of moving the question of subjectivity into political theory. And thinking about citizenship in this second sense is a way of focusing the debate specifically on migrants, that is, on people who are not recognized as formal citizens within a particular political space. Migratory movements are themselves a practice of citizenship that, over the past ten years, has placed more and more pressure on the borders of formal citizenship. Understood in this way, citizenship is a concept that allows one to ask how these pressures bear upon classical political concepts such as sovereignty. So speaking of citizenship in no way means to stop speaking about sovereignty. Above all, citizenship is a concept that allows us to put the subjective demands of migrants at the centre of political discussion.

23. At the same time, the concept of citizenship extends beyond this very direct reference to migratory movements. One big theoretical challenge is to individuate the nexus that connects the specific demands for citizenship expressed through migratory movements to other social practices that don't necessary involve the demand for formal citizenship. I have tried to identify (in a very embryonic way) what is common to subjective social practices of migration and demands for citizenship expressed within the so-called West over the past few decades, particularly in the feminist and workers' movements. The concept of *diritto di fuga* allows this nexus to come into view. I'm not trying to suggest some sort of leveling homology between migrant struggles and those of feminists and workers. To the contrary, the connection is absolutely formal and not immediately communicable. But there is a link as regards labour mobility. Again this relates to Yann Moulier Boutang's argument in *De l'esclavage au salariat,* which identifies the subjective practice of labour mobility as the connecting thread in the history of capitalism. In Italy, beginning in the 1970s, there has been an intense discussion of the worker's escape from the factory, the refusal of work in quite a banal and concrete sense. You can see the relevance of this movement of worker's escape from the factory discipline in the determination of the very strategies of managerial control and enterprise organization in the recent book *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* by Luc Boltanski and Éve Chiapello (1999). They show how 'flexibility', before becoming a keyword of corporate ideology, was recognized at the beginning of the 1970s as the chief problem of capitalist command, in the shape of labour's mobility. Similarly feminism involves a refusal of domestic work and the patriarchal family, a demand for control over subjective decisions regarding labour mobility. The category of *diritto di fuga* links these subjective practices of mobility to the migrant's demand for citizenship, to the migrant's right to assert control over his/her own movements.

24. (Neilson) You argue that this subjective practice of mobility limits the possibility of understanding migration in supposedly objective terms (the push-pull factors of the global economy, demographic imbalances, and so on). One important aspect of this argument involves a critique of multiculturalism, which in your view reduces the singularity of the migrant's experience, casting him/her as the representative of a culture, ethnicity, or community. As you know, the discourses and practices of multiculturalism are quite developed in Australia. Since the 1970s, multiculturalism has been an official government policy, even if the institutions that administer this policy have been among the worst hit by the dismantling of the 20th-century welfare state. Critics often point to a discontinuity between this official policy of multiculturalism and the brutal treatment of migrants in Australian detention centres (in which there is no limited period of stay). Others have argued that there is a continuity between this policy of detention (ethnic caging) and the merely spectacular and consumerist ethos of official multiculturalism. I am thinking in particular of the book *White Nation* (1998) by Ghassan Hage, which you cite in *Diritto di fuga.* It seems to me you are engaged in a similar project, trying to think of migration in terms that move beyond multiculturalism. Can you say something about how your emphasis on the subjective aspects of migration relates to multiculturalism as understood in the Italian or European context?

25. (Mezzadra) First, let me talk about the subjectivity of migrants, which is a question with both a theoretical and a political face. In the theoretical sense, emphasizing the subjective aspect of migration means moving away from mainstream discourses that altogether exclude this dimension, talking only of push and pull, of demography, and so forth. In *Diritto di fuga,* I pointed to the need to highlight this subjective dimension to understand the decision to migrate, the decision to leave unfavorable or undesirable conditions in a particular place. This is an approach that dovetails with much of the ethnographic work done with migrants in Italy for example by people like Alessandro dal Lago (1999) and Ruba Salih (2003). There can be no doubt that this ethnographic work has delivered a much richer and more complex understanding of migration than found in mainstream discourses. Above all, it places migration in the context of a life story in which the subjective aspect becomes very clear. And this allows a move away from stereotypical narratives by which the decision to migrate involves a search for liberty or

