Group themes and readings

1. WALLS and FENCES
   a. Wendy Brown
   b. Setti
2. BORDER CROSSINGS / CROSSING BORDERS
   a. Politics of border
   b. STÉPHANE ROSIÈRE and Jones
   c. Parizot et al
3. MIGRATION AS EVENT / IMMIGRATION AS SURVIVAL
   a. Held
   b. Molodikov
   c. Silverstein
4. CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE
   a. Parizot et al
   b. Setti
   c. STÉPHANE ROSIÈRE and Jones
5. WAR, CONFLICT AND MIGRATION
   - Bennet (Thomas Demand)
   - Held

after."[1] Similarly, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari affirm that the time of the event "is no longer time that exists between two instants", but a "meanwhile", a kind of between time with its own characteristics.[2] This "time of the event", they argue, is quite distinct from the historical time in which events occur. It cannot be conceived in terms of a sequential unfolding, sandwiched between a past and a future.

Social and historical events, like wars or terror campaigns, of course, have no precise temporal boundaries; it is never clear when they begin or when their effects cease to be felt. They are structured by relations with other events, and they often involve long periods when it appears that nothing is happening.[3] So can such events, as amorphous and indeterminate as they are, in some sense be inhabited by art, and what happens when they are?

The German artist Thomas Demand, who has consistently experimented with great events over the past ten years, produced his work *Poll* (2001) (Fig. 1) in response to the contentious count in the 2000 US Presidential election, of which he remarked:

> I was astonished to note that a truly momentous political event—which some have even gone so far as to call an attempted coup d'état by far-right Republicans—was represented to the public largely via various photographs of stacks of paper…The event itself (the vote count) plays only a subordinate role here…I wanted to avoid looking through the lens of historical distance. I wanted to be so close to the real event that my pictures of it and the media coverage would become indistinguishable.[4]

Demand happened to be working at the time with representations of behavioural tests and commented that:

> The Emergency Operations Center in Palm Beach seemed like part of a maze-based behavioural experiment—which it is in some extended sense, as the reduction of behavioural possibilities to a ballot corresponds quite nicely to the experimental setup for testing certain hypotheses about the behaviour of, say, mice.

He goes on:

> The conceptual structure of *Poll* is, naturally, devoted to a very specific set of political circumstances, but whether the work has any real significance will be
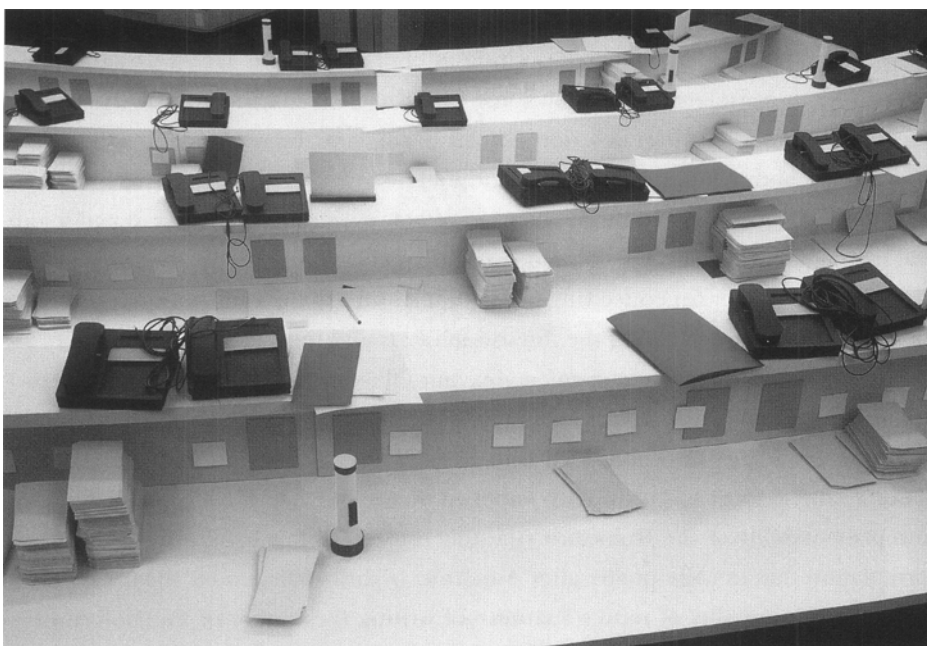
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Fig. 1.   Thomas Demand. *Poll*, 2001. C-print on photographic paper and Diasec. © Thomas Demand, VG Bild Kunst, Bonn/VISCOPY Surry Hills.

