

# Capitalism And The Generation Of Non-Relational Patchworks



*Kerala flood*

Felix Guattari's *The Three Ecologies* first came out in 1989 (As *Catographies Schizoanalytiques*). I bought a translation in 2011, when the research I was at, on urban processes in the south western India state of Kerala, was yet to wind up. Perhaps the most significant pointers were towards the complex relationships that have always been there but becomes starker in what he calls 'integrated world capitalism'.

The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) had started off in 1972. This was preceded by significant environmental movements across the world in their different orientations from conservation of ecology, wildlife, realization of pollution and rural community interventions. Though Joseph Fourier and Svante Arrhenius by the end of 1800s started talking the science of greenhouse effect, this was yet to be accounted for in the complex relationships that have epochal effects like the anthropocene, when Guattari was at work. The work gets more interesting as the trope of 'network' was yet to have internet as a metaphor and globalization as an idea replete with abstractions that went along, was still to be a key word.

*The Three Ecologies* prompted me, by the completion of my then enquiries, that the complex relationships that manifested in changing phases of urbanisation in

ecological contexts could well be stretched further from. Years hence the work comes back at me, now through some unavoidable vignettes that were less noted before. I quote one here:

*"Now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; in order to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, the mechanosphere and the social and individual Universes of reference, we must learn to think 'transversally'. Just as monstrous and mutant algae invade the lagoon of Venice, so our television screens are populated, saturated, by 'degenerate' images and statements [enonces]. In the field of social ecology, men like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely, like another species of algae, taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he 'redevelops' by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness becoming the equivalent of the dead fish in environmental ecology."*  
[P. 43, The Three Ecologies, 2000]

Specifics like Donald Trump who along with other right-wing figureheads as paradigms of threats to life, degenerate images and statements that characterize these symbols, driving out of people, metaphors from non-human ecology; all of these are too big to miss. But so are the reminders of recognizing connectivity, and the need to think transversally.

Such needs got pressing during specific events of recent times. The ecological disasters from different places, demonetization, or the pandemics can prompt transversal thoughts on relationships. The top-down imagination of ecologies and economies; with the add-on provisions to provide capital to corporates; have already resulted in the biggest socio-ecological disasters in the sub-continent. Urban spaces in the contemporary times, have demonstrated that it is not the virus itself that kills, but it works in synergy with the uneven terrains and absence of care as was evident in the Indian scenario with only a few exceptions. With the coordinates of daily rhythms overwhelmingly set by the virus and its trajectories, it has become even tougher to separate ourselves from the contingent and contexts we are thrown into every day. Risk societies, urban informalities, everyday precarities, techno-social deployments, or surveillance and pastoral orders have scaled our skins and rewired our bodily rhythms, to such an extent that only a transverse thinking and parliament of things (Latour 1991) can get us anywhere.

The Working Group of the Subcommittee on Quaternary Stratigraphy who deliberate on whether the anthropocene, could be an 'official geological era' has not decided which human impact has been the most comprehensive. Many pin the time period on the Columbian exchanges when European colonial process (from 1600s to 1700s) saw a coming together of industrialization, exchange of labour and raw materials, or rapid transformation of ecosystems like in the Americas.

The massive extraction of fossil fuels post world war two has been another significant point of time, and so are the increasing levels of nuclear tests after the 1960s (traced in the presence of increased radionuclide). All this brings in a major obligation in terms of historical, political and philosophical reconceptualisation of life, non-life, and the networks of relationships in terms of human impacts. The accustomed ways of thinking that kept human culture as separate from nature obviously is problematised. Presently, the pandemic order has only reiterated the inextricable links and relationships between hybrid systems that were earlier spliced up into nature and culture.

The need is pressings to dwell upon relationships between hybrids, that events like pandemics or demonetizations, makes visible the complex networks during ecological catastrophes. In a way, events of specific environmental catastrophes, top-down economic decisions, or the mishandling and thus making of a pandemic order; brings to fore what is otherwise unrecognized.

