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Bogaert, K. (2023). *In het Spoor van Fanon: Orde, Wanorde, Dekolonisering*. Berchem: Uitgeverij EPO.

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Bogaert, K. (2023). *In het Spoor van Fanon: Orde, Wanorde, Dekolonisering*. Berchem: Uitgeverij EPO.

In his book *In het Spoor van Fanon* [*In the trace of Fanon*], Koen Bogaert – an activist-scholar who teaches colonial history and resistance and studies social change and globalisation at Ghent University – intricately weaves together the intellectual legacies of several decolonial thinkers, including Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Sylvia Winter, Olivia Rutazibwa and others. Through these intellectual traditions, he illuminates the deep connections between colonialism, capitalism and racism. His work provides a thorough examination of both historical and contemporary manifestations of colonialism and decolonisation, challenging readers to critically reassess dominant historical narratives. Bogaert argues that this rich intellectual legacy – the lived experiences, writings, and thoughts of these thinkers – remains indispensable for understanding the world and its entrenched power structures, as well as for resisting these structures and creating meaningful alternatives.

Alternative political visions coincide with decolonisation: a radical reimagining of humanism capable of creating a new world order. According to Bogaert, decolonisation is first and foremost a social and intellectual struggle – a worldwide revolutionary project that seeks not only to dismantle oppressive structures resulting from neocolonial continuity, but also to lay new foundations for a truly *free* society (Bogaert, 2023, p. 18). However, this is neither linear nor easy, especially for social movements and activists who are trying to translate this into concrete action. The process of undermining power structures inevitably leads to disorder, as well as counter-reactions from the established seeking to preserve itself. Bogaert illustrates this with his historical and contemporary examples. We read, for example, of old statues of slave traders being built years after their deaths. Edward Colston, for instance, was commemorated in Bristol in 1895; 174 years after his death and forty years after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire (Bogaert, 2023, p. 64). Similarly, the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629) was unveiled at the end of the nineteenth century, nearly three centuries after his death. These statues are not products of their own *zeitgeist*, but explicitly symbols of colonial and imperial romanticism. Rather than representing history, they perpetuate the colonial myth, reinforcing European expansionism and imperial power at its height (Bogaert, 2023, p. 65).

Bogaert also examines contemporary counter-acts to decolonial discourse, particularly the ‘anti-woke brigade’ (Bogaert, 2023, p. 72). The term ‘woke’, which originated in the African-American community, historically signified awareness of social and racial justice issues, and has become mainstream in recent years with the success of Black Lives Matter and social media. Today, however, it has been co-opted and weaponised by those who actually wield public power and media influence. These actors portray themselves as victims, claiming that ‘we are not allowed to say anything anymore’, while simultaneously enjoying ample opportunities to propagate their narratives (Bogaert, 2023, p. 72). The stereotyping and delegitimisation of wokeness serves as a strategic counter-reaction to dismiss and silence the multiplicity of voices engaged in the decolonisation debate. As such, ‘[d]ecolonisation also fundamentally affects the interests of those in power. Precisely because it affects power, decolonisation is inevitably a struggle’ (Bogaert, 2023, p. 22).

Recognising this struggle, it becomes, as many already argued, essential to abandon the notion that history can be neutral or objective. Rather, history reflects the balance of power in society – it is a battleground of competing narratives. Decolonisation involves challenging dominant historical perspectives and constructing alternative ones. Bogaert exemplifies this in his study of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), the uprising of enslaved people against colonial France. His detailed analysis underlines the significance of the revolution for contemporary movements and societies. Particularly striking was the redefinition of racial identity in the Haitian Constitution, which deliberately sought new ways

to transcend racial hierarchies. Revolutionary Haiti declared that all people could become Black, regardless of their phenotypic characteristics – a radical departure from European racial classifications (Bogaert, 2023, p. 249). This ideological shift profoundly influenced later political-philosophical movements, now recognised as Black Atlantic humanism, which reshaped conceptions of equality and freedom (Bogaert, 2023, p. 239). The Haitian Revolution thus stands as a powerful example of radical imagination, inspiring resistance to colonialism and oppression both in its own time and in ongoing struggles today. A similar idea is present in the Palestinian struggle, where activists claim that anyone can become Palestinian. A shared society, they argue, begins with a shared history – one that must first be acknowledged. This is where solidarity begins: not merely as an emotional response to injustice but as a conscious, analytical commitment to oppose systemic oppression, regardless of proximity or personal connection.

Bogaert's work and thought motivate me as a political scientist to engage with and sustain this rich decolonial tradition. Like him, I am driven to explore alternative visions of the future – not only on an analytical level but in a way that inspires action. He helped me to understand that 'historiography is always a reflection of existing power relations' (Bogaert, 2023, p. 50). Or as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie puts it well: 'Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, rather than the arrival of the British, and you have a very different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, rather than the colonial creation of the African state, and you have a very different story' (Adichie in Bogaert, 2023, p. 41). This perspective made me reflect on why postcolonial states are often labelled as 'failed'; why are they often presented as imperfect replicas of the European nation-state model? The posing of these questions calls for a deeper engagement with the historical structures that shape postcolonial realities. Incorporating such critical reflections into my academic work has enabled me to develop an alternative reading of the decolonisation period. I learned how anticolonial leaders such as Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah envisioned and actively pursued a new world order. Their efforts are described by Adom Getachew's (2019) concept of worldmaking – both at the international level, through initiatives such as the New International Economic Order, and at the national level, through self-sufficiency projects and anti-colonial governance logics.

At the same time, I have become acutely aware of how the established order has systematically sought to undermine these worldmaking efforts. Recognising this historical continuity, without romanticising the postcolonial revolutions and their aftermath, allows us to critically engage with the structural constraints they faced. Rather than judging postcolonial states solely on their successes or failures, we need to analyse the conditions under which their dilemmas unfolded and how these tensions were historically constructed. I extend this line of thought to my current research on social movements, specifically on how the Palestinian solidarity struggle and the climate struggle are increasingly intersecting through shared solidarities, and the challenges this convergence poses. The key insight for me is that social movements, and broader decolonisation projects, should not be measured in terms of success or failure. As Robin Kelley (2002) reminds us: 'Unfortunately, too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realising their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact' (Kelley p. vii). Social movements generate 'freedom dreams' that allow us to explore their transformative and prefigurative potential. By focusing on the productive power of social movements and their capacity to imagine new possibilities, we can develop an alternative understanding of social movements - one that goes beyond the limiting dichotomy of success and failure. This binary framing also fails to capture the ways in which contemporary social struggles are embedded in a broader historical continuity. Social movements do not emerge in isolation; rather, they are situated within a collective memory of past struggles for freedom (Zemni, et al., 2012). Understanding this lineage allows us to appreciate the continuing relevance of decolonial thought and the

enduring legacies of resistance that shape contemporary movements today. As resistance is the driver of change.

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