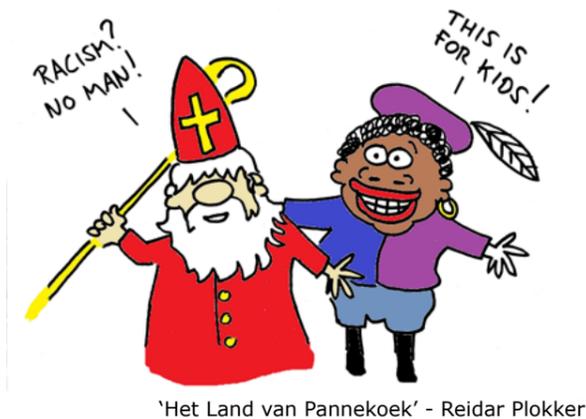


borderless

an anticapitalist journal

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'Het Land van Pannekoek' - Reidar Plokker

Netherlands A new anti-racist movement

— Alex de Jong

What was left of the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant, welcoming society was shaken the last few months by revelations of racist police, international criticism of Dutch immigration policies and discriminatory government proposals. But we are also seeing the first beginnings of a new movement against racism and discrimination, culminating with a demonstration on 22 March.

One very visible manifestation of racism in the Netherlands is of course Geert Wilders and his Freedom Party (PVV). Like most racists they reject the label 'racist', claiming that they are agitating against specific cultures, especially 'Islamic culture', not 'races'. But they use 'culture' in the same a-historical, all-explaining way that old-fashioned biological racists used 'race'.

But even outside of the PVV, in mainstream Dutch society, racism is common and largely unacknowledged. The number of reported racist-related incidents has increased in recent years. According to the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, between 20 and 40 per cent of people of migrant origin experience discrimination when looking for work. Then there was news about police-racism, such as violence against migrants in The Hague. Amnesty International has even issued a report criticizing ethnic profiling by the Dutch police.

None of this happens in a vacuum. The current government has continued its harsh policies towards asylum-seekers and has made being undocumented a crime. To prove this 'crime', the police have been given a broader mandate to search the houses of suspects. Aliens who cannot prove their identity have fewer rights than criminal suspects. These policies signal to society that migrants, refugees, aliens, and other 'outsiders' are problems, and that they deserve to have fewer rights.

But we are also seeing the beginnings of resistance against various forms of racism and discrimination, outside the established organs. One

important movement is that of undocumented refugees demanding a place to stay. Their struggle, which has been going on for many months, continues. Protests against 'Zwarte Piet', a racist caricature of a black man that forms part of the Sinterklaas festivities, were especially lively end last year.

The responses to such protests, often dismissive but also sometimes quite hostile, show how many white Dutch people, when confronted with criticisms of racist practices, respond by attacking the ones who raise this point - it is the critics, and not racism, that are the problem; they 'lack a sense of humor' or are 'blowing it out of proportion'. The more sustained the criticism, the more hostile the response of many white Dutch people, infatuated with their own notion of being tolerant and good.

Many migrant organizations are depended on government funding and do not want to rock the boat - especially in times of austerity. Parties of the Left often pretend racism doesn't exist or even adopt part of the discourse of the new cultural racism. When confronted with proof of racism, they reduce it to an individual problem, to a lack of manners on behalf of the racist and, it's often implied, the 'thin skin' of the victim. What is avoided is recognition that racism is not an individual problem but a structural one of unequal power relations that are reinforced through countless bigger and smaller gestures.

The new anti-racist groups and activists need to link up and prepare for a long-term struggle. The demonstration of March 22 will be a good opportunity for this and a way to keep the discussion about racism going. Racism in all its forms functions as a lightning rod, diverting potential anger over economic recession and austerity. In turn, it creates new social-economic difficulties for the victims. For too long, racism has been painted as an individual problem. Racism is not uprooted by anti-racism alone - we need a movement that fights for fair work, equal treatment and collective rights.

