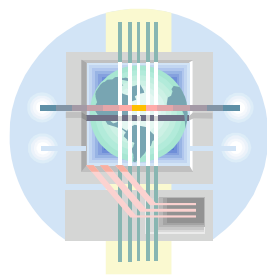# Fractured Polis   Failing Representation?

Session at the 30th IGU congress "One Earth - Many Worlds", Glasgow 15 - 20 August 04

Monday, 16 August, 11.50 – 13.00 and 14.00 – 15.20

Basel and Geneva, 28 January 2004

Fractured *Polis* – Failing Representation?

Democratic representation, from the ancient Greeks to 20th century nation-states, emerged as a political system bound by the territorial and social limits of the *polis* – the community of legitimate political agents. When democracy was re-installed at the end of the 18th and during the 19th century, the range of acknowledged legitimate political agents steadily extended beyond a privileged class of male citizens, stretching to include all human beings on equal terms. While geopolitical manoeuvres and colonial regimes have affected local populations for centuries, it is particularly since World War Two that global markets for goods, labour force, capital and information have penetrated local lifeworlds.

As a consequence, a variety of new forms of trans-territorial political representation, exemplified by social movements, NGOs and new forms of governance have developed throughout the last decades of the 20th century and early 21st century. Simultaneously, there is a recognition that not only people but whole lifeworlds, including living beings and inorganic processes, are connected to each other in new and hybrid ways. In consequence, the range of beings whose 'interests' and existence are politically being taken into account questions and reformulates the boundary between human beings and other entities.

However, these existential changes are not properly reflected in the structures of the modern political sphere which is still based upon and constructed around the territorial nation-state: both the right of political representation and the institutional reach of the state apparatus end at the borders of the nation-state. Instead, these global and hybrid scenarios imply that the state as a political container is neither capable of representing all affected actors and people, nor is it able to take appropriate measures outside its boundaries. There is no global *polis*, but instead a fractured multitude of existentially connected but institutionally isolated political communities.

Thus, for a variety of reasons, the spatial and social constitution of the *polis* needs reconsidering. We would like to invite papers that critically investigate forms of political representation and their territorial or social boundedness. These may address the issue in theoretical terms as well as by referring to empirical examples.

Congress homepage: http://www.meetingmakers.co.uk/IGC-UK2004

Session format: two blocs of 80 min.; 20 min. paper presentations incl. discussion

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1. First bloc (11.50 – 13.00)

1.1 Introduction: Fractured *Polis* – Failing Representation? (10')

Dr Wolfgang Zierhofer, Programm Mensch Gesellschaft Umwelt, University of Basel, Switzerland
Dr Juliet Fall, Département de Géographie, University of Geneva, Switzerland

1.2 "The world must be made safe for democracy": Demos, Kratos, Polis, Kosmos and the global war on terrorism (20')

Dr Stuart Elden, Department of Geography, University of Durham, United Kingdom

It generally goes unremarked that not only is the notion of the *demos* in classical Greece bound to a *polis*, but the *demos* itself is geographically determined. This is because the Greek term *demos* not only means the people, or more pejoratively a section of the people – the masses or the mob – it also means the *deme*, an area or village. Democracy in its original form, particularly in Kleisthenes' reforms of Athens, was tied to a particular understanding of political space.

Trading on Woodrow Wilson's call to congress in 1917 that "the world must be made safe for democracy", George W. Bush's foreign policy is shot through with all sorts of political and ethical ambiguities, but also requires some conceptual manoeuvring that he is palpably unable to undertake. As well as outlining the historical emergence of these terms, the paper seeks to think about the relation between *demos*, *kratos* and *polis* in the wake of the global war on terrorism. Questions raised will include the possibility of *demos* outside the *polis*; new geographies of representation; the territorial implications of notions of world, globe and *kosmos*; and the inherent tension between the power of the *demos* and that of the *polis*.

1.3 "Spatializing terrorist networks: geopolitical narratives of nation state actors facing the challenge of international terrorism" (20')

Prof. Paul Reuber and Dr Günter Wolkersdorfer, University of Munster, Germany

A decade ago in the heyday of the discourse on globalization the number of new transnational NGOs and ecological, social or political movements was still considered a corrective "from below". Using the same weapons the small "Davids" were fighting against the "Goliaths" of the global networks of the multinational economy. The Davids used the same global communication technology as well as the power of global media. By performing spectacular actions they called attention in the global village and thus gained the power to reach their political goals.

At the beginning of the new millennium another network entered the political stage. Its strategies are similar: by establishing global networks of resistance, by using modern communication media and performing spectacular actions it has attracted the media's attention worldwide: Al Quaeda – the terror network of Osama Bin Laden whose actions basically follow the same pattern but which are currently unique regarding their brutality and efficacy.

This situation has massively challenged the traditional geopolitical representation of the global order for the first time. Consequently, the narrative of globalization and governance now has to step back again behind the new geopolitical narrative of the one enemy that threatens the civilization - this time in form of an Islamic terrorist threat. Politics and political geography call this a paradigmatic turn in international geopolitics: a change of discourse in the geopolitical interpretation of the world of the Post-Westphalian system.

That means

- a quick interpretation of the terrorist attacks as attacks against a nation
- the re-interpretation of the terror network into a territorial project
- the reaction to the terrorist attacks in the codes of the argument of nation states or power blocs
- the cartographic or discursive restructuring of the world

In the meantime the nation state seems to have succeeded in gaining back or even extending its power of disposal. Therefore this presentation pursues the question what consequences such a development can have. The basic imagination of globalization and governance is influenced by the

increasing restriction of liberty by the powers of the nation state. Without free trade of goods and information a globalized world cannot develop. Thus the short era of the discourse on globalization might fail due to its own model imagination: a terrorist network that simply had not been considered in normative expectation.

