RE-CITY

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INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

"RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY, INTERACTION AND BELONGING"

SESSION WITH **NIRA YUVAL DAVIS.**

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Equality, Governability, and Belonging During a Pandemic

Guest Speaker: Nira Yuval-Davis, Emeritus Professor and Honorary Directors of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) at the University of East London

Contents

This document summarises a debate held with Prof. Nira Yuval-Davis in the *For an Intercultural Future* cycle of public lectures forming part of the Re-City project. Each one consists of a public lecture and a seminar with scholars drawn from the academic world in Spain. The activities were held on line in June 2020 [given the limitations imposed by the pandemic]. The contents in this summary follow a thematic order rather than that taken by Prof. Yuval-Davis. Re-City is a project carried out by Fundació Catalunya Europa [Catalonia-Europe Foundation] in collaboration with the Catalan Government, Barcelona's Metropolitan Area, Barcelona City Council, "la Caixa" [bank] and The Club of Rome. "For an Inter-cultural Future" is the third challenge in the Re-City project. The two previous challenges were: "Fighting Inequality" and "Facing up to Climate Change".

Biography

Yuval-Davis is a renowned Sociologist who is well-versed in subjects such as nationalism, citizenship, identity, and the politics of belonging, gender relations, racism, and fundamentalism. She was awarded a PhD in Sociology in 1979 by Sussex University (UK), and in 2003 began working at the **University of East London (UEL)**, where she is Emeritus Professor and **Honorary Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB)[1]**. In the teaching field, Yuval-Davis has been a Visiting Professor at sundry universities, including Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) [אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב], Tel Aviv University (TAU) [אוּנִיבֶרְסִיטַת תֵּל-אָבִיב] (Israel), and Umeå Universitet (Sweden). Since 2014, she has also been Honorary Professor at Aalborg Universitet (AAU) (Denmark).

In the research field, she was President of the 05 Research Committee (on Racism, Nationalism, Native Peoples, and Ethnic Relations) at the *International Sociological Association*, and a member of its Standing Committee. One should also highlight her participation in two Sociology Research Panels, held in The United Kingdom: (1) the national *Research Assessment Exercise* (RAE) in 2008; (2) the national *Research Excellence Framework* (REF) in 2014. In addition, she is also a founding member of the organisation *Women Against Fundamentalism* and the international research network *Women in Militarised Conflict Zones*. She has been a consultant to sundry NGOs and Human Rights organisations, such as PNUD, and was *Special Rapporteur* on Violence Against Women for the UN and Amnesty International, among other bodies[2].

Yuval-Davis' studies have had a big impact on the academic community and have been translated into over ten languages. In 2018, she received the International Sociology Association Award for Excellence in Research and Practice. Among her many publications throughout her career, one might highlight the following four works: (1) ***Everyday Bordering, Belonging and the Reorientation of British Immigrant Legislation* (2017)**, a paper written by N. Yuval-Davis, G. Wemyss, and K. Cassidy which argued that 'everyday bordering' has become a key control technology both in terms of social diversity and in discourses on diversity, threatening peaceful co-existence in plural societies by changing what citizenship means; (2) ***Bordering* (2019)**, a book also written by N. Yuval-Davis, G. Wemyss, and K. Cassidy which systematically explores the practices and processes that still define State bordering, and the role it plays in national and global governance. Based on ground-breaking research, the study takes an approach that goes beyond that traditionally undertaken in the migration and racism fields, showing how 'bordering' affects all members of society, not just those at its fringes; (3) ***The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (2011)**, a book that takes into account hegemonic forms of citizenship and nationalism that have tended to dominate recent social and political history. In this work, Yuval-Davis discusses contemporary political projects and alternatives for 'belonging' that are built upon religious beliefs, cosmopolitanism, and the 'Healing Ethics' advocated by Feminism; (4) ***Racism,***

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[1] Nira Yuval-Davis. (2020). Professor Nira Yuval-Davis - University of East London (UEL). Accessed 4th of February 2020 from: https://www.uel.ac.uk/staff/y/nira-yuval-davis