What is borderless?

borderless is a radical paper written in English for non-Dutch speakers interested in Dutch progressive politics. It provides news and commentary from an anti-capitalist perspective on Dutch politics and on events and social struggles in the Netherlands and around the world.

borderless is written and published by a collection of Dutch and non-Dutch activists living in Amsterdam. We consider ourselves socialists, feminists and ecologists and we seek anti-capitalist solutions to the many economic and ecological crises facing working people worldwide. We oppose capitalism, a political-economic system that is based on exploitation and whose increasingly frequent crises are devastating communities around the globe. We oppose all attacks on the civil and human rights of citizens, immigrants, workers, and minorities both inside and outside the Netherlands. We stand in solidarity with all people engaged in the struggle against exploitation and oppression

borderless is a supplement to our sister magazine, Grenzeloos, published by SAP, the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

Join us!

If you are interested in what we do, feel free to contact us at borderless@grenzeloos.org, visit our website: www.grenzeloos.org/borderless-an-anticapitalist-journal and to like our [facebook page](#). We appreciate comments on our articles, proposals or contributions for our next issue, and interesting events to add to our agenda!

We meet regularly to discuss current political issues, our involvement in social movements and how to put our ideas into practice. If you are interested you are welcome!

Editorial We are at a crossroads

Since our last issue, we have observed two historic rebellions against regimes in Ukraine and Bosnia. In previous issues, we have written about the popular uprisings in several Arab countries, in Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain, in Turkey and Brasil. Now the bells of rebellion ring in Eastern Europe.

Despite different national realities, these protests have a lot in common. Growing economic, social and ecological exploitation, coupled with intensifying authoritarianism are being experienced around the planet. These uprising inspire each other across borders and ordinary people see that they are the ones who must change things through organization and mobilization.

These rebellions are not homogenous. They are internally diverse - in terms of their level organization, political ideologies, demands and strategies. In several countries authoritarian, conservative and pro-corporate rulers tell us that they are the bulwark against dark forces, terrorists, fascists, and fundamentalists.

And due to the actual participation of far-right and fundamentalist groups in many of these uprisings, we, on the left, are constantly pressured to choose between the current oppressive regimes and potential future regimes that may be undemocratic, ultra-conservative, or simply alternative agents of global capital.

Furthermore, charges of 'imperialism' - often hollow and dehistoricized - are thrown about and used to convince us that we must choose between the lesser of two evils.

From here in the Netherlands, it is our responsibility to show our solidarity with those resisting oppressive and corrupt governments. But solidarity with whom, exactly? Our answer is with the progressive, inclusive and democratic forces within these rebellions. They might not be numerous in some contexts, but they do exist and their vision bears the seeds of a genuinely democratic and just society much more than either the current oppressive regimes or the conservative and fundamentalist factions within the resisting forces. It is with, for example, the Revolutionary Left Current in Syria, Tuzla Plenum in Bosnia, and the Left Opposition in Ukraine that we stand in solidarity.

We should not consider it strange or threatening that these uprisings are not homogenous. Now is the time for organizing and struggling to build alternative visions for a new world order out of these heterogeneous articulations of anger and hope and for supporting the democratic forces fighting in the streets.

The same argument holds for the elections that are happening in and around Europe. We must stand against the imposed options of austerity and oligarchy and fight for a third option - one that is democratic, egalitarian, feminist, and eco-socialist.

More than 100 years ago, Friedrich Engels wrote, 'Bourgeois society is at a crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.' These words are as relevant today as they were then.

We are at a crossroads.

European Elections

General indifference is the most widespread issue for the European Elections, coming up in May. Polls suggest new records in abstention and an alarming surge for the far right. The European Union is spearheading austerity across the continent with cuts that hit the most vulnerable: the sick, elderly, unemployed, low paid, etc. With its 'Stability' and 'Euro-Plus' Pacts the EU cements its commitment to creating more precarious employment and increasing inequality. The populist and racist parties across Europe have only reactionary proposals to divide ordinary Europeans. Borderless believes that real change, that can lead to a social Europe, based on solidarity rather than 'fiscal stability', can only come through the mobilization of ordinary people. The pro-austerity elites must be confronted and opposed at both national, European and international level.