> evident only when *the political event recedes into the background*. In a certain sense, this work is a site-specific installation, in that the site is precisely the American short-term memory. [my emphasis]

Through the sculptural reconstruction and subsequent photographing of a location in pristine form Demand realises the "event" in its incorporeal form. As he puts it, the model forms create surroundings that are "untouched" and "utopic." So even as the image embodies the surface and materiality of the event, it sheds the specific details of its incarnation. The formal apparatus of a ballot count is thereby transformed into a virtual site, which Demand conceptualises in terms of structure rather than texture, pointedly invoking the analogy with the behavioural experiment in which "the number of options for actions are radically limited and simplified" in the interests of producing a demonstrable result.

In this apparent trajectory from the actual to the virtual, *Poll* seems to invoke Deleuze's conception of the pure event, characterised in terms of an inherent structure or problem that may be conceived in separation from its actualisation in particular circumstances. For Deleuze and Guattari: "What history grasps of the event is its

IN 2012, EXTREME WEATHER DROVE **MORE THAN 32 MILLION PEOPLE** FROM THEIR HOMES
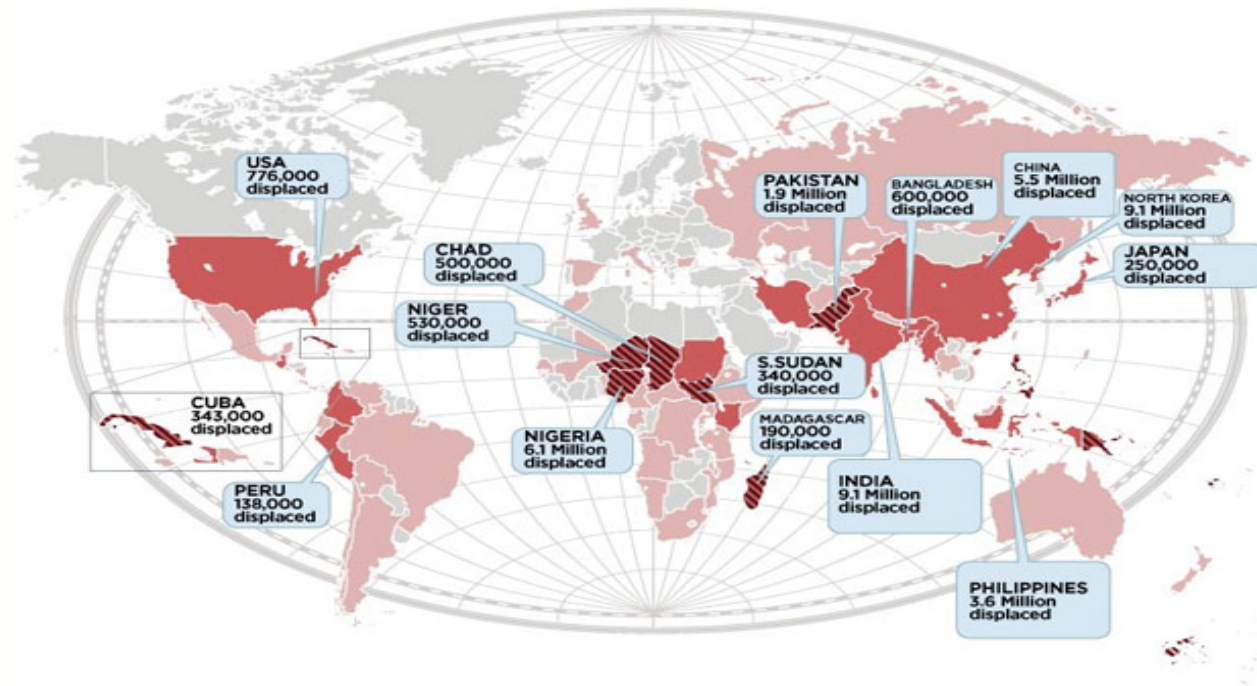
98% OF CLIMATE REFUGEES WERE FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

Source: Global Call for Climate Change, 2013

The European Union and the Mediterranean migrant crisis: a case study

Migration from North Africa to Europe is certainly not new. For years the Mediterranean has been a thoroughfare for migrants trying to reach the shores of Europe. Whilst migrants have started their journeys from many African and Middle Eastern countries, they are typically bound by a common goal to find greater economic and social opportunities, escape persecution and flee conflict. However, there are notable differences in migration patterns over the last few years.

