

***A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE NEW URBAN
MASSES IN AFRICA – A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF
THE “LUMPENPROLETARIAT”***

***En konseptualisering av de nye urbane masser i Afrika – en
kritisk diskusjon omkring “Lumpenproletariatet”***

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I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precaution and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic, and social processes, has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression. According to this hypotheses, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and re-establish a full and positive relation with himself. I think this idea should not be accepted without scrutiny. I am not trying to say that liberation as such, or this or that form of liberation, does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strictest sense. But we know very well, and moreover in this specific case, that this practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define the practices of freedom that will still be needed if this people, this society, and these individuals are to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society. This is why I emphasize practices of freedom over processes of liberation; again, the latter indeed have their place, but they do not seem to me to be capable by themselves of defining all the practical forms of freedom [...]

Q. But doesn't the exercise of practices of freedom require a certain degree of liberation?

M.F. Yes, absolutely. And this is where we must introduce the concept of domination.

Interview with Michel Foucault by H. Becker, R. Fomet-Betancourt, and A. Gomez-Müller, "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom" (Foucault 2003: 26)

The critical purpose of the (democratic) state is to represent symbolically the existence and unity of a political community, which is also a social and moral community. (Joseph 2003: 167)

Introduction

For the first time in history the urban population outnumbers the rural on world basis. The exact date when this transition took place is hard to identify. The new with this form of urbanization seems to be its synonymy with slumification rather than industrialization. Many of the new big cities in the Third World does not follow the patterns of city growth as we know it from the West, the Asian tiger economies or China. As such this form of urbanization represents a break with classical social theory as formulated in line from Karl Marx' and Max Weber's analysis to modernization theory. In many cases south of the Sahara, urbanization is not only decoupled from industrialization and development/economic growth altogether, but also from the supposedly *sine qua non*: rising agricultural productivity. The increasing unemployed slum population appears as superfluous, in spite of the fact that the countries in question, are characterized by little, none or even negative economic growth and low standards of living. According to a CIA report: "By the late 1990s a staggering one billion workers representing one-third of the world's labour force, most of them in the South, were either unemployed or underemployed." (Quoted in Davis 2007: 199). "There is no official scenario for the reincorporation of this vast mass of surplus labour into the mainstream of the world economy." (Davis 2007: 199) These people are simply not *put to work*, even if the numbers of tasks to be done are overwhelming. What processes are in play and how can we understand them?

We have chosen to call this group of the slum-dwelling, unproductive¹ workforce in the urban informal sector a "lumpenproletariat". Their defining feature is that they are outside the productive processes in the sense that they have but a negative relation to the means of production, but at the same time they are lock, stock and barrel within the confines of a money-economy. As a socially and economically – if not numerically – marginal segment, they are rarely a powerfully articulated political group. It seems to us, however, that when they at all appear on the political scene, they tend in political theory to be referred to as a "lumpenproletariat". The word "lumpenproletariat" itself is ascribed to Marx. The term becomes very useful for him when he is to explain the contra-revolution in France 1851, and it seems as such to be intimately related to the rise of a distinctively modern mode of founding political power based on the political mobilization of the masses. That this group *at all* appears in political theory, and *the way* it appears, seems to indicate a new political phenomenon – making this group slightly different perhaps, from the old concept of the "plebs". Insofar as it is the *political* potential of this group that interests us, we will therefore in the following use this denomination to designate it, as we already have this established term available in relation to conceptualizations of their political potential. We do not by the *use* of

¹ By "unproductive" we mean to indicate that they are not producing surplus value, i.e. value apart from what it takes to simply reproduce life – the defining feature of productivity within capitalism.

this term, however, want to implicate any *morally* demeaning characteristics that often seem to be associated with it as a *concept*. Conscious of the fact that this term itself is related to efforts of conceptualizing the political potential of these social groups, we will over the course of this thesis find it necessary to suggest its deconstruction. The term points towards our subject matter, but is not on the level of it.

The reason that we find the lumpenproletariat a central phenomenon for philosophical analysis is on the one side its obvious actuality in light of the velocity of the urbanization processes in the Third world. On the other side this group is far from a new phenomenon, but still a group that on the ordinary course of events largely seems to have either been ignored or defined primarily in negative terms as a residual category in relation to the proletariat or other politically or socially articulated interest groups. Insofar as this group in the West was a product of the so-called *primitive accumulation*, it also gradually disappeared to the extent that Western urbanization was accompanied by accelerating industrialization, emigration, colonization, and social reforms. In that sense the lumpenproletariat was a transitory phenomenon and parts of it was relatively rapidly incorporated in the ever-growing proletariat. The lumpenproletariat functioned on the one side, as Marx put it, as a *reserve army of labour* for a rapidly expanding economy. On the other side the lumpenproletariat, together with superfluous capital constituted an important reason and foundation for colonialism (Hobson, Lenin, Luxemburg, Arendt, Hardt & Negri). In short: they were integrated or exported.

Nevertheless, this social category has been revived in periods of economic crisis, such as in the interwar years. In relation to this group's political potential, it is in such settings it seems to come forth – even to the *forefront* – in national politics. There exists a reservoir of theory that articulates a tendency of the lumpenproletariat to affiliate with *imperative* authoritarian rather than *subversive* revolutionary forces when invoked – in such extraordinary times – to enter the political scene as a powerful actor. Insofar as there seems to have been a demonstrable causal relation between the lumpenproletariat and fascism, the lumpenproletariat's *inherent* incompatibility with democracy or socialist revolution is used as an explanatory factor in much political theory on fascism. As such, there seems to be no other option than neutralizing them: either by making them into class-conscious proletarians or by keeping them preoccupied with fulfilling their function as a reserve army of labour, thus preventing them from becoming “floating masses.”

The strikingly bleak record of democracy in Africa might from this perspective, at first presentist sight be quickly read off as attributed to the size of this segment, the lack of political clout among the peasants and the weaknesses of the proletariat and the middle classes. Until the negative economic trends turn – lifting people out of desperate poverty – the continent is *a priori* doomed to kneel under the weight of conspicuously bad leadership. Roughly speaking, the

champions of neo-liberalism bend towards a *laissez-faire* attitude, relying on economic globalization to cure these evils, while left-wingers usually put their faith in affirmative action: aid and fair trade. Both of these approaches seem to us to suffer from a fundamental flaw, however. For are we not in fact talking about a vicious circle where bad leadership undermines economic growth, and the lack of substantial economic growth upholds bad leadership? Perhaps the suspicions of the actual existence of such a circle accounts for the “Africa-pessimism” so prominent in the public image today, which moreover seems intimately related to the intellectual fatigue that has replaced the vigorousness so characteristic of the period around the anti-colonial struggle.

However, should not this impasse provoke us to reflect on its underlying premises, insofar as “impasse” is hardly an appropriate characterization of “the world”, but rather a sign of “reality’s” refractoriness in relation to our intellectual efforts of conceiving it? Do we not have to raise some critical questions when considering that the category of the lumpenproletariat can no longer be perceived as an “anomaly”, but rather – unless radical change come about, which there seems little reason to hope for – must be accepted and reintegrated as a normality of our (however much morally unacceptable) present condition? Do we not, then, have to ask what this group *is* signifying? Within the context of the contemporary processes of urbanization described above, it seems hard to reduce this lumpenproletariat to the exclusive definition of a *reserve army of labour power*, which they of course also do constitute in the sense that they are available and as such undermine every attempt at worker-organization. Nevertheless, the sheer size of this group is so overwhelming, there seems to be a need for forming some positive concepts too, concerning the lumpenproletariat in its singularity: the *remains* or the significative excess exceeding its role as a residue to the proletariat.

This conceptual crisis seems to compel philosophical analysis, the thinking through of certain theoretical and political assumptions and concepts. Firstly, these urbanization-processes represent a break with theories on urbanization based on previous historical trajectories. Secondly, the character of these processes establishes a massive group of people kept perpetually in reserve. Thirdly, the implicit determinism of the abovementioned rightwing/leftwing lines of reasoning essentially function as *apologetics*, i.e. systematic argumentative discourses in defence of deserting a great many people to a harsh destiny. This raises questions of epistemological, political and ethical dimensions. In our opinion, this kind of analysis seems vital in the sense that we do not believe “radical change”, as if some kind of *deus ex machina* is likely to eliminate desperate poverty in the near future, unless perhaps it is based upon the effort of this group itself, the very group that the “radical change” seeks to eliminate.

Presentation of problems and hypotheses

This thesis will focus on the growth of a slum-dwelling, unproductive workforce in the urban informal sector – a “lumpenproletariat” – south of Sahara. In this region the absence of economic growth has been particularly striking, the level of conflict conspicuous and the incorporation in the global economy to a large degree related to its shady sides. According to UN projections, informal employment will somehow have to absorb 90 per cent of urban Africa’s new workers over the next decade. (Davis 2007: 177) Moreover, UN projections estimate that by 2015, Black Africa will have 332 million slum-dwellers, a number projected to double every fifteen years. (Davis 2007: 19) This seems to us to clearly indicate that the informal sector in question is not very profitable. By delimiting the subject in this manner we do not want to repudiate the relevance of comparative analysis in relation to urbanization elsewhere in the Third world – on the contrary it seems to be many points of resemblance, not least because of the global organization of capital and the streamlining influences of international financial institutions. Our assertion is nevertheless that there seems to be good reasons for establishing Africa as the unit of analysis in this thesis due to the immensity of the problem and because it opens up possibilities for an investigation into relations specific to the distinctive African colonial state and its postcolonial reorganization. We believe that the legacy of the colonial state contributes vitally to the kind of urbanization-processes we are witnessing within these countries, which again seems interrelated to the major impediments this legacy imposes on meaningful democratization. On this background we will formulate our approach to the main topic in this thesis as the following:

A conceptualization of the explosive growth of a "lumpenproletariat" in Africa in light of colonial and post-colonial modernity – a critical exploration into political limitations and possibilities in terms of democratization.

Our hypotheses are:

- The African colonial state left a specific legacy that post-colonial state-reforms revolve around.
- This legacy poses impediments on meaningful democratization.
- The growth of a lumpenproletariat within these structures poses both a possible limitation for democratization, but perhaps also a possibility for overcoming the very structures that are impeding democratization.
- The role that the lumpenproletariat will play – upholding or altering these structures – fundamentally rely on what political options they are given. This is essentially a political question, rather than an economically predetermined answer.

- They will have to play a role, whether *subversive* or *imperative*. A fair guess is that unless they are given or themselves take a political role, it will be the surest guarantee for sinking states down in urban anarchy. Due to their growing numbers, “business as usual” – that is, leaving them “outside” politics to fall back on themselves – will become increasingly difficult insofar as radical change is not likely to come from other ends. Thus the up-keeping of status quo will demand a proportional rise in repression, possibly making life just as unbearable for rich and for poor alike.

An “ontology of the present”

As a point of departure for the exposition of our methodological and epistemological approach, we will begin with a statement by Michel Foucault: critical philosophy is “the ontology of present” and must be genealogical. In his article “What is Enlightenment?” (2003), Foucault argues that the fundamental question of the present – *what are we, now?* – is *the* central philosophical question of modernity. The discrete entrance of this question into the history of thought, Foucault ascribes to a minor newspaper article published in 1784 by Immanuel Kant, “Was ist Aufklärung”. In this article Kant, according to Foucault, poses the question of the present day as a specific relation between *what is* and *history*: “What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?” (Foucault 2003: 45). In this short article, based on the minor text by Kant, Foucault is essentially presenting a whole epistemological program, which is also a profoundly ethical and political program. Although Foucault is not centre of our attention in this thesis, this French epistemological tradition will guide our undertaking methodologically.

Whereas Kant’s critiques, which also treated the question of enlightenment, was an investigation into the limits of knowledge, Foucault argues that the critical question of today must be turned back into a positive one, understood as a practical critique, testing that which is to us *given* as universal and necessary. As such, it is not a search for transcendental, universal structures, but on the contrary a historical investigation that might reveal to us what place in the given is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, the product of arbitrary constraints, and as such possible to move beyond. This critique will be both archaeological and genealogical. Expounding the contingency of the given that has made us what we are, is at the same time an exposure of the possibility of no longer being, doing, thinking what we are, do and think in the same way as before. Rather than deducing from what we are, what it is impossible for us to know and do, the critical ontology of ourselves is “[...] a historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings.” (Foucault 2003: 54) The *historico-critical attitude* thus opens for examinations of what opportunities and limitations are at

our present doorstep, both in the sense of grasping the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take.

Within such a framework there is little room left for teleological models whether implicitly or explicitly defined, neither for ideal-types to operate as straight jackets instead of analytic tools. Rather the *exception*, the *deviation*, becomes central for this kind of philosophical analysis because it is precisely the anomalies – which yields and escapes accustomed models of explanation – that open for something *new*. Rather than being on the level of illusions, deviations become the primary, insofar as truth and reality are not perceived as ahistorical and universal categories. It is that which cannot be grasped and exhausted by our accustomed orbits of thinking that makes possible new ways of articulating truth, formulating new perspectives and new forms of knowledge we did not yet know of.

This methodological ethos will be guiding our work quite practically, but also in order to challenge the prominent Eurocentric hegemony within Western philosophy, which will be running as an undercurrent throughout this thesis. In our grappling with the problem of Eurocentrism – which essentially might be formulated as the problem of universalism versus particularism – it has been a matter of saying: to criticize in an immanent way the inherent chauvinistic tendencies of the kind of universalizing particularism so deep-rooted in the Western philosophical tradition, is one not posing an excessively complicated question? Could not the problem of universalism be more easily resolved by simply by shifting position slightly out of this area geographically and posing the same questions from this perspective, probing what works and what not?

In accordance with this ethos we believe there is a need for historicizing and contextualizing the African state, its social relations and ways of incorporation in “globality”, as a legitimate part of modernity and postmodernity. We also think there is a need to historicize and contextualize the growth of a lumpenproletariat. It seems of relevance to place this growing group of the lumpenproletariat in positive concepts and establish this form of social existence as a unit for analysis and discussion, rather than resorting to residual descriptions that can nothing but undermine the possibility of grasping the “meaning” these groups have within their societies. In the process of doing this, we might open for other ways to think about the political. Even in a globalized era, universal proclamations can respond poorly to regional challenges and problems, and possibly contributing to other forms of domination. We will now sum up some general methodological guidelines that will be underlying our approach:

- We will be grounding historical agency in a “problematology”, where what is perceived as problems or challenges (historical constraints) to be overcome, proves to be guidelines for action.
- We will reject a thesis of repression, i.e. we will not primarily focus on power as negation, but rather on its production of subjects and bodies. In short: one cannot *rule* what is excluded only.
- We will stress the relation between techniques, the microphysics of power and knowledge systems in the exercise of power.
- We will focus on *how* power is exercised, the *low* materiality of power concrete and in detail, its techniques, tactics and forms of knowledge.
- We will employ a genealogical and archaeological approach to the African state, which can be constructed as an ideal type due to specific regularities.
- Our approach will separate itself from both the juridical oriented analysis of the sovereign power, and the Marxist conception of power based on the relation between basis/superstructure.

Theory-Logical Structure, Scope & Organization of chapters

This thesis will be divided into three main-parts, where the first is a socio-historical approach, establishing Africa as the unit and general framework for our philosophical analysis. In the second part we will attempt to conceptualize the lumpenproletariat theoretically, first at the level of social formation, then at the level of globalization. In the third part, we will mediate between the theoretical and empirical level in order to establish a firmer grasp on what happens when authoritarian forces within African social formations mobilize this group politically. Finally we will suggest the necessity of a deconstruction of the *concept* of the “lumpenproletariat”, which we have been tracing genealogically, in order to open for other conceptualizations of this group’s political potential towards self-mobilization.

Contents Part I

Our point of departure will be that there seems to us to be a vital need for “articulation of practices” in the African context, in the attempt to critically reflect on “the ontology of the present” – its possibilities and limitations. “Practices” do not articulate themselves, and it is here the need for empirically grounded philosophy arises. We will start by establishing some positive concept of the African state and present a theory of this state based on a genealogical approach. We thus aim not towards some kind of historical recapitulation, but towards establishing a framework for conceiving and understanding our subject-matter as a process. What was the African colonial state

– which *problematics* of power/knowledge were its structures a response to? It seems to us that in much political theory, the African state is primarily defined as of that which it is not, revealed through the common use of such adjectives as “failed”, “collapsing” or by defining it as “too strong”, “too weak” etc., indirectly thus implying a norm of statehood – referring implicit or explicit to some “ideal” notion of what a state is or should be, which essentially is derived from a understanding of the European state. However, if all or almost all African states appears as deviations, is it not a clear indication that it is about time to investigate deeper into the legacy of the colonial state – the common heritage of these “Weberian anomalies”?

It is here we find Mahmood Mamdani’s theory of the African state very useful. In his book *Citizens and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (2004 [1996]), he launches a comprehensive theory about the colonial state and its legacy. He provides us with an analytic abstraction of the African state, based on identification of specific regularities in diverse social formations. His central argument, that the postcolonial states have been reformed and reorganized around the axis of its own despotic heritage, provides us not only with a theory of the state, but also with a conceptualization of African modernity and post-modernity. It is within this general framework that we will understand the urbanization-processes of our interest. In the two first chapters, we will therefore establish Africa as the unit for analysis based on Mamdani’s theory of *the bifurcated state*. In chapter 1, we will discuss the formation of the colonial state and the political engineering involved in its establishment. In chapter 2, we will discuss the postcolonial state and how and why the colonial legacy seems to pose grave impediments on democratization.

We will thus with Mamdani establish a theory of the African state, in order to provide a general background to discuss the de facto rise of a recent ”phenomena” within this state, i.e. the lumpenproletariat. We think it is of vital importance to firmly establish the phenomena to be investigated in the concrete socio-historical context in which it appears. The category of the African lumpenproletariat will be situated within this political framework, both genealogically, i.e. in relation to the historical processes that produced it, and archaeologically, i.e. in relation to its contemporary structures. Thus after establishing this general framework, we will therefore proceed in chapter 3 to a discussion of the explosive growth of the slum-dwelling unproductive workforce in the informal sector. Whereas the urban areas would essentially be the spheres of the colonizers during colonialism – strongly guarded by economic and political restrictions equivalent to city-walls – the postcolonial cities have experienced massive immigration from the countryside. We will base ourselves on Mike Davis’ book *Planet of Slums* (2007 [2006]) to get a grip on the urbanization-processes themselves and we will be drawing some implications of the growth of this segment in to relation the general framework established with Mamdani. How does this new

segment stand in relation to these structures of the state? And what political potential might their strategic placing in relation to these structures indicate? It seems to us that this group *might*, precisely by virtue of its strategic position, promise some possibilities in terms of the political, which could potentially transcend certain impediments that the colonial legacy poses on meaningful democratization. If so, however, the question that immediately arises is: can this group at all pose the question of political reform? Quite on the contrary it is our impression that this group, when politicized at all, rather tend to have been mobilized to uphold or establish reactionary regimes.

Contents Part II

This problem leads us to part II of the thesis. Socio-historical, genealogical analysis will help us to get a better grip on “the present” and situate the lumpenproletariat within it, but we will have to go further in order to explore the singularities of this group. We will therefore proceed to conceptualize the distinctiveness of this lumpenproletariat as a *political* category. As we have already argued, there exists a reservoir of theory in European left-wing thinking on the reactionary political potential of the “lumpenproletariat”, based on the assumption that this group cannot act and organize in its own right, but that they can be mobilized, i.e. they *can not* as a social group pose the question of political reform. We will thus give an account of the lumpenproletariat as articulated in the Western tradition, in order to see if we can develop some concepts and models for analyzing what exactly happens when the lumpenproletariat is politically mobilized. As we believe that no region is an island, neither that it is totally particularistic nor that its historical experiences can be totally exhausted by universalistic theories – concepts and theories, descriptive and explanatory approaches established within one sphere, might prove productive if properly extended, transformed, adjusted and adapted to new conditions and phenomena. In the process of doing this, moreover, both what is specific and what is generalizable potentially becomes more graspable, given that an understanding of what is to be compared is equally well founded and therefore do not degenerate into some kind of “history by analogy”. As Mamdani puts it: one can leave area-studies without leaving the area.² We will thus give an exposition of some theoretical articulations of the lumpenproletariat originating in the Western tradition, in order to investigate if we through this effort can derive some analytic tools and concepts from these overall theories, that transcend the particular European context within which they were conceived. We will thus explore certain theories about the lumpenproletariat derived from analysis of Western social

² W. E. B. Du Bois Lecture Series, lecture 1: *Beyond Settlers and Natives*, held 2008
<http://dubois.fas.harvard.edu/webcasts?page=4> (retrieved 16.04.2010)

formations, in order to see if we can challenge and/or establish some concepts about this group in general.

In chapter 4 we will discuss the reactionary role of the lumpenproletariat as a social political base for fascism, based on Karl Marx' *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1979 [1852]) and Georges Bataille's article "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" (1994 [1933]). We will proceed to discuss the growth of a lumpenproletariat in relation to the origins of colonialism, based on Hannah Arendt's analysis of imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (2004 [1948]). It will be our central argument that fascism and imperialism essentially two answers to the same problem, that of capitalism in crisis. Whereas the social crisis of capitalism imploded in France and Germany, leading to dictatorship internally, it exploded in Britain, leading to the establishment of despotism externally in an attempt to export internal contradictions. The intimacy between fascism and imperialism branded the particular mode of despotic rule in the colonies, which we will discuss in relation to the framework of the state that we established in chapter 1 & 2. The interrelatedness of the fascist, imperialist and colonial state seems to give some promise of fruitful dialogue between these systems for organizing power. Insofar as we have argued that the post-colonial state has not transcended its despotic legacy, such a discussion might provide a viewpoint from where to shed light on the reactionary political potentials of the lumpenproletariat today.

However, as these analyses relate themselves to the social articulation of capitalism within the state, and if we are going to try to make use of them in the analysis of the social articulation of capitalism in the African state – how then, can we then grasp the dimension that these states were the produce of these regions incorporation into the imperialist system of capitalism? The very origins of these states are global, not nation-state, capitalism. Moreover, a problem that arises with our preoccupation with these theories – insofar as we have been discussing both African and Western experiences on the basis of social formations – seems to be that they do not very well capture the increasingly accelerating processes of present globalization. Because how can studies and comparisons of social formations on a horizontal level only, attach to or explain the "higher" level of globalization? Does not accelerating globalization raise some critical questions to the relevance of the political framework of the state? It seems of relevance to contextualize the phenomena of urbanization and lumpen-proletarianization in relation to wider processes of global economic organization and domination. Perhaps should we even starting with the global and from there on proceed to phenomena and developments within the social formations. Before jumping ahead to an analysis of the African lumpenproletariat in its singularity, it seems necessary to consider the dimension of globalization and attempt to conceptualize this group within that framework. This is what will lead us to chapter 5 where we will be discussing Michael Hardt's &

Antonio Negri's book *Empire* (2000).

In a context of global capitalism, structures of domination are no longer confined to the state, and must be thought of global in scope, Hardt & Negri argue. With the introduction of the concept "multitude" they seem determined to deconstruct the dichotomy proletariat-lumpenproletariat all together. Everywhere today people are exploited by capital and Hardt & Negri hammer out a new value-theory to make us realize that. It is the *global* multitude's solidarity and desire for liberty that will show the way ahead towards some kind of basic, global communism. Muddling through the inconsistencies of their overall argumentation in order to look for constructive approaches to our subject matter, we identify two major problems with their book. Firstly their argument is inherently Eurocentric and thus inadequate due to their ambition of speaking about *the world* as such. Secondly, this global level of analysis reduces and dilutes the actual explanatory force of their theory.

In our exploration of this approach, it seems to us that "globalization" can easily come to work as a substitute for a metaphysic with strong Eurocentric overtones. It appears to be the "periphery" that suffers the most from a universalizing theory radiating from the "centre". This approach thus proves little helpful in terms of investigating the political potential of the African lumpenproletariat, but has been most helpful in revealing the logics of Euro-centrism. By probing this theory-level from the perspective of Africa, its Eurocentric metaphysics comes to light in a manner that it would not if probed from the perspective of Europe.

Contents Part III

We will thus return to the level of the social formation, and attempt another approach to the mediation between the particular and the universal. In chapter 6 we will appreciate Nicos Poulantzas' analytic distinction between *social formations* and *capitalist mode of production*. Based on his book *Political Power and Social Classes* (1982 [1978]), we find a methodological approach to mediate between the global level of capitalism and its different articulations within specific societies. By introducing the distinction between social formation and capitalist mode of production, we seem to come close to a methodological approach that can cater for both what is particular and what *might* be general and thus incorporate both the local and the global level of analysis. Insofar as the mode of production constitutes an abstract formal object, which does not exist in the strong sense in reality, we only have access to defining and redefining this level – genealogically and archaeologically – through that which in fact exists in reality: i.e. a historically determined social whole at a given historical moment: a social formation. From this platform we will pursue our investigation of the political potential of the lumpenproletariat in relation to neo-

imperialism, fascism and democratization. Thus, without missing the globalizing aspects of sight, we can proceed with our investigation into the political potential of the African lumpenproletariat.

As it seems to us that this segment, when mobilized, tends to bring support-basis for authoritarian-fascistoid regimes, we will need to go deeper into understanding these processes of usurpation in the African setting. As we have established in chapter 4 there seems to be an intimate link between fascism/imperialism. We have there developed, on the basis of Marx, Bataille and Arendt, some concepts and tools to understand these dynamics. It is now time to pose the question from the opposite pole of the imperialist axis, namely from the perspective of the neo-colony. It seems to us that that this requires a certain modification of our conception of fascism as established with our European thinkers, but that their theories nevertheless can be harnessed towards that end. In that effort we can get a better grip on those aspects of fascism that are general and those that are variable and essentially related to the mode of incorporation in the capitalist system and the social formation. Mediating between the theoretical and empirical level we will attempt to create two ideal-typical models for the unfolding dynamics of African fascism and popular mobilization based on the case of Idi Amin in Uganda and that of Rwanda in the period 1993-1994. By doing this we can get a better grip on how the reactionary potential of the lumpenproletariat is played out within these social formations.

We will in chapter 6 see that African social formations tend to be particularly susceptible to fascism due to the articulation of capitalism in these countries. The neo-imperialistic incorporation of these states into capitalism, tendentially throws the neo-colonial state into deep political crisis at every major economic downturn. In combination with the massive lumpenproletarianization, the prospect can as such seem bleak for meaningful democratization and fulfilment of the high hopes related to independence. We will see that the framework of Marx and Bataille, properly transformed, can be employed as a useful tool for analysing actual fascist mobilization in Africa. To deduce from this, however, that the lumpenproletariat is inherently incapable of posing the question of political reform, would that not be to do exactly what Foucault warns us against: namely that of deducing from what we are, or what has happened, to what we cannot be and do?

Through genealogical analysis we have *already* seen *how* the lumpenproletariat actually occupies a very specific position within the post-colonial state. Recalling our initial hypotheses, it seems to be relevant to argue that the postcolonial state revolves around a certain despotic legacy and that the growth of a lumpenproletariat challenges this legacy insofar they escape the established channels of control characterizing this power-structure – fascism being one *imperative* mode to “recapture” them. Based on chapter 6, we moreover see that this particular group also holds a strategic position in terms of the reproduction of the fascism-imperialism axis. Thus they

hold a key position in terms of not only internal, but also external relations of domination. In fact, could we not say that their *particular* interests might become *common* interest? Might they not, because of the dual strategic position they hold and their growing numbers, be taken as the model citizen for meaningful democratization? Insofar as we have seen that it is at least *possible* to conceptualize this group as a potentially *subversive* political force, might that not open possibilities for other constellations than the above investigated? However, an important question remains: can they act and organize, i.e. *pose* the question of political reform and thus *utilize* this position? We seem somehow to be back to where we started (in the end of chapter 3...) in terms of the question of democracy. These are the reflections that are taking us to our next and last chapter 7.

Over the course of working genealogically with the term lumpenproletariat it seems to us that a positive description of this group, in consideration to our “ontology of the presents”, perhaps requires a deconstruction of this concept if we are to pose the question of democratic reform and not exclusively pose the question of fascism. Even though these questions are of course interrelated, in the strong sense that these phenomena are mutually exclusives, they are not completely identical. Posing the question of fascism might make us forget posing the question of democracy – moreover, even *posing* the question of democracy in relation to the lumpenproletariat is not possible from within the perspectives derived from Marx, Bataille and Arendt. In order to investigate the possibilities of today, we will have to conceptualize these urban masses differently.

We will be engaging Frantz Fanon and Peter Worsley in discussing these issues because they help to raise the question of a *liberatory* potential: Fanon is providing the opening, Worsley is widening it. This discussion will lead us to suggest a return to Foucault’s “question of enlightenment” as a possibility to become aware of present possibilities and freedoms that might be accessible, and a way that rationality can question itself in relation to its limits and the powers it has employed – the Janus-face of reason as both despotism and enlightenment. For us that seems to be a question of appropriating the possibilities of a specific state-structure from within the lived confines and concrete possibilities of that state-structure itself, in face of a changing social formation due to the rapid processes of urbanization.

Based on our initial hypothesis and the twists and turns this journey that grappling with these question essentially has been for us, it seems to us that what we basically have done is levelling the ground for the possibility of posing some hypotheses that might lead the way to new inquiries. We suggest the possibility that on the level of discourse, might it not be so that the theoretical conceptualizations of the lumpenproletariat as per se reactionary, might to a large extent become self-fulfilling? Ignored or rejected by the left, are they courted and won over by right-wing demagoguery? If this is so: is it not time to seriously consider other ways of engaging

these victims of modernity politically progressively? It seems to us, moreover, that on the level of practical realities, any democratically minded movement is doomed to fail unless paying the highest attention to this group – either because their support will be given to any power-seeking demagogue or because leaving them as they are, and their numbers are growing, inevitably points in the direction of a social-anarchic threat which not even the legacy of colonial despotism might contain.

We will end the thesis with some concluding remarks.

PART I: A Theory of the African State & the Rise of a Lumpenproletariat

Chapter 1: Colonial Modernity – A Theory of the African State

1.1 Introductory remarks

My emphasis has been more on the mode of incorporation than that of marginalization. It is an emphasis less on the regime of rights from which the colonized were excluded on grounds of race than on the regime of customs into which they were incorporated and through which they were ruled. (Mamdani 2004: 295)

In the book *Citizen and Subject – Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Mahmood Mamdani is analysing structural features of the colonial state that seems to have survived the decolonization process. He perceives the continuity of central traits of these state structures as one of the major challenges in terms of a thoroughgoing democratization on the continent. Half a century has now passed since the majority of the African states achieved their independence. The outcome of this “practice of liberation”, however, stands in sharp contrast to the optimism related to the revolutionary project that the anti-colonial revolt seemed to open possibilities for. What happened? Characteristic of the Afro-disillusionment so dominant of today, Mamdani writes, is its tendency to reconstruct the past as if the only thing that happened was laying the foundations of the present crisis, and we believe his observation to be quite apt. It seems to us that much of the blame for impeding “the practices of liberation” becoming transformed into “practices of freedom” is commonly attributed to the African state simply being too little “Weberian”. Deviating from the “Weberian” norm, the African states tends to be described as anomalies, manifested in the range of adjectives political scientists are using to capture *what exactly* is its most prominent pathological symptom. There seems today to be a pressing need for forming positive concepts as of what this state *is*, rather than forming concepts of what it is *not*, thus presenting the African state as the eternally enigmatic residue.

It is in this context that Mahmood Mamdani’s analysis seems particularly useful for its attempt to get a better grip on structural problems connected to the disappointing “lack” of

meaningful liberation of the continents masses. What possibilities and limitations were inherent in the decolonization process? To what degree is the contemporary power structures shaped by the colonial era, rather than sprung out of the anti-colonial struggle? A major point for Mamdani is that the *colonial state structure* seems particularly difficult to transcend as a peculiar relation between state and inhabitants characterizes this state. Through a genealogical approach Mamdani develop a comprehensive theory of the state. He is thus leaving a repression-oriented approach in a search for the productive aspects of this form of state power – both as it was shaped under the colonial era – and as it has been partly reproduced through postcolonial reorganization. Through this move he shifts the focus from colonial power as pure repression to the more Foucaultian approach of *how* this power *exercised* itself: its *low* materiality, concrete and in detail, its techniques and tactics – its microphysics. Through this approach Mamdani gives an original contribution to the study of colonialism and an analytical framework for analysing opportunities and limitations of the anti-colonial revolt. The outcomes of the decolonization project, he argues, was to be intimately related to what conception the nationalist movements had of the power that was facing them.

A main goal for Mamdani is to analyse the non-racist part of the colonial legacy in order to investigate two interrelated phenomena: how power is organized and how it tends to fragment resistance in contemporary Africa. His assertion is that in spite of many and heterogeneous reforms, revolutions, *coups d'état* and attempts at democratization, the institutional legacy of colonialism remain partly intact. A more thorough investigation into the historicity of the colonial state is therefore necessary not only to understand the contemporary state of affaires, but also as a foundation for change and revolt against the obvious relations of exploitation and exclusion that characterize the relation between elites and population on this continent.

1.2 Establishing the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis

In the introduction to his book *Citizen and Subject – Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Mamdani starts by distancing his approach from two major Africanist trends: the structuralist- and the poststructuralist-inspired. These approaches he criticizes because of their tendencies to substitute theory formation with writing “history by analogy”. Through their construction of binary opposites modernization theory and orthodox Marxism tends towards unilinear evolutionism. Even dependency theory, he argues, cannot escape the scope of ahistorical structuralism in spite of perceiving underdevelopment as a historical produce. As a set of binary oppositions: “modern”/“premodern”, “capitalist”/“precapitalist”, “developed”/“underdeveloped”, the lead terms have both analytic and universal status. As residual, the second term is given little conceptual existence and meaning on its own, and as such lack

[...] both an original history and an authentic future. [...] The bipolarity thus turned on a double distinction: between experiences considered universal and normal and those seen as residual and pathological. The residual or deviant was understood not in the terms of what it was, but with a reference to what it was not. 'Premodern' thus became 'not yet modern' and 'precapitalism' 'not yet capitalism'. [...] A unilinear social science, however, involves a double maneuver. If it tends to caricature the experience summed up as the residual term, it also mythologizes the experience that is the lead term. If the former is rendered ahistorical, the latter is ascribed a suprahistorical trajectory of development, a necessary path whose main line of development is unaffected by struggles that happened along the way. There is a sense in which both are robbed of history. (Mamdani 2004: 9-10)

In the effort to restore historical agency, however, many poststructuralist critiques have tended to diminish the importance of historical constraints. As Talal Asad laconic remarks: "Even the inmates of a concentration camp are able, in a sense, to live by their own cultural logic [...]. But one may be forgiven for doubting that they are therefore 'making their own history.'" (Quoted in Mamdani 2004: 10.) Mamdani summarizes this shift in perspective as a shift from the exotic to the banal, from abstract universalism to intimate particularism. These approaches essentially represent two sides of the same coin: they both fail to establish the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis. The consequence of this failure is the tendencies towards reducing scientific theory formation to the search for the right analogy, obscuring more than clarifying and thereby inhibiting a deeper understanding of both historical and contemporary processes. Mamdani attempts to transcend this opposition by grounding historical agency within historical constraints.

In clarifying the methodological significance of the argument he advances, Mamdani claims that:

[...] issues of democracy and governance cannot be directly deduced from the analysis of the mode of production; nor can they be read off as prescriptions from a general theory of democracy. In grappling with the question of democracy and governance, I have both shifted perspective from the mode of livelihood to the mode of rule and argued that there is a historical specificity to the mode of rule on the African continent. This shift underlines a critique – more in the nature of sublating than a simple negation – of two kinds of contemporary discourses, that of political economy and that of civil society. (Mamdani 2004: 294)

Rather than simply reject these approaches, Mamdani is building on their insights, but questioning their holistic claims. As we already have suggested, without explicit references made in his book, it seems to us to be a strong affinity between Mamdani's approach to establishing Africa as a unit of analysis and the methodology associated with the French epistemological tradition, and in particular Foucault.³ It seems to us that Mamdani is grounding historical agency in a "problematology", where what is *perceived* as problems or challenges – historical constraints – to be overcome, proves to be guiding for action. He is explicitly rejecting a thesis of repression, insofar as his focus is not primarily on power as negation, but rather on its productivity of subjects and bodies. In short: one cannot rule what is excluded only. In his procedure he seems to be

³ By the French epistemological tradition we here refer to line from Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem to Michel Foucault.

searching for what we could call the microphysics of power, and relations to techniques and knowledge systems in the exercise of power. He employs what seems to us to be a genealogical approach to the African state, creating an ideal-type or a general theory of the state based on the identification of certain regularities. We therefore find it useful to employ certain terms derived from Foucault in the following exposition of Mamdani's state-theory. We will now proceed to give an account of his theory of the state in a manner stressing the genealogical aspect and thus its contingency. The framework established in the following two chapters, will in turn function as the foundation upon which the proceeding discussions in this thesis will be based.

1.3 The Bifurcated state

Key to understand the state in contemporary Africa is the historical fact that it was forged in the course of colonial occupation. (Mamdani 2004: 62)

African countries were among the latest colonized. The Berlin conference 1884-85 unleashed the frantic scramble among European great powers to secure effective control over the landmasses they had divided among themselves on paper. On the background of former trial and error, especially from British dealings in India, the colonial powers came with a wealth of experience to their latest colonial undertaking, where the form of colonial rule was to unfold in its mature form. What Mamdani calls *institutional segregation*, or *decentralized despotism*, combined with new forms of population-control technologies, come to characterize this system of rule.

Dubbed "apartheid" in South Africa, "indirect rule" in the British Empire and "association" in the French colonies, a specific form of structure of rule evolved. This creation was, according to Mamdani the product of the one overriding colonial dilemma, namely the so-called *native question*: How could a minor and foreign minority rule a population with long and diverse historical traditions for self-government? With the abolition of slavery new regimes of force were needed to make a subjugated colonized population productive – the abolition of slavery thus underlined both the practical need for a new regime of compulsion and at the same time cleared the ground for it. "[T]he end of slavery was followed by the "rosy dawn" of compulsions." (Mamdani 2004: 117)

Two seemingly contradictory answers gradually gave themselves to this problem and Mamdani's central point is that the *new* innovative strategy was to make use of both. Characteristic for the African colonial state was therefore its *bifurcated* nature – merging essentially two forms of rule into one. One branch of it consisted of a legally speaking singular and egalitarian, but *racialized* and *exclusionary* civil society with rights and divisions of power ala the Occident. Its discourse was centred on freedoms, rights and formal equality, and its legitimacy based in the protection of rights. This part provided the social, political and economic framework

for a civil society consisting of the colons and a few assimilated Africans, i.e. Africans who had achieved *citizenship*.

The other branch represented the arena where the *excluded* majority was *reincorporated* in the functioning of the state through the delegation of powers to cooperative “traditional” (rather than western educated) local elites. This part of the structure of rule rested on a plurality of tribalized local authorities of a despotic character and its discourse was centred on community, tradition and customary law.

Urban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition. The former was organized on the principle of differentiation to check the concentration of power, the latter around the principle of fusion to ensure a unitary authority. (Mamdani 2004: 18)

Thus two forms of powers evolved within one singular hegemonic authority. Race-based dualism was to become anchored and stabilized in politically enforced ethnic pluralism. It was essentially a regime of differentiation dividing first racially between *native–nonnative*, i.e. territorial segregation, then institutionally, i.e. ethnically between *tribes*. Race and tribe constituted complementary modes of control and as such, customary law was not one singular law for all natives, but rather as many sets of laws as there were thought to be tribes.

Accordingly we see that on the one side a *direct rule* over the population was operative in a singular and egalitarian legal space based on inclusion/exclusion. “Equal rights for all civilized men” Cecil Rhodes summed up this approach (Mamdani 2004: 17).⁴ For the vast majority therefore, who were considered not assimilated enough to achieve citizenship, *direct rule* appeared as unmediated, *centralized despotism*. No native laws were recognized, and though having to conform to universal law, there was little access to universal rights. Direct rule in isolation thereby accentuated the conflict between a privileged minority and a subjugated majority – the coloniser and the colonized. To uphold a situation such as this would inevitably rely on a large degree of violence and resources, not to speak of the obvious limitations in stabilizing such a form of rule, which was becoming increasingly evident in India (Mamdani 2004: 49-50).⁵ The need for a new form of economized administrative law and order, Mamdani argues, contributed to the fact that

⁴ In its early formulation this ideology legitimized segregation more out of culture than race. Thus Lord Milner argued that segregation was wanted not only out of social comfort, but also from a health- and sanitation perspective (Mamdani 2004: 16). Lord Lugard, reckoned as the father of *indirect rule*, argued likewise that the aim of segregation was segregation of social standard, not race (Mamdani 2004: 16).