There needs to be a reconceptualisation of humanities and social sciences, as well as other branches of sciences, not just in terms of the ways and politics of humans produce knowledge of humans; but the ontological effects of non-human that relate from within and outside, through time and space (Saldanha and Stark 2016).

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) maps the inhuman systems that subtend the distinct flows, and aggregates of species and relationships. Guattari in *The Three Ecologies* (2001) talks about ecological disequilibrium. He distinguishes the three interwoven ecologies: social, subjective and environmental.

There is the concept of mechanosphere coined by Guattari to understand the intermeshing of mechanical, architectural, and biological processes. This necessitates both the long duree understanding as well as a politically informed understanding of relationships that helps to situate anthropocene not as a passive homogenized context. In addition, this has also facilitated the

complex understandings of bigger histories- with history connected to astronomy, geology, or evolutionary history. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* is an attempt at such conceptualisations.

There are always divergent tendencies about the experience of what is considered the anthropocene. On one hand is an all-encompassing effect, but there are others like the indigenous experiences of inscribing life through the non-human life, meanders of rivers and battles between the human and extra-human. Anthropocene throws open a possibility if understood in Deleuzian reading of strata. This goes beyond constituting understanding in the 'either-or(s)' of anthropocene, capitalocene, plantationocene etc. The field could be understood as a coming together of contradictory tendencies, on strata, based on the varying degrees of relationships as well (Colebrook 2016). So, there could be the human moral agent who discovers one to be a geological force, but also there is a possibility 'man' not being such an agent of change in particular, but rather folded into relationships between human and non-human.

Thinking stratigraphically is also helpful in thinking of a world where on the one hand nothing other than exchange could be dominant and where no other value, except, entering the market is important; on the other hand, there is a coexistence of starkly different political orders globally.

The neoliberal reading of environment, in the environmental governance discourse has a 'service' based understanding of non-human world. The three ecologies of Guattari have a relational view with co-implications. Several modes of production have been integrated, totalized into a totalitarian capitalist functioning. Capitalist system is characterised most by neutralizing existential refrains and by a general equivalence, flattens value and subsumes everything in hegemony. One of the responses to climate change has been to support micro economic ventures that are non-standard in small states, which is much easier done than making any alteration in major carbon generations in big economies and powerful states (Bignall et al 2016).

Equivalence is evidently a hegemonic exercise. The arbitrary equivalences created in carbon trade, carbon market as well as similar system sustaining algorithms, and thereby sustainable development, now stands exposed. In fact, CO<sub>2</sub> has now become the fetish or 'thing' around which our environmental aspirations have galvanised (Swyngedouw 2018). The kind of reification has been

set in motion ever since the Kyoto protocol, through off setting. There has not been an institutional reflection on finance capital mediated reifications and fetishizations as one moved from Paris to COP 26 UN Climate Conference at Glasgow.

The reification of complex processes to a thing-like object-cause in the form of a socio-chemical compound around which our environmental desires crystallize is, furthermore, inscribed with a particular social meaning and function through its enrolment as commodity in the processes of capital circulation and market exchange (Bumpus and Liverman, 2008; Liverman, 2009). The commodification of CO<sub>2</sub> - primarily via the Kyoto protocol and various offsetting schemes - in turn, has triggered a rapidly growing financialized market in greenhouse gas commodities.

Further, ecology as 'resource management' seeks to bring into focus stable stock levels, maximum environmental utility and emphasise a certain type of resilience perceived in terms of species imagined to have a discrete existence. The latter does not take a relational point of view.

In addition, in the philosophy of maximum utility, capitalist value, and enforced equivalence; resilience is never a matter of choice. Rather it is an effect of 'there being no alternative'.

Different species, including humans, enter into an affective understanding (knowledge) of ecologies they are constitutive of and gain a perspective in relationship to each other. This is unlike discrete and individualistic imaginations that inform ideas of imposed equivalence.

