GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

# Stress Tests
## The European Project Under Pressure

Annual print edition 2015

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

GEF
GREEN EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

Printed in Belgium, July 2015
Project coordinators: Edouard Gaudot, Krisztian Simon, and Beatrice White
Production: Micheline Gutman
Printed on 100% recycled paper
Cover picture : © Adrien Herda




This publication has been realised with the financial support of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is not responsible for the content of this project.

This publication can be ordered at:
The Green European Foundation – Brussels Office:
15 Rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels – Belgium
Tel: +32 2 234 65 70 I Fax: +32 2 234 65 79
E-mail: info@gef.eu I Web: www.gef.eu

The Green European Foundation is a European-level political foundation whose mission is to contribute to a lively European sphere of debate and to foster greater involvement by citizens in European politics. GEF strives to mainstream discussions on European policies and politics both within and beyond the Green political family. The foundation acts as a laboratory for new ideas, offers cross-border political education and a platform for cooperation and exchange at the European level.

Green European Foundation asbl
3 Rue du Fossé – 1536 Luxembourg

# The Mission of a Grenzmann

## Tribute to Benoît Lechat

On a sunny terrace on the borders of the river Oder, which flows between Germany and Poland, a small group of activists, journalists and politicians from different European countries decided in the late summer of 2011 to start a new magazine that would contribute to building a European public space and at the same time empower the green movement. The real architect of this project was its future and first editor-in-chief, the journalist and philosopher Benoît Lechat, who died much too young at the beginning of this year.

According to him, more than 30 years after their emergence, Green parties and movements were coming closer to a decisive tipping point of their short history. In the concept note for the *Green European Journal* in 2011 Benoît wrote:

"If the Greens want to be able to implement the reforms that will transform the European economies in an ecological way, give a new impulse to European democracy, their actions should not only be efficient, they should also rely on common European visions and be supported by a broader social base. The current crisis obliges the Greens to accelerate."

**On the frontier**

Benoît was the right person to create a platform which would help the Greens to accelerate. As a journalist he signed his first political article on Europe in the Belgian magazine *La Revue Nouvelle* in 1993 as Simon Grenzmann. He explains this name in his article in this issue of the Journal, which he originally wrote for the Dutch magazine *de Helling*: "I wanted to stand on the frontier, to open up as much as possible to the other, to cross different perspectives, take the risk of encounter, without hoping for conflicts to disappear through the elimination of differences, and to attempt, even though I do not like the rather saintly aspect of this formulation, to make a richness out of differences."

The editorial board of the *Green European Journal*, under the guidance of Benoît Lechat, practised this attitude of "systematically placing ourselves on the frontier".

While working on this project of interconnecting our languages and cultures, we became friends. I shared with Benoît a love for the German language and history, which we vehemently discussed on many occasions, especially when we made together a special edition of *de Helling* and the *Green European Journal* titled "Europe one hundred years after the First World

War". We liked to speak Dutch among ourselves during the international conferences of the Green movement where English was the main language, not only to be able to comment more privately as journalists on the behaviour of the politicians present, but also out of our firm belief that European exchange must always be plurilinguistic. Benoît's language, coloured by a Belgian social Catholicism and a libertarian philosophy, collided regularly with mine, shaped in Dutch Protestantism and contextual theology. The pleasure of debate and encounter accompanied us to different European places.

**Ardent**

The core of Benoît's legacy lies, as I believe, in his acceptance of the otherness of the other. This implies finding ways to give space to cultures, attitudes and opinions which are out of your own reach and understanding, without becoming a relativist. His fascination for the "world of the other" made him into both an ardent journalist and a tireless debater, while being at the same time a caring and delightful friend. His existence as a Grenzmann was a personal attitude as well as a political mission. It's like in a famous poem of the Dutch poet Remco Campert, which shows how major changes are connected to very little gestures:

*Asking yourself a question*
*that's how resistance starts*
*and then asking that question of another*

In times when Europe is mostly defined by the language of financial and economic categories, Benoît's project of creating a European public space where languages, traditions and political visions can be sharpened by way of exchanging stories and experiences is more needed than ever.

To continue this "Grenzmann-mission", *the Green European Journal* will have to ask questions. To find the right ones for this moment in time, we will have to reach out even more to other political and social movements. Since the future of Europe depends on the interconnectedness of all European citizens, the *Green European Journal* and its board should continue to be a living platform where questions are asked and new stories are invented.

*Erica Meijers*

**Verzet begint niet met grote woorden**
maar met kleine daden
zoals storm met zacht geritsel in de tuin
of de kat die de kolder in zijn kop krijgt
zoals brede rivieren
met een kleine bron
verscholen in het woud
zoals een vuurzee
met dezelfde lucifer
die een sigaret aansteekt
zoals liefde met een blik
een aanraking iets dat je opvalt in een stem
jezelf een vraag stellen
daarmee begint verzet
en dan die vraag aan een ander stellen

*Remco Campert*

**Résister ne commence pas avec de grands mots**
mais avec de petits actes
comme une tempête avec un bruissement léger
dans le jardin
Ou le chat qui délire
comme des vastes rivières
avec une petite source
nichée dans la forêt
comme une fournaise
avec la même allumette
qui allume une cigarette
comme l'amour avec un regard
un frôlement, quelque chose qu'on entend
dans une voix
se poser une question
avec cela commence la résistance
Et puis poser cette question à un autre

*Remco Campert*

**Resistance does not start with big words**
but with small deeds
like a storm with a soft rustle in the garden
and the cat going crazy
like broad rivers
with a tiny source
hidden in the woods
like a firestorm
with the same match
that lights a cigarette
like love with a glance
a touch something you hear in a voice
asking yourself a question
that's how resistance starts
and then asking that question of another

*Remco Campert*

# Contents

# For a Europe that unites, rather than divides people

Pierre Jonckheer

Krisztian Simon

The idea of a European Community, based on a promise of shared peace and prosperity, was dealt a strong blow this summer, in a way that we couldn't have expected even months before.

At the time of writing, we have just witnessed how the strongest member states of the EU, led by an inflexible German government, humiliated Greece without mercy, as a warning to other potential targets. As far as we know, Europe's version of a Greek tragedy is far from over. Even though the majority of Greeks have voted for an end to austerity, the same strand of self-defeating and socially destructive policies awaits them. It seems doubtful the country stands any chance of ever paying back its debt on its own.

Whatever fancy names we might find for the forms of humiliation a member state has to undergo when dealing with the more powerful (be it Grexit, Graccident or aGreekment), none will hide the fact that today's politics at the European level has nothing to do with solidarity anymore. Europe is driven by a power game, whose rules are defined as "one (neoliberal) size fits all", and the less fortunate are left alone with their problems. And this is not to say that Greeks have done everything right. Their economic model was unsustainable for many decades, it is still in dire need of reforms - and frankly, we don't know if Syriza would have been able to make the necessary changes – but none of these can justify the forms of repressions we have witnessed recently.

For now the Greek patient is back on life support, but the doctors keep switching the machines on and off, saying this is how you can improve someone's condition most effectively.

Not surprisingly the repression of a weaker member state comes at a time when the construction of the European Union is already more fragile than ever before. In addition, new forms of cultural regression manifest through the rise of intolerant, xenophobic and Eurosceptic movements, who are doing their best to destroy half a century of patient and complex European construction. And instead of protesting, the electorate seems to have accepted that all is going down the drain: all we get is a "post-democratic lulling to sleep of public opinion" (Habermas).

This is why it is more important than ever for committed Europeans to stand up and raise their voice, to work on alternatives, and to build trust and solidarity among the member states. Those who feel uncomfortable in today's Europe and those who disagree with the directions dictated by the financial orthodoxy need to work even harder in order to change the "European model". To create a Europe that is based on the currency of values rather than the value of currency. A Europe that unites, rather than divides people.

**Europe in the (re)making**

After the end of World War II the European Community was born out of one simple idea: the founders hoped to overcome nationalism and the chauvinistic confrontations of the previous decades by creating a commonwealth of European nations. They knew that in order to achieve this they needed to create solidarity through a system of interdependencies between the societies of Europe.

In spite of France's rejection of a defence community in 1954, the founding members managed to set up a common market, which became the basis of the post-war economic model - "the social market economy". This, as Wolfgang Streeck, Emeritus Director of the Max Planck Institute puts it, was a time when social regulations were forced on capitalism, even if capitalism itself didn't feel comfortable with them. This is why, following the years of post-war reconstruction, capitalist elites and their economic allies decided to find ways to get out of their social commitments, thereby paving the way for the neoliberal reforms of the 80s and 90s, the third way of social democracy, a large set of crises, and now the diktat of the Troika over Europe's crisis-stricken economies.

It is always possible to doubt the viability of the whole construction of a social market economy, as if the temporary coexistence of social standards and the market were all doomed right at the moment of their birth. But neither we, nor any progressive political actor, should condone such lazy scepticism. Our kind of Europe is a community of cooperation, of peace and solidarity, on the basis of the acquis already achieved by the EU. After all, the Treaty of Rome was ratified almost 60 years ago, and since then the community that was built around the former arch-enemies France and Germany has remained an island of peace – a great achievement taking into consideration that we had wars in the Balkans and in Ukraine, both right at the EU's borders. Furthermore, this ailing construction remains a powerful force of attraction for many on the outside: countries in its neighbourhood are still hoping to join the common table, while thousands fleeing war or poverty in the global South are trying to set foot in the EU, in hope of a new, better and peaceful life.

This is something that we need to appreciate. And something that we need to keep in mind when forming European policies, as we have learned from current history that nothing human-made is irreversible. If we don't pay attention, Europe might easily lose itself, its purpose and its existence.

**Criticism from within**

The idea of politically integrated Europe has been subject to criticism for as long as it's been around, and with the growing number of committed Eurosceptic and illiberal parties inside the EU (it's enough to mention that Marine Le Pen's Front National was the party gaining most seats in France at last year's European Parliament election, and her party has also managed to build a coalition, big enough to form a parliamentary group), there is a strong force that is set on demolishing everything achieved since the Treaty of Rome. On the other side of the political spectrum an opposition of (more or less) radical left-wing movements demand a loosely defined "different Europe"; between these two extremes the grand coalition of Christian Democrats, Conservatives, Socialists and Liberals, broadly hopes to keep the status quo, and continue with the "European business as usual."

Although this majority itself is largely divided when it comes to determining the future path of the EU

and its institutions, they are very determined when it comes to defending the hegemony of the neoliberal orthodoxy, and they are still the ones providing the majority voice in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Their ideology feeds into the hegemony of the "technocrat", the dominant ideology in charge of protecting the status quo. As the philosopher Slavoj Žižek has noted not so long ago, their power-based decisions "are more and more masked as administrative regulations based on neutral expert knowledge, and they are more and more negotiated in secrecy and enforced without democratic consultation."

While these above mentioned groups seem to have a well-defined position inside the machinery of Europe, the Greens are today disoriented and utterly divided: some of them are more or less radical in their demands for a new Europe of solidarity, cooperation and sustainability, others rather position themselves as pragmatic reformist, hoping to transform Europe step by step, in accordance with the majority.

And while there would have been a great need for us Greens to step up, we couldn't really influence the course of politics in the EU.

Today we resort to a merely defensive approach. Greens might have ideas on how to improve policies, they seem to have no clear vision of the kind of Europe we want to live in. Do we want more integration? And if so, which kind? Do we want to live in a federal Europe? The answer is most likely yes. But we don't voice our opinions loud enough, we are not even sure how to express our thoughts, and thus end up being some of the all too quiet reformist voices trying to push for new integrationist projects, for tax harmonisation, for a modest reform of the monetary union, or for policies to welcome and distribute refugees in Europe, which – as desirable as they are – risk falling short of having an influence on the path of Europe. And so the systemic problems go on as if no one had noticed them: the Greek crisis and the refugee crisis are just two examples of the catastrophic outcome of this inaction.

At least since the signing of the Lisbon Treaty the "common market" seems to have fostered not only competition but also co-operation amongst the member states – but the innovation of the euro, which was supposed to further unite the societies of Europe didn't work the way it was expected.

The malaise this causes has been further accelerated by the crisis of the financial and banking sector, and has accentuated the differences between member states, their governments and public opinion in the EU. This in turn has led to a situation in which fundamental principles of the EU, the free movement of persons and the free movement of workers are being constantly questioned, and the EU's current stalemate seems to drive us back to a national logic, in which nothing else matters but brute force in negotiations and the performance of national economies.

At this moment, it looks like Europe and its institutions are going to resist the changes that would prepare the community for an adequate

response to the constraints and challenges of increased globalisation. While it would be more than necessary to go on with deepening the integration process of Europe, in order to effectively tackle the global challenges looming at our community.