[2] Nira Yuval-Davis. (2017). Nira Yuval-Davis. Accessed 4th February 2020 from: https://theconversation.com/profiles/nira-yuval-davis-302905

***cosmopolitanism and contemporary politics of belonging* (2005)**, a paper that explores some aspects of the relationship between cosmopolitanism, and issues of belonging and exclusion. Cosmopolitanism is often put over as the antithesis of racism insofar as it avoids nationalism and/or any other kind of identity and ideology. Yet Yuval-Davis argues that the key problem posed by cosmopolitanism is the same as that with any other universalist approach, namely that it avoids issues of differences and power and thus ends up thoroughly consolidating forms of exclusion based upon origin (or in the loose sense used in English, of 'race'), whether consciously or not.

Summary

"Equality, Governability, and Belonging During a Pandemic" was the title of the fifth session in the *For an Inter-Cultural Future* cycle. It was planned that the session would be presence-based but the COVID-19 pandemic meant that it had to be held online instead and the contents altered to take account of the new format. The session was led by Nira Yuval-Davis, who has a PhD in Sociology and is Emeritus Professor at The University of East London. The moderator was Silvia Carrasco, who has a PhD in Anthropology, and is Professor in the same subject at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). The session focused on explaining how the pandemic has exacerbated the re-emergence of the multi-faceted problems besetting global Neo-Liberalism. At the same time, the session also explored the trends that were already transforming Nation-States and societies before the crisis but to which COVID-19 has given wings.

The vulnerability and the uncertainty that assail our societies now is the result of trends that have been brewing since the advent of the Neo-Liberal paradigm. The key tenet of Neo-Liberalism is that communities and co-operation mean little because society as a whole works through each individual competitively pursuing his own goals. This line of argument is the one that now shapes and runs our societies. Yet as time goes by, such an approach spawns contradictions as the supposed benefits of this approach fail to materialise. Specifically, it gives rise to three issues that have only been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic: (1) Existing inequalities spread and are deepened; (2) Governments' failure to serve citizens' needs are becoming ever more apparent; (3) Citizens feel ever more discontent, abandoned, and powerless, and ever less politically represented.

In the context of this crisis, governments' management of these issues have a direct bearing on the success or failure of etheir policies for dealing with the pandemic. Thus governments face issues of governability and belonging from two opposing standpoints. On the one hand, there is the inclusive option taken by Portugal, which has sought to redress the inequalities and vulnerabilities found among certain sectors of the population. It has done so by earmarking social benefits for both nationals and migrants in equal measure. By contrast, in The United Kingdom and The United States, politicians have fielded arguments and practices to strengthen national borders and to earmark resources solely for those whom they consider to be citizens. Indeed, Yuval-Davis stressed that

everyday bordering[3] is the kind of Nation-State response that is becoming commoner after the latest, most transformative crises. This response in turn is driving inequalities, pushing many people to the fringes of society. The COVID-19 crisis gives a further twist to 'bordering' practices by driving unprecedented surveillance of the population. Yuval, Noah Harari and many other experts warn of the threat this process poses to democracy in which governments help private firms amass personal data on citizens and vastly them in the process.

Given all these changes, citizens come up with grass-roots measures to resist such government trends. Yet it is also true that arguments appealing to national identities and 'belonging' win over many citizens, making it easy for governments to justify 'everyday bordering' practices. This is because governments are adept at playing on citizens' feelings of vulnerability and precariousness. This helps explain why the Far Right is on the rise — a trend that also undermines democracy. Even so, a fair chunk of society opposes these trends, demanding solidarity, co-operation, and mutual aid, thus putting people first and foremost. This opposition takes many forms, ranging from world-wide anti-racist demonstrations to the emergence of mutual-aid local communities during the pandemic. Yuval-Davis believes that such cross-cutting solidarity is vital for bringing about the kind of sustainable change needed to put an end to the Neo-Liberal model.