First, there has been a generalised increase of would-be-migrants attempting to reach Europe. Second, there has been a dramatic rise in the departures that travel via the Central Mediterranean route. In fact, the EU Border Agency, Frontex, estimates that between 2013 and 2014 there was a 277% increase (see figure 3). Third, and bearing in mind UNEP's projections for environmental refugees in Africa, the push from Africa is only likely to intensify in the

future.

Figure 3. Increase in migration flows, 2013-2014
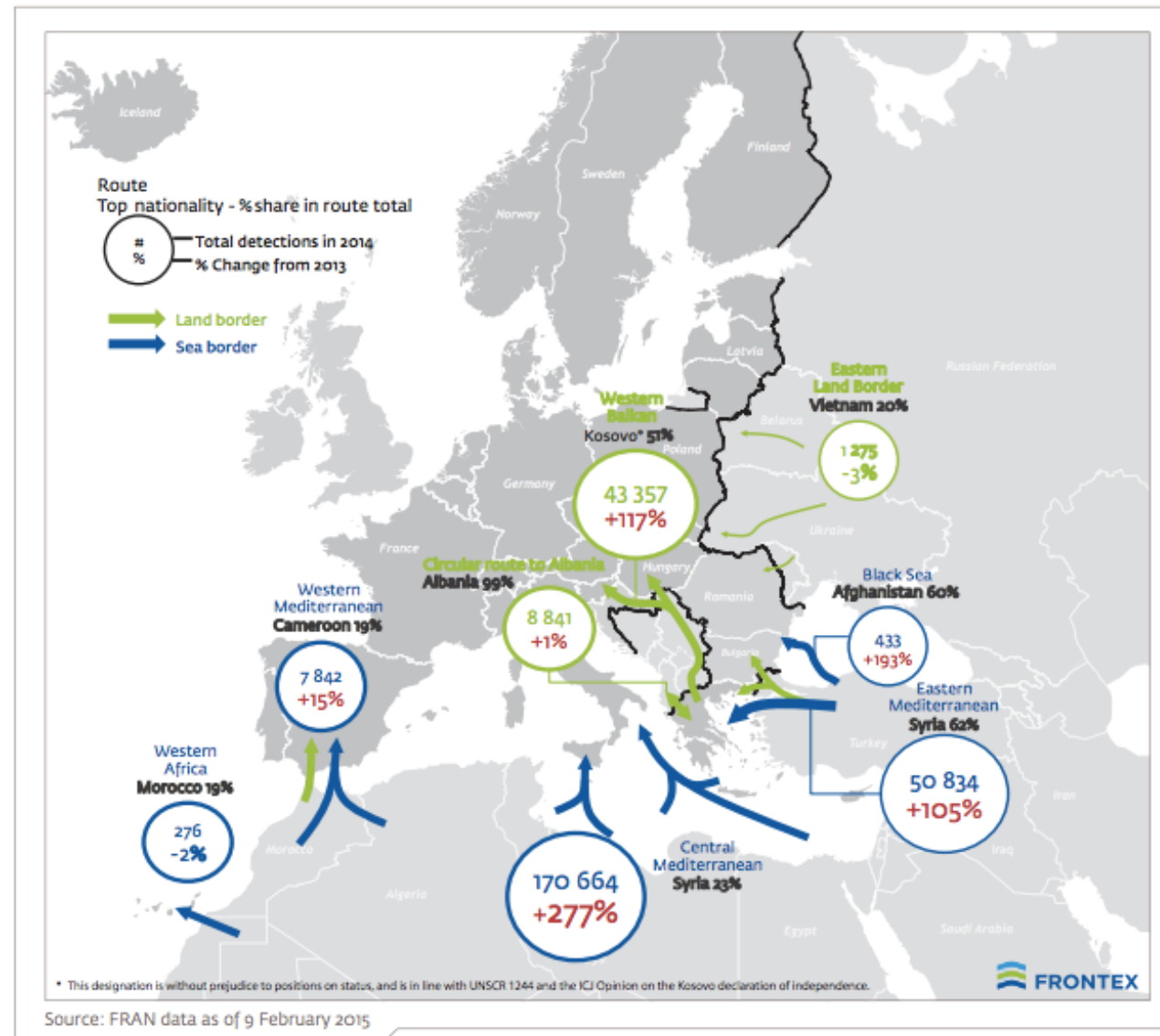
Source: FRAN data in Frontex 2015a