Europe seems to be paralysed, unable to deal with its internal imbalances and global challenges. It is desperately depending on the remnants of the long overcome nationalistic periods. It would be our task now, as Greens, to come up with a vision and lead the way for Europe to overcome this current stalemate.

We need to act, before it's too late. Because it is Europe that is at stake.

*Pierre Jonckheer is co-president of the Green European Foundation. He was a member of the European Parliament from 1999-2009 and is a Professor of European affairs at the University of Louvain (UCL). Pierre is an Honorary Senator of Belgium.*

*Krisztian Simon is deputy editor-in-chief of the Green European Journal.*

# 1 | EUROPE'S SOUL-SEARCHING CRISIS

There is a clear divide in Europe: a social divide that has been exacerbated by the crisis, as well as a cultural divide, obvious in the various readings of the crises. The crisis put European solidarity repeatedly to the test, and European integration and the promise of a united Europe have been losing out.

Can the European Union overcome the fundamental hurdle it currently faces? Can EU leaders reach a solution and come back from the verge of the abyss? Can a common ground be found to reunite Europeans around the ideals that bring them together: freedom, democracy, and the hope for prosperity?

The articles making up this chapter dwell on various aspects of the question of what keeps Europe together and how it could be brought closer together. History and languages (Lechat), a European identity or lack of it (Meijers), the use of modern communication technology to bring EU institutions closer to the public (Grabbe), as well as the implications of the flawed construction of the common currency on the reality of the crisis (Lamberts) are brought into discussion. They offer varied backgrounds and keys to decoding the questions that are so starkly on the table today: can the EU pull through the solidarity crisis that is currently driving it apart?

Benoît Lechat

# Europe through the trial of the foreign

My parents educated us according to the maxim that "we are as many times human as languages we know". As when learning a new language, one must throw oneself into the discovery of national political sensitivities, at the risk of not comprehending everything, but nevertheless making the effort to put – at least temporarily – one's own political references in the background, to be able to genuinely enter into the world of another.

*This article was first published in our partner publication De Helling.*

Despite their still vivid memory of the German occupation, my parents educated us according to the maxim that "we are as many times human as languages we know".

I was born in 1960 in Eupen, a small Belgian town that sits on the border with Germany and the "capital" of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, which today numbers around 70,000 people who are said to represent one of the best protected minorities in the world. Until 1984, I belonged to it, at least in legal terms, though my identity card was in French, and though I actually left in 1972, when I went to pursue my education in Wallonia and Germany.
My mother came from the very Francophile city of Liège and my father from Malmédy, which, like Eupen, was part of Prussia between 1815 and 1919 before being re-annexed to the Third Reich in 1940. Two years after the end of global conflict and the return to the Belgian fold, my parents settled there mainly for professional reasons, my father opened a small sewing needle factory with material retrieved from Aix-la-Chapelle on the other side of the border, by way of reparations for damages of war...

Despite their still vivid memory of the German occupation, my parents educated us according to the maxim that "we are as many times human as languages we know". While sending us to French schools, they strongly encouraged us to learn German, and then English, which my parents spoke when they wished not to be understood... Our father got by as well in Walloon as in German, which he had learned in Malmédy before the war. And his English, honed with the Anglo-Saxon liberators, was of a very good standard. Our mother was not as gifted for languages, but applied herself very much to learn German, were it to support the political engagement of her husband. Their example was rather profitable. It spurred us to "dare" to start talking in tongues without having mastered them, which I think is the point of departure for learning them. Thanks to them, their children can all get by in several European languages, which has served us well, not only professionally but also emotionally and politically... because it has truly enhanced our understanding of the European world.

For my part, this allowed me to work first at the 'wereldomproep' of the BRTn, which was the Flemish Belgian radio station where my rather imperfect German was useful for broadcasting information concerning the Flemish community in Belgium, and subsequently at the Belga news agency, the only Belgian structure of its kind that was entirely bilingual French and Dutch. For over 10 years, I was able to improve my Flemish there, and particularly to hear, on a daily basis, the reactions of my Flemish colleagues to the development of Belgium. The savings imposed by the Europe of Maastricht and by the process of federalisation of Belgium allowed Francophone Belgians to discover that they were henceforth a minority in a country to which they claimed to be increasingly attached but of which they were ignorant of the language spoken by the majority of the population. And these protestations of "Belgianism" sometimes gave my Flemish colleagues cause to smile, not without justification.

Throughout this decade, before becoming the spokesperson of Isabelle Durant, vice-prime minister in the first federal Belgian government that Greens participated in, I used the knowledge and experience

"Every culture resists translation, even if it essentially needs it."

accumulated during my work at the agency to draft articles in an erudite journal in which I attempted to analyse the profound political developments that my country was undergoing. "The European destiny of Belgium" was the rather pretentious title of the first article I wrote for it in 1993, in which I explained that Europe constituted the basis of a consensus among Flemish and Francophone Belgians, but for different reasons.

For a Flemish movement in full swing, it presented the prospect of a disappearance of the Belgian nation-state, while for the Francophone Left which dominated Wallonia and Brussels, it represented the hope of a social Europe capable of taking over from the Belgian welfare state subject simultaneously to the austerity imposed by the monetary union and to the chauvinism of the wellbeing of certain Flemish nationalists. I signed then most of my articles with the pen name Simon Grenzmann. Simon was the name of my oldest son and Grenzmann described the attitude I wished to develop: to stand on the frontier, to open up as much as possible to the other, to cross different perspectives, take the risk of encounter, without hoping for conflicts to disappear through the elimination of differences, and to attempt, even though I do not like the rather saintly aspect of this formulation, to make a richness out of differences.

Today, the Green European Foundation gives me the chance to pursue this route through the Green European Journal. With the network that we are establishing at the European level, it is less an attempt to feed the European public space with an overarching perspective but rather to offer the opportunity to enter into the different national public spaces where ecological ideas are deployed.

In a word, it is more about being "Trans-European" than about being "Pan-European". As when learning a new language, one must throw oneself into the discovery of national political sensitivities, at the risk of not comprehending everything, but nevertheless making the effort to put – at least temporarily – one's own political references in the background, to be able to genuinely enter into the world of another. In this sense, the articles and translations which we propose – alas essentially in English for the time being – have as a first objective to attempt to understand the point of view of "other Europeans" and through this, to attempt to systematically place ourselves "on the frontier". And this work of interconnection must additionally be fed by all that is being done, for example within the European Green Party, to reinforce the coherence among the projects of Greens in Europe.

This will to understanding is not naive. We should not expect miracles. On the contrary, the existence of differences, their impassability, their resistance, fuel our desire to enter into the world of the other, a desire which by definition can never be fully achieved, because it brings with it the risk of losing oneself in the other. This goes for political ideas just as it goes for languages. In the 1980s, Antoine Berman, the great French theorist of translation, explained clearly that translation was, paradoxically, simultaneously indispensable and impossible: "Every

We will not emerge from the crisis through the economy alone. The specific historical moment that we find ourselves in is that of the start of a global redefinition of the organisation of our societies.

culture resists translation, even if it essentially needs it." We must therefore accept the risk of "the trial of the foreign" and renounce the utopia of a complete transmissibility, while attempting to put forward each time the part of the radical foreignness of the language and the world of the other. The generalisation of the use of English as a lingua franca in Europe bears a major risk in this regard if it results in the retreat from other languages, beginning with French and German, whose complexity and relations constitute an irreplaceable richness for Europe. Greens must therefore confront the question of languages and what is at stake, a fundamental element of European politics.

It has already been said many times: the causes of the crisis are not only economic, ecological and social in nature. They are also democratic and cultural. The weakness of the process of legitimation of economic policies gives rise to, as much as it reinforces, the economic crisis. We will not emerge from the crisis through the economy alone. The specific historical moment that we find ourselves in is that of the start of a global redefinition of the organisation of our societies. The belief that we will find a way out through an adjustment that is strictly economic in nature, or even through institutional reforms, remains alas the mainstream discourse that prevails among the European institutions.

Equally, fearing that the European project might disappear with the Euro, is also to succumb to "economism". Evidently, the social and ecological consequences would be devastating for tens of millions of Europeans, undoubtedly more unbearable than what too many Europeans already endure, within but especially outside of the Eurozone. But for 50 years there has also been an acceleration in the construction of a European society, on which we must base ourselves to overcome the current stumbling block. Amid the emergency, the maelstrom banking, state, ecological and social crises, Europe continues to build itself, or at least elements of Europeanisation continue to accumulate. And this Europeanisation is built much more on the frontiers where differences actually encounter one another, than at the centre where they are no longer really within sight. ■

*Benoît Lechat was the editor-in-chief of the Green European Journal and one of the founders of the publication. He passed away in January 2015.*

Erica Meijers

# Europe's identity crisis

The European Project lacks any significant ingredient of emotional bonding. In the absence of a "European soul", the existing rational, bureaucratic structure is doomed to remain a distant presence for the citizens of Europe.

*This is a shortened and revised version of an article published in our Dutch partner publication De Helling.*

If we want to dig deeper into the identity of Europe, the stories of those who lived on the dark side of Europe might be more revealing than the speeches of those in power.

**No more war**

The unity of Europe is a long-cherished ideal. Even Napoleon dreamed of bringing it about. The roots of the present political unification of Europe lie, however, in the adage "no more war". The horrors of the World Wars were a dagger blow to the heart of the Enlightenment tradition, which had portrayed Europeans as rational, autonomous citizens standing at the helm of history. The Europe of Reason proved to possess a murky, irrational or even demonic side that showed early signs in the nationalistic, militant euphoria that undermined the internationalism of the early years of the 20th century, and eventually made itself grimly obvious in Hitler's Final Solution.

After seventy years of relative peace and prosperity, "no more war" seems to have become just a hollow phrase – or so some would claim when yet another discussion flares on that seemingly unreachable European ideal. They conveniently forget that during the nineties a part of Europe was again scourged by conflict. The Balkans have of course always been seen as Europe's underbelly, so our self-image of European rationality survived, practically unscathed, the explosion of barbarity that was unleashed by the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Yet at the time the exiles and refugees from the Yugoslavian wars warned us repeatedly that the same thing could happen anywhere in Europe.

Today, with new conflicts emerging on the borders of Europe and the unstable condition of the European Union itself, these warnings do not seem to be so idle anymore.

If we want to dig deeper into the identity of Europe, the stories of those who lived on the dark side of Europe might be more revealing than the speeches of those in power, in whose interest it is to keep up the image of a rational Europe.

**The uprooted**

Few could claim more experience with the irrational underbelly of Europe than those whose country collapsed in a paroxysm of nationalism and hate: the exiles from Hitler's Germany and the refugees from Yugoslavia. The German emigrés of the 1930s, who were mostly Jewish and political refugees, found few willing ears for their warnings about Nazism. For years, repudiated refugees drifted without papers from country to country, until they succumbed to their uncertain existence, gained possession of a passport at last by roundabout means and all kinds of guile, or escaped to America. Today's refugees who cross the Mediterranean risking their lives, could tell similar stories.

In the cafés in Paris, Prague and Zurich the German exiles vehemently debated the future of Europe. The loss of their homes made them Europeans, like it or not. After all, their survival depended on joint action by the countries of Europe against the barbarity taking place in their former homeland, and hence on a shared European ideal.

The chronicler par excellence of emigré life in the 1930s was the German author Klaus Mann (1906–1949). He was one of the young intellectuals of the period between the Wars who believed in

European culture, which he saw as an antidote to the nationalism that had wreaked so much havoc in 1914-1918. He fled Germany in 1933 because, he explained, he could no longer breathe; besides, the prospect of arrest was more than imaginary for this young homosexual writer with a Jewish family.

**The Volcano**

The plot of Klaus Mann's 1939 novel *Der Vulkan* (The Volcano) unfolds in the German emigré milieus of France, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and other countries. In the novel, the actress Marion, who is modelled on Klaus's sister Erika Mann, expresses an optimistic activism: "We emigrés represent the other Germany. We are the opposition to barbarism". But the price of becoming the symbol of European civilization is, in this situation, the loss of a home. "How fine it must be never to have to wonder where your home is," the Jewish professor Benjamin Abel thinks in his lonely room in Amsterdam, his gaze wandering to the bottle of sleeping pills on his bedside table. "Where are they waiting for my capacities, and how can I put them to use? You lose all your self-esteem when no one needs you. How fine it must be to be free of all the doubts, disappointments and loneliness. To be delivered from the poisonous brew of hate and nostalgia." Time and time again, the emigrés face the news of a suicide among their acquaintances. Marion's younger sister takes an overdose of sleeping pills when she learns she is pregnant from an emigré in whose company she felt at ease for the first time. After their one night together, he is carried off by the Swiss police and deported, to vanish forever from her life.