⁵ The event that truly shocked the British in India and inspired to radically new thinking in the colonial administration was the Sepoy Mutiny 1857 – also known as India’s First War of Independence. For more on this topic hear Mamdani’s Du Bois Lecture I. *Nativism: The Theory* (2008), <http://dubois-online.org/video/mahmood-mamdani-w-e-b-du-bois-lecture-series-mahmood-mamdani-1> (retrieved 21.03.2010)

the “civilizing” ambition of colonial politics by the turn of the 19th century was replaced by a much stronger, one-sided focus on control and domination.

Mamdani claims that a clear sign of this change in course was the production of an artificial lack of administrative personnel. In the 1860s it had seemed like the European powers were getting ready to abandon their coastal possessions in Africa. In this context, the educated strata had perceived a partnership with western powers as a progressive alliance, aspiring modernization, regeneration and independence. With the unleashing of the scramble, however, these coastal settlements were turned into beachheads for inland expansion. The westernized elites were thus abruptly shut out of the “civilizing” project they first had been welcomed to join and African opportunities to achieve citizenship were severed. Indirect rule was therefore not just a pragmatic response to the challenges of lack of personnel and difficulty in communication, for this approach ignores the African personnel already available. Given the majority’s cultural resistance against the policy of assimilation, and given that the Western-educated strata was often hostile or ambivalent to both tradition and white supremacy, the search for more culturally speaking legitimate, and politically speaking less progressive partners, had started.

The solution to the stabilization of a race-based domination in the form of exclusion therefore seemed for the architects of colonialism therefore to lie in a parallel opposite movement: a totally encompassing project of inclusion, so that side by side with territorial segregation a regime of institutional segregation took shape. Indirect rule, or decentralized despotism thus became the mode of dominating the “free” peasantry. In that manner we could say that the capacity to dominate increased proportional to the delegation of power. It implied that the populations became subdued to a formerly unknown and unlimited local despotism characterized by a total fusion of powers, only made possible by the constant threat of the central powers military intervention. As such, the tribes were autonomous, but not independent. With legislative, executive, judicial and administrative powers incarnated in the chief and his entourage, an extreme regime of extra-economic compulsions was made possible; forced labour, production, crops, sales, services and removals. In light of such concentration of power, of such an unlimited power to define “tradition”, no legal limitations, either of traditional or modern character could possibly exist. Customs became the language of force as the local authority stood at the intersection between market and non-market relations: “Rather than being its anti-thesis, force came to be complementary to the market.” (Mamdani 2004:52).

This was a logical consequence of the colonial economy where the productive capacity of the population was to be harnessed toward non-national aims. As one of the keys to this power over the “free” peasantry was founded in communal access to land, the scope of an internal market was limited. Force was thus required to extract both labour and its products in a way that went far

beyond framing the conditions for market institutions, where, according to Marx, the “iron laws of production” after an initial phase of primitive accumulation, can be left to themselves. (Marx: 1989: 336) Moreover, by reserving the right to allocate the vital means of production, land, for the chief alone, the peasantry's ability to either resistance or exit from the customary was severely weakened. Indirect rule therefore should be understood as a colonial complementary reform in response to the obvious limitations of direct rule.

Mamdani argues that the institutional pillars of decentralized despotism consisted in a fusion of power, an administrative notion of the customary and a range of extra-economic compulsions. It was based on a model of customary authority as monarchical, patriarchal and authoritarian; authority was considered an attribute of personal despotism. Any challenge to chiefly power could and would unleash wider systemic response: “No oriental despot ever had greater power than these black tyrants, thanks to the support which they received from the white officials who keep quietly in the background.” (G. George Padmore quoted in Mamdani 2004: 53) The chief was made insular from any kind of social base.

Customary law was not about guaranteeing rights; it was about enforcing custom. Its point was not to limit power, but to enable it. The justification of power was that it was a custodian of custom in the wider context of alien domination. Against this description was the reality: customary law consolidated the uncustomary power of the chiefs in the colonial administration. (Mamdani 2004: 110)

Mamdani recapitulates the logic of general Smuts – for the record: member of the British war cabinet, confidant of Churchill and Roosevelt, chancellor at Cambridge University, one of the minds behind the League of Nations, fiercely opposing slavery and adhering to the principles of the French Revolutions. According to Smuts, there lived in Africa a race so unique that nothing could be worse for it than a politics that would “[...] de-Africanize the African and turn him either into a beast of the field or into a pseudo-European. [...] And yet in the past we have tried both alternatives in our dealings with the Africans.’ [...] In the launching of the *new politics*, Smuts proclaimed: ‘The British Empire does not stand for the assimilation of its people into a common type, it does not stand for standardization, but for the fullest and freest development of its people along their own specific lines.’”(Mamdani 2004: 5)

The ingeniousness of this arrangement is indeed striking. From being a constellation where a visibly foreign minority was the state's only positive aim, politically sanctioned ethnic pluralism achieved a situation where also the subjugated majority appeared as a whole range of partly antagonistic minorities. Under pretext of respecting local conditions, the occupational power pulverized the colonised majority by replacing it with a whole range of insignificant minorities – over them all loomed the State as the mediator and master of pluralism.

That this was the outcome of political engineering is revealed in legal definitions of “the native”, for who was she really, to whom customary law was to apply? When comparing legal codes, Mamdani argues, it becomes clear that the objective was to arrive at a racial, not a cultural definition. Thus pointedly included in every legal definition is every person with any trace of African ancestry – and pointedly excluded are all citizens of non-African descent. Moreover, it is stated that all natives belong to a tribe, thus casting a finely masked net of differentiation over the blunt category of “the native”. As such we can say that while “the native” is the correlative to civil law and direct rule, the differentiation between tribesmen is the correlative to customary law and decentralized despotism. As “natives” the Africans were excluded, and based on that exclusion they were as “tribesmen” re-included in the bifurcated state.

Trapped in “the customary”

The colonial state subjugated a range of societies under a unified political power, and at the same time ruled the populations as an empire with a variety of asymmetric arrangements; this is not unique. Nor the distinction native-nonnative, citizen-subject, was unique to the African experience, neither the cooptation of elites. The lesson learnt from India which made African colonial statecraft unique according to Mamdani, was rather the containerization of the subjugated population into tribes and the scope of what was defined as customary. The experience of unrest in Asia had led to a shift in focus from the curative to the preventive, from “rejuvenating” societies to conserving them, from “civilizing” to holding the lines. Sir Donald Cameron, British governor in Tanganyika reasons along following lines:

If we set up merely a European form of administration, the day will come when the people of the Territory will demand that the British form of administration shall pass into their hands – we have India at our door as an object lesson. [...] we shall be building an edifice with some foundation to it, capable of standing the shocks which will inevitably come when the educated native seeks to gain possessions of the machinery of Government and run it on western lines. ... If we treat them properly, moreover, we shall have the members of the Native Administration on our side. (Sir Donald Cameron quoted in Mamdani 2004: 80)

The advantage of tribalism as a complement to racism was dual: it was fragmenting resistance and it could be argued to be natural and historical. Gradually, moreover, an understanding grew of control and representation as two sides of the same coin. “[T]he mode of representation, whether racial or tribal, would shape the lines along which natives would organize and in turn avail the state corresponding avenues of native control.” (Mamdani 2004: 90) It seems that containerized in the customary, with its focus on community rather than the individual, the sum of tribes found themselves in some sort of collective panopticon: isolated as groups from each other and visible to the central powers – as Mamdani frames it: autonomous but dependent.

Specific for Africa was the scope of “the customary”. The customary could regulate almost every aspect of human life, and was often technical to the point of tediousness.⁶ An increasing number of activities previously considered civil became criminalized with a corresponding rise in the number of legal prosecutions. As customary was also defined numerous rules and regulations arising from the new conditions, such as those arising from the demands of the colonial economy. Enforcing customs became a euphemism for extending colonial control and “[...] the triumph of techno-administration under the guise of indirect rule through customary law was nothing but a retreat into legal administration.” (Mamdani 2004: 125) The customary became the fig leaf for administratively driven justice.

Accompanying this evolving power structure, a large and partly discredited apparatus of knowledge, worthy of a Foucaultian analysis, was produced. A variety of philosophical, anthropological, religious and eugenic studies contributed to the constitution and legitimizing of perceptions about cultures and traditions as static, holistic and a-historical – in other words, the tedious construction of the myth of the *customary, primitive society*. This concept was, as we have seen, very much a product of the needs of modernity itself; the *power-knowledge* complex within colonial discourse is indeed remarkable. Many of the so-called traditions were partly pure fabrications, and partly based on the most authoritarian traits of the 19th century conquering-kingdoms, marshalling authoritarian possibilities in indigenous culture. Britain was, as Mamdani pinpoints “[T]he first to realize that key to an alien power’s achieving a hegemonic domination was a cultural project: one of harnessing the moral, historical, and community impetus behind local customs to a larger colonial project.” (Mamdani 2004: 286)

After hard work and much puzzlement, eventually crowned with some sort of success, the notion of the pre-colonial finally corresponded perfectly to the demands of decentralized despotism crafted under colonial rule. Where “impure” tribal identities existed it was a matter of “purifying” and “disciplining” them back to their supposedly uniform roots. As a secretary in Northern Rhodesia complained the tribes were “in a very disorganized state” when they first encountered them. (Mamdani 2004: 81) Among stateless peoples, “tribes” were created, such that eventually a whole state apparatus was constructed around every “tribe”. Peoples who had in fact long common historical roots could be split into different tribes and forged with others at random to satisfy the needs of pacification. Thus we see that sanctioning “culture” top-down sculpted traditions totally static from the opposite perspective below-up, eventually encompassing every aspect of the “natives” life. At the same time the customary was always a flexible and arbitrary category to the extent that all power was invested in the whims and preferences of one person –

⁶ For an account of its absurd and grotesque tediousness see for example Mamdani’s account pp122-128, 2004.

the chief. Codification of the customary into written law was according to Mamdani, generally a feature of either the stabilized consolidated periods of colonialism – when the central power felt more confident to involve in local affairs – or it was the result of colonial reform in response to the cries from an increasingly organized peasantry.

The “native” & the city

It is characteristic for this system that the urban population was limited to a minimum – ideally consisting of temporal migrant labour: ‘Nairobi was *our* town’, Karen Blixen wrote in *Out of Africa*, thus underlining that urban settlement was the privilege of the civil society, i.e. the “non-natives” area. After all, the greatest threat to this arrangement would be an urbanized, de-tribalized and thus excluded only, “native”. Urban-based “natives” languished in a judicial limbo outside the reach of rural tribal authority and excluded from the urban civil society of the colons, “[...] exempt from the lash of customary law but not from modern, racially discriminatory civil legislation.” (Mamdani 2004: 19)

With identity cards, pass-systems and restriction on movement, especially on migration to the cities, vagrancy laws, tribal reserves and compulsion, the colonial state sought to keep the population *in place*, confining and containerizing them within their respective “traditions”. In South Africa, the last country to fully adopt this form of rule and at the same time the country that to a highest degree perfected it, this form of politics found a particularly harsh expression in the forced de-urbanization of the growing African city population. “Forced removals” had the aim of restructuring a growing industrial proletariat to a migrating semi-proletariat.⁷ As Mamdani carefully points out, this brutality against the urban population can be understood as nothing but a frontal attack on the residual rights of the African population. In the homelands apartheid was portrayed as restoration of ethnic autonomy – the standard euphemism for decentralized despotism. Tribalism, long perceived as the heart of mobilization of resistance in South Africa, now became the trump card in the attempt to forcibly hold separate what socioeconomic processes spontaneously tend to bring together: the urban and the rural, one ethnicity with another. Following Mamdani’s exposition of the South African trajectory – the latecomer, and as such for a long time the “anomaly” – we can get a clearer grip on *how* the colonial state was shaped in response to *which* challenges.

The trajectory of South Africa: Apartheid & decentralized despotism

Mamdani separates himself from the particularistic and land specific approach to South Africa. Special for South Africa was rather its strong civil movements – both among black and

⁷ Estimates reckon that approximately 3,5 million, or more than 10% of the country’s population was forcibly removed out of the towns between the 1950s and 1985 (Mamdani 2004: 102)

white people. Only if seen from the perspective of the labour question, and not from the view of the general *problematics* of rule confronting all colonial powers, does semi-industrialized South Africa stand out as exceptional. More than the labour question however, we have seen that it was the so-called *native question* that was at the forefront in the shaping of the colonial state. Rather than a purely political economic question, the main problematic was a political one, as is evident from the fact that even the profit motive could be put aside to the advantage of political considerations. Economistic approaches therefore tend to mistake the mode of exploitation for the mode of rule. Mamdani bases this claim on the striking convergence in colonial state structures, in spite of the lack of uniform agrarian and industrial modes of production in different countries and regions, subjugated by seemingly diverse colonial powers.

In general however, a full blown autonomous but dependent indirect rule was possible only when settler interests, in the case of the settler colonies, were weakened by other fractions of capital or powerful peasant movements. This partly explains why South Africa was lagging behind in grasping the advantages of indirect rule. Initially the goal for the settlers in South Africa was the destruction of tribal autonomy in order to access land and labour, and to decapitate the main organization point for the strong resistance that confronted them. Once successful in this undertaking however, new problems were tumbling up in the horizon.

Let loose from age-old tribal bonds, the labourer, the professional, the trader, and the intellectual came to symbolize a threat instead of a promise. These products of a civilized native policy made equally modern and civil demands. [...] To check that threat, the state would try to shore up customary law and tribal chiefs – precisely when changing conditions were fast eroding their role and status. (Mamdani 2004: 92)

There was a growing feeling that the cutting edge of African resistance was no longer tribal; rather, the very processes that were undercutting tribal isolation and autonomy were giving rise to modern forces with strongly egalitarian demands. [...] Not until 1951 did South African ruling circles move decisively to subordinate race to tribe in the formulation of native policy. That move was a recognition that the real threat to racial supremacy came from new class forces engendered by the modern economy, forces that cut across tribal lines and would therefore flourish in the context of a racial mode of representation and control. (Mamdani 2004: 95)

In this sense we see that the South African move to apartheid was more reactive rather than preventive, in an increasingly explosive context. The difference in objectives between the settler interests and the mining industry had however for a long time pulled in opposite directions in South Africa and entangled *native* policy in contradictory ways. Whereas the settlers wanted the release of land and labour, the mining industry sought to keep the agricultural family units intact and extracting from it migrant male labour in order to keep wages low. The settlers wanted to tie family labour to their farms through the pass system, while the miners wanted it to prevent permanent settlement of families near the mines. These differences in legal and administrative perceptions, i.e. that of direct and indirect rule were according to Mamdani, in South Africa represented in the differences between the Cape and the Natal systems respectively. The Cape

system initially reflecting the settlers' worldview was seemingly the more liberal of the two, but as Mamdani pinpoints:

It seems to me that for Cape liberalism to flourish in a colonial context required an all-embracing capitalist market: combining civil inequality based on marked differentiation with legal equality based on the rule of law. "Equal rights for all civilized men south of the Zambezi," the clarion call of Cecil Rhodes, was inscribed in a propertied franchise, one that would "naturally" exclude that vast majority of natives on grounds of their propertyless civil status, not on the basis of any legally inscribed racial discrimination. The precondition for legal equality was civil inequality: an end to customary tenure and holdings and the appropriation of land. But where the reach of capitalist relations was limited, and the law facilitated retention rather than the appropriation of peasant holdings, a propertied franchise could not go hand in hand with colonial control. There, political inequality would have to be grounded in a legal dualism, rather than marked differentiation. It is this reality that the Natal system symbolized in the operation of a dual judicial system, one modern, the other customary, neither quite separate nor quite equal. As the Cape reserves turned into "the single largest source of migrant labour" in South Africa, the Cape system lost both its liberalizing zeal and its consistency. (Mamdani 2004: 69)

The reactive approach of South Africa in their grappling with the problems of colonial statecraft is moreover evident, Mamdani argues, in the great concern in the 1920s to "alleviate" the situation whereby white and black poor and unemployed tended to live side by side in squalid locations, thus undermining racial segregation and promoting class based joint action.⁸ Municipal segregation was therefore added to the already effected segregation in workplace and in industrial conciliation. As a latecomer in the statecraft of indirect rule, South Africa experienced a virtual urban explosion in the early post-war years. Whereas strikes and other work-based protests were curbed, there was an escalation in community-based protest. The schizophrenic aims of the regime paved the way for a contradictory path: on the one side workers were needed in the cities due to the increasing demands from a growing manufacturing industry; between 1939 and 1952 the urban African population doubled. On the other side there was an unwillingness to allocate resources for the construction of infrastructure and locations affordable to accommodate a growing urban population by the white local municipalities. A virtual squatting epidemic was the result of this housing crisis, and by 1947 at least 57.5 percent (official figure⁹) of the urban African population was defined as lacking approved and serviced accommodation (Mamdani 2004: 97). As most of the squatters were legally employed they could not simply be removed. The squatters, poor on resource but concentrated, increasingly organized themselves militantly.¹⁰ With the rising tempo of urban protest the gravity of anti-colonial opposition shifted from the countryside to the towns.

⁸ According to C. W. Kiewiet, referred to by Arendt (2004: 253) poor whites in South Africa in 1923 amounted to 10 per cent of the total white population and amounted to as many as 160 000 individuals.

⁹ According to Mamdani official figures tended to downplay the problem, numbers might have been higher.

¹⁰ One of the squatter leaders, James Mpanza, had the idea of breaking the segregationist urban geography, claiming the city through moving en masse to peri-urban land, keeping police and local administration at bay with camp guards and organizing basic sanitary services. (Mamdani 2004: 98)

This was the situation faced by The National Party coming to power in 1948. A trinity of housing, employment and influx control was introduced to combat squatting and accommodate the need for labour. However, such a policy would retrench rather than eliminate a permanent working class. The more practical apartheid accommodated to the needs of industrial capital, the more the gap widened between its economic strategy and its political project. “For the economic strategy was modified to include the acceptance of a permanent African working class, whereas the political project became ever more rigid as it denied the legitimacy of expression of Bantu interests outside the framework of the many indirect rule authorities ranged across tribal reserves.” (Mamdani 2004: 99). Thus we see that the gap increased between an economic strategy implying a permanent proletariat and thus class as the mode of representation, and the political project, demanding tribe as the “native” mode of representation. The prospect about class and race merging into a homogenous proletariat was looming over the policy makers. Warnings ranged from the dangers of “rootless masses concentrated in the large industrial centres” to “detrribalization” – the removal of tribal control while leaving “nothing to replace it”. (Mamdani 2004: 99-100) Hence the political rhetoric of the time accurately articulated the legal limbo in which the urban Africans found themselves lingering in. The solution to the seemingly contradictory demands of economy and politics would be an attempt to freeze the process of detrribalization: “[C]lassified as temporary urban residents, migrant workers were, in the language of an explanation given to the parliament, ‘periodically returned to their homes to renew their tribal connections.’”(Mamdani 2004: 100) Thus tribal control over natives in the countryside was “restored” through the system of decentralized despotism. Meanwhile native control in the cities was taken over by the central state. The local municipal authorities, who had formerly been in charge of the administration of native affairs, had proved far more susceptible to capital demands for cheap labour than to the political demands of the state – as we have seen the turmoil related to the squatter epidemic made evident. The victory of the National Party signalled a shift that was more of a political reform related to the overriding “native question” than an economic reform in terms of labour policy. The timing of this shift in strategy was not coincidental; as Mamdani argues: it occurred precisely when the locus of militant national opposition seemed to shift from tribe to race, i.e. from the rural to the urban arena. In response to this situation, statecraft moved in the opposite direction, from race to tribe, in an effort to channel African representation, i.e. resistance more effectively to the repressive capabilities of the state. “Apartheid had finally caught the secret of colonial control in Africa: indirect rule.” (Mamdani 2004: 100)

So we see that the colonial policy aimed at establishing a migrant semi-proletariat to satisfy the demand for urban and industrial labour, and at the same time prevent the growth of modern class formation and corresponding demands: “On the one hand the reserves have served

as mating camps for the production of migrant labourers [...] while on the other they have proved suitable dumping grounds for the physical wrecks whom industry discards [...]” (ANC member Govan Mbeki quoted in Mamdani 2004: 190) However, “reserve production”: the self-sustaining farmers, engaged for periods in wage labour was to a large degree a myth. The poverty of the reserves was immense and the majority of workers drawn from them were landless. In fact it seems to us, what had been created was a rural-residing lumpenproletariat, functioning as a reserve army of industrial migrant labour. Within the reserves there was an increasing differentiation between full time farmers and migrant labour, exacerbated by the forced removals of the urban population.

3.4 Concluding remarks on the bifurcated state

The British were the first to realize the option of indirect rule, but all other colonial powers would gradually follow suit. The French republic had in 1848 conferred citizenship to all inhabitants in their coastal colonial possessions, regardless of colour, and installed a system of “direct administration”. In the subsequent expansions the French (unlike the British who worked out alliances) were more often than not in direct conflict with pre-colonial power structures, which they perceived as coming between them and their subjects. Experience showed, however, that “assimilation” led to resurgence rather than subjugation of native political demands, and that culturally assimilated Africans turned out as poor mediators between the colonial power and its subjects. This was, Mamdani argues, a lesson to be learnt by all colonial powers – last of all by South Africa.

The bifurcated state and the system of decentralized despotism was essentially a crisis-driven response to the inherent problems of the colonial enterprise. Being a more stable form of rule than centralized despotism, it was none the less a system ultimately resting on a sole basis of violence and exploitation and the colonial world was indeed a world of brutality and coercion. We observe that the essence of colonial absolutism over the native population was the institutionalization and formalization of administratively driven justice – the permanent state of emergency, a rule by decrees – both at central and local level without traditional, nor modern in the terms of judicial or parliamentary constraint.

In the event of crisis, the routine violence of indirect rule exploded like the fragments of a cluster bomb, leaving in its wake blood-soaked homes and fields. No matter how gruesome they were, one needs to understand such events as an extreme manifestation of the crisis of indirect rule and not as exceptional episodes. [...] indirect rule was never just a commonsense, pragmatic, and cost-efficient administrative strategy that utilized local personnel to fill its lower tiers. Its point was to create a dependent but autonomous system of rule, one that combined accountability to superiors with a flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks. (Mamdani 2004: 59-60)

By focusing on how the colonized population was incorporated and not only excluded, Mamdani push to the forefront how the colonial state not only marginalized, but simultaneously produced a specific form of power as an answer to the overriding *native question*: how to stabilize alien rule and more basically how to *rule* (as one cannot *rule* what is simply excluded). The rationality and techniques in this by far most experienced colonial undertaking produced a system of differentiation intended to stabilize, neutralize and mitigate inherent tensions of the project itself, through the creation and criss-crossing of dividing lines such as nonnatives-natives, local elites-peasants, men-women, the urban-rural. These tensions were furthermore established as the fundamental pillars of the functioning of the state. It is therefore of importance to uncover the microphysics of this power – to disentangle its techniques and strategizing, the way this politics practically and concretely unfolded as a unique form of statecraft – in order to understand what the “modern state” signifies in the context of this continent. It is therefore relevant, we argue, to talk about a specifically African experience of modernity. Whether organized as protectorates or colonial states the issue is nevertheless about a specific form of incorporation in the great powers nation-state, capitalistic economy and a specific form of disciplinarity of the populations in order to harness their productivity towards a non-national aim. As accumulated wealth was exported, the accumulation processes had no or little national/local legitimacy.

“The customary” represented a discourse of disciplinarity that aimed towards controlling behaviour through emotions and thoughts, presenting this system of rule as historical, natural and a benevolent expression of the colonial masters cosmopolitan tolerance. The organization of the colonial state could be seen as a different form of tapping into the populations strengths than Foucault’s discipline/control-power – giving a different answers to the same challenge: the potential which the masses constitute as a source of power within modernity. Thus, as Mamdani argues, the indirect rule state was not a weak state, its ambitions were vast: to transform the subjectivities of the colonized population and not merely its elites. It was not just a matter of divide and rule, but to remake, re-divide and then rule.¹¹

Nevertheless, the actual, physical degree of violence and compulsion in the relation between state and inhabitant seems to us at first sight conspicuous insofar that this policy developed in relation to the evolution of democratic nation-states in Europe. The main colonial possessions in Africa after all belonged to Western, so-called liberal, nation-state democracies: Britain, France, and Belgium. Germany lost all colonies after World War I, while other minor authoritarian and eventually fascistoid states such as Portugal and Spain lingered on as colonial powers. The multiethnic empires of Russia and Austria-Hungary had no African possessions at

¹¹ Mamdani 2008, W. E. B. Du Bois Lecture 1: *Nativism: The Theory* (2008) <http://dubois.fas.harvard.edu/webcasts?page=4> (retrieved 16.04.2010)

all. Is it a coincidence that the first concentration camps were the ingenuity of British war craft in the Boer War and that Western democracies got first hand acquaintance with genocides in Africa long before the holocaust? The discrepancy between the policy at home and in the overseas possessions is grotesquely evident even in late and desperate attempts of colonial pacification, say of the Mau Mau or the Algerian war, where torture and death penalties were sanctioned en masse in a random and summary manner.¹²

The darkest side of European modernity was introduced in Africa: racial supremacy legitimized by enlightenment ideals, power and “rationality” hand in hand. The discourses of progress, universality and civilization manifested itself in colonial politics as legitimacy for crude exploitation or primitive accumulation. These processes, instead of being a deviation from the enlightenment vision, can be seen as a central part of it.¹³ The system of rule in the colonies did not stand back for any of the major totalitarian regimes on the European mainland in the 20th century. For some reason, however, it seems to us that colonialism is rarely seen in intimate relation to totalitarian communism and Nazism/fascism, which are often compared as *the* two ideologies, or extremes, tapping into the authoritarian potential of modernity. It seems therefore central to get a positive grip on colonial modernity: the structure of rule that this power assumed and the relation it construed between the state and its inhabitants. This is what we have attempted to do in this chapter by exposing a theory of the state following Mamdani. In the next chapter we will be discussing how this state was transformed with independence. The affinity between imperialism and mainland European totalitarianism we will discuss more thoroughly in chapter 4 with Karl Marx, Georges Bataille and Hannah Arendt – where we will argue that colonialism and fascism essentially provided two solutions to the same challenge.

Chapter 2: The Postcolonial State & the Legacy of Colonialism (or the Challenge of Democratization)

2.1 The fall of colonialism

The form of rule shaped the form of revolt against it (Mamdani 2004: 24)

We will in this chapter proceed with exposing Mamdani’s theory of the African state and his understanding of how the structures of domination were *not* overcome by those practices of liberation, which the anti-colonial struggle essentially represented.

¹² In the case of the repression of the Mau Mau movement, David Anderson writes: “In no other place, and at no other time in the history of British imperialism, was state execution used on such a scale as this.” (Anderson: 2005: 7) Moreover it was happening at a time when the British parliament was debating the abolishing of capital punishment. For an account of this dirty war see his book *Histories of the Hanged*.

¹³ For a discussion on the repressive aspects of enlightenment discourses and colonialism see Vincent Tucker “The Myth of Development: A Critique of a Eurocentric Discourse” (2001)

The resistance toward the colonial powers was to a great extent formed by the power it fought in terms of strategies opted for, focus of attack and the degree of violence unleashed. The whole period was marked by sporadic uproar, but the interwar years – colonialism’s most stable phase – was in general a period of defeat and resignation as people were gagged under the heavy weight of local despotisms and with different groups being isolated from each other in a manner that allowed the central state to deal with the different forms of resistance one by one and separately. This was one of the distinctive features of the colonial state-structure: to form channels for African representation, i.e. resistance – in order to confront it in the most cost-efficient way. And it was exactly this realization that was the key to colonial control in Africa. Not surprisingly and ironically corresponding to the fears that the bifurcated state was meant to console, the escalation of urban revolts was primarily directed against the central power and the exclusion from the sphere of civil society. The rural peasant uprisings, on the other hand, attacked local, tribalized power structures, thereby taking on a civil war-like character. Often these movements took the form of “purification movements”, contesting the official definitions of the “customary”. To varying degrees these two counter-forces, the urban and the rural, managed to unite in the struggle against colonial rule, and to differing degrees the local riots managed to transcend their ethnic containerization and create interethnic alliances. It is within this matrix, it seems to us, that the anti-colonial struggle must be qualified.

The increasing resistance gave in most cases rise to reforms in the late phase of colonialism, in a last and desperate attempt to extend the systems social basis. The demands from the different groups bore the imprints of the differentiation of the system itself: the main concern of the growing urban middle-class was incorporation in the sphere of civil society – for the free peasants it was about protection from the worst excesses of the local despots. As we know, the articulation of resistance against racism and colonialism gave rise to a virtual intellectual renaissance – a “counter-knowledge” – around the period of decolonization. Intellectual currents such as Pan Africanism, African socialism, the negritude movement and various forms of Africanization movements provided ideological artillery for various platforms of resistance. The intellectual elites played out in colonialisms early phase, re-entered the national political scene. When the snowball first started to roll, the disintegration of the colonial system over the greatest part of the continent, was extremely rapid – too rapid in some cases one could argue, for an able African administration to be properly installed in time for the handing over of power.¹⁴

¹⁴ One of the horror examples being Congo.

2.2 Deracialization without democratization

[T]he duality native-nonnative gave way to another, subject-citizen. (Mamdani 2004: 296)

The most important institutional legacy of colonial rule [...] may lie in the inherited impediments to democratization. (Mamdani 2004: 25)

Independence in the 1950-60s led quickly to a deracialization of state and civil society, however without being followed by a thoroughgoing democratization, neither of central nor local power. It seemed as the bifurcated state structure somehow survived in the newly independent states and contributed in a modified form to a specific form of post-colonial state, where the main dividing lines –citizens-subjects, urban-rural and interethnic – were simply not transcended. What happened to the great project of liberation of the masses? What happened to the egalitarian ideals associated with European modernity that had so effectively been mobilized in the struggle to bring down European colonialism? In short, what were the possibilities and limitations of the moment of independence?

Mamdani divides the efforts to reform the colonial state into two main trends: the conservative/moderate nationalistic and the radical nationalistic. Both models succeeded primarily with a deracialization of civil society, but none of them, he argues, managed to transcend the bifurcated power structure. This partly reproduction of the bifurcated state – this failure to come to terms with the institutional legacy of colonialism – led quickly to new variants of despotism.

The conservative/moderate regimes, such as Nigeria and Zaire, upheld the tribalized structure as *homage* to tradition, as they basically understood the African society as the sum of a multitude of tribes. Colonial subjugation was primarily understood as exclusion from civil society, i.e. alien rule. Thus limited electoral reforms of the centre introduced in late colonialism had to a certain extent appeased their demands. With that, the incorporative aspect, represented by tribalized despotic local rule, was ignored as a part of the colonial states functioning. This approach inevitably exacerbated ethnic divisions, but on the other hand softened the urban-rural divide through a political linkage of extensive tribalistic clientelism. Decentralized despotism continued as the rural population still were ruled as subjects. The prototype subject kept its ethnic mark, which complicated every attempt at democratization on a central level. Elections tended to degenerate into ethnic conflict as political loyalty became linked to ethnicity. A “winner takes it all” culture survived fluctuations between democracy and autocracy in the centre, thus destabilizing both forms for regimes. (Mamdani 2004: see especially pp. 25-27, 104-105, 288-137)

The radical regimes such as Tanzania, Ghana and Guinea, on the other hand, sought to overcome the decentralized despotism through a de-tribalization of the population via nation building: the “nation” as a multiethnic entity, united in the struggle against colonial rule. In this

way ethnic dividing lines were downplayed as the civil war-like relationship between elite and subjects within each people was addressed and articulated. However, in the name of revolution, modernization or development these promising political processes degenerated as “The Party” became increasingly synonymous with the state. Traits that had characterized decentralized despotism – power concentration in the form of fusion of legislative, executive, judicial and administrative authority - was moved up to the central level and the central power took total control over local authorities. Party cadres, appointed from the central, replaced the customary authorities. Rather than decentralized despotism, these regimes were characterized by centralized despotism, i.e. direct, but undemocratic rule and one-party state. This centralization reinforced the urban-rural conflict and the prototype subject was simply the peasant, deprived of ethnic identity. As such these radical regimes opened no less for corruption and mismanagement. (Mamdani 2004, see especially: pp 25-27, 107-108, 128-137, 170-178, 290-291)

The two main reform strategies were preoccupied with transforming one branch each of the Janus-state – each according to their perception of what colonial rule had consisted in. By missing the two-faced character of this creature both attempts lead to new varieties of despotism as the backlash of the unreformed branch, whether decentralized or centralized despotism – would impede any thoroughgoing democratization. “The anti-dote to decentralized despotism turned out to be centralized despotism. In the back and forth movement between a decentralized and centralized despotism, each regime claimed to be reforming the negative features of its predecessor.” (Mamdani 2004: 26) A central reason, according to Mamdani, is that both approaches have the introduction of local democracy as their blind spot.

The rhythm of reform since the 1960s appears as an alternation between these two forms of power. In the radical regimes, which have proven to be the more unstable of the two, the demand for decentralization therefore tended toward reproduction of traits characteristic of the conservative regimes: decentralized despotism. Within the conservative regimes, where Nigeria constitutes a standard example, the pendulum has been swinging from the centralized despotism of military regimes to the decentralized despotism of civilian rule. Attempts to overcome the negative aspects of the one form of power tend toward the reproduction of the negative features of the other; reform in one sphere has been played out against repression in the other.

On the one hand, decentralized despotism exacerbates ethnic divisions, and so the solution appears as centralization. On the other hand, centralized despotism exacerbates the urban-rural division, and the solution appears as decentralization. But as variants both continue to revolve around a shared axis – despotism. (Mamdani 2004: 291)

The second round of radical reformers of the 1980s and 1990s such as Qaddafi (Libya), Sankara (Burkina Faso) and early Rawlings (Ghana) and Museveni (Uganda) attempted to join

detrimental to democratization, but primarily on the local level. This approach has opened for democratic appreciation of the customary as multiple, contradictory and thus also its emancipatory possibilities. Their major problem in terms of an overall democratization has been to link the rural and the urban and to extend the democratization process to the centre. As such these regimes have democratized local authority, but still tends to be a power of direct despotism in the civil sphere of the urban. The focus is thus on participation within and autonomy of each ethnic group rather than on interethnic alliance building as a foundation for majority-based representation at a national level. The one-sided focus of participation on the local level has therefore been at the cost of representation on the central level and as such both legitimated and upheld central despotism (Mamdani 2004: 214-217).

At the other end of the second round reform continuum is the multiparty electoral reform focus. With the fall of Soviet Union, democracy has become “the only game in town” and even the most authoritarian regimes pay at least lip service to the formal institutions of democracy. In the African context the prescribed reforms have been both multiparty elections and decentralization. With its focus on the centre, leaving local despotism intact, this approach has tended towards representation without participation. The tendency is thus that “[...] instead of a representation of popular strata in the state, the representative turn into an agent of the state power to popular sectors.” (Mamdani 2004: 299) By reproducing the decentralized despotism and thereby presuming that despotism in Africa has primarily been a centralized affair, one seems to be forgetting that “In the absence of alliance-building mechanisms, all decentralized systems of rule have fragmented the ruled and stabilized their rulers.” (Mamdani 2004: 300)

As such the dividing line citizen (the new elites) and subject (the rural population) has been reinforced and reproduced. In the absence of democratization, “development” and “modernization” became a process led from above, and due to lack of democratization there was still little opportunity for development of a home market. Consequently several of the colonial extra-economic regimes of coercion linger on in the countryside. In a 1987 Commission of Inquiry into the Local Government System in Uganda it was found out that peasants travelling but short distances to reach the market in the capital paid market dues at least three times – one at each district boundary and an additional upon entering the market. “The same commission noted a direct link between the incredible range of empoza (Luganda, from “to impose”) levied by cash-starved local authorities and extralegal extortion by its on-the-ground officials.” (Mamdani 2004: 57) This is only one, and far from the gravest, example of the challenges facing the rural population.

In the absence of democratic accountability, the opportunities to extract contributions and labour for both local authorities and individual functionaries are numerous and far exceed official

tax rates and community obligations. Furthermore every downturn in international economy has been an opportunity for externally defined structural adjustment programmes to forward a narrow program for privatization combined with a broader defined program for globalization. “The result was both an internal privatization that recalled the racial imbalance that was civil society in the colonial period and an externally managed capital inflow that towed alongside a phalanx of expatriates – according to UN estimates, more now than in the colonial period!” (Mamdani 2004: 288) The postcolonial state is in Mamdani’s vocabulary a deracialized but decentralized despotism.

There are two issues related to the deracialization of civil society – largely successful – that we will briefly discuss here, as they have left a lasting legacy. The Africanization process, achieved through affirmative action, was what Mamdani calls simultaneously unifying and fragmenting. It was unifying in the sense that it was addressing all the victims of colonialism, i.e. at the moment of expropriation and redress. However, with the moment of redress came the moment of redistribution, fragmenting that same majority along ethnic, regional and religious lines. Rather than perceiving these moments as simultaneous, the literature on corruption has tended to isolate and de-contextualize them and through ahistorical analogies described them as politics of prebendalism, patrimonialism etc. Put back in the context of an urban civil society encircled by a variety of customary power under the twin pressure of deracialization and retribalization, patrimonialism, Mamdani points out, was a politics of restoring urban-rural links in a top-down fashion. The less the countryside was reformed, the more it came to contaminate civil society, as the more civil society became deracialized the more it became tribalized.

The other point Mamdani makes relates to civil society. He argues that, “The history of civil society in Africa is laced with racism. That is, as it were, its original sin, for civil society was first and foremost the society of the colons.” (Mamdani 2004: 19) Faced with Africanization, the former beneficiaries tended to use the language of civil and individual rights to defend formerly racially protected privileges guaranteed by the colonial state. The result was a breach between the discourse of rights, which appeared as a means for continued domination, and the discourse of justice, which became formulated in the language of nationalism and social justice. As such the language of liberal rights formerly reserved for the exclusive civil society became tainted rather than extended to embrace the whole of the society and the concept of justice as a collective affair would rapidly turn out to be a dual-edged sword. As we have already observed, the “natives” had in the colonial systems been treated as tribal collectives, rather than individuals and the focus had been the enabling of power rather than the protection of rights. With the breach in discourse between rights and justice in the independent states, a course was set for further neglect of civil rights. With the breach in the discourse of rights and justice in the postcolonial setting the scene

was set for a virtual collapse of the embryonic indigenous civil society, labour unions and autonomous civil organizations.

It is the moment of the marriage between technicism and nationalism, of the proliferation of state nationalism in a context where the claims of the state – both developmentalist and equalizing – had a powerful resonance, particularly for the fast-expanding educated strata. It is the time when civil society-based movements became demobilized and political movements statized. (Mamdani 2004: 21)

The difference in terms of deracialization between the conservative/moderate and the radical regimes lay primarily in the difference in rhetoric – “indigenization”/Africanization vs. nationalization – and the strategy of redistribution employed – privatisation or etatism. The outcome: nepotism, corruption and clientelism were in the long run indistinguishable.

These were among the limits of deracialization of civil society. Although deracialization was a necessary step it did not equate to democratization due to the structure of tribalized authority, which was not organized as a racial power. The core agenda that the newly African independent states faced was threefold: deracialization, detribalization and developing the national economy in an international context of unequal relations. Together, Mamdani argues, this combination of internal and external imperatives marked the limits and possibilities at the moment of independence. The failure to democratize local authority led ultimately to the failure, both of development and of a sustainable deracialization.

What Mamdani points out is the degree to which the anti-colonial revolt was shaped by the power it rebelled against, and that the liberation movements in differing ways can be seen to further central aspects of the technologies of rule of the colonial state. The failure to realize that the bifurcated state could transcend deracialization is therefore one of the main obstacles for analytically grasping the continuity in this form of rule. African free peasants are according to Mamdani trapped in a non-racial version of apartheid.

What we have before us is a bifurcated world, no longer simply racially organized, but a world in which the dividing line between those human and the rest less human is a line between those who labour the land and those who do not. This divided world is inhabited by subjects on the one side and citizens on the other; their life is regulated by customary law on the one side and modern law on the other; their beliefs are dismissed as pagan on this side but bear the status of religion on the other; their stylized moments in their day-to-day life are considered ritual on this side and culture on the other; their creative arts is considered crafts on this side and glorified as arts on the other; their verbal communication is demeaned as vernacular chatter on this side but elevated as linguistic discourse on the other; in sum, the world of the “savage” barricaded in deed as in word, from the world of the “civilized”. (Mamdani 2004: 61)

Only a deeper understanding of these conditions – how power is organized and how it tends towards the fragmentation of resistance in contemporary African – can give a meaningful foundation for political reform of the postcolonial state.

