Cosmopolitan elites, organic intellectuals and the re-configuration of the state

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The past decades have witnessed a significant transformation of the identity space of the global arena. Within this process intellectuals have played a crucial role as elaborators if not originators of a series of discourses that might be called cosmopolitan. This chapter examines the relation of such elites to this process and to the reconfiguration of state power in which they have supplied or at least participated in the dominant discourses. I shall argue that the actual content of these discourses, the discourses of globalization, of multiculturalism and of hybritity, is not a creation of intellectuals but a spontaneous expression of an experience related to a particular position within the global system of states and interstate relations. In order to understand the emergence of this particular position, it is necessary to recapitulate certain properties of the contemporary word system and its current transformation. The framework of analysis is not, thus, one that contains oppositional intellectuals but which concentrates on those intellectuals who partake in the formation of global elites, their discourses and practices.

The discourse of globalization has approached the status of a hegemonic term in its penetration of everyday talk, from kitchen to media to government offices. It might be said to have roots in particular disciplines such as business economics where it had much of its origins, but it has appeared in numerous academic domains from the 1980’s until today. Names as varied as Castells, Appacurai, the Camaroffs are strongly associated with this discourse, which stresses movement, border-crossing, transnationalism, hybritity and cosmopolitan values that are to characterize a new world order. The situating of this discourse and its experiential foundation is the subject of this paper, but here it is necessary
to demonstrate the degree to which « globalization » discourse is a mis-
representation of the world, i.e. an ideology with hegemonic pretensions.

The most prominent and common assumption of this discourse is its
evolutionary bias, one that is usually couched in terms of technological
development (Castells, Harvey), especially the internet, which has allowed
for speedup and time-space compression. This evolutionary assumption is
contrary to the one we put forward here which is closer to the Braudelian
framework of world systems analysis. For the latter, globalization is not an
evolutionary but an historical process, one that prevails in periods of
hegemonic decline in which declining hegemonic zones export capital to
new rising areas within the same system. This is a common phenomenon
within the history of a world system and can be represented as follows:

**Figure 1**: Hegemonic cycles and globalization in
global systems

![Hegemonic cycles and globalization](image)

Here globalization is a phenomenon linking hegemonic cycles
rather than an evolutionary stage. This interpretation renders comparison
between, for example, the past century and the present, a real possibility.
Between 1870 and 1920 a number of phenomena comparable to today’s
situation are clear expressions of an important parallel development. This
is the period during which Britain declined as world hegemon. Having
been the “world’s workshop” at mid-century it produced only 14% of the
world’s manufactured goods in 1914. At the same time it became the
world’s major exporter of capital while the internal economy not only
stagnated in production terms but became increasingly a financially dominated economy in ways that some were to describe as decadent and which is comparable to the current domination of world finance. This is the trajectory known as world workshop to world banker which many hegemonic powers have experienced. Figure one depicts the series of expanding hegemonic powers, each replacing the other in the center of a world system. It includes the history of displacement from the Mediterranean to Iberia, then to Holland and then England, followed in this century by the United States and perhaps today China, which is fast becoming a world workshop. For those who have assumed that globalization is a stage of history, one in which the state system is replaced by global capital in the form of transnational companies and their accompanying institutions such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, the following statistics should must be seriously considered:

### Chiffres de l’industrie chinoise

<table>
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<th>% production mondiale</th>
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<tr>
<td>tracteurs : 83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>horloges/montres : 75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>jouets : 70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>pénicilline : 60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>appareils photo : 55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>vitamine C : 50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ordinateurs portables : 50%</td>
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<td>téléphones : 50%</td>
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<td>climatiseurs : 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>téléviseurs : 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machines à laver : 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>réfrigérateurs : 16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>meubles : 16%</td>
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<td>acier : 15%</td>
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diaspora 30 million : 75% de tous les investissements étrangers en Chine contrôlent 60-70% du PIB indonésien.

This is in a period when US production, which was over 40% of world mfg. following WWII, dropped to 12% in the 1980's. This kind of development supports a model of shifting accumulation rather than evolution. If there is a secular trend in the developmental process it is toward a general expansion of the entire system. And here, of course, technology plays a significant role even if essentially quantitative. There
is also an envelope curve in the graphic that signifies the limits, also technologically determined, of the expansion process as a whole. Most processes of cyclical expansion end with general declines and even the emergence of a so-called dark age in which institutions disappear, the economy becomes more localized and even subsistence based, and the urban structures collapse. There are not many documented cases, but the examples of the end of the Bronze Age and the end of the Roman Empire provide clues for understanding the process. Today, while there is a clear shift in hegemony toward East Asia, it is also commonly asserted that if China were to attain the same standards of consumption as Western Europe, the world ecosystem would collapse. The approaching limits of oil production are an indicator of this potential crisis.