The title *The Volcano* has a dual meaning. It refers both to the menace of National Socialism, to living on the edge of the collapsing old world, and to the anxieties that grip the uprooted figures of the novel. The precipice in the soul of the emigré meets up with the precipice facing enlightened Europe; the consuming fire in the depths of the mountain that is "civilization" spews destructive lumps of glowing lava into the atmosphere. You must always be alert because you are always in danger. Nothing is certain. Klaus Mann sees it as the end of an era; no one knows if there will still be a future.

**Permanent crisis**

"L'Europe est finie," wrote the French poet Paul Valéry just after the war. Klaus Mann agrees with him in a trenchant essay, "The ordeal of the European intellectual". Not only had the old Europe literally been destroyed, but the bombing of cities and the mass murder of Jews and other minorities undermined both a lifestyle and faith in the Enlightenment. Mann saw the post-war debates among existentialists, Marxists and nihilists as symptomatic of the general despondency and disarray of European intellectuals. First published in an American magazine in 1949 under the title "Europe's Search for a New Credo", the essay morbidly concludes by suggesting that a mass suicide of intellectuals is the only way out of the impasse. And shortly after its publication, Mann was to take his own life by an overdose of sleeping pills.

Sixty years after the War, it all sounds familiar: the end of the grand narratives and the hollowness of the Big

The best thinkers must follow the examples of Virginia Woolf, Stefan Zweig and Jan Masaryk. That would be the only way to shock the world out of its lethargy.

Words. We have become inured to these things, and we get bored when they come up for discussion yet again – just as we get bored with all the bombastic and abstract discussions about Europe. Klaus Mann, who himself was not untouched by twelve years of exile, genuinely felt pained by the non-arrival of that "different, more humane, Europe" which had buoyed his optimism and that of so many others through the difficult years.

Klaus Mann did not see the War as a kind of industrial accident, but as the long-smouldering eruption of Europe's true nature. The sinister forebodings of nineteenth-century pessimists were surpassed by the appalling reality of the twentieth, Mann wrote. He was referring not only to the gas chambers, the bombs and the propaganda, but also the "fiendish tastelessness of commercial entertainment, the cynicism of the ruling cliques and the stupidity of the misguided masses, the cult of high-ranking murders and money makers, the triumph of vulgarity and bigotry, the terror of ignorance..." It was impossible to rationalise "the nightmarish world of Auschwitz and the comic strips, of Hollywood films and bacteriological warfare".

The upshot was that we no longer understand the world; we exist in a permanent state of crisis. In this situation, Klaus Mann's sympathy went to the doubters. He was irritated by those who come up with simple answers and who would like to impose a simple identity. For someone who had lost his passport, shutting oneself off in a national identity could never be an option; on the contrary, the peoples of Europe belong together, and it was the apocalypse of the First and Second World Wars that forged their sense of continental solidarity. Regional differences still exist but we all "still belong to the same tragic but proud and distinguished clan."

Klaus Mann did not doubt the existence of a European identity. But he didn't look for it in its tradition of enlightenment and rationality, but mostly in the common experience of its dark side. Therefore he hoped for a movement of despair and disgust. He relished the idea of a wave of suicides among European intellectuals. The best thinkers must follow the examples of Virginia Woolf, Stefan Zweig and Jan Masaryk. That would be the only way to shock the world out of its lethargy. Then, perhaps, they would perceive their true situation. Klaus Mann concludes with Kierkegaard – and these are among the last words he would write before his death – "infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith." There is hope in this life, but solely "by virtue of the absurd, not by virtue of human understanding."

**Always at risk**

Klaus Mann's arguments are corroborated by a much more recent episode of inner European emigration that makes it difficult for us to dismiss his insights as dated and invalid. First screened in 2007, the film My Friends by the Amsterdam director Lidija Zelovic who fled Sarajevo in 1992, follows her on journeys to Canada, Scandinavia and Sarajevo, places where her childhood friends now live. She is curious about how they are doing and hopes to arrange a reunion on her wedding day. Zelovic is beset by the question of

However much you sympathise with the longing for a foothold and with the uncertainty that people feel in the current political and economic climate – especially in combination with a worldwide malaise – a new nationalistic myth is extremely dangerous.

who she is and where she belongs. As in the works of Klaus Mann, Zelovic's films interweave her personal life with politics. Both of them portray the hope and fear of a generation of European emigrés.

"When did I first get the feeling that everyone was going the wrong way?" Zelovic wonders. "When was it that life became complicated and contradictory? Was it when I realised I didn't know what to believe any more?" Later in the film she says, "It is great to believe in something. I used to believe in Tito and Yugoslavia. It was a kind of religion, although with a different kind of a God. (...) The path was simple and beautiful. My life and that of my friends were alike."

Over twenty years later, the life of Zelovic and her friends is far from simple. They live far apart, and despite her visits and journeys she is unable to reconcile their conflicts. Acrimony and distrust have grown between Olja, of Serbian ethnic origins, and Emina whose background is Bosnian and who lost her mother to a Serbian grenade. Olja feels she is being made a scapegoat, and rejects responsibility for the tragedy of her childhood friend. Jasna has returned to Sarajevo after years in Australia, intent on building up a new life in her native city. All four of them have lost their homes, and the lives of all four have taken different courses because of the war.

Zelovic herself decided to put down new roots in Amsterdam. While she expertly manoeuvres a buggy with her son, now nearly one year old, through the traffic of Overtoom, we talk about estrangement, identity and Europe. Zelovic's tales of discussions among refugees from former Yugoslavia, their difficulties with papers and the despair at ever feeling at home anywhere again, all sound like echoes of Klaus Mann's novel. But when I ask what Europe means to her, Lidija struggles to explain. "Europe is familiar, it's a place you belong to and where you want to belong. Even if you lost your homeland, a sense of belonging is possible in other European countries." Her comment on the question of whether European identity lies in a shared history of mutual conflict: "if it is indeed the suffering and failures that bind us, it is because we all interpret them as a dereliction of our own ideal of civilisation. Europe is the struggle between reason and unreason, between civilisation and barbarism, as well as the projection of that barbarism onto others. Europe matters because Europe is always at risk – as it is now, too."

**Without identity**

The long-ingrained psychoses of Europe, those of self-overestimation and self-idolisation, are flaring up again. Klaus Mann described Europe as a tragic but proud tribe. Those who ignore the tragedy are left with nothing but empty, bombastic pride. The latter is evident today in the calls for a clear-cut national identity, which can only take the form of excluding others. This looks more absurd than ever in today's globalised world. However much you sympathise with the longing for a foothold and with the uncertainty that people feel in the current political and economic climate – especially in combination with a worldwide malaise – a new nationalistic myth is extremely dangerous. However, it is no use looking for a rebuttal in the form of an equally

Identity is not something you can establish remotely, by looking back at Europe's past. It only has meaning when it is inchoate and you are part of it yourself.

strong counter-identity. If we are to do justice to the European soul, we must find a different answer.

Identity is not something you can establish remotely, by looking back at Europe's past. It only has meaning when it is inchoate and you are part of it yourself. Identity is after all intangible; it is always on the path ahead of you and you never actually get there. Unrest and uncertainty typify our hard-fought Europe. Scepticism and incessantly asking what things mean have been at the heart of modern Europeanism since Voltaire, Descartes and Kant.

So it is the emigrés and refugees, the vagrants and the rootless, who represent the soul of Europe. Their experiences must be an ingredient of our thinking about a European identity. The Green parties could connect the concept of identity to the "uprooted" members of our societies and could consider in this light how to give a higher profile to participation in European politics.

It is at least clear that Project Europe is doomed to remain "soulless" as long as it remains solely the province of high-profile politicians who set limits and impose rules. The characters in Klaus Mann's *The Volcano* hitch their identity to the hope of a better future. After all they have been through, they no longer know who they are, but they do know who they would like to become. In other words, there is no such thing as a European identity, but, if we wish, there can be a shared future for people from differing traditions and cultures, linked by nostalgia and alienation.

*Erica Meijers is editor-in-chief of De Helling, the quarterly of the Political Foundation of the Dutch Green Left Party (GroenLinks), and a member of the GEJ editorial board.*

**Sources**

Klaus Mann, *Der Vulkan, Roman unter Emigranten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1989.

Klaus Mann, *The Ordeal of the European Intellectuals / Die Heimsuchung des Europäischen Geistes. Ein Literarisches Testament*, München 1989.

*My Friends*. Directed by Lidija Zelovic-Goekjian, production company Pieter van Huystee Film & Zelovics Productions, broadcast on 6.9.2007 by IKON Television.

Heather Grabbe

Stefan Lehne

# Bringing Europe closer to the people

Instead of bringing regional officials to Brussels, the EU needs to bring Brussels to the regions. Local and regional bodies need to debate EU issues at home. Heather Grabbe and Stefan Lehne propose a solution to narrow the distance between the EU and the individual.

*This is an excerpt from the study "Emotional Intelligence for EU Democracy" published by Carnegie Europe.*

## Getting MEPs into cyberspace

Cyberspace can help narrow the distance between the EU and the individual, provide arenas for interaction, and ensure access to more information about what EU institutions are doing. New technologies offer many ways for individuals to get involved in EU politics – but Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have to go where the traffic is rather than assume voters will automatically go to their Twitter accounts. They should engage in online debates where they take place and build their audience from there.

Some MEPs have had great success in using Twitter to interest younger voters in the EU's work. Dutch MEP Marietje Schaake sent out her election manifesto in ten tweets and has taken up issues related to digital freedoms that interest a large proportion of the under-forty-year-olds. Schaake even crowd-sourced comments on her European Parliament (EP) report, "A Digital Freedom Strategy in EU Foreign Policy." [1]

A positive move in 2014 was the live webcast of the parliamentary hearings of the candidates to be European commissioners. That gave citizens all over the EU a chance to follow the discussions and to contribute their own comments via Twitter. The parliament even had a live Twitter stream displayed in the chamber, giving the participants views from outside the Brussels bubble.

## Turning the EP into the focal point for transnational public debate

Some MEPs are developing solid expertise and a public profile on new EU agenda items that do not involve clear right/left divides, such as climate change, intellectual property, data protection, and surveillance. These are issues that no country can solve alone and about which public debate is needed, not just lobbying by industry and NGOs. The EP can turn itself into the primary forum for broad public debate across many countries on these crucial issues.

In recent years, the EP has stirred up political drama and won cheers from the public by voting down proposals on sharing personal data with the United States through the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) and with airline passenger name records. The EP also rejected favoring copyright holders over consumers when it declined the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. MEPs signaled strong support for limits on bankers' bonuses, an issue about which many voters are angry. The next hot topic for EP debate is likely to be the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

There is a danger of populism and simplistic dismissal of such complex issues, but at least the debate is about policies that citizens really worry about.

1 Marietje Schaake, "Digital Freedom Priority in EU Foreign Policy," November 2012, www.marietjeschaake.eu/2012/11/digital-freedom-priority-in-eu-foreign-policy

At every level of government, citizens are going to mistrust institutions that they feel do not represent them and in which their participation is limited to voting every few years.

**How to reach citizens through national and regional institutions**

The spheres of national and European politics are now one. Mass communication, globalisation, and the euro crisis have shown how much EU projects affect the space available for policymaking at the national level, from budgets to borders. In the other direction, national policies on migration and social security benefits directly affect the rest of the EU. Refugees arriving by boat in Lampedusa affect Berlin and poverty in Iași affects domestic politics in Birmingham because people can freely move between EU countries. The future of Europe can be called into question by the Greek parliament voting down a key measure, and rising Euroscepticism in Finland can increase unemployment in Spain if the Finns block a bailout. It is impossible to tackle the problems in one sphere without considering the implications for the other.

Solutions to the democracy crisis also have to integrate better the two spheres. At every level of government, citizens are going to mistrust institutions that they feel do not represent them and in which their participation is limited to voting every few years. The individual's experience with the political system therefore has to be at the center of new measures. If anybody can counter rising anti-EU sentiment and reconnect voters with Europe, it will not be EU functionaries or even MEPs. This task can only be accomplished by national politicians who take the EU seriously.

**Giving a higher profile to parliamentary scrutiny committees**

The basic mechanisms for connecting EU business to national politics exist, but they need to be developed further and implemented better. In parallel with the rise of the EP, national parliaments have gained more power in EU business, although this has been uneven across the member states and has depended on their parliamentary traditions. Parliamentary EU scrutiny committees have become very powerful in some countries, even controlling their governments' positions in the Council of Ministers.[2] The most ambitious such mechanisms exist in Denmark, Finland, and Germany. For instance, before going to the Council of Ministers, Danish ministers have to present their position to the Folketing committee on European policy, which has binding powers. The German Bundestag has increased its role in European affairs after the German constitutional court ruled that it should have greater oversight powers.

Scrutiny committees could use their powers to generate a more lively democratic debate about the EU in all member states by reaching out to the press and public. They could follow the good examples in Berlin, Copenhagen, and Helsinki of explaining EU business to voters more directly, for example, on animal rights and climate change. They could open up their scrutiny process by inviting journalists to take part and encouraging public input on their deliberations through social media and other forums.

