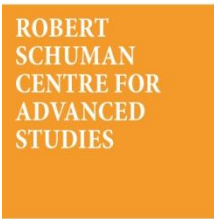




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A Concept of the Global to Conceive Global
Governance. Four Metaphorical Proposals

Daniel Innerarity

European University Institute
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Global Governance Programme

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Abstract

This paper suggests four metaphors to correct our habitual way of thinking about globalization. It begins with the idea that the world can be understood more effectively based on the properties of gases, rather than liquids; secondly, it analyzes the properties and effects of the excessive exposure in which we find ourselves when interdependency is in force; It maintains that our world lacks outlying areas, in the sense that nothing, in fact, remains outside, peripheral or completely isolated, and as a normative principle, we cannot consider anything absolutely exterior; and finally, It presents the idea that we live in a world belonging to everyone and to no one, where piracy holds great explanatory force.

Keywords

Globalization, global governance, interdependence, piracy

Introduction*

Conceiving of global governance demands understanding the nature of that which is global. Since it is a concept that contradicts many of our experiences of the world and our typical ways of handling it, we have no choice but to make a “metaphorological” effort. I am going to suggest four metaphors to correct our habitual way of thinking about these matters. I will begin with the idea that the world can be understood more effectively based on the properties of gases, rather than liquids; secondly, I analyze the properties and effects of the excessive exposure in which we find ourselves when interdependency is in force; I maintain that our world lacks outlying areas, in the sense that nothing, in fact, remains outside, peripheral or completely isolated, and as a normative principle, we cannot consider anything absolutely exterior; and finally, I present the idea that we live in a world belonging to everyone and to no one, where piracy holds great explanatory force. Between gaseous states, contagious realities, spaces without closure and generalized piracy, our understanding of the world in which we live is at stake, an understanding that is necessary if we are to be able to create something reasonable out of this world.

1. A Gaseous World

Metaphors can be dangerous toys, and that is why when people launch metaphors into the world, the metaphors simultaneously illuminate certain aspects of reality and verify their own limitations. In the same way that there is no light without shadows, neither are there brilliant metaphors that do not occasionally blind us, preventing us from perceiving some aspects of reality that they wanted to clarify. That is what happened to the image of a society that had become “liquid,” as the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman characterized the current world, a world of fluidity that contrasted with the rigidity of the nation states and the traditional frameworks of government. According to this imagery, the geography establishing traditional geopolitics would be modified and the central question would revolve less around controlling geographic space and more around controlling liquid fluidity.

Nevertheless, no matter how seductive the metaphor of liquidity, it does not, in my opinion, adequately describe the entire reality of current social processes; this is why the regulatory attempts of national and international organisms fail, as has been repeatedly confirmed in attempts to control immigration, capital flight or the governance of climate change, to mention only a few telling examples. We are hitting the limits of what has been called “hydraulic Keynesianism.” The metaphor of liquidity—given the homogeneous character of liquid elements—is not able to account for the global dimension of media turbulences—the buzz—that is created around events. This turbulence is initially explosive but quickly goes flat. Neither does the idea of liquidity sufficiently illustrate the phenomenon of financial bubbles, economic volatility and speculation. When it comes to choosing an image that speaks for itself, Sloterdijk bubbles (1998) have more explanatory strength to help us understand a world composed of phenomena that are more atmospheric than material, a world made up of hoaxes, rumors, haziness, risks, panic, speculation and trust.

Explanatory limitations tend to be accompanied by strategic failures; inadequate theories are translated into inefficient actions. We have known for a while now that the control of the channels through which materials are exchanged does not guarantee the control of content. Even though Russia, for example, controls a significant segment of the global gas and petroleum market, its role in setting final prices in New York or London markets is minimal. Countries or actors that exercise no physical control over the channels of transferring “liquids” have considerable influence in the setting of those prices. There is a growing disconnect between the fluidity of commerce, the fluidity of capital and

* Translated by Sandra Kingery.

currency exchange. The increasing importance of these factors in relation to the products on which they are based, the spectacular growth of options and futures markets or economic speculation are phenomena that have more in common with atmospheric unreality than with liquid elasticity. It is also true that there is an increasing divide between the intrinsic value of the underlying “liquid” that is circulating through tubes (gas, financial flows, information. . .) and the use value for end users, a value that can “contract” or “explode” based on speculative oscillations.

