

# Europe After Eurocentrism?

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**Abstract:** Eurocentrism is nothing but bourgeois ideology, quipped Samir Amin in his eponymous book. Does it mean that we should reject European ideals as mere bourgeois ideology or is there a way to rethink the European project after Eurocentrism? This essay revisits some of the left criticisms made against the European project, by emphasising that simply rejecting it on the basis that it is just a tool for capital and labour management risks obscuring the fact that the same holds for nation-states. The critical question is not rejecting or supporting the European project but rather trying to understand the possibilities that such a process opens (or closes) for those who are *inside* as well as *outside* of it. The paper adds therefore another, yet often under-explored layer of criticism, namely a colonial critique. By showing how Europe was created in its colonial peripheries and still thrives there, the article proposes to look at the project of European integration with a double lens. In particular, we will reflect on the theories produced by those who are *in* or in the *margins* of, but not *from*, Europe, to rethink the European project in a global context marked by mass migration, challenges to established forms of citizenship, and the new forms of oppression created by climate change and global warming.

### Introduction

The left has been divided on the question of Europe since its very beginning. The European project has often been ignored, if not openly opposed, as a mere technocratic and capitalist project that has nothing to do with a true democratic process of institution building. The criticism is not without basis. The process of political integration has indeed happened as a mere spill-over effect of economic integration,<sup>1</sup> so that the federalist ideas that accompanied such a process can easily be scorned as sheer ideological cover.<sup>2</sup> And yet, what is often forgotten in this outright opposition to Europe is that the nation-states that compose it were also projects for capital and labour management – a process initiated only a few centuries before that of European “construction”. We can therefore equally look at the idealism of nineteenth century popular nationalist movements and easily dismiss them along with the European federalists. Alternatively, we can consider the two processes of institution building, equally driven by the integration force of capital, and try to investigate which opportunities they may, or may not, disclose. Yet, in doing so, we should not only consider the opportunities that such a process opens (or closes) for those who are full citizens of Europe, but also for those who are not. When seen in this double perspective, the alternative between Europe and its members states may appear

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1 Haas 1961.

2 Schulz-Forberg and Stråth 2010.

in a different light. To begin with, we should remember that European citizenship is (still) completely dependent on that of its member states, so that being a European citizen today means being a citizen of its member states.<sup>3</sup> This creates a very *sui generis* political configuration, which is neither a classical federation, because the EU is not a sovereign state, nor a confederation of sovereign states, because some of the sovereign prerogatives of modern states are now shared at the EU level.

In this essay we would like to look at this process of pooling and sharing fragments of sovereignty not only from the inside, as we mainly did in our previous work,<sup>4</sup> but also from the outside, that is, from the liminal zones of a putative European center. Given that the very boundaries of the European project are themselves constantly shifting, we would like to ask: How does the project of “Europe” appear when de-centered? How is Europe perceived by those who may be in but are not from Europe,<sup>5</sup> as well as by those who may perceive themselves to be from but will never be allowed to be in Europe – physically or intellectually? Born out of economic imperatives, but also supported by the federalist movement that saw in the project an attempt to go beyond the logic of European nationalism, the project of European integration has from the very beginning implied a process of boundary thinking.

Arguably, a leftist defence of Eurocentrism can have objectives such as reinforcing social justice and deepening political enfranchisement based on a criticism of the primacy of the economy. In this approach, however, one easily ends up merely defending the default political option for political boundaries, i.e., in the current context, those of nation states. Indeed, when the European left *a priori* rejects the project of European construction, it often does so on the basis that capitalism needs to be undone, but it does so without fully reflecting on (a) the fact that nation-states, upon which their hopes end up landing, are also built on capitalist forces (capital accumulation, labour control and management, tax extraction, or, as Tilly notoriously put it, war-making as state-making)<sup>6</sup> and (b) on the global nature of capitalism, its interlinking European nation-states with their colonial past and neo-colonial present. For much of the European left, the major acting subject of history still remains the white (often male) factory worker, whose paid labour is intrinsically attached to the formal chains of economic production. Still too little attention is paid to extorted labour, unpaid labour, social reproductive labour, and growing economic and environmental

3 For an overview on the most current debates pertaining to EU citizenship and citizenship in the EU, see Bauböck 2019.

4 Bottici & Challand 2013.

5 Hall 2003.

6 See Tilly 1985.

inequalities that are most often rooted in old colonial geographies or in current neo-imperialist competing centers and dying peripheries.<sup>7</sup> This is one of the reasons why we think it is pivotal to approach the question of Europe from the perspective of a *critical-colonial* approach. With this expression, we mean an approach that unifies the contributions coming from different field of critical colonial studies, including the post-colonial, the de-colonial and the settler-colonial critiques. We will be drawing from all of them, and therefore we prefer to use the expression “critical-colonial”, to point to the ensemble of critical investigations into the colonial conditions. While the term “post-colonial” may surreptitiously suggest that we are beyond that colonial past, a question that we would like to leave open,<sup>8</sup> the term “de-colonial theory” performatively reinstates the speaking subject who is authorized to decide how to undo the colonial past, and thus, when used by theorists of European descent, like ourselves, can equally be interpreted as a gesture imbued with colonial hubris and thus reproduce the same coloniality of power it aims to undo.<sup>9</sup>

More broadly, taking a critical-colonial approach is an attempt to enrich theory-making, by emphasizing that in our current predicament, you cannot have without the other. Inbuilt forms of Eurocentrism – what Ina Kerner aptly calls “methodological Eurocentrism”<sup>10</sup> – automatically makes us privilege theory emerging from European experiences and centers. But at best, “European theory” can only extract facts from the peripheries that are then re-interpreted in the center. Even a certain type of Marxism, despite its alleged internationalism, continues to ignore the different empirical realities of the “peripheries” and negates the theory-making ability of thinkers from the global south.<sup>11</sup> We propose a new sensibility that combines both strands of research, the critical colonial studies produced in the “center” and the anti-imperial type of thinking coming from the “peripheries”. Whereas in our previous work we explored the process of European integration through a critical lens raised from

7 We introduce neo-imperialism here to show that there are now non-European powers (China, Saudi Arabia and the neighboring Gulf countries) leading the political destruction and/or plundering of resources like the former colonial powers did.

8 Ann Stoler (2017) is reluctant to use the term post-colonialism and prefers to speak of (post) colonialism to show that colonialism is still with us (Stoler 2017, p. ix) but we think that the expression (post)colonialism may still suggest that we are in a “post” condition, which is clearly not the case in settler colonial states (USA, Israel, Australia), and also, as such, does not automatically include the insights from de-colonial critique.

9 Although they do not make exactly the same point, settler colonial theorists Tuck and Yang, emphatically underlined that de-colonization is not a metaphor, but the practical act of rendering the land back to those to whom it belonged before the arrival of Europeans, which in the settler colonial context of the Americas, means the indigenous population.

10 Kerner 2018, p. 615.

11 For a discussion of this problem in Marxist theory, see Chalcraft 2018.

inside European space<sup>12</sup>, we aim now to explore the claim that Europe was actually made in its peripheries, as has long been emphasized by liminal writers such as Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Albert Memmi (born 1920), Achille Mbembe (born 1957), or Annibal Quijano (1930-2018). Theory is not only the apanage of Europeans, as some Eurocentric philosophical approaches insisted for way too long; rather a philosophy of Europe can only emerge by attempting a relational and multidirectional gaze between Europe and its colonies, thereby insisting on the zones of contention, and the zones of exclusion.

### 1. Europe was born in the colonies -- and it still thrives there

How can one sustain that Europe, a faltering political project uniting various nation-states in a common political and economic polity, was born in the colonies? Was Europe not born in the 1950s, with a process of “European construction” that began exactly when the former colonial empires collapsed? Is the EU not the result of the attempt to make all wars, including imperial ones, impossible, as the advocates of European federalism hoped?<sup>13</sup> This is certainly one of the most powerful founding narratives produced by those who advocated for a process of European integration from the inside. As we emphasized in our *Imagining Europe*, the narrative of “Europe born out of the war” worked as a powerful founding narrative for the project of European integration, a narrative that at times merged with other founding myths, such as that of Europe born out of the classical Greek and Roman civilizations (the classical Europe), Europe as the cradle of a distinct religious identity (the Christian Europe), or Europe as the birthplace of the modern project (the Enlightened Europe).<sup>14</sup> Although one can critically engage with those narratives from the inside, we also need to look at them from the outside.