1.4 Unbundling the State: The Recontainerization of Rule, Production, and Identity in the post-Cold War Era (20')

Prof. Timothy W. Luke, School of Public and International Affairs, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

This paper examines how the figures of 18th century political rhetorics are clearly being eclipsed by many contemporary developments in technoscience, global production, and transnational media consumption. In many ways, the Cold War helped to keep those rhetorics alive artificially;, but, after the collapse of the USSR's, the fractures within a world order organized around such epistemic frames became much more evident and far more threatening in all corners of the world. Whether it is terms denationalization, detraditionalization, destatalization, new formations are anchoring the containerization of rule, production, and identity that have a different political scale and pace. In many ways, the massive urbanization of the world perhaps is creating something more like a global/transational omnipolis out of the fractured national polis.

This paper explores its material underpinnings, and the resistances that one finds to this omnipolis. Whether it is global terrorism striking at its machinic infrastructures, environmental justice movements demanding a fairer share of its risk and benefits for all, or new human rights groups seeking to defend various unbundled poststatal/postnational identities, networks and flows are displacing pyramids and foundations in determining who rules who, what is produced where, and how identities are maintained.

2. Second bloc (14.00 – 15.20)

2.1 Querying Immanent Cosmopolis (20')

Dr. Olivier Kramsch, Department of Human Geography, University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands

In reflecting on the future of the Left in a time of "terror", critical social theorist Susan Buck-Morss has recently heralded the coming of a "grass-roots, globally extended, multiply articulated, radically cosmopolitan and critical counter-culture" (2003: 72). Building on the work of Hardt and Negri, she contends that such a global public sphere, despite its fragmentation and internal incommensurabilities, is emerging as a result of the immanence of an overdetermined and indivisible terrain in which there is no longer any outside to capital. Notions of immanence provide the theoretical context to much additional and recent writing exploring the political pre-conditions for an active transnational or radically cosmopolitan society. This paper attempts to problematize a politics of representation associated with such a gesture, arguing that within its conceptual frame lies an abdication of the active struggle over the very definition of politics. In so doing, the author will address a question raised by Buck-Morss herself: "How to write for a global public that does not yet exist?"

2.2 Multicultural Citizens: Identity and Belonging amongst Iranian Baha'is in London, Vancouver and Sydney (20')

Cameron McAuliffe, Division of Geography, University of Sydney, Australia.

The ideals of multiculturalism have become increasingly popular as nation-states grapple with the challenges of human diversity. The recognition of difference as valuable and legitimate is often captured under the rubric of 'unity in diversity'. However, despite the ideological intentions, the realities of policy-based multiculturalisms in their various contexts reflect dominant discourses of nation-statehood and an overriding concern for *national* unity. One key area 'under threat' by the legitimation of difference is the role of institutional belonging, of citizenship, as a marker of exclusive allegiance to the nation-state. Increasingly, migrants have the chance to avail themselves of dual or multiple citizenships expressing the right to institutional inclusion without the demands to expunge prior (institutional) identity. For members of the Baha'i Faith, a religion with its origin in 19th Century Iran, institutional belonging has become a key aspect of the mission-based structure behind its successful expansion. During recent research with the children of Iranian

migrants who subscribe to the Baha'i Faith in Sydney, London and Vancouver national citizenship was identified as integral to the understanding of identity spaces open to second generation individuals. However, the pragmatic relationship to the nation-state represented through citizenship also serves to highlight the importance Baha'is hold for *global* unity in diversity. For Baha'is, the nation-state, whilst being a vessel for contemporary action, is in the end a barrier to their ultimate goal of global community.

2.3 Global disjunctures and fractal normalities: Transterritorial flows and territorial containment in a Nuremberg neighbourhood (20')

Christian Berndt und Marc Boeckler, University of Eichstätt, Germany

Approaching struggles for political representation in the global age through a perspective of "methodological transterritorialism", we seek to make sense of recent developments evolving around a territorialized neighbourhood in Nuremberg, Northern Bavaria. Founded at the beginning of the 20th century by a mechanical engineering company as a garden suburb restricted for employees, the neighbourhood enjoyed relative protection from globalizing frictions and struggles until the "world-in-motion" suddenly penetrated the community a few years ago. In the first section we chart the production of the bounded and isolated settlement as a site of alternate social ordering at a time of hyper-industrialisation and its imaginary role as territorial heterotopia symbolising order and harmony in a seemingly disorderly and chaotic urban world. Turning to the owner's decision to heed a hegemonic global management logic and sell the neighbourhood in 1998 in section two, we argue that long-term inhabitants discursively frame the events following the decision as "transterritorial pollution" of their bounded community, reflected in the commodification of their neighbourhood and in an "invasion" of non-German, mostly Turkish home-owners. After discussing how longer-term residents attempt to re-stabilise their identities by taking up a xenophobic discourse and practices of othering (section three), we conclude by criticising policy-makers for responding solely in a territorial logic and for one-sidedly taking up the discourse advanced by long-term residents. We argue that policies of territorial containment are doomed to fail and instead advance an alternative vision of the city as a crossroads of disjunctive topological orders where movement and distanciation are the norm.

2.4 Final discussion: Fractured Polis – Failing Representation? (20') *(With all speakers)*

(in discussion: presentation of the "Transnational Republic" *Georg Zoche, Munich, Germany)*