The challenges we face will shape Mankind's future. That is why the solutions we come up with must be holistic ones that are both inter-related and inter-sectional. In other words, they must prize what we share and what unites us as a society. They must respect and dignify people without blinding them to the fact that they are subject to different forms of inequality and power.

Liberalism's multi-faceted crises: The COVID-19 pandemic as the latest expression of today's world

Right now, we are living through strange times that are plagued by uncertainties. While we have no idea about how to plan the future, we do know that life will never go back to being the way it was before the pandemic. This makes us all feel very vulnerable. Things started going awry with the outbreak of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic is now withering Neo-Liberalism itself, whose roots go back to the 1970s. The ideology spread greatly in the 1980s along with globalisation in the second half of the 20th Century. Since then, governments around the world have spread the gospel of minimum State intervention, conveniently assuming that individuals are wholly responsible for their lives, success or failure, and their welfare. They have favoured competition over co-operation. The end result is ever worsening social and economic outcomes.

Yet citizens (who initially heeded Neo-Liberalism's siren-song) now grow restive as they see nothing of the promised benefits as their living standards slide. This is the state of affairs described in Wendy Brown's book *In the ruins of Neoliberalism: The rise of antidemocratic politics in The West* (2019). In

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[3] Academic translation proposed by Carrasco within the framework of the report by Catalonia's School of Public Administration (EDPC), titled *Vers una identitat col·lectiva pluricultural* [Towards a Collective Pluri-cultural Identity] (2020), directed by Jordi Pàmies.

it, she holds that the Neo-Liberal world has led to the very reverse of what was sought, namely the separation of the political and economic spheres. Brown states this situation has led to dire outcomes for the population at large. This is an argument shared by Yuval-Davis, who stresses the following three dimensions: (1) a crisis of inequalities; (2) a crisis of governability among Nation-States; (3) a crisis in the governability of society itself. All three crises have been worsened by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The crisis of inequalities

According to Yuval-Davis, social and economic inequalities have surged around the world as the result of de-regulation, privatisation policies, and public sector cuts. This applies both within countries and among nations. At first, the phenomenon was largely confined to the world's poorer 'South' but the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic has brutally exposed its consequences for the rich 'North' too. Thus all governments' efforts to swiftly deal with the disease's spread have failed to stem a tide of death, poverty, and marginalisation. Paradigmatic examples of this mis-management can be seen in Donald Trump's government in The United States and in Boris Johnson's government in The United Kingdom. Both have been forced to spend huge sums of public money to maintain services that had been cut to the bone in the past. This, says Yuval-Davis, is like trying to put a sticking plaster on a gaping wound.

The problem is that inequalities are many-faceted and affect people in many ways, depending on various factors including: gender; race; immigration status; where they live; the country; the kinds of policies applied; population type; environmental factors, and so forth. To explain this, she cited the renowned Sociologist Göran Therborn, who in a paper titled *The Killing Fields of Inequality* (2012) delved into social inequalities, splitting them into three kinds: vital; existential; resource-based. These categories are useful during the pandemic, especially at the political and analytical levels. For instance, most of the key workers who have died were Black or belonged to other minority ethnic groups, and those who worked in Homes for The Elderly. Thus **vital inequalities** refer to the real chances of people living healthy lives. Clearly, those groups with underlying health conditions and/or who have certain other traits have died in much greater numbers. **Existential inequalities** cover those skills people need to live fulfilling social and material lives and to have a sense of belonging. In this respect, the pandemic has widened the gap between: (1) those who can work remotely, stay at home and get paid, on the one hand, and (2) those who have risked their health to go to work, or have lost their jobs because they cannot work remotely. Then there is **resource inequality**, which means access to economic and cultural resources, and other kinds of social capital. In this respect, those who live with the rest of their family in a small flat or room find it that much harder to cope with the pandemic and its consequences. Months of confinement means that these people suffer higher levels of stress and worry than more fortunate souls.