In his *Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon made the case that thinking Europe without its global outer layers does not make sense. He went as far as asserting that “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World”.<sup>15</sup> Knowing the Martiniquais intellectual’s focus in that book on conflictual relations between the colonial realms and Europe, one is tempted to reduce this statement to uniquely material terms: without the riches of the colonies and the plundering of natural and human resources by European imperial powers, Europe and its dominant economic mode of production, capitalism, would not have been possible. And without capitalism there would not have been any European modernity. Indeed,

12 Bottici & Challand 2013.

13 See below for one of these early statements on European cooperation, namely the Schuman declaration of May 1950.

14 Bottici & Challand 2013, p. 62ff.

15 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 58.

there is ground to argue that most of the wealth produced by Europeans from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards was accumulated only marginally from internal surplus production, most of it coming from the raw materials and labour force extracted from its colonies.<sup>16</sup> Only by enlarging the focal point to the whole world can we understand why European wealth and well-being emerged at a given historical moment.

Preserving the material control of the colonies, or “the Third World”, was possible only through the creation of a brutal apparatus of coercion, one that morphed from indentured labor to slavery in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, from unequal forms of punishment under liberalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the wars and quashing of nationalist independence movements in the colonies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, European powers managed to eclipse the earlier economic power of Asia, and thrived globally thanks to American ores and lush cash-crops (such as sugar, tobacco, and indigo), and to the African material and labour resources extorted through the Atlantic trade to rule all the way to the East, with Unequal Treaties imposed by European powers on China.<sup>17</sup> In the name of liberalism, new infrastructures of global exchange dotted the global map, with new transportation channels that made the plundering of such resources possible (think of the parallel creation of trans- or inter-continental railroads and the navigation canals such as the Suez or Panama Canal). In the name of their “civilizational mission” and “the new freedom” they brought, Europeans shamelessly managed local populations in order to uproot local agricultures and economic organization and force the adoption of cash-crops such as cotton, aimed at feeding the spinning machines of Liverpool, Alsace and Germany (Beckert 2014). From the point of view of capitalism, that is as a mode of production aimed at the endless expansion of profit, the local subsistence economies of the colonized territories could not but appear under-developed. But we tend to forget that subsistence economy, as culturally perceived poverty, is different from deprivation, that is a low physical quality of life: in the name of “civilisation” and “development”, local natural economies were destroyed in favour of an industrialized system that fed capital accumulation (of the colonizing powers) at the detriment of feeding the local population. This, in turn, has often led colonized populations to move from a subsistence economy to actual misery and deprivation.<sup>18</sup>

16 For a global narrative of the emergence of “war capitalism” as necessary condition for the spread of “industrial capitalism”, see Beckert 2014. Among the classical texts, see Luxemburg 1951.

17 On the passage from indentured labour to slavery see Williams 1944. On commodities and the rise of capitalism, see Mintz 1986 or Beckert 2014, on and global colonialism, all the way to China, see Reinhard 2011.

18 As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out a long time ago, the early industrial development in Europe could only happen because of the permanent occupation by colonial powers and the destruction of what she termed “natural economies” (see Luxemburg 1951). Shiva insists on this point by borrowing from the African writer Bahro’s distinction between poverty as subsistence and misery as deprivation (Shiva 2016: 9).

For instance, it is often forgotten that hundreds of thousands died in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in what Mike Davis terms “late Victorian Holocausts”.<sup>19</sup> In that period, hundreds of thousands of people died in Africa and India because of climate phenomena, such as El Niño, the high temperature in the ocean that generated famine and extended drought periods. Davis shows that these droughts were not the first to occur on such a large scale. But what was different this time is that imperial powers *took advantage* of these extreme climatic conditions to push for the cultivation of cotton or other crops relevant for Europe at the loss of local agriculture aimed at feeding local populations. In the name of “free markets”, British authorities decided not to intervene in redistributing wheat or other food that could have saved starving people, but rather continued on crops such as cotton that served Britain’s industrial developments. Supply and demand ruled the day and, according to Mike’s analysis, generated an early example of a planned Holocaust. It also decimated the social fabric and economy in India and Africa, where, among others, Italian colonialism also benefited from a weakened Eritrea, and thus contributed to the making of “the Third World” in the imaginary of capitalist societies.<sup>20</sup> The latter term transmits the idea that a part of the world is (fatalistically) unable to provide enough food for itself, and is therefore essentially backward (in respect to the first and second worlds), and thus in need of help to develop. We can start to see here how “development” implies a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: local economies aimed at sustaining local populations are destroyed in name of “development”, thereby producing a misery that calls for yet more aid and thus for more “development”.

Labels such as the “Third World” work as powerful, unconscious images that establish implicit hierarchies. The above material components of a growing division of Europe *versus* the rest are part of the violence of growing cultural and symbolic differentiations. Fanon captures this schism in his other masterpiece *Black Skins, White Masks*,<sup>21</sup> in which he shows the psychological damage made in the name of an alleged European cultural superiority. Language, accent, and other embodied cultural dispositions are constant reminders of the power asymmetries between metropolises and colonies, power asymmetries that do not need a police force to enact their brutality: they are the internalized police. The trauma of those who consider themselves good, but then end up in a pervasive colonial imaginary that stigmatizes “blackness” as “evil” is aptly captured by his description of “the

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19 Davis 2001.

20 Davis 2001, p. 17-21.

21 Fanon 1952/2008.

complex of [the] colonized”:<sup>22</sup> “There is no forgiveness when one who claims superiority falls below the standard”.<sup>23</sup> Cultural superiority, and with it inbuilt racism, runs not on biological grounds, but on the performance of whiteness and of sense of civilization as opposed to the Other’s primitivism.<sup>24</sup> Psychological alienation reached dramatic and traumatic proportion when the natives internalized colonialism and white superiority. The consciousness of the white Europeans was naturalized, made invisible, while blackness was bestialized, hyper-sexualized and constantly ascribed to the native populations of the colonies, who were thus seduced into trying to pass as “white” by adopting their way of life.<sup>25</sup>

At this point of the argument one could easily be tempted to argue that this colonial past has been overcome by the formal dissolutions of the European colonial empires, and that what we are dealing with today is no longer the past but the present and, possibly, the future of Europe. But has the European project of building a common market (EEC) and, later, a political community (EU) managed to disentangle itself from Europe’s role as an imperial and neo-imperial power? As we have already mentioned, the founding narrative explaining the initial impetus for European cooperation around coal and steel in the early 1950s is built on post-conflict reconciliation between France and Germany, and thus on the overcoming of nationalistic wars that was supposed to spill over to other countries and spread peaceful relations. The Schuman Declaration (9 May 1950) became the symbol of this project: “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity”, so stated the French politician Robert Schuman in the eponymous declaration, ritually celebrated as the founding text of the European union. This solidarity was indeed expected to create *de facto* peace: “The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.” The hope that such a process would lead us beyond the logic of nationalist wars was so strong that not only did it lead the original six members to create a joint political project, but Schuman himself was later declared the “Father of Europe”. Indeed, it does not come as a surprise to learn that, in 2006, the Father of Europe was also declared to be “a servant of god” and candidate for beatification in the Catholic church<sup>26</sup> -- a prospected sanctity of which Europeans are reminded every year, since the 1990s, when the EU started

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22 *ibid.*, p. 3-5 and 61ff.

23 *ibid.*, p. 14.

24 *ibid.*, p. 62.

25 *ibid.*, p. 16-17, 21.

26 <http://www.robert-schuman.com/fr/pg-saintete/pourquoi.htm>.

to celebrate the day in which the Declaration was given (9 May) as Europe day.

What is often omitted in this (literally) hagiographic narrative, is that Schuman was also proposing French-German reconciliation as a way to calm down internal tensions in the French empire, at the time in the form of the French Union (1946-1958), the watered down version of the second French Colonial Empire. In 1950, less than seventy years ago, Algeria was still a full territory of France, and Algerian nationalists were a thorn in the flesh of France. A sentence of the Schuman declaration reveals that the “European construction” (as we call it) was not immune from imperial hubris and the underlying myth of Europe as the agent of civilization. As we read in the text, the hope was also that European integration would lead to a renewal of its imperial role: “With increased resources Europe will be able to pursue the achievement of one of its essential tasks, namely, the development of the African continent.”<sup>27</sup>

Schuman foresaw in a nascent “European solidarity” the new and necessary condition for a renewal of the European colonial paternalism. Other statements and projects from the French Foreign Minister in the early 1950s confirm that hopes were laid in transnational and/or intergovernmental organizations, either European or Atlantic (*videte* NATO), to preserve the decaying French Empire.<sup>28</sup> Another of the decaying European powers, Great Britain, and its PM Ernest Bevin, were also toying with project of “development” to calm down anticolonial forces, for example in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.<sup>29</sup> The last common European colonial upheaval, and its graveyard, was the Suez crisis of November 1956, but the international context of the Cold War and the tide having swung to an East-West confrontation forced Europeans to acquiesce to their loss of global hegemony. This was also the moment when the divisions between the East and West of Europe rose to prominence and the former colonial world became the “third” world, in terms of Western Europe’s significant other<sup>30</sup> and was bracketed in the European imaginary. Only for a while, though.