2.3 What would democratization entail in the African context?

[A] key to reform of the bifurcated state and to any theoretical analysis that would lead to such a reform must be an endeavour to link the urban and the rural – and thereby a series of related binary opposites such as rights and custom, representation and participation, centralization and decentralization, civil society and community – in ways that have yet to be done. (Mamdani 2004: 34)

The antidote to a mode of rule that accentuates difference, ethnic in this case cannot be to deny difference but to historicize it. [...] In the specific circumstances of contemporary Africa, to create a democratic majority is to transcend two divisions that power spontaneously imposes on resistance: the urban-rural and the interethnic. (Mamdani 2004: 296)

Mamdani's point is that in order to transcend the legacy of the bifurcated state a genealogy over how this state was formed is needed in order to grasp to the conditions under which it is reproduced and it could be transformed. Democratization at the moment of independence would have entailed a simultaneous process of deracialization of civil power and detribalizing of customary power, as the starting point for an overall democratization transcending the legacy of bifurcated power. Democratization will demand linking of the urban and the rural by breaking down the binary sets of opposites related to each sphere respectively – constructed by colonialism and reproduced in the postcolonial state as mutually exclusives. At the same time democratization will demand the linkage of one ethnicity with another in a realization of the social character of demands, i.e. the difference in struggles for generalizable rights and demands for privileges at the expense of others.

In posing the question what social forces can link the urban-rural and create interethnic alliances, Mamdani claims that the most successful attempt yet was the militant nationalist movements of the independence struggle. Their failure was to not pursue this link in the independent state through an ongoing democratic process. They reformed, as we have seen, both the civil society - through deracialization, and Native Authority – through detribalization, but separately and from above. With the substitution of administration for politics this “[...] bifurcated reform strategy re-created the bifurcated state” (Mamdani 2004: 300) and thus the political link established in the anti-colonial struggle was substituted with one of coercion.

Based on the early experience of the militant nationalists, Mamdani argues that of the two tensions that the subject-citizen divide revolve around, the interethnic and the rural-urban, the latter is the key. The conservative/moderate linking of urban-rural have been political, in the form of noncoercive clientelism. The radical approach have been coercive administrative. The challenge would be to bridge the urban-rural in a political manner that is non-coercive and democratic through the simultaneous reform of both the urban and the rural forms of power. “Only then will the distinction rural-urban – and interethnic – be more fluid than rigid, more an outcome of social processes than a state-enforced artefact.” (Mamdani 2004: 300-301)

What the second-generation radical reformers have shown in the most serious attempt to date of reforming rural power is, however, that decentralized democracy containerized at the local level is both partial and unstable.

It harbours contradictory possibilities: the point of reform of rural power can just as easily be to link up with representative demands from urban civil society as it can be to check these. If the objective is an overall democratization, it requires a balance between decentralization and centralization, participation and representation, autonomy and alliance. But if it is to checkmate civil society, a one-sided glorification of decentralization, autonomy and participation will suffice because, in the final analysis, it is bound to exacerbate the breach between the urban and the rural. (Mamdani 2004: 298)

So what does Mamdani's clarification imply? Can we on the basis of his analysis imagine how these linkages can come about in a context where power tends to fragment resistance? Let us now focus on the one group not catered for within this bifurcated system – neither privileged nor really gagged – namely the urban poor. As excluded only (from civil society and from rural authority), they are, strictly speaking, for good and for bad, *not ruled*.

Chapter 3: The Rise of a “Lumpenproletariat”

3.1 Introductory Remarks

Our starting point has been the colonial setting, where the urban native was a most precarious group for the whole stability of the system. After all, the political impetus of the national militant movements, to date the most successful in creating interethnic, urban-rural alliances, came from the disenfranchised native strata of the towns – *the excluded only*. “[T]hey shared a common social position: they lay beyond the reach of customary law and yet had few entitlements to civil rights. Though in civil society, they were not of civil society.” (Mamdani 2004: 297) As we have observed, vital traits of the bifurcated structure have survived in the postcolonial deracialized state. So what exactly will this group of urban excluded – today represented by the urban poor – signify in this partly new setting?

With the end of influx controls the “informal sector” has had an explosive growth as economic stagnation and crisis has been bleeding both the cities and the countryside white. Mamdani argues that today [...] it is migrant labour – and those in the informal sector – that forms a class that is in civil society but not of it.” (Mamdani 2004: 297) However, migrant labour is still within the reach of tribal authority; we recall the core ambition of South African apartheid policy of migrant labour: prior to the motive of keeping wages low it was a matter of renewing tribal links within the native semi-proletarian, and through that link also keeping the wages low via the substitution of class for ethnicity. As such Mamdani argues that:

The social role of migrants varies, depending on the political choices available to them. [...] that role can be progressive and nonprogressive. The point about the prodemocracy movement of today is precisely that it lacks a program for linking the urban and the rural on the basis of democratizing rural power [...]. In the absence of such a democratization, the customary will remain a rallying cry lining up urban-based migrants behind customary authorities in their ethnic homes and behind city-based champions of the customary – so as to defend customary rights, however residual these may be. In the linkage of the urban and the rural, the rural is the key. So long as the rural is not reformed, the perversion of civil society is inevitable. (Mamdani 2004: 297-298)

Could it be so that it is the informal sector – the city-based lumpenproletariat that could forge that intersection from which a program for thorough democratization could be formulated? This question will take us to the next step in this thesis – an investigation into the explosive growth of an urban lumpenproletariat everywhere in African cities. Let us take a brief look at the processes of postcolonial urbanization.

3.2 Planet of slums

As Mike Davis pinpoints in his book *Planet of Slums*, when considering why Third World cities and their slums grew so fast in the second half of the twentieth century, one needs first to grasp why they grew so *slow* in the first half. Davis dub the colonial mechanisms, such as the variety of restrictions on urban entry and urban citizenship, pass laws, vagrancy ordinances and migrant labour arrangements as the virtual political and economical equivalents to city walls, preventing massive transfer of rural poverty to the cities. This was particularly evident, as we have seen, in Africa where the colonial state was developed in its fullest potential. However, “[d]espite their antipathy to large native urban settlements, the British were arguably the greatest slum-builders of all time. Their policies in Africa forced the local labour force to live in precarious shantytowns on the fringes of segregated and restricted cities.” (Davis 2007: 52) Davis goes on to add that “Indeed, this almost universal refusal to provide even minimum sanitary infrastructure for the ‘native quarters’ until the 1950s was more than stinginess: it pointedly symbolized the lack of any native ‘right to the city’.” (Davis 2007: 53) It signalled strongly that no permanent urban proletariat was planned for and that: “The native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man’s creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefore when he ceases so to minister.” (The 1922 South African Stallard Commission quoted in Mamdani 2004: 93) This policy of retarded city growth found perhaps its most brutal expression in the continent’s latecomer in terms of indirect rule, South Africa, where it culminated in the *forced removals* from the 1950s. As such a legacy was established for making urbanization a *de facto*, but unplanned and informal affair. Colonial power sought to sculpt a mode of organizing society that combined modern ways of organizing capital and production, with that of avoiding the growth of corresponding societal forces, i.e. to

avoid the societal transformation that had followed in the wake of the capital-industrial production complex at home and the contours of it was becoming increasingly visible in India.

With the gradual growth of this non-recognized group as a consequence of irresistible socio-economic process an enormous problem of urban squalor arose that was to be inherited by national elites. As satellite economies, little manufacturing or value-adding processing was left in the colonial ports and centres and opportunities for formal employment and urban growth were meagre. The response to this immense challenge for the post-independence regimes varied from ambitious programs for housing, maintenance of urban influx controls, forced removals to simply ignoring the problems as efforts at industrial import-substitution policies, where attempted, rapidly collapsed in face of the growing debt-crisis and structural adjustment programs. Without going deeper into the differences in policies initially opted for, we here summarily conclude that according to UN estimates Black Africa will by 2015 have 332 million slum-dwellers, a number estimated to double every fifteen years. (UN statistics quoted in John Vidal, quoted in Davis 2007: 19)

The push factors from a war-torn and impoverished countryside sustain urban growth in spite of the weak pull of the towns. In sub-Saharan Africa urbanization has not only been decoupled from industrialization and development, but also from the supposedly *sine qua non* rise in the agricultural productivity. Explosive population growth, structural adjustment programs, environmental and climate related factors, conflict and, as we have seen, the deliberate under-urbanization of the colonial era are all vital push factors in understanding this process. The framework in which we primarily attempt to understand these factors are the legacy of bifurcated power that none of the postcolonial regimes managed to transcend. An unreformed countryside combined with an urban power ignoring the needs of urban poor has proven to be a recipe for a perverse urban boom. City growth in Africa has been subsidized by coercive policies forcing peasants to sell their products at artificially low prices and taxing the rural areas disproportionately high. In the case of Zaire

[...] President Mobutu regularly denounced “the dangers of hypertrophic urban development, and the attendant evils of unemployment and crime” while continuing to squeeze the countryside so ruthlessly that peasants had few options but to flee to the urban areas. But the so-called “urban bias” in African development hardly worked to the advantage of the new urban masses – indeed, as postcolonial elites and armed forces batted off the countryside, infrastructural provision and public services in the cities rapidly deteriorated.” (Davis 2007: 58-59)

To get an idea of the velocity of this urbanization, Kinshasa is today approximately *forty* times larger than it was around the time of independence. In comparison London was in 1910 seven times larger than it was at the beginning of the 19th century. (Davis 2007: 2) Seen against the background where the reformed bifurcated state tends to impede the generating and harnessing of

economic growth towards national aims both in terms of impeding development of a home market and in terms of nepotism, this urban magnitude is indeed amazing. Davis poses the question in this way: “[H]ow has Africa as a whole, currently in the dark age of stagnant urban employment and stalled agricultural productivity, been able to sustain an annual urbanization rate (3.5 to 4.0 percent) considerable higher than the average of most European cities (2.1 percent) during the peak Victorian growth years?” (Davis 2007: 14-15)

The answer seems to be that slum growth is outpacing urbanization and informal work is outpacing formal work. This is a global trend, but here we are limiting our discussion to the African continent, where the situation is in fact the most extreme. “Africa’s slums are growing at twice the speed of the continent’s exploding cities. Indeed, an incredible 85 percent of Kenya’s population growth between 1989 and 1999 was absorbed in the fetid, densely packed slums of Nairobi and Mombasa. Meanwhile any realistic hope for mitigation of Africa’s urban poverty has faded from the official horizon.” (Davis 2007: 18)

This was stated with grim clarity at the annual joint meeting of the IMF and World Bank in October 2004, where the UN’s Millennium development Goals for Africa, originally projected to be achieved by 2015, was on the agenda: “Sub-Saharan Africa will not achieve universal primary education until 2130, a 50 percent reduction in poverty in 2150 and the elimination of avoidable infant deaths until 2165.” (Gordon Brown quoted by Davis 2004: 18-19)

In the Third World, Davis argues, governments long ago abdicated the idea of an interventionist state committed to redress urban marginality, and this trend has been strongly reinforced by neo-liberal economic policy championed by IMF and the World Bank. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) demanded downscaling of government programs, privatization of housing markets and enterprises in debtor nations as a response to the debt crisis from the late 1970s. But “[...] the social state in the Third World was already withering away even before SAPs sounded the death knell for welfareism.” (Davis 2007: 62-63) It would perhaps be more precise to say that the social state was a concept perverted right from the beginning due to the legacy of the bifurcated colonial state and, as we have seen, the failure to successfully reform it. The interests of post-colonial elites seem moreover to have been adapting very well to the current neo-liberal economic orthodoxy of SAP.

[T]he urban rich in Africa [...] are rampantly, even criminally undertaxed by local government. Moreover, as financially hardpressed cities have come to rely on regressive sales taxes and user charges [...] the tax burden has shifted even more one-sidedly from the rich to the poor. [...] Part of the blame must be assigned to the IMF which, in its role as the Third World financial watchdog, everywhere advocates regressive user fees and charges for public services but never proposes counter-part efforts to tax wealth, conspicuous consumption, or real estate. Likewise, the World Bank crusades for “good governance” in the cities of the Third World but undermines its likelihood by seldom supporting progressive taxation. (Davis 2007: 68)

Both the fiscal bias, the interventionist role of global organs and “poaching” Davis relates to the lack of political clout of the poor majority: the lack of democratic constraint upon the post-colonial elites.

[U]rban democracy is still the exception rather than the rule, especially in Africa. Even where the slum poor have the right to vote, they can seldom wield it to effect significant redistributions of expenditures or tax resources: a variety of structural strategies – including metropolitan political fragmentation, control of budgets by provincial or national authorities, and the establishment of autonomous agencies – have been used to insulate urban decision-making from the popular franchise. (Davis 2007: 68)

The effect of this is that urban development authorities more often than not eclipse local municipal authorities and prioritise beautification and modern infrastructure construction in the wealthiest parts of town, allowing these islands to insulate themselves even more from the society that they are geographically embedded in, but increasingly distanced from politically, socially, culturally and economically as they plunge themselves into the global cyber-economy. The urban middle classes and elites are subsidized by the urban poor – paying unproportionally low taxes while receiving an un-proportionally high level of public services. The encroachment on the tasks and responsibilities, financial and human resources of local democratically elected authorities thus further undermines the whole concept of going to the polls. More often than not the citizens’ relation to their government is that of conspicuous absence of relation at all. In the words of a Nairobi slum-dweller: “The state does nothing here. It provides no water, no schools, no sanitation, no roads, no hospitals.” (Davis 2007: 62)

Regardless of the human degradation this “mal-development” implies, increasingly many voices give warnings that urban poverty will be the most significant and politically explosive problem of the 21st century.

3.3 Posing the question of political reform

The fact that the specific context can help us make sense of a particular form of power does not mean that the form of power cannot survive a change in context. For, clearly the context has changed – markets have both expanded and deepened over this century – but the apparatus of compulsion has not withered away in response. Power does not self-destruct. Its tendency is to adapt to a changing context and simultaneously try to shape it. The reform of political power requires an explicitly political reform. Only crude economic determinists can hope that market reform will automatically translate into democratic reform. In underlining the decentralized despotism that was forged in the colonial period, my point is to pose the question of political reform. (Mamdani 2004: 179)

If it is so, as Mamdani argues, that the legacy of the colonial state makes the postcolonial state very little sensitive to democratic demands – and that for a thorough and meaningful democratization to take place one needs a linking of the urban and the rural, one ethnicity with another; who seems more apt, theoretically, in bridging this gap than the urban poor? Linger on as they are in a limbo between:

- 1.) The civil sphere of the petty bourgeoisie “citizens” under direct and perhaps even “democratic” rule of the central state, little willing to give up their share of scarce resources and privileges, with links to the global economic networks.
- 2.) The traditional sphere of the peasants gagged under weights of decentralized despotic structures were market and compulsion still constitute complementary forces, or containerized within a participatory, local tribalized semi-democracy with few possibilities for representation in the central despotic state.
- 3.) The miniature genuine urban proletariat caught between draconic labour legislation to keep up with the ‘downward spiralling law’ of falling wages in a competitive global economy and the stream of services offered by an ever-growing reserve army of labour outnumbering themselves.

Based on the experience of the militant nationalist movements, within civil society but not of it, with links to the countryside but not within it, no longer forcibly being held separate from what socioeconomic processes spontaneously tend to bring together – the urban and the rural, one ethnicity with another – this could perhaps be the position from which to formulate a way ahead? Perhaps could the lumpenproletariat play the role as that point of intersection of every subversive ejected element in society, which the proletariat played in Europe’s historical trajectory towards democratization and welfareism. If that could be so, it seems of vital importance that this platform is based on a deeper understanding of the historicity of relations of subjugation and exploitation in the African continent. If it is so that this analytic approach to Africa as a unit of analysis is anything to go by, a separate program for action and reform is needed. According to R.H. Tawny, Calvin was for the bourgeoisie what Marx would become for the proletariat: providing the organization and the doctrine. (Bataille 1991: 123) Could this organization and doctrine be the missing link for progressive political mobilization of the urban poor in Africa in a quest for meaningful democratic participation, linking the urban-rural, one ethnicity by another, participation-representation, rights- customs, community-civil society in an effort to transcend the barrier citizen-subject?

It is important to note that there is an analytical difference between the slum-dweller and the lumpenproletariat, i.e. the workforce of the informal and “unproductive” sector. However, these groups tend to overlap – and their space is within the informal either in terms of living quarters, in terms of employment or both. As such the concept can be sub-divided into segments but without falling apart, and the sites of resistance could be imagined to be work based, community-based or interrelated within a matrix of slum-none-slum dweller, and formal-informal worker. Of course this is not a new and no particularly African phenomena. The early uprooted peasants and proletariat of the industrial revolution were primarily living in the slums rather than in neatly stretched out and serviced workers quarters, and the housing standard has historically

always, directly or indirectly been an issue in the workers movements. There is however a difference in the sense that in the colonial context, class and race almost perfectly overlapped and that there was a political strategy behind the lack of will to provide for a permanent urban proletariat – more than mere stinginess. The always too few hostels and townships did not even close to resemble an up-to date standard in terms of urban services and facilities. There was also a tendency for capital to demand a higher influx of labour than the political administration was willing to cater for, thus the increasing tendency towards squatting and overcrowding. Frantz Fanon vividly describes the socio-geography of the colonial city in his evocative work *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001 [1961]).

The settler's town is a strong-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. [...] The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners.

The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where and how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live on top of each other, and their huts are built on top of the other. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. [...] The colonized man is an envious man. And the settler knows this very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive 'They want to take our place'. (Fanon 2001: 30)

As Mamdani argues, apartheid-like structures can transcend a racist component. Power structures have an ability to adapt and outlive the context in which they were originally forged. The outline of almost any major African city differs little from the socio-architectural Manichaeism portrayed by Fanon and this seems to be intimately linked to the relation between the state and its population, citizens and subjects. As such, the obvious class component implied in this urban geography gets a certain particular twist in the African context as the political framework for containing class struggle has received a historically specific and unique form in the contamination of civil society by unreformed Native Authorities in the postcolonial state. The early crackdown on the embryonic indigenous civil society, such as trade unions, in the newly independent regimes exacerbated this situation in combination with the pauperizing effects of economic crisis.

Perhaps the urban poor today, just as under colonialism, constitute the most labile force for a stabilization of this form of rule. But can this group “pose the question of political reform”? Can they pose any meaningful threat to the continuity of colonial state structures? And if so, does that threat have the potential to overcome the breaches that Mamdani identifies or is their threat more of the character that leads to more chaos, more violence or potential social support bases for continuity of autocratic regimes or establishing of new – thus undermining more than supporting a genuine democratization process. As a matter of fact there are plenty of examples of modern

African regimes exploiting the reactionary and violent potential of this group, Of recent, the Robert Mugabe regime of Zimbabwe have eagerly been recruiting young, unemployed men and these thugs have played a major role in crackdowns on subversive, reform-minded elements. Moreover there seems to be strong reasons for suspecting the political violence in Kenya's presidential election 2007 to be a result of highly placed politicians' manoeuvrings and manipulations of the slum-populations.

This category seems, in most social theory, the least apt group to fend for democratization for a number of reasons; let us start by looking at Marx' and Bataille's analysis of this phenomenon to see if they can provide us with some useful analytic tools in grappling with this seemingly paradox: that the worst struck victims of these structures of modernity seems to be fending for their preservation.

PART II: Theories on the Politics of the Lumpenproletariat

Chapter 4: Fascism & Imperialism: Articulations of the Political role of the Lumpenproletariat in European Modernity – Marx, Bataille & Arendt

4.1 Introduction: The Lumpenproletariat in western social theory

Methodological remarks

As we argued in the introduction of this thesis, there seems to be a vital need for “articulation of practices” in the African context in the attempt to critically reflect on “the ontology of the present” – its possibilities and limitations through a genealogical approach. “Practices” do not articulate themselves, and it is here the need for empirically grounded philosophy arises. We have with Mamdani established a theory of the African state, and proceeded to discuss the de facto rise of a recent “phenomenon” *within* this state, i.e. the lumpenproletariat. We will now take one step further in an effort to conceptualize this lumpenproletariat. As we mentioned in the introduction, there exists a reservoir of theory in the European tradition that we want to make comparative use of in order to establish some concepts about this group as a *political category*. We believe that concepts and theories, descriptive and explanatory approaches established within one sphere, might prove productive if properly transformed and adapted to new conditions and phenomena. This is because in the process of doing this, both what is specific and what is generalizable potentially becomes more graspable, given that an understanding of what is to be compared is equally well founded and thus will not degenerate into some kind of “history by analogy”. Due to the intimacy and intertwinement of African and European modernity – never

quite similar, nor quite separable – a specific phenomenon in one sphere might very well shed light on a different phenomenon in the other.¹⁵ We will thus give an exposition of some theoretical articulations of the “practice” of the lumpenproletariat originating in the Western tradition, in order to investigate if we through can derive some analytic tools and concepts from these overall theories, that transcend the particular European context within which they were conceived. At the end of the chapter we will test how adequate these theories are in relation to the particular African experience of modernity and how far their explanatory power goes.¹⁶

The lumpenproletariat is an ill famed group in most social theory. Traditionally Marxist theory has been sceptical towards this group as they are free, not in a double but a triple sense: free from traditional bonds, free from means of production and free from exploitation as defined in accordance with Marx’s value-theory. In political theory in general, the lumpenproletariat is associated with the worst excesses and the most reactionary and erratic regimes of modernity. These regimes seem to be draining their vital force from the lumpenproletariat.

What we want to look closer at now is hence not primarily the concept of the lumpenproletariat as a reserve army of labour, i.e. an *economic category*. As a reserve army of labour, which the lumpenproletariat without question constitutes, this group *on the one side* becomes conceptualized primarily as a *residual political category* in light of the social and political project of the proletariat. From this perspective the lumpenproletariat is something to be eliminated and transformed into a proletariat, by the proletariat. We believe, however, that when the “anomaly” (which the lumpenproletariat is from such a perspective), becomes the normal state of affairs, i.e. a majority, there is a need to form positive concepts of this group as such – as of what it is, rather than what it is not, i.e. the proletariat. *On the other side*, from the perspective of capital, in contrast – which is indeed giving the “reserve army of labour” a positive content in terms of keeping wages low and thus makes sense from the point of view of the total social capital – there is the fact that most of these people are not even exploited as a reserve army by capital. Most African countries are not characterized by economic growth and investments, such as for example the Asiatic Tigers. As such, orthodox neo-liberal theory about the marvels of unregulated and unorganized labour markets does not capture the whole picture either. We will, however,

¹⁵ We would like to underline, however, that we by this do not mean that there exists some kind of dialectical relationship and as such we might say we agree with Hardt and Negri that even though colonialism may be dialectic in terms of producing representations of a binary and mutually dependent character, realities are not. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 128)

¹⁶ In our methodological approach we operate with an analytic distinction between theory and concept, i.e. the distinction between the conceptual interpretation and the theoretical explanation of a phenomenon. Georges Canguilhem developed this epistemological distinction and thus broke with positions that subjects concepts to the theories within which they are formulated. Canguilhem argues that concepts can work within different and competing theoretical frameworks, as the descriptions they provide can give rise to different questions regarding their explanation. (Gutting 2002: 229-232)

leave this discussion for now and examine a left-wing approach to this more *economistic* perspective more thoroughly in the next chapter in light of Hardt and Negri's book *The Empire*, whose scope is global in pretensions. Let us start by looking at the lumpenproletariat as conceptualized in more classical political theory in the line from Marx.

Conceptualization of the lumpenproletariat in Europe

In Western Europe the lumpenproletariat, according to Marx, primarily constituted a transitional phenomenon related to the phase of primitive accumulation, i.e. the historical period when the rural population was expelled from their land holdings and the means of production were expropriated by the capitalists. The uprooting of the peasants was intimately related to the emergence of the capitalist mode of production – the transforming force in the transition to the new industrial regime. Powerful productive engines therefore drove the city growth of the Victorian times. As such the lumpenproletarian was a transitional character – the in-between of a peasant and a wage-labourer. The expelled peasants were “[...] driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system.” (Marx 1989: 365-366) As the salaries through legal means were forced down, statutory provisions promised “[...] with ear-clipping and branding of those ‘whom no one was willing to take into service.’” (Marx 1989: 367) This brutal proletarianization nevertheless lead the way to an increasingly organized and pugnacious labour-force, which through continuous struggles with capital paved the way for the social democratic welfarism characteristic for the capitalist mode of production in Western post-war Europe. In periods of economic downturns, however, this otherwise marginal segment of the lumpen has occasionally been reappearing as a vital group on the national scenes, more often than not with devastating political consequences. What we want to do here is therefore not to look for the lumpenproletariat primarily as described in the *Capital* (1989 [1867]), but rather as they appear in Marx' study of the social formation in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

We will read this analysis of Bonapartism alongside Bataille's article “The Psychological Structure of Fascism”. Bataille will provide the theoretical framework for our interpretation of the phenomena described by Marx and its links to fascism, and, more fundamentally, our interpretation of what really is *new* in the historical context that produced Louis Napoleon. Bataille will continue to provide us with an interpretive framework when we proceed to Hannah Arendt's analysis of imperialism/colonialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. We will in this section broaden our approach to the political legacy in modernity of authoritarian solutions based on the lowest classes. We will thus attempt to get a better grip on fascism and imperialism/colonialism:

two forms of power that we will discover over the course of this thesis to be entangled both in their European origins and as practices in African colonial and post-colonial politics.

As an overall point of departure we will set two simple observations as a precondition for the perspective we take on in our reading of the above-mentioned works. Our interpretation will fundamentally rely on two historical turning points that are intimately interrelated, and of which we have derived our understanding of from Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Det Moderne Fængsels Historie 1977 [1975])*, namely:

1. That the source of wealth is labour rather than land, as the Physiocrats had thought. This new perception is related to the economic aspects of modernity – the rise of the capital-industrial complex as the primal mode of production.
2. The realization of the political potential of the masses as it came to light in the American and French revolutions – a perception which is related to the new understanding of the human being as the inseparable carrier of a “labour ability”, but not reducible to it.

This is essential for our understanding of the following, for, as Foucault nails it: modern statecraft evolve around how to make the masses economically productive, but politically controllable. The scope of this thesis does not allow for pursuing Foucault's analysis of this transition itself, but for our purpose it will be enough that we keep this “motto” in mind when we now proceed to an investigation into the analysis of Marx and Arendt as seen through the lenses of a theoretical framework that we will establish with Bataille.

4.2 The farces of Modernity – Marx on Bonapartism, Bataille on Fascism

Marx derisively remarks that history occurs as if it were twice: the first time as tragedy and the second as farce. The 1848 parody of 1789, seems, however unfortunate, to represent a new beginning just as much as conjuring up the spirits of the past in riotously farcical manners. Rather than the beginner who has learnt a new language and always translates it back into his mother tongue – the indebted and ludicrous nephew of Bonaparte indeed assimilated the spirit of the new language – however burlesque and however much in contrast to what Marx himself had anticipated this new language to be.

Marx' study of Louis Napoleon and Bataille's study of fascism both concentrate on abnormal times in need of abnormal measures. In contrast to the day-to-day silent compulsions of economics within modernity, which Marx describes in the *Capital* as the iron-laws of production¹⁷ (and which Foucault describes as disciplinarian power); the times they describe are

¹⁷ "It is not enough that the conditions of labour are concentrated in a mass, in the shape of capital, at the one pole of society, while at the other are grouped masses of men who have nothing to sell but their labour power. Neither is it enough that they are compelled to sell it voluntarily. The advance of capitalist production develops a working class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of nature. The organization of the capitalist process of production,

of the most extraordinary. These are times of economic depression and revolutionary upheavals where everything seems turned on its head. These are times of an embryonic proletariat as of 1848, or of a decimated one as under the 1930s depression. These are times when the lumpenproletariat becomes the source of political power on the national scene – the most marginalized of the marginalized become kingmakers. These are dangerous times. What Marx clearly grasps in the *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is the radically new way of founding political power on the affective organization of the masses excluded from the economic system. By tapping into the reservoirs revealed by the French revolution, Napoleon thrones himself as the *Principe* of the lumpen. The insight of Napoleon was to come very much again to the forefront in the interwar Europe, as Bataille early to realized in his study of the psychological structure of fascist mass appeal.

Bataille and Marx have of course a very different general framework in which their theories on these particular issues are embedded. It is only to the extent that these texts can give us a better grip on the political potentials of the lumpenproletariat that they are used here. We therefore do not attempt to do full justice to their originators. Let us therefore look closer at the dynamics of the processes that are of our interest.

Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

As already pointed out, both the periods analysed by Marx and Bataille respectively are characterized by being exceptional in relation to the normal day-to-day workings of the political economy of capitalism. In the terminology of Bataille the modern regime of industrial-capitalist production is generally characterized by an increasing *homogenization*. The *homogenous* for Bataille represents the equivalence and commensurability of elements and the consciousness of this. The *homogenous* is the sphere of utility (always for something *else*) and as such it does not represent a value or a goal in itself. The basis for the societal *homogeneity* is production and from this sphere every useless and incommensurable element is excluded. According to the instrumental rationality operative in *homogenous* society, man is essentially a mean, not an end; accumulation is essentially for the sake of accumulation, not for human *welfare* in the broadest sense. In the industrial order it is the owners of the means of production that form the foundation for the social *homogeneity*, and it is in the middle segment of the capitalist/bourgeois class that this

once fully developed, breaks down all resistance. The constant generation of a relative surplus population keeps the law of supply and demand of labour, and therefore keeps wages, in a rut that corresponds with the wants of capital. The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions is of course still used, but only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the labourer can be left to the "natural laws of production," i.e., to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by the conditions of production themselves. It is otherwise during the historical genesis of capitalist production." (Marx 1989: 366)

reduction is taken furthest. The proletariat is included in this order as far as work is concerned, but not in terms of profit and consumption.

The societal *homogeneity* arises spontaneously based on interactions in the production complex. It is nevertheless an unstable form, and it needs a specific form of *law and order* to protect itself against *heterogeneous*, i.e. excluded elements, that constantly threatens the workings of the *homogenous* order. In the social fabric *crowds, masses, warrior classes, aristocrats, violent agitators, insubordinate or mad individuals, poets* etc, as well as *the miserable classes* all represent the *heterogeneous*. The proletariat belong to this group as private individuals but not as employees. Insofar, however, that the *homogeneous* social order is inherently unable to establish external or non-economic values (it can only justify itself tautologically) it tends to seeks protection against these elements in a certain segment of the very *heterogeneity* itself. Traditionally the political alliance has been between *homogenous* and *sovereign imperative heterogeneous* forces as the king.

As such, the internal social structure of the *heterogeneous* itself has a dual character: divided into *pure vs. impure, transcendent/sublime vs. low, imperative vs. miserable/* potentially *subversive* forms. *Subversive* elements are lower *heterogeneous* forms converted from an amorphous mass to revolutionary consciousness and thus potentially compose a third constituting element of *heterogeneousness*, alongside the *imperative* and the simply *wretched*. A revolutionized proletariat can, according to Bataille, function as the intersection for every emitted *lower* element in the struggle against *sovereign imperative* forms. The “Hegelian master’s” *heterogeneity* is the incarnation of such an *imperative* sovereignty: he rules over his equals without any rational account for his domination. He appears as if he is of a *different nature* in relation to the *homogenous* principle of equivalence: he appears as *an end in himself*. “If the heterogeneous nature of the slave is akin to that of the filth in which his material situation condemns him to live, that of the master is formed by an act excluding all filth: an act pure in direction but sadistic in form.” (Bataille 1994: 146) Insofar then, as it is impossible to uphold *heterogeneity* in a “free” state – its character is *being for itself* and as such “useless” from the perspective of *homogeneity* – its destructivity is politically canalized (and thus made “useful”) towards those segments of *heterogeneity* that are the least compatible with *homogeneity* itself: alien societies, miserable classes and other elements threatening productivity.

All these *heterogeneous* elements (both the “higher” and the “lower” forms) provoke strong emotional reactions of both attraction and repulsion. A certain degree of “vehemence” and “violence” characterize them to the degree the laws of the societal *homogeneity* is broken and the state’s ability to hold them back or canalize their destructivity is weakened. The state is not in itself an *imperative* element, but rather an intermediate formation between the *homogenous* classes and

the ruling instances. As its character is a function of this relation – an expression of the prevailing societal compromise – it is not a value in itself and as such it is *homogenous*.

Depending on whether the State is democratic or despotic, the prevailing tendency will be either adaptation or authority. In a democracy, the State derives most of its strengths from spontaneous homogeneity, which it fixes and constitutes as the rule. The principle of its sovereignty – the nation – providing both its end and its strength, is thus diminished by the fact that isolated individuals increasingly consider themselves as ends with regard to the State, which would thus exist *for them* before existing *for the nation*. And, in this case, personal life distinguishes itself from *homogeneous* existence as a value that presents itself as incomparable. (Bataille 1994: 139)

The relation of strength between the societal *homogenous* and *heterogeneous* elements decides whether the state *can* be democratic or not, as the state plays the role of stern authority toward elements that cannot be assimilated and threatens the *homogenous* order. As such an investigation into the preconditions for the existence of the *homogenous* leads to an investigation into what *homogeneity* excludes: namely the position and role of the *heterogeneous*.

Homogeneity in dissolution - modern imperative solutions I: the reawakening of seemingly anachronistic ghosts, Fascism

As the societal *homogeneity* is a reflection of the system of production that implies that any contradictions within the development of the system of production will tend towards the disintegration of the *homogenous* social order. This disintegration is only becoming acute, however, if a considerable part of the *homogenous* layers no longer have interest in the preservation of the existing form of *homogeneity*, precisely because it is in the process of losing its character of *homogeneity*. That disintegration is social unrest in its negative form.

[T]he mode of resolving acute economic contradictions depends upon both the historical state and the general laws of the *heterogeneous* social region in which the effervescence acquires its positive form; it depends in particular upon the relations established between the various formations of this region when *homogeneous* society finds itself dissociated. (Bataille 1994: 140)

The positive form that the social unrest takes on is thus related to which of the *heterogeneous* forms – *subversive* or *imperative* – that the disassociated *homogenous* elements unite with. These disassociated elements then take on the general and positive form of this particular *heterogeneity*, i.e. *subversive* or *imperative*. It is within this framework that Bataille traces how seemingly anachronistic forms of sovereignty can reappear, as in the fascist regimes. Let us follow his argument.

Bataille is drawing attention to the affinity between fascism and Bonapartism understood as an acute reactivation of the latent sovereign *imperative* forces. Both Marx and Bataille points out the totally new about these movements that separates them from the classic *imperative* monarchical social order. In contrast to the monarchic order, which was characterized by the sovereigns' more or less total loss of contact with the lower classes, these movements have on the

contrary very intimate ties with the miserable classes. What is at issue is a radically new form of modern affective organization of the masses. These cases of reawakening of seemingly anachronistic ghosts is in fact extreme and modern cases of how *homogeneity* seeks refuge and salvation in *imperative heterogeneity* – its extreme manifestations being a combination of a fuehrer, army, militias recruited from the lumpenproletariat and with the *nation* as its transcendental principle. Characteristic, and a trait derived from military organization, is that representatives from the exploited and excluded classes can only be incorporated in this affective process when their characteristic nature is negated, displaced and transformed to its opposite. Let us look at Marx' description of this crowd:

[T]he lumpenproletariat, which in all big towns forms a mass sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds, *gens sans feu et sans aveu*¹⁸, varying according to the degree of civilization of the nation to which they belong, but never renouncing their *lazzaroni* character; at the youthful age at which the Provisional Government recruited them, thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption. (Marx 1978 : 62)

It is drained into the revolutionary potential of the mass unrest and this unrest is canalized as its negation through a combination of dutifulness, discipline, order on the one side – and *imperative* vehemence and violence on the other. The *heterogeneousness*' useless negativity achieves in these movements a positive, destructive form. It is the inordinate scope of this affective value “[...] that gives the chief and the whole formation the accent of violence without which no army or fascism could be possible.” (Bataille 1994: 154)

As opposed to democratic politicians, the power of these leaders is derived not primarily from their official position in the state.¹⁹ This duality makes clear that: “In conjunction with the duality of *heterogeneous* and *homogeneous* forms, this evidence of the deep roots of power precisely maintains the unconditional supremacy of the *heterogeneous* form from the standpoint of the principle of sovereignty.” (Bataille 1994: 156) Bataille argues that in contrast to the democratic politicians, who *essentially* represent the inherent banality of *homogenous* society, the fascist leaders immediately come forth as something totally *different*. They represent a *force* that is fundamentally absent within *homogeneity*, and the *state of exception* is the most obvious token of the *heterogeneous* character of fascism. In the fuehrer increasingly vehement energy-flows are accumulated through the affective stream that unites him with his followers, and this concentration of force in one point unifies one all-embracing *heterogeneous* power structure. In that sense this *heterogeneous* existence is “[...] *for itself* distinct from that of a formless uprising where *for itself* signifies ‘for the men in revolt.’” (Bataille 1994: 144).

¹⁸ I.e. shady characters (people without home and without social recognition).

¹⁹ The post as the German chancellor stands in radical opposition to the role as Fuehrer, just as the position as chief of the Society of December 10 stands in sharp contrast to the role as President of France.

After the seizure of power the *heterogeneous* forces commands the means of coercion necessary to enforce a solution to the contradictions within society's basic *homogeneity* (the apparatus of production) that unleashed the unrest in the first place. But as far as these forces are of an *imperative* character and any *subversion* is excluded, the solutions will aim towards agreement with the general direction of the existing *homogeneity*, i.e. with the aggregated interests of the capitalists. This, however, does not save the bourgeoisie from being negated by the very forces it desires, a dynamic Marx is capturing very well when he describes how the republic is buried December 2, 1851 to the accompaniment of the anguished cry of the coalitional royalists: "Long live the Republic".

The French bourgeoisie balked at the power of the working proletariat; it has brought the lumpenproletariat to power, with the chief of the Society of December 10 at the head. The bourgeoisie kept France in breathless fear of the future terrors of red anarchy; Bonaparte discounts this future for it when, on December 4, he had the eminent bourgeois of the Boulevard Montmartre and the Boulevard des Italiens shot down at their windows by the liquor-inspired army of order. The bourgeoisie apotheosised the sword; the sword rules it. It destroyed the revolutionary press; its own press has been destroyed. It placed popular meetings under police supervision; its salons are under the supervision of the police. It disbanded the democratic National Guards; its own National Guard is disbanded. It imposed a state of siege; a state of siege is imposed upon it. It supplanted the juries by military commissions; its juries are supplanted by military commissions. [...] It transported people without trial; it is being transported without trial. It repressed every stirring in society by means of state power; every stirring in its society is suppressed by the state power. Out of enthusiasm for its purse, it rebelled against its own politicians and men of letters; its politicians and men of letters are swept aside, but its purse is being plundered now that its mouth has been gagged and its pen broken. The bourgeoisie never wearied of crying out to the revolution what Saint Arsenius cried out to the Christians: "*Fuge, tace, quiesce!* Flee, be silent, keep still!" Bonaparte cries to the bourgeoisie: "*Fuge, tace, quiesce!* Flee, be silent, keep still!" (Marx 1979: 182)

Liberal revolution as precondition for the populist attraction of the imperative forces

We have now described the fascist usurpation of power – but in 1848 everything was totally different. 1848, in contrast to 1851, was a *subversive*, not *imperative* revolution. As we recall, the *subversive* elements are lower *heterogeneous* forms converted from an amorphous mass to revolutionary consciousness. A revolutionized proletariat can, according to Bataille, function as an intersection for every emitted *lower* element in the struggle against *sovereign imperative* forms. Characteristic for *liberal revolutions*, Bataille argues, therefore that disassociated *homogenous* elements (bourgeoisie) link up with the *subversive* and take on the general character of this form. This process is exactly what Marx describes as the first phase of the revolution, the overturning of the July-monarchy, in *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850* (1978 [1850]).

After the first phase, i.e. the liberal revolution, the context, however, has changed dramatically. This is because: "[I]n a democratic society [...] the *heterogeneous* imperative agency (nation in republican forms, king in constitutional monarchies) is reduced to an atrophied existence, so that its destruction no longer appears to be a necessary condition of change." (Bataille 1994: 158)" This is the precondition for the fact that the *imperative* forms can now function as an open field in the same way as the *subversive*. They are no longer associated with

and limited by the lost preceding form of sovereignty as before, when the *imperative* forces worked in the direction of Restoration (as the reaction on 1789, with the re-installment of Louis XVIII.)²⁰ With that, the *imperative* field is opened as revolutionary – where something totally new can spring into being.