emancipation. Sometimes this is the case, sometimes not. For instance, many Moroccan women interviewed in Italy have indicated that they chose to migrate because they could no longer stand to live in' an extremely patriarchal society. In this case, it's reasonable to talk about migration as a mode of emancipation. But one also finds people who offer absolutely banal reasons for migrating, not just economic problems but also existential ones. One of the first interviews I ever read was with a young Moroccan who decided to leave his studies in Casablanca to come to Italy because his girlfriend had left him. These kind of subjective motives are just as valid as those associated with economic problems or more general social conditions. Finally, it's important to recognize that in emphasizing the subjective aspect of migration, I'm not trying to reinstate some mythical understanding of Cartesian subjectivity. Rather I'm speaking of processes of subjectivization in the Foucauldian sense, and while these may involve pain and poverty they can also involve enjoyment.

26. Moving to more political questions, it's necessary to recognize that much of the work done in the name of solidarity with migrants in Italy has treated them as victims, as people in need of assistance, care, or protection. Doubtless this work has been inspired by noble motives, but it also has a certain ambiguity. By exploring the subjective aspect of migration, one is able to move beyond this paternalistic vision and to see migrants as the central protagonists of current processes of global transformation. As regards multiculturalism, it is safe to say that there has not been much practical experience of multicultural politics in Europe. Here the discourse of multiculturalism was imported from North America, and the public debate has always been narrowly linked to migration. As in Australia and North America, the debate has largely been driven by a certain white fundamentalism that sees multiculturalism has something to be fought. In Italy, we have figures like Giacomo Biffi (2000), the Roman Catholic cardinal in Bologna, who argues that all migrants should be Christians, or Giovanni Sartori (2002), who has reached a similar position in lay terms, claiming that certain migrants (especially those coming from Muslim countries) threaten the European Enlightenment tradition. With a debate that functions at this level, many people have reflexively taken a position for multiculturalism, particularly those who identify with the institutional or even the grassroots left.

27. But even in this left-wing context, there are ambiguities surrounding the politics of multiculturalism. For instance, if you imagine a group of activists who are working with migrants to organize a festival, there will surely be somebody who asserts that each of the cultures involved ought to have a space to express itself. Not only are different cultures shunted into different spaces, but also culture and ethnicity are collapsed. If you asked the person who comes out with this position to identify her/his own ethnicity or culture, she/he would likely feel confused or threatened. The basic lesson of whiteness studies (that whiteness is a marked identity and not a neutral or universal position) has not really penetrated the European left, and ethnic particularity still tends to be identified in contrast to the white European citizen. Moreover, there is a growing tendency in Europe to oppose issues of cultural recognition to those of economic or social well-being. Axel Honneth (1996) is only the most intelligent proponent of this argument. Such a tendency is particularly worrying in a period in which the welfare state is under attack. Marco Martiniello (1997) tells a very instructive story. In Frankfurt they opened an office of multicultural affairs. Other public agencies in the city offices began to send migrants to that office, although the problems they had were quite banal and absolutely 'material' (work, housing, and so forth); the authorities seemed to be working from the presupposition that migrants are confronted first of all (if not only) with 'cultural' problems. This shows something of the limits of multicultural politics when it comes to

the real life subjective experiences of migrants in Europe. As in other parts of the world, multiculturalism has become overwhelmingly associated with the politics of identity. Clearly the question of identity is important but, under the hegemony of multiculturalism, all the diverse aspects and problems of migration are reduced to that of identity. And in Europe identity is largely understood as a question of cultural belonging, as something contained by official geographical borders, as given rather than constructed. Perhaps this is why that strain of postcolonial studies that emphasizes the idea of hybridity, which is by now relatively mainstream in the English-speaking world, is still seen as quite cutting-edge in Italy.