Europe was not only made by the colonies, but also still thrives there, because European prosperity still depends on them, as it is the by-product of the European nation-states built on their colonial role and of a *sui generis* European entity built as an optimization of an always expanding market. Realist accounts of Europe’s construction underline that EU regulations are at best a negative form of integration, i.e. an integration

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27 For the full text, see [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en)

28 Hanhimaki 2003.

29 Kingston 2002, p. 10-12.

30 Challand 2009.

aimed at generating the best possible conditions for the exchange of goods and services within its borders, and that harsh measures to protect its external borders largely outweigh the pretence of a benevolent empire, willing to export its best norms to its neighbours.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the former colonies at the southern borders of Europe, the so-called Barcelona process (launched in 1995) was the EU’s attempt to generate cooperation with southern Mediterranean countries. However this turned out to be a vacuous process of “cultural rapprochement” when most agreements were about forcing economic and security collaboration from Northern African states, thereby making sure they would provide cheap early potatoes, bell peppers and tomatoes when the EU internal market could not produce enough.<sup>32</sup> The overall objective of a free trade zone managed between the EU and Southern Mediterranean states was abandoned and delegated to privatization and neoliberal diktats,<sup>33</sup> which now also have to accommodate the pressures coming from new seats of imperial powers, such as the Arabian Gulf.<sup>34</sup>

It is in this context that we should also interpret the questioning of European borders by migration flows from its former colonies. The EU’s inability to deal with the flow of African and Middle Eastern refugees from the 1990s until now is a reminder that the “best norms” of Europe can exist only when the EU’s economic performance is at its best, when they exist at all. “Fortress Europe” is a term originally referring to a defence strategy developed by Nazis during WW2, re-emerged massively in the 1990 to criticize European discourses aimed at presenting the EU as a benevolent “civil power”,<sup>35</sup> while its policies were de facto aimed at merely preserving certain economic advantages inside of the EU, as well as trade and economic agreements with former colonies that favoured capital accumulation. No wonder the project of “European development” is still decried by some as a form of “neo-colonialism”.<sup>36</sup>

Besides the creation of Frontex, the EU agency that has managed its external borders since 2004, we have now a series of aggressive and infringing measures by the EU to outsource “security” management of the alleged “refugee crisis” to non-EU soil, be it Turkey, Libya, or even Saharan states such as Mali, Chad or Niger, as a way to cut the flow of smuggling routes towards the Mediterranean.<sup>37</sup> All of this “security

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31 One of such accounts of the EU committed to norms and standards is in Manners 2002.

32 Pepicelli 2004.

33 Cassarino 2012.

34 Hanieh 2013.

35 Silonen 2016.

36 Rutazibwa 2019.

37 See e.g. Raineri & Strazzari 2019.

management” is akin to a business model where EU “development” and “emergency aid” feeds not migrants, but an aid industry made of an army of European experts and consultants propagating alarmist discourses on “security threats”.<sup>38</sup> Among these “risks”, Muslim “migrants” (and not refugees) have been singled out in the last decades as the greatest danger for Europe. But alleged threats to European security, its jobs, its identity, or even its “identity”, are only the most recent iteration of old intellectual patterns that began with European colonialism and the racial map of the world that accompanied it. Before turning to the question of the future of Europe, we must turn again towards another aspect of its past.

## 2. Coloniality of power: Eurocentrism and the racial view of the world

The process described above, whereby Europe was made by its colonies and vice versa, was accompanied by the rise of a specific worldview in which we are still largely immersed. It is a worldview characterized by a visual organization of political space that established Europe as its centre and by a racial organization of bodies across the globe that propped up “whiteness” as the norm. It is important to keep the two categories of racism and Eurocentrism separate, because despite the fact that both have their origins in the process described above, they are separate concepts. Also notice that we are here provisionally understanding them in a purely technical way: Eurocentrism being a worldview that literally takes Europe as its center, while racism is the idea that bodies around the globe should be classified according to their racial belonging.

Eurocentrism is a very specific but now pervasive image of the world whereby a globe (the earth) is turned into a bi-dimensional map, with Europe posed at its very centre, a representation that has roots in the time of the so-called “great discoveries”, with all of the economic and cognitive shifts that these generated.<sup>39</sup> When people located in the US use expressions such as “continental philosophy”, for instance, without adding any specification, we are implicitly saying that there is one continent and thus, so to speak, a meta-continent through which we look at all the others.<sup>40</sup> And this is the colonial map of the world we see most of the time on our screens. Europe is “The Continent” because it is the one from which we, literally, look at the rest of the other continents and place them on an East/West divide by using the prime meridian (i.e. Greenwich,

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<sup>38</sup> Or at least some of the aid apparatus has become this. Some serious work is still done with European monies, often by smaller organizations, more attuned to the needs and to the varieties of constellations on the ground.

<sup>39</sup> See Samir Amin 1988/2009 or Wynter 2003. The term “discovery” is obviously imbued with Eurocentrism in the technical sense of the term because it presupposes the European gaze as the standard for establishing what is new and what is old.

<sup>40</sup> For a colonial critique of the concept of “continental philosophy”, see Torres 2006.

UK) as its centre. This is the same image that we unconsciously reproduce each time we utter words such as “Far East” or “Middle East”. In a globe, properly speaking, there can be no absolute East and West, and by stating “Middle East” we actually mean the “middle between Europe and its East”, thereby implicitly reinstating Europe as the default focal point for the organization of space. It is here that geo-graphy, the writing of the globe, literally becomes geo-politics, that is the re-production of its power sites.<sup>41</sup>

This imaginal organization of space, the so-called “political map of the world”, is also linked to the imaginal past that we reproduce whenever we classify history into “Ancient”, “Medieval” and “Modern” without further qualifications. Again: in the middle of what, if not the modern-colonial system of knowledge that places European history as the implicitly universal History, whereby to classify all histories? Speaking today about “Ancient” or “Medieval History” without further qualifications means reproducing the narrative that sustained the European Enlightenment intellectuals who created it, and thus the idea that European modernity was the destination of history. We tend to forget that this narrative is imbued with the values of those European intellectuals who perceived themselves as living at “the” turning point of history, an attitude that is very well captured by the German term for modernity: the *Neu-Zeit*, or literally the “new” epoch. It is this self-perceived “new” epoch that turns the Greek and Roman civilisations into “Ancient history” and quite a few centuries of Christendom as just its “Middle”.<sup>42</sup> Besides the (quantitative) irony of naming more than a millennium of history as a mere “middle”, notice here that the narrative of Greece as the cradle of European civilisation was invented by those European intellectuals who rejected Christendom and proposed Ancient Greece and Rome as the true origin of the European spirit, thereby paving the way for an alternative, secularist founding myth.

One may think that after a few decades of invitations to provincialize Europe<sup>43</sup> or to unsettle the racist divides generated by the European bourgeois man and “his overrepresentation”,<sup>44</sup> the Eurocentric map of the world has been overcome. But this is far from the case. Consider the image that Google retrieves whenever we type in “political map of the world”: it is again one bi-dimensional map with Europe as its center, a map that we unconsciously reproduce in our everyday language with expressions such as “Middle East” or “Western civilisation”. From this point of view, one could even argue that Google has become the repositi-

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<sup>41</sup> Mignolo 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Bottici & Challand 2013, p. 122.

<sup>43</sup> Chakrabarty 2000.