The crisis in nations' governability

Neo-Liberalism has also caused many changes in the internal governance of States. One can see a radical shift in the relative power between States, and especially in their financial resources on the one side, and those of multinational corporations on the other. These companies have been given

free rein. As a result, governments, instead of representing citizens' interests, have effectively been 'captured' by multinationals. Governments haggle with these firms to stop them packing up and taking their money and jobs somewhere else. In the aftermath of the 2008 GFC, the link between the public and private economic interests has proven stronger than ever. This is because there was no way to 'solve' the crisis other than to use taxpayers' money to bail out private companies.

Yuval-Davis noted the reflections of the Sociologist and Economist Saskia Sassen in her paper *Globalisation, The State and the democratic deficit* (2007). Sassen stated that the growing wave of privatisation has meant that governments are no longer capable (or even willing) to represent the citizens who vote for them. Furthermore, they have undermined the system of political checks and balances to the point where parliaments are little more than rubber stamps. This trend was already clear in many nations before the pandemic, with The Executive conducting negotiations and taking the major decisions while Parliament steadily lost power, being relegated to a secondary role or simply losing its control and oversight functions.

All of the foregoing shows that governments have failed to properly prepare for the pandemic by protecting their citizens. Indeed, many governments have acted irresponsibly by showering funds on private firms instead of developing the public services and resources needed. This ties in with the roll-back of democratic rights — a trend aided and abetted by companies working on high-tech mass surveillance and tracking.

The crisis of governmentality *vis-à-vis* citizens and others

As a result of the two earlier crises, people now see that Neo-Liberalism's promises are broken ones. Inequalities are widening and deepening and governments fall ever shorter when it comes to serving citizens' interests. This is why folk feel ever less represented, and ever more angry and powerless to shape events.

The governability crisis has deepened during the pandemic with two opposing models at work. On the one hand, there is growing resistance to debate and social practices fostering 'independence' and 'belonging'. Such discourse and measures are based on the State's notions of who belongs in society and who should access its benefits and resources. These government policies put thousands of people at risk worldwide because they doom many to eking out miserable lives in limbo. A case in point is The United Kingdom's post-Brexit Immigration Act[4], which will come into force on the 1st of January 2021[5]. The Bill has received initial parliamentary approval. It will put an end to 'free movement' [as defined by the EU] as part of the shift towards a productive British economy based on a skilled, highly-paid workforce, shutting out low-skilled would-be immigrants. On the other hand, there are countries such as The Republic of Ireland and Portugal which have sought more inclusive, effective solutions for the population at large. During the pandemic, the latter two countries have taken everyone into account — nationals and migrants — as fully-fledged members of society with a

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[4] O'Carroll, L. (2020). Immigration rules post-Brexit could fuel modern slavery, say charities. Accessed 20th June 2020, de: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/21/immigration-rules-post-brexit-could-fuel-modern-slavery-say-charities

[5] MPs give initial backing to Immigration Bill. (2020). Accessed 20th June 2020 from: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-52701843

right to social benefits. They took this approach to avoid certain groups being ruined and pushed to the fringes of society.

Yuval-Davis stated that it was clear which nations had fewer problems of governability and in which lock-down and control of the virus had been most effective.

Responses to the crisis: waning democracy and resistance movements

According to Yuval-Davis, new responses have emerged during the latest, most transformational crises. These responses have implications for national and global governance. The author delved into this aspect in greater depth in *Bordering* (2019), explaining how these responses are both top-down and down-up. In governments' case, one can see a steady rise in everyday bordering, with widening grey areas as a result. In citizens' case, this not only leads to less trust in government but also less sense of belonging to society. The upshot is a crisis in governability with a widening gap between the ruling class and the people, leading the latter to organise. Specifically, one can see two opposing trends during the pandemic. On the one hand, there is the rise of 'nativist' Populist movements that are striving to roll back society's democratic advances. On the other hand, grass-roots movements and mutual-aid groups have sprung to life to resist these trends.