The new is thus – in contrast to *L'Ancien Régime* – the renewed attraction of the *imperative* forces on a popular basis.

Hence the lower classes experience not solely the attraction represented by the socialistic *subversion*, and likewise disassociated elements from the *homogenous* classes can find a new outlet for their anxiety. They do not any longer have to ally with the *subversive* elements in a joint struggle against the sovereign. It is therefore not surprising, Bataille argues, that once given the option between *imperative* or *subversive* solutions, they have in their majority turned in *imperative* direction. This seems to us to be in accordance with how Marx depicts the development in France, which within a grisly short time span witnessed this turn. *The Class struggles in France 1848 to 1850* describe how all *heterogenized* elements coalesced to dethrone the July-monarchy in 1848. Immediately after this common goal is achieved, class struggle breaks out as the contradictory nature of this alliance comes into the open. The still *subversive* forces, i.e. the proletariat, is crushed by an alliance of all bourgeoisie elements together with the lumpenproletariat organized in *Mobil guards*, dressed in uniforms that made them outwardly distinct from ordinary people and paid the 1 franc 50 centimes a day.

And so the Paris proletariat was confronted with an army, drawn from its own midst, of 24,000 young, strong, foolhardy men. It gave cheers for the Mobile Guard on its marches through Paris. It acknowledged it to be its foremost fighters on the barricades. It regarded it as the *proletarian* guard in contradistinction to the bourgeoisie National Guard. Its error was pardonable. (Marx 1978: 62-63)

The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte witnesses the change where Napoleon arises as a radically *new* form of *imperative* force with a populist basis in the lowest classes. The *homogenous* republican forces (who organized the *Mobil guards*) are simply no longer capable of upholding themselves due to the lack of foundation in *heterogeneous* values. All laws guaranteeing liberal freedoms and rights had by then been supplied with organic laws, whose purpose it was to hold the “ghost of the revolution” – the socialists – at bay, in spite of the fact that they had already since long played out their role due to the devastating defeat in June 1848. The bourgeoisies’ reaction was thus more of a psychological (or at least premature) paranoia, rather than a rational response to any real and imminent threat. An enormous, *heterogeneous* and

²⁰ Thus we clearly see the difference to Napoleon Bonaparte. Even though his dictatorship can be seen as a usurpation of the revolution on a popular basis, the very realistic prospect of the re-installment of the monarchy in absolutistic form was haunting the prospect. In addition it was in the Napoleonic state ideally the citizen of the universal state, i.e. the worker-soldier in the revolutionary army, according to Hegel, rather than a lumpen-militia, that formed the basis for Napoleons political, though imperial power.

preemptive violence was thus paradoxically unleashed in order to prevent violence and tighten all the cracks of a *homogeneity*, which was scattered in the very same effort. The democratic experiment undermined itself as anxiety was allowed to pose the answers and not only the questions on the political agenda, leading Marx to the conclusion that “[p]resent-day France was contained in a finished state within the parliamentary republic. It only required a bayonet thrust for the abscess to burst and the monster to spring forth before our eyes.” (Marx 1979:183) “France, therefore, seems to have escaped the despotism of a class only to fall back beneath the despotism of an individual without authority.”²¹ (Marx 1979: 185). As an executive power made independent, Bonaparte perceived himself as the protector, but also the adversary of all classes simultaneously. “But, above all, Bonaparte looks on himself as the chief of the Society of December 10, as the representative of the lumpenproletariat, to which he himself, his entourage, his government and army belong [...]” (Marx 1979: 194).

Subversive revolution is thus hampered by the modalities in the social fabric when the *heterogenized* elements just as well can be drawn in *imperative* direction. A totally *new* situation springs into existence at the moment it within the same society announce itself two competing revolution that are both hostile towards each other and towards the existing order. From this, Bataille drew the gloomy conclusion that:

[A]n increase in this effervescence is accompanied by a proportionate increase in the importance of the *dissociated elements* (bourgeois and petty bourgeois) as compared to that of the elements that had never been integrated (proletariat). Thus the chances for a working class revolution, a liberating subversion of society, disappear to the extent that revolutionary possibilities are affirmed. (Bataille 1994: 159)

In the sphere of modern politics it is not “the Hegelian masters” that poses the greatest obstacle to the “practices of freedom”.

4.3. Homogeneity in dissolution - modern imperative solutions II: The export of seemingly anachronistic ghosts, Colonialism

The new fact in the imperialist era is that these two superfluous forces, superfluous capital and superfluous working power, joined hands and left the country together. (Arendt 2004: 200)

In light of what we have now examined it is both interesting and almost banal to see that one of the most powerful theories of imperialism is linked precisely to the growth of the European lumpenproletariat. There is a long theoretical tradition for relating the whole colonial enterprise to the need for an outlet of surplus capital and surplus population. In line from J. A. Hobson, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Hannah Arendt, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri the colonial project has been understood as motivated and made possible by the problematic growth of these, in Bataille’s

²¹ We recall the Weimar republic after 1930 being ruled increasingly through laws of exception.

terminology, *heterogeneous elements*, and that colonialism provided an outlet for both. According to these theories, this export functioned to uphold the day-to-day workings of the iron laws of production and discipline at home, thus in fact preventing such revolutionary upheavals described by Marx and Bataille. As such imperialism can be seen from the immediate perspective of the mother country as a less dramatic solution, however much implying the dangers of a boomerang effect – as summarized by Edmund Burk: “breakers of law in India” might be tomorrow’s makers of law at home.²² In light of Bataille’s theoretical framework, these theories can be said essentially to concentrate on how *homogeneity* has the prevention of its own dissolution in sight in its dealings with *heterogeneous* elements. Through the canalization of *heterogeneous* elements abroad, the positive form that mass unrest took on in a no-less all-embracing *heterogeneous* power structure – the colonial state, characterized as we have seen by a state of exception – was imperialism. In relation to imperialism we will here follow Hannah Arendt’s line of argument as outlined in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*²³, but expound and discuss it in light of the theoretical framework established in the preceding section – thus Arendt’s theories will be clothed in the terminology of Bataille.

Causes for dissolution of homogeneity

Within *homogenous* society both surplus capital (capital which cannot be reinvested) and people (that cannot be put to work) are problematic and destabilizing entities. Whereas the above section described the processes of disintegration of the social *homogeneity* and simply stated that it was due to internal contradictions within the system of production, it did not go in details about the causes for disintegration. Both in pre-revolutionary France and in 1930s capitalist countries we find a major reason for disintegration in the increasingly divergent interests of financial and

²² “The power of the House of Commons...is indeed great; and long may it be able to preserve its greatness...and it will do so, as long as it can keep the breaker of law in India from becoming the maker of law for England.” (Burke quoted in Arendt 2004: 240).

²³ Arendt seems, in spite of the brilliance of her overall argument, herself tainted by a racist logic. That becomes particularly evident on the pages 251-257 (2004). In the part where she elaborates African conditions she seems to go totally astray in terms of her own conceptions of what it is to be human, as she seems to accept a difference between being human and “civilized”, where “civilization” seems to be present even in what she elsewhere describes as the scum of Europe, while absent in the African peoples they were confronted with in the process of occupation. It is our opinion that she thus is accepting to a certain extent the logic and legitimacy of the “first” white man’s reactions (which she in the rest of her argument denounces) to these peoples who “behaved like a part of nature” (Arendt 2004: 251). Their “major crime” is thus not so much seen in light of the occupation, as in their reluctance to spread “the light” of enlightenment and establish a “civilization”. As such she seems confused in terms of the dual legacy of enlightenment ideals. She also seems to go astray in terms of the empirical foundation of her description of the way of life in southern Africa. The Zulu-kingdom was a far more complicated and sophisticated affaire than what Arendt manage to depict in her rather conformist-with-spirit-of-the-time conception. When she refers to Joseph Conrad’s works, we suspect him for better understanding the conditions of the subjugated peoples, than Arendt. These pages by Arendt, for all her well-meant and ethical directedness, may prove as a lesson for all of us for the power of discourse and chauvinism.

industrial capital.²⁴ Arendt argues that left to itself, if in big quantities, surplus capital proves counterproductive to capital interests of production as it tends to result in conspicuous consumption and orgies of swindles, frauds, racketeering stock-market speculations, financial scandals, tremendous profits as well as losses, turning society into a community of gamblers rather than producers. Thus overproduction of capital leads to a “complete reversal of economic and moral values.” (Arendt 2004: 261) This, she argues, was gradually realized in Britain at the turning point of venturing into extensive colonial enterprises.²⁵

In addition to overproduction of capital, the growth of a surplus population posed serious concerns for crime, social unrest and that these forces could potentially link up either with the proletariat (*subversive*) or antidemocratic demagogues (*imperative*) – forces aimed towards the destruction of the current (*homogeneous*) order. However, in since long consolidated parliamentary Britain, where the bourgeoisie developed in an atmosphere of security and mutual understanding with the nobility, a “Napoleon” did not present himself as clearly as in France. Nevertheless, in the context of “oversaving”, a social system based on maldistribution became ever more precarious as the holders of this capital did not fulfil the role as stimulators and producers of production. This wealth could simply not be legitimized as having a function for the wellbeing of the nation as a whole, which in Britain at this time essentially had become a “mature” community of producers.

Arendt argues that the severe economic crisis of the 1860s in Britain gradually led the bourgeoisie to understand that their original sin – “the original accumulation of capital” – had to be repeated in order to find new non-capitalist supply and demand to revitalize the system. At the moment capitalism had pervaded the whole economic national structure and all its social strata, new non-capitalist hinterlands had to be found or the social structure of society dramatically changed. As such we could say that increasing *homogenization* within a closed system – both understood as the capitalist nation-state or internationally as a system of capitalist nation states, and und as the reluctance to include the lower classes in consumption, which essentially could have functioned as a hinterland in terms of demand – ultimately lead to an increased *heterogenization*. Within these circumstances

²⁴ Marx himself writes extensively on this divergence in the works on France.

²⁵ We believe the causes for colonization to be multifaceted. Among other things the acute cotton shortage in Britain due to the American civil war, Frances’ injured national pride after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war 1870-1871 or King Leopold of Belgium’s’ personal megalomania could be mentioned. We therefore do not believe the theoretical framework presented here easy, swiftly and elegantly really captures the whole picture, and that all motivational factors can be so summarily summed up as it is done in the following sections. However, this thesis is not about the reasons for the colonial enterprise as such. The same goes for the following lines of the argument as for the preceding – the theories presented here interest us to the extent that they shed light on our subject-matter and should therefore not be seen as exhausting neither in terms of their empiric explanatory power nor in terms of doing full justice to their originators.

[Imperialism] gave a new lease on life to political and social structures which were quite obviously threatened by new social and political forces and which, under other circumstances, without the interference of imperialist developments, would hardly have needed two world wars to disappear. As matters stood, imperialism spirited away all troubles and produced that deceptive feeling of security, so universal in pre-war Europe. (Arendt 2004: 196)

As we know, this living on “borrowed time” proved disastrous – the old Europe was eventually caught up with by both the strong movements that it had feared and due to this fear ultimately produced: totalitarian fascism and communism, and the outlived order was swept away in two incomparable orgies of violence. In the words of Marx, weakness, as ever, had taken a refuge in a belief in miracles, fancying the enemy overcome when it had conjured him away in imagination, and thus lost all understanding of the present. (Marx 1979: 107) Imperialism seemed to promise exactly this kind a miracle.

Colonialism as solution to disintegration

The menace of superfluous people was early realized and identified as a problem in political thinking, long before the appearance of superfluous capital. The exit-option had for long been an attractive alternative for both governments and the excess population themselves, as the massive emigration to the United States, Australia and Canada bears witness to. The new that happened to the late 19th century imperialism was, according to Arendt, that superfluous working power now was joined by superfluous capital in leaving the country.

The rise of the mob out of the capitalist organization was observed early, and its growth carefully and anxiously noted by all great historians of the nineteenth century. [...] But what the historians, sadly preoccupied with phenomenon in itself, failed to grasp was that the mob could not be identified with the growing industrial class, and certainly not with the people as a whole, but that it was composed actually of the refuse of all classes. This composition made it seem that the mob and its representatives had abolished class differences, that those standing outside the class-divided nation were the people itself (the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as the Nazis would call it) rather than its distortion and caricature. The historical pessimists understood the essential irresponsibility of this new social stratum, and they also correctly foresaw the possibility of converting democracy into a despotism whose tyrants would rise from the mob and lean on it for support. What they failed to understand was that the mob is not only the refuse but also the by-product of bourgeois society, directly produced by it and therefore never quite separable from it. They failed for this reason to notice high society's constantly growing admiration for the underworld, which runs like a red thread through the nineteenth century, its continuous step-by-step retreat on all questions of morality, and its growing taste for the anarchical cynicism of its offspring. (Arendt 2004: 206)

In a national environment threatened to be torn apart by class-struggles, imperialism's additional advantage to that of simply providing an outlet, was that it promoted itself as being in the interest of the nation as a whole and its advocates seemed to reason along the lines of sound economic interests. In that sense, imperialism appealed to the immediate concerns of the people *and* promised to redeem the moral crisis of the bourgeoisie. Thus imperialism was not as strongly opposed by liberal and socialist parties as one might have expected (and in fact often met stronger

critique from conservative circles).²⁶ The bridgehead in this unholy and unnatural alliance between nationalism and imperialism could only be racism, as the political ideology underlying the two principles (nation-state – empire) so obviously conflicts.²⁷ As we have seen in the first part of this thesis, the British were the first to fully grasp this and did therefore not even attempt to spread one civil code worthy of an old-fashioned empire, but increasingly conscious of the abyss between the body politic of the nation, being inherently unsuitedness for imperial ambitions, designed the bifurcated state as a mode of rule in its latest possessions.

In Marxist terms the new phenomena of an alliance between mob and capital seemed so unnatural, so obviously in conflict with the doctrine of class struggle, that the actual dangers of the imperialist attempt – to divide mankind into master races and slave races, into higher and lower breeds, into coloured people and white men, all of which were attempts to unify the people on the basis of the mob – were completely overlooked. [...] Socialists were still probing the economic laws of imperialism when imperialists had long since stopped obeying them, when in overseas countries these laws had been sacrificed to the “imperial factor” or “race factor”, and when only a few elderly men in high finance still believed in the inalienable rights of the profit rate. (Arendt 2004: 202)

We recall how the political question – “the native question” – dominated the shaping of a state consciously designed to avoid class as a mode of native representation. (c.f. chap. 1.3) It is a certain irony in the fact that the “masters” – as they saw themselves in the occupied world – and the “incarnations of the general will of the nation” – as they perceived themselves in relation to their homelands – in reality was a ragtag amassment of people composed of the redundant scum of the accelerating European *homogenization*.

As superfluous capital took the lead, export of power would follow to secure foreign investments that were coming to proportions dangerous for the national productivity. Only by political expansion could the national economies reintegrate the outpouring and gambling of national wealth and rationalize the flows of foreign investments to the benefit of the home economy. Thus, as we have argued, increased *homogenization* led to an explosive growth of *heterogeneous* elements that were none-incorporable unless the political structure of maldistribution would be changed or an exit-option existed. Surplus capital therefore took the lead out of the country joined by surplus work-power, opting for an *imperative* rather than *subversive* solution to the disintegration. Governments would more or less reluctantly follow, expanding the national instruments of violence overseas to the extent they were realizing that their societies were

²⁶ Both in Britain and in Germany the liberal and socialist parties were complicit in the imperial policy. In Germany the Conservative party was sceptical to Kaiser Wilhelm II’s aggressive naval policy, whereas Bismarck earlier had been reluctant towards overseas imperialism and instead addressed the social question with social reforms. As the breakdown of the international solidarity of the proletariat at the outbreak of the First World War also shows, the appeal of nationalism was strong and this is perhaps the most plausible explanation to why imperialists were allowed by the working classes to become “parasites upon patriotism”, as Arendt puts it.

²⁷ For an analysis of the inherent inconsistency between nationalism and imperialism – nation-states and empire-building see Arendt 2004, especially on the pp. 169-181.

in a process of disintegration, and hence opting for imperialism as a measure to dam up for social and political forces challenging hopelessly outdated political structures. This expansion of power, cut loose from the checks and balances of the nation-state, had its effect on the conspicuous vulgarity of African colonial political economy.

The Establishment of an all-embracing heterogeneous imperative structure abroad²⁸

The bourgeoisie's empty desire to have money beget money as men beget men had remained an ugly dream so long as money had to go the long way of investment in production; not money had begotten money, but men had made things and money. The secret of the new happy fulfilment was precisely that economic laws no longer stood in the way of the greed of the owning classes. Money could finally beget money, because power, with complete disregard for all laws – economic as well as ethical – could appropriate wealth. (Arendt 2004: 183)

The abundance of native labour, whether compelled or symbolically paid, Arendt argues, promised for the European mob a permanent emancipation from work, and ironically it was the discovery of gold and diamond fields in South Africa in the 1870s – the most fantastic and superfluous raw material on earth – that acted as a catalytic agent for imperialism's promise to permanently solve the problem of superfluity.²⁹ As Arendt pinpoints, it is significant that at a time, when society was about to part with all traditional absolute values (*heterogeneous* values), it was deluded to look for an absolute value – gold – in the sphere of economics, where such a thing cannot possibly exist insofar as everything per definition is functional (*homogenous*). As such, the situation *within the colony* was perhaps the closest we get to a condition where *heterogeneity* could be upheld in a “free” state. (c.f. chap. 4.2) For the *mother country* on the other hand, imperialism represented an attempt at canalizing the destructiveness of *heterogeneousness* outwardly and make it “useful”, in a venture that was not perceived as simply rampant looting, but as a permanent solution.

The particularity of the colon society left its imprint on colonial rule in Africa, as this new mob of superfluous men of misery or capital was both unwilling to work and to establish a “market-civilization” according to the laws of capitalism and its all-encompassing principle of *homogenization* – however distorted and unjust this kind of “civilization” might be. (c.f. chap. 1.3) The gap between the economic trajectories of these late colonies and the old, such as USA, Canada or Australia, might perhaps be explained by this fact. Thus, as we have seen in South Africa, the most industrialized country, the growth of modern labour markets was impeded through politics of institutionalizing migrant labour, and the mining of symbolic metals and diamonds – ancient symbols of wealth – were prioritized at the expense of more sound industrial

²⁸ In the older colonies such as the USA, Canada and Australia, an all-embracing heterogeneous power structure was not really established as the indigenous population were simply killed and the survivors not really considered vital for production. These lands were more or less perceived as “empty”.

²⁹ With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, British possessions in South Africa were no longer vital for the route to India and were in the process of being liquidated.

development and production of consumer goods. The colonial economy was solely harnessed to non-national ends, i.e. to the interests of quickest possible returns for absentee-shareholders (c.f. chap. 1.3). As Arendt argues “[...] the neglect of all authentic industrial enterprise was the most solid guarantee for the avoidance of normal capitalist development and thus against a normal end of race society.” (Arendt 2004: 265) This break with the law of profitability, she holds forth, is an inevitable outcome whenever the mob gets the upper hand in its alliance with capital – which we also have seen from the analysis of Marx and Bataille, where the big bourgeois was no less negated by the forces it put in play. A significant lesson of modernity was learnt in the race-divided society:

[P]rofit motives are not holy and can be overruled, [...] societies can function according to principles other than economic, [...] circumstances may favour those who under conditions of rationalized production and the capitalist system would belong to the underprivileged [...] through sheer violence an underprivileged group could create a class lower than itself, [...] for this purpose it did not even need a revolution but could band together with groups of the ruling classes [...]. (Arendt 2004: 268)

According to Arendt, race and bureaucracy proved to be two fundamental pillars in colonial rule, and we add: from the perspective of the colons. Developed independently, they soon came to be intimately interrelated. Whereas “race” initially appealed to the worst elements of Europe, “bureaucracy” attracted more often than not the intelligentsia. After the first initial outpour of capital and people, followed by the riotously scramble among the European great powers, colonization was a *fait accompli*. The “best” sons of England were then recruited and trained for service in the colonial bureaucracy; as we have seen in Mamdani’s bifurcated state, the colonized were to be ruled through administration, not politics. The establishment of a ruling exclusive cast of “experienced experts”, with no codified law nor checks and balances to guide them, brought England close to the feared boomerang-effect that Burke had warned against. They eagerly began to defend a position outside home-parliamentary control, pleading for an atmosphere of discretion and secrecy to encapsulate their work in order to avoid the invading stare of the “inexperienced majority”. They became increasingly convinced of their innate capacity to rule in the interest of the mother-country, but never let their patriotism lead them astray by “naïve” and “well-meaning” believes in the inherent superiority of the mother-country’s institutions as applied to the “backward peoples” (who should, we recall, be ruled by their “customs”, i.e. Native Authority). As such democratic control and public transparency of their activities were highly despised and considered “counter-efficient”. (On the imperialist character see Arendt 2004: 269-286)

Aloofness became the new attitude of all members of the British services [...] Integrity and aloofness were symbols for an absolute division of interests to the points where they are not even permitted to conflict. In comparison, exploitation, oppression, or corruption look like safeguards of human dignity, because exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, corruptor and corrupted, still share the same goals, fight each other for the possession of the same things; and it is this *tertium comparationis* which aloofness destroyed. Worst of all

was the fact that the aloof administrator [Lord Cromer] was hardly aware that he had invented a new form of government but actually believed that his attitude was conditioned by “the forcible contact with a people living on a lower plane.” So, instead of believing in his individual superiority with some degree of harmless vanity, he felt that he belonged to “a nation which had reached a comparatively high plane of civilization” and therefore held his position by right of birth, regardless of personal achievement.” (Arendt 2004: 275-276)

In light of the bifurcated state and its dualism between civil society vs. Native Authority, Arendt’s observation seems quite apt. If we recall Bataille then, these administrators could be described as the ultimate *sovereign-imperative heterogeneous* “masters” whose direction aim towards purity, but whose form is sadistic. In contrast to the old sovereign, as Foucault describe him in *The history of the modern prison*, this character was not driven by outwardly honour, fame and glory; rather his ethos was secrecy and anonymity in the mother country, and the feared and eventually inglorious inventor of “administrative massacres” in the colony. Thus one could argue that the mobs initial cry echoing Mr. Kurtz³⁰ infamous phrase “Exterminate all the brutes” was refined in the clean and clear language of a bureaucrat, as the mob and the administrators jointly prayed to be saved from the humanistic ignorance and meticulousness of “the English departments”, which could eventually lead to what Winston Churchill lamented as “the liquidation of His Majesty’s Empire” (Arendt 2004: 286). And we think they were in fact rightly concerned—to the extent the *subversive* indigenous forces eventually came to get increasing sympathy and support for their cause, from the national political body of the colonial powers themselves.³¹

4.4 The consequences of the establishment of an all-embracing heterogeneous imperative structure in the colony

As we have seen, the export of the problems via imperialism did eventually not save old Europe from itself, but nevertheless it established long-lived structures abroad. How useful then, are these theories and concepts in relation to the particular African experience of modernity? Initially the nature and frequency of authoritarian regimes in Africa seemed to promise that there might be something to gain from comparisons with theories about European authoritarianism based on the mobilization of the lower classes. In grappling with these theories of Marx, Bataille and Arendt, we have also come closer to a better understanding of colonialism itself, i.e. the very forces creating the bifurcated state in the first place. We will now try to apply these insights to the context of African modernity, thus pursuing our genealogical undertaking of philosophically questioning the present.

³⁰ The bizarre character in Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness*.

³¹ We recall for example the devastating and polarizing effects the Algerian issue had within France during the war for independence 1954-1962.

Imperative heterogeneous rule detached from popular support: *L'Ancien Régime* and Colonial Rule

As we can see, the classical *imperative* monarchical social order and colonial rule have one thing in common – namely their detachment from the lower classes in the case of *L'Ancien Régime*, and from the *native masses* in the case of colonialism. In the bifurcated state this detachment was institutionalized with the establishment of dual spheres: the civil society for the colons and the Native Authorities for the colonized. The sphere of civil society was characterized by exclusion, while the sphere of Native Authority defined by inclusion but through despotism (c.f. chap. 1.3) *L'Ancien Régime* and colonial power are thus similar in the sense that they were both aloof, but differ in the sense that the latter attempted to harness the productivity of the population towards the industrial apparatus in the metropolis – and as such represented an integration into the capitalist system of production and money-economy.

Thus, if we stretch the concepts and relate them to the colonial political economy, we can view the overall *imperative* colonial domination as establishing dual spheres of semi-*homogenization* and disciplinarity producing subjectivities and bodies:

1. The sphere *within* civil society – where economic relations were regulated according to market principles and legislation in accordance with the Occident. Within this peculiar colonial *homogenous* sphere founded upon the *heterogeneousness* that a race-society implied, the possibilities for *subversion* were limited by the fact that everybody in this sphere per definition belonged to the “masters”.³²

2. The sphere *within* Native Authorities – where economic relations were at the intersection between market and compulsion, and “the customary” represented an erratic discourse of disciplinarity vacillating between broadly accepted customs and imposed “customs”, privilege and terror, appeasement and repression. In its deep roots this form of power rested on the unconditional supremacy of violence – a defining feature of power in most political theory – but the particular brutality of this regime is well captured by Frantz Fanon when he writes that: “In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and ‘bewilderers’ separate those exploited from those in power.” In the colonies however, “The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination.” (Fanon 2001: 29). Thus *subversive* elements were of course to be found in this sphere, but in the darkest age of colonialist terror and fragmentation they were more often simply *wretched*, politically speaking. Nevertheless this regime cannot be reduced to a slave mode of production. Rather we could say that colonialism “chose” to make the masses *less* productive to the advantage of political control in a context of occupation, within the

³² We recall for example how eager South African policy-makers were to “alleviate” the situation whereby poor white and poor black people interacted (c.f. chap. 1.3).

matrix that Foucault defines as the key to understand modern statecraft (c.f. chap. 4.1 & 1.3).³³ As Arendt argues, the overruling of the profit-motive is the outcome whenever the mob gets the upper hand in their alliance with capital, but as Bataille argues, *imperative* solutions may negate the interests of capitalists and nevertheless aim towards agreement with their aggregated interests, which in the colonial context meant overexploitation where: “Money could finally beget money, because power, with complete disregard for all laws – economic as well as ethical – could appropriate wealth.” (Arendt 2004: 183)

This second, seemingly erratic, sphere was “normalized” or “whitewashed” in the first sphere of civil society in terms of export and integration of accumulated wealth into the world market; rarely do money smell.³⁴ It was furthermore “normalized” in the overall sphere of the state-hegemony, where it was legitimized as being a totally new form of government respecting local rule, and thus in the same process accrediting violence to custom³⁵ (we recall that the advantage of indirect rule was that it could be argued to be both natural and historical, easing the dichotomy of racial oppression through tribal pluralism, see chap. 1.3). In essence, within this overall invention not only a particular form of *law and order* was needed – but *order and no law at all* was a prerequisite, i.e. the institutionalization of a *state* of exception, quite literally, in the very heart of the legal-systems themselves.

The marginalized urban population, belonging to neither sphere of control, but at the intersection of both in a judicial limbo, represented the most threatening segment to the *imperative heterogeneousness* of this overawing state. They were the un-incorporable in neither sub-regime of semi-homogenization, and as such the weak link in the chain in so far that they could not really be *ruled* as excluded only. They were the social group that most of all resembled any kind of western class-setup, and as we have seen this was tried remedied by labour migration and semi-proletarianization in order to keep them within the sphere of Native Authority and thus avoid class as their mode of representation. Thus the export of *heterogeneous* elements and the subsequent establishment of an *imperative*, aloof power, resulted in very different articulations of social capitalist relations.

³³ In contradistinction to the mother countries where they were in danger of losing political control to the advantage of productivity, manifest in violent class struggles, which colonialism promised to remedy and which the bifurcated state was harnessed to prevent.

³⁴ Only in the case of the utterly repulsive regime of King Leopold in Congo did civil society in Europe react decisively to colonial exploitation – and the success of this movement was not crowned with the abolition of colonial exploitation, but with the transfer of jurisdiction over Congo from the King in person to the Belgian state. For an account of this civil protest movement in Europe see Adam Hochschild *King Leopold's Ghost: a story of greed, terror, and heroism in Colonial Africa* (2000).

³⁵ Reading diverse colonial records it is quite remarkable to what extent the language of force is ascribed to its victims. “Blame the victims” seems to be running like a red thread in western historiography on Africa and the power of this discourse seems not to have faded, but perhaps been revitalized with the end of colonial rule.

The end of race-based heterogeneity upheld in a “free” state: moving towards the present

In contrast to the old race-divided days where *the whole* black urban community was treated as a lower, not only class, but “race”, the situation due to deracialization has changed. With the disappearance of racist legislation, the formal legal status (even) of the urban poor has in most cases been altered more than that of the peasants. As Mamdani argues the urban poor live within the confines of the modern civic power –the law-defined boundary of civil society and their predicament may be grasped as: “[A] *de jure* legal equality compromised by *de facto* social inequality, a formal access to legal institutions rendered fictional in most cases by the absence of resources with which to reach these institutions [...]”. The situation of the rural poor in contrast: “[...] is not the lack of access or reach, but the actual law (customary law) and its implementing machinery (Native Authority) that confront them. Their problem can be grasped not through an absence or remoteness to institutions, but through institutions immediately and actually present.” (Mamdani 2004: 137)

As we have seen it was the small black lumpenbourgeoisie and middle-classes of the colonial era that at the moment of independence were towering as the new elite, the new “citizens”, and the bifurcated structures were not transcended. Not much has happened in terms of socio-geographic layout of the cities – which is still characterized by enormous inequalities in the standard of services provided and a weak proletariat. Nor has much happened to alleviate the countryside, which partly accounts for the explosive slumification. Despotism and/or lack of thorough and meaningful democratization are endemic on the continent, but the character of despotism seems to be altered in a specific way.

Whereas white supremacy, like the old forms of sovereignty, was characterized by total aloofness³⁶ – limiting their cooperation to local traditional elites – the new forms of central dictatorships seem rather dependant on some kind of popular support from the lowest classes, *none-subversive heterogeneous* social elements, organized as army, militias and mobs recruited from the lumpenproletariat. These are often mobilized around The Party (in the radical-nationalistic regimes) or ethnicity (in the conservative-nationalistic regimes) as the transcendental principle, thus stressing either the urban-rural or the interethnic cleavages. To make the point clearer in terms of the latter: insofar as the term ethnicity/tribalism often conceal the term nationalism and from the times of the colonial occupation worked as its euphemism, the

³⁶ That the colonial administrators were “aloof” must not, however, be confused with the fact that their ambitions in terms of “reaching” their subjects were vast – as we have already argued, the doctrine of non-interference proved a doctrine of all-round interference, insofar as they themselves defined the boundaries of “the customary”. When we refer to their aloofness we refer essentially to the racism and that the ultimate monopoly of force did not rely on internal forces, but rather the military capacity of an entire empire.

organization around the nation, understood as “a imagined community”³⁷, in multi-national states³⁸ are obviously particularly explosive and potentially detrimental to other nations.³⁹ Perhaps the postcolonial situation could be structurally comparable to the kind of difference between the unifying liberal revolutions against the sovereign vs. the duality of revolutionary potentials within a democracy or liberal revolutionary context as Bataille and Marx has described it?

But on the other hand: *what* exactly do we mean by this? *Who really* constitute these *heterogeneous* masses in an African context without the *homogenizing* all-embracing capital-industrial complex of the West? And does it make any sense to talk about a *homogenous* order that causes a politics of anxiety in the African context, leading to usurpation of lumpen support for reasons that could be espoused by the preceding? Or should we be content with the fact that this framework has given us some concepts and valuable background for the understanding of colonialism and the genesis of the African lumpen – while in order to really grasp the contemporary situation in all its possibilities and limitations, other theoretical approaches would be more proper?

Obviously the social formations analysed by Marx and Bataille in Western Europe were (and still are) a lot more *homogenized* to modern class-formations than they were in Africa, where the growth of these forces were politically impeded even at the cost of profitability; colonialism being essentially an *imperative* form of power. Vital traits of this creature have furthermore been passed on to the post-colonial regimes. Perhaps this fact can place politics – rather than “laws of economics” and from there deducted law of politics – at the centre of the agenda. Perhaps it can open for the massive and growing lumpenproletariat playing another role than they seem to have done so far in post-colonial Africa, i.e. reactionary, due to the fact that they constitute a majority in relation to the miniature size of the proletariat, given that this potential is grasped and mobilized?

But then again – is not everybody, everywhere today, incorporated into the capitalist system at an accelerating speed due to the immense forces of globalization? As such, Africa finds itself within the *homogenizing* all-embracing capital-industrial complex after all. This might imply that even if African *states* are not characterized by the *homogenizing* all-embracing capital-industrial complex of the West, it still makes sense to talk about a *homogenous* order that causes a politics of anxiety, leading to usurpation of lumpen support for the similar reasons as espoused in

³⁷ As Benedict Anderson coins it in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983)

³⁸ More often than not with differences linguistically, historically and culturally that by far exceed any meaningful comparisons to for example the diversity in the Balkans, apart from political exploitation of difference in general. With independence came also “the setting of scores” – who betrayed, who did not – who belonged, who did not.

³⁹ In the Charter of the African Organization for Unity (AUO) 1963 Article 3, it was stated that colonial borders, no matter how irrationally drawn, should be respected in an attempt to avoid endless border conflicts and secessions.

the preceding, thus suggesting that this framework might still contain some explanatory power if moulded properly. After all the very origins of this state is to be found in the incorporation of these regions into world capitalism.

If we think the answer is yes, however, a new question immediately comes forth: whether this level of the social formation would then really be a proper level of analysis. Does not globalization raise some critical questions to the *relevance* of the political framework of the state and demands that the analysis be carried out on a higher level, i.e. on the level of the global economic context? Thus, before jumping head on to an analysis of the lumpen in the African context, as an isolated phenomenon, we must consider if that approach is at all appropriate today. Perhaps globalization has altered conditions more fundamentally. Perhaps these “practices” of a lumpen must indeed be articulated theoretically on a global rather than regional or national level – from the perspective of the total social capital globally – in an era where increasingly many voices outdo each other in proclaiming the *passé* of “the state” as the container for disciplinarity, announcing the coming of the transnational corporations.

Globalization as a homogenizing force & “the lumpen of the world”

We have argued that the African lumpenproletariat seems not to make sense as a reserve army of labour, as it seems to be kept perpetually and actually increasingly in *reserve*, insofar as the majority of these countries are not characterized by economic growth – or more precisely: by adequate creation of formal jobs. In the beginning of this chapter we announced that we would discuss a more *economistic* approach from a left-wing perspective more thoroughly in the next chapter, in light of Hardt and Negri’s book *The Empire*, whose scope is global in pretensions.

We have suggested the rise of a lumpenproletariat in Africa might have been used as support-bases for authoritarian politics. That these pattern of attraction are still operative, developments in Western European countries seems to give an indication of too, in the sense that the patterns of attraction of the lower classes towards extreme right-wing politics seems reinforced, starting with the decline in the industrial regime of production, the economic crisis associated with that transformation and the corresponding right-wing revolutions of the 1970s – early 1980s.⁴⁰ With that, the era of the undisputed supremacy and hegemony of social democratic politics in Western Europe was *passé*. Obviously the dual option of the revolutionary attraction have not disappeared – to the initial surprise of many a left wing politician – but to a certain extent it seems democratically tamed. The “lumpenproletariat” is, however, not a very good term to capture these lower classes any longer, depending as it is on the degree of the regulation of labour

⁴⁰ This is of course not the same as saying that only the lower classes are attracted by these forces, as we have observed from the analysis of Marx and Bataille these processes are primarily driven by the anxieties of the disassociated *homogeneous* elements.

markets and labours organization in the respective countries. The remains of the indigenous European lumpenproletariat was in the golden age of social democracy primarily transformed into the categories of the welfare states and either put to work, psychiatric or criminal ward, coined unemployed or otherwise defined within the social security system and as such does simply not exist.⁴¹ Today the “real” lumpenproletariat in Western Europe should be considered defined as illegal immigrant workers – that have no political voice at all. And this group seems to be the targets rather than supporters of right-wing extremism in a not unfamiliar European manner of unifying “the nation” on the basis of, if not the mob – then at least mob attitudes, i.e. racism.

As such, it is perhaps better to look at the world as a whole in terms of the processes of *homogenization* and *heterogenization*. The deindustrialization of the West was proportional to the industrialization of many non-Western regions – in particular Asia – and global networks of production are more interrelated than ever. Perhaps these developments indicate that it is *the worlds* lumpenproletariat that is now the unit to be discussed, and not the lumpenproletariat as they occur within particular societies. As we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the lumpenproletariat has a positive, and not at all residual content from the perspective of constituting a reserve army of labour in deregulated and unorganized labour markets – to ensure competitive and low wages and the “smooth” running of production and capital accumulation. In Western Europe moreover, the indigenous lumpenproletariat seem to reappear exactly at the moment when they have disappeared into the categories of the welfare state, in the form of highly skilled, but precarious labour in an increasingly neo-liberally-biased global economic redressal. This leads us to our next chapter where we will explore other approaches to these “multitudes”. In a context of global capitalism, structures of domination are no longer confined to the state, and must be thought of global in scope, Hardt & Negri argue. Perhaps Hardt & Negri’s concept of the global multitude’s desire for liberty can open for other possibilities than the reactive desire of the lumpenproletariat as described by Marx, Bataille and Arendt where the political activation of the lumpenproletariat lead to authoritarianism (internally) or imperialism (externally).

⁴¹ This process could be seen in prolongation of the movement that Foucault coins “The great confinement”, dating back to the 17th century and for Foucault’s thoughts on confinement see *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (2001 [1961]) & *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. In our context this could be seen as a third strategy in dealing with essentially heterogeneous, unproductive elements in western modernity, i.e. that of simply “paying the price” for homogenizing them – an option that came to full force in the aftermath of two devastating world wars, the moral crisis of holocaust and the realization that colonialism could not function as a permanent solution in face of crumbling colonial control.

Chapter 5: Hardt & Negri's *Empire* - Do We Need a New Value Theory?

5.1 Introductory remarks

The reason why we include *Empire* in this discussion is primarily its global, universalistic pretensions and promise of social justice and emancipation, celebrated as the new communist manifest. Roughly sketched the authors assume a global capitalistic hegemony – an Empire – where there is simply no hinterland available anymore: the Empire constitutes a uniform, smooth and continuous space, where there is no “outside”. The response to the shrinking of non-capitalist hinterland has been a deepening of capitalist relations. In light of what we have been discussing above – imperialism as an outlet of heterogeneous forces in an attempt to preserve obviously outdated political structures in a context of overaccumulation and unequal relations of distribution – this *imperialistic* modern era is by Hardt & Negri coupled to what Foucault terms the *disciplinary society* i.e. the society of producers. Within the same reference to Foucault, the concept of *control society* is by Hardt & Negri seen as complementary to the postmodern *imperial* era. As a society where an increasing part of production and accumulation stems from abstract, immaterial, affective and communicative work, the line between productive, reproductive and unproductive work is fundamentally blurry, i.e. capitalist relations have moved from formal to real subsumption of work under capital. As Hardt & Negri think within the framework of Italian *operaismo*, the agent of change in the transition from the one regime to the other, from modernity to postmodernity, is labour – not capital or technological innovation. The control society is capital's response to the challenges posed by labour. Thus they write about the transition that “[i]n this sense, the processes of the formal subsumption anticipated and carried through to maturity the real subsumption, not because the latter was the product of the former (as Marx himself seemed to believe), but because in the former were constructed conditions of liberation and struggle that only the latter could control.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 256) Within this society life itself becomes directly productive and the object of power – politics have turned into *biopolitics* – power into *biopower*. The old value theory is simply no longer conceivable with the rise of immaterial and affective work, but exploitation of life by capital is nevertheless intensified. To revitalize an understanding of exploitation within the new global biopolitical control regime, a new value theory, they argue, is vital. The growth of new modes of domination must be countered with an understanding of relations of exploitations based on a new value-theory, grounded in life itself.

5.2 A new value-theory

While Hardt & Negri leave classic value-theory they thus nevertheless operate with the concept of exploitation as *the* key starting point for their political thinking. As far as capitalism is a system of private property based on expropriation and accumulation of some kind of surplus value generated by wage labourers, it is a system of injustice. Collective effort creates wealth, but this wealth is not under collective, i.e. democratic command.⁴² Along classic Marxist lines therefore, it is the concept of exploitation from which their line of argument – the critique of capitalism and urge for change – derives its moral legitimacy and logical stringency.