2 Thomas Winzen, "National Parliamentary Control of European Union Affairs: A Cross-National and Longitudinal Comparison," West European Politics 35, no. 3 (2012): 657-72.

The eurozone has become very salient to voters and has institutions of its own, yet it lacks direct parliamentary accountability to its members.

**Giving national parliaments the right to suggest EU-level action**

The Lisbon Treaty introduced an early-warning mechanism whereby national parliaments can indicate whether a commission proposal constitutes a breach of the subsidiarity principle, which states that the EU will not act unless it is more effective than action taken at a national, regional, or local level. The existing mechanism has only negative power at present; it is a brake to stop unpopular measures. If one-third of national parliaments submit this kind of objection, the commission must review the proposal – known as a yellow card. If a simple majority of national parliaments object, then the council and European Parliament can reject the proposal immediately – an orange card.

This power could be made positive by allowing parliaments to introduce ideas for the commission to consider.

**Inviting MEPs to address national parliaments**

The EU has made attempts to build stronger connections between the EP and national parliaments. The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (better known as COSAC) was created in 1989 to bring national parliamentarians into EU-level deliberations. But it has failed to attract the best and brightest national parliamentarians, and its complex processes do not offer real power.

A simpler and better innovation would be to give an MEP the right to speak in his or her own national parliament. They are few enough that they would not take up excessive speaking time, and they could provide information and debate EU business with their national counterparts directly. Even better would be if the 28 commissioners addressed national parliaments on their areas of responsibility more often. The scrutiny committees could organise a hearing with each commissioner at least once during his or her term.

**Giving national parliamentarians a role in eurozone oversight**

The eurozone has become very salient to voters and has institutions of its own, yet it lacks direct parliamentary accountability to its members. A way to provide this would be to establish a committee of representatives from national parliaments of the eurozone countries to hold hearings with the president of the Eurogroup and the head of the European Stability Mechanism. The committee could also issue reports on how well the eurozone's governance and regulatory mechanisms are functioning.

**Creating new mechanisms to involve regional and local authorities in EU decision-making**

There are more than 300 regions and 90,000 municipalities in the EU. These local governments are closer and more familiar to citizens, who trust them more than national and EU institutions.[3] Yet a clear majority feels that the regional and municipal levels

3 Special Eurobarometer 307, February 2009.

are insufficiently taken into account when decisions on EU policy are made.[4]

The body set up to consider local concerns at the EU level, the Committee of the Regions, cannot do its job because it does not have decision-making powers. It is composed of regional dignitaries who are important in their locality but have little influence in Brussels. Less than a quarter of EU citizens are even aware of the existence of this forum.[5]

Instead of bringing regional officials to Brussels, the EU needs to bring Brussels to the regions. Local and regional bodies need to debate EU issues at home.

The forces of regionalism are growing in several parts of Europe. The 2014 Scottish independence referendum stirred up interest in devolving greater powers to regions in other parts of the UK as well as the EU. In coming years, widespread debates about decentralisation and new constitutional settlements are likely in the UK and Spain, while Italy and Belgium already have ongoing national discussions about the relationships between their centers and regions.

In the past, the EU was popular in regions with a strong identity because it seemed to offer an umbrella solution that allowed those regions to assert their identity and enjoy new forms of representation through multilevel governance. However, the euro crisis led to new rules for fiscal discipline at the national level, which centralised decision-making on economic policies.

European Union institutions need to engage directly at the regional and local levels, both to hear local concerns and offer participation in decision-making. For example, the commission is using its representative offices in member states to promote dialogue among stakeholders about new budgetary rules at the EU level, and these offices could engage national actors on other issues. National authorities could involve regional representatives and mayors more systematically when forming their EU positions. These representatives have more daily contact with the grass roots and could play an important role bridging the EU institutions and the population.

*Heather Grabbe is the director of the Open Society European Policy Institute.*

*Stefan Lehne is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, where his research focuses on the post–Lisbon Treaty development of the European Union's foreign policy, with a specific focus on relations between the EU and member states.*

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

# “Bubbles are meant to burst”

Philippe Lamberts

Throughout his time in the European Parliament, Philippe Lamberts has been campaigning and working towards a fairer and more human system of financial regulation for the EU. Nevertheless, it appears the financial orthodoxy is still calling the shots in Europe. With the new parliament term underway, he gives his assessment of the progress made so far, and the outlook for the future.

**Do you think policymakers have done enough to protect our economy from a relapse?**
The answer is no. We have extinguished the fire of the financial crisis with a tsunami of liquidity. That's basically how it was done in the U.S., in the UK and in Europe. But when you make money cheap, you shouldn't be surprised that it will be used badly. Something that is cheap can easily be squandered. Now we are witnessing that the money is not going in the real economy, but instead is fueling asset-price bubbles. And as we know, bubbles are meant to burst. We have an inherent fragility now in our system. We didn't dare take the measures that would really establish watertight compartments in the financial system. Our institutions are still too weak, and we still have an interconnected financial system, which means that an incident in one compartment of the ship will sink the whole ship. I think the situation is still very fragile. Of course as long as the interest rates are almost zero no one notices, but once they go up they can lead to explosions. The same applies to the case of the Grexit, once it happens it can cause an explosion as well. Therefore, we are not safe and policymakers did not dare to do enough to put our societies on a safe ground.

That's for the financial aspect, the other aspect is the monetary union. There it still seems like the policymakers have a hard time recognising the key element: no monetary union is possible without financial transfers between the different parts of the monetary union, from those that are richer to those that are less rich. That's a fact of a monetary union. Look at Germany: they have a monetary union there and they had that for centuries, and today you have three regions contributing more than what they receive from the bund, and 13 regions that contribute less than what they receive from the bund. That means you have transfers within Germany. And similarly we have transfers within Belgium, and nevertheless we act as if transfers in Europe would make no sense. But I am saying there is no monetary union without a transfer union.

You need vehicles for rebalancing. You either need a fiscal channel (a central budget funded by central taxation) or common social security. The leadership in Europe still refuses to see this reality, and therefore it does not answer the basic contradiction of having a monetary union that is neither a fiscal union nor a social union, and certainly not a democratic union, because you cannot have these kinds of transfers without democratic accountability. And these are the kinds of answers that are delayed these days, because politicians think that voters are not interested in these issues. But at some point we need to decide whether we want to be together in this union or not.

So either we backtrack and there is no monetary union and we get back to national currencies, and national democracies, or we decide to go with the monetary union and we decide to move towards the federal system. The status quo will kill the Euro. A rules-based system won't keep it together.

The third failure for me is the inability to recognise the inadequacy of the basic ideology, the basic software that has determined policymaking across Europe since the beginning of the 80s in

the UK, and across Europe in the 90s. This policy mix of deregulations, and the idea that the state is poor allocator of resources, while the market is a good allocator of resources, and that we have to shrink the state and to shrink the added value that goes to remunerate work, that is the balance of distribution between capital and work. Direct and indirect wages (meaning social security) are being squeezed. This is the policy mix that has been applied in Europe in the last decades. This has led to the financial crisis, and yet no substantial change has been made in this policies.

This acknowledgement would be a minimum but this is not happening. And thus, what we witness is increased inequality. We indeed are making the rich richer but it doesn't mean that everyone benefits. Not at all.

**Last year in another interview with the Green European Journal you have said that the financial industry is still calling the shots...**

Very much so. We had the vote on the last component of the Barnier action plan to regulate finance and that was the banking structure reform file. Basically it stemmed from the idea of splitting investment banks from retail banks, a very basic idea. It was already watered down by the commission itself in its legislative proposal. It was no longer a mandatory separation, it was a discretionary one for a very targeted set of banks. Even that was deemed too much by the financial ministry, and they almost got their way, because they got a rapporteur who basically gutted the text of Barnier of its teeth so that it no longer had any impact. Ultimately there was no majority for this. But the point is, the big banks do not want this reform, and basically they are winning. You can see the French socialists standing up and fighting for their "national champions" because what's good for BNP Paribas, they believe, is good for France. It's quite obvious that the financial sector is calling the shots. If we hear the French president, who called himself the enemy of finance in the campaign, the bosses of these banks, and the trade unions all using the same words, then it's quite obvious who's calling the shots.

**Prior to the crisis of 2008 the regulators failed miserably, why do you think they would do better than the market?**

The regulators did a bad job out of their own will. They trusted banks to self-regulate. I hope that by now it's obvious that markets are not self-regulating. It's not to say that governments know everything, but that's why we have argued for simpler regulations. The more complex a regulation, the harder it is to enforce it. In order to counterbalance that regulators were too close to banks they were supervising, we decreed that 130 systemic banks in the eurozone would be supervised by the ECB. It is more or less equivalent to saying that instead of the law being enforced by the local police it becomes the federal police. And it is maybe somewhat harder to find an amicable agreement with the federal police than the local police, but how long would it take for the same kind of cosiness to reappear at the federal level? This is why you should not give too much discretionary

powers to the supervisors, because they might get captured by those they supervise.

**Many of the regulators or policymakers used to be bankers themselves, isn't it hard for them to distance themselves from this sector?**
Yes, that's why you need to put in the law the most important things. If you make sure that the law says what can be done and what can't. I still think that financial law is too complex. The law needs to be understandable otherwise there is no chance it will be applied properly; it will always be interpreted in favour of things that should not happen.

**What would be your assessment of the Greens in the European Parliament during these crisis-ridden years?**
I think there is on the one hand the aspect of the previous term (2009-2014), where I believe at least from the economic and financial topics, we have built up credibility in the sense that we know what we are talking about, that we are hard workers, that we are able to strike compromises, when necessary. That is capital that we were able to build up in the previous term. How good is this capital today? There is a new situation in the European Parliament today, there is a much clearer line between the majority and the opposition, which was less the case last time, to a large extent because of the presence of the Eurosceptic parties, that has drawn the two big parties together in a grand coalition, also including liberals and to some extent the ECR. We see that block cementing itself more and more, and we are not part of that block. This means that even though we have built up influence, that influence cannot be used today. Since we are Greens they don't want to deal with us. We just voted, for example, on revising legislative measures like the six-pack and the two-pack in the European Parliament. When negotiating the six pack and the two pack, we were quite successful, but every amendment that came from the Greens was refused as a matter of principle by the EPP shadow rapporteur. For the European People's Party (EPP) whatever comes from the Greens is considered bad. There is not even room for debate. We still need to figure out what this means for our actions, because we will not be able this time to achieve the number of victories that we achieved in the previous mandate.

This election was not a major success for us, we are somewhat smaller than we used to be, now we are only the sixth largest group in the Parliament instead of being the fourth, as we used to be, and because of the grand coalition we have less influence on the state of play. So that leads us to prioritise our external campaigning actions over the internal law-making actions. You still have to do both, because you cannot be credible on the outside if you're not working well on the inside, but you have to find the right balance, and now that means spending more energy on campaigning and speaking with members of society in order to build up credibility, so that next time, in 2019, the Greens can be really reinforced when entering the European Parliament. The balance was more geared towards legislation last time, it should be more geared toward campaigning this time.

We do not see ourselves as the avant-garde of society instructing people what to do, I would rather see ourselves as midwives helping society find ways to change. We must be catalysts of change, not teachers who instruct people.

**Can the radical left be an ally to the Greens? Last year you said the far-left agrees with the Green analysis on many issues, nevertheless their members don't participate in the fight to improve EU legislation. Has this changed since the rise of Syriza and Podemos?**

It depends. They are potential allies, but there are major differences. I've seen some Greens saying we should emulate what Syriza and Podemos have done. I would put it differently. Both in Greece and in Spain there has been a massive failure of the traditional political parties, Christian conservatives and social democrats, and I hate the fact that it was not the Greens who were able to seize the initiative and to become the party that addresses the frustrations of the citizens with traditional parties. In Spain it's Ciudadanos and Podemos, but not the Greens. In Greece it's Syriza, but not the Greens. This is a failure of ours.

In order to be successful, do we need to emulate what Syriza and Podemos have done? I would be careful with that. Indeed, the radical left is working more now in the European Parliament, but the people who are working most on economic and financial issues in the Parliament are not their MEPs, it's people like Fabio De Masi from Die Linke, Marisa Matias form the Portuguese Left Bloc. Syriza and Podemos are in the parliament only to be the voice of the indignados, not to legislate.