The control of channels is not always crowned by success. This is especially evident when we try to place barriers on immigration by considering it a question of fluidity and channels, as if we had forgotten that this is an issue that depends more on general economic conditions. People do not immigrate because there are conduits between one country and another but because there are inequalities that the movement of workers tends to even out, in the same way as air evens out atmospheric pressures. That is why strict border controls barely modify the final result of migratory fluidity; it is not slowed by any barrier but by decreased economic opportunities.

More than a liquid world, the process of globalization has led to a “gaseous world.” This metaphor responds better to the reality of current financial markets and the mass media world since both are characterized, like volumes that contract and expand in the gaseous state, by cycles of expansion and contraction, growth and recession, a changeable volume. A gaseous world responds better to immaterial, vaporous and volatile exchanges. These exchanges are very distant from the solid realities that characterized what we nostalgically call the real economy and are more complex than the movement of liquid fluidity. This image is also very appropriate for describing the increasingly uncontrollable nature of certain social processes, the fact that the whole world of finance, the media and communications is based more on “gaseous” information than on fact checking.

In the new context of this gaseous world, the ability of international states or organisms to organize processes is as desirable as it is difficult. The proposed metaphor can help us understand the reasons behind this complexity. It is more difficult to control gaseous emissions than the circulation of a liquid. The great political problem of the contemporary world is how to organize things that are unstable. To do that, it is not enough to control the containers and channels of transmission, since an increasingly large number of exchanges are realized beyond traditional pathways and their use value depends increasingly on the particular conditions imposed by the end user.

Any attempt at regulation should be centered on acting on the conditions and contexts that provoke the expansion or contraction of these speculative gaseous phenomena. The essential political task is to create a market environment whose essential parameters can be governed in some way. The classic and rigid act of channeling should be substituted by a flexible configuration that, as the magnetic field does with electrical particles, works at a distance to define the limits within which movements are free and not controlled. This flexibility would allow us to bring individual freedoms in line with the regulations that seem necessary so free movement does not destroy the conditions of possibility, the system inside which they can act without provoking catastrophic situations.

2. Universal Exposition

Humanity’s principal concerns today are not concrete evils as much as indeterminate threats. We are not concerned about visible dangers but about vague risks that could spread anywhere, at the most unexpected time and against which there is not sufficient protection. Of course, there are concrete dangers we can identify, but what most concerns us, for example, about terrorism is its unpredictable nature; what is worrisome about the current economy is its volatility, in other words, the weakness of our instruments to protect us from financial instability. In general, much of our discomfort comes from how exposed we are to threats we can only partially control. Our ancestors lived in a more dangerous, but less risky environment; the poverty they lived in would certainly be intolerable for us today, but

we are exposed to risks with which they were unfamiliar. If it is hard for us to understand the nature of these risks, they would have found them literally inconceivable.

Let us think about everything that has to do with the effects of climate change, the risks of nuclear energy, terrorist threats (so qualitatively different than the dangers of conventional wars), the consequences of political instability, the repercussions from economic crises, the epidemics whose conditions of possibility are the mobility of people and foodstuffs, the consequences—unknown until recently—of the financialization of the economy, the spreading of rumors, distrust or panic, which is as rapid and uncontrollable as the speed of information, etc. With all these phenomena, we experience the most worrisome part of the general interdependence that characterizes the globalized world: contagion, chains of events, pollution, turbulence, toxicity, instability, shared fragility, universal effects, overexposure.

What is the cause of this feeling of excessive exposure and our resulting discomfort? We owe it to the reality of our mutual dependence, something that has in fact provided us many benefits. Talking about interdependence is a way of referring to the fact that we are exposed in a way that is unprecedented, and we do not have sufficient protection. Interdependence signifies mutual dependence, a shared lack of protection. We live in a world where "all things hang together," or, to say it in the language of Leibniz, "all things conspire." Nothing is completely isolated, and "foreign affairs" no longer exist; everything has become domestic. Other people's problems are now our own, and we cannot view them with indifference or wait for them to necessarily turn to our own advantage. This is the context of our unusual vulnerability. The things that used to protect us (distance, state intervention, foresight into the future, classic defensive procedures) have become weakened for various reasons and can now barely afford us sufficient protection.