The end of the dialectic of modernity has not resulted in the end of the dialectic of exploitation. Today nearly all of humanity is to some degree absorbed within or subordinated to the networks of capitalist exploitation. We see now an ever more extreme separation of a small minority that controls enormous wealth from multitudes that live in poverty at the limits of powerlessness. The geographical and racial lines of oppression and exploitation that were established during the era of colonialism and imperialism have in many respects not declined but instead increased exponentially. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 43)

In spite of increased exploitation the possibilities for liberation and emancipation has ironically for the same reasons increased. The parasitic character of capitalism becomes ever more evident due to the changes in the social character of work. The cooperative aspect of immaterial work is not forced on or organized from the outside; rather cooperation is completely immanent in the work activity itself.

This fact calls into question the old notion (common to classic and Marxian political economy) by which labour is conceived as “variable capital”, that is, a force that is activated and made coherent only by capital, because the cooperative powers of labour power (particularly immaterial labour power) afford labour the possibility of valorizing itself. Brains and bodies still need others to produce value, but the others they need are not necessarily provided by capital and its capacities to orchestrate production. Today productivity, wealth, and the creation of social surpluses take the form of cooperative interactivity through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks. In the expression of its own creative energies, immaterial labour thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 294)

Following Foucault they argue that since the transition from *L’Ancien Régime* the biopolitical context has increasingly been harnessed towards capitalist accumulation. The advantage of Foucault’s analysis is his attempt to transcend the historical materialistic dichotomy between superstructure and basis by situating social reproduction, culture, subjectivity and corporeality in the material structure. The new biopolitical collective body is “[...] both production and reproduction, structure and superstructure, because it is life in the fullest sense and politics in the proper sense.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 30) They furthermore write about the gradual

⁴² Hardt & Negri’s ideal democracy in the era of postmodernity differs, however, somewhat from the classic and modern definitions: “[...] we are introducing a concept of participation that is linked to the vitality of a population [...] [and central is that] a terrain of immanence be affirmed. Immanence is defined as the absence of every external limit from the trajectory of the action of the multitude, and immanence is tied only, in its affirmations and destructions, to regimes of possibility that constitute its formation and development.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 373) For more on the topic see same page.

appearance or realization of the immanence of power in relation to the political within postmodernity: “This idea of immanence is based on an idea of productivity. If it were not, the principle would be impotent: in immanence alone, nothing allows society to become political.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 164)

With the development of the concept *multitude*, Hardt & Negri attempt to transcend the orthodox class-concept by modifying it to the postmodern biopolitical conditions of exploitation. As life itself is made immediately productive, the traditional class concepts no longer manage to identify the specificities of this mode; it mystifies rather than clarifies as it refers to the bygone modern/industrial regime of production. The concept of the proletariat is thus reformulated into the concept of the multitude as the reference point for exploitation. It is the multitude that constitutes the exploited and thus revolutionary force of postmodernity. While introducing the vague concept of the multitude they continue to operate with a concept of the proletariat and it seems unclear if the two are completely identical or just partly overlapping. It seems to us, however, that they are used interchangeably and we base this interpretation on a section where Hardt & Negri define their new understanding of the proletariat starting by stating that: “We need to recognize that the very subject of labour and revolt has changed profoundly. The composition of the proletariat has transformed and thus our understanding of it must too.” (2000: 52) With the proletariat they understand “all those whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjugated to capitalist norms of production and reproduction.” (2000: 52) About the “work” that the proletariat performs they write:

Some labour is waged, some is not; some labour is restricted within the factory walls, some is dispersed across the unbounded social terrain; some labour is limited to eight hours a day and forty hours a week, some expands to fill the entire time of life; some labour is accorded a minimum value, some is exalted to the pinnacle of the capitalist economy. We will argue [...] that among the various figures of production active today, the figure of immaterial labour power (involved in communication, cooperation, and the production and reproduction of affects) occupies an increasingly central position in both the schema of capitalist production and the composition of the proletariat. Our point here is that all of these diverse forms of labour are in some way subject to capitalist discipline and capitalist relations of production. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 53)

As far as the western, increasingly immaterial economies are concerned this is a relevant argument, but what about the rapidly growing group of people that seems more excluded than exploited – can we understand them as a part of the multitude? We regret the vagueness of the concept, but will in the following attempt clarification of some points for the sake of analytic clarity. Hardt & Negri explicitly praise “*the poor*”, in a homage that seems to exalt her to “*an eternal postmodern figure*” (2000: 156; emphasis in original) “*Finally today, in the biopolitical regime of production and in the process of postmodernization, the poor is a subjugated, exploited figure, but nonetheless a figure of production. This is where the novelty lies. Everywhere today, at the basis of the concept and the common name of the poor, there is a relationship of production.*”

(Hardt & Negri 2000: 157; emphasis in original) They argue that the Marxist tradition always has despised the poor for their freedom, i.e. immunity to factory discipline and the discipline necessary for the creation of socialism. In the biopolitical context however, realities have changed.

And here, after so many attempts to transform the poor into proletarians and the proletarians into liberation army (the idea of an army weighed heavily on that of liberation) once again in postmodernity emerges in the blinding light of clear day the multitude, the common name of the poor. It comes out fully in the open because in postmodernity the subjugated has absorbed the exploited. In other words, the poor, every poor person, the multitude of poor people, have eaten up and digested the multitude of proletarians. By that fact itself the poor have become productive.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 158; emphasis in original)

This passage, more poetic than analytic, needs some clarification. As we touched upon in the preceding chapter the lumpenproletariat has always made perfect sense within a capitalist economy demanding cheap and flexible labour, i.e. as a reserve army of labour in *suitable* and *controllable* numbers. With the raise in postmodern modes of affective and immaterial work, however, Hardt & Negri argues that disciplinary institutions collapsed, not to disappear but more in the sense that their walls broke down and their content floated all over. The inside/outside dichotomies of modernity thus broke down, they argue, and, we suggest, with it also the distinctions between the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat as conceived in the industrial regime. In relation to work and workers this has profound consequences according to Hardt & Negri.

In the general breakdown, then, the functioning of the institutions is both more intensive and extensive. The institutions work even though they are breaking down – and perhaps they work all the better the more they break down. The indefiniteness of the *place* of the production corresponds to the indeterminacy of the *form* of the subjectivities produced. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 197; emphasis in original)

Thus it seems that the poor has absorbed the proletariat only in the way that the proletariat was defined within modernity, i.e. the proletariat as understood in its relation to the disciplinary social order. Correlatively it seems that subjugation has absorbed exploitation, only as far as exploitation can no longer be grasped by classic value theory. “[...] *the proletariat is becoming the universal figure of labour.*” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 256; emphasis in original).⁴³ We believe it is in this context the above quotation about the poor as the eternal post-modern figure must be understood, to make sense in the overall framework of Hardt & Negri. It is tempting to say that what they in fact is writing about is the organized Western proletariats lumpen-proletarianization, if we look at a passage later on about network production:

Entire labouring populations, which had enjoyed a certain stability and contractual power, have thus found themselves in increasingly precarious employment situations. Once the bargaining position of labour has been weakened, network production can accommodate various old forms of non-guaranteed labour, such as freelance work, home work, part-time labour, and piecework. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 297)

⁴³ On the proletariat see also the following pages.

As an analysis of developments in the Western political economy this observation seems very to the point, but the authors claim to be writing about global, not regional processes. How well then, does this description or narrative really fit for the context in our interest, if at all? We will discuss the relation between the multitude and the African lumpenproletariat more in detail, but start by looking into how well Africa more generally fit into *Empire's* Empire.

5.3 Africa in the Empire

In the following discussion we will take Kevin C. Dunn's article "Africa's Ambiguous Relation to Empire and *Empire*" (2004) as our starting point and combine his critiques with arguments based on the previous sections and former chapter. Dunn examines some of the foundational premises for the overall argument forwarded in *Empire* in order to examine to what degree this grand narrative really holds water in light of African experience and reality. He argues that Africa is de facto both included and excluded from the postmodern imperial project as conceived by Hardt & Negri, and moreover that their very construction of a theory of Empire by necessity in fact requires a marginalization of Africa.

The myth of modernity - sovereignty

One major weakness in Hardt & Negri's analysis, he argues, is that they appear to take the myth of modernity – the fixity of sovereignty, nation-state and territory – at face value. Realizing that the genealogy of modern European sovereignty can only be comprehended in light of the encounter between Europe and the none-European "Other", they nevertheless seem to assume that this modern sovereignty eventually spread and operated outside Europe in the same manners as it did inside Europe. "[T]hey tend to combine the constitutive elements of sovereignty – population, territory, authority, and recognition – into a single, unproblematic actor: the sovereign state." (Dunn 2004: 146) In the tradition from Jean Bodin, modern sovereignty is thus understood as the state's supreme authority over citizens and subjects and hence the final arbiter, with no higher authority or law within a given territory. This is not an unproblematic assumption if one is seeking a better understanding of sovereignty as it has been produced and reproduced in Africa. As Dunn argues:

During colonialism, the European powers delegitimated the sovereignty of non-Western polities but simultaneously inscribed their colonial holdings with a "quasi-sovereignty" that provided the legal grounding for European administration and subjugation. Within colonial Africa, multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory regimes of sovereignty were produced and practised, often through the mediation between the metropole, colonial administrators, and local elites. (Dunn 2004: 146)

If we follow Mamdani, the colonial state was a hegemony overawing a fundamentally bifurcated power internally – between the civil sphere of citizens on the one side and the myriads of local despotisms over subjects on the other. Externally, as we have seen from Arendt, there was

an inherent tension between the body politics of the European nation-state and its imperial ambitions, in result making “sovereignty” in the colonial enterprise a highly contested affair in the relation between parliamentary politicians in the metropolises and the colonial bureaucracy – “the men on the spot” – in the semi-dependencies. As such, modern sovereignty in Africa “was not a universal but at best only a regional practise of government and rule.” (Barkawi & Laffey quoted in Dunn 2004: 146). Furthermore global structures of economic relations and political processes, ideological contestation during the Cold War, aid dependency, the legacy of the bifurcated state and its different reorganizations, has had profound effects on postcolonial constructions of sovereignty. The production of sovereignty of African states has sometimes almost been imposed due to the vitality for the international community to obtain of acknowledgement of highly doubtful debts and contracts both in relation to other states and foreign firms. (Dunn 2004: 147) In light of African realities we join Dunn in questioning Hardt & Negri’s argument that a global paradigmatic shift from modern to postmodern imperial sovereignty has taken place: that globally *every* state experience an eroding of their sovereignty. They are thus missing the analytic difference between those states that perhaps indeed are loosing sovereignty and those that never really possessed that kind of sovereignty. This is an argument that, moreover, is closely connected to their propositions about the declining power of the (*nation*)-state.

The state

As Dunn argues, when employing Weberian concepts of state and power as if they were actual descriptions of reality, most African states simply do not make sense. In the same way as they treat sovereignty Hardt & Negri seem to assume a monolithic, homogeneous and universal understanding of the state as it was crafted in Europe, and then ultimately exported from the European mainland to the rest of the world as the “poisoned gift” of independence. In their perception they are far from original, and a paragraph from Dunn that is partly critical and partly reflect the core problem, is revealing:

As Africans have increasingly chosen to “disengage” and distance themselves from predatory and parasitic governments, the continent is increasingly made up of “states without citizens”. Since citizenship, territorial integrity, and monopoly of the tools of coercion are all considered prerequisites for statehood, the disengagement of citizens raises serious doubts about whether African states are in fact “states” at all. Scholars on the African state have recently taken to producing new adjectives (such as *failed*, *collapsing*, *quasi-soft* and *post-state*) to describe what are distinctly non-Weberian states. Yet in one of the more insightful recent discussions of politics in Africa, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz argue that the state in Africa – colonial and postcolonial – *never* met the requirements established by Weber because it failed to be institutionalized. Chabal and Daloz note that the state in Africa is not “collapsing,” simply because no (Weberian) state was constructed to begin with. The concept of the state must always be historicized and contextualized. (Dunn 2004: 148, emphasis in original)

In light of the confusions and sham-problems that come to light in this paragraph we can clearly grasp the advantages of Mamdani's positive conceptual analysis and understanding of the state and its functioning in Africa.

Pondering on subaltern nationalism, Hardt & Negri comments that:

It may be true, as Benedict Anderson says, that a nation should be understood as an imagined community – but here we should recognize that the claim is inverted so that *the nation becomes the only way to imagine a community!* Every imagination of a community becomes overcoded as a nation, and hence our conception of community is severely impoverished. (2000: 107)⁴⁴

Hardt & Negri seem to blame this “overcoded” community for much of the postcolonial misery and thus seem to presume that subaltern nationalism was followed by the establishment of “nation-states”. As we have seen from Mamdani's analysis of the reorganization of the postcolonial state – *the nation-state* never really materialized, but nationalism played a role in the struggle for independence. For that particular phase we might give Hardt & Negri right about the concept of the *nation* as a powerful anti-colonial mobilizer. However, after independence that “nation” seemed to fade very rapidly. Rather a multi-national state materialized as the colonial legacy of tribalism⁴⁵ lingered on in the political institution of decentralized rule in the conservative regimes. In case of the radical militant nationalists fall into centralized autocracy, the ideology of the Party and the urban-rural divide did much eclipse nationalism (see chap. 2.2). Thus Rosa Luxemburg, who Hardt & Negri let forward their argument, might be right that “[...] national sovereignty and mythologies effectively usurp the terrain of democratic organization by renewing the powers of territorial sovereignty and modernizing its project through the mobilization of an active community.” (2000: 97) But to us it seems that it was the statizing of the one-party system more than nationalism that eventually captured the democratic potential of the modernizing radical regimes in the African context, which we recall were those regimes that made the hardest effort to establish an overarching national identity.⁴⁶

It was the bifurcated state that was the explicitly modern heritage to be reproduced and reformed along the axis of despotism in the postmodern era. As such the decline of the nation-state as a stage in the realisation of the world market sounds odd in the African context. It is in fact a perspective reflecting solely the loss of colonies by European powers, i.e. the hegemony of the European nation-states in the structuring of world markets. So do their statement sounds odd that with the decline of the nation-state, and the “people” with it, a new era has been reached where “the situation of struggle is completely open”, “[c]apital and labour are opposed in a directly

⁴⁴ Hardt & Negri seem here to downplay the international character of the anti-colonial struggle, such as the pan-African movements that could be argued to have been active until the end of apartheid.

⁴⁵ And as we recall, “tribe” often works as a euphemism for “nation”.

⁴⁶ We also recall the impediment imposed on redrawing of borders agreed upon by AUO – a resolution intended to de-legitimate and discourage nationalist secessionist-attempts. (see footnote chap. 4.4)

antagonistic form” without any mediation.” “Class struggle, pushing the nation-state towards its abolishing and thus going beyond the barriers posed by it proposes the constitution of Empire as the site of analysis and conflict. [...] This is the fundamental condition of every political theory of communism.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 237) The absence of both a nation-state (in times of crisis turned into a fascist state), and an outlet did not prevent the modern colonial state and its post-colonial reorganizations to produce myriads of mediations between capital and labour. On the contrary, the colonial state was the product of much learning on the side of capital and politics, and this fact has perhaps contributed much to its success (in terms of the objectives that it was initially forged towards and later reproduced around). The major impediments it imposes on democratization could thus point in the direction that it has fulfilled to a very high degree the objectives that was set for it. That the nation-state has declined could be used as an argument for its failure to contain resistance, as Hardt & Negri does, but the nation-state is not the *only* modern state and not the only state construed in the age of capital.

Disciplinary institutions

Totally missing the point that the colonial state was a modern state Hardt and Negri writes: “[w]ith national “liberation” and the construction of the nation-state, all of the oppressive functions of modern sovereignty inevitably blossom in full force” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 109) as if the postcolonial states simply were late replicas of a European primordial modern predecessor. Part of this sovereignty’s repressive functions is, according to this theoretical framework, its disciplinary institutions – the backbone of biopolitical organization within modernity. About the export of disciplinary institutions they write:

In the postcolonial countries, discipline required first of all transforming the massive popular mobilization for liberation into a mobilization for production. Peasants throughout the world were uprooted from their fields and villages and thrown into the burning forge of world production. The ideological model that was projected from the dominant countries [...] [both the USA and the Soviet block] consisted of Fordist wage regimes, Taylorist methods of the organization of labour, and a welfare state that would be modernizing, paternalistic and protective. From the standpoint of capital, the dream of this model was eventually that every worker in the world, sufficiently disciplined, would be interchangeable in the global productive process – a global factory-society and a global Fordism. The high wages of a Fordist regime and accompanying state assistance were posed as the workers’ rewards for accepting disciplinarity, for entering the global factory. We should be careful to point out, however, that these specific relations of production [...] were never realized in the same form in the subordinate regions of the global economy. [...] All this, however, did not really have to be realized; its promise served rather as the ideological carrot to ensure sufficient consensus for the modernizing project. The real substance of the effort, the real take-off toward modernity, which in fact was achieved, was the spread of the disciplinary regime throughout the social spheres of production and reproduction. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 247-248)

What then, does this disciplinarity that supposedly spread actually consist in? A few pages earlier Hardt & Negri present a clear definition of a disciplinary society:

[...] in a disciplinary society, the entire society, with all its productive and reproductive articulations, is subsumed under the command of capital and the state, and that the society tends, gradually but with

unstoppable continuity, to be ruled solely by criteria of capitalist production. *A disciplinary society is thus a factory-society*. Disciplinarity is at one a form of production and a form of government such that disciplinary production and disciplinary society tend to coincide completely. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 243; emphasis in original)

In these two paragraphs we again witness the Eurocentric tendencies of Hardt & Negri – first imperialism is defined as a feature of modernity, but at the same time modernity seems to be realized or reached in the colonized world only in the era after independence. The colonial state in itself seems thus not to be considered as modern, but some kind of residual vacuum to the European nation-state. At the same time as “the world” move into post-modernity, through processes of decolonization, decentralization of the places and streams of production, decline of the nation-state and spread (*and/or breakdown one could ask*) of disciplinary regimes (Hardt & Negri 2000: see pp 243-249) – the postcolonial states seem to move into some kind of belated modernity through the same last process (adopting the nation-state and its disciplinary institutions). There seems to be some very grave problems with the chronology of Hardt & Negri’s global narrative.

The colonial state, as we have seen in previous chapters, had its own methods for disciplinarity, construed consciously to avoid problems that had been coming to the forefront due to modernization processes both at home and in India. The bifurcated state was the result of a “learning process”. Migration control, city walls, “tradition” and semi-proletarianization all belonged to this attempt of carefully trying to balance the inherent development of capital (such as for example the social formation of a proletariat) with the overriding political concerns of dominating the values it produced within a context of occupation and race supremacy. We thus argue that more than an import of disciplinary western models, the postcolonial era was about the reformation and reproduction in various ways of indigenous explicitly modern disciplinary regimes. Moreover African countries are debtor nations under the strong influence of IMF and World Bank; organs, which dominated by neo-liberal trends, have explicitly inhibited expansion of disciplinary state-institutions associated with Western modernity (such as schools, hospitals, “mad-houses”, import-substituting factories etc. – perhaps though, they have proved more lenient on those disciplinary institutions associated with Western modernity more in line with the legacy of the colonial regime, such as armies and prisons).

The decline of the nation-state and its disciplinary institutions might be true where it existed, but in a global context the “discovery” that the Weberian ideal-types is hard to come by, is hardly impressive and have little to do with a “decline” as it simply never was there. Their claim thus that a massive, paradigmatic, worldwide shift has taken place seems somehow exaggerated. Their “discovery”, Dunn argues, furthermore leads Hardt & Negri to leap forward to a mistaken double conclusion: “[T]hat the state has been defeated, and that power now operates at a universal

level of Empire; that the ‘traditional sphere of politics’ have declined, and that now ‘power is constitutionalized on a supranational level’” (Dunn 2004: 149). Even though Hardt & Negri recognize that state functions and constitutional elements are displaced to other levels and domains they seem to argue that power is primarily flowing to the supranational level. In light of the fragmentation, overlapping and multiple authorities and loyalties that characterize African states it seems however more in touch with realities to argue with Dunn that: “decentralization of politics has created a web of socio-political structures that integrate local, regional, and international actors, often resulting in multilayered structures of concentric circles of diminishing control, radiating from the various cores.” (Dunn 2004: 150)

Globalization and the scrambling of worlds

The point Hardt & Negri makes about the scrambling of worlds – that we find the First world in the Third and vice versa (and the Second world hardly anywhere) seems content-wise not very extraordinary in light of the bifurcated state, as far as the concept “Third world” seem by the authors to be used in the meaning of “the subordinate regions” in global capitalism.⁴⁷ The colonial state in Africa from the very outset was in miniature the First world in the Third, immanent in its bifurcated legal structure.⁴⁸ The whole colonial adventure moreover, was to large extent an export of the social Third world in the geographical First – the European lumpenproletariat – to the geographical Third World. So if something has changed, it is the reversal of movement – that the West is today importing, rather than exporting, an underclass of cheap, flexible labour. We suspect that might be the reason why it has caught the attention of Hardt & Negri. They argue:

The general equalization or smoothing of social space, however, in both the withering of civil society and the decline of national boundaries, does not indicate that social inequalities and segmentations have disappeared. On the contrary, they have in many respects become more severe, but under a different form. It might be more accurate to say that centre and periphery, North and South no longer define an international order but rather have moved closer to one another. Empire is characterized by the close proximity of extremely unequal populations, which created a situation of permanent social danger and requires the powerful apparatuses of the society of control to ensure separation and guarantee the new management of social space. Trend in urban architecture in the world’s megalopolises demonstrate one aspect of these new segmentations [...] [this] trend toward what Mike Davis calls “fortress architecture”, in which not only private homes but also commercial centres and government buildings create open and free environments internally by creating a closed and impenetrable exterior. This tendency [...] has established in concrete, physical terms what we called earlier the end of the outside, or rather the decline of public space that allowed for open and unprogrammed social interaction. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 336-337)

To us it seems like cities in Africa today is characterized by proximity of extremes party because they were totally closed off in the colonial era for all “natives”. When the architecture reflects strong dividing lines it seems thus more of continuation than a radical change, and as such

⁴⁷ For this discussion see in particular p. xiii, pp.328-331, Hardt & Negri 2000

⁴⁸ Civil society of citizens versus local despotism over subjects.

it is not necessarily necessitated by withering of national boundaries or civil society (apart from the racist civil society of colons, which is hardly the kind of civil society Hardt & Negri has in mind).

The spatial scope of Empire and Empire

We have until now written in good faith taking for granted that Africa is an integral part of the Empire. At first sight the argument about the scrambling of worlds seems to give some assurance of this, even though the argument is inherently Eurocentric. However, when it comes to the spatial scope of the Empire and *Empire*, Africa at least seems to pose some problems for Hardt & Negri, problems they “solve” by simply ignoring them at best, making them invisible at worst. As we have already noted there exists according to Hardt & Negri no longer any non-capitalist hinterland in the world. They argue that “the concept of the Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire ‘civilized’ world” (Hardt & Negri 2000: xiv) They claim that “civilized” signifies incorporation in the capitalist domain, but simultaneously argues that the “most subordinate regions, such as areas of sub-Saharan Africa, are effectively excluded from capital flows and new technologies, and they thus find themselves on the verge of starvation.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 288) As Dunn pinpoint this discourse construct Africa as ambiguously positioned both inside and outside – incorporated but not “civilized” (Dunn 2004: 151). We find it worth noting in this context that the Empire as conceived by Hardt & Negri have several traits similar to that of empires as defined by Bataille.⁴⁹ Bataille writes that characteristic for an empire is that “It is not a thing in the sense in which things fit into the order that belongs to them; it is itself the order of things and it is a universal thing.” (Bataille 1992: 66-67) Reading in good faith could allow for such an understanding of how Hardt & Negri operate with the concept “civilized” (vs. the “barbarians”) were it not for the fact that the authors in *Empire* ignore the ways in which Africa continues to be *discursively* constructed as outside the sphere of the “civilized”, and *practically* the ways in which Africa by Empire is included through exclusion – in effect making a whole continent *invisible*.

Defining Empire through “universal civilization” thus is in danger of becoming deeply Eurocentric and certainly “empire-centric”. Dunn makes a point of relating this trend to leave Africa outside efforts at global, universalizing theorizing to a trope known as the “New Barbarism” thesis. The “New Barbarism” thesis very much articulates in contemporary vocabulary a seemingly ingrained Western refusal to even attempt to treat Africa as a legitimate unit for historical analysis. The Africa portrayed can somehow, neither due to culture nor environment, sustain even basic elements of civilization. Its conflicts are basically meaningless and beyond the reach of rationality – the continent inherently wild and dangerous. The point Dunn

⁴⁹ We are clearly aware that “empire” has different conceptual meanings in the writings of Bataille and Hardt & Negri. For a description of the characteristics of Empire see xiv Hardt & Negri 2000.

makes here is of more than theoretical importance; he relates this trope in Western discourses to the fact that “imperial” power have hardly intervened in any recent African crisis.

Hardt and Negri argue that the legitimacy of Empire is supported through intervention, or the right to engage in “police action” (17). Yet, with the notable exception of the Somalian failure, the “international community” has largely chosen to ignore recent African crisis [...]. Western confidence in its ability to “civilize” and “develop” Africa appears to have been deeply shaken. The employment of the New Barbarism discourse allows for this “isolation” of Africa by the West. (Dunn 2004: 153)⁵⁰

About imperial power, its possibilities and limitations Hardt & Negri write, and I quote extensively:

Imperial command is exercised no longer through the disciplinary modalities of the modern state but rather through the modalities of biopolitical control. These modalities have as their basis and their object a productive multitude that cannot be regimented and normalized, but must nonetheless be governed, even in its autonomy. The concept of the People no longer functions as the organized subject of the system of command, and consequently the identity of the People is replaced by the mobility, flexibility, and perpetual differentiation of the multitude. [...] The multitude is governed with the instruments of the postmodern capitalist system and within the social relations of the real subsumption. The multitude can only be ruled along internal lines, in production, in exchanges, in culture – in other words, in the biopolitical context of its existence. In its deterritorialized autonomy, however, this biopolitical existence of the multitude has the potential to be transformed into an autonomous mass of intelligent productivity, into an absolute democratic power, as Spinoza would say. If that were to happen, capitalist domination of production, exchange, and communication would be overthrown. Preventing this is the first and primary task of imperial government. We should keep in mind, however, that the constitution of Empire depends for its own existence on the forces that pose this threat, the autonomous forces of productive cooperation. Their power must be controlled but not destroyed. The guarantee that Empire offers to globalized capital does not involve a micropolitical and/or microadministrative management of populations. The apparatus of command has no access to the local spaces and the determinate temporal sequences of life where the administration functions; it does not manage to put its hands on the singularities and their activity. What imperial command seeks substantially to invest and protect, and what it guarantees for capitalist development, are rather the general equilibria of the global system. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 344-345)

We have seen how Africa is included through exclusion and negated by Empire in *Empire*, but we can from this quotation try to create a positive image of why and how Africa is excluded: i.e. its majority population is not included in the productive multitude which Empire rests upon and drains its forces from, and therefore there is no need to govern it. Hardt & Negri identify the three global and absolute means through which imperial control operates: the bomb, money and ether (Hardt & Negri 2000: 345). Africa is correspondingly ignored by Empire through the absence of intervention/policing, through the exclusion from the flows of capital, and communicatively through such discourses as the “New Barbarism” trope represents.

Nomadism and the generative power of the multitude

Hardt & Negri proclaims that mobility is the multitudes weapon to resist global capital’s attempt to control their labour power and that mobility is as such an “ethical practice” (2000: 362) aimed at achieving “global citizenship” (2000: 361). They claim that labour has become more

⁵⁰ In many ways it can seem like the Somalian failure contributed vitally to the growing uneasiness about the prospect of international intervention in Africa.

mobile due to the decline of the nation-state. As Dunn makes clear, this is certainly true in light of the European integration project. Borders in Africa, he argues, have always been more porous and thus questions whether this is a paradigmatic shift valid for other areas than Europe. Nevertheless, we think it is certainly true that the migrations held in check by colonial control mechanisms have faded, as the hyper-urbanization indicates. Anyhow the lessened relevance of some borders does not imply the fading of all borders. On the contrary the border between Africa and Europe seems as strongly watched over as the Berlin wall (with the particular twist that people are not stopped from leaving, but from entering). There are also the indications that capital has become far more mobile than labour. Without spending more time on discussing the validity of these claims, the core assumption nevertheless remains: that nomadism in itself is a liberating act. As Dunn pinpoints – in a continent with 14 million refugees and displaced persons this seems out of touch; the massive slumification point in the same direction. Without questioning the potential liberating effect of movement, these are strategies of survival more than liberation and reminds us of Talal Asad's remark that prisoners of a death camp may be said to live according to their own logic, but hardly 'make their own' history. It seems hard, as Dunn pinpoints, to grasp that these unfortunate individuals are part of a "counterimperial ontology" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 363) (Dunn 2004: 156). Rather than the refugee or the millions that migrate to the urban slums – Hardt & Negri's idealized "global citizen" seems to have far more resources. These "global citizens" seems paradoxically much more in touch with the postcolonial elites that plunge themselves and themselves alone in to the world of cyberspace, than the slum-dwelling lumpenproletariat we have been tracing with Davis. As Dunn phrase it:

The latter seems to be caught within the web of modernity's violent contradictions while the former successfully employs and manipulates the symbols and signs of the modern nation-state (passports, visas, currencies, etc.) actually to further capitalism. One is left wondering how either image fulfils Hardt's and Negri's vision of the emancipatory and counterimperial power of nomadism. (Dunn 2004: 156)

About the generative power of the multitude, with its desire to resist domination and increase its own joy and power, Hardt & Negri see signs of optimism for its liberation in the decline of disciplinary institutions. "Today the social institutions that constitute disciplinary society (the school, the family, the hospital, the factory), which are in large part the same as or closely related to those understood as civil society, are everywhere in crisis." (Hardt & Negri 2000: 329). This crisis seems to be opening spaces for the multitude to unfold its potentials. Lets dwell for a moment at the above quotation from *Empire* – schools, family, hospital, factory – the basic institutions for disciplinary society?

So might be it – but these social institutions carry with them a totally different line of association in the African context and these institutions are, to put it mildly not characteristic for

African modernity. It makes little sense to talk about desert from or revolt against these institutions, simply because so many people are deprived of that privilege such a riot in fact constitutes altogether. As we have already observed civil society in Africa has a different genealogy, initially laced with racism (see chap. 2.2). Moreover one could even claim that it is not the presence of disciplinary institutions, as we know them from the West, that seems to pose the major problem for Africa's "multitudes", but rather their precarious absence, and we recall the quote from the Nairobi slum dweller "The state does nothing here. It provides no water, no schools, no sanitation, no roads, no hospitals." (Davis 2007: 62).

Rather than biopolitics, the term necropolitics⁵¹ can seem to better fit to describe these conditions and as such could be seen as its complementary. Whereas biopolitics seems related to exploitation and disciplinary institutions harnessed towards increased exploitation *and* control of the capabilities and productive force of the population, exclusion on the other hand seems to carry with it a necropolitical list. The *absence* rather than *decay* of these institutions seems not to be able to be articulated in *Empire*, even though they occasionally refer to marginalization Empire produce. As we mentioned above, it is not the interference by the imperial police forces that poses the biggest problem in Africa – it is rather their precarious absence and will to let conflicts bleed themselves white. The explanation for this can, as we have seen, be deducted from the argument of Hardt & Negri – the interventions from the Empire is always police actions and exceptions in order to keep internal order, rather than fixed by legal codes. African conflict or crisis does not disturb this order, but on the contrary can seem to further this order as the incorporation of the continent in the more shady sides of global economy – in terms of weapons, precious metals, oil etc. – to a great extent benefit from the fog of war. Present-day Congo should hold as an example. We will add to Dunn's questioning of the proposed paradigmatic changes, that the form of government that characterize the Empire in fact resembles to a great extent the form of government characteristic of the colonial state. It was never characterized by transcendentals (apart from the rather shallow concept of race supremacy, that never had a potential to win much conviction from the ruled) and legalism, but rather *efficiency*, *flexibility*, a *permanency of crisis* and *state of emergency* justified by "[...] *the appeal to essential values of justice.*" (Hardt & Negri 2000: 18) i.e. "civilize the savages!".

⁵¹ We have "borrowed" this term from Warren Montag, "Necro-economics: Adam Smith and death in the life of the universal" ("Nekroøkonomi. Adam Smith og døden i det universelles liv" (2007 [2005])

5.4 Exploitation vs. exclusion

Why do men fight *for* their servitude as though it was for their salvation?
Spinoza (quoted Hard & Negri 2000: 210)

Marx would probably be shocked to find how in developing countries much of the teeming mass does not consist of oppressed legal proletarians but of oppressed small *entrepreneurs*. Hernando de Soto, (Quoted in Davis 2007: 179)

On a general basis we believe universal proclamations drained from European experience may prove counterproductive, leading to great definitional difficulties and confusion when applied in different contexts. Our question is then: does *Empire* give African lumpenproletariat much hope? Are they in fact not filtered out of any notion of freedom?

Exploitation

One of the problems using *Empire* in our context is that its point of departure is exploitation as understood in the relation between labour and capital. If one really want to speak in global terms, judging from the share growing numbers of the informal sector of urban poor, perhaps the focus on a new value theory seems a bit out of place, and can even be in the danger of increasing the division between included (exploited) and excluded (almost altogether).

Before going further on this argument lets look at what Hardt and Negri have to say about primitive accumulation, i.e. the accumulation necessary before capitalistic production and reproduction can take place (of wealth, of property and the social formation of capitalists and proletarians). On a general basis they argue that primitive accumulations are processes that constantly has to be repeated – capitalist relations of production and social classes must constantly be reproduced (Hardt & Negri 2000: 258). The model or mode of primitive accumulation, however, has changed in postmodernity, as there is no “outside” hinterland any longer. Moreover, the nature of labour and wealth to be accumulated is changing: “In postmodernity the social wealth accumulated is increasingly immaterial [...] correspondingly social labour [exploited by capital] is increasingly more immaterial; it simultaneously produces and reproduced all aspects of social life.”(Hardt & Negri 2000: 260) From our point of view, in contrast, perhaps the most significant mode of primitive accumulation seems to operate in an almost diametrically opposite way. It seems like a process of primitive accumulation, separating the producers from the means of production – but without a phase two: without the salaries, not even to mention the factories ready to “receive” them. If recalling the urbanization processes described by Davis, the features of global capitalism seems perhaps better captured as a necropolitics rather than a biopolitics. The process of primitive accumulation seems in our context almost completely detached from proletarianization, and as such the term primitive accumulation might perhaps be improper

altogether. Nevertheless, what we are witnessing is a dramatic social transformation driven by solely modern forces.

The swelling ranks of urban informal-working poor simply do seem to outnumber so grossly the function they have as a reserve army of labour, that they therefore can not be seen solely in the light of exploitation (however indirect) to the benefit of the social reproduction of capital. Perhaps we should understand necropolitics as the complementary to biopolitics, biopolitics as the hallmark of inclusion where “[...] life is made to work for production and production is made to work for life.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 32) – whereas necropolitics is the hallmark of exclusion from exploitation. In that context we can understand the quote from Spinoza in a new light.

The dangers of exclusion from Empire/multitude

As we have seen, Empire and the multitude stand in a relation to each other. If Africa is included through exclusion and the fight to overthrow Empire – in order to achieve a genuinely free and democratic control over the biopolitical conditions – has to be fought within the terrain of Empire itself (as power is immanent and there is no “outside”) – what then, guarantees that Africa will have a place in the coming paradise of the multitude?⁵² Hardt & Negri argue that due to the new regime of production what is in common has changed.⁵³ The concept of private property is in a conceptual if not practical crisis within this new regime. However, their community is a community of producers – as such it can seem like the ones excluded from this common work is also excluded from this community. The exclusion might become then, in a certain sense, more brutal, if less subjugative.

Perhaps is it so, as Hardt & Negri argue, that to a certain extent the chances for dramatic changes within a state is lessened as the sovereignty and autonomy of the state is undermined by other forces. Whether the postcolonial states ever possessed that autonomy and homogeneity or not, it seems nevertheless like the options of institutionalized workers organization, which Hardt & Negri dub the traditional form of counter-power against the traditional sovereign state, seems complicated in these societies by their minor numbers. As such, it is perhaps not a *new* (understood as a contrast to the old) but, we agree with Hardt & Negri, a *different* type of resistance must be formed, adapted to the dimensions of the sovereignty in question. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 307-309) Nevertheless, it seems that the “multitude” is of little help. As we have seen Africa not characterized of capitalistic exploitation in any “normal” sense neither from the perspective of an industrial nor post-industrial regime – but rather of a political

⁵² “The struggle to contest and subvert Empire, as well as construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself [...]” (Hardt & Negri 2000: xv)

⁵³ On Commons see Hardt & Negri 2000: 300-303

exploitation/subjugation with roots in the colonial powers specific way to tap into the productivity of the population and the resources of its territories. In the postmodern regimes the links with the colonial powers were severed to the advantage of a world market. Nevertheless the tapping into the productive capacities has been reformed in a specific way – still around the axis of despotism and coercion. As such it seems like reforms in this context is more of a political question than a political-economic question as suggested by Hardt & Negri's *supra-historical* narrative of the developments of capitalism.

Hardt & Negri's descriptions take constantly Western history as their starting point and universalize it to a general form of capitalism. By focusing on capitalisms rise and development in the west, they ignore and caricature other historical experiences. This seems related to the conception of the Third world, as a homogeneous world not only as seen from the perspective of capital (see Hardt & Negri 2000: 332-336), but also in fact as seen from their perspective of Empire. To the extent an experience does not fall in line with their grand theory, it remains residual. Lets for example see how they treat stages of capitalist development.

Economic *modernization* involves the passage from the first paradigm to the second, from the dominance of agriculture to that of industry. [...] We might call the passage from the second paradigm to the third, from the domination of industry to that of services and information, a process of economic *postmodernization*, or better, *informatization*. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 280, emphasis in original)

This is a rather classic schema and well fitted for analysis of the development of the productive forces. Hardt & Negri, however, do not restrain themselves to limit this concept of *postmodernization* to simply refer to technological innovation and productive forces, but rather to greater, global, universal social transformation. How then, does this *postmodernization-process* appear in our context of urbanization? After all, the global informal workforce is about one billion strong worldwide and thus the fastest growing social class on earth (Davis 2007: 178). Regardless of their involvement as a reserve army of labour, “[...] at the end of the day, the majority of the slum-dwelling labouring poor are truly and radically homeless in contemporary international economy.”(Davis 2007: 178) For sure it is a process of differentiation and a greater focus of tertiary activity – but perhaps petty-business, fragmentation of existing work and thus subdivision of income, overcrowding and a “gothic elaboration” of niches – in short *involution* (Davis 2007: 178-185), rather than *informatization* would be the proper name for it. We could argue that this activity is indeed social cooperation as autonomous power and source to livelihood (somehow) – but it would be perverse to portray conditions of *the Third World slums as a communist paradise*, and *hardly* was it Hardt & Negri's intention.