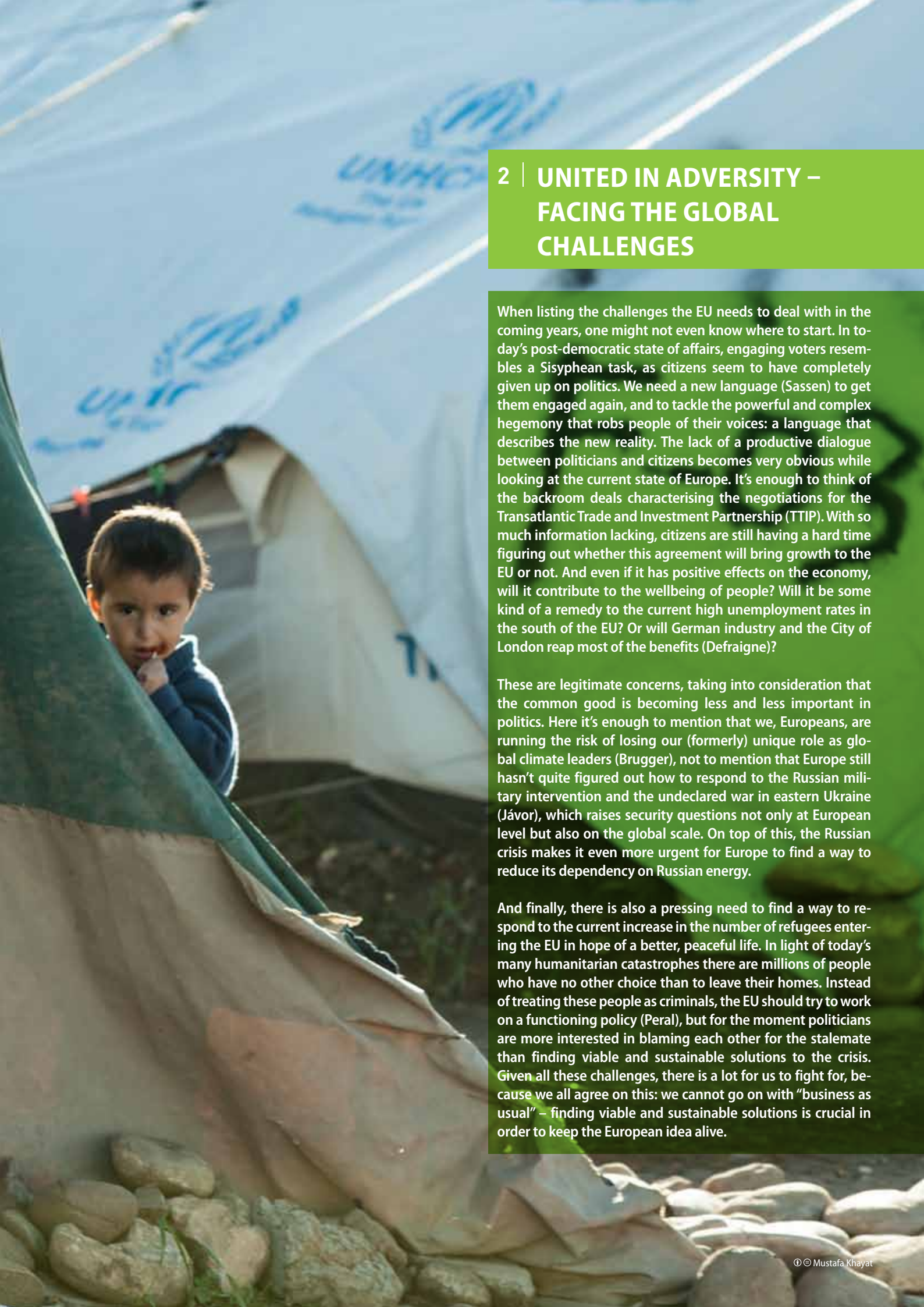
I think that the radical left is a challenge to us and also has a lesson for us, by virtue of their success. . What makes the greens unique is the combination of radicalism and realism, because we are aiming at a fundamental transformation of society, but we are not aiming at an instant transformation. We know that, even though the transformation has to be fundamental, it will only happen step by step therefore we need to show that we understand the ways it is happening. And understanding change means that we also need to understand that there isn't one enlightened avant-garde of society, and that is the party that instructs societies what to do. It's rather us, as a political party, expressing maybe better than others the challenges of this century, indicating a direction and being able to stimulate the forces in society that will provide the innovation. We do not see ourselves as the avant-garde of society instructing people what to do, I would rather see ourselves as midwives helping society find ways to change. We must be catalysts of change, not teachers who instruct people.

The second major difference is in the role of the state vs. market. The instinctive reaction of the radical left is to pass on the problems to the state. Let's take again the problem of the financial system: typically they would say, as they did in the campaign, let's nationalise the financial industry, like Mitterrand did in 1981. He nationalised all the banks in France. We say no, if we want a resilient financial system, we need diversity. Banks that are publicly traded companies on the market, state-run banks, cooperative banks, so different forms of ownership. We believe that resilience comes from diversity, and of course we don't say one size fits all and we want all banks to be nationalised. Also, well-regulated markets are fine for us, but they are not for the European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL).

The third big difference, which doesn't apply to all radical left parties, but definitely does to Syriza and Podemos, is that the environmental challenge is something they ignore. Or they say, it's important, but first we need to achieve growth and redistribution, and then we can tackle climate change and resource scarcity. We, on the other hand, say that high inequalities and the ecological crisis are two time bombs that are tied together and can both explode in our faces.

So these are major differences, but this should not prevent us from forming alliances on issues like the tax justice, on making sure we find a solution to the Greek crisis. There are a number of battles in which we are allies, but even then the two parties together in the European Parliament don't have much more than 100 seats. If you add to that the Italian 5 Star Movement, which is somewhere between the radical left and the Greens, you end up with 119 seats. That's far from being a majority. We have to look beyond that in order to build alternative alliances to the orthodoxy that is currently killing Europe.

*Philippe Lamberts has been a Belgian member of the European Parliament since 2009 and is currently Co-President of the Greens/EFA Group, as well as a member of the Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. He was the co-spokesperson of the European Green Party between 2006 and 2012.*



## 2 | UNITED IN ADVERSITY – FACING THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES

When listing the challenges the EU needs to deal with in the coming years, one might not even know where to start. In today's post-democratic state of affairs, engaging voters resembles a Sisyphean task, as citizens seem to have completely given up on politics. We need a new language (Sassen) to get them engaged again, and to tackle the powerful and complex hegemony that robs people of their voices: a language that describes the new reality. The lack of a productive dialogue between politicians and citizens becomes very obvious while looking at the current state of Europe. It's enough to think of the backroom deals characterising the negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). With so much information lacking, citizens are still having a hard time figuring out whether this agreement will bring growth to the EU or not. And even if it has positive effects on the economy, will it contribute to the wellbeing of people? Will it be some kind of a remedy to the current high unemployment rates in the south of the EU? Or will German industry and the City of London reap most of the benefits (Defraigne)?

These are legitimate concerns, taking into consideration that the common good is becoming less and less important in politics. Here it's enough to mention that we, Europeans, are running the risk of losing our (formerly) unique role as global climate leaders (Brugger), not to mention that Europe still hasn't quite figured out how to respond to the Russian military intervention and the undeclared war in eastern Ukraine (Jávor), which raises security questions not only at European level but also on the global scale. On top of this, the Russian crisis makes it even more urgent for Europe to find a way to reduce its dependency on Russian energy.

And finally, there is also a pressing need to find a way to respond to the current increase in the number of refugees entering the EU in hope of a better, peaceful life. In light of today's many humanitarian catastrophes there are millions of people who have no other choice than to leave their homes. Instead of treating these people as criminals, the EU should try to work on a functioning policy (Peral), but for the moment politicians are more interested in blaming each other for the stalemate than finding viable and sustainable solutions to the crisis. Given all these challenges, there is a lot for us to fight for, because we all agree on this: we cannot go on with "business as usual" – finding viable and sustainable solutions is crucial in order to keep the European idea alive.

Saskia Sassen

# Invisibility, globalisation and the limits of the political language

In what kind of world does the political artist work? Sociologist Saskia Sassen spoke at the first *Life Hack* of the art project *Hacking Habitat*. Her theme for the evening: invisibility. This concept was explored in connection to a range of ideas including expulsion, complexity and violence in the global economy.

*The interview was conducted by Erica Meijers, for our partner publication De Helling.*

If you only talk about crisis and inequality the process of economic cleansing passes unnoticed.

*The Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen has seen quite a bit of the globe: she grew up in Argentina and Italy and studied in France. Nowadays she divides her time between London and New York. It is not surprising therefore that much of her research is about globalisation, and the vicissitudes of cities in the globalisation process in particular. Sassen sketches an increasingly narrowing world, in which fewer people and places actually matter. Initially in an economic sense, but subsequently in a social and moral sense too. This is a brutal and violent process, which she underpins theoretically in her latest book* Expulsions. Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy *and illustrates with lots of data.*

**You use the term invisibility. What does it mean in your understanding?**

Generally our times are characterised with the terms "crisis" and "inequality". However important these terms may be, to me they are rather inadequate. Crisis is engrained in capitalism; so that does not offer sufficient explanation for the situation we find ourselves in. Equality is about sharing. It is a description of what is happening, not an explanation.

Today we're seeing a continuous accumulation of the sharp edges of the system. By sharp edges I mean the moments in which common, familiar situations take on extreme characteristics. To such an extreme that the ways in which we usually measure situations in our society get blurred. They fall outside the scope of our statistics. In this sense these situations become invisible. Take for instance the announcement by the IMF and the ECB in January 2013 that Greece was heading in the right direction again. What gave them that idea? They based themselves on figures concerning company profits, exports and so on, but in their statistics no less than 30 percent of the Greek working population was completely absent, all those small companies whose owners had committed suicide or had been declared bankrupt. This process of the vanishing from the statistics is what I call economic cleansing, in analogy to ethnic cleansing. If you only talk about crisis and inequality the process of economic cleansing passes unnoticed.

Likewise, the vast destruction of the environment isn't accounted for in economic reports like these. All those places we've completely exhausted, killing them in fact. We'd better hang up maps in kindergartens, point out those places and say: 'Look children, that's what mommy and daddy have done!' The irony of course is that most of us live in beautiful surroundings. I took a walk through Utrecht, the Netherlands, and I think it's more beautiful than it's been in ages. This sort of thing also contributes to invisibility.

**What does this invisibility have to do with globalisation?**

The idea of globalisation suggests the opposite, namely that we're all closely connected. It gives individuals access to a much larger space than before, physically, digitally, through travel and tourism. But in reality less room is available: less room for crops grown on the land, less clean water, less fresh air to breathe.

In spite of globalisation we still take national borders for granted as markers of our territory, but the territory of most nations has shrunk. In many countries whole parts have lost their usefulness through environmental damage. But you also see this in cities: think of all those deserted neighbourhoods where people were evicted from their homes because they couldn't pay their mortgage any longer. These are no-go areas. And the people concerned are no longer valued as consumers, so they are finished economically. In addition, consumption has lost its importance in the production of economic value; great numbers of people are therefore written off economically and subsequently vanish from numerous statistics.

Another element is that our governments have become poorer, with fewer means available to put the situation right. A great deal of public money has been transferred to the private sector. And multinational companies that are doing a lot of damage have become extremely rich and can proceed unhindered.

So, in many different ways we're dealing with a shrunken world.

That process still continues. A lot of arable land we're still using is actually dying. We know that the temperature of vast tracts of land is too high and that is a signal. In the Netherlands things aren't that bad, except maybe for what is going on in the province of Groningen as a result of natural gas drilling.

**What does that say about the value of all those things, people, and places?**
Everything is reduced to its practical value, including people. Look, during colonialism the Western countries quarrelled over who possessed which colony and what civilisation quest was the best. Nowadays that's of little importance. If China goes somewhere, it only uses what it needs, and leaves. It isn't interested in the rest. They don't care at all if after a few years they leave a complex structure behind for dead. Call it a new kind of imperialism. Power is used to actively create spaces of expulsion. Spaces that have become unfit to live in.

So we have to do with extreme exclusion in all kinds of fields: social, economic, geographical and natural. Look for instance at the black ghettos in the cities; they aren't simply no-go areas, they are now completely written off once and for all, including the people. In the old system they were interesting in terms of cheap labour, but now the economy doesn't need cheap labour anymore. Young black men only serve to form a prison population. After all, in order to make a private prison profitable you need bodies to fill the beds. It's that extreme.

**If democracy is about giving people a voice, making them visible, what does your story say about the shrinking world and democracy?**
Firstly the role of the state has shrunk too because of privatisation and deregulation. The result is that the legislative branch has lost its grip on a lot of sectors. By liberalising the telecom sector for instance, you in fact undermine the role of parliament. The executive branch, i.e. the government, does gain power, which

People want to survive in ways of their own. They're pragmatic. But there's no serious assessment of how our system works and what the alternatives are.