Across the Mediterranean migration is increasing, but nowhere more dramatically than from Libya. From figures 4 and 5, one can see the apparent correlation between migration flows through the Central Mediterranean and the regional instability in North Africa. 2011 was a period of optimism and migration from Libya declined; but it has been exponentially rising since. The majority of the migrants are not Libyan per se. Rather, the greatest number of migrants to date have originated from Syria, Eritrea and Somalia, but there are significant numbers also from Nigeria, Gambia and Mali just to name a few. The instability and chaos that

grips Libya has created a vacuum for armed groups, smugglers, gangsters and human traffickers to operate at will; hence, Libya has become the dominant point of departure for many.

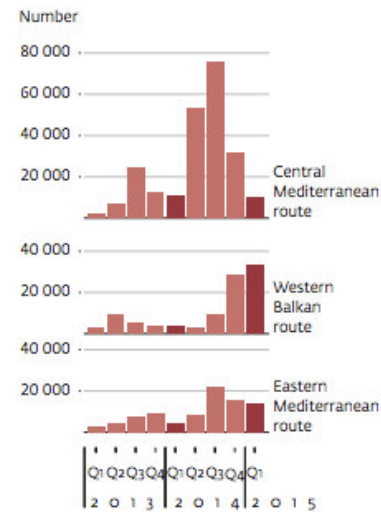Figure 4. Fluctuations in popularity of routes to Europe
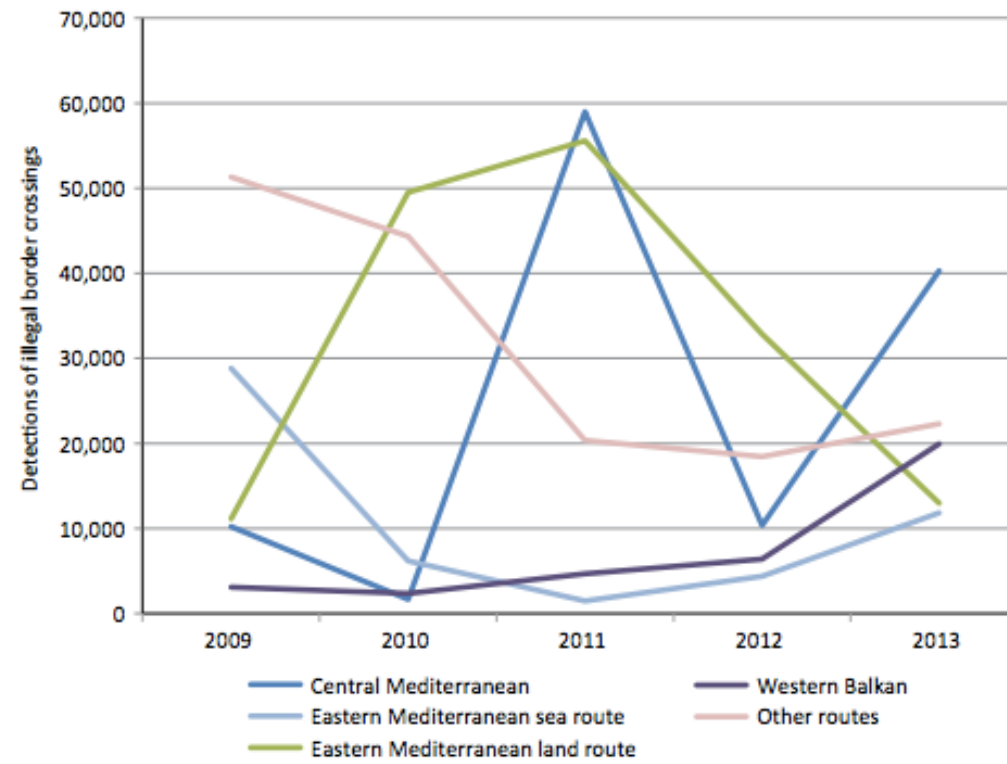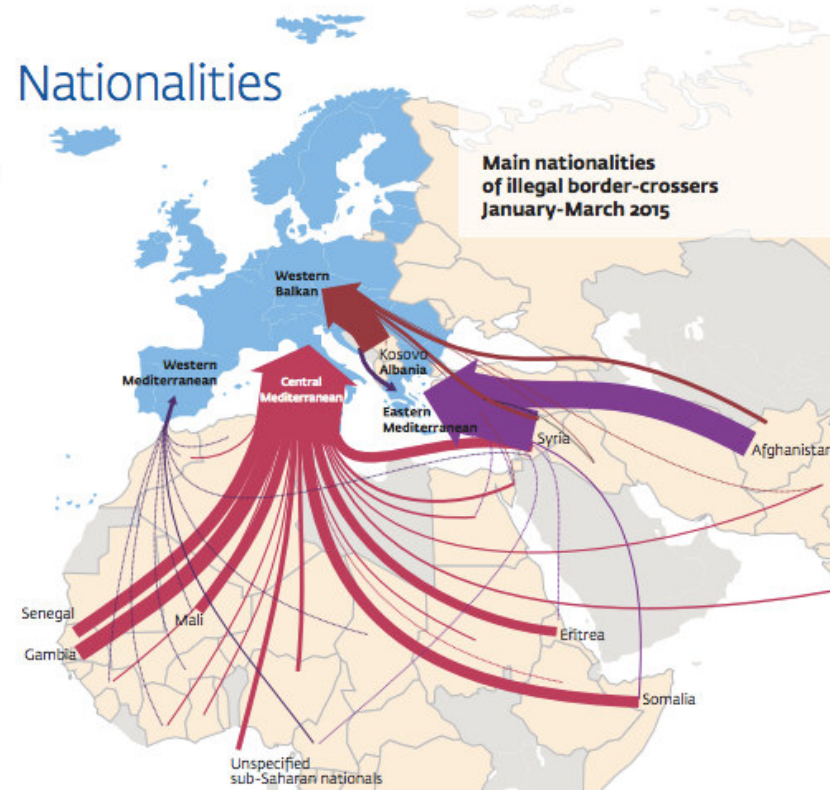