We could affirm without exaggeration that there are no longer large distinctions between outside and inside, between nature and human, between something that is ours and something that is someone else's. Or to express it in a more appropriate manner, these distinctions are no longer clear and non-controversial. "The Great Divides" that were until recently organized by our living spaces should, according to Latour, be seen as interwoven dimensions, permitting some novel ideas (Latour 1999). This is what Ulrich Beck called "boundarylessness": there is no way to expel to the exterior our undesirable actions, which will end up affecting us, like a boomerang. We could define it as the fundamental self-influencing of the modern world.

Perhaps we have not expressed all the geopolitical consequences that stem from these new realities that make us so dependent on each other. In such an intermingled world, not even the most powerful among us is sufficiently protected: hegemony collides with the fact that, even though those who are less powerful have never been unimportant, fragmentation and empowerment now create situations that are off-balance and asymmetrical and not always favorable to the needs of the powerful. The weak, when it is clear they are not going to win, can damage those who are strong and even make them lose in the end. While each individual state created its own laws under the Westphalian model, in a world of interdependences, the strongest is continuously hostage to weakest: regarding its security, its health, its economic stability or the protection of "its" environment. Everyone is exposed to the effects of the disorder and turbulences that develop on the periphery.

When borders are blurred in such a way that it is not easy to determine what belongs to you or to someone else, when phenomena circulate and expand very quickly, when there is no action without a response, it is logical that the problem of threats and protections is considered with greater urgency, although sometimes in an unreasonable manner. In the absence of global protections and in view of the weak security that states afford, individuals search for immunological microspheres like walls, cars, the stigmatizing of the Other, protectionisms, segregation, etc. That is why there is an entire paranoid politics that pursues borders, insists on recuperating the old distinction between the outside and the inside and the separatist insularities that try to achieve total immunity.

The problem is that certain defense mechanisms are dangerous, and they end up being potentially self-destructive when they are trying to be protective. Separatist bubbles run the risk of transforming themselves into redundant protections that provoke disasters that are similar to the ones they are trying to ward off. Let us think about dangerous combinations of medications, preventive wars that are lost, walls that, rather than protecting us against evil, isolate us from good and exacerbate hate toward the Other. Perhaps what best illustrates this paradoxical connection between overexposure and over-immunization, the logic of harmful protections, is the image of Westerners as beings who straddle two contradictory automotive realities, that double, ambivalent condition between maximum exposure and the sense of maximum immunity (Brossat 2003, 95).

In this world, anyone who wants to be protected must start by limiting the scope and extent of their security measures, if they do not want to destroy themselves in case the security measures go beyond the destruction of supposedly pathogenic elements. They must, therefore, "protect themselves against their own protection, their own police, their own power of rejection, their own isolation, in other words, against their own immunity" (Derrida 2001, 67). Total immunity, the success of protections would, according to Derrida, be absolute evil, equivalent to self-destruction. Absolute evil is the failure of absolute protection, or in other words, its complete success.

We must, first of all, overcome the temptation to produce spheres of impenetrable security. A perfect enclosure is impossible and the dream of that impossibility demands considerable energy. We should learn from the human organism, which boasts systems of protection that are very sophisticated, but less rigid than we generally suppose or would, in principle, desire. But the fact is that we owe our extraordinary survival to the flexibility of our defenses.

Of course life is not possible without protection. If separatist bubbles are dangerous, pure exposure to everything that pops up is unthinkable. But protections are effective when they allow for a certain type of relationship and when they are integrated into processes of building common ground.

We must learn a new grammar of power in a world that is made up of more shared opportunities and shared threats than self-interest. Self-interest has not disappeared, of course, but it is untenable outside of the framework of the communal process in which everyone is implicated. While the ancient power struggle promoted the protection of that which belongs to us and indifference toward that which belongs to others, overexposure forces us to mutualize risks, developing cooperative procedures, sharing information and strategies. We must deepen the debate that points toward global governance, the horizon that humanity should pursue today with the greatest of energies. It sounds difficult, but it is certainly not pessimistic: governing global risks is humanity's great imperative if we do not want the thesis of the end of history to be verified, not as an apotheosis of the placid victory of liberal democracy, but as our worst collective failure.

