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## EDITORIAL

### Citizen city

*Neoliberal politics of time removes time for the other, which on its own would be unproductive time. The totalisation of time for the self is accompanied by the totalisation of production, which now covers all spheres of life and leads to the total exploitation of man. [...]*

*Unlike time for the self, which isolates and individualises us, time for the other creates a community.*

**Byung-Chul Han<sup>1</sup>**

In a collection of articles originally published in the German press at the beginning of the 1970s, H. M. Enzensberger<sup>2</sup> sarcastically describes a fictitious board game for bored, sceptical members of the bourgeoisie: at the first comment along the lines of “everything is so awful, we should emigrate”, he proposes getting out a map of the world and asking those present to order the countries according to their suitability as a destination for their own emigration/exile — but only on a one-way ticket. After describing all their possible considerations (social democrats, communists, hippies, ecologists, etc.) they whittle down this selection to decide on their list, the result being that neither the Maoist chooses China, nor the communist the USSR, nor the hippie Katmandu, etc. (except for the odd absent-minded *naïf* utopian ...) because it turns out it is impossible to choose countries without individual freedoms, separation of powers, democratic administration, good education, health or pension systems, and the rest. Even when we recognise the shortcomings and deficiencies in way these principles are practiced in our own countries, the author tells us that in the end we are all “Eurocentric in spite of ourselves”. Fifty years later, this adage still holds due to the escalated flows of migration and exile, particularly towards this wearily inadequate Europe. This situation becomes even more patent in light of figures from the recent World social protection report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which shows that 55% of the world’s population (chiefly in Asia and Africa) have no type of social protection, the most obvious parameter for gauging quality of life. Despite all its deficiencies, this Europe is still among the top positions in the social protection ranking. Arbitrary political and administrative barriers —including all types of frontiers— have little hope of detaining the aspirations of people who are increasingly aware of their own unprotected, discriminated and excluded status, and who at the same time are familiar with the situation in neighbouring societies —and today the whole planet is a neighbourhood— whose citizens do enjoy this social protection, to one degree or another. As throughout human history, people, in groups or individually, will put all the resources they have into relocating if their own societies are not moving towards fulfilling their aspirations for a better life.

There are also parallels in the unrelenting flows into the cities from the countryside, an accelerating trend in the last century. Dense agglomerates of industrial, manufacturing and service complexes, expanding since the beginning of the industrial revolution, they have required contingents of progressively better trained workers with increasingly more sophisticated skills; cities that have grown to the size of small or medium-sized states, attending to needs and consuming resources accordingly. But this new globalised capitalism is a clearly differentiated phase, mainly characterised by its short-term vision; its prioritising of investment to acquire all types of financial assets and property rights at the expense of producing goods and services; its appropriation of the advantages introduced by automation;

1. Byung-Chul Han (2016): *Die Austreibung des Anderen: Gesellschaft, Wahrnehmung und Kommunikation heute*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 110 Seiten.
2. Enzensberger, H. M. (1985): *Politische Brosamen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.



and its taking advantage of its unique, dominating and all-encompassing position to act above or on the edge of political and administrative regulations that in today's world are, at best, fragmented and circumstantial. This capitalism has thus become second nature, or better still, a substitute that, devouring everything in its path, has eventually alienated the individual in a way that the fiercest critics of early capitalism could never have imagined. A nature as the principle of reality and in the face of which, the person, the individual, the citizen is left defenceless, with neither resources nor alternatives.

Commercialisation and privatisation have eroded the network of social connections in cities even further and more deeply, compounding the inequalities by making a growing number of people and groups more vulnerable, segregating them, condemning them to poverty and depriving them of protection. For these reasons David Harvey argues that we are facing a "crisis of planetary urbanization", and calls for us to imagine another kind of city. Together, as citizens we need to reconstruct a new social contract that distances us and protects us from the law of the jungle, from this new nature, based on inclusive participation with a firm vision of the ideals of social justice, with guarantees of security and protection for all citizens, and where the wealth perversely accumulated by this predatory capital is redistributed reasonably; where institutions —public and private— are there to serve the citizen and not vice versa. A city that satisfies to the full people's needs for housing, rest, work and recreation, and above all stimulates the personal and social development of all its citizens: "the society to come will be able to say it is a society of listeners and those who pay attention".<sup>1</sup>

Castelló, December 2017.