Cosmopolitanism as a constituent of the state arena: double polarization

Global elite formation refers to a process in which a cosmopolitan identity is the core of identification. The study of elites is of course an old phenomenon. The latter is not reducible to a question of class. It contains two essential characteristics: the function of leadership and the establishment of ideological hegemony. The formation of national identity, for example, is very much orchestrated historically by elites for whom such identity made perfect sense. This making sense is the operative basis of such identity. It creates a certain resonance among a wider group if not an entire population that is the triggering mechanism for the emergence of ideological hegemony. The following simple model is an attempt to grasp two processes that are typical in central hegemonic states in periods of decline, periods that are also eras of globalization. I have referred to this process in terms of double polarization. In periods of decline, the paradigm of modernism loses its purchase on populations primarily because the experience of development loses its power of attraction, one that was part of the doxa of the previous period of expansion. The future fades and there is a scramble after new forms of more tangible identity: roots, religion, ethnicity. These tangible identities are what can be called cultural identity in that their core characteristics are not based on identification with a particular social position (as in class) but with an autonomous set of specific elements including language, history, life forms, “beliefs”, etc. The adaptive advantage of such identity is that it is independent of social success or failure of the individuals who partake of them and that it harbors its own quite particular, i.e. cultural
project. This process of re-identification which took off in the mid-
seventies is still a powerful force, one that leads to growing fragmentation
generated by the formation of sub-national sodalities and movements but
also of gangs, of gated communities in both the literal and the figurative
sense, of increasing segregation.

In periods of hegemonic expansion, organic elites tend to identify
with the state and with the idea of a developmental future. In the history of
the nation state, intellectuals played insofar as they formulated the myths
of the state, its history, as well as its cultural content. They were also
active in the making of national citizens in their role as teachers and
public intellectuals. There were those who identified as cosmopolitan or
internationalist in such periods but they are only of marginal significance.
Categories such as cosmopolitanism have a longue durée as do another of
other categories of the territorial state. The absolutist state, while different
in its organization, contained the same kinds of categories: immigrants,
ethnicity, nationality, foreigner, diasporas and cosmopolitans. The
salience of the categories varies with time, of course, and the articulation
between state organization and position in the larger arena determines the
nature of this salience. There are cosmopolitan elites throughout the
history of Early Modern and Modern Europe who developed a discourse
of world governance, of the parochial nature of the local state, and whose
distrust of « the people » is associated with the notion that the wise of the
world should rule. The Rosicrucians, the Freemasons and other
cosmopolitan “clubs” are old phenomena and, while their place was rarely
at the center of state politics, the French revolution, for example, was
certainly a target for their engagement, not least the humanist and anti-
clerical ideas of the 18th century. The Freemasonry really came into its
own within the British empire where it had a function in the production of
“public school” recruits for the imperial rule and where a certain
universalist humanism was cultivated as the ideological core of the
imperial project itself. This was a general trend within the cosmopolitan
bourgeoisie that emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries.

« The cosmopolitan bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century came to
adopt a perspective own society as if it were a foreign one a target for
"colonial" exploitation. Freemasonry provided a cover for developing the
new identity on which the exploitation of members of one’s own community
is premised. By entering the masonic lodges, merchants and those
otherwise involved in the long-distance money economy such as lawyers
and accountants, realised the primordial alienation from the community
which is the precondition for market relations, exploitation of wage
labour, and abstract citizenship » (Van der Pijl, 99).
But this was also the age of emerging national identities so that this strategy in which the population of a country was seen as a mass of subjects and not citizens was increasingly inappropriate and challenged by the development of working class politics in the 19th century.

These organizations were not so much against working class goals as against working class politics and autonomy claiming that they knew what was best for ordinary people. Caroll Quigley has documented the way in which the British upper class at the end of the 19th century could be understood as a family affair in which a very few intermarried aristocrats filled most of the important positions in the imperial and national governments. Cecil Rhodes, governor of South Africa, headed a real secret society, « The society of the elect », and a subgroup headed by his associate Alfred Milner, « The Association of Helpers », who did much to work out the plans for the League of Nations and the Commonwealth, sensing already that the empire would not last forever they envisioned a world of nation states dominated by responsible leadership, for example of the British. This was the model that was inherited by the United States following the Second World War. Near the end of British hegemony, there is a significant increase in the salience of the cosmopolitan witnessed in the various forms of internationalism at the start of the 20th century. It is important not to conflate internationalism with cosmopolitanism. The former, associated with the socialist international, never gave up the national as the basis of political action, but saw the political field as a set of states in interaction and the international field as a political field within which the world might be transformed. The latter denies the significance of the nation state and seeks to replace it with a single world social and political space, one in which the national is seen as a stumbling block rather than a constituent of world order (Mauss, 1920, Nairn). Mauss distinguished the two terms on the grounds suggested above and it might be suggested that his differentiation throws light on the way the terms are used today. The currently popular notion of transnationalism is equivalent to Mauss’ cosmopolitanism in that it sets out to supercede the nation as such. Much of the postcolonial discourse of what is today called « Occidentalism » (Buruma and Margalit, 2003) represents such an onslaught. The power of this ideology today is related to the phenomenon of hegemonic decline itself but it is also the expression of a larger and more substantial transformation of the intellectual field of the West, one that has been referred to in terms of ideological inversion (Jacoby, Friedman) in which a former critique of Western imperialism has become a critique of Western culture in general. Now this inversion is also an expression of decline and it takes on various forms. However among left intellectuals one might envisage it in the terms described in Figure 2:
These two lists compare what was assumed to be progressive in 1968 and what is progressive today. The left of 40 years ago was oriented to a core notion of collective sovereignty of which the local and the national were logical extensions. Homogeneity meant primarily the maintenance of a single social project to which all were supposed to assimilate themselves. This also implied both monoculturalism and equality, not in the sense that cultural difference was not tolerated, but that it was irrelevant or unmarked in relation to the social project. Equality was the self-evident character of these projects and in the sense that equality implies sameness, it depended on the sharing of common goals. From the 80's on this old New Left schema declined and was transformed into an ideology of culture by those who either replaced the older group or radically changed their own positions in their new found upwardly mobile positions as well paid academics and members of the culture industries.