3. A World without Outlying Areas

We may owe the first formulation of the idea of globalization to Kant when he warned that, given the spherical surface of the earth, we all end up encountering each other: human beings cannot be dispersed indefinitely, so they have no choice but to tolerate other people's company. If the world had another shape, dispersion, the protection of some against others, definitive isolation or exclusion would be possible (Kant 1968, 6, 358). The fact that everything is connected to everything invites us to consider the world as a unified system (which does not exclude the possibility of asymmetries and malfunctions). Initiatives generate resistance in this system; the separation between that which is inside and that which is outside becomes problematic, and we are all exposed to the same difficult conditions.

In all likelihood, we owe this consciousness of sharing a common fate to the presence of risks that threaten us equally and relativize the distinction between individual and common concerns. In the same way that these undesired risks do not respect areas where responsibility is limited, the shared

world is constituted as a suppression of rigid differences between what is ours and what is someone else's. The contrast between self-interest and public interest is increasingly useless, just as the contrast between here and there is disappearing. We can explain this strange accord with the metaphor of a world that has lost its outlying areas, its outer edge, outskirts, suburbs (Innerarity 2004, 119-127). Things are global when they leave nothing outside themselves, when they contain everything, connecting and integrating so that nothing remains loose, isolated, independent, lost or protected, saved or condemned, outside. The "rest of the world" is a fiction or a way of speaking when there is nothing that does not in some way belong to our common world. In a world without outlying areas, close or immediate are no longer the only dimensions available, and the horizon of references is notable increased. The tyranny of closeness is relaxed, and other considerations come into play. This could be formulated with a precise expression by Martin Shaw: "there are no others" (1996). For Beck, globalization also means the experience of a civilizing self-threat that suppresses the mere plural juxtaposition of towns and cultures and introduces them into a unified space, into a cosmopolitan unity of destiny (2002, 37-38). Along similar lines, David Held speaks of communities "that share a common destiny" (2000, 400; Albrow 1996; Robertson 1992) to indicate that the globalization of risks creates an involuntary community, an unintended coalition, which means that no one is left outside of this common fate.

The suppression of the outer edge implies the end of two habitual operations that are like two sides of the same coin: assuring one's own immunity and transferring what is undesirable to the edge. When outlying areas existed, there were a series of operations that allowed us to make use of those edges. It was possible to flee, wash one's hands, ignore, protect. There was some logic to the exclusivity of one's own possessions, one's own practice, the good of the country. The disappearance of outlying areas, to the extent they eliminate the distinction between interior and exterior, results in the loss of a free trade zone from which other peoples' shipwrecks can be calmly observed. It signifies, therefore, the end of any guarantee of immunity. It makes difficult and precarious the perimeterization that, whether spatial or temporal, would allow us to protect ourselves from certain problems.

On the other hand, when we had outlying areas, almost everything could be resolved with the simple operation of externalizing problems, pushing them to the edge, outside of our field of vision, to a distant place or another time. An outlying area is specifically a place where we can simply discard unresolved problems, waste products, a garbage dump. The modern theory of the sovereign nation state was expressly configured to move the problem of chaos to the outside: Hobbes secured internal order with a concept of sovereignty that meant "exporting" anarchy to the outside, thus configuring a competitive and exclusive international system.

Perhaps the most beneficial side of the civilizing process and the advancement in the construction of spaces for the common world can be formulated through this concept of suppressing the outlying areas. Without needing anyone to sanction it expressly, it is increasingly difficult to hand responsibility off to other people, to distant regions, to future generations, to other social sectors. Globalization presumes the impossibility of expelling the Other to a location beyond our reach. Our best progress takes the form of obliging interiorization and forbidding externalization.

