I am proud to announce that my Sad by Design essay has been translated into Turkish: http://red-thread.org/mutsuzlugu-tasariminda.

It was published in the 5th issue of the Red Thread web magazine, published out of Belgrade and Istanbul. Here the table of content and introduction of the current issue on "Alt-Truths and Insta-Realities: The Psychopolitics of Contemporary Right".

The Red Thread made a short interview with me by Red Thread editor Vladimir Jerić Vlidi during the opening of the Venice Bienale in May 2019. Here it is in Turkish and here in English. Here the English version, just in case:

Red Thread: Your 2019 book *Sad by Design* speaks about the general sense of the state of the world today, and particularly about how media technologies are created and implemented so to shape a particular image of reality and a specific sense of our participation in it. What would be your view of the current political landscape?

Geert Lovink: We see a lot of evidence that something like multipolar world is emerging trough these new forms of authoritarianism, which are regional in nature. It's is a new form of Empire, not one but a multitude of centers, and in that sense has nothing to do with the Cold War politics anymore. The legacy and procedures of Cold War is history now.

In order to develop these regional ambitions further, each ruling class would need to have much, much better grip on their own sphere of influence. It cannot really focus on the establishing of this networked regionalism because all the time it will be undermined by outside forces, thus wanting to strengthen the grip at home. But still I see none of these big regional players having yet a comprehensive plan for the tools of rule in the XXI century.

RT: Speaking about the ever-growing influence of social media over pretty much all the aspects of contemporary society, how do you see the development in our parts of the world?

GL: These things are happening, especially inside so-called national firewalls. Some of the states imply to introduce something like national social media platforms, rebuilding from scratch in comparison to the original Silicon Valley or Chinese version of these services. But there is no real overview if this is actually happening and if these surrogates ever reach a

critical mass.We need to understand that what we have today is a PR war, and that today's PR wars have this under-layer of information or cyber warfare. In the cyber war rhetoric the announcements of something like a national search engine or email service – explicitly described a kind of a national form of Gmail – could be both a smokescreen and a real thing. At the moment this is difficult to judge. The fact that we haven't heard about it ever since *may mean something, or not*; we should be careful not to ridicule this too much. But *it does mean something* that we cannot distinguish between the two. This lack of orientation provides for new forms of introducing insecurity and uncertainty.

RT: By mentioning the disorientation and insecurity being introduced in both the public and the private discourse, do you refer to the phenomena of the rise of what is called "alt-right"? Media-wise, this new right seems quite inconsistent, quite bipolar. Wherever they climb towards power they argue for ever more media deregulation, while wherever the right wing takes the power, they resort to as heavy media regulation as possible. Is it that simple as "we will use the social media to get to the power, and then prevent everyone else of using it once we are there"? Such "disposable populism" perhaps makes sense on a purely pragmatic level, but presents an ideological paradox, or how would you see it?

GL: A lot of the fights today is around the question who owns the right Gramsci, who understands how to make this hegemonic claims in the best possible way. Originally it was about how to build this kind of what in the past was called "people's front", this historical coalition, or in Italian vocabulary, "historical compromise", so that the left or whoever it was could, at least in part, take power and rule. But these days this logic has been completely coopted and privatized, it has been owned by the right-wing populism, who is reading Gramsci in their very own way. So it is difficult to answer your question…

You actually shouldn't be asking me, but to consult Steve Bannon because he has explicitly gone into this paradox. Why should I answer on his behalf? He is the one who, in public, is thinking and philosophizing about this paradox. People need to understand that he works on both levels, in both directions, and these are obvious paradoxes. Peter Thiel is another one who is also very, very explicit in his open statements on these obvious contradictions. We should never underestimate their ability to think through the dialectics and dichotomies of today's world.

RT: What would be the way forward from here, how to put progressive ideas back on the track and into the public discourse? Most of the people active around the issue would be artists and academics and similar, not union leaders or experienced activists. And most of such progressive efforts seem to still fail short of having much of the wider impact. What can art do better, or more?

GL: Most of the artistic strategies are not very useful in this, because they are symbolic gestures. And the real work with the documents like what investigative journalists do, we should leave that up to the real experts. What they need is our support; we can build a kind of shield around them, a kind of framework, conceptual, aesthetic, technical framework, in order for them to do their job.

So please, get involved in the real stuff. You shouldn't stop writing essays or doing art, but it would be good to think less about symbolical gestures. A lot of artists can be involved in terms of mapping, producing visualizations and memes. There's plenty that can be done, from video to podcasts to digital publishing. Also, there are networks; to look into the international support systems for this type of work would be very useful.

RT: Symbolic gestures, or acts, can still be very important; as a difference from West, where all the words imaginable seem to already be on the wall (what is another problem, of making the words meaningless), somewhere else a single word can still bear a lot of importance. It can perhaps start a revolution, but more often gets people in jail, or worse.

GL: Maybe our task then is to build that protective shield around that one word on the wall. So it can have a maximum impact.

RT: So what it will take to get out of this situation, how to get organized? Do we need some powerful figures of leaders, or more articulate programs, or to use the media better? All of that?

GL: No. I think, first of all that we need the understanding that it should be some form of local or national version of what is elsewhere called a Rainbow Coalition. But the Rainbow Coalition is going to consist of colors that we may not really like. And this is the problem. As Sad by Design, the title essay of my book, is trying to communicate, the problem is in how the very choice is designed. We will stay sad—at least for a while. But there are things to learn from this techno-sadness. Radical empathy, to use the term by Douglas

Rushkoff, may not be the latest and most effective political strategy, but is one powerful gesture. We should organize radical care, self-care, overcome the dependencies and create living support networks for ourselves and others.