'Everyday bordering' and the widening of 'grey areas'

In *Bordering* (2019), the authors analyse the paradoxical situation under Neo-Liberalism whereby borders are strengthening both among and within nations. These borders include everything from consulates to everyday spaces. Railway stations and workplaces are examples of the latter. These borders are not only expressed through static frontiers but also through certain procedures. Both have been tightened up to levels scarcely imaginable just a few years ago. Here, certain practices foster exclusion, boosting inequalities and marginalisation — something that the pandemic has only worsened.

When it comes to enforcing physical borders, it is becoming ever clearer that the notion of 'free movement' has never held for most people. It is the money and skills demanded by the Neo-Liberal economy that open doors, rendering borders meaningless. The lucky few can cross them at will. For them, the frontiers are invisible. For many, frontiers are both visible and closed — especially for people from the global 'South'. Thus, at the beginning of the pandemic one could clearly see how these factors worked at both ends of society. At the top end, there were multi-millionaires jetting around the world without let or hindrance. At the bottom end, there were fruit-pickers flown in from Eastern Europe to help keep the population fed. Although it is too early to forecast how this beefing up of borders will work out in the long run, one can say that we shall not go back to what passed for 'normal' before the pandemic.

Regarding exclusionary practices, Yuval-Davis stressed that 'unskilled workers' are the ones who come off worst in today's global economy. Yet it has been precisely these who have proven to be key

workers during the pandemic. Without them, basic services would have ground to a halt. Yet at the same time, the strengthening of borders to keep out migrants has led to many being trapped in limbo, living in grey areas beyond the protection of modern States. These people have no chance of leading normal lives because they are denied basic political, civil, and social rights.

The widening of these 'grey areas' is not socially neutral. That is because certain groups from given areas are the most likely to end up in them. These groups' experience varies greatly depending on their relative socio-economic position. The proposed post-Brexit[6] Immigration Act exemplifies all these issues. As noted earlier, it welcomes highly-qualified workers but lessens protection for workers who are classed as low-skilled. The latter have no right to a visa or permanent residence in The United Kingdom. This choice may prove a mistake in a country whose labour market is highly dependent on foreign workers, especially in the National Health Service (NHS).

Last but not least, these 'everyday bordering' practices cannot be understood (especially in the context of the pandemic) without reference to the role technology is playing in undermining democracy. The giant strides being made in the surveillance industry (aided and abetted by many governments) pose an unprecedented threat to our societies. Such technology seeks to watch and punish anyone 'breaking the rules'. Governments avidly seek surveillance technologies and apps, as well as personal details from data-mining companies (such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon). As a result, these firms have become rich beyond the dreams of Croesus and powerful forces in their own right. The list of governments bent on harnessing technology to control their citizens is a long one. It not only includes the likes of Israel, China, Russia, and Singapore but also many European governments. Yuval-Davis and Noah Harari speculated that the pandemic is a golden opportunity to request our biometric data, which later could be used to learn more about our habits and thus control our lives[7]. It is something of a paradox that in a globalised world, physical barriers are becoming ever less important yet at the same time, technology makes 'everyday bordering' increasingly effective.

The rise of home-grown Populist movements

Throughout the world, everyday bordering practices have been strengthened by the rise of 'nativist' Populist movements that seek to replace citizenship with nationalism as the basis for society. The Populists argue that the only way to 'get back control' over government and society is by strengthening the State's borders to keep out foreigners and to cut off their access to the nation's resources. Such discourses have been heard in many countries in which 'authoritarian' governments have come to power, such as in The United Kingdom and in The United States (sic), and in Brazil. Here, the reaction was to blame others for all the ills caused by the pandemic. At the same time, these governments did not treat everyone's lives of being of equal value, with certain groups being treated worse or overlooked. This helps explain why a higher percentage of them have died than in the population at large.