All EU citizens have the right to vote - in their country of citizenship or residence. Borderless urges its readers to use this opportunity to say 'no' to the Europe of austerity and 'no' to nationalist withdrawal. We suggest voting for an internationalist and socialist candidate that will be a part of the left wing group (GUE/NGL) in the Parliament and support the candidacy for the European Commission president of Alexis Tsipras. This could mean voting for the Socialist Party in The Netherlands - or a socialist organization in your country of origin.

Fortress Europe

Turning borderlands into storage houses for unwanted migrants

— Manolis

Since early 2010, facing a severe economic and political crisis characterized by uncertainty and austerity measures resulting in rising unemployment and steep decreases in salaries and welfare allowances, Greeks have been emigrating in large numbers and Balkan immigrants who dominated earlier migration flows into Greece have also been 'returning home'. Ironically, during this same period the number of asylum seekers and undocument-

ed migrants from Asia, Middle East and Africa into Greece has also grown significantly. Thus, even as the economic crisis in Greece was deepening in the late 2000s, the country was becoming the major point-of-entry for undocumented migration into the European Union. Political upheavals in Asia and the Middle East, combined with toughening migration-control policies in Spain and Italy, have diverted immigration flows toward Greece. In 2010, 90% of all apprehensions for unauthorized entry into the EU took place

in Greece (up from 75% in 2009 and 50% in 2008).

Most of the new immigrants are not entering Greece to stay but are using it as a first step into Western Europe. However, the implementation of the Dublin Regulation (allowing the processing of asylum applications only in the EU country of initial entry) means that most get stuck in Greece. This has turned crisis-ridden Greece into a 'storage house' for unwanted immigrants by the countries of

(continues on the next page)

the north. New immigrants are clustering in the major western ports of Greece as well as in the centre of Athens, where many attempt to acquire forged papers to leave the country. They live in poor conditions in deprived areas, joined increasingly by those Greeks whom are the most severely struck by the crisis, while fascists, particularly active in these areas, incite xenophobia and fear among local residents.

The 2012 coalition government's approach to 'solve this problem' was through the implementation of a sweep operation, cynically named after the ancient Greek God of hospitality Xenios Zeus, with the aim 'to cleanse Greece of illegal immigrants'. According to estimates by NGOs, approximately 10,000 people have been imprisoned in Greek detention camps and many more are detained in police stations all around the country.

Although detention is officially a temporary measure for preparation for deportation, in practice it is used as a punishment for crossing European borders. Last year, the maximum detention period was increased to 12 months for asylum seekers and 18 months for undocumented migrants; as a general trend the maximum period is applied. Moreover, European law allows for re-detention if deportation

is not successful. After release, people are therefore at risk of being detained again for several more months.

The EU and international organisations have repeatedly admonished Greece for the extremely low number of people granted refugee status, for administrative structures that make applying for asylum almost impossible, and for the inhumane conditions to which immigrants are subjected in Greek detention centers. However, in a recent report by EuroFrontex, Greece is praised for applying a systematic detention policy that, according to the report, appears to be working successfully in decreasing migration to Europe. In that report, Greece is not represented as a weak member of the Community failing to fulfill its obligations but rather as an active member working for the common good. Thus the inflow of disadvantaged persons continues to be framed as an aggressive invasion, the proposed solution to the 'problem' is to penalize entry. As long as those ideas continue to guide European migration policy so will the suffering of vulnerable migrant populations persist and the spread of racism, xenophobia and fascism across Europe will continue, especially in Greece and the other borderlands of the EU that are asked to perform its dirty work.