Perspectives rather 'emerge' in the value laden- political contexts. One of the examples of formal recognition given to such perspectival knowledge is the agreement signed by south Australian government with Ngarrindjeri authorities in order to protect and engage with indigenous knowledge. The Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreements (KNYA) recognises the authority of certain forms of knowledge within a nation- state jurisdiction. This de- facto recognition (p: 468-469, Rigney et al 2008) is not yet de jure in the constitutional order. But this is significant in terms of exclusion of large number of people in the language of exception in the Special Economic Zones and Urban impositions. There is of course the fact that the reference is still to human species and that the recognition given is only de facto.

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## **Italy Has A Far-Right Government, But The Real Danger Of Fascism**

# Exists In The US



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At the present historical juncture, the danger of European societies becoming fascist is far less than the one facing the United States.

The victory of Giorgia Meloni's far-right coalition in Italy's election is yet the starkest evidence of the dramatic consequences that the neoliberal policies of the European Union (EU) are having on the member states. Indeed, the return of old demons in Italy and the spread of far-right movements and parties across Europe are directly linked to the reactionary economic dogmas and shallow integration strategies pursued by the euro masters in Brussels and Frankfurt.

Let me explain.

Following the end of World War II, certain visionary leaders in France and Germany proceeded with the creation of structures and institutions beyond the nation-state to ensure that Europeans would finally put an end to their favorite pastime: bloody warfare. This was the logic behind the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), which was founded by the [Treaty of Rome](#) in 1957. It was a rather noble undertaking, and one that managed to build solid alliances among historical enemies that have lasted longer than any other time in European history, although other factors, such as the Cold War, played a significant role in the long period of peace that ensued in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

However, the EEC evolved over time into something beyond a regional trade regime with respect for democracy, national sovereignty and social rights. It was transformed into a corporate entity driven by the relentless desire to subjugate labor to the whims of capital and to impose "economic efficiency" in the management of the welfare state through the gradual transfer of power from the demos to non-elected officials in Brussels. Ultimately, this vision was materialized with the [Maastricht Treaty](#) in 1992, the foundation treaty of the European Union. The Maastricht Treaty also paved the way for the creation of a single currency,

but without putting into place a federal system of government.

In this sense, rather than being unique, the EU is in fact an oddity—a Frankenstein-like creation. With the adoption of a single currency, in particular, the space for national economic policymaking was severely constrained and, in the absence of a federal government, austerity became almost by default, an integral component of the new European political economy, providing a perfect match to labor flexibility and other anti-social reform measures—privatization, the commodification of health and education, pension reform—all of which are geared toward the marketization of society. Full employment, which prior to the creation of the EU political parties of all persuasion took seriously, was ditched in favor of flexible labor markets and equality was left to the “logic” of the market forces themselves.

The so-called “flawed” architecture of the EU was not due to oversight or technical errors. It stemmed from the very premises of the fundamental neoliberal dogmas that guided the mindset of the European economic elites and their corporate and financial allies. European policymakers had become obsessed with the belief that the critical variables for growth were to be found in trade openness and competition, deep financial integration, and the removal of all restrictions on capital movements. They understood very well that these were the conditions that would pave the way to more efficient business operations, lower unit labor costs, and increase profit margins for Europe’s multinational corporations.

Indeed, the Europeanization process that has been unleashed since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty is completely alien to the traditional vision of a social and democratic Europe, creating in the process fertile soil for the growth of authoritarian leaders who promise to take power away from the global elites, re-establish the supremacy of the nation-state, and return to the traditional social order in which national homogeneity and family values reign supreme.

It is due to the unsettling effects of the EU’s neoliberal policies that voters on the continent have shifted dramatically to the right, even in traditionally social democratic nations like Sweden and Finland, especially since the socialist and social-democratic parties have abandoned any pretext of caring about the working class and have in fact been carrying out the mission of a neoliberal EU.

