

Politics without a project and the neighbourhood watch.

The government of the EU's neighbourhood and the management of insecurities*

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ABSTRACT

The issue of EU engagement with the spaces lying in its vicinity currently enjoys a high visibility in the European governmental arenas. The current status of the neighbourhood among European governing circles is to be understood in the context of the completion, in 2004-2007, of a full round of EU enlargement, which has taken up the best of a decade and is often presented as one of the (if not the) most successful European achievement so far in the post-bipolar period. With enlargement gone, the neighbourhood would have been expected as the one development which might have allowed for the formulation of an original project of collective life, bringing together the Union and countries from the former Soviet and Mediterranean spaces. The paper argues that such a project has not emerged. The politics of the neighbourhood have mainly entailed debates about variants of the managerial model that would be adopted for the government of the neighbourhood. Problem-management, in other words, has taken over what could have been the forging of a political project. Engagement with the European contiguities has been framed either on ethical or self-interest grounds, particularly with regard to security questions, but outside of any reflection on the political horizons that such a process could open. In the process, we want to argue, what could have been construed as a European alternative to contemporary practices of global liberal governance - an alternative which, with some reservations, was present in the enlargement process - has been lost. We further wish to draw attention on the potentially severe political consequences of these politics without a project. In the absence of any political horizon beyond day-to-day managerial issues, we argue, the potential is very high that the European engagement in the Union's contiguities might turn the latter into spaces of surveillance and control for the purpose of managing alleged insecurities – in short, a neighbourhood watch.

* The present paper presents the current state of a doctoral research dealing with the European neighbourhood policy. As such, it contains and reformulates material, particularly empirical, already presented elsewhere (Jeandesboz, 2007).