I call ironical power. By regulating the private sector and the semi-public sector the state has become more important when it comes to drafting treaties, drawing up contracts and deciding on rules and regulations. The private sector requires all sorts of rules and regulations. It needs the state to modify legislation. So the state seems to gain in importance as the executive branch increases its power, but the political role of the state is diminished. All the more so since the state itself looks at society through the eyes of the business community because of the lack of distance between the two. The result being that we no longer have a well-functioning liberal state.

**Can a counter-movement achieve anything, if people no longer have an economic powerbase?**
I don't foresee an emancipatory movement like the one we had in the 1970s materialising very rapidly. We also know that many leaders of former resistance movements turned out to be corrupt and violent. So more than about movements, it's about gestures. For instance the way in which president Morales of Bolivia acknowledged an entire population group that had become invisible. But examples like these are few and far between. I do see people and groups who're saying: we'll do it alone, we'll bake our own bread, generate our own energy, and so on. People want to survive in ways of their own. They're pragmatic. But there's no serious assessment of how our system works and what the alternatives are.

*Hacking Habitat* launches the idea of *hacking*; which appeals to me. One counter-movement or one fist isn't enough, the existing systems are just too powerful and too complex. You can bring them down here and there, you can create leaks and make visible what is being suppressed.

**Does the lack of confidence in politics also play a role here?**
Absolutely! And don't forget the poverty of our political language. That's an important issue as well: we need a new language to describe the new reality. The old vocabulary of the left no longer suffices. On the other hand immigrants are depicted as the enemy, vis-à-vis low-income citizens; horizontal lines of conflict are created and the vertical ones disappear out of sight completely. It's a tragedy, it's the poverty of the political language at its worst. The middle class has benefited from Keynesian capitalism, without having to fight for it. So we behave like consumers. We have no time for struggle, all we do is complain... and there's nothing political about that. The question then is: how do we regain control over the political arena? In order to do this a new language is needed.

An old political term we could start using again is expulsion. Because that's what happened, you were expelled, banished from the community, socially you ceased to exist. This often led to actual deaths as well. We see that now, but at a micro-level. Youngsters from migrant families are being expelled. And where can they go? Today there isn't much choice, except the Islamic State. And take prisons, they can be regarded as places of expulsion. They're places where there are people who don't matter anymore. Politically speaking there is a problem of representation. We need language to address the greater political landscape.

Artists, especially the more activist ones, play an important role in creating sanctuaries where alternatives can be invented and tried out.

**Can artists make a contribution?**

Not only artists, but scientists, and others, too. But artists have the benefit of an important condition, namely freedom, in the sense that they enjoy emancipatory autonomy. Because of that they see more and have a different perspective. Art can make visible what has been lost from view. We once organised an exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where an artist showed what it means to work in a *sweatshop* as a needlewoman. She sat there sewing in the shop-window and only left it to sleep elsewhere, just a few hours a night… In the same vein there are exhibits showing what it means to be homeless.

Artists, especially the more activist ones, play an important role in creating sanctuaries where alternatives can be invented and tried out. And strikingly enough they do that often in those places that have been written off by the system, in the spaces of expulsion in other words. Making them visible again.

*Saskia Sassen is Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and Co-Chair of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University. Her research and writing focuses on globalisation, immigration, global cities, the new networked technologies, and changes within the liberal state that result from current transnational conditions.*

# First in the class but not best in the class – The EU's proposal for COP 21

Silvia Brugger

The EU submitted its contribution (INDC) to the global climate change agreement in March, which is due to be adopted in Paris in December. It is worth noting that the EU was the first of the major economies to present its offer for the Paris agreement. Nevertheless, the extent to which the offer paves the way to an ambitious climate deal in Paris is questionable indeed.

*This article was first published on the Heinrich Böll Foundation's website.*

Only a few days after the European Commission set out its vision for the new global climate change agreement, which is due to be adopted in Paris in December, the EU agreed on its contribution to the Paris Conference (in UN-jargon INDC for "intended nationally determined contribution"). The EU aims at a legally binding agreement that would take effect as soon as it is ratified by enough states to cover 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Commission would like the agreement to reduce global emissions by at least 60% below 2010 levels by 2050. However, the expected international contributions are unlikely to be in line with the trajectories required to realise the below two degrees objective in time for Paris. For this reason, the EU has proposed a revision process that would require the UN to assess progress every five years on the basis of climate science and the adequacy of countries' policies to justify an increase in ambition. Such a dynamic review clause must be a crucial outcome of the Paris agreement in order to still keep the 2°C objective within reach.

It is worth noting that the EU was one of the first negotiating parties to present its offer for the Paris agreement. Nevertheless, the extent to which one can agree with Climate and Energy Commissioner Cañete's assertion that the offer paves the way to an ambitious agreement at the end of the year is questionable indeed.

**The risk of watering down EU climate ambition**

The EU's INDC is based on the 2030 climate and energy framework, which requires emission reductions of at least 40% of 1990 levels by 2030. This target represents a compromise between the sometimes-conflicting domestic understandings of the European climate and energy future.

The 2030 EU climate objective is not ambitious enough to make a fair contribution to global climate protection. The target of 40% emissions reductions by 2030 is based on a decarbonisation scenario of 80% by 2050 – this puts the offer at the lower end of the IPCC recommended long-term goal of 80-95% by mid-century. This being said, it should not come as a surprise that the EU Commission has largely abstained from commenting about the fairness of its offer.

Furthermore, the EU decided to include the emissions of the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector in the "at least" 40% target, while taking into account environmental integrity. Due to the challenges associated with the measurement and calculation of emissions, there is considerable concern that the inclusion of LULUCF could threaten the rigour, integrity and ambition of the EU climate target . By announcing that LULUCF rules will be legislated after Paris, but before 2020, the EU does unfortunately not foster much clarity and confidence.

Transparency and accountability of international contributions are ranked very high on the European agenda, and should therefore apply all the more for the domestic climate protection policy.

**Other countries are positioning themselves according to the EU's proposal**

This point is particularly striking given the EU's role in establishing a benchmark for other countries. Countries with larger forestry and land use, such as Brazil and Indonesia, will undoubtedly observe how the EU deals with the LULUCF sector and its controversies. Transparency and accountability of international contributions are ranked very high on the European agenda, and should therefore apply all the more for the domestic climate protection policy.

Moreover, it will be critical to observe the extent to which an increase of the 40% goal will be pursued. This is especially important given the use of the words "at least" in the rhetoric and the fact that the target only mandates reductions in domestic emissions. Accordingly, the EU has left prospects for collectively increasing global climate ambition open, for example with an international carbon-trading scheme, by defining a mid-term climate target to be reached until 2025 and by continuing to push for meaningful reforms of the emissions trading system.

**The EU, hesitant to act alone, relies on others**

At present, the EU's ability to mobilise the political will required to push for further concessions is questionable at best. The Climate Summit in Paris is not very high on the political agenda, and European countries are preoccupied with issues like terrorism, the Ukraine crisis and the Greek bailout. Additionally, many Member States believe that the EU has already done its fair share, and that other states should take the lead.

Accordingly, the EU has called on the developed countries and emerging economies in the G20 (the US and China in particular) to make bold commitments to climate protection. However, it cannot allow itself to rely on the actions of the US and China; instead, the EU should proactively seek alliances with other partners worldwide.

**Climate diplomacy must respond to the needs of the partners**

Despite the criticisms outlined above, the EU's conviction to use its extensive diplomatic network, coupled with its launch of a climate diplomacy action plan, should be commended. The new EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini, alongside her colleague Cañete appear to be promoting this agenda. Nevertheless, such a diplomatic strategy can only be deemed successful and serve to build confidence if it is bolstered by substance and concrete action.

Regrettably, the EU's INDC is limited to emissions reduction, and neglects the issue of adaptation. Indeed, the EU climate agenda bears an Achilles heel in the form of climate finance and adaptation. The Commission claims that it is "too early" to discuss climate finance commitments for the next decade; however, issues of climate finance and adaptation are central to a successful alliance-building between the EU and its "natural partners" in African, Latin American and island countries.

The longer the international community waits to take action on climate mitigation, the more susceptible those already-vulnerable countries become to the effects of climate change.

To make matters worse, and this surely is a disappointment for the EU's prospective partners, the issue of "loss and damage" is completely excluded from the Commission's 16-page document. The EU's approach to preventable loss and damage is crucial; especially given the high priority level of the issue for many countries. The longer the international community waits to take action on climate mitigation, the more susceptible those already-vulnerable countries become to the effects of climate change. One can only hope that the EU prioritises these types of confidence-building diplomatic measures in the future.

**A mutually reinforcing relation**

Climate change should be the core of the Energy Union – and the Energy Union should serve to strengthen EU climate leadership. The EU's credibility at the negotiating table is directly linked to its ability to realise the decarbonisation goals of the Energy Union, for which a vision was outlined some months ago. The Energy Union should not be limited to joint gas purchasing, nor should it blindly advocate the use of all domestic energy sources without regard to the risks and climate impacts of their extraction. Lastly, the presumed trade-off between security of supply, competitiveness, and climate protection should be eradicated from the political narrative.

An Energy Union based on a transition towards 100% renewables has the potential to reinforce Europe's role as a pioneer in the realm of climate protection. However, this will require the support of frontrunner Member States to push for a European energy transition and for an ambitious and fair deal at the COP 21 in Paris. The agreement of G7 leaders to decarbonise the global economy by the end of the century is a hopeful sign on the road to Paris.

The proposal of the EU should not be the last word. Indeed, it is up to the Member States to recognise the (formerly) unique role of the EU as global climate leader and continue to strive for the position of "best in the class."

*Silvia Brugger is Director of the Climate and Energy Programme at the EU office of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung.*

# Choosing between Europe and TTIP

Pierre Defraigne

For Americans, much more so than for Europeans, security trumps freedom. The NSA is beyond the control of the President and of Congress, moreover, in the role of the benevolent protector, the US imposes its own ethical standards onto its allies in order to extract both economic profits and strategic political information. These differences between the US and Europe do not call into question the continued viability of NATO, but they do, however, negate both the desirability and the feasibility of forming a "Transatlantic Internal Market".

*The article was first published as a Madariaga paper in 2013.*

Europe tends towards the precautionary principle, giving priority to the law and thus preventing risk, whereas America prefers a "litigation after damage" approach.

Is the growth promised by the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a modest 0.5% of GDP in the EU, plausible in the context of high unemployment? Or will German industry and the City of London reap most of the benefits on the European side, further widening the economic divergence between Member States, and increasing social inequality in Europe?

Let us analyse the five substantive questions raised by the TTIP. First, we must ask ourselves if the gains, in terms of supply-side economics, expected from trade liberalisation will compensate for the lack of domestic demand perpetuated by the fiscal and wage austerity being implemented on both sides of the Atlantic.

Secondly, given that trade tariffs are already very low and that any separation of European and American markets is primarily due to non-tariff barriers which are deeply rooted in the fabric of society, is it possible to achieve sufficient convergence of norms and regulatory standards to a point where the cultural and social "barriers" to trade are eliminated?

And in this vein, whether it is hormones in livestock, GMOs, chlorinated chickens, privacy protection, plastic packaging, cyber laws, financial, social and environmental standards (including and notably shale gas extraction), is upwards harmonisation or mutual recognition of standards between the U.S. and EU possible? Europe and the United States do not have the same collective preferences, particularly in terms of risk aversion, nor the same institutional models; Europe tends towards the precautionary principle, giving priority to the law and thus preventing risk, whereas America prefers a "litigation after damage" approach.

Thirdly, how do we see the negotiation between the United States and Europe in the (many) areas where the EU has unfortunately not yet achieved unity – energy, finance, telecommunications, railways, digital industries, defence industry – or where European interests are directly opposed to those of the USA; for example in the case of Airbus and Boeing, agriculture, or cultural output? Is a negotiation with a strong and united America, really a negotiation of equals?

Fourth, how to counter the formidable power of the American lobbies, primarily in Congress, but also in Brussels, where they already ensure "friendly" influence at the heart of the European institutions and national governments?

And fifth, how does one reconcile the coexistence of two international reserve currencies in an integrated "Transatlantic Internal Market", for example with a declining dollar and rising euro? Can we envisage a dollarisation of European national economies, explicitly or by pegging, in case of collapse of the eurozone? To date, these five questions remain open.

Treating the TTIP as an 'FTA-plus', when it is in fact an 'FTA gone too far', reveals the extraordinary short-sightedness of the European Council. How else can one explain, firstly, the neoliberal conformity that still prevails in European fora, despite the crisis, and also activities of the lobby groups, especially those

Treating the TTIP as an 'FTA-plus', when it is in fact an 'FTA gone too far', reveals the extraordinary short-sightedness of the European Council.

in Brussels who represent very specific American interests? The political (or mercantile) affinities between London, Berlin and Washington also play a considerable role. Amongst other European heads of state, several have only vague ideas about the complex relationship between these two compatible, but ultimately radically different, concepts: European identity and the Atlantic 'strategic partnership'. We shall attempt to shed some light on the matter with the following three proposals.