The euro crisis of 2010 brought to surface all the structural weakness of the EU



and intensified the realignment of European voters over both social and cultural issues, with conservative and outright reactionary political parties and movements gaining the upper hand virtually throughout the continent, with Greece being a rare exception. But even in the land that founded democracy, the experiment with a “leftist” government was short-lived after [Syriza](#) engaged in a gigantic betrayal of the clear mandate that it had to shred into pieces the bailout agreements and do away with EU’s sadistic austerity measures.

The electoral victory of Brothers of Italy, led by Giorgia Meloni, a longtime admirer of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, comes therefore as no surprise. It is the price representative democracies are paying for allowing themselves to be controlled by outside forces with little if any political legitimacy. Indeed, lest we forget, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty was one of the most undemocratic procedures in the history of modern Europe. It was signed by presidents and prime ministers without any popular input, let alone consent.

Make no mistake about it. It is the undemocratic nature and the neoliberal policies of the European Union that are responsible for the revival of European fascism. And it is not just in Italy that the far-right has come to power. In Spain, the far-right also holds a share of power. Moreover, today’s conservatives in Europe have no objection working with the far-right in order to come to power. The cabinet of the current conservative government in Greece has scores of ministers who have had close ideological and political ties with the far-right.

Still, at the present historical juncture, the danger of European societies becoming fascist is far less than the one facing the United States. Europe’s multiparty systems make it difficult for any given party to gain clear majority support, thus political parties have to work in a coalition. Giorgia Meloni’s far-right Brothers of Italy won 26 percent of the vote, but both the anti-immigration League Party of Matteo Salvini and the right-wing Forza Italia party of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi secured far less votes than they did in 2018. Italy’s far-right coalition did secure a clear majority in parliament but with less than 44 percent of the popular vote.

In the light of this and given that Italy will remain a member of the EU and of the eurozone, one should not expect to see radical changes in the way the new government will conduct itself on both the domestic and international fronts. Meloni has already indicated that her government will rule for all Italians. In

practical terms, what this means is that her government will seek to ingratiate itself with both the business class and average citizens. According to the joint program of the coalition partners, Meloni's government will reduce taxes for business, families, and the self-employed alike, and use a greater portion of the \$200 billion euros that has been allotted to Italy by the EU's recovery plan in the wake of the Covid pandemic to support social programs. Unlike the far-right in the U.S., Europe's far-right parties favor certain aspects of the social state.

On the foreign policy front, Meloni's government will surely remain an obedient servant to EU rules and regulations, while making occasional noises about EU reform, will support NATO and its policies towards Ukraine, while backing initiatives for a peaceful solution to the conflict, but will most likely impose stricter border controls as immigration was a big component of Meloni's campaign.

Italy's far-right coalition has also said that it will fight against discrimination, including anti-Semitism, but will take a hard stance on Muslim fundamentalism.

There is nothing in the above policies that distinguishes Meloni's far-right government from the conservative governments in place today in other European countries.

Indeed, it's been rumored that outgoing prime minister Mario Draghi, who had also served as European Central Bank President, personally vouched for Giorgia Meloni to the euro masters. This is quite possible, and, in fact, it is highly unlikely that Italy's new prime minister will rock the boat. If she does, one of the coalition partners (most probably Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia) will most likely walk away and her government will collapse.

In this regard, [the celebrations on the part of the Trumpist camp](#) in the U.S. for the election of Giorgia Meloni may prove to be premature. Italy's far-right government does represent a clear setback for social and political progress, but the neo-fascist vision that inspires today's GOP isn't about to take form or shape in Italy. Both domestic (bureaucracy, organized labor, left-wing parties) and external (EU) constraints will ensure that this doesn't happen.

Are we sure that such constraints exist in the "land of the free and the home of the brave" to prevent far-right extremism from destroying what is left of American democracy?

Source:

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/09/30/italy-has-far-right-government-real-danger-fascism-exists-us>

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