<sup>44</sup> Wynter 2003, p. 260.

tory of the global unconscious map of the world.<sup>45</sup> This map is imbued with what Anibal Quijano called “the coloniality of power”, an expression he coined to point out that this organization of space presupposes Eurocentrism and thus the racial classification of people that originated with it.<sup>46</sup> Hence the importance of focusing on “coloniality”, and not simply “colonialism”: whereas the latter may be perceived as an item of the past, coloniality denotes the relations of power that continue to exist even when the formal process of colonization is over.<sup>47</sup>

Eurocentrism must therefore not be considered as a kind of prejudice, as some sort of sickness that may affect some people but not others. It is an unconscious image of the world (ethnocentrism) that is constantly being reproduced through language and the practices of exploitation and exclusion that began with European colonialism, and thus, literally, favoured the European bourgeoisie’s “perspectives” on the world.<sup>48</sup> The physical map of the world with Europe at its centre may or may not be present to our minds when we use expressions such as “Middle East” or “Western Civilisation”. Yet, by the very act of uttering those words, we constantly produce and reproduce that image and make it appear natural, as if it could ever be natural to turn a globe into a bi-dimensional map with a very specific geographic location at its centre.

As Quijano showed in his seminal essay, *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America* (1992) we cannot understand the range and depth of Eurocentrism as a system of knowledge, without keeping in mind how, since the beginning of modernity, the affirmation of a capitalist world system went hand in hand with the emergence of the concept of race, understood as a tool to classify people around the globe and thus for labour control.<sup>49</sup> This does not mean that discrimination did not exist before, but it is only with the emergence of a world capitalist system based on an international division of labour that separated the centre from the periphery (and semi-peripheries) that the modern concept of race, with its specific biological and hierarchical connotation, became hegemonic worldwide.

The entire history of how we have come to perceive people around the globe as classified according to their racial belonging still needs to be written in detail, with some arguing that it originated in the discussion as

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45 For instance, this Eurocentric image of a bi-dimensional map with Europe as its center is the image of the world that appears when one searches in google for “political map of the world” from inside the EU or the US (<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=political+map+of+the+world>) Accessed on 14 October 2019.

46 Quijano 2000.

47 For an argument in favour of this distinction see Quijano 2000 and Torres 2016. Among those who prefer to keep the notion of colonialism, see for instance Stoler 2017.

48 Amin 1988.

49 A similar point was already made by Williams in 1944, but Quijano has the merit of emphasising the distinction between colonialism and coloniality.

to whether the native “Americans” were humans or not, and others pointing to later developments such as the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>50</sup> But in all of the different accounts, it is now clear that Eurocentrism was fully in place when, in the eighteen and nineteenth century, European philosophers and natural historians sitting in their studies systematically elaborated the notion of “race”, using information that was by that time largely supplied by travellers involved in missionary activities, colonial enterprises, and the slave trade.<sup>51</sup>

Quijano and others after him carefully focused on the way in which, during the invention of the Americas, racial classification was first mainly understood in terms of the *conquistadores*’ Christian identity, and then progressively assumed other, and specifically biological, connotations. At the beginning, the main identitarian driving force was the dichotomy Christians *versus* Indians, between the civilized *versus* savages, with its inbuilt allochronisms.<sup>52</sup> The latter, understood as the placing of the other into another time, here specifically a primitive one that can only exist in relation to a supposed superior civilizational stage, worked as a powerful tool for the justification of genocide and elimination: even when the “savages” were recognized with the status of human beings, by being placed at the infancy of humanity in a pre-civilizational stage, they were also implicitly presented as pre-Christians, and thus as immature Christians to be assimilated either through physical elimination or by cultural transformation.<sup>53</sup>

Progressively, with the expansion of colonization, skin colour became the phenotype that signified race and thus came to replace the “Christian *versus* savages” distinction as a tool for labour control. In Latin America, for instance, where waged labour was largely reserved for whites, all other races (and skin colours) became signifiers of different sorts of unwaged labour, ranging from serfdom, reserved mainly for *Indios*, to slavery performed by blacks in different parts of the colonies. In Anglo-America, Native Americans were less often reduced to serfdom, but instead mainly exterminated, forcibly assimilated or pushed onto reservations. Blackness remained the signifier for bodies whose labour could be extorted for free, while waged labour was largely per-

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50 Bernasconi & Lott 2000, p. viii.

51 Ibid., p. vii-viii.

52 For the original discussion of allochronism, see Fabian 1983.

53 A good example of how this happened is provided by Penny Weiss, who collected, among other women’s manifestos, a series of petitions by the Cherokee Women’s Council (Weiss 2018, p. 47-50). Cherokee women were at the time more empowered than their European counterparts and used their authority to voice their political ideals. In this context, a comparative reading of speeches given on 2 March 1817, 30 June 1818, and 17 October 1821, shows how Cherokee women had progressively internalized the “civilizational” narrative, and having adopted the customs and social habits of the Europeans they considered themselves as having finally exited “the state of nature” (see, in particular, p. 49).

formed by the massive immigration of white settlers.<sup>54</sup>

By systematically showing the intertwinement of racism and capitalism, Fanon and Quijano come, in a way, close to one another. Quijano's influential "coloniality of power" thesis connects the critique of Eurocentrism with Karl Marx's concept of world capitalism and Immanuel Wallerstein's world system theory. According to this conceptual synthesis, since 1492, i.e. the moment when European colonialism reached the entire globe, modern capitalist division of labour on a world scale has been and still remains linked to race. The reason for this is easy to understand: as a system predicated on the endless expansion of profit, capitalism needs both the extraction of surplus value from waged labour, and the extortion of free labour and resources from unwaged relations of production. Race, and the claims that some human groups are more apt to certain physical activities than others, is what guaranteed that the latter could happen. Without the slaves and natives, whose labour was extorted for free through colonialism, there could not have been any original accumulation and thus no capitalism.

This explains why Quijano insists on the notion of an intrinsic "coloniality" of modern power. His theoretical move implies distinguishing between colonialism, that is a system of external rule premised on managing differences and which does not, by definition, necessarily imply racism, and the coloniality of the modern system of power, which is unconceivable without taking race and racism into account. It is this centrality of racism to the capitalist world system that explains why Eurocentrism is so pervasive: Eurocentrism, and thus the map of the world described above, is inseparable from a system of knowledge which distinguishes between all different skin colours (black, red, yellow, brown, etc.) from the point of view of an imaginal<sup>55</sup> European skin colour identified as "white". There is no black nor red skin without a white gaze, in the same way that there is no "Middle East" without the Eurocentric gaze that assumed Greenwich as the point from which to turn a globe into a bi-dimensional map.

That white and black are the two colours that serve to classify all others is something built into the racial thinking from its very inception. In his 1777 "Of Different Human Races", Immanuel Kant explicitly states that "negroes and whites are the base races", with all the other colours (olive-yellow, brown, copper red) being the mere result of the combination of them through the influence of climate.<sup>56</sup> This is a crucial text in the history of racial thinking because it is one of the first to recognize that all

.....  
54 Quijano 2000.

55 By imaginal, we mean here what is made of images, understood as re-presentations that are also presences in themselves because they can be both conscious and unconscious. For a longer discussion of the notion of the imaginal and its political relevance, see Bottici 2014.

56 Kant 2000[1777], p. 12, 20.

human beings are part of the same species (that of human beings), but adds the qualification that they remain divided into different races. Kant defines race here as "deviations that are constantly preserved over many generations and come about as a consequence of migration (dislocation to other regions) or through interbreeding with other deviation of the same line of descent".<sup>57</sup> "Deviations" are, in turn, defined as "hereditary dissimilarities that we find in animals that belong to a single line of descent",<sup>58</sup> thereby inscribing the concept of race into the realm of hereditary traits and biology. The skin colour thus becomes the definitive trait that names the different races, while the level of iron in blood is identified as the main natural cause of the different colours. As Kant writes:

We now justifiably account for the different colours of plants by noting that the iron content of certain identifiable plant juices varies. Similarly, since the blood of all animals contains iron, there is nothing to prevent us from accounting for the different colours of the human races by referring to exactly the same causes. Perhaps the hydrochloric acid, or the phosphoric acid, or the volatile alkaline content of the exporting vessels of the skin, were, in this way, reflected red, or black, or yellow, in the iron particle in the reticulum. Among whites, however, these acids and the volatile alkaline content are not reflected at all because the iron in the bodily juices has been dissolved, thereby demonstrating both the perfect mixing of these juices and the strength of this human stock in comparison to others.<sup>59</sup>

Kant does not provide any other explanation for why those acids and alkaline content would not be reflected at all in supposedly white skinned people, and he even admits that his opinions on the question of blood composition are only "preliminary",<sup>60</sup> but he nevertheless continues to set up whiteness as the norm from which all other colours are derived. In his view, since the part of the earth that has the most fortunate combination of cold and hot regions is that between the northern latitude of 32 and 53 degrees, that is where the "Old World" is located, we should also assume that precisely here we find the human beings "who diverge the least from their original form" and who must therefore have been "well prepared to transplant into every other region of the earth".<sup>61</sup> The "Old World" appears thus factually so because, according to Kant's imaginal classification, the people living here were the oldest.<sup>62</sup> Now, given that, according to Kant, we find here white and brunette inhabitants, they are said to be the first lineal root

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57 Ibid., p. 9.