All these circumstances presume, at the same time, an extraordinary increase in what must be considered public space and a previously unknown difficulty with configuring common spaces for which we do not currently have adequate instruments. This complication stems from the most radical transformation realized by a world that tends to eliminate its outlying areas, namely: the difficulty of defining limits and establishing any strategy based on them (be it organizational, military, political, economic. . .). In the best case scenario, when it is possible to fix the limits, we must also know that any construction of limits is variable, plural, contextual and that the limits must be defined and justified over and over again, according to the matter under consideration. The immediate consequence is that the interior and exterior of any activity are continually confused. While we most likely have not yet drawn all the conclusions that derive from this fact, we must now accept as indisputable truth that no important problem can be resolved locally, that, strictly speaking, internal

politics and external affairs no longer exist; everything has become internal politics. The number of problems that governments can only resolve cooperatively is increasing, at the same time as the authority of transnational organizations is strengthened and the principle of non-intervention in other nations' affairs loses legitimacy. The limits between internal and external politics have become extremely vague; "external" factors like global risks, international standards or transnational actors have become "internal variables." Our way of conceiving and acting on politics will not be up to the challenges we are facing if the distinctions between "inside" and "outside," between "us" and "them" are not placed into question as concepts that do not help govern within geographically limited areas (Grande / Risse 2000, 251).

The starting point to construct a world of common goods consists of understanding the implications of diverse spaces in a destiny that tends to be unified or, at least, getting rid of any limitation of areas and subject, as national belief systems have always preferred. One cannot understand the current world situation without taking into account the intrinsically polemical nature of the question: who are we? Globalization is a process that makes the determination of one's own identity more complex and broader, more permeable and interconnected with other collective destinies. In the era of globalization—in the era of interlaced destinies, of side effects that affect us all—we again find validity in Dewey's idea (1988; Beck / Grande 2004, 63) that politics creates its own public spaces according to what is in play at any given time: political controversies do not arise in the places where decisions are made as much as in the diverse contexts where the dramatic consequences of those decisions are perceived. Be that as it may, a globalized government would then have to become something like a regime of side effects, whose scope of action does not coincide with national limits. The political arena then becomes everything that is perceived as a bothersome consequence of society's decisions.

The processes aimed at politicizing globalization have the same legitimacy as the processes aimed at political decentralization and similar goals: in all such cases, there is an attempt to allow for the possibility of including those who find themselves significantly affected by a decision. All democratizing impulses have come from the scandal of having binding decisions that not everyone had accepted. This is also the case with globalization, even if we know that the procedures for democratizing globalization will need to be more complex than the procedures that served for the configuration of nation states. In this respect, David Held formulated a criterion for drawing proper boundaries that required calculating the range of people whose life expectancies are significantly affected by a particular decision (Held 2005, 252). It is safe to assume that we will have more intense discussions in the future about the appropriate jurisdiction for handling public goods, to avoid unacceptable power imbalances during the decision-making process or thinking that market forces are capable of resolving these questions.

4. The Return of Pirates in the Global Age

In his famous *The History of Piracy*, Philip Gosse recalls that people, at the end of the nineteenth century, believed the disappearance of pirates was imminent (1932, 298). It was the dream of a world where there is no territory without sovereignty, in other words, no one distanced from the rules of the state (Thompson 1994; Anderson 1997). Subsequent history seems to flatly disprove this prediction. Piracy has stopped being a historical curiosity or a simple metaphor. Pirates are among us and taking on diverse forms in many different realms: pirates of the air and seas, radio pirates, parliamentary pirates, global terrorists, computer pirates and hackers, viruses, spam, illegal immigrants, squatters, biopiracy, lobbyists, free riders, financial pirates, leaks, data aggregators, flags of convenience, international organized crime, money laundering, etc.

The pirate is part of the contemporary social imaginary of globalization, where there is a convergence of predatory capitalism, fundamentalist movements, networks that escape the states and the libertarians of deregulated cyberspace. Piracy maintains a close relationship with the figure of the

parasite since pirates cannot exist without a social system off of which they live, but to which they do not want to belong: viruses live off of our organism; those who steal intellectual property are dependent on the existence of cultural creation; the financial economy depends in the end on what we call the real economy. . . . There are also "free riders": people, institutions or countries that go it alone and escape the agreements that should bind them.

With the increase in what we could call humanity's common public goods (the climate, the internet, health, security, financial stability. . .), uncertainty about their ownership and management also increases. All the efforts to regulate these new realities could be understood as attempts to provide a degree of territorial intelligibility to areas where there has been particular ambiguity until now. The great difficulty of the matter is that this can no longer be done with the old categories of the nation state. It requires another way of thinking and managing the new public spaces.

