

*Because something is happening here  
But you don't know what it is  
Do you, Mister Jones?<sup>1</sup>*

The End of Security or „Error 404: Democracy not found“<sup>2</sup>

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The title „Zonen\_prekär“ evokes associations of a space that has become insecure. The term precarious has become popular, in the past 10 years, for describing existential relations with regard to working conditions and income. The development in technology and media over the past 20 years has changed everyone's life. Some professions have become obsolete, while entirely new ones emerged at the same time. The World Wide Web and computerization in the working world have caused an acceleration that condenses and intensifies work processes. Outsourcing and deregulation have catapulted people out of steady working conditions, forcing them into self-employment, where they find themselves on their own at home, confronted only with the computer. Isolation, competitive pressure, excessive workloads, the constant necessity for self-promotion, low fees, an insecure future, and many other associated effects find their expression in this attribute and in its nominal form as the subject precariat.<sup>3</sup> This term is used in a broader sense in the context of the exhibition and it goes beyond the mere description of work and the „individualized individual's lifeworld“ (Ulrich Beck).

The disaster of Fukushima has dramatically brought the world's attention to the uncontrollable risks of nuclear power. As long as there is no international solution in terms of a general abandonment of nuclear power generation, it is downright grotesque to consider protection zones. Many international developments, however, are causing vague fears that lead to irrational behavior and make people cling to the old ways.

Art has a decisive advantage over texts of political and scientific analysis. By using impressive „images“, it is capable of getting to the heart of conditions which language is insufficient to describe. Art needs neither to deduce nor to verify. It is often most powerful when it takes the riskiest ventures, regardless of safeguard, balance, or logic. Artists take the freedom to generate, from the complex, multicausal, and contradictory conditions of our times, impressive, moving, and also multifaceted images and moments that activate trains of thoughts and associations. In doing so, they are often themselves subject to precarious working conditions.<sup>4</sup>

The multicausal reasons for the feeling of uncertainty and fear due to the rapid pace of changes in technology, economy, and world political developments can only be touched on here.

What is specific is the vague, an uneasy feeling, which dangerously frequently and irrationally forges ahead into a defense movement against a subjectively perceived threat and culminates in a political movement. Migrants, who leave their countries of origin due to economic and political conditions and make it to Europe despite the Schengen barrier, face racism here. Representing the unknown, the foreign, „the others“, they are the ones to frequently become the target of aggression. Right-wing populists draw on the difference of „we“ and „you“ and employ it for their own purposes. The presence of people from other nationalities is suddenly reinterpreted as cause for the own precarious situation, job loss, or difficulties with government aid. Populist instigators regard the West and civil society as threatened by immigrants, who want to „take advantage“ of „our“ social welfare system. Bitterest poverty, racism, and anti-gypsyism drive people to Western Europe, giving rise to new, informal labor markets in sectors from services to street trading. Musicians in the street and subways, beggars, vendors of homeless newspapers, car window washers at traffic lights, and prostitutes: all of them are trying to ensure survival. A mere wall or a street corner separates such phenomena as impoverishment, prosperity, and luxury.

A culture struggle has emerged, where populist fearmongering and xenophobic projections do not stop short even of social democrats (Thilo Sarrazin). Already many years ago, the US-American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington painted the warning scenario of the so-called "clash of civilizations" and basically only expressed an arrogance of the West to suppress the fact that fundamentalist tendencies exist in this country (and in the USA) just like in Muslim societies. The Arab democratization processes, which were foreseen by no one in Europe, only illustrate once again Western misconceptions, in which the Arab peoples were exclusively seen as persisting in backward and archaic societies.

„The eternal mantra of European liberals that only anti-Semitism, nationalism, and Islamism are capable of stirring Muslims has been refuted. What we are seeing is a clearly universalistic movement for more freedom and solidarity.“<sup>5</sup>

Islamophobia is a defensive reaction that has reached dangerous extremes and has led to criminalizing the orthodox Muslim dress code in France. In immediate reaction to the act of terrorism, the U.S.-led „coalition of the willing“ started a war against Afghanistan that lasts to this day. Two years later, forged documents and false allegations served for provoking a second war – this time against Iraq. Both wars have caused incomparably more suffering and destroyed more people than all terrorist attacks together.

For a long time after World War II everything seemed to be in order. We had arranged ourselves in a very orderly, bipolar situation: On one side, the NATO states and their anti-communism, on

the other side the Warsaw pact and its anti-capitalism, both separated by the „Iron Curtain“. This divide, visible primarily in Europe, exerted its influence as far as Africa and Latin America. Some states, wanting to belong neither to one nor the other bloc, organized themselves in the Non-Aligned Movement<sup>6</sup>. Until well into the 1980s, many democratic socialists regarded the Yugoslavian model of liberal socialism as a desirable „third way“. There is no more mention of it today, if anyone remembers it at all. Despite the hermetic separation into two antagonistic systems, the two blocs had come close enough to each other in negotiations to conduct talks about disarmament for reducing the risk of nuclear wars on the one hand and to transact mutually satisfactory, lucrative business on the other hand.

The opening of the Hungarian border to Austria on September 11, 1989, set off the gradual disintegration of the Eastern bloc and gave way to a new separatism and to religious fundamentalism. „Really existing socialism“ disappeared, not only from the European stage, within a very short time after the fall of the Wall on November 9, 1989. Since then, the capitalist market has subjected nearly the entire globe.