28. (Neilson) I noticed that in the lead-up to the 30 November demonstration against the detention centre in Torino, there was a screening of a video documenting the Woomera breakout of Easter 2002. Almost all the activists I have spoken with in Italy know about this event, which in Australia has been the most prominent act of civil disobedience in the struggle against detention centres. In Italy, of course, the group known as the *disobbedienti* has played a very important part in the global movement. Could you say something about the role of civil disobedience in the struggle against the *Lager* and within the movement more generally? It would be interesting to hear your thoughts on the way acts of disobedience have been cast as crimes and linked to the terrorism threat. What is the significance of this in the context of the 'permanent global war,' the collapse of police and military powers, discipline and security, etc.?

29. (Mezzadra) I would say that disobedience, which involves the spectacularization of politics and the production of exemplary actions, has been extremely important in the phase of maturation and growth of the global movement. It has certainly been crucial for creating the impression of an emergence from marginality, for winning a space on the

evening news, for occupying sound-bytes. This kind of action is absolutely valid in a social context that tends ever more toward symbolization and spectacularization and, for this reason, it must not be demonized. A problem emerges, however, when such spectacularization becomes an end in itself, when it begins to colonize the entirety of political expression. In such circumstances, disobedience ceases to be one part in a combination of political actions, losing its connection to a program of political change. To descend for a moment into the practical politics of the movement, it is significant that at the European Social Forum the *disobbedienti* absented themselves from the fort, the main area in which the seminars and discussions were taking place. Within the fort, there was a genuine diffusion of disobedient practices as well as serious discussions about how the movement should proceed. But in this alternative space, the *disobbedienti* had nothing to do. In this context, there is a danger that disobedience becomes nothing so much as a kind of self-promotion. Something like a *logo,* one could say.

30. At the same time, this remains an open discussion, since even people like me who criticize the *disobbedienti* find it difficult to identify forms of political action that would be as exemplary as theirs but at the same time contribute to a deep structural change. This is a big problem that relates to the motivations of people involved in the movement. There is important difference between actions that speak the language of ethics and actions that speak the language of politics, although recognizing this difference does not mean to devaluate the language of ethics. Perhaps the importance of 'ethical' motivations, which are not to be confused with 'moralism,' within the composition of the movement tells us something very important--and at the same time absolutely material--about it: it could be interpreted as the subversive side of a mode of production which tends to value the very subjectivity of the workers, and so on … Nevertheless it implies a couple of problems. The big dilemma facing the movement is how to harness and move beyond the utopian feeling that has been created during the unexpectedly large demonstrations. For while it is true that the movement has experienced amazing growth, one is left to ask in between the protest marches that attract hundreds of thousands of people on the base of these very general (ethical?) motivations: 'Where is everyone, what are they doing?' The challenge is to find concrete points of application for the movement. One possibility is within the universities, since despite the recent reforms, there is a new generation of student activists in Italy and real possibilities for the university to emerge as a laboratory for experimenting with new political discourses and practices. There have also been some interesting experiments with connections between the movement and institutions, especially at the municipal level. For instance, in Cosenza, the mayor is very open to the movement and interesting things are happening as a result. I think it is important, however, to keep this experimentation with institutions at a distance from the project of

winning constituted political power at the level of the nation-state.

31. To move to the question of repression, I would say that in the context of 11 September and the 'permanent global war' the movement does face a different situation. However, this is not a situation of generalized indiscriminate repression. For example, we might have this conversation a hundred times without being arrested, but on the one hundred and first occasion we might be arrested for reasons that appear quite arbitrary and completely unrelated to anything we have actually discussed. Certainly the risks of encountering such repression are much greater for people involved in the movement than in the past. We are operating in a situation in which there are definitely less fundamental rights or guarantees. If there is a war in Iraq, for instance, I'm really not sure what opportunities there will be for taking radical positions against the military action, although there might be more of a chance in Europe than in the United States. Anyway, the development of a powerful anti-war movement in the US is of course a key question for the "global" movement in the next months.

32. (Neilson) I'd say there will be more opportunities for opposition in Europe, even if by now there is a certain momentum behind the anti-war movement in the US. Certainly in Europe you can find mainstream political parties against the war, and this is not the case in the US or even in Australia (where opposition is often predicated on the position of the UN Security Council, as if a Security Council resolution in support of an attack would make this a just war). But how can we understand this new climate of risk and repression? Should we understand it as a moment of regression or reaction?