The point of departure for this inquiry could be the divergence between the land and the sea that has been part of our geopolitical imaginary since Thucydides, who contrasted coastal Athens to landlocked Sparta, one democratic and the other a conservative alliance (1972). The premodern world was an imperial, "maritime" world, not organized on the basis of strict territoriality, as nation states in the modern era would later be defined. Both the unity and the division of the planet then depended on maritime factors. The empires wanted to assert their authority as hegemonic powers across the oceans. The imperial age cannot be understood without hydrogeopolitics.

The legal notion of "territory," fixed and delimited, on the other hand, is a creation of modernity. The ancient world was still too fluid and limitless. Ancient and medieval cities and republics established dominion over specific geographic extensions. Even the Roman Empire admitted that their supremacy extended to the *Limes* of the empire. But this boundary was not a border. It was a point where the area of a specific jurisdiction stopped, a point provisionally reached by the advance of the legions. Even when they became stable, these were not strict limits. Instead, it was a zone of transition, commerce and communication between the Roman and the barbarian worlds. There were typically these types of spaces in medieval cities. They were not divided by lines, but by areas, sometimes sufficiently broad so as to allow enclaves and exclaves, where authority could always be debated. In a strict sense, the line of territorial demarcation emerged much later. As many historians have shown, the border was an invention of the absolutist state, especially in France.

The contrast between the sea and land also allows for a more general consideration of political theory in which two forms of understanding the social order become imaginarily opposed. Looking at things from this contrastive lens, we find this very antagonism in reflections made by Carl Schmitt in the period between the world wars (Schmitt 2008). The German jurist found it unfortunate that the dry-land nations, protectors of security and property, were growing weaker in the face of the maritime, liberal and oceanic powers. For Schmitt, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were torn asunder by the antagonism between the terrestrial powers of the closed societies and the maritime powers of open societies. This outline is the backdrop for all the political debates of modernity, which have revolved around a fundamental alternative between autarchic terrestrial states and limitless maritime powers, the collision between a political philosophy of land and a political philosophy of the sea, between a belief in limitation and a belief in limitlessness. For Schmitt, a conservative, that which is finite and completed would represent the ideal, in contrast to that which is open and incomplete, typical of liberal societies. The supremacy of politics was symbolized for him in the power of solid ground, in the determination of that which is continental. What horrified Carl Schmitt was that the land could collapse into the sea, in other words, that nations could end up disbanded in the ambiguity of a common public law. That explains his strong opposition to the birth of a new international order or jurisdiction, as he pointed out after the Second World War.

This antagonism between the open sea and the limited land is very well exemplified in the philosophies of Grotius and Hobbes. The first is the defender of a world without static sovereignties

and, therefore, without stable properties; Hobbes, on the other hand, is the champion of the terrestrial order.

We should remember the history that gave birth to this particular ideological juxtaposition. In 1603 in the Straits of Malacca, a Portuguese ship was captured by a ship belonging to the Dutch East India Company. Portugal denounced this act of piracy and demanded the restitution of its cargo, while the Dutch company tried to justify the seizure. The Dutch then appealed to Hugo de Grotius, a young lawyer at that point, who argued, in a work entitled *De Jure Praedae Commentarius* (1606), that it was an act of legitimate defense against a country, Portugal, that was trying to gain exclusive control over the Asian seas to guarantee their business. His final argument was that, in the name of natural rights, no one can appropriate the air or the water and that it is impossible to appropriate the sea, because it belongs to everyone.

This is how Grotius justified the right to plunder, to appropriation, as the new maritime way of thinking, thus questioning the aspirations of the sovereign states to appropriate the seas. Grotius came to affirm that the uninhabitable oceans had a specific legal status that made them closer to the properties of air. It was not possible to acquire fixed sovereignty over these elements. All attempts at possessing the open seas, whether they were claimed as a “discovery,” through papal bulls, laws of war or conquest, were equally invalid. A similar argument was formulated by that great writer of the seas, Herman Melville, who established a distinction in order to legitimize colonial capture between the “fast-fish” that belonged to stable, consolidated authorities, and the “loose-fish,” that were fair game for whoever arrived first. He concluded that the “loose-fish” category included America for Columbus, Poland for the czars or India for the English. There is also an old tradition that associates property with the cultivation of land and believes that that which is not cultivated or not cultivatable (like the sea) cannot strictly belong to anyone. Plutarch once described the inhabitants of a certain island as pirates because they did not know how to cultivate the land. It is the same argument that was used to say that the Americas were unpopulated when the conquistadors arrived. Inhabiting means cultivating the land; those who do not do so do not have any rights over the space. That is why it was permissible to expel the indigenous peoples in the Americas or to freely ply the seas.

Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) could be interpreted specifically as the attempt to establish terrestrial order and security against maritime disorder. The modern nation state thus arose against the disorder of the sea, against that which is mobile, unstable, floating, fluctuating and elusive that is symbolically personified by pirates. It is not surprising, therefore, that Schmitt found in Hobbes a precedent for his conception of a sovereign state, as that which introduces order and limitations in the face of maritime chaos.

Everything seems to indicate that the battle is currently tipped in favor of what Zygmunt Bauman has called the “liquid world” (2007): globalization is driven by general fluidity, which implies liquidation not only of the old borders, but also of the very idea of the border, which becomes obsolete in a deterritorialized space. We could comprehend what is going on with the metaphor of an “oceanification of the world,” in which fluidity is liberated from territorial constriction. It is a question of a world in which displacement and flexibility are the only reality, a world of generalized circulation, in which everyone navigates, whether it is through digital, financial or communicative spaces. What has not been fulfilled is Virgil’s dream where, in the fourth of his *Eclogues*, he affirmed that, in the future, we would live in a golden age when there would be no more voyages by sea. Even though there are now faster means of transportation, maritime traffic has not decreased: 95% of the global transportation of material now takes place by sea. The sea, clarifies this source, unmarked, a universe of danger and conquest, is the risk society now, deregulated spaces of finance and consumption, upon which the old nation state appears to be a power without authority.

We are facing a configuration of the world that looks like the archaic form of the societies of hunters and gatherers, who conceive of the world more in terms of itineraries, plunder and pacts, than as closed spaces and stable properties. There is nothing strange about the figure of the pirate

reappearing in a world like this, and it is not surprising that it continues to represent ambiguity between freedom and barbarity.

Piracy is the opposite of hegemony, not in the sense that it is able to compete with empires in the power arena, but because it contests the idea of sovereignty itself. Piracy meddles in the intervals that the cycles of sovereignty continue to open, in “the space without witnesses, in the moral void” (Sloterdijk 2005, 180). This absolute hostility leads to our current designation of genocides as “crimes against humanity” or terrorists as “unlawful combatants.” Modern terrorism is less reminiscent of a traditional war between nations than of the piracy that stems from the weakness of modern conventions on territorial war (Chomsky 2002; Innerarity 2004). We find ourselves facing “brigands,” in the sense in which Bodino used this term to refer to those who do not respect the rules of the game (which also has unintended consequences, since turning the enemy into a “brigand” or a “fugitive” has served as an excuse for a strong decline of justice, for weakening democracy and international law). The parallelism between ancient piracy and current international terrorism is based on the fact that both phenomena are situated at the edge of the territorial picture.

For this reason, I do not believe it is stretching the metaphor to affirm that piracy represents a new form of being in a world that has become liquid. I am not only referring to global terrorism but to current forms of globalization that once again take the bird of prey as a model. We could think about the behavior of consumers, which is so similar to pillaging (as is revealed on the first day of sales at the largest retailers or through any form of consumption that implies damage to the environment). The success of financial products would be inexplicable if it were not for the fact that they promise such large profits that we are blinded to the risks these products entail. I am also thinking about biopiracy, a term that appeared at the beginning of the 1990s to denote the improper appropriation of genetic resources. In this case, scientific or medical institutions are denounced as pirates, not because they destroy property, but because they introduce property into places where it did not previously exist. There is a relationship between many current conflicts and the regulation of certain natural resources; this could be called “a political ecology of war.” In short, the current increase in pillaging is explained by the weakness of nations when it comes to effectively controlling their territories and by the worsening of particularly intolerable inequalities.