The emergence of this group is captured, however superficially, in the literature on the « Bobos », or bourgeois bohemians, children of the 60's who transformed the radical into radical chic and whose political agenda moved rapidly toward one or another form of liberalism. The occidentalism implicated in this transformation is one which, interestingly enough, maintains an imperialist position with respect to the « other » insofar as the latter is still seen as an object and totally lacking in intentionality in the positive sense. Thus terrorism in its various guises is not seen as a true project directed against a « we ». It is merely the extension or translation of our imperialist behavior into their reactive violence. Thus it is in fact we who are the instrumentalizers of terrorism. Islamism can hardly then be said to exist on its own since it is no more than a righteous reaction or resistance to oppression. While this inversion exists in differing degrees among intellectuals, it is an increasingly prevalent mentality. This also accounts for the identification with the cosmopolitan among members of this group, one that opposes the nation state on the grounds that it is the essentializing basis of racism. This unites both liberal intellectuals and those who claim a more radical left wing
identity. Thus Appadurai has as his project, normative more than scientific, the demise of the nation state, or at least the “nation” half of it, « We need to think ourselves beyond the nation » (Appadurai, 1993 : 411), while Hardt and Negri say in their explicitly progressive version the former : « Nomadism and miscengenation appear here as figures of virtue, as the first ethical practices on the terrain of Empire ». And this is followed by a violent attack on the local and especially the indigenous :

« Today’s celebrations of the local can be regressive and even fascist when they oppose circulations and mixture, and thus reinforce the walls of nation, ethnicity, race people and the like » (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 362).

Thus the nomadic is the future, a future of hybridity which is somehow opposed to the homogeneity of the national. In an interview in France, Negri criticized the French Left for its (nationalist) opposition to the proposed European constitution. While he agreed that the constitution was basically liberal and therefore reprehensible he still encouraged a yes vote for one reason only, « Oui, pour faire disparaître cette merde d’Etat-nation » (Libération, 13 mai 2005).

It is noteworthy that Empire (2000) was published by none other than Harvard University Press and that it received favorable reviews in such journals as Foreign Affairs, a publication of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, as well as the New York Times. It was positively praised by the Postcolonial Studies elite, but the old New Left did not fall for its message (Balakrishnan ed., 2003), which is that we, including the authors, are at the beginning of a new and final age of empire, one that is not governed by a particular country but is embedded in the global networks that today control our lives and in which the figure of the nomad is the figure of the revolutionary, the same nomad as former aristocrats who in their global displacement were always and everywhere « at home ». The postcolonial vision of a former left is the foundation for the not so new variant of cosmopolitanism that has become the new global elite identity. The latter is shared by various elites, transnational capitalist, media, diplomatic, United Nations (especially UNESCO) and other global institutional complexes such as the World Trade Organization, World Bank and more traditional clubs such as the Bilderberg where global governance is often on the agenda. The role of intellectuals in this is not terribly creative, but the latter do function to elaborate on the cosmopolitan vision, producing, today, a serious contender for global, or at least Western, ideological hegemony. This hegemony is of course mediated by the media themselves that turn the global into a kind of doxa.
That « we live in a globalized world », that globalization forces the
government to make certain cuts, that globalization is a new form of
cultural enrichment (via migration), etc. In all of these expressions
globalization is converted into a progressive force of nature to which one
must adapt or perish. This is the evolutionary bias of the discourse that we
have argued against above.

Figure 3 represents the location of cosmopolitan elite identity
within a larger positional context of the nation state. It is the cosmopolitan
space itself that defines the contours of elite identity and which is the
locus of production of cosmopolitan discourse. Intellectuals elaborate their
discourses from within this space but are not its originators.

The positionality of cosmopolitan intellectual identification has
been critically assessed by Dirlik in a work whose title is itself revealing.
Postcolonial Aura deals with various aspects of the relation between the
transformations of global capitalism and the rise of postcolonial elites
from the upper echelons of the Third World.

« The current global condition appears in the discourse only as a
projection of the subjectivities and epistemologies of First World
intellectuals of Third World origin: the discourse constitutes the world in
the self-image of these intellectuals, which makes it an expression not of
powerlessness but of newfound power » (Dirlik, 1994 : 344).

And perhaps overdrawing the relation between position and
ideological content, but clearly in the right direction, he suggests:
"To insist on hybridity against one's own language, it seems to me, is to disguise not only ideological location but also the differences of power that go with different locations. Postcolonial intellectuals in their First World institutional location are ensconced in positions of power not only vis-à-vis the 'native' intellectuals back at home, but also vis-à-vis their First World neighbors here. My neighbors in Farmville, Virginia, are no match in power for the highly paid, highly prestigious postcolonial intellectuals at Columbia, Princeton, or Duke; some of them might even be willing to swap positions and take the anguish that comes with hybridity so long as it brings with it the power and the prestige it seems to command" (op. cit. 343).