Universities

Academia in crisis, management in denial

- Boris Slijper

Early in 2012, the Rector Magnificus of the University of Amsterdam surprised friend and foe alike when in her annual Dies Natalis speech she stated that universities should train students to become 'competent rebels'. In the same speech, she also criticized the Dutch 'Top Sector Policy' through which funds for academic research were transferred from the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Ministry of Economic Affairs, prioritizing the main sectors of the Dutch economy such as the chemical industry, logistics, water management, and the 'creative industries'. In short, the Rector voiced support for the "old" ideal of the university as a haven of social critique, intellectual freedom and scientific autonomy, and a central countervailing power against market and state.

The Rectors' speech however sharply contradicted Dutch policy on higher education since the 1990's, which without exception, has instrumentalized the university for the sake of strengthening the competitiveness of the Dutch economy. Combined with structural budget cuts on higher education, this policy has severely undermined all necessary preconditions to perform the critical functions of research and education.

To be sure, these policies have not led to the privatization of academia in the strict sense of the term. In the Dutch version of the neoliberalization, it was the technique of 'market-imitation' that was applied to higher education: the application of business models taken from the private sector, management jargon to assess the quality of education and research, and most importantly the introduction of financial incentives. In short, making universities operate like businesses under the supervision of the state. This policy has manifested itself in five developments.

The first two were directed towards a transformation of labour relations in Dutch universities. First, employee and student participation in university management has been severely curtailed. The relatively democratic structures that had governed academia until the early nineties were transformed into managerial structures, governed by professional managers who are now mainly accountable to the Ministry of Education. The second development was a continuous increase in the proportion of precarious

contracts among the academic staff and the outsourcing of many support staff functions. These developments undermine the idea of an academic community and simultaneously silence the voices of students and employees alike.

Next, in order to monitor and measure the returns on investment in education and research, the performance of universities and of individual scholars is increasingly measured in terms of quantifiable output, namely degrees and publications. Thus, in terms of education, universities (and individual faculties and departments) are rewarded for the annual amount of degrees (or credits) "produced". The official justification for this financing model was that it would stimulate universities to improve the quality of education. In practice, it proved to be an incentive to abolish smaller scale programmes and teaching forms and to inflate grades to ensure higher rates of graduation. In terms of research, scholars are increasingly assessed on the basis of the number of publications produced, while prioritizing so-called professional publications (those written for a select audience of academic peers). Academics have undoubtedly become 'more productive', but this also led to an increasingly self-referential academia, the recycling of research results, and tremendous pressure on researchers to win highly competitive external grants and increase publications - leading to higher levels of stress and, ultimately, burnout. It has also led to the rise of a culture of career-minded scholars with a tendency to 'buy-out' time from teaching obligations.

And last but not least, universities have been gradually incorporated into the financialized economy, largely as a result of huge loans for investments in new building projects. This not only means that universities are now taking on substantial financial risks, especially in the longer term but also that large investment banks now have an important stake - as creditors - in the policies and practices of universities - a dangerous precedent.

It is not just that these policies stand in stark contrast to the ideal of the autonomous university. The proclaimed advantages of these policies - a highly professionalized, accountable and efficient university - are nowhere in sight. Over the last five years, there have been many media reports of abuses in higher education, including fraudulent



practices relating to certification, excessive remuneration for university boards of directors, unscrupulous recycling of publications, and examples of outright plagiarism.

The response of the Dutch authorities to these reports is as expected. They are seen as individual 'excesses' that have to be countered by the introduction of ethical codes, integrity committees, and even an academic version of the Bankers' Oath (in the case of managers in higher professional education (HBO)). This is a classic 'end-of-pipe' solution. Although a number of critical platforms and action groups of academic employees have recently been promoting a structural understanding of these incidents, identifying them as symptoms of rather than excesses in the system, the dominant policy discourse remains highly resilient.

The university is in crisis, but its management is in denial.

Spanish state

What is happening in Spain?

The 1st February, a demonstration took place in Amsterdam against the new Spanish law on abortion. The demo was called by Casa Kliniek and attended by around 200 people. This text was distributed by Spanish activists organised in the indignados movement in Amsterdam.