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[6] O'Carroll, L. (2020). Immigration rules post-Brexit could fuel modern slavery, say charities. Accessed the 20th June 2020, de: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/21/immigration-rules-post-brexit-could-fuel-modern-slavery-say-charities

[7] Harari, Y. (2020). 'Coronavirus may usher in new era of surveillance'. Accessed 7th July 2020 from: https://www.bbc.com/news/av/technology-52441339/yuval-noah-harari-covid-19-may-bring-new-surveillance-era

Huge challenges are posed by the growth of such attitudes. This is why we need to come up with compelling counter-discourses as a matter of urgency, and doing so would help build alternative policies to foster a sense of belonging. Right now, there are rising worries over the slide in civil and political rights during the pandemic, and on the growing dependence on surveillance technology to keep tabs on citizens' movements. It is particularly worrying that any attempt to protect one's rights and privacy is systematically de-legitimised by 'the powers that be'. Meanwhile, all those living in 'grey areas' find themselves ever more excluded from State Aid and ordinary citizens. This dire state of affairs stems from sundry kinds of exclusion, and the rolling back or suspension of democracy. Yet in the ultimate analysis, it will also shape Mankind's future because it concerns the relationship between States, the economy, and the environment.

The emergence of solidarity and mutual-aid groups

It is said that every cloud has a silver lining. Yuval-Davis argued that a burgeoning collective awareness of the injustices stemming from the crisis is one of them. The pandemic has given rise to the growth of inclusive solidarity movements, worldwide mass demonstrations against racism, the springing up of mutual-aid groups in communities, and local initiatives for helping those most in need. One can also see more progressive forms of resistance. Yet if these forces are to become powerful enough to counter Neo-Liberalism, they need to create cross-cutting solidarity that drives sustainable change. This means appealing to common values and overcoming barriers and borders yet without overlooking the workings of various forms of inequality and power. Yuval-Davis considered that a clear example of best practice in this regard was the kind of co-operation she felt was to found among grassroots social movements and parties in Spain.

Challenges and solutions

Given that there will be no return to pre-pandemic 'normality' Yuval-Davis took a highly critical view of the present and future. She argued that huge challenges face society. These not only bear on sundry forms of exclusion and the roll-back/suspension of democracy but are also broader in scope, interlinking relationships among States, economic development, environmental protection, and Mankind's future. She cited Arundhati Roy, the Indian writer and activist, to argue that the pandemic was like an X-Ray machine, revealing all the cracks and weaknesses in the sub-systems underpinning States and contemporary societies. At the same time, the pandemic has revealed the need to place people at society's core so that all lives matter.

Is the pandemic Neo-Liberalism's death knell?

Given the foregoing, it came as little surprise that Yuval-Davis raised the question as to whether the pandemic would mark the beginning of the end for Neo-Liberalism's global hegemony. Although she felt that it was too early to say one way or the other, she believed that cracks have opened up in the edifice that should be exploited to work transformational change. This ambivalence was captured

through the Gramscian concept of "**Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will[8]**", for which the Palestinian-Israeli writer and activist Emile Habibi has coined the term *opsimisme* (sic). According to Yuval-Davis, Neo-Liberalism's mistakes and shortcomings have been starkly revealed, changing how citizens see States' public policies. Put another way, the State's over-dependence on the private sector and the profit motive makes citizens re-think the way things are. More specifically, it makes them realise the vital importance of the main planks of a social-democratic society, namely: a Welfare State; Health; Education; Social Services. The clearest example of the cuts can be seen in Health Services, which lacked the protective clothing (PPE) and other resources to cope with the emergency. The problem applies to many nations, including The United Kingdom and Spain. Instead of investing in a national system that could produce this equipment, these nations preferred to splash out vast sums of money to make up these shortages in a hurry. Much of this *largesse* ended up in the hands of big companies.

On the same lines, people have become more aware of what they have in common. On the one hand, this is because workers who used to be labelled 'unskilled' (and who were despised by employers and overlooked by public policies) have proven to be a godsend. Indeed, if it were not for such workers, our economy would have ground to a halt during lock-down. That is why these self-same workers are now seen as heroes. On the other hand, citizens have protested *en masse* at the cruelty meted out to those who were formerly deprecated and forgotten — such as George Floyd [the Black brutally murdered by a Minneapolis cop — an act that sparked an international outcry]. That protest became a systemic one at the height of the pandemic, revealing society's wrath at and feelings of powerlessness over racial discrimination.