The analogy also proves its worth if we examine the current ideological panorama, more liquid than territorial, with political strategies that are closer to piracy than to traditional action. The current ideological disillusionment is manifested in the fact that neither the left nor the right is particularly interested in taking part in the habitual pathways to representation. Both conservative individualism and radical leftism see themselves as “anti-establishment movements,” as “para-politics.” The pirate, in both their ideologies, represents the paradigm of the fight against the rigidity of the state or against the neoliberal order; for various and even contradictory motives, piracy is considered the most adequate strategy for the economic and cultural evolution of capitalism.

Some appeal to a civil society and others to the multitude (Hardt / Negri 2000), both very liquid concepts that are not very political. We are no longer in an age of the institutionalized right- and left-wing, but in the age of the Tea Party and social movements. The right prefers the market over the state and the left—rather than traditional forms of labor, social, institutional or armed struggle—formulates substitute battles like exile, defection or nomadization. As Deleuze and Guattari suggested, the nomad, more than the proletariat, is the resistor par excellence (1972). On the left, the most innovative strategies reflect the decline of revolutionary ideals. The most they can aspire to is “détournement,” a satirical parody proposed by contemporary art, making use of a term coined by the Situationist International. It implies attempted sabotage, derailment, distortion or subversion. It is a question, to say it with Deleuze, of interruptions or microspheres of insurrection. Of course, there is nothing reminiscent of the old goal of seizing power; the most ambitious proposal is to benefit from the interstices or the zones unoccupied by the state. Naomi Klein, one of the principal advocates of the anti-globalization movement, appeals to “cultural jamming” as a form of resistance; this interference transforms brand advertising without altering its codes of communication in order to question the

values these brands transmit (Klein 2000). It is easy to note the contradiction of this alterglobalization, since choosing piracy demonstrates precisely that we do not believe “another world is possible.”

Pillage, which was a common form of appropriation in the ancient and classic world and which the modern state attempted to resolve with the establishment of codified forms of property, has currently assumed (in the world of finances and information) enormously complex manifestations. One of the most telling entities of contemporary piracy is the tax haven, these places without identity, taxation or residency requirements. What is claimed there is the unusual right to abandon political spaces and avoid the taxes that are a symbol of territorial power. This is another strategy of depolitization, in its most harmful form. It is no coincidence that many of these "havens" are islands, and those who go there are no longer reprobates but the elite who abandon territorial states and their restrictions.

Cyberspace also provides a great number of maritime and pirate metaphors. Like the oceans and the air, cyberspace is a territory of navigation. The vocabulary of the web is very explicit in this regard. We navigate the web, and pirates attack, immobilize, sabotage and take over servers, sometimes just for fun, other times for criminal or geostrategic motives. Other surfers move about there with the same libertarian logic with which financial experts invent products to escape possible regulation. Hackers sneak through flawed portals in the web and financiers look for offshore spaces in the same way pirates circulate between spaces of sovereignty. Like historic pirates, those who navigate the web live in an archipelago over which the powerless state does not hold a monopoly on legitimate violence.

The dream of freedom is what has turned the internet into a political utopia that has delighted a generation. Many commentators have emphasized the similarities between certain countercultural ideals and simple liberal anarchism. It is a question of what some have called “the Californian ideology” (Barbrook / Cameron 2001) since its origin resides in the anti-authoritarianism of the 1970s and has given way to an ideological proximity between market libertarians and the on-line community, between neoliberal hyper-reality and virtual hyper-reality, between hippie anarchism and economic liberalism. This curious mixture of MacLuhán and Hayek is something that is not simply explained by a common belief in technological determinism; it has even deeper roots.

Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello have demonstrated how, through the rebellious movements of 1968, the criticism of capitalism took two different directions: a “social” direction that demands a modification in the relationship between dominant forces and an “artistic” direction that attempts to liberate individuals with the goal of making them more authentic and creative (1999). The internet has afforded the movement a means to expansion for the autonomy of the individual, self-organization and the rejection of collective limits. This anti-institutional dimension establishes many similarities with libertarian ideology. It has been frequently pointed out that the anti-establishment hippies of the 1970s, who were so committed to individual autonomy, did not find it difficult to get used to liberal policies and deregulation.

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