Source: Frontex in IOM 2014

Figure 5. Recent trends in and nationalities of illegal border crossovers

Trend

Nationalities

Source: Frontex 2015b

The current Mediterranean migration crisis is in many respects a symptom of Western policy failures in two key respects. First, the failed intervention in Libya created the instability that led to the Central Mediterranean route becoming so popular as a passage to Europe. Second, the European countries scaled back recovery efforts just at a time when they were needed the most. From late 2013 to November/December 2014 the Italian government ran a relatively effective operation called Mare Nostrum, during which time more than 100,000 migrants were rescued at sea.

However, the operation was costly at €9 million a month, and Italy cancelled it at the end of 2014 claiming that it was unsustainable without more EU financial backing. In place of Mare Nostrum the EU launched the much-scaled back operation Triton. Under Mare Nostrum the Italian Navy carried out search and rescue operations across 27,000 miles of the Mediterranean. Under Triton, the mandate only covered border surveillance within 30 miles of the Italian coast. The EU budget for Triton was only a third of what was spent on Mare Nostrum. To those who paid attention at the time, this was a huge, bright, waving red flag. Human rights groups and migration experts warned, with virtual consensus, that this would lead to a much larger migration crisis with many more deaths in the Mediterranean.

In the face of renewed crisis (and many deaths) the EU initiated discussions about how to address the Mediterranean migrant dilemma. On the 29th of April 2015 the EU Council released its summary of their 28 country talks. The agenda moving forward can be summarised in three points: confront and prevent smugglers and human traffickers from operating; triple the financial resources for EU border operations including the increase of ships and other necessary capacity; and enhance refugee protection. For the latter, this includes implementing a 'Common European Asylum System to ensure the same standards in all Member States, an increase of emergency aid to front-line Member States, and the deployment of support teams to help process asylum claims' (European Council 2015).

This could have gone a long way towards mitigating the escalating tragedy in the Mediterranean. However, it would certainly be a mistake to consider the matter closed and problem solved, even if the EU were able to bring casualties to zero. Upon close inspection of the EU's plan, it is clear that is has continued to be driven primarily by an exclusionary regional interest to manage and control migration into Europe. These are policies that, whilst having a humanitarian veneer, radically exacerbate the burdens of migrants and displaced persons from and in countries like Libya, Syria, Eritrea, and Somalia. Stefan Kessler captures the underlying motive behind the EU's new approach: 'Keep protection-seekers far, far away from Europe so that their deaths don't make the headlines in European media' (in Siegfried 2015). Moreover, a conspicuous absence from this response is the increasing concern with climate-induced displacement and migratory flows. Instead, migration continues to be conceived through a security-specific lens, deliberately missing larger parts of the picture. But it is clear that the policy has failed both in its narrow objectives and in wider terms as migration flows put pressure on multiple entry points into Europe, from Macedonia to Italy, Greece to France. Some of these pressures have now become so great that these entry points are almost ungovernable. It remains to be seen how the interplay between state migration policy and actual migratory movements play out, with some countries, notably Germany and Sweden, currently liberalising their border policies, while others, the UK and Hungary for instance, are resisting such moves.

To be sure, these problems are difficult to resolve. The issue of refugees and displaced peoples is one of the great tests of the international humanitarian ideals of the 21st century, and of the cosmopolitan aspirations of a Europe shaped by ambition to project its soft power and good governance across the world. However, when cosmopolitanism meets state interests under economic pressure, the former is often cast aside. Europe, racked by the Euro crisis, has become a partial, and all too often sorrowful, champion of humanitarian values. There is a paradox wherein many European states are cosmopolitan when it comes to championing ideals, but remain sectarian when it comes to their implementation.

Concluding remarks

The growing crisis of migration, as Pierre Hassner once wrote, "like the problem of genocide, or of the environment, or of nuclear proliferation, can be handled only by going beyond the monopoly of states toward a more universal perspective, such as that of human rights, or a more global one, such as that of a collective interest of the planet" (1998, p.281). As Hassner recognised, the question is whether "an effective synthesis of the global and the local, the universal and the particular" remains within the sphere of the possible (ibid.).

Stepping stones to a universal constitutional order, linking the global and the local, are, I have argued elsewhere, already in place, set down by some of the most important achievements of international law and institution building in the 20th century (see Held 2010). These developments generate a conception of rightful authority tied to human rights and democratic values. In this perspective, political power is legitimate, if, and only if, it upholds these standards. Moreover, the link between territory, sovereignty, and rightful authority, is, in principle, broken since rightful authority can be exercised in many spheres and many levels – local, subnational, national and supranational. Accordingly, citizenship can be envisaged, as it already is in the EU, as equal membership in the diverse, overlapping political communities, which uphold common civic political values and standards. Citizenship, accordingly, is not built on exclusive membership in a single community, but on a set of principles and legal arrangements which link people together in diverse communities which significantly affect them.

Stepping stones, yes. But it remains another big step to extend these principles and arrangements to the stateless. Short term extensions policies in the EU could include: centrally funded reception centres; coordinated legal routes through which migrants can travel safely to seek refuge; robust asylum quotas for all member states; tackling human trafficking; and providing direct aid to refugee camps in the Middle East which are currently home to millions of displaced people. Short term working visas and limited working passes are also among options to ease the crises of the stateless while offering universal hospitality in an era of overlapping communities of fate.

Even if this were granted (and we are a long way from this happening), the problem would only be stemmed – not resolved. Only when people live securely in a world where sustainable development is promoted in all regions, where severe inequalities between countries are tempered and reduced, and where a universal constitutional order guarantees the rights of all peoples, could this begin to be envisaged. Cosmopolitan ideals, but still, far from realities.

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