58 Ibid., p. 9.

59 Ibid., p. 19.

60 Ibid., p. 19.

61 Ibid., p. 19-20.

62 Ibid., p. 20.

*genus* of the human beings as a *species*, while the “nearest northern deviation to develop from this original form” is said to be “the noble blond”.<sup>63</sup> Beginning with this lineal root genus, Kant develops a full classification of four fundamental human races based on skin colour and the natural causes that he sees as responsible for their origins, presumably because of their influence on bodily juices: “First race: Noble Blond (Northern Europe), from humid cold; Second Race: Copper red (America) from dry cold; Third race: Black (Senegambia) from humid heat; Fourth race, Olive-Yellow (Asian-Indians) from dry heat”.<sup>64</sup>

Notice here that Kant, who notoriously never left his native Königsberg, elaborated his classification of human beings into these four races by basing his theory on biology and the accounts of human groups provided by travellers, missionaries and European merchants who were involved in world trade, which obviously included the very profitable slave trades. It is thanks to texts such as this one that skin colour and other traits that play with the visual register become crucial ingredients for the modern concept of race, which still now is largely defined in terms of fixed biological differences between human groups.<sup>65</sup> But notice also how the labour capacity, which must have been of crucial interest for the European merchants writing such reports, is explicitly invoked in Kant’s argument. For instance, when speaking about the Native Americans, he observes that they reveal a “half extinguished life power”, which is probably the effect of the cold weather of that region, and stands in sharp contrast to the humid warm weather where the Negro race developed. Kant further claims this accounts for the “fact that the Negro is well suited to his climate, namely strong, fleshy, and agile” and is only made “lazy, indolent and dawdling” because he is so amply supplied by his motherland.<sup>66</sup> As an indication of this difference in strength, Kant quotes the following example:

To cite just one example, red slaves (native-Americans) are used only for domestic work in Surinam, because they are too weak to work in the fields. Negros are thus needed for fieldwork. The difficulties in this case are not the result of a lack of coercive measures, but the natives in the part of the world lack ability and durability.<sup>67</sup>

63 Ibid., p. 20.

64 Ibid., p. 20.

65 Lentin 2008 provides this summary definition of race but later on she distinguished between the racial naturalism and racial historicism, thereby making it clear that even after abandoning the biological connotation of the very first elaborations, the concept of race survived (Lentin 2008: 23). By elaborating on her definition, and the incorporation of racial historicism into it, we would suggest to define race in terms of fixed hereditary differences between groups, thereby suggesting that such hereditary transmission can be considered to happen either through biology or through history, and or a mix of both.

66 Kant 2000, p. 17.

67 Ibid., p. 17.

Kant provides no source for this example, but it is not hard to imagine it must have come from somebody who has been particularly attentive to labour needs.<sup>68</sup> Whereas the capacity for physical work is a criterion for classifying those races that are apt for slavery, Kant refers to the capacity for abstract thought as a pendant criterion for racial classification, while lecturing to his students about the future of races. As Van Norden pointed out, Kant simultaneously used the ability for abstract thought as a criterion to arrange races in a hierarchical order, and thus distinguished between those fit and those unfit for philosophical thinking. According to Kant:

1. “The race of the whites contains all talents and motives in itself.”
2. “The Hindus... have a strong degree of calm, and all look like philosophers. That notwithstanding, they are much inclined to anger and love. They thus are educable in the highest degree, but only to the arts and not to the sciences. They will never achieve abstract concepts.”
3. “The race of Negroes ... [is] full of affect and passion, very lively, chatty and vain. It can be educated, but only to the education of servants, i.e., they can be trained.”
4. “The [Indigenous] American people are uneducable; for they lack affect and passion. They are not amorous, and so are not fertile. They speak hardly at all, ... care for nothing and are lazy.”<sup>69</sup>

If we add to this that according to Kant, “Philosophy is not to be found in the whole Orient”, we come to the striking conclusion that Chinese, Indians, Africans and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are congenitally incapable of philosophy,<sup>70</sup> whereas white people are naturally prone to it. In sum, it does not appear as an exaggeration to say that races were largely set up as job descriptions, with imaginal white people containing all talents and were thus the best fit for abstract thinking and intellectual labour, while the others displayed features that made them fit for certain jobs (mainly manual) but not for others.

We have insisted on the biological language that Kant uses in his elaboration of the concept of race because, at least in the European political public discourse, we tend to perceive such biologism as outdated. But it is not. Since the early 1950s (and the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice), the term race has been abandoned in most European public discourses and considered scientifically flawed, precisely because of its problematic biological connotations. And yet, as has been observed, the concept of race survived through other names, such as ethnic

68 Williams (1944, Ch. 1-2) traces in the making of modern capitalism the origins of such discourses about “suitability” or “natural abilities” of Black enslaved persons to work in hard and hot conditions. When there was not enough indentured labour and native American slaves, a new justification was needed for the massive exploitation of Black bodies, that of the “natural qualities” that Kant refers to.

69 Quoted in Van Norden 2017. pp. 21-22

70 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

origin, civilisation, or even culture.<sup>71</sup> The term race may have been buried, but, where it did, it was certainly alive, because constantly reproduced by the institution at the core of the political organization of European modernity: the sovereign state. As Alana Lentin, among others noted, the history of racism is intimately linked with that of the modern state.<sup>72</sup>

For example, we tend to forget how the biological understanding of belonging is transmitted and constantly repeated in the legal institution of citizenship, which is at the basis of the very foundation of modern European nation-states. Since the French 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, a tension has been established between the universal aspiration of the language of human rights and the particularism of the institution of citizenship, whereby the protection of rights is only accorded to those who belong to a specific state, so that to follow Arendt's succinct formulation, the crucial question of our time is indeed that of the right to have rights.<sup>73</sup> Race is reproduced daily by the modern European state system, because in most European nation-states, citizenship is still defined by a mixture of *jus soli* (the *jus* of the territory) and *jus sanguinis* (the *jus* of blood). That is, the criteria for belonging to a European nation-state is in most cases a mixture of the rights one acquires through presence on a territory (*jus soli*) and that of blood descent (*jus sanguinis*), with some EU countries still basing citizenship on *jus sanguinis* alone.<sup>74</sup> This means that, in some cases, you can automatically acquire European citizenship just because your parents are European citizens, and thus because you have European blood, even if you have never lived in that territory. On the contrary, there are countries where, if you do not have that supposed European "blood", you cannot automatically acquire that citizenship even if you have lived there for most of your life. Notice also that the simple opposition between the two Latin terms may be misleading: even the *jus soli* contains in itself a biological element, in as far as, very often, the criteria for accessing citizenship through *jus soli* is the very fact of being born in a certain country rather than another. Once again, it is not the fact of inhabiting a certain territory, but the biological event of birth inside of that territory that matters, as if a land could ever literally be a mother-land or a father-land.

We tend to think that citizenship is a universal institution and that defining political belonging in terms of the place where one is born (or of the blood of their biological parents) is a normal fact. But this is far from being the case. For centuries, even in Europe, the institution of citizenship

71 For a discussion of the 1950 UNESCO declaration and the idea of "racism without race", see Lentin 2008, p. 92.

72 Lentin 2008, p. 15-23.

73 No rights without being citizens of any sovereign state, according to Arendt (1973, p. 267-304).

74 For comparative material on European citizenship and citizenship in Europe, see: <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/> and <http://globalcit.eu>.

did not even exist.<sup>75</sup> This is not to argue that those times were better, but rather to emphasize the contingency of the institution of citizenship, and in particular, a contingency that is intimately linked with the history of the modern state, and its exclusionary logic that divides territory according to the inside/outside. In the entry "Citizen", that Diderot wrote for the *Encyclopédie* that he co-edited with D'Alembert, and which remains in European intellectual history a symbol of the spirit of the enlightenment, Diderot captured this double-sided nature of citizenship very well. "The citizens", he wrote, "in their capacity as citizens, that is to say in their societies, are all equally noble".<sup>76</sup> Although Diderot means here to emphasize how nobility has now been generalized to all citizens belonging to a certain community, this is a double-sided move that enlarges the nobility from one cast to an entire class, but thereby only transposes the exclusionary mechanism of nobility from family lineage to political belonging. There is a marriage between the racial understanding of the world and the modern institution of the sovereign state, and that marriage has been sealed and exported to the entire world through the institution of modern citizenship. What may appear as a universalizing institution when looked at from the inside of a nation-state such as Diderot's France, suddenly becomes a particularizing one when seen from the outside, and in particular from the colonies. The free French citizens were the "nobility" of Diderot's modern times because they enjoyed privileges that were denied to people of other descent (and, we should not forget, from other genders).