The graphic in Figure 3 represents the double polarization characteristic of periods of hegemonic decline. It is not applicable to East Asia where an inverse process of integration is occurring and where elites tend to be national rather than cosmopolitan. Horizontal fragmentation, referred to above, based on cultural identification related to ethnic, gender, territorial and other cultural categories is accompanied by a vertical polarization in which class distance increases and new elites as well as new lumpenized underclasses emerge. These are complementary processes and are inconceivable as autonomous phenomena. Thus the cosmopolitanization of elites in a process of upward mobility occurs simultaneously with the indigenization of downwardly mobile sectors of the population that, with no hope of future mobility, search for roots. Here the horizontal and vertical become co-terminus. Nationalist fundamentalism is equivalent if not identical in structural terms to Islamic fundamentalism, and the two confront one another in the multicultural street. In the nation state context it is a confrontation between the national (native) and the transnational (diasporic, Islamic) but both are fundamentalist in content.

The cosmopolitan is also more than a mere representation of the world. Its strategy of encompassment hides a separation from the masses, the creation of a segregated world of schools, hotels, restaurants, but also, of interaction and even of intermarriage. There is, then, an equivalent ethnicization of the elite so that class position is consolidated by cultural identity. Here again there is evidence from elites if not necessarily from intellectual elites. Thus while the latter describe themselves as open, tolerant and even encompassing with respect to the world’s diversity, they tend to transform that diversity into a relation of consanguinity.

"j'ai le sang ex-patrié".... Je suis américain, de passeport et de nationalité mais ma famille et celle de ma femme aussi ont un grand
nombre de ramifications dans beaucoup de pays, ce qui fait qu'on a toujours eu un pied aux États-Unis un pied à l’étranger » (Wagner, 1999 : 116).


And the opposition with respect to the “other”, i.e. the plebian, also manifests the complementarity of this double process. They are referred to by these elite subjects as “terrestrials” (terriens) as opposed to themselves. The verticality of the representation is clearly a question of social difference

« Alors le terrien, c’est quelqu’un qui a un espace limité. Son activité se concentre sur la terre qu’il possède. Si l’autre va sur sa terre, il ne l’acceptera pas. Il est attaché à sa famille, à ses enfants, qu’il veut garder chez lui, parce que sa famille cultive sa terre » (op. cit. : 204).

Here openness is at the same time the expression of a specific biologized/racialized identity. This is also conveyed in the fact that cosmopolitan identity hovers above the nation state whose transcendence is its very definition. And at the bottom of this polarized social order, already classified as local, stuck in the ground, closed and xenophobic, it can be suggested that there are real indigenous groups that in some cases seek to exit the nation state via the bottom, forming international alliances. Some racist groups who, giving up on the multicultural nation state, have their own international organizations based on race rather than « nation ». The Washitaw Indians, who may be said to combine these two tendencies, occupy three southern states of the U.S., are Black self-identified Indians, who have a homepage, an empress, their own licence plates, and an arsenal of weapons that keeps the authorities at bay. They combine Black and American Indian identity, claiming to have come to the New World when it was still joined to the continent of Africa. It is noteworthy that they are allied to the white militia group « The republic of Texas » in a paradoxical union that pits them both against the main enemies: Washington, the Vatican, the Jews and all others who have an agenda of world domination. In this sense cosmopolitan representations of the social order are quite complementary to those of the indigenized bottom of that order. They partake of the same semantic space as well but find themselves at opposite ends.
The logic of post-colonial cosmopolitanism

The formation of cosmopolitan elites is a product of the conjuncture of the wider inversion of ideology with a process of upward mobility that produces a distance to “the people”. This is a process of ideological ranking as well as class differentiation. If there is a logic to this positioning it seems to have the following schematic structure:

Position above the world generates the reconfiguration of the actual fragmentation of the world in terms of a vision of diversification or in more static terms, simply diversity, and in common policy parlance, multiculturalism. This diversity includes the national population with which one might at one time have been identified, in an earlier period of stronger national identity. The result is the fracture of the relation between the state as container and a nationally defined population. The latter becomes another ethnic group, similar to the other ethnic groups that have come to occupy the territory as immigrants. In this way the state is separated from the former nation and the latter becomes redefined as a multi-ethnic or multicultural polity. Hybridity expresses the idea of the mixity of this identity, but it is often the product of the consumption of diversity rather than any participation in the latter. Consumption is the practical expression of what in identity terms is encompassment of the world’s differences. Real difference is often frightening and far too vulgar for the new sophisticates, who prefer to reduce the latter to objects, or rather, commodities, that can be used to furnish the space of elite living rooms and salons. In this sense hybridity is the encompassment of diversity within the life space of the cosmopolitan. « We are the world », it is said, but it is not the real world of social experience. It is the object world. This logic generates an enemy as well, that part of the population that is either indigenizing or really indigenous in the sense defined by the United Nations. Both of these populations are oriented to local territory and tend to stress the necessity of homogenization, either by exclusion or by assimilation. The latter are in such terms closed, against globalization, and probably racist, a term that has come to be conflated with nationalism and localism (see Hardt and Negri above). The logic of cosmopolitanism is a positional logic, but it is internally coherent and for its participants quite authentic as a form of identity. It is in this context that we can understand the way the same arguments are replicated repeatedly across different domains and why the discourse creates a resonant sense of familiarity for those who partake in it.