Looking on the bright side, Yuval-Davis said that there were many fields in which progressive forces could transform and develop such solidarity as an alternative source of power. Here, she pointed to **the role played by the media and social networks** to keep people fully informed and linked in a cross-border fashion during lock-down

More specifically, she suggested that **appealing to emotional contradictions** was a good way to **build counter-exclusionary political narratives**. Ours is a world in which the arbitrary and the unexpected seem to hold sway. This makes people feel helpless and more likely to grasp at the straws offered by the Far-Right, with its appeal to ultra-nationalism. Such parties have a gift for playing on people's feelings and telling them what they want to hear. When such parties reach power, their policies are discriminatory and exclusionary, threatening democracy itself. That is why one needs to show the contradictions on which such discourses are based, stressing the paradoxes of Neo-Liberalism (which have only grown during the pandemic). A model that deprecates human lives and society erects social divisions to justify keeping power in the hands of the privileged few.

[8] Antonini, F. (2019). Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will: Gramsci's Political Thought in the Last Miscellaneous Notebooks. Symposium. *Rethinking Marxism,* 31(1), 42-57. doi: 10.1080/08935696.2019.1577616

Intersectionalism[9] as the basis for the emergence of cross-cutting forms of solidarity

Yuval-Davis argued that it is vital to highlight the growing contradictions of a system that is not benefiting society as a whole. This, she said, must be accompanied by political projects for creating alternative systems of belonging and inclusion. Such alternative systems require a quest for holistic, interrelated solutions enshrining solidarity, co-operation, and sharing. On this point, she recalled that there will always be groups whose thoughts and identity excludes them from fundamentalist, 'nativist' schemes of belonging. That said, it would be wrong to defend inclusive ideologies in the global 'North' yet close one's eyes to opposing policies in the global 'South'. This is why there is a need for cross-cutting forms of solidarity that respect people's human rights. Such an approach will facilitate debate among equals, regardless of differences in beliefs, value systems, and settings.

Conclusions

In this fifth session, the Sociologist Yuval-Davis linked the outbreak of the pandemic to the worsening of Neo-Liberalism's structural issues. These bear on the pressing issues of equality, governability, and belonging in our societies. As an ideology, Neo-Liberalism was proposed in the 1980s and advocated policies based on minimal State intervention. It blithely assumed that individuals are the only ones who are responsible for their lives, their success or failure, and their welfare. As a result, Neo-Liberalism has favoured competition over co-operation, steadily driving the system into crisis. There are many dimensions to the problem but Yuval-Davis highlighted three specific ones: (1) the rise in social inequality; (2) the internal nature of the crisis, affecting the governability of States; (3) citizens' discontent and disaffection with their governments. In turn, actors have faced these issues in sundry ways: (1) with everyday bordering and the expansion of grey areas by governments; (2) the rise of Far Right Populist movements; (3) the emergence and/or strengthening of inclusive global grass-roots movements and mutual-aid groups. The upshot is a setting posing great challenges. These include tackling different forms of exclusion and the roll-back of democracy. Taking a broader view, they also bear on relations among States, trends in economic development, and protection of the environment. In a nutshell, nothing less than Mankind's future is at stake. The author thus wonders whether the pandemic may turn out to be a turning point in ending the paradoxes and contradictions underlying today's hegemonic global Neo-Liberalism. While it is still too early to say whether this is indeed the case, there are good reasons for thinking that transformative change is possible. We need to discover how to turn feelings of injustice and discrimination (as well as everything else that we share and that unites us) into positive action. This can best be achieved by co-operating and showing cross-cutting solidarity. Taking this step will help us find holistic, inter-related solutions. At the same time, the quest for solidarity helps us grasp the many ways people experience the world and its settings. This understanding is vital if we are to achieve sustainable changes.

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