First of all, regulatory convergence between the U.S. and the EU, by superimposing itself on the completion of the Single Market, will shift the policy focus away from EU internal unity. This Common Market unity is an absolute priority for Europe, as well as being a critical element of its political identity; pursuing the TTIP will instead expose it to dissolution. In addition, it opens up the possibility of a U.S. "divide and conquer" strategy in the heart of the legislative process of integration.

Furthermore, the effective substitution of multilateral negotiations at the WTO level by a EuroAmerican regulatory block setting international standards, and the resulting pressure for China to abide by them, combined with the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership (TTP) will appear to Beijing no less than a containment strategy. And what's more, if it is indeed a containment strategy, it will not be a very effective one, given China's bargaining power, stemming from the expected growth in the Chinese domestic market, and the ability of China to implement a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) to compete with the TTP.

Finally, those in favour of a NATO rebalancing, in particular in light of the distancing of the United States, should be seriously concerned to see the European dependence on the US increasing; the reliance shifting from strategic to economic. This would go against the necessary convergence of America and Europe towards political parity, a priority which should lie at the core of NATO. A European common defence policy would strengthen the Atlantic Alliance even as the TTIP would weaken it, fostering a return to anti-Americanism in Europe.

*Pierre Defraigne is Executive Director of the Madariaga – College of Europe Foundation.*

Benedek Jávor

# Reconsidering EU-Russia energy relations – A basis for a new balance

The aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, the Russian military intervention and the undeclared war in eastern Ukraine brought about a crucial change in the EU's foreign affairs. The new understanding of a conflict-oriented and imperial rationality-based attitude of the Russian leadership caused a substantial shift in the EU's Russia politics – and raises security questions not only at European level but also on the global scale.

*An earlier version of this article was published on the website of the Green European Journal in February 2015.*

Putin is primarily led by imperial rationality and now it seems that Putin's Russia is no longer interested in a trustworthy and functional relationship with the EU.

The military conflict in Ukraine has brought to the forefront the issue of energy security, the need to reduce all forms of dependency on Russia and it underlines the importance of the EU speaking with one voice in energy policy as well as in its foreign policy.

Russia is the EU's biggest neighbour and its third biggest trading partner. In the last decades, EU-Russia relations have been characterised by mutual recognition and increasing cooperation, which was evident not only in the fields of trade and economic cooperation. The so-called common spaces cover aspects such as research, culture, education, environment, freedom and justice. Moreover, negotiations have been ongoing since 2008 to further strengthen the partnership and have legally binding commitments in all areas including political dialogue, freedom, security and justice, research, culture, investment and energy. After 2010, the Partnership for modernisation has become the focal point for cooperation, reinforcing dialogue initiated in the context of the common spaces.

**Not acceptable in any sense**

The role of Russia in the Ukrainian crisis shed light on the fact that Russia is not on track in the process of democratisation and modernisation, in the way the EU had believed. Russian politics did not become more moderate through the cooperation with the EU, but rather the opposite occurred. Even if we accept the experts' argumentation for the need for a "buffer zone" between the EU and Russia, the illegal annexation of Crimea and the continuous destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine including aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil cannot be considered acceptable in any sense. These issues give a clear indication of the unchanged aggressive nature of Russian politics and leadership. It became clear that Putin is primarily led by imperial rationality and now it seems that Putin's Russia is no longer interested in a trustworthy and functional relationship with the EU.

Since 2014, the EU has progressively imposed restrictive measures in response to the annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of Ukraine. After a series of rocket attacks in Mariupol by pro-Russian separatists in January this year, the Latvian EU presidency has called on a council of EU foreign ministers to prepare the ground for a summit of EU leaders on the crisis with Russia and to determine the role the EU should take. The developments over the past two years call for a new interpretation of the Russian-EU relationship as they demonstrate that Putin's Russia is impossible to handle with peaceful approaches and methods based on seeking consensus. It is all the more important that the EU speaks with one voice and acts in a united manner. And this is exactly what is missing.

**A need for clear signals**

Some EU member states including Poland and the Baltic states regularly use strong anti-Russian rhetoric, while others, such as Hungary, take political decisions showing an opening towards Russia. These seemingly contradictory attitudes, however, might stem from a common fear of growing Russian influence – partly

due to historical reasons. The only difference lies in the role these national governments attribute to the EU (or the US) in handling the conflict, depending on the extent they believe that the EU is willing and able to send clear signals to Russia.

Germany itself, having a huge influence on EU politics, has recently re-evaluated the Russian relationship. Before, Germany had the standpoint that a close economic cooperation could have a stabilising effect on Russia and reduce the possibility of aggressive geopolitical measures. They hoped that this cooperation might also further the modernisation of the Russian economy and thus it might contribute to the creation of a Russian state that was linked to the world economy not only through its energy export, but with many other ties and which has its interests in sustaining the balance of international relationships. Germany, however, has realised that these presuppositions and hopes were wrong. Therefore, Chancellor Merkel placed harsh measures and defends consistently the sanctions that the EU adopted in response to Russia's military intervention in the Ukraine.

The sanctions in place include the suspension of most cooperation programmes, suspended talks on visas and the new EU-Russia agreement, as well as restrictive measures targeting sectorial cooperation in the fields of defence and sensitive technologies, including those in the energy sector. Russian access to capital markets is also restricted. The European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have suspended the signing of new financing operations in Russia and a trade and investment ban is in force for the Crimea region.

The sanctions would have expired in the course of this year, yet various EU leaders stressed that the EU should maintain the sanctions until Russia stopped the aggression in Ukraine. Thus, the Council meeting of June 2015 extended the restrictive measures and economic sanctions until June 2016. These sanctions, however, are somewhat questionable in their effect.

Thus, the EU has to find a way to ensure aid and protection for the civilian population in eastern Ukraine as well as to find a new balance in the EU-Russian relations. In this respect, again, speaking with one voice is essential. Finding a new balance is key in the broader context, for the sake of a global equilibrium as well, as Russia might opt for building stronger links to China.

**Extreme dependency**

These recent developments also affect the issue of energy security in the EU, which is very high on the political agenda now. However, the impacts of Russia's nuclear investments in the EU are not seriously considered.

We are all aware that the EU is extremely dependent on external energy sources, mainly coming from Russia. (And vice versa, supplies of oil and gas make up a large proportion of Russia's exports to Europe, which are crucial for the Russian economy. The recent collapse of the Russian economy due to the rapid fall of oil prices is a clear proof of this, as it has shown

The EU has to reassess its relationship with Russia, to act firmly in a united manner and to tackle security threats at all levels, including in the field of energy policy.

that the country's self-confidence merely stemmed from high oil prices.)

The dependency on Russian fossil fuels and the lack of diversification of energy sources have been widely recognised in the EU's energy policy. However, these are only a small part of the whole picture. The impacts of Russia's fossil or nuclear investments in the EU are hardly considered in the energy-related acquis, even though it is obvious that through its energy corporations, the Russian government has means of influence far beyond the mere business transactions.

Energy dependency can appear in multiple forms including financial, technological or fuel dependence in the nuclear and fossil sectors, acquisition and ownership of strategic energy infrastructure as well as investments in energy projects by Russia in the EU, in particular, the Baltic and the Central-Eastern European member states. Here again, we see no unified behaviour from EU member states. Some EU member states have reconsidered their cooperation with Russia, or Rosatom in particular as a consequence of the crisis in Ukraine, e.g. Germany refused to sell the gas storage capacities to Russia, Bulgaria refused a second Rosatom nuclear plant, Slovakia stopped negotiations with the Russian nuclear complex, and the UK suspended its negotiations with the company. At the same time, some EU countries such as Finland or Hungary still consider building new nuclear power plants partly using Russian financial sources, technology, fuel and waste management facilities. It is the responsibility of the EU bodies to ensure that decisions in any member state do not undermine the energy security of the EU as a whole.

Equally importantly, the EU should think out of the box and look beyond resource route diversification and new infrastructure projects, when it comes to improving energy security. A systemic, long term solution for the problem is increased energy efficiency with special attention to the transport sector, residential buildings and industrial sites and the wide-scale use of local, renewable energy sources building upon, inter alia, novel financial solutions and community-based models. Energy efficiency and renewables projects could be very useful components of this project, as they could contribute to reducing all forms of energy dependencies.

To conclude: even if the hopes of the EU for the stabilisation and democratization of Russia have failed to come true, geopolitical realities are given. The EU has to reassess its relationship with Russia, to act firmly in a united manner and to tackle security threats at all levels, including in the field of energy policy. The EU should work for a healthier relationship with Russia in this regard, as well, by systemically reducing its dependency, wherever possible – yet acknowledging long-term mutual dependencies which can be used as a basis for the new balance.

*Benedek Jávor is a Hungarian Member of the European Parliament for Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Dialogue for Hungary), and was a founding member of the environmental NGO Védegylet (Protect the Future!).*

Rafael del Peral

# Cooperation to remove the barbed wire: Europe and the Maghreb

Many inhabitants of the Maghreb have no other choice than to leave their homes, and start a new life abroad. Instead of treating these people as criminals, the EU should try to work on a functioning policy for the region. This includes looking at problems from an environmental perspective.

*This article was first published online in the 10th edition of the Green European Journal, "Peace, Love and Intervention".*

## Migration and integration: Debunking the myths

"(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." These two statements make up Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Based on this we can say: denying the right of migration is inhumane. This may seem an overstatement, but what other word is there to describe the denial of humanitarian aid and assistance to those fleeing extreme poverty, hunger and violence?

In Europe we are experiencing a regression of the values on which our community was based – the cosmopolitan cooperation of different cultures in order to build a common future. The crisis has fuelled racial hatred and has helped feed the myths on which xenophobic parties thrive[1], such as:

1. The myth of the roots, based on the alleged identity of the various European nations, purportedly invaded by "different" people, who are required to either assimilate and abandon any existing cultural ties or be condemned to ostracism and exclusion. This idea is based upon a lie – our cultures are not homogeneous, and neither are those of the migrants.

2. The statistical myth, which consists in counting intra-European migrants as foreigners in statistics, even though the Schengen Convention establishes that they are citizens. It is sad to think that the free movement of persons, unlike the movement of capital, is called into question based on a false perception of security concerns whereby our privacy is monitored and our rights and freedoms reduced.

3. The myth of the illegality of people, whereby people rather than actions are condemned as illegal, and the mere act of crossing a border is criminalised. "No human being is humanly illegal, and still there are many who are legally illegal and indeed should be, and they are those who exploit, those who use their fellow beings to grow in power and wealth." I echo these words of the Nobel-winning Portuguese writer José Saramago and I reiterate that no one who is in need of asylum should be excluded. As if running away from one's home were not damaging enough to a person's inherent dignity, they are then received as criminals.

4. The myth that anything goes against illegal migration. From detention centres where human rights are violated and where there is no health care, to hot returns and the walls of shame in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, due to which Spain accumulates complaints before the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the

1 CHUECA, Ángel G. (2005) "Mitos, leyes de extranjería y migraciones internacionales en el Mediterráneo". In FLECHA, José-Román & GARCÍA, Cristina. *El Mediterráneo en la Unión Europea ampliada*. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, pp. 89-116.

Environmental refugees are invisible to international statutes, despite being estimated by Norman Meyers to reach 250 million by 2050.

Council of Europe and the United Nations (UN). The radical difference in the protection of the fundamental rights of the poor compared to the rich is huge. Proof of this is the fact that no Western countries are to be found among the signatories of the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

**An interdependent world**

The West must accept two premises: that one cannot hold a different conception of human rights based on economic capacity, and that in an interdependent world our actions as countries and as individuals have global consequences. Poverty and environmental degradation are closely related, as becomes clear when crossing variables from the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Ecological Footprint.

Yet environmental refugees are invisible to international statutes, despite being estimated by Norman Meyers to reach 250 million by 2050. Including them would require accepting the intrinsic relationship between pollution, ocean acidification, resource scarcity, salinisation of irrigated land and desertification with hunger, shortage of drinking water, loss of biodiversity, social unrest, war and migrations.

Advocating a green and cosmopolitan Europe implies bearing in mind this relationship and revitalising a *ius migrandi* (the right to migrate) in its three perspectives: the right to remain in our home in dignified living conditions, including the right to emigrate as well as the forgotten right to settle peacefully wherever one chooses. This would be of particular importance for the people of the Maghreb.

**The Green solution: no more neoliberal models**

The creation of Green policies between the Maghreb and Europe implies understanding the problems of the region from an environmental perspective. A development model is not feasible if environmental collapse is to be avoided. Therefore, the Maghreb's future does not lie in imitating the "Angola model" of exchanging raw materials for "mega-projects" built by China, which has found in Africa a resource pool to satisfy its growing consumption.