The spontaneity of the cosmopolitan imaginary is perfectly resonant with the discourse of consultants who often have their laptops as their only offices. In interviews with such higher end consultants at the transnational
corporation Cap Gemini, the following kinds of statements are made.


Openness to the wider world, seen in evolutionary terms, a process of enrichment… These are all the same terms as can be found in articles published in *Public Culture*. The parallels are not the product of diffusion, but of spontaneous recognition or interpretation of the world. A well known consultant discussing her experience of becoming globally connected states:

« Regardless of how the awareness began, it generally culminates in a sense of global citizenship. The best approach is to develop a sense that "I belong anywhere I am, no matter who I am" » (Barnum, 1992 : 142).

Thus, while intellectuals may indeed be engaged in *elaborating* on a cosmopolitan identity, there is a core of representations that can be said to be the spontaneous product of social position.

**Cosmopolitan governance**

In a once strongly homogenizing Sweden a new multicultural state has been declared, following the logic outlined above. This is not a mere change in strategy, although such change is the overriding factor. It is declared in a government proposition that the once homogeneous country not longer has a common history. In a government proposition from 1998/99 well known as the « Integration proposition » that became the « Integration Act » we find the following preface :

« A country’s history often serves to integrate individuals in a larger unity. As a large group of people originate from other countries, the Swedish population now lacks a shared history. Contemporary membership in Sweden and support for the society’s basic values has, therefore, greater significance for integration than a common historical origin ».

The state relocates itself above the various “peoples” that inhabit it and declares itself a neutral *primus inter pares* where Swedes as other immigrant populations are defined as equally ethnic (note the confusion of
ethnic, national, and religious identity).

« Further, the government has decided that a person’s ethnic background or ethnicity can be Swedish as well as Sami, Finnish, Kurdish, Muslim, etc. ».

Finally, the new constitution of society is redefined as plural rather than national:

« The point of departure for a new politics according to the government: society’s ethnic and cultural plurality should be the basis of the formulation of general policy and its implementation in all the domains and levels of society ».

Policy oriented intellectuals have argued for the necessity of immigration in order to create and maintain diversity which is seen as a goal in itself.

« Diversity is linked with immigration. If immigration is stopped, diversity is jeopardized. Policy-makers should reassess immigration policy. Diversity should not be seen as a means to handle what is perceived as "problematic immigration". Rather, immigration needs to be seen as the positive means to achieve the goal of diversity. All Western countries have ageing populations. If welfare systems are to be maintained immigration of labour power will soon become an economic demographic necessity » (Westin, 2000 : 734).

This implies that if immigrants decided to turn home and life became bearable at home then we would have to force them to come. The transformation of Swedish social policy might seem innocuous to some, although a French researcher was totally astonished that such a re-configuration could occur in a country like Sweden. And the relation between this increasingly implemented policy and the self-identification of the government elites reinforces the distancing of the latter from anything resembling « peoplehood ». When asked in a Television interview if he were Swedish or not, the minister of integration (SVT 21, 4 1998) replied tersely: « No! Definitely not! » and then proceeded to recount his mixed, i.e. hybrid genealogy including Scotland, Germany and Denmark. This is comparable to the hybrid blood referred to above and can be understood as the same kind of identification, except that it is not clear whether the minister feels at home anywhere in the world. In this transformation the question of class, once the major social question, is replaced by the question of identity, especially ethnic identity and the major problem becomes racism itself. Many « organic » intellectuals become instrumental actors in this transformation in which globalization is combined with immigration in a single scheme. It is also perhaps not a mere coincidence that political salaries have increased faster than all other salaries and that
there has been a plethora of scandals concerning credit card abuse and abuse of state airplanes for private desires, i.e. an increasing lack of trust between the political class (a word that has only appeared in Swedish) and their constituencies. The social democratic prime minister has, unlike any minister before him, built a mansion during his period of office. The construction firm belongs to his brother. There is increasing evidence of political class (i.e. party) endogamy and one commentator has referred to this as the « political aristocracy » (Isaksson, 200x). The prime minister is married to the director of the State Wine Monopoly, an employment that provides her a salary of 26000 € per month. When the prime minister was asked how he could afford such a house, he replied that he was married to a wealthy woman. Needless to say it was the prime minister himself that appointed his wife to her current position. All this appears as quite new to average citizens, not least those social democrats who had a very different kind of political culture in mind. Only a couple of decades ago Sweden was one of the most egalitarian democracies in the world. Politicians usually thought of themselves as servants of the people. They lived modestly and had modest salaries as well.

This transformation is not unique for Sweden even if the latter represents an extreme example. In France, a similar analysis has emerged of what is called in a recent title, Le gouvernement invisible. Naissance d’une démocratie sans le peuple (Jaffres, 2001) which followed on the book La faute des élites (Julliard, 1997). While these are quasi journalistic works, they reflect an understanding that something has changed. While there has always been a political class of graduates from the ENA (École nationale d’administration) and the École Polytechnique, there has been, in this strongly republican country, a strong sense of identification of that class with a popular project. But this is no longer the case.


Here there is the same move from socialist or social democratic ideology toward cultural liberalism. This is echoed in the transformation of class to cultural politics more generally, leaving what is left of the working class to find its own identity and project (which it has done in its move to nationalism).