Even though Hardt & Negri recognize the fallacy of analogy – i.e. they do not claim that the subordinate economies find themselves at a “earlier stage” in a unilinear process of

modernization, nor that there is a new global organization of economic stages – they nevertheless fail to grasp, much less take interest in what is at all going on within these economies. They remain in fact residual. That seems not to be worrying Hardt & Negri's and seems to be of now hindrance for them still to claim that the scope of their program is global:

We believe that toward the end of challenging and resisting Empire and its world market, it is necessary to pose an alternative at an equally global level. Any proposition of a particular community in isolation, defined in racial, religious, or regional terms, "delinked" from Empire, shielded from its powers by fixed boundaries, is destined to end up as a kind of ghetto. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 206)

It seems, however, that for the lumpen we have been discussing, they *already* are in some form of ghetto. That is their problem – they are included through exclusion. In the framework of Hardt & Negri these ghettos can be understood from the perspective of capital. They thus write about the biopolitical structuring of life by capital:

The activities of corporations are no longer defined by the imposition of abstract command and the organization of simple theft and unequal exchange. Rather they directly structure and articulate territories and populations. They tend to make nation-states mere instruments to record the flows of the commodities, monies, and populations that they set in motion. The transnational corporations directly distribute labour power over various markets, functionally allocate resources, and organize hierarchically the various sectors of world production. *The complex apparatus that selects investments and directs financial and monetary manoeuvres determines the new geography of the world market, or really the new biopolitical [and, we add, necropolitical] structuring of the world.* The most complete figure of this world is presented from the monetary perspective. From here we can see a horizon of values and a machine of distribution, a mechanism of accumulation and a means of circulation, a power and a language. There is nothing, no "naked life", no external standpoint, that can be posed outside this field [...] Production and reproduction is dressed in monetary clothing. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 31-32, our emphasis)

If we are to follow Hardt & Negri's recommendation it seems that rather than resist the globalization of capital, the process should be accelerated. "Empire can be effectively contested only on its own level of generality and by pushing the processes it offers past their present limitations." (Hardt & Negri 2000: 206) But what room for action does that leave persons fundamentally excluded? As Hardt & Negri understand it desertion can prove to be the prime form of "being against". But where or what opportunities exist for the groups of people already excluded? It might be that the disciplinary institutions today form not the major barrier for nomadism, migration and desertion – but powerful barriers tend to encapsulate, both nationally and internationally these groups nevertheless (migration control internationally, fortress-architecture nationally). Hardt & Negri argue that mobility and mass workers nomadism always is an expression of rejection and a search for freedom: resistance towards exploitation and search for new freedoms and possibilities. They seem to underestimate push factors. As we seen from Davis the hyper growth of many third world cities are today negatively linked to any form of economic growth and job creation. The massive migrations indicates perhaps how much people are willing to suffer for their "enslavement", as these people search for *an* or *any* opportunity to sell their

labour, rather than escape from it. They literally risk their life for an opportunity to be exploited in wage labour as production and reproduction is dressed in monetary garbs. They desire inclusion rather than exit. This seems somehow expressed, at best very confused, at worst as Eurocentrism of a highest degree, in *Empire*. Lets see how they picture “the hero” of the Third World, or maybe better: the hero of the ghetto; we add some comments on the way:

One important example of the functioning of this spatial dimension is demonstrated by the processes that brought an end to the Third World, along with all the glory and disgrace of its past struggles, the power of desires that ran throughout its processes of liberation, and the poverty of results that crowned its success. The real heroes of the liberation of the Third World today may really have been the emigrants and the flows of populations [*to the west?*] that have destroyed old and new boundaries. Indeed, the postcolonial hero is the one who continually transgresses territorial and racial boundaries, who destroy particularisms and point toward a common civilization. Imperial command, by contrast, isolates populations in poverty and allow them to act only in the straitjackets of subordinated postcolonial nations [*is this not precisely where they should act – to transform their own societies?*] The exodus from localism, the transgression of customs and boundaries, and the desertion from sovereignty were the operative forces in the liberation of the Third World [*the exodus to the west or the internal exodus of the peasants from despotic countrysides to the limbo of the urban slums?*]. Here more than ever we can recognize clearly the difference Marx defined between *emancipation* and *liberation*. Emancipation is the entry of new nations and peoples into the imperial society of control, with its new hierarchies and segmentations; liberation, in contrast, means the destruction of boundaries and patterns of forced migration, the reappropriation of space, and the power of the multitude to determine the global circulation and mixture of individuals and populations. The Third World, which was constructed by the colonialism and imperialism of nation-states and trapped in the cold war, is destroyed when the old rules of the political discipline of the modern state (and its attendant mechanisms of geographic and ethnic regulation of populations) are smashed. It is destroyed when throughout the ontological terrain of globalization the most wretched of the earth becomes the most creative force and the omnilateral movement of its desires is itself the coming liberation. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 362-363)

In this paragraph we clearly see the consequences of tying immanence to productivity, rather than to a broader understanding of historicity. The only option appearing is to become included in the community of exploited – as that is the only possible platform for “liberation” from exploitation – thus *the wretched left* in the ghetto is per definition rendered powerless. As it is from within Empire the only possibility to “strike back” exists, they must do their outmost to enter it. As such it seems that Hardt & Negri are getting all mixed up in their own concepts – it seems as though what they in fact are talking about here is what Marx would call emancipation rather than liberation, but on an individual rather than national/state level, i.e. the individual that escapes the containers of unexploited poverty. For how can one be liberated from capitalist exploitation when one is not exploited by it?

Global citizenship & social wage

Sketching some elements suitable for a political program for the global multitude, Hardt & Negri enlist the demand for a global citizenship. Due to the necessities of legal and illegal migration for the workings of global capitalism, this demand is simply linked to the fact the legal status of the population should be reformed in line with the real economic changes. Everybody should be entitled to the full rights of citizenship in the land where they live and work. This seems

for us to be a little confusing argument. First they claim that everybody should be entitled to a *global-citizenship* – later it seems that this citizenship is synonymous with *state-citizenship* as it is formulated and operates within a western liberal social democracy. This confusion is not related to the proposed sequencing of the demands: i.e. firstly demand that citizenship be recognized by every state, thus insisting on the fundamental modern constitutional principle of linking rights and labour “[...] and thus reward with citizenship the worker who creates capital.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 400). Secondly, demand control over own movement and thus gear the first demand to the postmodern conditions of Empire. Rather the confusion for us is related to the content of citizenship, as the demand for citizenship where one lives and works tends to be attractive only for the people who migrate from the subordinate regions to the dominant states. For what would a citizenship in the subordinate states imply? Nothing? Hardt & Negri seem to downplay what Marx so clearly grasped: work is in many regions a commodity the worker only with the greatest strain can manage to get hold on. In contrast it seems that for Hardt & Negri the Empire, i.e. global capitalism has work for everybody, all day and life long.

It seems that within Hardt & Negri’s framework the only possibility for the African lumpen to join in the struggle for freedom and liberation – for their possibility to join in the multitudes fights to direct technologies and production “[...] towards their own joy and increase of power.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 396) – is to immigrate to the richer parts of the world and achieve citizenship and legal permit to stay and work there. It seems hard (without the strong social states that Hardt & Negri seems not to long back to) to picture how such massive migration would not break down the Fordist wage regime altogether in the dominant regions and as such work to the benefit of capital rather than labour. This seems not to worry Hardt & Negri: the multitude is *one*: “Empire creates a greater potential for revolution than did the modern regimes of power because it presents us, alongside the machine of command, with an alternative: the set of all the exploited and subjugated, a multitude that is directly opposed to Empire, with no mediation between them.” (2000: 392) “Fear of violence, poverty, and unemployment [...]” is brushed aside as false consciousness resulting from the Empires politics of communication rather than sound concerns. “The constant fear of poverty and anxiety over the future are the keys to creating a struggle among the poor for work and maintaining conflict among the imperial proletariat.” (Hardt & Negri 2000: 339) Presumably to overcome these segmentations produced by Empire, Hardt & Negri suggest the entitlement to global social wage, legitimized by the inherent productivity of life itself within the biopolitical economy.

The social wage extends [...] to the entire multitude, *even those who are unemployed*, because the entire multitude produces, and its production is necessary from the standpoint of total social capital. [...] The demand for a social wage extends to the entire population *the demand that all activity necessary for the production of capital be recognized with an equal compensation* [...] One citizenship is extended to all, we

could call this guaranteed income a citizenship income, due to each member of society. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 403, our emphasis)

But is in fact the whole humanity necessary from the point of view of the total social capital? What if a big part of humanity come to compose a *superfluosness* that does not function as a reserve army of labour power – as an anomaly and residue of the proletariat – but rather constitute a normality in camp-like ghettos? Would they belong to Hardt & Negri’s biopolitical-society?

5.5 Immanence: production as part of history – not the whole history

The process of modernization [...] is the internalization of the outside, that is, the civilization of nature. In the imperial world, this dialectic of sovereignty between the civil order and the natural order has come to an end [...] we have no longer nature in the sense that these forces and phenomena are no longer understood as outside, that is, they are not seen as original and independent of the artifice of the civil order. In a postmodern world all phenomena and forces are artificial, or, as some might say, part of history. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 187)

The value of *Empire* is its insistence on a politics of immanence, and that modernity’s transcendentally legitimized power-regimes appear increasingly anachronistic.⁵⁴ That, we agree with Hardt & Negri, increases the potential for greater social justice. When they talk about liberation, however, things become more complicated. It seems for us that the authors, spellbound by a virtual cyber-conceptual version of globalization, seems de facto (in spite of their occasional assurances that it is not uniform and produce segmentation) to forget that the same processes that makes the world smaller – simultaneously produce increased differentiation. As Foucault claims, universal proclamations may answer poorly to regional challenges and problems, both in order to grasp “[...] the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take.” (Foucault 2003: 54) They may even possibly contribute to other forms of domination rather than a critical approach. As such, perspectives associated with the “new barbarism thesis” may be an undercurrent undermining such undoubtedly well-intended works as Hardt & Negri’s book exemplifies. The consequences of their thinking in terms of Africa are undoubtedly unintended, but so is generally the banality of Eurocentrism.

Hardt & Negri write that in the biopolitical context, reappropriation means free access to knowledge, information, communication and affects – and, following Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari that the forming of concept today is production of ontology. We think that this standpoint can also be taken from the perspective of historical immanence, i.e. the world is fundamentally historically/artificially produced. The advantage of this standpoint is that the solutions to all

⁵⁴ After the end of the Cold War there seems to be a change in political discourse of regimes globally: democracy, i.e. power grounded in the “people” have seemingly won hegemony as the only legitimate form of grounding power, at least rhetorically.

problems are not homogenous, as they are not viewed from *one* privileged perspective (such as the economic).

We would therefore in line with Mamdani like to look for solutions in the field of the political. That is not to reduce the role of economics, but rather to argue that solutions might not be coming from that end, i.e. from the struggle between labour and capital. It is, basically to argue that historicity is as much on the level of immanence as productivity; it is to argue that historicity might be a fundament for action and change. We thus agree with Mamdani and Dunn: there is a need for historicizing and contextualizing the African state, its social relations and ways of global incorporation, as a legitimate part of modernity and postmodernity. As Dunn criticize Hardt & Negri for, they seem to have a fundamental problem in seeing that the state and for that matter civil society, modernity and postmodernity play different roles in different contexts. Even though Hardt & Negri are occasionally aware of these difficulties, they do not take the full consequences and draw its implications.

As such we will argue that only analysis that does not relate to a conception of the "masses" (not the multitude) as an ahistorical and universal residual category can possibly function as a background for suggestions about change. This is not the same as naturalising the local as some kind of essence or romanticizing it as a bulwark against globalization, which Hardt & Negri rightly criticize (2000: 62-63). We totally agree with them that what one has to investigate is the production of the local: "[T]hat is, the social machines that create and recreate the identities and differences that are understood as local. [...] The globalization or deterritorialization operated by the imperial machine is in fact not opposed to localization or reterritorialization, but rather sets in play mobile and modulation circuits of differentiation and identification. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 45) In relation to globalization we thus agree that: "The domesticity of values, the shelters behind which they presented their moral substance, the limits that protect against the invading exteriority – all that disappears. We are all forced to confront absolute questions and radical alternatives. In Empire, ethics, morality, and justice are cast into new dimensions." (Hardt & Negri 2000: 19-20). "[I]f one breaks down the walls that surround the local (and thereby separate the concept from race, religion, ethnicity, nation, and people), one can link it directly to the universal. The concrete universal is what allows the multitude to pass from place to place and make its place its own." (Hardt & Negri 2000: 362). What we would like to do is to relate the "concrete universal" to historicity – to an "ontology of the present" – rather than production as a foundation for immanence. Production is a part of history, but not the whole history.

The point here is thus not really to argue against the possible existence of an Empire, but rather against Hardt & Negri's proposals for remedies and greater social justice. It is not to argue against that a global hegemonic political-economic order affects peoples lives worldwide, but

rather their claims that this order has universally produced more “work”, i.e. work to be exploited and value to be expropriated by capitalism, and that *it is this exploitation that makes humanity one – the multitude* – which will have the possibility (*and this possibility as its only option*) to create a true world-revolution. As such we think that Hardt & Negri’s concept of immanence is an impoverished and, moreover, teleological version of what we have presented as the portal to modernity according to Foucault (c.f. chap. 4.1). Whereas the urban “floating” poor by Marx, Bataille and Arendt is included in the politics of fascism/imperialism (somehow dehumanized) – they are by Hardt & Negri simply made invisible (and at worst find themselves outside humanity altogether insofar that they cannot be articulated within their framework). In any case the observation made by Ziauddin Sardar seems to hold water:

We can see that in both classical and modern definitions of freedom, people with needs are excluded. In his famous *Essay on Liberty*, John Stuart Mill excluded ‘the backward nations’, women and children from rights to liberty; and John Rawls (1971), in his celebrated *Theory of Justice*, acknowledge that societies where basic needs are not fulfilled do not fit into his framework of liberty. Western ideas of freedom thus filter the vast majority of humankind out of any notion of freedom. (Sardar 2001: 48)

Our argument does not fundamentally attack the premises, insights and value of *Empire* as far as the revolutionary subject might for all we know be their *multitude*. What we question is rather their universalising and generalizing outlook, which requires that Africa is discursively construed both as included and excluded in their empire in a manner not totally unfamiliar in Eurocentric thinking. Hardt & Negri argue that the apparatus of imperial hegemony is composed of three distinct moments – one inclusive, one differentiating and one coordinating. It can seem here that in the third moment African poor are simply coordinated out of the system – they do not in their massive numbers fulfil any function (in contrast to their “more” productive Asian counterparts). As the multitude and the Empire corresponds, are they then not in fact filtered out of any concepts of and struggles for freedom, even though they on this continent constitute a normality and more often than not a urban majority? If that is so, it seems like Hardt & Negri’s concept of the multitude offers little salvation.

Instead of a new value theory we will discuss the social character of demands – what responds to claims of universal rights and what to privileges (for the proletariat for that matter). We do not want to reduce labour to the biopolitical context and we want to cut the connection that thus is made between labour and citizenship (citizenship to be rewarded the worker who creates capital), due to the dangers it poses for a division of humanity into exploited/excluded. As such we would like to paraphrase Mamdani that once labour is understood as the life-sustaining activity of labouring humanity, and not as wage labour, the accent shifts from citizens’ to human rights (2004: 292).

According to Hardt & Negri human rights, however, will be transcendental values as they are unrelated to immanent production exploited by capital and possibly liberated by the desires of the multitude. As such the regime of production is the point from where they view all life. We do not reject Hardt & Negri's attempt to save the value theory: their effort to reformulate the value theory by grounding it in biopolitics is a most beneficial way to understand relations of exploitation within an era where abstract work is becoming ever more predominant. Rather our attempt is to grasp the limitations of its scope. In the end it seems like Hardt & Negri's framework still operate within this old dichotomy of proletariat-lumpenproletariat as reserve army of labour, in the gradual and contradictory process towards the development of a world-market. The Empire has work for everybody! The less regulated the regime of exploitation is, the more work is there. Their concept of the multitude in fact is relevant only in the hyper-productive and hyper-exploitative context of biopolitics, rather than ghettoized, unexploited context of necropolitics.

We could now go on by trying to grasp, positively how the African lumpenproletariat is incorporated and excluded in the global capitalist economy from the perspective of African modernity and postmodernity. We will not follow this track further, however, as it would far exceed the scope of our paper. Rather we will follow the political track attempting to transcend any value theory, as thinking within this framework seems fundamentally to lead us nowhere in relation to the context of our interest, as we have seen in the preceding. But how to create a new politics on human right and avoid that it will simply be residual and impotent, as it seems to be hovering in the sphere of transcendentals and not on the level of immanence that is the great advantage of Hardt & Negri's proposal.

In relation to their idea of immanence we recall Hardt & Negri stating that this idea is based on an idea of productivity. Were it not, the idea would be impotent as there in immanence alone is nothing that allows society to become political. Here, we believe, both today and historically, lies the advantage of the value theory. Genealogical analysis does not "force" society to become political in the sense of Hardt & Negri. The immanence of Hardt & Negri (as so many other Marxist orthodox) seems to have a certain necessity over it and here they fundamentally depart with Foucault. Perhaps for this precisely same reason, they can better explain change whereas Foucault's attachment to structuralism to a certain extent made him more cautious to recapitulate the "direction" of history, less prophetic in regard to future and restrained him from making concrete proposals for change, for which he has been much criticized. The immanence we here suggest is as such much more in line with Foucault – *an ontology of the present*. Hence it is a broader approach to the understanding of production and reproduction of power, society, economics and culture – allowing us not more than *potentially* a fundament that *might* prove potent or impotent in terms of the freedoms available to us, depending on *how we deal* with it. It is

a “here and now” deprived of the “fetish-character” of the given, as the given is constantly questioned by insistence that any ethics and any values are fundamentally grounded in contingency – as such they are *political* and thus open for revision, reversal and rejection. *This* constitutes the major challenge of “the practices of freedom”, and here the value theory has had a formidable advantage as a fixed rallying-point for mobilization – providing the means, the doctrine and the objectives – in contrast to the much vaguer “[...] possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking what we are, do, or think [...]” (Foucault 2003: 54).

Empire's biopolitically exploited multitude constructs a positive project as they according to Hardt & Negri: “[W]ork toward the liberation of living labour [*from the paraciting of capital*], creating constellations of powerful singularities” (2000: 61) where “[t]he struggles are at once economic, political, and cultural – and hence they are biopolitical struggles, struggles over forms of life. (2000: 56) However, might not the “necropolitical fights” be no less attached to *life* – and perhaps even in a more fundamental way be fights with these very characteristics as they are fights for inclusion: economically, politically and culturally – fights to be acknowledged as a form of life, more precisely for the acknowledgement of unexploited life and labour as belonging to humanity. Arendt reminds us in the last part of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* of what in fact is at stake: the production of humans *as such*, without representing anything but their own absolute unique individuality, and who, without possibility to express themselves and act in a common world, lose all significance. The calamity of the excluded is not that they are oppressed but that nobody wants to oppress them (2004: 375). As such, many people in the category we are here discussing are in fact deprived of human rights, obviously concretely *but also* discursively, by such thinkers as Hardt & Negri. “They are deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion. Privileges in some cases, injustices in most, blessings and doom are meted out to them according to accident and without any relation whatsoever to what they do, did, or may do.” (Arendt 2004: 376). They are like living symbols of what has “happened to them.” (2004: 247) “Human rights”, according to Arendt in reality operates as a standard slogan, or emptied discourse for protectors of these underprivileged: “[...] a kind of additional law, a right of exception necessary for those who had nothing better to fall back upon.”

Her central argument is that a “meaningful” concept of human rights can in itself neither achieve liberty nor justice:

[...] for these are the concerns of the daily strife of all citizens; it can only secure the participation of all men in the strife. The concept of human rights can again be meaningful only if they are redefined as a right to the human condition itself, which depends upon belonging to some human community, the right never to be dependent upon some inborn human dignity which *de facto*, aside from its guarantee by fellow-men, not only does not exist but is the last and possibly most arrogant myth we have invented in all our history. (Arendt 2004: 631)

Hardt & Negri's global citizenship promise little in regard to the human conditions as such. That *life* itself is defined by capital – by being productive within the framework of capitalist exploitation as Hardt & Negri do – must be the furthest reduction of humanity to *homogeneity*, as understood by Bataille, thus far. As Arendt frames it: any definition where *rights* is that which is *good for*, rather than *what is* – even when applied to a unit as large as mankind (or multitude) itself – will never prevent murder. “For it is quite conceivable that one beautiful day a highly organized, mechanized, and centralized humanity may decide that it would be better for the whole to do without a certain part.” (Arendt 2004: 630) As such Hardt & Negri's overall argument seems not only defective from our perspective, but also inherently very dangerous. This is what Hardt & Negri fails to grasp both in establishing their humanity as a community of producers of surplus value and when they argue that Empire can be attacked from *any* place, which to us seems more proper to say from *no* place.

PART III: The Lumpenproletariat in African social formations

Chapter 6: Fascist Mobilizations of the Lumpenproletariat in African Social Formations

6.1 Mode of production and social formation- The social articulation of capitalism in African social formations

We have not had the same past, you and ourselves, but we shall have, strictly, the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course. . . no one can any longer live by the simple carrying out of what he himself is.” In the sameness of this global future, however, we the formerly colonized, [...] have to reclaim and concretely reinstitute the historicity of our own existence. [...] [T]he unequivocal recognition of the multiverse that constitutes our – thus far denied – historical and cultural specificity (i.e. humanity) will become the basis for global earthly solidarity. (Serequeberhan 1994: 29)

[W]e shall have to reveal how far certain concepts, which appear in the study of the political in a concrete capitalist social formation, do in fact function (appropriately transformed or not) in the field of the political in the capitalist mode of production; and how they are thus valid for capitalist social formations in general, and indeed for all possible capitalist formations. (Poulantzas 1982: 22)

In his book *Political Power and Social Classes* (1982), Nicos Poulantzas discusses the relation between the *mode of production* and the *social formation*. The *mode of production* constitutes an abstract formal object (for example capitalist, feudal and slave modes of production), and does not exist in the strong sense in reality. What exists in reality is a historically determined social whole at a given historical moment, i.e. a *social formation*. A social formation “is a real-concrete object and so always original because singular, [it] presents a particular combination, a specific overlapping of several ‘pure’ modes of production.” (Poulantzas 1982: 15)

From Hardt & Negri's reasoning it seems to follow automatically from the fact that capitalism is *de facto* the global mode of production, that the world today constitutes one, uniform, global social whole – i.e. Empire. As segmentations are an inherent characteristic of this social formation, they do not for Hardt & Negri indicate a plurality of social formations within *one* global capitalistic economic space. We will argue that this collapse in distinction between mode of production and social formation is partly what gives *Empire* a flair of being an overtly abstract-formal work, as they essentially relate to an abstract-formal object (the capitalist mode of production) and from that deduce a uniform social formation. Thus it is our belief that the distinction between social formation and mode of production is still a valuable analytic tool in analysis as ours.

As Mamdani argues, the African colonial domains converged over time in terms of state-structures due to the similarities in the challenges these structures were a response to. In spite of diverse colonial powers, economies, geography and societies, they produced surprisingly uniform structures as an answer to the “native question”. To the extent that these social formations share certain overarching structures, they can be characterized as similar. On the background of the analytic distinction between social formation and capitalist mode of production, let us clarify some general characteristics of the social organization of capital within the African social formations. We thus develop the critical questions raised in relation to employing the framework established with Marx, Bataille and Arendt in an African context. Let us take two statements from Poulantzas as our point of departure:

[T]he fact that the structure of the whole is determined in the last instance by the economic does not mean that the economic always holds the *dominant role* in the structure. (Poulantzas 1982: 14)

[I]n a social formation dominated by CMP [*capitalist mode of production* – we will henceforth refer to it as *CMP*], as a general rule the dominant role is held by economic. (Poulantzas 1982: 16)

As we have seen from Mamdani and Arendt, it was not really the case in the colonial economic-political matrix that the dominant role was held by economics. Rather the “native question”, i.e. a political question, was at the forefront in framing policy and could even be at odds with the profit motive. Basically you were rich because you were white and white because you were rich, the cause was the consequence. (Fanon 2001: 31) This is a *heterogeneous imperative* form of sovereignty and transcendental legitimating of power. We recall Bataille's “master” – the “master” ruling over his equals without any rational account of his domination; we recall Hardt and Negri's analysis of the transition to immanence within the field of the political – there was not much immanent about the legitimating of this power. And finally we recall Foucault's claim about the revelation of the political potential of the masses – symbolized by the French revolution as the Western portal to Western modernity, as that which was precisely what the colonial masters were

so anxiously trying to contain within the setup of the bifurcated state. Nevertheless, colonialism was a way of incorporation in global capitalism and as such a CMP. Capitalism underlined both the practical need for an export of class struggle and a repetition of primitive accumulations – which colonialism promised to resolve – and at the same time cleared the ground for it through the production of surplus population and capital. Thus we can now lift Mamdani’s theory of the colonial state into a bigger economic picture, and discuss this state in relation to capitalism.

The bifurcated state inhibited the spontaneous growth of class formations (i.e. especially the formation of a proletariat), and a native-non-native/citizen-subject racial axis became the primary dividing line in the colony. The excluded majority in terms of race became reincorporated in the state as a plurality of minorities, i.e. tribes. Thus race and tribe became complementary organizational principles determined in the last instance by the functioning of the economics in the colonial mode of capitalism, not class – which is of course not the same as saying that classes did not exist. Hence politics, and not economics was by the specificities of the colonial economy attributed the dominant role in the structure, its’ social expression being race/tribe i.e. origin, not place-based class, in the context of occupation and over-exploitation.

This implies that class (understood as the principal division between the capitalist and the proletariat) is not necessarily *the* essential social organizational feature of a CMP. Rather the *relative* importance of class is fundamentally attached to the specific social formation dominated by CMP, and as such not valid for the political within CMP in general. Poulantzas seems to open for such an interpretation when he is arguing that social classes “[...] are the effect [...] of certain levels of structures, of which the state forms a part.” (Poulantzas 1982: 37). He then proceeds to discuss fractions, categories and strata. Poulantzas provides solid analytic tools other than class for analysis of social formations, but considering the scope of this thesis, we will leave Poulantzas and confine ourselves to make use of his distinction between social formation and CMP. As for now, the point is simply that in the African context we are facing modern and capitalist structures of domination that are not primarily articulated as class and class struggle. These structures were, moreover, a direct response to the prospect of failure of class as a social organizational set-up in relation to the matrix that Foucault identified as the key to understand modern statecraft – how to make the masses economically productive, but politically controllable (see chap. 4.1) – in face of increasing, militant socialist organization. Colonial powers brought with them a wealth of experience both from the devastating effects of class struggle in the homeland (which in part motivated colonialism in the first place) and from Indian aspirations towards independence. They had learnt that class was simply not an efficient way of organizing capitalism socially and that it eventually caused more problems than it solved due to the organizational and mobilizing advantage of an uprooted peasantry, containerized in the factory with nothing but their chains to

lose. *They knew very well* that the globe was in fact limited – they had just carved it up completely among themselves – and that Cecil Rhodes famous vision of colonizing the stars was but an empty dream.⁵⁵ As such, they *already* pondered the finitude of earth and mankind – which Hardt & Negri seem to identify as a totally post-modern reflection – insofar as the “biopolitical hinterland” was rarely considered as a desirable option within governing circles at that time. They also knew that unless they came up with something very clever they might end up with no place to go. The dynamics that *direct* racial rule in isolation put in play in India, had clearly pointed in the direction of them eventually being thrown out wherever they would go, in the attempt to find permanent external outlets for internal problems. The backlash of the “civilizing” and “modernizing” mission to put it to the point, reproduced “a European problem in the tropics”, just a hundred times worse, as race and class would match almost perfectly in a colonial context all exploited would be colonized, even though not all exploiters would be Europeans.⁵⁶ This latest colonial mode of *indirect* rule was by far the *most* modern social organization of capital of its time. It is odd that Hardt & Negri seem to be completely unaware of this fact when they treat this mode as residual to developments in the metropolises.⁵⁷

In spite of the deracialization after independence, the way of articulating race-supremacy exclusion through tribal forms of inclusion made possible that the citizen-subject divide could outlive the *native-non-native* divide. The elaborate effort to avoid class as the mode of “native” representation left a lasting imprint. It is thus the non-racial legacy of colonialism that today are setting some strong guidelines for the social structuring of post-colonial capitalism.

In a neo-colonial context the political articulation of capitalism is still strong. By strong we mean stronger than the political framing of market institutions in a *universal* legal room. Mamdani argues that in a neo-colony, capitalism essentially has a dual character: a comprador aspect, i.e. local capitalists functioning as agents for foreign monopolies, and a bureaucratic aspect, i.e. the state is playing a major role in the accumulation processes due to the weakness

⁵⁵ "To think of these stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_rhodes, retrieved 02.05.2010)

⁵⁶ We recall that according to Arendt, race was the natural bridgehead in the unnatural alliance of nationalism and imperialism, and the outcome of unifying the people on the basis of the mob. (c.f. chap. 4.3)

⁵⁷ While on the contrary these organizational principles seem to have had a boomerang effect in the metropolises. Little versed in the sophistication of colonial practices as he was, however, Adolf Hitler seems to have focused principally on exclusion through race – but without the “civilizing” ambitions the British initially had in India, thus degenerating to slavery and/or extermination – and missing the salient innovation of inclusion through tribe. No wonder he did not seriously attempt to colonize (in contrast to occupy) the much-experienced powers westwards! Arendt discusses European totalitarianisms as a prolongation/backlash of imperialism from another angle in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Because it is essentially an analysis of Europe, we will not pursue her approach to this affinity between fascism and imperialism although we have already touched upon this argument of hers, see chap 4.3.

of individual capitalists. “A capitalist in a neo-colony thrives on a double connection, his ties with foreign monopolies and with the local state machinery.” (Mamdani 1983: 103) The colon capitalist had been characterized by these features too, apart from the fact that he also needed the state to protect his racial supremacy. The comprador aspect of colon-capitalism is quite clear from the fact that accumulated wealth was rarely reinvested in the colony, but rather its steady streams flowed back to Europe.

Due to these contingencies, we argue that political exclusion became the basis for economic exploitation both of human and natural resources, underlining the dominant role of the political in these social formations. Firstly this exclusion, rooted in colonialism, logically if not chronologically, came before the inclusion represented by decentralized despotism. The exclusion from civil society – where economic relations were regulated according to *universal* market principles and legislation in accordance with the Occident – was the primary mode of exploiting the “free peasant’s” labour. (c.f. chap. 4.4) In contrast, the European proletariat, even when deprived of the political franchise, at least theoretically would be articulated in contractual and not “customary” relationships to capital. Secondly this exclusion forms, now as then, the framework for the access to and massive economic exploitation of natural wealth. In a neo-imperialistic world order its crudest version being simple robbery in the fog of war and seemingly anarchy. The interest in Africa from the perspective of global capital today is not essentially its bio-political resources, which seem to be of interest only insofar as they can be used to extract natural resources in the most labour-contemptuous ways.⁵⁸ From the perspective of capital it seems to be a much greater need for *Africa* than for *Africans*.⁵⁹ The main division here is not the multitude vs. Empire, but subjects vs. citizens in African post-colonial social formations dominated by CMP – both in terms of exploitation of human resources and in terms of command over natural resources.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ A range of examples on this we identified in the former chapter as Empire’s conspicuous absence rather than presence in Africa.

⁵⁹ We are reminded of the many colonial diaries, travel-records and even late philosophical accounts of such prominent Western thinkers as Arendt herself, who tend to describe Africans as in-differentiable from the *nature* in which they live. There is certainly a certain legacy in Eurocentric discourse to deal with here. It could be interesting to look into if there is any systematic relation between the origins of these discourses and the take off of the extraction of ground rent which colonialism opened for on a grand scale – and if so, that we could identify some kind of epistemological breach with the seemingly much more open-minded curiosity so characteristic of the enlightenment era’s fascination with everything *human*: “foreign” and “unfamiliar”.

⁶⁰ It seems to us that this on the deepest level is related to the relation between ground rent and surplus value. Accumulation did not have to take the route through production and essentially was a repetition of the processes of primitive accumulation. Ground rent is basically when one can make money, not via accumulation of surplus value; i.e. value created by work, but from controlling localized, limited natural resources, oil, minerals, land etc. which are greater in demand than in supply. As Marx argued: *work* is not the origin of *all* wealth, *nature* is too. If we were to operate on the level of CMP, we would have to raise the question of ground rent and not only surplus value in relation to our critique of Hardt & Negri, insofar

When arguing that political exclusion and not the iron laws of wage labour is the major form of subjugation, this is of course not the same as saying that demands from the money-economy are non-existing. In the colonial days, people were forced into the money-economy, primarily via monetary taxation. Taxation was used as a technique to promote the production of cash-crops, thus disrupting the system of subsistence farming (and in many cases leading to malnutrition insofar the peasants were forced to allocate land and time for this purpose at the expense of growing protein-rich, labour intensive food crops for domestic consumption). The main motivation for this incursion into peasant lives, was not, however to make the peasants “productive” properly speaking. Policy aimed towards their continued subsistence just with less to subsist on. The aim of forcing the peasants into growing cash-crops was rather to make them productive for capital in the sense of providing raw materials that could be “wage-laboured upon” and added surplus value in the European factories. In contrast to the colonial days when people were “branded” into the money-economy through the merciless collection of taxes in cash, today the demand for money seems to be more a desperate demand from the people than from capital, when seen in relation to the low level of capitalist productivity, i.e. surplus value-adding activity. Yesterday people were forced into the money economy, today they do whatever they can to access money. Today peasants grow cash-crops even when, or to the extent that prices are falling. The urban dwelling, informal-labouring poor do not even have a strip of nature from where to extract some little “ground rent”: they are outside the productive economy, but very much inside the money-economy.

Thus, as Warren Montag⁶¹ argues, next to Giorgio Agamben’s figure *homo sacer*⁶², whom one can kill with impunity, we find another character whose death is undoubtedly less spectacular, and for whom no memorials will be constructed: he who with impunity is let to die, slowly or fast, in the name of rationality and marked equilibrium. (Montag 2007: 154) They are excluded from the civil society of the urban but also the Native Authority of the rural, finding themselves within cities that grow completely detached from job opportunities with a “living-wage”, which in essence would have allowed them an exit from the rural and an entrance into civil society.

as this seems to be a concept alien to their biopolitics – and more thoroughly in relation to imperialism in general. We would also have wanted to discuss it in relation to how we have attempted to develop a concept of “necropolitics”. Ground rent and necropolitics might have proved prolific to discuss on the level of the political within CMP. Insofar as our scope is the social formation we leave it out for now.

⁶¹ From whom we have borrowed the term necropolitics (see chap. 5.3)

⁶² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998)

Within the framework of these contingencies of the post-colonial mode of incorporation into the all-embracing capitalist system and its social articulation, the genealogical inquiry into the political potential of the lumpenproletariat will be resumed. Again it is the limiting potential of these forces that so obviously comes to the forefront in reality and cannot be ignored. There seems to be a need to understand the dynamics of demagogic usurpation of lumpen support if exposing any alternatives. Through adapting the framework of fascism established with Marx and Bataille and use of historical analyses, will be generated some ideal-typical concepts and analytic abstractions characteristic for the unfolding dynamics of African neo-colonial fascism in postcolonial social formation.

6.2 Imperialism and fascism in Africa: an “eighteenth Brumaire” as the latest stage of imperialism

Fascism is neither a child of backwardness nor of advanced industrialization. It is really a product of imperialism in crisis. Those who have argued that fascism is only possible in imperialist countries have ignored the two poles of the imperialist system: the oppressor imperialist country and the oppressed neo-colonies. The crisis of the system can come to surface at either of these two poles. (Mamdani 1983: 35-36)⁶³

In France and Germany the social crisis of capitalism imploded, leading to internal dictatorship – in England it exploded, preventing dictatorship internally through imperialism and colonialism externally. Let us now pose the question of imperialism/fascism from the opposite perspective, that of the post-colonial state in a context of neo-imperialism, and its relations to the political role of the lumpenproletariat in this setting.

Through operationalizing the relevant parts of the theoretical framework of Marx and Bataille, identifying what it cannot comprehend and incorporating those distinctive, but general elements relevant for a proper understanding of African fascism, a flexible model will be sketched. This model will later be deployed on concrete analysis of two specific cases of fascism, putting the historical inquiry to the test of reality in an effort guided by what Foucault coins the historico-critical attitude.

Developing a general model

Independence essentially put an end to white, direct rule, i.e. *imperative heterogeneous* sovereignty upheld in a “pure form”, based on racial inclusion/exclusion. For all their cunning ingenuity, the colonial administration’s carefully elaborated system of installing myriads of mediating and fragmenting instances between themselves and the subjugated, was identified and eventually defeated by the revelation and articulation of the *subversive* political potential of *the people*. Regardless of whether independence was “given” or “taken”, it was nonetheless the haunting or actual threat this majority posed, that brought colonialism to its end. Just as through

⁶³ On the broader discussion of fascism see Mamdani 1983: 35-36

the deposition of the king in France 1848, or the abdication of the Kaiser in Germany 1918, “the people” had irrevocably entered the political scene, and the base for legitimating power was irretrievably altered.

What exactly this “liberation” – which independence promised – was to entail, was yet an open question. Of the two major paths – radical and conservative nationalist – that the postcolonial regimes followed, none of them managed to push the revolution further in a truly *subversive*⁶⁴ direction, due to structural impediments related to the deep-rooted structures of power internal to the state. As a result the national bourgeoisie and middle classes became the new “citizens”, leaving the majority behind and more often than not increasingly relying on the military for the up-keeping of such a status. The character of these regimes thus functions in this model as equivalents to the regime of the French and the Weimar republic, insofar as they increasingly undermined any kind of liberal (or socialist for that matter) *heterogeneous* values. Hence they were becoming increasingly perceived as illegitimate, and consequently precarious internally. As if following some kind of thermo-dynamic logic, fewer and fewer people had their stakes in the regime and the regimes responded by increasing repressive pressure. A rapidly diminishing social base proves, however, an unstable foundation for modern power.

With Marx and Bataille has been argued that in a post-liberal revolutionary context, two competing revolutions can proclaim themselves in times of crisis – both hostile to a present, disintegrating regime and both seeking popular support. This analytically open situation will be equated to the above-described post-independence context. In contrast to the colonial order – characterized by the sovereigns’ more or less total loss of contact with the “natives” in general and the lower classes among them in particular – the new situation allowed for *imperative* movements and solutions to come forth as revolutionary.

That an *imperative* movement comes forth as revolutionary – appealing to the most urgent needs and demands of *the people* – is essentially what analytically separates a fascist regime from a military or quasi-military dictatorship, which basically is a non-delusionary class-dictatorship (in the post-colonial context the dictatorship of the politically defined “citizens”, in the French republic the dictatorship of the economically defined bourgeoisie).⁶⁵

⁶⁴ In this context we will use the term *subversive* essentially to refer to meaningful democratization, which could pave the way for fairer redistribution of national wealth. We will abstain from any revolutionary romanticism. As the reader has probably noticed already, we use the term in a “non-Bataillian” way, thus even though we have borrowed the concept from him, we do not imply his wider psycho-social framework. “The practices of freedom”, moreover, that Foucault talks about in the motto for this thesis, seems to us an overtly ambitious understanding to use in this context, insofar as these practices require a certain degree of liberation – and hence makes Foucault introduce the concept of domination.

⁶⁵ As we have just argued that class was not the defining feature of the social organization of capital in Africa, it might be a cause of confusion to use the term class-dictatorship, but relying on the reader’s good sense, I will occasionally use the term “class” to avoid cumbersome reading. Interest group would perhaps

A “Bonaparte” – in contrast to “the military dictator” – perceives himself as the protector *and* the adversary of all classes or interest-groups simultaneously, but above all, he views himself as “the representative of the lumpenproletariat, to which he himself, his entourage, his government and army belong.” (Marx 1979: 185, c.f. chap 4.2)⁶⁶ What essentially separates a military regime from *L’Ancien regime* or colonial rule, is that the ethos for legitimating power has altered insofar as the people have already shown their political potential – which brought down both *L’Ancien Régime* and colonial rule. The transcendental principle of *the nation*, so commonly invoked by these regimes, appears shallow insofar as the people of this nation are very well aware that the *nation* in fact refers to themselves, in their immanence, and not to some abstract sphere of ideas. Thus, when the post-colonial elites stepped into the shoes of the former colonizers, people were aware that that was what they did; they stood forth as “*primus inter pares*” rather than an completely alien occupying power, overawing and subjugating all by the criteria of race. Fascism, in contrast, is a mobilizing force that brings people out of their habitual orbits. It is a form of modern affective organization of the masses, its pillars being the fuehrer, army, militias recruited from the lumpenproletariat and with the nation or religion (however much sectarian defined) as the transcendental principle invoked emotionally. *Imperative* revolutionary movements, has by far been more successful than its *subversive* counterpart in the postcolonial states.

In Africa, *subversive* attempts have been seriously hampered by circumstances that cannot be articulated within the framework of Marx and Bataille, i.e. the framework of class. Different political communities, which had historically been related by alliance, animosity or not at all, which had been moulded within the straitjackets of indirect rule, collaborated or resisted, were in the post-colonial state forced to share a *common future* and not only a *common past* as racially excluded within the container of the colonial state. This legacy has put major obstacles in the way for the organization of *subversive* movements not sectarian defined. On the other end of the spectre, the “detrribalized” radical regimes degenerated into centralized despotism: modernizing people from above and exacerbating urban-rural divides. These are specificities of this social formation internally due to characteristics of the bifurcated state and its inherent tendency to fragment and contain *subversive* forces.

Another dimension that cannot be articulated within the framework of Marx and Bataille in relation to the contingencies of *subversion*, is the manner in which these states are incorporated

be a more neutral term insofar as it could also incorporate other than purely economic dimensions of group-solidarity.