- Assembly of Spaniards in Amsterdam (15-M/Marea Granate)

Under a new law proposed by the Popular Party (PP) government of Spain, abortion would only be allowed if two medical or psychiatric reports state that the health of the pregnant woman is at risk. This suppresses all freedom of women to decide about their pregnancy, even in cases of rape or fetal malformation. If the law is passed, Spain would become one of the last European countries in terms of reproductive rights.

According to polls around 80% of Spaniards (and even 60% of PP voters) oppose this reform. With this law, the PP seeks to satisfy the small ultra-Catholic minority that is one of their stalwarts. They are the same people who demonstrate against the legalization of gay marriage. Under the guise of defending "life" and "family", they seek to impose a traditional and conservative morality, inspired by fundamentalist Catholicism.

The Popular Party is able to impose this reform because it has an absolute majority in parliament (186 MPs out of 350), even though they received only 44% of the vote (with a total turn-out of 68%). Spanish electoral law is not proportional, making it easy for a single party to gain absolute power.

The government takes advantage of this situation, disregarding public opinion and without negotiating with other organizations. In addition, their attitude towards social mobilizations has ranged from disdain to criminalization. With the new Public Safety Law, nicknamed "#Ley-Anti15m", photographing a policeman while doing his work, participating in an unauthorized demonstration, or installing a tent on the street, are crimes with fines of up to 600,000 euros. Thus the government is pushing towards an authoritarian and increasingly undemocratic state.

Only in this way can the government continue to impose austerity, social cuts, and the

privatization of public services. Their aim is to defend the financial system above all, even at the cost of sinking a large part of the population into poverty. The major parties, PP and PSOE have even amended the Constitution - without any popular consultation - so that the payment of the public debt has priority over any other budget item.

In the recent years, Spain has become the most unequal country in the euro zone according to the Gini index, with over nine million people under the poverty line. In 2013 unemployment in Spain reached a record high of 27%, after four years of being above 20%. For those under 25, unemployment is 57.6 %, also the highest in Europe. All this has led to the departure of hundreds of thousands of workers, many of them young, looking for a job and unable to plan a life in our own country.

To all of this we can add the innumerable cases of corruption involving PP leaders from the summit of the party to the regional presidents. Other cases of corruption have involved the PSOE, the major unions and even the Royal Family, which has received blatantly preferential treatment from the justice courts.

We, Spanish immigrants in the Netherlands, are organized in solidarity with the movement in Spain to denounce and combat this enormous social regression and to fight for a real change in the economic and political system, which we think is wrecked.

We are part of the 15-M/indignados movement (started on May 15, 2011) and the Maroon Tide (network of assemblies of Spanish emigrants). We believe that international pressure against the Spanish government, and international solidarity with the protest movements in Spain, can be effective in stopping reforms such as the Abortion Act. Finally, we are concerned that the setbacks that are happening in Spain may be the vanguard of what is to come in the rest of Europe if we do not rise up together to stop it in time (...).



«We decide, Free abortion», Demonstration in Madrid the 1st of February 2014.

What's going on?

22 March 13h
Demonstration against racism and discrimination
@ Museumplein, Amsterdam

24 March, 7h15
Picketline against nuclear energy
@ Beursplein, Amsterdam

29 March, 11h
Film screening and debate: The Land Between
@ Cinerama Filmtheater, Westblaak 18, Rotterdam

29 March, 11h
Film screening and debate: The Land Between
@ IIRE, Lombokstraat 40, Amsterdam

1-6 April
CinemAsia Film Festival
@ De Balie, Amsterdam

3 April, 19h
Iraq War 11 Years On: What's the Real Story?
@ Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Kortenaerkade 12, Den Haag

3 and 4 May
Marxisme festival
Organised by Socialisme.nu, two days of debate on Marxism, contemporary politics and culture.
@ Nieuwe Achtergracht 170, 1018 WV Amsterdam