« Aux ouvriers elles ont substitué les immigrés et ont reporté sur ceux-ci le double sentiment de crainte et de compassion qu’inspire généralement le prolétaire. Or l’immigré n’est pas seulement victime de
l’exclusion sociale, mais aussi de l’exclusion ethnique, autrement dit du racisme » (op. cit. 105).

This leaves the former class, the so-called Français de souche or ethnic French, another new term, generated by the ethnic fragmentation and ethnicization discussed above, in a position of being red-necked, backward-looking closed, populist and of course potentially or actually racist or even fascist.

« Fallait-il aller plus loin et se demander (....) si le peuple n’est pas un ennemi naturel de la démocratie, séduit par l’autoritarisme, complice des tyrans et enclin à la violence » (ibid. 204).

These parallels are indicative of powerful forces at work in the social and political transformation of the state. The globalization of the elites, the separation of the state from the nation and a combination of structural changes in political strategy that empty politics of its former ideological content. Instead the goal is simply to maintain power and even to increase it. This is evident in the emergence of New Public Management as an eventual replacement for democratic rule, one that appears easiest to apply at the local or the global/regional level, since it can go unnoticed by the majority of citizens who care increasingly less about politics.

« NPM discourse is constantly confronted with a powerful counter-discourse of "public sector values" stressing democracy, equality, accountability, participation etc. In NPM discourse, the contradiction does not exist; management techniques are said to provide the same benefits as classical democratic institutions: to be responsive to customers is equivalent to democratic control, measuring performance is the essence of accountability, choice is pluralism, etc. » (Bislev, Hansen and Salskov-Iversen, 2000: 27).

This is the discourse that informs what is called in various guises la voie unique, or in Swedish den enda vägen, the former expression from the left, the latter from the right. And it is this strategy that is the core of the “new socialists” including the American New Democrats, the British Third Way and the more revealing German Neue Mitte. This strategy, following NPM, is simply economic liberalism combined with a minimal welfare policy. It is the definition of a new center of political power, one that defines itself as progressive but not necessarily in the traditional sense. Anthony Giddens, major theorist of the Third Way, puts it as follows:
"Radicalism" cannot any longer be equated with "being on the left." On the contrary, it often means breaking with established leftist doctrines where they have lost their purchase on the world" (Giddens, 2000: 39).

That is, sometimes radicalism implies its opposite, which is why Blair is sometimes referred to as "Thatcher without the handbag".

NPM discourse is an essential part of the politics of global institutions, not least in the European Union, where a green paper on "organic democracy" stresses that the true actors in a new form of governance are governments, multinationals, ethnic corporations and the like. The role of the demos is reduced to the legitimation of the real governance that is projected as the future of European politics (Burns et al., 2000). It is interesting to consider the logic involved here. NPM implies that there are best solutions to political problems that can be arrived at by experts. They are thus removed from the political sphere and become issues of organisation as such. Now if there is only one way to run a governmental process, then the question of political differences disappears in the equifinality of strategic choices. All parties use more or less the same experts, so political difference is reduced to the minimum. So why vote at all? What can people, already defined as basically ignorant and potentially dangerous, have a say in such an important process? That people have understood this in one sense is reflected in the declining participation in electoral politics as well as increasing populism which is an expression of precisely the fact that the people are no longer consulted on issues concerning their existence.