⁶⁶ This is, however, not the same as saying that only fascistoid regimes can or do employ the lumpenproletariat. We recall for example how the Mobile Guards were recruited from this group in order to crush the proletariat in 1848, or how the radical and conservative post-colonial regimes can play on these group, often organizing them around the Party or ethnicity. (c.f. chap. 4.2)

in the world economic system, i.e. global structures of domination. The necropolitical incorporation summarily requires that a truly *subversive* development in Africa would necessitate a change in global economic structures as well, as they were the very forces to frame the bifurcated state to begin with. A post-neo-colonial world order would require the wealth of the state, both human and natural, to be harnessed towards the well being of its territorially defined citizenry, consequently requiring a fundamental restructuring of international patterns of trade and consequently wider systemic repercussions. Thus *subversive* movements in Africa will necessarily not only stand in opposition to *internal imperative* forces, but also to the mode of global economic integration. Hence we maintain the necessity of understanding relations of domination in a global perspective in order to adequately analyse the present day, but argue that such analysis must be undertaken from the perspective of the social formations, which are integrated in this global network of capitalist organization.

The mode of incorporation of these states into international relations of domination has some distinctive implications: The bifurcated state was a product of an export of a crisis that might have led to fascism internally if it had not been exported. Whereas fascism/imperialism represented ideal-typically two answers to one problem in Europe – it looks slightly different from a neo-colony. In a neo-colony it rather seems to be that it is the prospect or threat of *breakage of the linkage* with the imperialist forces that is what calls forth fascism internally. Thus it is the crisis of imperialism that implodes in the neo-colony and its solution tendentially go in *imperative* direction. As such fascism does not represent one answer to an essentially “indigenous/autonomous” crisis that could equally well be solved with some kind of export. It essentially represents an answer to an internal crisis in *relation* to neo-imperialism i.e. the already imported crisis; fascism functioning as a “shock-absorber”. Both *subversive* and *imperative* revolutionary movements promise a solution to the crisis of imperialism, appealing to the urgent demands of the people (in contrast to the military regimes). But, as we have seen from Bataille, in case the latter seize power – insofar as any *subversion* is excluded – their solution will be in agreement with the aggregated interests of capital. (c.f. chap 4.2) The alternative outcome to such a crisis would be an internal subversion that would depend on a fundamental break with the neo-imperialistic forces and as such in danger of ending up in some form of ghetto within the world economic system, perhaps the very ghetto Hardt & Negri warns against (c.f. chap 5.4). The autonomy, but dependence of neo-colonial states stresses the importance of apprehending internal developments in a wider international context.

Generalizing the framework of Marx and Bataille, it can be applied to the dynamics of fascism in Africa, but not exhaust it. The manner in which dynamics of fascism in a neo-colonial Africa is unfolding differently is linked to two interrelated facts: The specificities of the social

formation internally and the incorporation of these states into international relations of domination. African and European fascism are revolving differently around the axis imperialism/fascism. We sum up some general points distinctive for African fascism:

- Fascism must be understood in relation to the continuity of state-structures from colonialism to post-colonialism
- In a certain sense the regime *instability* in Africa provides political *stability*, outright versions of fascisms being the most extreme expression of the search towards preservation of this stability
- There is a link between fascism and imperialism, fascism today being a logical consequence of neo-imperialism in crisis *within* the former colonies
- Fascism must thus be understood on the level of the social formation dominated by CMP; it is internal developments within the social formation threatening the imperialist link that leads to the political crisis of which fascism provides a solution

Based on this schematic exposition of a general model, let us now proceed to mediate between the theoretical/hypothetical and empirical level in order to create two sub-model trajectories of neo-colonial fascist usurpation. Assuming fascism is following a certain pathologic logic of reasoning, we believe that beneath the sensational violent excesses can be unveiled a certain rationality. Unveiling this rationality through a historico-experimental approach may give better grip on the *meaning* of fascism in this context. What does it signify? On the basis of Mamdani's historical analysis *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (1983) we will unravel an ideal-type path for the unfolding of post-independence politics pointing towards fascism, and the unfolding of fascism, Amin figuring as a proto-fascist leader. Rwanda 1993-1994 provides the proto-type example of African "dual-revolution", where practically all forces were in play simultaneously and whose outcome was apocalypse.

In the case of Uganda, the path towards fascism was characterized by similar dynamics as those that Marx describes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. The bourgeoisie essentially *devoured* itself, retreating politics into ever more reactionary cycles, to the extent that the fascist regime was "contained in a finished state" and it only needed "a bayonet thrust for the abcess to burst and the monster to spring forth before our eyes." (Marx 1979: 183). The haunting prospect of "the people" led the regime to rule increasingly through organic laws. Driven by anxiety for these *subversive* forces – these ghosts of the revolution – the regime eventually imploded. In Rwanda, in contrast, *two* powerful competing revolutionary movements with strong social base – one *subversive* and one *imperative* – revolted simultaneously against a disintegrating regime and against each other. The outcome proved to be such an explosive mix that it led to

civil war *and* genocide simultaneously. “The people” was certainly not “the ghost” of this revolution and was pandered to from both sides, driving politics into a deadly zero-sum game.

Sub-model I: When “the people” is “the ghost” of the revolution & the bourgeoisie devours itself – based on the case of the origin of fascism in Uganda

Amin came to power after an Israeli-British sponsored coup in 1971, accomplished by a clique of officers. The preceding president Milton Obote’s dictatorial tendencies had become increasingly clear and as such there was little *homogeneous* or liberal about his rule; but neither was it a clear fascist regime either: anyhow, the “people” had for long been the “ghost of the revolution”. The post-colonial regime of Uganda, we argue, could at independence primarily be seen as within the conservative/moderate nationalist camp⁶⁷. We recall that through cooptation and post-war reforms the British had been fairly successful in the forging of these “responsible nationalists” (c.f. chap 2.2) and in Uganda the contrast between the nationalist movements of the 1960s to that of the aggressive peasant-workers movements of the 1940s was sharp (Mamdani 1983: 22). Independence was the last step in colonial reform and the handing over of power to the nationalist middle-class/bourgeoisie cleared the ground for continued imperialistic influence. As such Uganda had after independence all the typical characteristics of a neo-colonial state; it had inherited from colonialism all its anti-people institutions and none had raised the questions about the obviously dangerous and predatory character of this state.

[...] Uganda would inherit the colonial state machinery, with simply a change of personnel. Whether it was the army and the police that shot down workers and peasants in the 40s and 50s, and later went on to suppress Mau Mau in Kenya, or the legal system that tried and imprisoned them, these were part of a God-given natural order to the leadership of these parties. It mattered little that these state institutions had been devised over half a century ago to keep the people in line. On the contrary, the new leadership was now ready to direct the same institutions against the people among whom they had stood until recently. How, again are we to understand an independence which leaves the key economic lifelines of a country in the hands of imperialist interests; which leaves intact the instruments of colonial repression [...]? Such an economy is a *neo-colonial economy*; such a state is a *neo-colonial state*. (Mamdani 1983: 22, emphasis in original).

Long before independence was granted thus the struggle over its meaning were at the forefront, the “responsible” eventually gaining the upper hand in the case of Uganda. After a happy and unifying moment of independence, the radical nationalist political minority in these “responsible” regimes would generally tend to organize strikes and opposition to an economic policy favouring upper petty bourgeoisie and foreign monopolies – generally soon to be silenced

⁶⁷ We base this assessment on the economic policy and on the internal political nature of the compromise arrived at independence (the alliance Kabaka Yekka and Uganda Peoples Congress), even though it ended up as a very centralized dictatorship under Obote as he later crushed Buganda-nationalism. Obote was a machiavelist and opportunist, and as such had few principles he seemed to follow with consistence. The inconsistency of his policy is evident in the vacillations to the left and to the right as challenges were rising. The two paths (moderate/conservative and radical nationalists) are of course ideal-typical constructs, where some regimes fall smoother into the categories than others. For a review of Ugandan history see for example Mutibwa, Phares: *Uganda since Independence, A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, Fountain Publishers Ltd., Kampala 1992.

and trade unions to be statized. To the extent the independence was indeed literally a “liberal revolution”, i.e. not just the removal of *imperative* “white” rule, but the installation of conservative/moderate nationalist regimes, it was a liberal revolution without a solid class base due to the inherent weaknesses of the national bourgeoisie. The competing factions within the petty bourgeoisie thus will move to organize sectarian social support bases (religious, ethnic) among the people internally and create alliances with competing imperialist interests overseas externally.⁶⁸ The pace is set for a cycle of crises, each of which promotes the army to higher and higher positions as *the* broker on the national political scene. Civilian politicians increasingly come to view the army as an extension of the party-political means and the army itself becomes increasingly aware of this newly acquired status. The repression of bourgeois values by the bourgeois themselves, we recall, bears resonance from the analysis of Marx and Bataille:

But, although a neo-colonial army can be used to silence local opposition [...] it ceases to be a reliable instrument in the event of struggle against imperialist interest. This is what the regime learnt in 1971. In the very first attempt the Obote government made to reform the neo-colonial system, the army came down on it like a sledge-hammer.” (Mamdani 1983: 28-29).

Thus the same powers training the army “on behalf” of the national government, can use the same army to depose a government falling out of favour – a fairly straightforward affair.

The Obote regime by 1969 found it self in the midst of deep economic crisis, typically for neo-colonial economies and a result of faithfully following all recommendations drawn up by The World Bank at independence. In spite of tremendous improvements in productivity, the country was steady-fast growing poorer.

The people had worked hard. Twice the amount of coffee was produced in 1969 as in 1962, and 50 per cent more cotton in 1969 than in 1962; and yet there was an economic crisis in 1969. The government was facing a shortage of foreign exchange, although it was exporting more than before. Inexplicably, commodities became scarce, prices rose, and people found life more difficult. Why? Because imperialist exploitation had increased. While peasants produced more than before, the prices of cotton and coffee on the world market went down. As a result foreign exchange earnings from export declined. At the same time foreign monopolies began taking more money out of the country than they were bringing in. In 1969, 133.4 million shillings flowed into the country as ‘aid’; 294.6 million shilling left the country the following year. (Mamdani 1983: 29)

Due to the import-export character of the economy and the laws of supply and demand, adequate profits could not be generated within the agricultural sector regardless of the major effort to increase productivity. The more that was produced, the more the prices would fall. Whereas the processes of primitive accumulation in Europe lead to a proletarianization of the peasants and increase in the efficiency of the agricultural sector to harness it to the needs of a growing urban population – the cash-crops production in Africa was and is essentially geared towards a world, rather than home market. Due to the crisis in the countryside, the peasants are increasingly

⁶⁸ For an overview over how these processes developed in Uganda see Mamdani 1983: 27-28

lumpenized. As such post-independence capitalism had and has little to offer ordinary people in an international context of unequal economic relations. The moral crisis of the bourgeoisie – which fascism essentially is a solution to, we have argued – thus become endemic in the African context leading to a high susceptibility for fascism. Conspicuous consumption of elites aggravates and is the symbolic expression of this crisis.

In face of economic crisis popular discontent rise, but with no political organization allowed to represent it – left wing forces being crushed by terror – it seems up to rightist forces, i.e. the military, to assassinate the president. Precisely such an attempt acted as an awakener for Obote and in an effort to regain initiative he launched the reform program ‘Move to the left’. The implementation of this program would entail a more independent economic and foreign policy in relation to World Bank and imperialist powers. Despite the title of the program and its anti-imperialist implications, the reforms were nevertheless anti-people. True to the tactics of divide and rule strikes were declared illegal at the moment nationalization measures were announced (Ugandans should not strike against themselves!) and in the case of Uganda the experienced and militant Kenyan workers were simply expelled to “remedy” the unemployment crisis. The point is that these regimes became increasingly impossible due to the unfolding of the economic crisis that hit most African countries after independence, their social base both internally and externally eroding rapidly.

Middle class nationalism was trying to fight simultaneously on two fronts: demanding concessions from imperialism and muzzling the people. Sandwiched between imperialism and the people, the regime became highly vulnerable. The coup of January 1971 underlined the limits of middle-class nationalism. The coup was engineered by an alliance of foreign imperialism and local reaction with the people standing on the sidelines. Their direct instrument was the military – the rightist officers in the neo-colonial army, who since the early colonial days had been set up as a bulwark against any popular nationalist initiative. (Mamdani 1983: 30-31)

The fascist leader’s rise to power is thus essentially a product of the crisis within the neo-colonialist camp and as such a sign of their weakness. It is an attempt to resolve the crisis of the middleclass/bourgeoisie nationalist regime increasingly ruling through “organic laws” (c.f. chap 4.2) and preempt popular distress from becoming mobilized towards *subversive* reconfiguration. But the actual success of this attempt also bears witness of the fundamental weaknesses of the people’s movement in a context where two populist radical alternatives can present themselves. In Uganda this weakness was profound due to the terror Obote unleashed on *subversive* elements and exacerbated by the fact that opportune elements in the leadership of the popular opposition would initially endorse the coup and in the process pacify the people in the vulnerable phase of regime consolidation. (An opportunism not totally irrecognizable from the opportunism among the liberal and socialist politicians that Marx describes in his texts on France, which we unfortunately have no space for further developing here). Upon the coming to power, people were

not sure what to expect from Amin and expectations were initially high that he would reintroduce democracy. In his speech after *fait accompli*, he promised rule of law, release of detainees, elections etc. Due to the repressive political climate preceding the coup, people would be essentially confused over who represents what (*imperative* or *subversive* solutions).⁶⁹ After a short honeymoon, when people voiced their demands and took to strikes due to continued economic crisis, the repressive character of the regime became clear to everyone still in doubt. As we have no space nor need here for a thorough exposition of the regime, we will highlight certain structural points of the regime of broader and theoretically generalizable relevance and which identifies the specifically fascist characteristics of the regime, which separates it from a military regime. As Mamdani points out, Amin and his gang had far from any systematic plan how to build fascism, and it is even doubtful he understood the meaning of the word. Nevertheless, the immediate problems' facing these leaders and their attempts to solve them leads to a total result: neo-colonial fascism.

Fascism is not simply a military dictatorship. Under fascism, the gun moves through all structures of the state and society [...]. Fascism is neither a tyranny of the social riff-raff (the *bayaye*), who may form its rank and file, nor it is a dictatorship of small proprietors, who may cheer it in the early stages. *In a neo-colony, fascism is the dictatorship of the most chauvinistic agents of imperialism.* (Mamdani 1983: 36-37, my emphasis)

Firstly we want to mention one of Amin's most infamous misdeeds: the expulsion of the Asians in 1972.⁷⁰ This so-called "economic war" was on the fairly straightforward side an attempt to broaden the social base of the regime through rewarding followers with the expropriated property. On the other side however:

[B]y representing the 'economic war' as a crusade against imperialism and its agents, *fascism appealed, in a demagogic way, to the most urgent needs and demands of the people.* The trick was to identify imperialism with British imperialism, and exploitation by local agents with Indian exploitation. Fascist demagogy had a dual character. On the one hand, it played upon the sentiments of the people with its anti-imperialist rhetoric; on the other hand, it inflamed certain historically-ingrained prejudices with its racist rhetoric. The combination allowed fascism to cast exploitation as a racial attribute, not a class relationship. By driving anti-imperialism into narrow nationalist channels, fascism pre-empted the anti-imperialist and revolutionary upsurge of the people. (Mamdani 1983: 39, my emphasis)

By channelling nationalism as all black-Ugandans against the Asians very physically and against imperialism very rhetorically, Amin thus cleverly plaid out the collective resentment-card (all the 'exploited' against the 'exploiter'), but in such a manner that the structures of exploitation would not be fundamentally altered. At the same time, tribalism was rampant within the system itself; purges and massacres based on suspect ethnic loyalties became a part of everyday life. Simultaneously as he "unified" the "nation", he thus did everything to divide the same "exploited"

⁶⁹ In fact the attitude of the majority seems to have been that nothing could be worse than Obote.

⁷⁰ As in many East-African countries the British "introduced" the Indians as a non-national trading/commercial class.

majority along ethnic and religious lines. The classic fascist refusal of class-antagonism in African versions thus underlines internal ethnic divisions in a manner moulding the colonial patterns. We recall the excluded majority being reincorporated in terms of tribe within the colonial system – here we see the active mobilization/inclusion of that majority, against the proxy-imperialist Asians or other candidate groups, simultaneously as it is internally pulverized into ethnic antagonisms.

Secondly we want to stress the way in which the army became the supreme organ of the state and society at all levels. Typical for any fascist regime “[t]he distinction between the army and the police, between those supposed to guard against external threat, and those supposed to maintain law and order internally, became merely formal.” (Mamdani 1983: 43) An important aspect related to the militarization of state and society of particular importance to us however, was the altering of the character of the army. Much attention has been given to the recruitment of foreign mercenaries, giving the impression of the fascist army as being primarily non-Ugandan. However, a point strongly stressed by Mamdani is that more important than foreigners in the composition of the army, was the recruitment of the urban riff-raff, thus following a classic fascist pattern. Amin announced the priority given this group as a policy to curb the problem of employment. However:

The mercenary and lumpen composition of the army soon gave it a new dimension, peculiarly fascist. The fascist army was not just a neo-colonial army that functioned as the repressive arm of the state; it did not use terror simply to defend a class dictatorship. Individual members of the armed forces used terror to eliminate all obstacles that stood in the way of their search for wealth.” (Mamdani 1983: 43)

Thus Mamdani points out that fascist terror had both an institutional and an individual aspect: class violence in defence of the state (‘centralized’ violence) and individual violence for personal gains (‘decentralized’ violence or ‘anarchy’) (Mamdani 1983: 44). As such we are almost getting a glimpse of what later Mamdani is to develop as the legacy of the bifurcated state even in the nature of fascist terror: the citizen-sphere of ‘legal-bound’, however much perverted state-violence operating side by side with the subject-sphere of the private, non-codified individual terror⁷¹.

Due to the peculiar economic crisis resulting from the economic policies of fascism in a neo-colony, the lumpenproletarianization of the population will by reason of pure logic, be massive. Lacking a heavy industry means that for the build-up of a military machine, arms have to be imported. For arms to be imported the regime needs control over the export-import relations. “Whereas it had been apparent that the welfare of the rulers depended directly on the performance of the export-import connection, it now became clear to the people that their own welfare hinged on their ability to break out of the narrow confines of export-import relations.” (Mamdani 1983: 47) The resistance of the people can but primarily be individual as the capacity of state-repression

⁷¹ It’s been said that Amin gave his soldiers a gun and told them to “feed themselves”.

increase proportionally to the armament. Massive it can still be however, and as in Uganda it often took the form of economic sabotage perhaps for the above mentioned reason: absenteeism, rooting up of cash crops, burning of plantations and factories. With a regime focused on arms only, the import substituting industries suffer severely of lack of imports of spare parts, productive machinery etc. Inflation rise as the regime resorts to the old trick of printing money, unemployment rise. There can thus be a movement from the cities to the countryside initially, as people loose their jobs, if they still have rural ties and land rights, which they often had due to the unreformed Native Authority system of the conservative/moderate nationalistic regimes. As there is little ideological support for the regime among elites, African fascisms being purged of even the thinnest veil of ideology and appearing in its pure form – the regime will constantly need new material gains to be rewarded to collaborators. The regime might thus put its eyes on the countryside in one way or another. With a new land reform in the case of Uganda, peasants could be evicted from their customary tenure to the benefit of agricultural ‘development’, a euphemism for land grabbing by absentee landlords – regime-collaborators to be rewarded. (We recall Davis analysis of how regimes have battered off the countryside as being one of the major reasons for the velocity of the urbanization, see chap. 3.2). Both peasants and workers thus find themselves fundamentally homeless and lumpenized by the regime. The collapse of import-substitution industries combined with a sole focus on arms import only, moreover leads to the flourishing of black-market trade of essential goods. Reaching levels of national economy and run by the profiteers of the regime themselves, this development underlines the schizophrenias of the economic policy and its essentially non-nationalist character. The essentially petty character of colonial economy thus becomes increasingly grotesque and farcical under fascism and ‘*okuliira mu kavuyo*’ (Luganda) – literally: ‘eating in the confusion’ is its slogan.

[The profiteers] preferred commerce to productive investment, and *magendo* [black-market trade] to legal commerce. The most lucrative activity was a combined investment in *magendo* and long-distance transport. *Magendo* profits were high when scarcity was greatest. Scarcity was not the result of lack of planning; it was planned by the *mafutamingi* [the profiteers]. The *magendo* trade rose in direct proportion to the decline in industrial production, and as wage employment declined, the number of *bayaye* [lumpenproletariat] rose. The *mafutamingi* seldom employed workers: he distributed his stock to ‘his’ *bayaye* to retail at every nook and corner of the town at *magendo* prices. [...] Fascism’s most negative effect on the working people, particularly those in the urban and semi-urban areas, was that it lumpenized them. (Mamdani 1983: 53)

About the lumpenization Mamdani furthermore writes that:

Fascism idealized the *bayaye*, the ignorant, the rough and the tough, and these qualities paid better than productive labour. Not only did *bayaye* populations of the towns increase, *bayaye* thinking and *bayaye* traits affected the rest of the town population, and that part of the rural population closely connected with the *magendo* economy [...]. The youth increasingly drifted away from schools, into *magendo*. Related to the lumpenization of the working people was their brutalization. In the midst of fascist terror and disorder, life became a kind of war. In the midst of scarcity, the poor fought one another to get hold on necessities [...] living conditions disunited and divided the oppressed as never before. Fascist attempts to divide people included utilizing every historically ingrained prejudice found among them. The two most conspicuous was

racism and male chauvinism. Racism in the modern era is a by-product of imperialism. Imperialism [...] created petty racial privileges to keep the oppressed divided. Petty nationalism capitalized on these petty privileges to turn anti-imperialism into a racial crusade. (Mamdani 1983: 54)

Thus we see a peculiar African twist: whereas the fascisms of Germany, Japan and to a lesser extent the southern European versions initially appealed to the lumpenproletariat, but after taking power essentially transformed them into a proletariat working for powerful military industries, fascisms in Africa lumpenize ever bigger factions of the population due to the import-character of militarization. Thus, this kind of fascism fulfils a very different role than its western counterparts, where fascism essentially was 'successful' in a short-term perspective of 'solving' the unemployment crisis heavily responsibly for its emergence (hence its appeal also in liberal western interwar-societies ridden by depression). We will therefore look deeper into exactly what this kind of fascism resolves.

As is obvious from the preceding, fascism has little to offer ordinary people. Apart from the initial phase thus, the popular support for the regime is minimal and primarily restricted to the few who benefit in highly personal economic manners. Apart from the fanning of racial hatred, there is little systematic or ideologically elaborated about it. Thus fascism is revealing relatively unveiled its crude economic basis: capitalism and imperialism. The sheer brutality of regimes such as Amin's, is well known and need no further explications here, but explains a long way why the internal opposition have difficulties to organize in combination with the disuniting conditions of living. The reasons for regime-survival (eight-years in the case of Amin) can thus not solely be found internally, but must be sought elsewhere, i.e. from the support given it from imperialist powers.

As we know, by 1960s the old imperialist powers had to give room for two new superpowers, a process that was giving a massive boost to the decolonization processes. Both of the new superpowers were well versed in neo-colonial practices and techniques from Latin America and Eastern Europe/Central Asia. The decolonization worldwide thus opened for a veritable scramble over again and was characterized by harsh competition, this time with the flair of ideological Cold War rivalries. This was the international context in which Amin found himself when he, disappointed with what Britain and Israel had to offer his army, started the search for other masters. In spite of the Asian expulsion, in spite of fierce rhetoric and ties with popular anti-imperialist movements from which he derived great propaganda, the Amin regime was indeed well within the orbit of both western imperial powers and the USSR.⁷² Amin's anti-imperialist

⁷² For a through exposition of the economic relations between Amin's regime and imperialist powers see Mamdani 1983 pp 59-103. During Amin three areas in particular gave opportunities for big-time profits: arms, coffee and transport and telecommunication industry. With the eroding of the British monopoly competition became intense, but by the end of the Amin era the Soviet Union primarily preoccupied the

profile and ties with other former colonies (principally Libya and Kenya – but Kenya’s economy was being firmly in British hands, and Libya’s assistance fairly marginal) was in fact a great propaganda boon for western imperialism too, uneasy to openly reveal intimate ties with ‘the butcher of Africa’. (Mamdani 1983: 92-101) Thus the Amin regime, despite its image and reputation of being fiercely anti-imperialist, de facto differed little from regimes of well-known henchmen such as Sese Seko Mobutu or Jean-Bédél Bokassa.

During Amin, the bureaucratic aspect of capitalism (i.e. the states role in the accumulation processes) became extremely strong due to the expulsion of the Indians – who before had operated as the agents of foreign monopolies and whose property now were distributed according to political colour rather than merit – coinciding with the expansion of state control over import-export relations and the essentially erratic character of Amin. Realizing how disposable this situation made him from the point of view of imperialist economic interests, Amin actually attempted some blatant reforms in 1977, which in fact could be characterized as nothing but neo-colonial blueprints and which were jubilated from both IMF and UN, in spite of the fact that the viciousness of the regime had been widely publicized by then. Exactly this brutality, however, pushed the political problem to the forefront, regardless of how satisfactory the reform package was from a purely economic point of view. Even though organized opposition was effectively curbed by the reign of terror, imperialist powers were losing faith in Amin’s ability to curb them forever. USA was the first to publicize their wish for his replacement, and dropped as the inglorious hot potato hastily he was. The new regime, composed of exile splinter-groups, opportunists and Obote-supporters preliminary united under the an umbrella organization⁷³, had hardly anything in common apart from shared hatred to Amin and started to disintegrate as soon as they faced the problems of the country without him. The country was virtually drained away in a maelstrom of dictatorship, soldiers running amok and civil war. Compared to the bloody aftermath, Amin’s times were sometimes even viewed with nostalgia, and stability has for the country as a whole not returned until very recently with the ousting of The Lords Resistance Army, now spreading their terror in other countries. As such we can say that the toppling of the fascist regime, did not translate into a broad popular, democratic, anti-imperialistic movement, and was to a certain extent more anti-Amin than anti-fascist.

arms trade, while the western powers, led by USA controlled the coffee trade and communication networks. (Mamdani 1983: 90)

⁷³ The Uganda’s National Liberation Front (UNLF)

Sub-model II: Dual-revolution – imperative and subversive alternatives revolt simultaneously against a disintegrating regime. Based of the case of Rwanda 1993-1994

In Rwanda in contrast, a movement to a large extent characterized by popular, anti-fascist and at least anti-French imperialism actually did take power in 1994, but only after a virtual apocalypse had tainted the worth of its victory and still continues to destabilize the whole region in the most devastating ways.

Since 1973 Rwanda had been ruled by the military dictatorship of Juv nal Habyarimana and were under the heavy influence of French imperial interests, who propped up the regime with military advisors, arms and training. Habyarimana followed the logic that had been set in play with independence of hutu-ethnocracy. Rather than democracy, a reversed ethnocracy had been installed: “Hutu-power”, discriminating the Tutsi-minority that had been the former beneficiaries of Belgian colonial rule. Since the days of the revolution, every time social discontent rose to alarming proportions, the elites in Rwanda had replied by mobilizing vertical cleavages. Rather than a social dysfunctionality, this racism was both structural and functional (Scherrer, 2002: 121), thus the Tutsis were compelled to play the role forced on the Indians by Amin.⁷⁴ The results of the persecutions was the Rwandan Diaspora, late in the 1980s numbering around 700 000 people, the majority of whom were living in British/US influenced Uganda. Nevertheless, Rwanda appeared as a state where *law and order* prevailed; a regime guaranteeing imperialist interests, relatively high literacy rates, good infrastructure and welfare institutions, lead international observers to name it ‘the Switzerland of Africa’. In African terms a peculiarly strong central state, with unusual capacity to interfere in people’s everyday lives took shape. (Hintjens 1999: 270)⁷⁵

A massive drop in the prices of raw materials on the world market in the mid 1980s, however, threw the country into a typical neo-colonial economic recession. Discontent rose as stability and welfare benefits eroded with decline in state revenue and structural adjustment programmes imposed by IMF and World Bank. With the end of the Cold War a resurging interest in democratization took shape in donor countries (apart from France it seems), and as the economic situation deteriorated “a crisis of clientelism” eroded the core social base (Hintjens 1999: 261) simultaneously as the pressure on the regime internally and externally increased. Economic lines of division transcended any ethno-chauvinism; the majority of the population remained poor peasant whether they possessed a Hutu or Tutsi-identity card, something that was reflected in the interethnic character of the political parties formed after the initial democratization. In 1987

⁷⁴ In Rwanda the Belgians did not create different “homelands” for the Hutu and Tutsi identities respectively. Rather they lived side by side, but the Tutsis were by historiographers portrayed as “foreigners” of Nilotic origin – i.e. the Hamitic myth.

⁷⁵ This might be due to the fact that no different tribal homelands had been created, which might suggest that central, rather than decentralized despotism would be the proper characteristic of this specific colonial legacy. Perhaps is it therefore no “accident” that two such very clear revolutionary movements presented themselves in exactly this context.

RPF/A (Rwandan Patriotic Front/Army) was formed by Diaspora Tutsis and Hutus that had fled political repression. In 1990 they attacked from the Uganda side and this marked the start of a guerrilla war in the north. Reluctantly the regime opened a process of liberalization and transition; first involving the opposition internally, later to be followed with negotiations and plans for repatriation and integration of the Diaspora represented by the RPF/A. However,

[...] from 1991 to 1993, two logics were locked in a race against time in Rwanda: on the one hand, negotiations and democratization; on the other, war and ethnicist mobilization. The Habyarimana regime in fact pursued both strategies for three years with unfailing military support of [...] president Francois Mitterrand. Defending the status quo in France's Francophone "backyard", now threatened by an Anglophone irruption (this was the new Fashoda) [...]. (Chrétien, 2003:321).⁷⁶

Right from the first internal liberalization, a fundamental militarization of state and society took place. From 1990-1994 the army increased from 5000 to 35 000⁷⁷ (Scherrer 2002: 87). Interahamwe, the militia fundamental for planning and accomplishing the genocide was established in 1992 by the renamed more than reformed old ruling party⁷⁸. Thus, from the perspective of the extremists, the militia reinforced rather than challenged state monopoly of violence and its "ethnic monopoly of force" (Scherrer, 2002:89). Carefully orchestrated by the prominent, but crumbling *Akazu* elite – the clique around the presidential family whose base of power was the army – media and new founded parties⁷⁹ fanned ethnic hatred under cover of the newly won liberal rights – and we recall how civil society in Africa has been laced with racism as were it its original sin (see chap. 2.2). Behind the scene they were meticulously and bureaucratically preparing the means required for the conduct of a genocide of the speed and velocity as the Rwandan.

Habyarimana's dual track political manoeuvrings, however, confused both the reform prone within the regime, the opposition, the international community, the regime hardliners, and eventually, it seems, Habyarimana himself. Two powerful revolutionary forces with strong social basis had by 1994 emerged; on the one side the *subversive* interethnic popular front represented by RPF and the domestic democratic opposition, on the other the *imperative* fascistoid Hutu-power faction. The regime was in a process of fundamental disintegration and the increasing numbers of disassociated elements all had to take sides. Habyarimana was no longer in the position of being

⁷⁶ Africa was at this time the only place in the world where France still righteously could lay claim to superpower status. RPF being based in Uganda represented an Anglophone intrusion in the French sphere of interest. The support given by the Ugandan government is fairly well documented, but the Anglophone powers did obviously not use their power to the extent of encouraging any kind of international intervention during the genocide and rather endorsed French involvement in the resumed civil war on the side of the genocidary regime. It thus seems like the French had greater interest in "keeping" Rwanda, than the Anglophone powers had in "obtaining" it.

⁷⁷ Other estimated even claim 70 000 (Scherrer 2002: 62)

⁷⁸ the National Revolutionary Movement for Development and Democracy (MRNDD) –

⁷⁹ Notoriously the Defence of the Republic (CDR), the radio channel Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) and the newspaper Kangura.

the broker of the overall political game and of an increasingly split regime he until now had held somehow together through the logic of contradictions. Habyarimana took the step from liberalizer to reformer too late; he was no longer in position to contain the hardliners within his own ranks.

The Akazu elite gave the order for the mass murder when it saw its position of power jeopardized by Habyarimana's promise (given at the sub regional conference in Dar el Salaam on April 6, 1994) that the Arusha agreement⁸⁰ would finally be implemented. Habyarimana came back on the same April 6, when his plane was shot down at about 8:30 P.M. by two missiles, and the genocide began immediately. (Scherrer, 2002:95).

The embryonic, interethnic civil society, which had demonstrated for peace, reform and democracy in the streets of Kigali in 1992, was completely pulverized in the process of organizing the genocide. Since 1990 the hardliners had organized politically within parties, they had organized the Interahamwe and through media fanned racial hatred in order to prepare civil society for mass participation in genocide under cover of the military threat posed by the RPF/A, whom they portrayed as chauvinists and monarchists. As such they aimed to mobilize and recruit not only the state apparatus, but the whole Hutu population to exterminate the Tutsi minority, but more fundamentally to crush a growing, subversive interethnic popular opposition. "In Rwanda racist ideology served as a mask for the more fundamental goal of regime survival under conditions of sharp socioeconomic crisis and growing political opposition by mobilizing vertical social cleavages." (Hintjens, 1999: 242). It is hardly necessary to mention which social group (apart from the elites obviously) acted as the genocidary vanguard: young, unemployed, crisis-stricken men.

With the unleashing of the genocide thus, the carefully crafted lists over priority targets were of course not *any* Tutsi. The prime minister, a moderate Hutu, whom the constitution would transfer presidential powers in case of the incapacitation of the president, was killed 7. April. Within the first 24 hours of the genocide the entire leadership of moderate forces within politics and the army (mostly Hutus) was either killed or had gone into hiding. The possibilities for the moderates regaining initiative were irrevocably lost. The genocide left between 800 000 and one million massacred and unleashed one of the greatest movements of populations in contemporary history of between 2-2,5 million people. The repercussions in the shape of painful destabilization of the whole region are still operative. The war was resumed and the genocide within Rwanda did not end until RPF/A had taken control of the whole country 18. July, but still continues on the other side of the boarder as French forces under cover of a "humanitarian intervention"⁸¹ came to the aid of their close friends and provided them with a corridor and safe haven in Zaire, where they

⁸⁰ The Arusha Agreement on peace and power sharing between the regime and the RPF was signed in August 1993, but its implementation prolonged.

⁸¹ The Security Council endorsed the French operation Turquoise rather than reinforcing the already present UN contingent, UNAMIR, which was reduced to the role of witnessing the genocide.

were welcomed by Sese Seko Mobutu. The extremists drove a great part of the civilian populations with them out of the country, together with the whole arsenal of the army and they took immediate administrative control of the refuge camps there established. "The apparent panic-stricken flight was in fact a "meticulously organized preplanned movement of population."" (Vasset quoted by Scherrer, 2002:145). As Augustin Bizimungu, Chief of the Army is to have said: "They may gain the country but not the people" (Dallaire 2004: 388), and summing up the partial defeat: "RPF will rule over a desert" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2195666.stm>, retrieved 12.03.2010).

The lack of interest from the internal community in monitoring the fragile process of transition was something the extremists were the first to realize and perhaps the most realistic to assess and take advantage of. The hardliners were seated in the Security Council representing Rwanda during the genocide and the UN contingency dispatched as a peace monitoring force was left with no mandate and more or less deserted to its own faith when the peace evolved into to genocide. Not before 1. July, when it became obvious that it was a matter of time before the RPA would be in control of the whole country, came the infamous resolution 935 from the Security Council to establish a committee to investigate 'possible acts of genocide'. By then France had had plenty of time to secure the retreat of the genocidaries into Zaire. Genocide, had since long been established as a "political" option in Rwanda, evident from prior persecutions which were massive, but of course not of comparable scale. "Hutu-power" was the cornerstone of the post-colonial state, endorsed by French politicians and military. To the surprise of many the RPF proceeded in accordance with the Arusha protocol (the peace and power sharing agreement signed in august 1993) after the assumption of power. They established a broad coalition government, held elections, installed law and order, and even integrated those sections of the army that had not participated in the genocide.

Rwanda is as such a very clear example of two competing revolutions taking shape in a context of economic crisis and regime-disintegration: one *subversive*, one *imperative*. We see clearly from the massive popular participation in genocide how the reactionaries⁸² mobilized

⁸² It might seem confusing to use the terms reactionary insofar as this *imperative* form is in fact revolutionary. For the sake of clarity we want to underline that *imperative* forces are revolutionary in the sense that they do not simply reproduce the former status quo. They are not *conservatives* or *conservers* and, as we have argued, they differ from military dictatorships, which essentially is the despotic version of conservatism. Nevertheless they are *reactionary* in the sense that their proposed solutions to the dissolutions, will never go in *subversive* direction – it is as such they must be understood as reactionary. Perhaps we could coin the phenomenon *radical or radicalized preservation*. If recall the case of Rwanda, Habyarimana was inclined to simply try to preserve status quo: Hutu-ethnocracy, which for twenty years had functioned quite successfully as one of the pillars in his rule. As such he was a conservative in the literal meaning of the word – he wanted to "conserve" society, as it was, something that was becoming increasingly difficult. In face of dissolution the Hutu-power faction, in contrast sought to intensify and radicalize status quo through the ultimate solution of "purifying" genocide.

vertical cleavages in demagogic manners, eroding to the extreme any concepts of citizenship based on territory to the advantage of origin – replaying the “settler-native” problem-complex. Thus democratization heightens the perils of belonging.⁸³ We also see with clarity the role of imperialist forces in encouraging and underpinning such forces in order to maintain a privileged position for exploitation of the national wealth, generously supplying reactionary regimes with arms to suppress their people. Fascism in Africa is not essentially an internal solution to internal problems as it was in its European counterparts, but essentially a solution to imperialism in crisis: in face of economic crisis originating in these very imperialist structures themselves, and/or in face of the *actual* or *haunting* prospect of *subversive* movements wanting to revoke these structures.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

After the end of the Cold War there seems to be a change in political makeup of regimes globally: democracy, i.e. power grounded in the “people” have seemingly won hegemony as the only legitimate form of grounding power. This is evident from the drop in outright dictatorial regimes (even the most harsh dictatorships pay lip-service to the formal institutions of democracy) after the unconditional streams of money provided by Cold War competition somehow now have strings attached. The cases of Amin and Hutu-power is indeed extreme, but in essence the structures revealed in these examples, it can be argued, are operative even in the much more tranquil context of such as Yoweri Museveni’s Uganda⁸⁴. Googeling “Museveni + envelopes” today, one year before the next election, one receives an impressive number of hits. The honourable father of modern Uganda is simply and *publicly* handing out petty cash in envelopes wherever he goes – to his own taxpayers and, perhaps more important: to the *bayaye* and the peasants; to the poor people, in what seems to be some sort of burlesque “election campaign”. The state being totally dependent on foreign aid, i.e. western taxpayers money, while foreign companies are profiting on its natural and human resources, the President is in person handing out the crumbs of state and corruption revenue to his own people as if they were beggars, not citizens – recently identifying gay-rights with neo-imperialism, proposing death-penalty for homosexuality in a symbolic crusade against imperialism, appealing in a demagogic way to the most urgent needs of the population without addressing the real issue of corruption. Thus we must recall that outright fascism is the exceptional answer to exceptional challenges in times of crisis. On the ordinary course of events less extreme measures will do.

⁸³ For a broad discussion on the bifurcated state and the problem of citizenship hear Mamdani’s W. E. B. Du Bois Lecture III: *Beyond Settlers and Natives The Theory and Practice of Decolonization*, <http://dubois.fas.harvard.edu/webcasts?page=4> (retrived 16.04.2010)

⁸⁴ Museveni have held power since winning the civil war 1986. He was elected first time in 1996. Multi-partyism was introduced in 2006 *along* with constitutional changes to abolish the limitation on re-election to two presidential terms – a restraint he himself had approved of just 11 years before.