Everything everywhere is now organized according to supply and demand. Once established social standards, which had been achieved in the shadow of the putative system alternative of „real socialism“ and as a result of many struggles, were attacked shamelessly and blatantly. The necessity for restraint in deregulating employment rights and wage levels had become obsolete overnight. In the course of this social transformation, certain terms were redefined and underwent a radical conversion. Formerly, „energy was released“ in order to use it according to objectives, nowadays workers and employees are „released“, meaning nothing else than that they are being laid off. „Modernization“ and „reform“ no longer imply an improvement of life and working conditions for a majority of the society, but rather indicate an improvement of conditions for accumulating capital within a neoliberal context.

„A devastating terrorist attack on New York and two world order wars later, the wind has changed. Hailed as the victory of the West and the ‚end of history‘, for the one global global community of capital it is either all or nothing; the community will not be divided into mutually isolated zones of center and periphery, of prosperity and poverty, of peace and unrest. Whatever happens somewhere takes effect everywhere at the same time; not only in the media, but in reality, too.“<sup>7</sup>

The „modernization“ of Western societies shifted barriers and resentments. During the phase of bipolarity in the Western hemisphere, old reminiscences against women's and gay liberation were, although not yet completely removed, still substantially reduced by the women's and gay

movements. The struggle for acceptance of same-sex love and partnership has made considerable progress in the past 20 years, particularly as the system has recognized the very new and exceedingly lucrative market potential associated with these issues. The apologists of the capitalist system enthusiastically cheer its liberality as well as capitalism's ability to carry out reform.<sup>8</sup> All is consumption and commodity: Human organs, children, jails, water supply. And indeed, one must concede that capitalism has proven itself far more survivable and flexible than the leftists assumed in the 1970s, even if just recently financial crises are threatening to drag down the economies of an increasing number of states.

From the Masters of War<sup>9</sup> to the Prophets of War<sup>10</sup>

Those who had believed that the world would become more peaceful after the upheavals and revolutions and the end of the Cold War were painfully disabused. Gangs, warlords, and terrorist groups leading asymmetric wars against states, civil war-like conditions on several continents, separatist wars and wars over natural resources such as oil, gas, and water, or over other resources are keeping the world on edge. The West displays an enormous share of hypocrisy in its fight against Islamist terrorism when it positions itself against the legitimate claim for fair distribution in the world. Drone-based war fighting in Afghanistan was intensified under the Nobel Peace Laureate and U.S. President Barack Obama.<sup>11</sup> On his orders, Osama bin Laden was virtually executed in a clandestine cloak-and-dagger operation under violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, instead of subjecting him to due process of law.<sup>12</sup> It was also Obama who reclaimed leadership, thereby confirming any anti-Western reservations on the part of Islamic countries, when he stated: „The time for our leadership is now.“ There is room for suspicion that we have entered a new epoch of warfare over geostrategic targets and resource control. At the same time, the economy of the military industry is at issue, for it has to sell its products and expand its comprehensive system of service, such as Xe Services LLC (formerly Blackwater). International as well as national conditions are in a state of great upheaval, capable of affecting every individual life. Old securities are gone, and prognoses for the future are about as suitable as weather forecasts. In our everyday lives we are moving from one precarious zone to the next with a constant feeling of instability.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Dylan: Ballad of a Thin Man; on *Highway 61 Revisited*, CBS 1965.

<sup>2</sup> A demonstrator's sign in Athens. Cf. Wassilis Aswestopoulos: Spanische Verhältnisse nun auch in Griechenland? In: *Telepolis*, 5/27/2011 ([http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/34/34834/1.html#34834\\_2](http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/34/34834/1.html#34834_2))

<sup>3</sup> Cf.: Geert Loving: Was uns wirklich krank macht. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6/21/2010.

<sup>4</sup> Cf.: Matthias Reichelt: Ist das Bohème oder schon Unterschicht? In: *Kunst + Kultur. Kulturpolitische Zeitschrift von ver.di*, No. 4, 2010, Volume 17, p. 12–13.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Slavoj Žižek in an interview with Lukas Ondreka in the *TAZ* from 5/25/2011.

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<sup>6</sup> A movement, founded largely on the initiative of Tito in 1960, that was directed against colonialism and racism and gave voice to the so-called Third World.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Kurz: *Marx lesen! Die wichtigsten Texte von Karl Marx für das 21. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Eichborn 2006, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the special issue of the *Merkur* „Kapitalismus oder Barbarei“, eds. Karl-Heinz Bohrer and Kurt Scheel, Berlin 2003. This is a collection of essays, which more or less hail capitalism as the economically and ethically superior system.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Dylan: Master of War; on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, CBS 1963.

<sup>10</sup> William Hartung: *Prophets of War. Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex*. New York City: Nation Books 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Wolf Schmidt: Obamas ferngesteuerter Krieg. In: TAZ, 5/28/2011 and 5/29/2011.

<sup>12</sup> In the magazine *Guernica* of 5/6/2011, Noam Chomsky illustrates the criminal act by painting the absurd scenario of Iraqi commandos landing at George W. Bush's compound, assassinating him, and dumping his body in the Atlantic. He rightly adds that Bush's „crimes vastly exceed bin Laden's, and he is not a „suspect“ but uncontroversially the „decider“ who gave the orders...”

[http://www.guernicamag.com/blog/2652/noam\\_chomsky\\_my\\_reaction\\_to\\_os/](http://www.guernicamag.com/blog/2652/noam_chomsky_my_reaction_to_os/)