This transformation creates a serious problem for politicians and does much to account for the practically hysterical use of the word democracy in global and national politics. Democratization of the world has become the major goal of Western states. And since it is no longer the democratic process that is essential, as there are no longer any choices, the word itself has become transmuted. It no longer refers to the political arena but to the attributes of persons. It is now embodied and represents the notion of respectability. This the product of the transition of what can be referred to a former diametrical dualism to a concentric dualism. It is possible to apply this kind of dualism to the transformation of the Western political sphere even if neither the form nor the process is identical. The left/right opposition dominated politics throughout the "modern" era even if there was also a continuum here with respect to the extreme parties of the left and the right. The left/right polarity however was dominant in that it organized the discourse around a pro-socialist versus a pro-capitalist opposition. This was also, of course, the era of class opposition in which
left/right was founded in class conflict. The diametrical dualism has today been transformed into a concentric dualism for reasons that we have outlined above. The single solution of the *voie unique* and the Third Way is best expressed in the spatial notion of the *Neue Mitte*, the New Center, a fusion of right center and left center that defines a new kind of politics, one that is self-defined as simply practical and effective, i.e. New Public Management. It renders democratic politics irrelevant in the absence of the issue of political alternatives. The new center represents respectability as such those who implement the best engineered solution to whatever social problem should arise. Others, who still maintain ideologies and are by definition to the right and left of this center, are re-categorized as the non-respectable, the undemocratic, the iniquitous. They are sometimes reduced to populism, fascism, left and right, and they are associated with a population that is redefined as the *dangerous classes*. Concentric dualism opens toward various other categories and represents a continuum of respectability rather than an opposition between discrete complementary categories. Mayor Livingstone of London, too far to the Left for Blair, was attacked as undemocratic in the same kind of language used to attack Haider in Austria. The embodiment of the notion of democracy referred to above is clear in these examples. It is now people that are democratic or not, rather than the political arenas within which they operate. This embodiment-reconfiguration of the term is a significant aspect of the transformation of the political sphere. The process also entails the moralization of the political. Democratic is not just respectable in the social sense but even more so in the moral sense. It implies that one is able to carry out the strategy of the dominant party, to maintain political power, to mystify really serious problems so that people « don’t get upset ». The concentric structure is not entirely separate from the diametric structure. The two are interwoven in an ambivalent reality within which one or the other form can become dominant. Changing dominance is, of course, a question of historical context, and we suggest that it is part of the larger process of declining hegemony, even if it can also arise in other circumstances. A Swedish social democrat expressed this in saying openly that a conservative-liberal party victory was the equivalent of a coup d’État for her. The openness of concentric dualism applies to the top as well as to the bottom. Thus the elites need not belong exclusively to the territorial state, but can hover in the higher realm of the transnational, whether regional (EU) or global. If the latter is conceived as a conical and not merely a two dimensional concentric form, this is easily apparent. In this way the upward mobility of elites is also their outward mobility just as depicted in the pyramidal structure in Figure 3. It is also expressive of the transformation of governance that we have outlined. Here the
cosmopolitan content of the new political discourses are clearly identical with cosmopolitan identity in general so that globalization as a discourse already can be said to contain a certain form of governance within itself. In the green paper on the future of democracy proposed for the European Commission we find an entirely new system of governance. Instead of the classical model of democracy, the political process is to be dominated by various interest groups, be they transnational firms or ethnic corporations as opposed to a « people » which is fragmented into « peoples ». Rather than Parliamentary democracy the rules of the game are now such that accountability is not to a public but to specific publics, a plurality of « peoples » organizations, firms, NGO’s, etc. Finally law is transcended by a complex system of rules and regulations that emerge in the new interactions among new dominant actors. The true organic democracy is the order that is worked out among these actors. What is missing in all of this is the _demos_. The latter’s function is reduced to precisely that of legitimating the rest of the process. This fascinating scenario, democracy without the demos is implicit in NPM and sometimes explicit in policy statements. Organic democracy is a variant of the general logics that we have discussed, one which is not as new as it appears at first. It is close to the kinds of rule found in the absolutist states and in previous imperial structures. In this process it can be seen that sovereignty, which formally at least passed from the state as royalty to the people throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, is on its way back to the state which is not unlike a class for itself, a new aristocracy.

Sweden for several years has had a minister of democracy, a minister whose function is unclear according to the person who was appointed. Her new salary was high, especially for Sweden, and she was very happy with it. She also admitted to having gotten the appointment via her mother, a former minister. Several questions are pertinent here. If Sweden is a democracy, why does one need a minister of democracy? Second, what does it imply for democracy when such a minister has gotten her position via family connections and influence? The idea of such a ministerial position is related to the obvious decline in citizen participation in elections and the documented growing lack of respect for politicians. A ministry of democracy would provide remedies for this situation. Efforts at spreading more information to « the people » and the usual slogans concerning all people’s equal worth did not succeed in eliciting scepticism. An enormous number of reports were published during this period but there is no indication that they were taken seriously. The secretary of the Committee on democracy complained that the government was reluctant to accept increased citizen power. The government proposition presented by the new minister in 2002 was
attacked by four of the countries leading political scientists, who complained that the government apparently thinks that it is the citizenry itself that is the greatest problem for democracy, not those who govern (DN 22-1, 2002). Another commentator (Jonsson, 2002-01-28) discussed the language used in attempting to improve democracy, the avowed function of a minister of democracy. One of the most common terms dealt with what is called « anchoring » or grounding of government policy among the people. The techniques are well known and include an array of techniques taken from the advertising industry. But the direction is clearly top-down rather than bottom-up. Given precisely the « legitmation crisis » occurring in the country, the function of a new ministry would be primarily to re-legitimate governance as it now functions, not to change its structure. It is interesting that this is precisely the function designated to the European Parliament in the vision of organic democracy, i.e. to legitimate the functioning of the real governmental process.

Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism and the Absolutist State

We have traced the relation between intellectuals and globalization to the transformation of the political order of the Western state. The argument we propose is unitary.

1. The process of globalization is a concomitant of hegemonic decline and a major shift in the locus of world accumulation.
2. In this process the forces of integration that existed previously, expressed in the international order of nation states under Western hegemony, begin to unravel.
3. This leads to the breakdown of imperial order and political and cultural fragmentation in the geopolitical arena, a process that is primarily intra-state rather than interstate as it is the state that is increasingly weakened by the export of capital and resultant indebtedness.
4. In identity terms this takes the form of the decline of modernism and the rise of processes of cultural identification: ethnic, indigenous, national, regional. The latter in some parts of the system, weaker links especially, leads to conflicts among the fragments or between the fragments and the state. Political instability in these zones leads to mass migration toward the declining center.
5. There is also a real fragmentation of the economic process under pressure of decline. Flexible accumulation, outsourcing, flexible labor, lumpenization and marginalization. Fordism is replaced by networks of fragmented production and globalized circulation of people and goods within such networks. Guns, drugs and people are among the major
economic sectors in the world economy today.

6. The networks, not least the illicit ones, link up with the fragmentation process itself, arming gangs, militias and mafias for the increasingly violent hunt for wealth and power.