33. (Mezzadra) In general I try to avoid using the term reaction. I don't think there have really been moments of reaction in modern history, at least since the Napoleonic wars … What we are dealing with is more a question of reorganization than reaction or regression. I know that Antonio Negri (2002) has referred to the current situation as a backlash. But this seems to me a position that emerges from one of the weaker aspects of the book he has written with Michael Hardt. There can be no doubt that *Empire* (2000) is a very important text that has opened new spaces for political thought and action, building a kind of bridge between discussions that took place in Italy during the 1990s and radical thought and practice in other parts of the world, not just in English speaking countries but also in places like Turkey and Korea. In my opinion, however, Hardt and Negri's argument risks buying into a progressive, almost linear, model of historical change. I'm referring to that element of the book that argues that Empire makes a definite preferable advance over classical nation-state imperialism, the line of argument that refers back to Woodrow Wilson's project of instituting a world government of peace. One drawback of this approach is that it makes it seem that the Empire that Hardt and Negri describe as emerging in the Clinton years is the only Empire possible. For me, the

theoretical model they themselves describe (particularly in the seminal chapter entitled 'Mixed Constitution') is much more complex and complicated than this. It is a model that can incorporate conflict and aggression.

34. Rather than speaking of backlash or reaction, I think it makes more sense to understand the present situation as one in which various elements of this mixed constitution are undergoing a process of redefinition and reorganization. The current conflicts are internal to Empire and they do not attest a simple movement back into the period of economic and military nationalism. What we are seeing is a series of displacements and adjustments within a new form of constitutionalism that is itself a field of tensions and can pass through different phases of equilibrium and disequilibrium. This idea of mixed constitutionalism seems to me one of the strongest aspects of Hardt and Negri's book and one that works in counterpoint to the more metadiscursive narrative that sees counter-Empire emerging only to the extent that Empire succeeds the older system of nation-states in an entirely linear way. There is a danger of falling into a certain Hegelianism here, and the only way to get out of it is to begin talking about backlash or reaction. Certainly it is important to recognize that the book's utopianism is one of its most appealing aspects and, as I said before, its opening of new political vistas has been altogether positive. But it seems to me that the more progressive aspects of Hardt and Negri's argument are at odds with some of the other theoretical excurses they make, in particular the engagement with postcolonial theory. This is why I favor a moratorium on the use of words like regression and reaction.

35. (Neilson) Can I ask your opinion on the argument according to which Europe is the weak link within this new global constitution of Empire. This seems to me a central

theme in the volume *Europa Politica* edited by Heidrun Friese, Antonio Negri, and Peter Wagner (2002) to which you contributed a piece (with Alessandro dal Lago). It is true that in Europe there exists an already existing system of supranational administration that suggests the possibility of constructing new modes of government beyond the nation-state system. This is true even if, as we discussed earlier, Europe is involved in designing ever more complex and repressive forms of border control. There are some thinkers in Italy who argue for the possibility of working for change through the existing institutions of the EU, for example, through projects such as the Charter of Nice (the effort to institute a European bill of rights). Others are much more skeptical. Others again contend that the time is ripe, after the electoral failures in France and Italy (and the positions of the German and UK centre left governments on issues such as the war and migration), to begin the work of reforming the institutional left at the European level. How do you judge these arguments? Is there a danger that seeing Europe as the weak link in Empire obstructs the project of constructing alliances and channels of political communication with social movements outside of Europe?

36. (Mezzadra) Let me begin by talking about the relations between the movement and the institutional left. This is clearly a problem that we need to face. At the moment in Italy there is probably a better chance than in the past to change the institutional left. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the situation has partially improved. Certainly it is fair to say that the movement must begin to think of new ways to relate to social and political institutions. This is necessary to achieve concrete changes. One of the difficulties is that today there exists a heterogeneous movement of unparalleled numbers and strength in Italy, but we have been unable to change anything. For instance, we struggled against the Bossi-Fini legislation, but now it is part of Italian law. We need to draft a model that will allow us to reach concrete goals. This is not a matter of reform. Rather it is a question of thinking about new relations with institutions, of thinking of institutions themselves in a different way.