If we now consider that, since the end of the second world war, the entire globe is divided into sovereign states, meaning that there is not even a single space on earth that is not subject to state sovereignty, it does not appear as an exaggeration to state, with Fanon, that what divides our world is first and foremost our species, that is what "race" one belongs to.<sup>77</sup> By elaborating on classical Marxism with his mix of psychology and phenomenology, Fanon, well before Quijano, emphasized that the link between the international division of labour and the racial classification of people across the earth is a twin product of European colonialism.<sup>78</sup> As he goes on to explain, in "the colonies you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich, so whereas in the centre of capitalist production it makes sense to distinguish between structure and superstructure, in the colonies we have to

75 Mendieta 2020, [p.8].

76 Mendieta 2020 [p.10]. Although Mendieta mentions this as an example of the emancipatory potential of modern citizenship, with its "democratization of the spirit of nobility to all citizens", we should also contextualize that effect and look at it from the point of view of those who are excluded from it.

77 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 14.

78 In his oft forgotten seminal work, Trinidadian historian Eric E. Williams also notes how racism emerged as a justification for the increasing use of slaves in Atlantic commerce. For him, it is capitalism that breeds racism (Williams 1944).

emphasize that the superstructure is also the economic infrastructure, and thus the cause is the effect”.<sup>79</sup> In contrast to Quijano, we find in Fanon not only an analysis of the intertwinement of racial schemes and world capitalism, but also an emphasis, as we have already mentioned, on the reflections of those mechanisms in the social unconscious. Since the capitalist division of labour is global, the unconscious patterns that sustain it must be equally global.

Already in 1961 Franz Fanon could observe “the colonized, underdeveloped man is a political creature in the most global sense of the term”.<sup>80</sup> We must understand global in the dual sense of the depth of oppression but also its range. When we take the perspective of the colonized, and thus of the entire international division of labour that the concept of race came to signify, one cannot but take the entire globe as the framework of analysis. This does not mean that there exists a global racist unconscious that works in the same way and in the same manner all around the globe. Despite the fact that Fanon used the notion of collective unconscious when analysing the complex of the colonized, he also emphasized how the latter changed considerably from one context to the next. Beginning with Fanon, we can therefore see how, in order to analyse the structures that perpetrate racism, we need both a potentially global framework, but also the careful work on the specificity of each context.

### 3. From colonial politics of the past to the necropolitics of the present

The notion of a coloniality of modern power that Quijano develops by referring mainly to Latin America also clearly applies to other former colonies and certainly to those located at the Southern Mediterranean border of Europe. All European nations involved in colonial enterprises denied to the indigenous populations of (North) Africa and the Middle East intellectual and civic maturity. In particular, the interwar period generated different types of mandates for the League of Nations expressly based on the ability to reach independence or not. Mandates A, B or C were established based on a supposed degree of “preparedness” for self-government, thereby providing excuses for European powers, and in particular for France, England, Germany and Italy, to retain a colonial foothold in those territories after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Albert Memmi, in his *Portrait du colonisé* (published in 1956, English version 1965) describes how the colonizers created the myth of the immaturity of the colonized through symbolic mechanisms such as comparing the colonized to a teenage society<sup>81</sup> and how, in parallel, the colonized progressively lost hope of reaching a full sense of citizenship. The discourses of

79 Fanon 1961/2004, p. 14.

80 Ibid., p. 40.

81 e.g. Memmi 1965, p. 98.

the colonizers were internalized to the point of naturalization and thus normalization: a lot of colonized people really ended up thinking of their societies as still “immature” and thus incapable of self-government.<sup>82</sup> The infantilization of native societies is a colonial trope which has nurtured a sense of biological and cultural difference, reproducing forms of structural racism at different levels.

Quijano’s point about the mixture of religion and phenotypes in the expression of racism is indeed also at play in European encounters with Northern African populations. The common Christian origins of the various European settlers, be they Catholic or Protestant, was perceived as opposed to the Muslim identity of most local populations. Not by chance, the French empire organized a tiered system of citizenship based on religion in its Algerian colony, opposing Christians (first rate citizens) to “Indigenous” (second-, or at times even third-class citizens).<sup>83</sup> The presence of Jews in these colonies, at a time when European Jews strived to be assimilated in the metropolises, added a second putative divide, that of “whiteness”. Jews, even if more autochthonous than Muslim Arabs,<sup>84</sup> were imagined as white and became, with the infamous Edict Crémieux of 1870, full citizens. From there a gradient slope of superiority expressed in a sliding scale of white to black ran from the European metropole towards Africa, thereby reproducing that traumatizing complex of the colonized that Frantz Fanon captured so well in his *Black Skin, White Mask*. This complex is based on a dichotomy between black and white where the latter work as two extreme of a spectrum including different variations. Fanon himself gives different examples of this and of the racism existing within the colonial realm itself, for example when he narrates how *Antillais*, himself included, were taught to look down on “savage Senegalese” or how he was shocked “to learn that the North Africans despised men of colour”, thereby meaning people of a darker skin colour.<sup>85</sup> Still nowadays gradation in skin colour is a powerful signifier in the region, so much so that we could say, paraphrasing Fanon, that the whiter you are, the richer you are, and vice versa.

The meaning of citizenship and its administrative praxis were also profoundly racialized in the colonial context. We will now dwell on the Algerian case because a critical colonial analysis of the history of French citizenship at the time of decolonization (and European construction) can shed light on both the generally exclusionary mechanism at play in citizenship for those who are non-citizens, but also for those who are lesser

82 Memmi 1965, p. 96. This echoes H. Sharabi’s famous theory of *Neopatriarchy* (1988).

83 Shepard 2008.

84 Note here that North Africa was conquered by Arab Muslims at the time of the Prophet, and thus Berber and Jewish populations antedated the Arab presence there.

85 Fanon 1952/2008, p. 126 and p. 82

citizens. Todd Shepard has captured better than anybody else both the violence of this legal codification and the legacies of decolonization in the French context.<sup>86</sup> In his *The Invention of Decolonization* Shepard documents how France, which originally refused to leave the Algerian colony and pushed for a politics of assimilation for a century, created new measures to specifically target Muslim Algerians and prevent their migration towards metropolitan France in a dramatic U-turn at the end of the Algerian war in 1962. Why this abrupt change of policies? In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, France favoured measures that would grant a form of citizenship to Algerians who would abandon their local, religious customs. Thus, if a Muslim Algerian accepted the French civic code during the period 1865-1919, this person would have access to better jobs and benefit from limited political rights (though not yet as a first-class citizen like “European” French or Jewish Algerians, who were promoted to full citizenship with the Edict Crémieux). Muslims in French Algeria could only get French *nationality*, but were never entitled to full *citizenship*.<sup>87</sup> After WW2, when France realized that the assimilation proposed was only “faint”,<sup>88</sup> it proposed integration of all its citizens under its *Union Française*, a last-ditch attempt in 1946 to retain its Empire under another name. Yet, in North Africa, all of the Muslim population was denied any say in the legal aspects of self-rule and suffered severe discrimination in French politics. For ex., representation from Algeria in the French Assembly was based until 1958 on the principle of a “double collège”, with French settlers and Jewish populations (the first electoral college) electing the same number of deputies as the rest of the population of Algeria (the second college). Although the number of electors was much smaller for the first college (probably about 200,000 total in the settler population) than for the second one (about seven million “Algerians” in total)<sup>89</sup>, both colleges sent the same number of deputies to the *Palais Bourbon*, presenting a serious discrimination against the Muslim population of Algeria. This is one of the many instances of the racialization of Muslim subjects, which would peak at the end of the Algerian war.<sup>90</sup> In the neighbouring Tunisian protectorate, we see similar discriminatory patterns: French and European workers received a 30% higher salary than their Tunisian (read Muslim) counterparts – the so-called “*tiers colonial*” in French (or colonial third”.<sup>91</sup> Symptomatically, the so-called “French Muslims of Algeria” (FMA), an official category of

86 Shepard 2008.

87 For a detailed analysis and description, see Shepard 2018, p. 19-54.

88 Ibid., p. 31.

89 See e.g. [https://www.persee.fr/doc/pop\\_0032-4663\\_1971\\_hos\\_26\\_1\\_4969](https://www.persee.fr/doc/pop_0032-4663_1971_hos_26_1_4969) for figures about European and local population in “French Algeria”.