7. There is also massive vertical polarization within the state order itself. The upwardly mobile become both wealthier and globalized and numerous groups are drawn into this process of elite formation. Finance capital, media elites, political classes, cultural elites including intellectuals, all interact within a process of cosmopolitanization at the same time as the lumpenized bottom fragments ethnically and the former national population indigenizes.

8. The emergence of elite globalization discourses, a product of the social mobility of a certain segment of the intellectuals, occurs in a situation of ideological inversion in which a former critique of Western imperialism is transformed into a purely cultural critique of Western culture, values, science and rationality. This is expressed in the form of occidentalism. All things culturally dangerous and bad are associated with those who still identify with the social field of national identity, those who have not elevated themselves to a postnational position.

9. This generates in its turn a tendency (one among others) to a division in the political elite pitting national against cosmopolitan factions. In Sweden, where the latter are dominant, the state moves from the nation state format to the multicultural state. In this most extreme form, the population inhabiting the state is redefined as a set of ethnic groups of nationals, indigenous populations and immigrant ethnic minorities. All are defined as ethnic groups including the national population and the political class re-situates itself in cosmopolitan space identifying with Europe or with the world. In France, there are similar tendencies but globalization discourse has not (yet) become dominant. The fact, for example, that there is a significant political tendency that identifies as «left republicanism» is an impossibility for the Swedish elite, for whom republicanism equals nationalism equals essentialism and racism and therefore cannot be associated with the left. On the European scale, cosmopolitan ideology has made much headway and it is here, as in international organs such as UNESCO and the World Bank, that a particular pluralist notion of global governance has become increasingly dominant.

10. This development seems to imply a number of related tendencies:

a. The separation of the state from the nation. What might be referred to as the lift-off of the state implies the transformation of the people into a set of «peoples» or ethnic populations including the former
national population.

b. The state also is transformed from the inside in this process from an extension of a sovereign people to a sovereign entity in its own right. This accounts for the increasing power allocated to state institutions, the tendency to represent a set of abstract principles embodied in the idea of democracy, and the inversion of the relation of representativity itself. The state now represents the higher principles of democratic rule to the people rather than being the representative of the people.

c. The participation of the rulers in a higher cosmopolitan sphere, the regional or the global, where they discuss solutions to issues of governance formulate plans that are not the product of grassroots initiatives but must at most be made acceptable to the grassroots. This is the gist of NPM methodology, one that occurs in a situation detailed above, where real political choices are replaced by a praxeology of rational rule, itself an ideology of absolute power.

d. These processes provide the basis for the transition from diametric to concentric dualism. The function of respectability in this transition is that it fixes the status of political leaders in an absolutistic way. They become independent of the usual democratic process, embodying democracy in themselves. They embody as well the voie unique of the new governance that is independent of any « people’s will ». They are no longer representatives of the people to themselves, but representatives of higher principles. This new absolutism is cosmic insofar as it derives from a higher order and it is also cosmopolitical insofar as it unites the rulers of the world in a potential network of morally exemplary actors (except for those rogues and rogue states that are not allowed into the fold). The conjunction of power and morality in this concentric order has, increasingly, the character of theocracy, of absolutist rule based on cosmic principles of « the good ».

The fact that there is an implicit logic linking cosmopolitan ideology and global governance of a particular kind ought not to be particularly shocking, but the intuitively obvious character of the connection is not clear and I have endeavored to work that out in this contribution. I have argued as well that intellectuals who are the fellow travelers, as well as script writers for this historical tendency in regime change, have, therefore, a central role in the process. I have not argued that intellectuals are to be seen as a unitary phenomenon. On the contrary, there are quite opposed positions and all the variations in between involved in intellectual positions within the historical process. But in order to account for the formation of both new positions with regard to social identity as to power, it is crucial to keep in mind the fact that this history occurs within a broader logic of social re-configuration and re-
identification that is its true explanatory context. The latter accounts for the complementary character of some of texts that deal with the other end of this transformation, by those who might perhaps be classified as « left republicans ».

« The Neue Mitte manipulates the Rightist scare the better to hegemonize the "democratic" field, i.e. to define the terrain and discipline its real adversary, the radical Left. Therein resides the ultimate rationale of the Third Way: that is, a social democracy purged of its minimal subversivesting, extinguishing even the faintest memory of anti-capitalism and class struggle. The result is what one would expect. The populist Right moves to occupy the terrain evacuated by the Left, as the only "serious" political force that still employs an anti-capitalist rhetoric — if thickly coated with a nationalist/racist/religious veneer (international corporations are "betraying" the decent working people of our nation). At the congress of the Front National a couple of years ago, Jean-Marie Le Pen brought on stage an Algerian, an African and a Jew, embraced them all and told his audience: "They are no less French than I am — it is the representatives of big multinational capital, ignoring their duty to France, who are the true danger to our identity!" In New York, Pat Buchanan and Black activist Leonora Fulani can proclaim a common hostility to unrestricted free trade, and both (pretend to) speak on behalf of the legendary desaparecidos of our time, the proverbially vanished proletariat. While multicultural tolerance becomes the motto of the new and privileged "symbolic" classes, the far Right seeks to address and to mobilize whatever remains of the mainstream "working class" in our Western societies. In this uniform spectrum, political differences are more and more reduced to merely cultural attitudes: multicultural/sexual (etc.) "openness" versus traditional/natural (etc.) "family values" » (Zizek, 2000 : 37-38).

Bibliographie


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