Thus we conclude that this kind of fascism is related to a specific way in which the political dynamics can take shape. As the political structures we are investigating over time are strikingly stable, fascism denominates not so much a specific state formation, as it is a concept related to a particular type of political regime and popular mobilization, taking shape within the post-colonial state in response to certain types of crisis. These particular regimes functions as stabilizers, or shock-absorbers, in face of economic and/or popular crisis within the social formation, rooted in neo-colonial incorporation into world capitalism. Neo-colonial fascism in short, is a constellation that is appearing with the over-determination by imperialist forces. These imperialistic forces are not Hardt and Negri's abstract Empire, but states with names and leaders with names. To confuse imperialistic social formations with the abstract level of CMP, as Hardt and Negri does, can nothing but obscure responsibilities and decisions, and forever protect these committers of crimes against humanity from being dragged to the courts where they indeed do belong. It will effectively ensure that international tribunals such as The Hague will remain the special privilege of the black tyrants, their enablers keeping quietly in the background.⁸⁵

Being in civil society, but not of civil society sometimes elevates the lumpen to kingmakers in inter-elite rivalry, but rarely are they rewarded with more than a petty gun or a petty envelope, and rarely do they demand for more. As such it seems that even if there is an decline in outright dictatorial regimes, it at the same time seems more difficult than ever to consolidate both democracy and autocracy – and the “mobs” role in politics have definitely not faded away. But does that mean that we now mistake the “mob” for the “people”, like Arendt warned against and accused the 19.th century historians, for doing? (c.f. 4.3)

⁸⁵ This is of course not the same as saying that transnational corporation have no role. It is rather to relativize their role as it seems to us that the extensive focus on these firms completely overshadows the continued responsibilities of states. States, which moreover often are democracies and as such potentially self-correcting systems, in contrast to the closed spheres of the company-boards, which it seems a veritable world revolution necessary to make otherwise. In fact there seems to us often to be a “division of labour” between states and companies, insofar as even the transnational corporations must “spend” their accumulating monies *somewhere* – benefiting *someplace*; in short: they are (at least not yet) a closed circuit in themselves. For whatever they are responsible, they moreover rarely have the gunboats and diplomatic resources available to states – who, and when all comes to all, usually guarantees their investments – in the last instance by imperialist powers themselves, but more often through such regimes as we have described in chapter 6. A West German company could gain almost sovereignty over 150, 000 kilometre area in Zaire during Mobutu. (Dunn 2004: 149). We also recall from chapter 4, that initiating colonialism, capital had taken the lead and the states readily followed in order to ensure at least some returns on this outpour of national wealth. To put all focus on the transnational corporations seems thus to withhold and make invisible the responsibilities and/or complicities of states from –in the last instance – these states' own electorates.

Chapter 7: Towards a Deconstruction of the “Lumpenproletariat”

7.1: If the Mob becomes the “People” & not only the Refuse of all Classes: The lumpenproletarian as the model citizen?

The 1971 coup in Uganda teaches two lessons. First that it is not possible to use a neo-colonial army to reform a neo-colonial economy. Such an army is, in the final analysis, an instrument of reaction, not of progress. Secondly, it is not possible for middle-class nationalism to play an independent and leading role in the present era. Its own weakness must compel it to either join the working people or ally with imperialism, the two basic forces in the world today. (Mamdani 1983: 31)

Due to the inherent and permanent weaknesses of the national bourgeoisie within a neo-colony, they are not in a position to uphold *homogeneity* as defined by Bataille, and we have seen how economics attributes to politics the dominant role in the structure (see chap 4.2 & 6.1). If relating this to Mamdani’s assertion that middle-class/bourgeoisie nationalism are compelled to choose between the working people and imperialist forces – in times of crisis, we add – it is according to the analysis of Marx/Bataille no wonder that given the option between *subversive* and *imperative* solutions, they will in their majority turn in the *imperative* direction. Moreover this tendency will be endemic insofar as the national bourgeoisie in fact is a petty bourgeoisie, deriving its economic power not from production, but from poaching on already available wealth – not from its position as the privileged owners of the means of production, but from privileged ties to the political elite, i.e. to the extent it is not completely identical to the political elite.

On the ordinary course of events the “new citizens” can rely on the structures of the inherited bifurcated state for their domination. But it is precisely this very legacy and its neo-imperialistic incorporation into capitalism that makes them so susceptible to crisis, violent conflict or clean-cut palace revolutions in the first place – accounting for the structural stability in spite of regime instability. Fascism is being the most extreme solution to post-independence crisis insofar as fascism essentially is imperative modes of “recapturing” “the people” in the face of dissolution, where more and more people increasingly evade the established structures of domination. As such the lumpenproletariat is its ideal-typical target and reference group: the symbolic and actual incarnations of *déclassement*, but for the precisely same reason they constitute a peculiar intersection within the bifurcated state structure; being within civil society, but not of civil society. Thus they seem to hold a key-position in terms of destabilising the bifurcated structure, of which fascism provides an attempt towards *radical preservation*.

As a consequence of how power is organized in the African context and how it tends to fragment resistance – the appeal from *imperative* forces to the lower classes (where the urban lumpenproletariat has a privileged position) becomes very complex and many-layered, due to multiples of politically institutionalized and crisscrossing lines of divisions within the very foundation of the state to be mobilized and played out – such as ethnic, religious, urban-rural,

citizen-subject divisions. The “lack” of a majority of “exploited” either in the sense as understood in orthodox Marxist value theory or in the sense as understood in the biopolitical value theory of Hardt & Negri, undermines the mobilizational *subversive* appeal associated with “classical” nation-state worker-based political organizations and of “global” *multitude*-based mobilization respectively. Nevertheless we have also seen many contours of genuinely *subversive* forces, first in the shape of militant nationalist movements and later in such pro-democratic movements as in Rwanda – however much distorted their eventual victory became. The problem of these popular forces is their tendency to either become entangled in the bifurcated structures or to be put down by imperialist-sponsored reactive forces leading to fascisms or leaving “a desert” to rule. The radical regimes pursued bifurcated reforms: detribalization and deracialization, but from above, thus reproducing centralized despotism and the second generation reformers pursued local democracy detached from centralized democracy, i.e. participation without representation.

In terms of the *imperative* imperialist-sponsored forces, the lumpenproletariat plays a key role as support base. But the fascist seizure of power does little to alleviate their problems of unemployment and poverty. Quite on the contrary, due to the import-character of armament, fascism in Africa does not have the “job-creating agency of war” of its European counterparts. As such the lumpenproletariat holds a key position also on the imperialism-fascism axis: For even though the framework of Marx and Bataille properly transformed, can be employed as a useful tool for analysing actual fascist mobilization of the lumpenproletariat in Africa, we cannot from that deduce that they will nothing but forever be mobilized by fascism. That would be to deduce from what we are, or what has happened, what we cannot be and do. In the line from Marx, the lumpenproletariat is essentially an open group “thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption.” (Marx 1978: 62) As for now we have seen how reactionary forces have singled out the poorest of the poor – the desperate people – those with few other survival strategies and therefore easily paid off with crumbs. Rather than drawing their strength from middleclass/workers/peasants alone, it seems therefore to be a need for pro-democratic *subversive* forces to include the lumpenproletariat into their project. If not, the consequences might be devastating as the reactive forces for sure will now how to make uses of them. Any pro-democratic movement must therefore pay the highest attention to this group.

In the specific context of the African neo-colonial state, the lumpenproletariat seems to be the weakest link in the iron-chain of fragmentations, making it very susceptible for fascist mobilization. For these very same reasons, i.e. those of unifying “the people” on the basis of the mob, they might, however, also show the way ahead for a democratic *subversion* of the bifurcated state. In terms of the bifurcated state:

- They may play a role as a link between the urban-rural.
- They may play a role breaking down the ethnic division lines, due to the common way of life to which they are referred.
- They are in many ways the greatest victims of modernity (expelled from the countryside, but with no employment ready to receive them) and they might very well become aware of this in a manner that can be transformed to an *subversive* organized political expression. They live in the city – they are very much exposed to riches they are effectively excluded from. They know they are an underclass.

If we go back to Marx and his interest in the proletariat, this interest was fundamentally based on the realization that their *particular* class-interest could become *common*, or *public*, interests beyond the confines of class. The proletariat was for Marx the revolutionary class, the agents of change whose goal was not simply the abolition of exploitation as understood in the value theory – which is a, and we have argued, only *one* of the peculiar capitalist mode of domination – but whose aim was to end *all* structures of domination in the social formation, so that man could live free in the widest sense of the word. Keeping this in mind, it seems necessary to pose the question of the political potential of the lumpen again, not in order to evangelize for revolution against all forms of oppression, but insofar as an investigation of the possibilities and limitation of the present is also an investigation into *who* has the possibility to bring about *what* kind of changes on a structural level? It is a question of agency.

Might we not go further then and imagine a *subversive* constellation of peasants, lumpenproletariat and intelligentsia where the lumpenproletariat itself could provide the very intersection? Might not the lumpenproletariat appear as a very solid and growing social base for a *subversive* agenda on the political scene – and not only as a thoroughly malleable group to be moulded by democratically-minded elites, essentially looking for ignorant voters? As excluded only, the lumpenproletariat might function as the *model citizen*, opening for a territorial rather than tribal ascription of rights. Thus from the perspective of the lumpenproletariat a key can be envisaged: a key to end the reproduction of the bifurcated structure and a key to break out of the reproduction of the fascism-imperialism matrix. If the exploited wage-labourer does not constitute a majority, the excluded certainly seem to do, whether they are peasants: excluded from the citizen sphere of urban power, however much included as subjects in the decentralized despotisms – or they are the lumpenproletariat: excluded almost altogether due to the irreality of access to their “formal rights” within civil society. But whereas the peasants are “gagged” due to the immediate presence of institutions of “productive” power (in the Foucaultian sense), the lumpenproletariat is evading these structures of domination and is simply “locked out”, often manifested very physically in the “fortress-architecture” so characteristic of African metropolises.

For such a suggestion to pretend even the slightest hint of realism, it is however not enough to simply state that they occupy a strategic position. There is also the need to challenge the conceptualization of them as “inherently” incapable of posing the question of political reform: i.e. *organizing, acting* and thus *utilizing* this position.

7.2 Towards a deconstruction of the “lumpenproletariat”

Over the course of this thesis, the “lumpenproletariat” seems to become an increasingly problematic term; it points towards our subject matter, but is not on the level of it. This is linked to the manner in which the term is intimately related to efforts of conceptualizing the political potential of these social groups that we intended it to simply denominate. It appears necessary to conceptualize these urban masses differently in order to capture those dimensions explored with Mamdani and Davis, if investigating into possibilities in Africa today. Thus over the course of working genealogically with the term lumpenproletariat, it seems that a positive description of this group to which it refers, perhaps requires a deconstruction of the concept if we are to pose the question of democratic reform and not exclusively pose the question of fascism. Even though these *questions* are of course interrelated, in the strong sense that these phenomena are mutually exclusives, they are not completely identical in the sense that posing the question of fascism in relation to the lumpenproletariat does not make superfluous posing the question of democracy. Moreover, even *posing* the question of democracy in relation to the political potential of the lumpenproletariat, is not possible from within the perspectives derived from Marx, Bataille, Arendt, insofar as we are on the road to fascism/imperialism the very moment the term is invoked.

We will be bringing in Franz Fanon and Peter Worsely in this endeavour. Fanon we will relate to insofar as he seems to be one of the first to identify the emancipatory potential of the lumpenproletariat in his classic analysis of the struggle for independence. Worsely is taking Fanon as his point of departure for a deeper investigation into this group in his article “Frantz Fanon and the ‘Lumpenproletariat’” (1972). Worsley is writing about the phenomena in general, but in the following will be taken up only some of the points he makes that we find of relevance to harness and contextualize within our framework.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon warn explicitly against the nationalist bourgeoisie taking power in the independent state. His book with the benefit of hindsight can be read as an almost prophetically clear analysis of much that actually came to happen the last fifty years. Here we will not go through his analysis as a whole, but rather focus on an aspect which in the reception of Fanon’s work has fallen in the background to the importance attached to the role of violence: that of the revolutionary potential of the lumpenproletariat. It seems that today that is the aspect of his analysis that points towards a way ahead or a *way out*, precisely of violence.

When it comes to the role of violence, Fanon might for all we know be right in the context he was writing in – but even if “revolutionary violence” could have cured all evils in the 1950-1960s, there seems little reasons for being optimistic on behalf of the path of violence today. In light of for example the genocide in Rwanda, reading Fanon’s analysis of the identity-creating role of violence invokes a chilling feeling:

The group requires that each individual performs an irrevocable act. [...] You could be sure of a new recruit when he could no longer go back into the colonial system. [*Read: the former system*] This mechanism, it seems, had existed in Kenya among the Mau-Mau, who required that each member of the group should strike a blow at the victim. Each one was personally responsible for the death of the settler. [*We recall how the Tutsi were by Hutu-power fascists depicted as "the settler", "the alien", "the foreigner"*] To work means to work for the death of the settler. [*One of the major metaphors for killing during the genocide would be "to work"*] This assumed responsibility for violence allows both strayed and outlawed members of the group to come back again and to find their place once more, to become integrated. [*We recall how the lumpenproletariat formed the genocidary vanguard*] Violence is thus seen as comparable to a royal pardon. (Fanon 2001: 67-68)

One is tempted indeed, to ponder the possibility of these fascist-ideologists actually to carefully have studied the writings of Fanon in the planning of the genocide. The problem of Africa is not too little, but too much violence; the path of violence seems infinitely exhausted after fifty years of sectarianism, coups, insurgences, dictatorships replacing each other, conflicts and genocides. Rather there is a need to attempt to understand the deep structures of African modernity and post-modernity to get a positive grip on what exactly is to be reformed and why violence is reproduced. The “original violence” to use the vocabulary of Fanon – the political structural violence of the citizen-subject and the “native-settler” divide, must be confronted at the political structural level, based on a critical approach grounded firmly in historicity, insofar as so much of the *physical* violence seems to be bred by these structures. These are structures that precisely for that very reason cannot be overturned overnight in the fervour of revolutionary violence. Within these structures, as we have observed, violence seems on the contrary particularly susceptible to sustain and reproduce, rather than overturn them. These are structures contrived and thriving in the context of violence, evident from their conspicuous stability in spite of the conspicuous turbulence characterizing postcolonial polities.

Rather than violence, we will therefore discuss the role Fanon opens for the lumpenproletariat. Instead of a *subversive* revolutionary vanguard – which was undoubtedly what Fanon had in mind – the lumpenproletariat, as we have observed, has turned out again and over again to be the useful tools of demagoguery and imperialism. Put in qualification we can say that the lumpenproletariat have certainly been *revolutionary*, but *imperative* in direction. However, insofar as both Fanon and Worsley do not operate with this distinction we will be reading in good sense, and simply understand their term “revolution” as *subversion*. Fanon is not unaware of the reactionary potentials and “corruptibility” of the lumpenproletariat. What is *new* with Fanon is not

that he identifies their "duality", i.e. that they can be mobilized in all directions, but rather that he opens for this group to have an *agency in their own right*. Ironically thus, if we presume that, the most severely struck victims of the imperial order and the bifurcated state structure have again and again been mobilized for its preservation. Are we then not just repeating in a different manner that they are inherently reactionary, but now by choice? But need it be so?

As we have observed, Marxist theory have to be modified when applied to the African context and in the colonial/postcolonial setting; economy is attributing politics to the dominant position in the structure. Fanon posited an alliance between the urban poor, the peasants and the urban intellectuals, and for this he was, and still seems to be, in direct opposition to or outside mainstream Marxism; the concept of the multitude, e.g. could be read as an attempt to avoid classification of these groups as a lumpenproletariat, but ended up making them invisible. It seems to us, however, that what have lead many a orthodox Marxist thinker to categorically reject, ignore or make invisible these floating urban populations ^{to the privilege of the proletariat,} is that they confuse Marx writing about France as being on the level of CMP, i.e. as valid for all capitalist social formations. In contrast Marx was writing about France, within the general context of Europe in the 19th century. Following Poulantzas, it must be *probed* to what extent some dynamics or concepts appearing in the study of the political in a concrete capitalist social formation, functions in the field of the political in the CMP in general; i.e. to the extent they are valid for all capitalist formations. Investigation of two African fascistoid social formations has given strong indications that conceptualizations of the reactionary potential of the lumpen, derived from Marx analysis properly adjusted, seems inclined to be valid for African social formations, and thus perhaps for *fascism* in general. But a characteristic of fascism in general need not be a characteristic of any social group in general. Analysis must be both archaeological and genealogical.

The concept of the lumpenproletariat rises to prominence in the political analysis of Marx where it functions within a type of political game of revolutionary upheavals. The floating urban population is easily mobilized as they are characterized exactly by non-fixed loyalties, and it is precisely when played upon by reactionary forces that they appear as a lumpenproletariat within the political as described by Marx. As such they are included in the political game, precisely in the capacity of being excluded from the social-economic sphere. Thus *the lumpenproletariat*, as described in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* is a political conceptualization more than a concept that belongs to the description of the social formation (the social base) properly, where they constitute the less dramatic, unproductive labour force of the informal sector. Indeed it seems rather to be a notion occurring and belonging in the twilight zone between the political drama and the social formation; it is here the lumpenproletariat spring into existence as a reactionary actor.

Marx analysis has a great explanatory force in term of actual fascist mobilization in the social formation. But if confused as being on the level of CMP – that the lumpenproletariat as a reactionary group is defined on the level of CMP – might it not become so, and here we will take in Worsley: that this theorizing might become self-fulfilling and that one of the major factors keeping the underclass depoliticized or outright reactionary is the very theory that they are a lumpenproletariat as understood by Marx? It seems to us that Marx, when writing on the level of CMP, perceives this group primarily as helpless victims/reserve army of labour, but that both he and Engels in actual contemporary politics warned strongly against any cooperation with this outcaste group. As such, might not theorizing based on Marx’ relation to his contemporary social formation, become a strait jacket, insofar as it deduces from the form of what we are, what it is impossible for us to be and to do and to think, instead of separating out from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of being different? A conceptual problem appearing in discourse, its possible practical consequences might be that rejected, ignored or made invisible by left-wing forces this underclass are courted and won over by reactionary forces. Insofar as our concern is the question of democratic reform it thus seems to us that we must pose the question differently: what are these crowds otherwise – when they are not fascistically mobilized – might they become politically visible in other ways? It seems to us that a different kind of outset for thinking is essential in order to conceptualize differently. We will in companionship with Worsley suggest another angle of incidence to the conceptualization of this group politically, based on their social position, but not as ahistorical living symbols of human misery.

Worsley attributes to Fanon that he was one of the first thinkers to see that this floating population of urban poor was a new element inadequately catered for in existing theorizing about the Third World.⁸⁶ Exposing Fanon’s ideas in a manner we will not go into here, we pick up the tread that will be common for us and Worsley, namely Fanon’s setting of the premise that this group can have an *agency in their own right*. Entering a dialogue with Worsley, lets start by an observation he makes that we find very apt:

Whatever term we use to describe this social category it is high time to abandon the highly insulating, inaccurate and analytically befogging Marxist term *lumpenproletariat*, which is so commonly used. “Underclass” or “subproletariat” would seem more apt characterizations of these victims of “urbanization without industrialization”: the central attribute that distinguishes [...] the cities Third World cities, from that of the developed countries. For these people are at the bottom of the heap. [...] the immigrants constitute a stratum beneath those who may only have their labour-power to sell, but do at least succeed in selling it. (Worsley 1972: 208)

⁸⁶ The revolutionary potential of the lumpenproletariat was, however, much debated among nineteenth century anarchists, nihilists and terrorists and was a major issue of contention between Marx and Mikhail Bakunin. (Worsley 1972: 207) It was later taken up again among Black Panther theorists. (Worsley 1972: 222-224). It might have proven productive to follow this track, but that would far exceed the scope of our thesis.

The potential and composition of these “victims of urbanization without industrialization” has been analysed within the general framework of the bifurcated state and in terms of the dynamics of fascistoid mobilization within this colonial legacy. Insofar as situating them and then posing the question of fascism does not make superfluous posing the question of democratic reform, we need to find an entrance to pose this question. Worsley seems to provide us with a “way out”, when he argues that:

This new population in the cities of the Third World should not be thought of in static, “structuralist” terms as a separate category – lumpenproletarians – distinctly marked off from the peasants on the one hand and the workers on the other. As we have seen, they are only recent ex-peasants in many cases so that they are essentially people in process, not a fixed and consolidated, let alone self-consciousness and organized social class. They are becoming townsmen – eventually, they hope, a part of the settled, employed urban population. Fanon [...] was one of the first to appreciate not simply the existence and sheer size and rate of growth of these populations, but their revolutionary potential. (Worsley 1972: 211)

The problem of relying solely on the framework established with Marx, Bataille, Arendt, seems to have been precisely that of presenting this group, in all its fluidity, in static terms, which at first thought might seem like a paradox. However, only analyses that do not relate to this group as a a-historic category can really push to the forefront, that this fluidity is precisely that characteristic of this group that makes it impossible to contain in within such a structuralist term as “lumpenproletariat”, unless fascistically mobilized. The term is inherently paradoxical: positive and residual at the same time. Through genealogical analysis of the social formation, this group on the contrary has been coming forth as constituting a particular, contingent intersection: between the rural-urban and interethnic cleavages. Relying on Davis and the UN projections, moreover, there are small chances in spite of all “hopes”, for these people actually of “becoming townsmen” in the sense of becoming incorporated into the sphere of civil society. The estimate suggesting that 90 per cent of Africa’s new urban workers will have to be absorbed by the informal sector, highlights the importance of another observation made by Worsley:

[T]he irreality of any sharp and universal dividing-line in situations where even regularly-employed workers have to pursue secondary occupations [...] to make ends meet [...]: where men float between regular and irregular income-opportunities and are often involved in both: and, basically, where over a half of the city population may be sub-proletarian, i.e. not engaged in full-time wage employment. [T]he employed poor, too, are “sub-proletarian” in living standards and pursue “informal” income-opportunities [...]. (Worsley 1972: 224-225)

Marx recognized, somehow, a potential dual character of the lumpenproletariat, they can link with either the *imperative* or the *subversive* (where the proletariat provides the intersection) forces, but *never in their own right*. As such they are potentially traitorous allies to be avoided. There seems to be no good reason however, Worsley argues, for why the new underclass should not become revolutionary in themselves given good leadership and appropriate theory. Worsley points out that slum-life is often highly structured at primary group level and such groups are often

articulated to wider social institutions such as “political parties (usually via patronage and similar links), to criminal organizations (gangster empires etc.), to churches and so on.” (Worsley 1972: 218). To this list can in the African context be added the unreformed Native Authority-system, “poisoning” civil society as urban populations, not least the poor, are often sectarianly rallied behind ethnic champions. Thus: “Such organizations *do* organize the sub-proletariat as effectively as they have often organized the proletariat too.” (Worsley 1972: 218, our emphasis) – and we add that these kinds of organizations are not necessarily *imperative* mobilizations. Why should it be so unthinkable for them to form a political party?⁸⁷

Moreover it seems to us that these groups *do* actually engage in riots, which are not easily identified, as mobilized from above, and as such perhaps simply has meaning “for the men in revolt” (c.f. chap. 4.2). As formless uprisings, however, they might not have a direction other than negation. Hence they become somewhat comparable to that of the “senseless” jacquerie: peasants rising made impotent by “high massness and low classness”, which lead Marxists to categorically reject the revolutionary potential of the peasants altogether.⁸⁸ As Mosiuoa “Terror” Lekota, prominent ANC member exclaims when visiting the rioting township of Khutsong in the documentary directed by Jihan El-Tahri, *Behind the Rainbow* (2009): *some of them are drunk, others want only to fight. I can not cooperate with them.* But as another ANC member, Victor Moche reasons in the same documentary: *The slower we deal with the poverty, the more dangerous it gets. The more aggressive the atmosphere becomes and eventually it can all explode. If you leave people in poverty, it happens what is now happening in the suburbs. Mamelodi exploded: burning tires and throwing stones at the authorities. Khutsong exploded. It has been many such small explosions, which are the people’s way of saying: We are tired of being patient. One sent to Khutsong a bureaucrat as “Terror”, who referred to a government resolution, and they said: No government shall take decisions over our heads – We talk about what we want – No government should tell us that it has decided our destiny over our heads – The day you listen to us, we will give you our support – but now you shall leave – leave Khutsong! And that was what they did. They cased him from Khutsong.*⁸⁹

⁸⁷ We would very much have wanted to take in Davis here in a broader discussion. Without discussing the political potential explicitly, he is showing many examples of both organization and obstacles for organization. Unfortunately that would go beyond the scope, going into the vast material that exists on “slum-life”. But it is such analyses – anchored *within* a theoretical and philosophical framework that we believe is the way to go; i.e. that of harnessing empirical studies of the conditions of living to the specific social formations and relate it to a wider philosophical framework. Such analysis, we believe, could articulate *new* political possibilities – revoking the stalemate that allows the figures to grow more depressive and pacifying for every day that pass.

⁸⁸ Until Mao showed otherwise, or perhaps not, insofar as the Chinese revolution essentially produced a new dictatorship, but perhaps more likely the “Revolution” rather than the peasant should be blamed for this development.

⁸⁹ These are not direct quotations.

Perhaps is this increasingly impatient population the greatest threat to democracy in South Africa. But at the same time, is not this increasingly impatient population also indicating a certain shallowness of this democracy that perhaps eventually can be traced back to the longevity of the very structures we have been tracing with Mamdani? Perhaps can we even argue that these structures are in the process of “loosing the grip” in many African countries due to the growth of mega-cities and the urbanization-processes we have been following? As Worsley argues: the sub-proletariat may become a directed and self-conscious force, but that the actualization of such a latent possibility is something that can only come about by political action. Rising at the other end of the horizon is, however, the anarchic threat of urban chaos. Both dimensions are captured in the accounts made by “Terror” and Moche. Thus rapidly changing realities in a very concrete (not simply discursive) manner urges us to reconsider the vitality of this group politically. In that sense it is a certain duality related to the fact that governments of these countries are very sensitive to these new populations, however much in a negative manner – not in order to improve their lot but rather to ensure they remain excluded. As we have seen over the course of this thesis they repress them, forcefully evicts them, excludes them, bribes them and occasionally mobilizes them. We could thus say with Worsley that: “The only groups they fear as much are they Army, the trade unions and the intelligentsia.” (Worsley 1972: 218) Worsley is underlining the *political* dimension as an open field when he is claiming that: “Where they go depends on who approaches them and how. But is a fair guess that they will not continue to be upholders of the *status quo* [...]” (Worsley 1972: 223)

Foucault identifies Kant’s central question about the present as the following: “What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?” (Foucault 2003: 45) The growth of this group offers not only an opportunity, but also poses a great danger for these states to lapse into a urban hell, which it seems the violence of such cities as Johannesburg and Nairobi gives a foretaste of. The present represents not only “freedoms” to be “grasped”, but just as much a task and an obligation. If these social formations are changing the state must too, and the established solutions might not function anymore insofar as this state is challenged at the heart of it institutional weakness; namely by the growth of the “un-ruled”. Perhaps could we say with Shalini Randeria, that the African state is a “cunning state”⁹⁰ – it is essentially manoeuvring to uphold itself. With the growth of big cities, characterized by the majority in fact being excluded only, problems might arise that this state might no longer handle. As such this thesis is an effort towards clarification in order to come to terms with these structures, and these changes, which again can function as a foundation for political organization and action.

⁹⁰ “Glocalization of Law: Environmental Justice”, <http://csi.sagepub.com/cgi/content/short/51/3-4/305?rss=1&ssource=mfc>, (retrieved 12.05.2010)

A key point for Worsley very to the point in this context is that: “[O]ne not unimportant reason why the Right has organized the urban poor is that the Left has let them get on with it [...]” (Worsley 1972: 213) Recalling the top-heavy structure of much left-wing mobilization and reminded about Fanon’s warning that the revolutionary party must be decentralized to the extreme, but then again the decentralization of the new generation reformers were in fact too extreme to allow even for representation (see chap. 2.2). It seems that if there is one thing the left and moderate right have in common it is their distrust of the people, either “modernizing” them from above or confining them within the “customary” (i.e. radical vs. conservative/moderate nationalistic reform), whereas the fascists rely on their ability to *orchestrate* them.

For any meaningful democratization to take place there seems to be a need to formulate the possibility of exactly this excluded stratum to organize in its own right, itself to provide this “intersection” of the victimized, repulsed and progressive, but fragmented resistance to the order of the day. This seems to be of a particular relevance within the specific framework of the African bifurcated state both due to its inherent structural features of this creation and due to the immensity of the problem that this legacy is creating. The population within the jurisdiction of this state tends to be fragmented in so many ways to ensure them from ever becoming *a people* or *the people*, i.e. the human equivalent to state power – territorially defined citizens to which state power would universally refer, and as citizens defined *equal*, whether despotically or democratically ruled. It is therefore our contention that the growth of the “un-integrateable” within the current structures may promise a possibility as much as a threat. The statement Worsley makes about the lumpenproletariat in general is of urgency in this context:

Certainly, no analysis which neglects [...] the sub-proletariat of the new cities will be adequate. We are not, however, saying that sub-proletarians are “the wave of the future”. They are no more *the* revolutionary force than any other classes. But they are wretched and growing in numbers. Whether they become a revolutionary force, however, does not depend simply upon their “existential” situation alone (i.e. numbers, degree of misery, expectations, relations with other classes etc., etc.) but in significant measure on the leadership they are given (if any). But this is true of proletarians and peasants too. In sum, there is no single absolute general proposition that one can make about any particular type of class, universally, as being *the* or even *a* revolutionary force. (Worsley 1972: 227)

7.3 The practices of freedom within the practices of liberation

A weakness with Worsley’s article which, might be attributed to/justified by its level of abstraction, is that he is talking unqualified about “revolution”.⁹¹ To us the talk about revolution has an overt romantic flair to it apart from the in-distinction Worsley makes between *subversion/imperative*. For the question is not only *who* is going to make revolution, but, and perhaps more importantly: *what exactly* is to be revolutionized? Revolution is not all about tearing

⁹¹ We see no reason to be apologetic in defence of “the spirit of the time” to the extent leftist flirtation with the most repressive of regimes were draped in the language of “revolution”: the “revolution” automatically providing these regimes with the stamp “liberated”.

down repressive deadlocks, throwing off the chains and liberating Adam, but about *radical preservation* in its *imperative* direction and *the practices of liberty* in its *subversive* direction. *Subversion* is a constructive process, more than one destructive moment, taking the ontological status of the present as its point of departure and from there identify *what can* be changed, *what is desirable* to change, and deliberate *how to go about* doing that.

As Foucault says it in the motto of this thesis, this is not the same as saying that such and such *liberation* from such and such domination do not exist, but that that it is not in itself *enough* to define admissible and acceptable forms of political society. As we have argued, the first step is the “practices of liberation”, i.e. meaningful democratization, but we do essentially argue that the “practices of freedom” must nevertheless be incorporated in the very heart of any pro-democratic movement if it is to be crowned with any kind of meaningful success. Political education is not political indoctrination – rather than a political elite telling people *what* to think, the focus must be on the forming of an individual political opinion or what Kant described as the way out of “immaturity”, i.e. not to accept somebody else’s authority in areas where the use of reason is called for. We have seen that Mamdani’s careful study of the structural constraints impeding meaningful democratization, i.e. the bifurcated state, is an invaluable analysis of what is to be changed, but he is not giving a marching order how to put wrong right. We hope that this thesis too, has attended to this distinction between a clarifying and a normative program. The role of philosophical analysis is not to tell people what to do and how to do it – “the organization and the doctrine”. The primary goal of investigation is rather to suggest analyses that can function as a background for discussion and proposals for change. The amendments themselves must be raised from the individuals concerned, which do not relate to their circumstances as ahistorical and universal – therefore this effort of exposing these contingencies.

Thus we would stress reforms and politics rather than “revolution and violence” – that the aim is not to conquer the state, but to limit its violent despotic potential both directly and indirectly through its exclusionary and inclusionary structures. Harnessing a general statement made by Worsley to our specific subject-matter, we agree that in order to understand these new developments – their possibilities and limitations – we need not empiricism, but empirically-grounded theory: “Its methodology and concepts may be applied as general strategic and “sensitizing” guides as to what to look for and for tools of investigation; but its substantive findings will be as varied as the societies to which such methods and concepts are applied.” (Worsley 1972: 226)

Concluding remarks

I insist on the fact that, to freedom of mind, the search for a solution is an exuberance, a superfluity; this gives it an incomparable force. To solve political problems becomes difficult for those who allow anxiety alone to pose them. It is necessary for anxiety to pose them. But their solution demands at a certain point the removal of this anxiety. (Bataille 1991: 14)

A theory should not only be evaluated according to its potential as a reservoir of hypothesis implications to be tested against present reality (data), but as much – or perhaps more – as a reservoir of policy implications to be tested against potential reality (goals, values). What we have tried here is an effort in both directions. (Galtung 1971: 109)

As Mamdani expresses it, what most African left-wing intellectuals imagined to themselves at the dawn of independence was that from now onwards all violence would be played out between the haves' and the have-nots. It was a revolution – a progressive revolution going on. However, what we have witnessed the last fifty years is not the have-nots against the haves – not the rich against the poor – but rich against rich, poor against poor.⁹² We could paraphrase Agamben and say: What is a colony, what is its juridical-political structure, how could such things take place there? What is its legacy? To us it seems that these are the questions Mamdani handles and his analysis provides us with valuable insights on why the expectations at independence were not redeemed.

It is our contention that the focus must shift from wage-labour to labouring humanity, from the mode of livelihood to the mode of rule, from the CMP to the social formation to get a better grip on the potentials of our problem-complex both internally in terms of the bifurcated state, and in a wider global sense in terms of neo-imperialistic relations. *Immanence* within the sphere of politics, i.e. the realization of contingency based on genealogy (and not only on genealogy of production as for Hardt & Negri) has nothing “necessary” about it. The *historico-critical attitude* does not “force” society to become political in the sense of Hardt and Negri, who in fact is retreating into socio-economic determinism. Rather it depends on how we deal with it. It is at the same time a process, a freedom, a task and an obligation. The advantage of such a standpoint is the opening for the appreciation of the political. We *need* not uphold “the present” in its present form. The amazing capacity of our productive forces makes severe deprivation today a paradox, typifying poverty in the midst of plenty – but there seems little reason to believe power would self-destruct and melt away in face of “the spontaneous multitude’s counterimperial ontology”. In a certain sense the “multitude” seems to provide a messianic straw eagerly grasped by a succumbing Western radical left. On the other side intellectual fatigue, in contrast to the, at least vigorous, attempt by Hardt & Negri, provides humble legitimacy for status quo. Historicizing opens for freedom of thinking and acting ahead on the basis of the appreciation of the contingency

⁹² *Beyond Settlers and Natives: The Theory and Practice of Decolonization* (2008)
<http://dubois.fas.harvard.edu/webcasts?page=4> (retrieved 16.04.2010)

of the given in a manner clarifying – never conclusively – *what is possible* and *desirable* to change and suggesting *how* that might come about.

We have argued that everywhere the world today is dominated by CMP, but that it is analytically valuable to operate with a plurality of social formations. Social formations have always been intertwined politically, economically and culturally, and their “boarders” have always been fluid. Nevertheless we agree with Hardt & Negri that today, more than before: “The domesticity of values, the shelters behind which they presented their moral substance, the limits that protect against the invading exteriority – all that disappears. We are all forced to confront absolute questions and radical alternatives. In Empire, ethics, morality, and justice are cast into new dimensions. (Hardt & Negri 2000: 19-20). Our contention, however, is that this is the case not on the abstract level of CMP, but rather on the *immanent* interdependence of diverse social formations dominated, integrated and articulated in a variety of ways by CMP; social formations, who, moreover, in the world of today can be grouped roughly and by no means precisely into two camps, i.e. those dominated by that of bio- and that of necropolitical mode of incorporation – dividing mankind into exploited and excluded – highlighting the moral responsibilities of each and everyone. Instead of a new value theory, we thus argue that what matters today is the social character of demands: what responds to claims of universal rights and what to privileges, for the imperialist camp or the proletariat for that matter, internal to each social formation or in the world system of social formations.

We have traced the forces that set up the bifurcated state in the first place, and we have followed how the bifurcated system are conducive to neo-imperialism, promoting fascism in times of disintegration. The situation *within* the imperialist camp had, however, fundamentally altered between the 1880s and the 1960s; the indigenous lumpenproletariat had been swallowed by emigration, by productivity and welfarism, and this same welfare-state had gone far to redeem the moral crisis of capitalism and class-struggle internally.⁹³ From this perspective we agree with Johan Galtung’s statement on a general basis, without going into Centre-Periphery theory:

Instead of seeing democracy as a consequence or a condition for economic development within a certain nation, it can also be seen as the condition for exercising effective control over Periphery nations. Precisely because the Centre is more egalitarian and democratic than the Periphery, there will be more people in the Centre who feel they have a stake in the present state of affair, since the fruits of imperialist structures are more equally shared on the top than on the bottom. (Galtung 1971: 100 emphasis in original)

⁹³ Two devastating hot wars, one cold and the rise of totalitarianism heavily contributed to this development in the social order.

However, as Mamdani stresses:⁹⁴ *by virtue* of being democracies these systems are *potentially*, but only *potentially* self-correcting. We believe that these corrections only have the potential to come about if these imperialistic forces is not perceived as Empire, and this urbanization without industrialization is not seen as an expression of an inexorable trend: “[T]he inherent tendency of silicon capitalism to de-link the growth of production from that of employment. [...] [U]rbanization without growth [...] is more obviously the legacy of a global political juncture [...] than any iron law of advancing technology. (Davis 2007: 14). In short, we believe it can only *potentially* come about by refusing the analytic indistinction so commonly made in today’s era of globalization between CMP and social formation, by clarifying responsibilities and decisions, thus bursting the best defence for neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism: namely the “irresistibility” of the forces in play. As Marx, when in revolutionary mood, advocated, economy is not a force of nature, and thus should therefore not be perceived as such – economy is political economy. To paraphrase Mamdani: only in that manner can democracy be exercised to fulfil its promise of democracy for the sake of humanity.

Creating concepts and theories is in a certain sense to create ontology, or at least “possible worlds”. Mamdani with his framework of the bifurcated state and situating of urban poor as “free” politically – between rural-urban, interethnic, citizen-subject – is giving a possibility for perceiving this phenomena *differently*, for creating new conceptions and thus new possible foundations for political thinking and action. It is a question of appropriating the possibilities of a specific state-structure from within the lived confines and concrete possibilities of that state-structure itself in face of a changing social formation due to the rapid processes of urbanization. Foucault has set the task: Reason as both enlightenment and despotism – the practices of freedom or the practices of domination.

The explosive urbanization-processes and their character of producing “surplus” people in Africa, has lead us to investigate into what this development can signify in relation to prospects for democratization. The prospects for turning them into a class-conscious proletariat or preoccupying them as a reserve army of labour, thus preventing them from becoming “floating masses”, seems bleak; there is no plan for their reincorporation into the world economy. This is what has spurred this undertaking of critically discussing the “lumpenproletariat” in an effort to conceptualize these new urban masses. This critical endeavour has raised questions of epistemological, political and ethical dimensions. What we have been trying to push to the forefront is the importance of grounding historical agency within historical constraints.

⁹⁴ *Global Consequences of the Iraq War* (2003)
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/vforum/03/global_consequence/index.html (retrieved 28.04.2010)

Following Mamdani it seems to be good reasons for arguing that the African colonial state has left a specific legacy of domination that was not overturned overnight at the moment of independence. These state-structures are still posing serious impediment on meaningful democratization, and has as such been very “successful” in terms of the tasks initially set for them. To conceptualize the African states positively, and not as eternal anomalies, it is therefore necessary to establish the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis.

We have been situating the “lumpenproletariat” within these structures and critically discussed the political potential of this group on the basis of Marx, Bataille, Arendt, Hardt and Negri. We have seen that Marx, Bataille and Arendt has provided us with a better understanding of fascism/imperialism, and that we from within this framework can derive tools to grapple with fascist mobilization in Africa, but that we cannot pose the question of democracy. Hardt & Negri’s global level of analysis was of little help, but exposed the problem of eurocentrism clearly. Poulantzas has with his distinction between CMP and social formation taken us further.

Our initial hypothesis was that the growth of a slum-dwelling, unproductive workforce in the informal sector within the specific bifurcated state-structures poses both a limitation and perhaps a possibility for overcoming the very structures impeding democratization. In terms of conceptualizing this group in relation to overcoming these structures, it has seemed to us that that requires a deconstruction of the term lumpenproletariat. This deconstruction has not given rise to any new deterministic implications about what role this group will play by virtue of any “inherent” character. What role they will play is deepest down a political question.

On the basis of what has been done here, however, we think it is a fair guess that a role they will come to play, and as such that this political question is a very urgent question. We have proposed three main scenarios: They may be mobilized by fascistoid demagogues, thus indicating *imperative order* as the solution to the crisis of the post-colonial state structures. They may be continued to be left “outside” (both by left-wing and right-wing ordinary politics), which to us seems to be the surest guarantee for urban anarchy insofar as their projected growing numbers will undermine “business as usual”. Then there is the third solution: to make a mockery out of the UN projections by radically changing the trajectory that these forecasts as based on. If such a change in course is to come about, we think it so of utmost urgency to include the very social category set out to be eliminated in this effort – the unproductive, informal-working slum-dweller elevated to the model of a citizen.

Thus we open for further investigations of these decisive questions.

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