90 Shepard 2008, p. 37, 42, fn 67.

91 Anderson 1986, p. 148.

French administrative law in the Algerian departments after 1944<sup>92</sup> were not even consulted in the referendum of April 1962, leading to the end of the Algerian war.<sup>93</sup>

In sum, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Muslims were the clear target of legal and administrative measures meant to prevent their inclusion in the fold of full French citizenship, while other non-French residents of colonial Algeria were given support for repatriation in their capacity as “Europeans”. These measures reinforced what Fanon called the complex of the colonized by sealing the sense of lesser citizenship in the letter of the law itself, and by grounding a *legal* opposition between Europeans on the one hand, and Muslims on the other.<sup>94</sup>

Even if the end of colonial empire is a relatively distant historical event, many analysts argue that the specific targeting of Muslims and North African migrants by police forces, law, or public discourse in contemporary Europe is a direct follow-up to a long history of colonial rule by difference. Colonial times and practices still live with us. When, after the November 2015 attacks in Paris, President Hollande declared “the state of exception”, he did so through a legal category whose origin harks back to the time of the Algerian war (March 1955 to be precise).<sup>95</sup> Similarly, after the Cologne New Year’s Eve sexual harassment attacks in 2016, we saw the resurgence of racialized discourses portraying “North Africans” as hyper-sexualized, essentially sick individuals who are a threat to European public order.<sup>96</sup> To be sure, the “global war on terror” that ensued since 9/11 contributed to the spread of the myth of a clash between Islam and the West.<sup>97</sup> Some specifically national episodes have become mingled

92 Shepard 2008, p. 41, 51.

93 Ibid., p. 41, 94. The apex of this confessional discrimination against Muslims came with measures taken to decide who would be entitled to “return” to the metropolis, i.e. continental France. There were two types of residents in French Algeria: “French citizens” on the one hand, and European residents, who did not enjoy political rights in the French system. The group of French citizenship itself was split, as we have seen into three groups, Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Jews were mostly dealt with and considered as 100% French citizens since the Crémieux Edict, but a tiny minority of Jews in the Algerian Sahara, (the so-called Muzabite Jews, probably less than 1,000 persons), who had refused to renounce their customary, religious laws in the 19<sup>th</sup> c, were granted automatic access to France in 1961 when they were granted full French citizenship. They were thus “*rapatriés*”, like “French Algerians”. Muslims who, we have seen were second-class citizens, were not permitted access to the European continent and were at best considered “*réfugiés*” (Shepard 2008: Ch. 9 “Rejecting the Muslims”). But it was instead non-French European residents in Algeria who were allowed access to France, on confessional grounds, even if they had no legal reasons to be given privileged access to “return” migration towards France (Shepard 2008, p. 224-247).

94 For Shepard, this means that “Islam” is legally connected to French citizenship from 1962 onwards. Other authors insist that this targeting of Muslims and Islam might date back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is clear that previous colonial rule of difference built the basis for this now formal identification of Muslims as legally different.

95 Sereni 2015.

96 Dakhliya 2017.

97 Bottici & Challand 2011.

over time with the process of building a supposed “common European identity” that is perceived as threatened by migrants in general, and by those of Muslim descent in particular.

Indeed, when Frantz Fanon stated that Europe has been “literally the creation of the Third World”,<sup>98</sup> he meant more than the mass plundering of material goods and labour from the colonies. The colonial and decolonization contexts contributed as well to building a certain idea of citizenship, one that has a long history of entrenched Islamophobic and anti-black racism. In his more recent work, *Arab Sex and France* (2017), Todd Shepard illustrates another legacy of decolonization, that is the image of a sexually aggressive man, perceived as a danger to French women, and the parallel new paragon of the Arab homosexual, perceived as threatening the heteronormative European cultural order and self-understanding. This stereotyped image of a sexually aggressive Arab man first emerged from social groups who resisted Algerian decolonization, in particular the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS, a military club of officers refusing de Gaulle's acquiescence to decolonize Algeria). One publication that distilled racist and homophobic remarks against French Muslims of Algeria was *Europe Action*, a journal frequently associated with “sexual orientalism” and fears of aggressive sexualized others (generally male).<sup>99</sup> The continuity from this right-wing imaginary all the way to the present, with the FLN of Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen, and other intellectuals from the *Nouvelle Droite*, such as Alain de Benoist, plays with the fear of France and Europe under threat and is strikingly described by Shepard as part of this long colonial history. The original formulation of the theory of “great replacement”, used nowadays by white supremacists and terrorist attacks against Muslims throughout the globe,<sup>100</sup> was first written by Renaud Camus, a journalist and essayist whose ideas crystallized in the context of the 1970s post-Algerian war.<sup>101</sup> According to this conspiracy theory, the very existence of Europe would be threatened by such large and sustained waves of immigration that white people will soon be fully replaced by Muslims and/or people of colour.

To sum up this point, we can see how the specific colonial context is enmeshed with a larger self-understanding of Europe, and vice versa.<sup>102</sup> Similar arguments would be made about anti-Black feelings in other parts of Europe, for example, Enoch Powell's “River of Blood” speech

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98 Fanon 1961, p. 58.

99 Shepard 2017, p. 19-41, 282.

100 For ex, the recent attacks in Christchurch in New Zealand in March 2019, or in El Paso, August 2019. For reference to great replacement in the El Paso shootings, see “Minutes Before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online”. *The New York Times* (3 Aug 2019).

101 Shepard 2017, p. 125-129; 282-284.

102 Haleh Davis & Serres 2018.

and hatred-filled discourses against Jamaican immigration in the UK.<sup>103</sup> The myth of a shared European cultural identity is based on a fantasy of whiteness that runs throughout the European colonial history. Arabs, Turks or “North Africans” (even when the latter are regular citizens of France, Spain or Germany) are constantly singled out in xenophobic discourses as outcasts, threats or lives with less value because they are seen as “non-white” and therefore a threat to the fantasized European purity. Those speaking of a “post-racial Europe”, on the basis that, since WWII, race has largely been banned from European public discourse,<sup>104</sup> should consider the way in which other categories, such as civilisation, ethnicity or even citizenship, are now doing the same work that biological discourses did in the past. The term “race” may have been buried in the European public sphere, but it constantly being re-enacted at its borders.

The current so-called “migration-crisis”, which may indeed only be a crisis from the point of view of this fantasy of pure whiteness (for there have always been large-scale migrations around the globe), must also be read as another episode in this long history of racial discourses. From the early alleged “migration crisis” of 1991, with the stunning images of the boat *Vlora* full of Albanians that were denied entry to the Italian city of Bari, to the flow of refugees following the war in Yugoslavia, to the endless debates about whether to accept mere dozens or thousands of migrants in the mid 2010s, all the way to the illegal measures by the Italian ministry Matteo Salvini to criminalize solidarity around the Mediterranean,<sup>105</sup> both European states, and Europe, have been administering the chances of survival in front of death.

Faced with hundreds of thousands of migrants, the EU has more often than not preferred to let people die on the perilous journey to Europe, or turned a blind eye to the paramilitary units making money smuggling refugees towards or in Libya.<sup>106</sup> It is therefore apt to apply the term of “necropolitics” to these instances. Mbembe originally coined the terms to depict how modern sovereign power, in general, is much more than Foucault's biopower. For Mbembe, the term necropolitics is a complement to biopower, as it allows us to understand how weapons create “death-worlds”, i.e. spaces for the living dead.<sup>107</sup> Later in that article, he explores the specificity of colonial contexts for necropolitics, where the conse-

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103 Gilroy 1987.

104 For a critique of post-racial Europe, see Lentin 2020.

105 By denying access to Italian ports for boats rescuing migrants and refugees, or by pressing charges against the NGOs staffing these rescue operations. For another example of criminalization on the French-Italian border, see Celikates 2018.