37. Having said this, it is clear that the best chance for realizing a new way of relating to institutions is at the European level. The institutions of the EU are already quite well established (it is difficult to imagine a "regression" back to the old nation-state system). So when we begin to think about new relations with the institutional left, we are not proposing some reform of the Italian left, the French left … or the German left. We are thinking about new ways to connect to (and reorganize) the space of European governance. In this respect, what I said earlier about migratory movements is extremely important. Thinking of Europe in terms of migratory movements allows us to imagine an entirely different version of Europe than the one that is presently being constructed at the institutional level. So the first task of the movement as it begins to experiment with institutions is to keep open the criticism of the borders of EU citizenship. In this regard, it is necessary to realize that European constitutionalism implies a very different model of borders than that characteristic of the nation-state. The material constitution of EU is complex, flexible, and multi-level. It continually integrates and reorganizes spaces and functions. And this definitely opens new opportunities for social movements. At this level, there are possibilities to use the contradictions that exist with the new constitutionalism, to occupy gaps formed by these flexible operations (even if only temporarily). To argue that this is the case simply because the EU operates at a supranational level is to presuppose a conflict between this new constitutionalism and nation-state governance. While this may have been the case in the 1960s or 1970s, the integration of Europe is now something that has been done. Clearly this integration has often served to strengthen the mechanisms of global capitalist command, but there are also spaces for alternatives.

38. (Neilson) Finally, can you say something about the new project you are involved

38. (Neilson) Finally, can you say something about the new project you are involved with at *Derive Approdi?* While you signal these new possibilities for institutional connections at the European level, you are also very much involved in seeking to create new opportunities for communication, exchange, and dialogue between social movements at the global level. What is the significance of and reasoning behind this effort of global opening?

39. (Mezzadra) *DeriveApprodi* began in the early 1990s as one of the main laboratories in Italy for the critical analysis of post-Fordism and globalisation. It grew very much out of the *operaismo* tradition and was strongly linked to a program of practical political action. But when the global movement erupted in Italy with the Genova protests of July 2001, it took an altogether different form to that which the contributors to the magazine had fantasized during the 1990s. For this reason, the editorial collective decided to launch a new series of the magazine, which would investigate one of the most innovative aspects of the new movement, that is precisely its global character. By doing this we wanted both to step away from a platform based exclusively in the criticism of neoliberalism and to distinguish our position from that which sees the nation-state as the last bastion of defense against global capitalism. While recognizing the continuing importance of mobilizations at the local and national level, we affirmed that the movement itself presents an alternative image of globalisation. Indeed, building on some of Hardt and Negri's arguments in Empire, we wanted to point to another form of globalisation, a globalisation of struggles and resistance that did not simply begin in Seattle but has a long history, including the history of anti-colonial struggles.

40. At the same time, we claimed that what took place in Seattle was a kind of explosion that lead to the construction of a new global imaginary. This was not an anti-globalisation movement, but one that was itself truly global. And this was the case despite many of the movement's limits and contradictions, particularly as regards its tendency to present a paternalistic face toward struggles in the global south. It seemed to us that this was the first time in the history of anti-systemic movements that a movement had emerged that took the unification of the planet not as an end but as a starting point. For this reason, we planned a series of three issues to investigate the condition of the movement at the global level, beginning with an issue on European movements, moving on to another on Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and finishing with one on North American and Oceania. The idea is to create a new lexicon or imaginary to begin the work of articulating struggles within, between, and across different political spaces. To this extent, the DeriveApprodi project is very much about the communicability of struggles. It recognizes the necessity to operate at all levels, (municipal, national, continental … planetary) without taking the politics of geographical scale (or more precisely the jumping of scales) as an end in itself. To this extent it differs from much of the work done in the 1990s that concentrated on global/local or 'glocal' connections, moving away from a position that unproblematically equates the global with the economic (or neoliberal) and the local with the cultural (or with resistance). Rather, this is a project about the articulation of struggles, about the construction of a new global imaginary that operates on an altogether different plane than that of rational Enlightenment dialogue or happy postcolonial hybridity. But the project is still underway, so we will have to defer our discussion of it to another time and place.

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