106 For an example of complacency towards Sudanese paramilitary forces and the “migration” question to Europe, see <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eu-accused-hiding-links-sudan-armed-groups-migration-funding>.

107 Mbembe 2003, p. 12 and 40.

quences for racialized subjects have been the worst.<sup>108</sup> For him the “most accomplished form of necropolitics is the contemporary colonial occupation of Palestine”.<sup>109</sup> Extending his argument, we want to argue that even in the “post-colonial” context (the false belief that we are allegedly *after* colonialism), there continues to be an uneven distribution of violence and inequality in terms of one’s chances in front of death. If during the formal European colonial empires, the European settlers consistently benefited from high protections and suffered lower rate of mortality than the colonized, similar inequalities are still at play with Fortress Europe in the present. We use here “necropolitics” to denote an uneven “politics of death”,<sup>110</sup> and, in particular, a biopolitical apparatus that distributes different life trajectories according to how close they are to the prospect of premature death.

The phrase “Fortress Europe”, originally referring to a defence strategy developed by Nazis during WW2, re-emerged massively in the 1990s to decry and criticize common European policies meant to prevent the entry of migrants from its eastern and southern borders.<sup>111</sup> 1999 was a turning point, with concerted measures adopted by the EU to stop migration from the Balkans and North Africa.<sup>112</sup> Later instruments, such as Frontex are just the continuation of this effort to prevent migration across the Mediterranean. The more the EU builds its fortress, the less legitimate is its claim to offer a new model of citizenship. The fact that, from November 2019, the next EU Migration Commissar will be entrusted with a new portfolio called “Defence of the European Way of Life” is further proof that the current management of migration in the European context is still imbued with colonial and essentialist discourses, aimed at perpetrating a biopolitical apparatus that discriminates between lives that are worth living and lives that not.

While the administration of death through the control of borders is a clear case of necropolitics, a less evident yet very powerful example is the administration of ecological resources. In that instance, it is less the political component of Europe than the consequence of its economic policies that comes to the front. Through three decades of neoliberal policies and a commitment to capitalist exploitation, Europe has been and remains a central actor in what we could call the current “environmental necropolitics”: while Europe has been and continues to be one of the

108 Ibid., p. 17, 24.

109 Ibid., p. 27.

110 Ibid., p. 21.

111 On the history of Fortress Europe, see Silonen 2016. A search on JSTOR (done 25 Aug. 2019) with the phrase “Fortress Europe” produced 2,337 results, with a maximum 89 hits per decade until the 1990s. It then peaked to 683 in the 1990s, 741 results with that phrase in the 2000-2009 decade and 698 for the 2010s. See <https://bit.ly/2NBZDMp>.

112 See e.g. [www.economist.com/leaders/1999/10/14/fortress-europe](http://www.economist.com/leaders/1999/10/14/fortress-europe) (accessed 20 Aug. 2019).

regions that has most benefitted from the unlimited plundering of natural resources, it is now mainly the global south that faces the deadly consequences of such plundering, with heat waves of unprecedented levels in the “global south” turning locals into the “living dead”, to take again the expression of Mbembe.<sup>113</sup> This is particularly clear in terms of the consequences of human-made climate change, with Europe, along with the US and China, still being one of the main emitters of carbon dioxide, while Africa and East Asia pay the highest prices for the extreme weather patterns generated by such emissions.<sup>114</sup>

Since the 1990s, experts on global warming have repeated calls to stop uncontrolled economic and industrial growth. In August 2019, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented its latest report on “Climate Change and Land”. Priyadarshi Shukla, an expert on climate and food security and co-chair of one of the IPCC working groups, underlined the unequal consequences of global warming: “We will see different effects in different countries, but there will be more drastic impacts on low-income countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean”.<sup>115</sup> *Le Monde*, in its coverage of the report’s release,<sup>116</sup> estimates that 500 million persons will be exposed to the growing trend of desertification, but almost none of these live in Europe or advanced capitalist polities. The risk of desertification, and with it deaths and new rounds of conflict, are once again exported to the Middle East, South and East Asia.<sup>117</sup>

There is however a positive light in this report, albeit a dim one. The group of experts that put out that report was comprised of about 100 international researchers. For the first time, a majority of these (53%)<sup>118</sup> were from “developing countries” (the expression chosen in *Le Monde*), bringing awareness to topics that are usually overlooked by European and North American analysts. Leaders of “autochthonous people and communities” from 42 countries greeted this report positively because the alarm bell that it raised gave them a chance to defend an alternative model of land development. These leaders called for more community-

113 Mbembe 2003, p. 40.

114 See the data of CO2 emissions per capita with Europe still above all other world regions (except North America with a double rate of emission per capita), at: [shorturl.at/giH18](http://shorturl.at/giH18) (accessed Oct. 12 2019, via Google Public Data Explorer).

115 For more on the IPCC report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, see [www.ipcc.ch/2019/08/08/land-is-a-critical-resource\\_srccl/](http://www.ipcc.ch/2019/08/08/land-is-a-critical-resource_srccl/) (accessed 2 Sept. 2019).

116 *Le Monde*, 9 Aug, 2019, p. 2-3.

117 See [https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/08/08/l-humanite-epuise-les-terres-selon-le-dernier-rapport-du-giec\\_5497654\\_3244.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2019/08/08/l-humanite-epuise-les-terres-selon-le-dernier-rapport-du-giec_5497654_3244.html).

118 See factsheet report at <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/190729-SRCCL-leaflet.pdf> (accessed 29 Aug 2019).

based control over natural resources and the preservation of respectful know-how and management, often gendered, of natural resources.<sup>119</sup>This simply means that awareness of the global scope of the issue should also go hand in hand with rethinking global natural resources as common resources, outside of the boundary thinking and methodological nationalism inherited from the past. Recognition of the positive role played by indigenous communities in fighting natural catastrophes should not lead us to indulge in the fantasy of a possible return to the origins, even less so when the latter are understood in terms of ethical origins. Human beings have always been migrating so, properly speaking, nobody is purely “ab-original”, that is there from the very origins, if not in the universalizing sense that all humans are aboriginal to planet earth.

#### 4. In lieu of a conclusion

When seen through the lens of a colonial critical approach, the language of “crisis” that currently surrounds the European project cannot but appear as misleading. More than a “European crisis” or a “migration crisis”, we should speak of a “re-politicization of the battles over borders”. Migrants crossing borders and carrying signs such as “we did not cross the border, the border crossed us” remind us that the movement of people and goods between Europe and its colonies has been happening for a long time. Equally, battles over who is in and out of Europe are a stark reminder that human beings have not always lived in political formations characterized by sovereign boundaries demarcating the inside from the outside.

Will there ever be a Europe after Eurocentrism? Only if Europe becomes a space of exchange that encompasses its cultural and political neighbours as well, with liminal zones of crossing, debate and at times disagreement and struggle, but in which joint emancipatory and solidarity projects can emerge. Europe’s history cannot only be the history of its member states: it is also a Europe of its conflicted relations. This means that it is not made up of European voices only, but of intellectuals, thinkers, artists and migrants, whose very act of crossing the border can have a democratic effect, in the etymological sense of an expression of the power of the people. In the current necropolitical configuration, crossing borders illegally ceases to be a mere act of civil disobedience and can indeed become a process of constituent power.<sup>120</sup> Triggered by Europe’s colonial past, border crossing can project Europe towards a different future, prefiguring a different form of citizenship outside the exclusionary logic of nation-states, which many Europeans believe is the reason Europe was created in the first place. Maybe the reconfiguration of European citizenship is not the entire story, but it is at least one step closer.

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<sup>119</sup>The quote, in French is “garantir les droits communautaires sur les terres et les ressources est essentiel à la gestion durable et la conservation des forêts (...) en particulier à travers le leadership des femmes autochtones et rurales.” *Le Monde* p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> Celikates 2018.

Instead of contemplating our supposed European identity, in need of preservation, and threatened by an alleged “crisis”, we should rather follow the call of Fanon to defend a shared sense of solidarity, transcending narrow conceptions of identities. In the concluding pages of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon charts a path forward that resonates with the idea of a common political project for generating new selves:

[...] I acknowledge one right for myself: the right to demand human behavior from the other.

And one duty: the duty never to let my decisions renounce my freedom. [...]

There is no white world; there is no white ethic--any more than there is white intelligence. [...]

I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must constantly remind myself that the real leap consists of introducing invention into life.

In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself.

I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Fanon 1952/2008, p. 204.

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