There is no denying that Africa is in need of economic decolonisation. The income sources of the Maghreb countries are either limited (gas, oil, iron or phosphates) or closely linked to environmental and social balance (farming, tourism and horticultural exports). Therefore, short-sighted neoliberal or neo-Keynesian models are unable to allow for the reality of finite resources and do not take into consideration region's environmental deterioration.

The environmental problems of the area generate social problems that also impact its economy. The drought that plagues Mauritania and keeps 12 million people at risk of malnutrition is proof of this delicate balance. Meanwhile, desertification threatens the Maghreb's coastal areas, a region where there are still non-degraded areas and one that is already dependent on exports of grain.

Wherever there are people living under draconian business practices, there we will find allies to generate awareness and amplify calls for change committed to the planet.

Moreover, the introduction of fracking in Algeria prompted strong protests, since it requires large amounts of water, a scarce resource in the country. This should remind us that ecological thinking is present even among the poorest sectors and those more strongly dependent on energy exports. It should also remind us that wherever there are people living under draconian business practices, there we will find allies to generate awareness and amplify calls for change committed to the planet.

**"Vicious circles"**

We tend to forget that the causes for shortages in countries emerging from colonisation often go back to the abuses committed by extractive social elites that plunder the resources on which the global North thrives and concentrate power, promoting what the development scholars Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson called "vicious circles" – that is, problems that exacerbate the existing problems.

For example, Morocco and Algeria are politically stuck in their progress towards democratic systems, being dependent on "strong men" such as King Mohamed VI of Morocco or President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Institutionalised corruption and the absence of democracy create instability that makes the rule of law impossible since it prevents institutional changes, condemns these societies to poverty and inequality, and makes them a hotbed of fundamentalism and conflict, rather than fostering an education that respects the culture and religion of the different regions, that promotes the emancipation of women and creates the conditions for developing a strong civil society.

In addition to this, Libya is embroiled in a second civil war, and its HDI continues to decline, which has been forgotten now that the oil flow to the North has been restored. Furthermore, Western Sahara is still illegally occupied by Morocco, due to Spain's lack of political will and the distrust in the relations between Morocco and Algeria – as the king of Morocco owns the phosphate mines in Western Sahara, whereas Algeria defends the territory's independence by echoing the demands of the Polisario Front (the liberation movement of Western Sahara). Meanwhile, refugee camps in the region, such as Tindouf or M'Bera, continue to grow in size and await a solution that never comes.

In this context it is no wonder that regional cooperation projects such as the Arab Maghreb Union are frozen owing to bilateral conflicts. Morocco is trying to distance itself from Algeria and be positioned as a salient ally of the European Union by partaking in common security policies, fisheries agreements or through the MEDA programme for financial aid. This forces supranational organisations like the EU to cooperate with each nation separately, rendering it impossible to develop interregional projects.

**The West needs to listen, as well as act**

We need to radically rethink our understanding of foreign policy if we want to cooperate with the Maghreb. Cooperation implies reciprocity, mutual cooperation, understanding that our best interest is in the welfare of not only our country but the world; not only for the current generations but for the future ones too. To this end, we must rethink the traditional

It is not acceptable that the dreams of the people of the South are crushed on the barbed wires of Ceuta and Melilla or that thousands of them are drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.

formulas, we must reduce resource consumption in countries with a higher carbon footprint, and enforce the effective observance of human rights in the most devastated regions.

The formula of the Washington consensus, based on the premise that introducing a neoliberal market economy guarantees the development of democratic institutions, has been proven false. Failing to treat non-Western cultures as equals who are able to dialogue and fit for problem solving reeks of Eurocentrism and prevents exchanges of culture and know-how between North and South.

It is not acceptable that the dreams of the people of the South are crushed on the barbed wires of Ceuta and Melilla or that thousands of them are drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the North must commit to reducing the carbon footprint, foster a culture where citizens are empowered and ecologically aware, and demand fair treatment from Europe towards the Maghreb, its migrants and the global South. In the words of Seville's Muslim poet Az-Zubaidi, "The whole Earth, in its diversity, is one, and all its inhabitants are human and neighbours." Let us cooperate today to remove the barbed wire.

*Rafael del Peral is a student of political science and law at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, and co-ordinator of the politics and society section of the Spanish ecological publication Ecopolítica.*

# 3 | NEVER CLOSER UNION – FACING EUROPE'S INNER CHALLENGES

Today all dimensions of solidarity – be they social, economic or ecological – have lost relevance. The absence of an EU compromise on how to deal with refugees fleeing from war and poverty is just one example, the indifference towards millions of Europeans condemned to extreme poverty, mass emigration, unemployment and the plundering of natural resources, by failed austerity programmes, are some of the others.

Europe is living dramatic moments. The determination of a few, to impose Grexit, no matter the consequences, is one of the warning signals that the EU crisis is not only social or economic. It is democracy that is at stake. And it's no exaggeration to say: if we continue acting this way, the European project will collapse.

And yet, the "EU always presents alternatives, depending on forces and plans that are not always on the table" – writes Etienne Balibar. One of these alternatives should be the Greens. To match the different visions and combined difficulties and solutions in an EU dominated by a neoliberal *political front* is the Greens' major challenge. The articles and interviews making up the next chapter confirm that this is a huge task. But we believe it is not impossible. To understand the various perspectives, different cultural and political approaches, the obstacles and the risks, Etienne Balibar's article and our interview with Ska Keller and Mar Garcia are very insightful.

Transforming political consciousness should be one of the main political goals when tackling the dominant neoliberal model (Mouffe). We need to pay more attention to social demands and to redistribution and embrace our capacity to connect with struggles and social movements. In order to be successful in our endeavours we need to define a common and a consistent political agenda, because in today's European societies, most voters don´t feel like they have a real choice.

And do we have an alternative model for the future? Can we prosper without growth? That´s the question posed by Giorgios Kalis in his 10 proposals that aim to provide an alternative to *the magic word* now used in both the mainstream left and right narratives.

Finally José Bové explains how actions, commitment to democratic struggles, campaigns can contest the current system. His experience and background give an encouraging vision of an alter/green activist, or as he puts it in his own Gramscian words, an "active pessimist" who did not give up dreaming of a better future.

ⓘ mac_ivan

Chantal Mouffe

# Transforming political consciousness

Today voters can only choose between Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. This in turn leads to the depoliticisation of people and a lack of interest in what is going on in our societies. If a Green party cannot present an alternative to the current neoliberal system it won't be able to connect the struggles, argues philosopher Chantal Mouffe in an interview with the Green European Journal.

*This interview was first published online in the 11th edition of the Green European Journal, "Connecting the Struggles".*

The struggles we witness all over the world are democratic struggles, in the sense that they are struggles against a form of subordination. But it's a mistake to believe that they necessarily converge.

**Is it possible to connect the many different struggles we see now in the world?**
The first question is not whether it is possible to connect the struggles, it is "what's the objective?" For a political project, the aim should be the radicalisation of democracy (creating the kind of democracy that not only accepts difference, but depends on it). This can only be done if one puts into question the currently dominant neoliberal model.

Our societies are sometimes called post-democratic societies: we still have all the institutions, but they have lost their meanings. In a representative democracy people need to have a chance to vote and to choose between different alternatives. Today, there is no fundamental difference between centre-right and centre-left: they are managing the same neoliberal globalisation, even if one might do it more humanely than the other.

I think that this is not a situation in which I would say democracy has a meaning. For me democracy only has meaning when you have an agonistic struggle in which you have alternatives, and I think that Green parties would also need to situate themselves in respect to that. There are, for example, some Green parties who are not offering anything that could be seen as an alternative to neoliberal globalisation, some of them are even willing to make alliances with the centre-right and the centre-left. Thus, it is not always very clear where the Green parties stand, whether they are left or right.

I think, if a Green party cannot present an alternative to the current neoliberal system, I'm not sure it will be able to connect the struggles or create what we call a "chain of equivalence" between all the democratic struggles. A common adversary makes a lot of sense when creating convergence, and in this situation the common adversary would be neoliberalism, and the actual form of financial capitalism.

The struggles we witness all over the world are democratic struggles, in the sense that they are struggles against a form of subordination. But it's a mistake to believe that they necessarily converge. The unity is something that needs to be constructed politically. For me this is something that is central for the radicalisation of democracy. But this can only happen once we know what the objective of the movements is. Do they simply want to contribute to the humanisation of financial capitalism and neoliberalism or are they movements that want to offer an alternative to the current hegemony?

**But if the enemy is neoliberalism that means that you can only unite groups with a social or economic agenda, but not groups that seek recognition, like LGBT groups, for example.**
Today there is a big discussion about what is more important: the struggle for recognition or the struggle for redistribution. My position is that a project of radicalisation of democracy needs to link both. I find it very disturbing that some left-wing and Green parties only advocate LGBT rights and liberties, and they don't care at all about the questions that concern the working class.

I think it is very important to participate in elections and to try to come to power. I think a good example of linking social movements to more traditional parties is the example of Syriza in Greece.

This is why we see the emergence of right-wing populist movements in so many countries of Europe. Look at the example of France: the majority of the working class votes for Marine Le Pen's Front National. And they vote for that party because that's the only party that pretends to take care of their interests. This is extremely dangerous.

The left-wing parties can't abandon the working class and act as if those people were already lost for progressive policies. The really important struggle for me is to find a way to link those struggles, to link the struggles for equality in the economy and equality in terms of gender and in terms of race. This is not something that is already given; you need to construct this link if you want to establish some kind of alliance between LGBT movements and the working class. And for that you need to transform the political consciousness, so that the demands of the LGBT people can be articulated together with the demands of immigrants, the working class, and so on.

This of course means that a new adversary needs to be constructed. And for that we also need to be aware that many of the new demands that exist today are based on problems that are in fact caused by inequalities. And I am not only thinking in terms of inequalities in salaries: capitalism is destroying the environment and with it the livelihoods of many people; and in this situation even middle class people – who are not particularly affected by economic issues – tend to suffer under the effects of neoliberalism.

**We have seen in recent years that movements don't really trust political parties. What do you think a Green party can do if it wants to approach movements and become part of the struggles?**
That of course is a problem for all left-wing parties who want to look for an alternative to neoliberal globalisation. The creation of the collective popular will cannot be done strictly through the vertical order inside the party. You need to have some kind of association between the horizontal forms (everything that has to do with the social movements) and the party itself.

At the moment, what I find really worrying is for example the issue of the Occupy movement and some other groups who were able to organise socially but did not want to have anything to do with the more traditional forms of politics. This attitude is not going to lead to any serious transformation. Those movements are important, because they transform the common sense, they bring to the fore a serious issue, but on their own they are not going to be able to transform the relation of power that structures society, nor to get rid of the neoliberal hegemony.

I think it is very important to participate in elections and to try to come to power. I think a good example of linking social movements to more traditional parties is the example of Syriza in Greece. But this is also what Podemos are doing in Spain, and I think this is how real progressive politics should work. Green parties used to insist on this kind of alliance before, they didn't want to be like the traditional parties, but unfortunately they have become too

institutionalised. That's the big problem in politics: a lack of institutionalisation leads to impotence, too much of it cuts the parties from their base. Therefore I think it is important for Green parties to recover this relationship with social movements.

There is also a very interesting debate now in France, inside Europe Écologie – Les Verts. There are some people who want to go back to government with the socialists, and there is another group, led by Cécile Duflot, the former Minister of Territorial Equality and Housing, which is trying to establish links with the Left Front and left-wing populist movements. I think the future of left-wing politics in Europe should be on the basis of what I call left-wing populism. This means creating a transversal alliance between different groups by defining their common adversary: neoliberal globalisation. I think the Greens should be part of this alliance.

**You advocate left-wing populism. But people on the left like to think of themselves as intellectuals, as critical thinkers. How is their rather complex worldview compatible with left-wing populism?**
If you want to be critical about everything, you shouldn't do politics. For me politics means choosing a side. Of course, many of us expect the intellectuals to look at things from the outside, but I tend to disagree with this view. I am on the side of Antonio Gramsci who advocates for the role of the organic intellectual, the kind of intellectual who is active in politics: in Gramsci's view all of us can be intellectuals, not only the academics in their ivory towers, but also teachers or syndicalists, all the people who are involved in organising social relations. I would go even further and say, in my view these people are the real intellectuals, and not the ones who sit in their ivory towers without taking a stance, so that they remain pure and their hands don't get dirty. Left-wing populism means that intellectuals are going to act as organic intellectuals in those movements.

**And what about those whose voices are marginalised? As sociologist Agnes Gagyi puts it: "There are countless other ways to express personal or massive dissatisfaction, from slipping into alcoholism to joining sects to committing suicide (...) it is the existing unequal distribution of social resources that defines who is in the position to launch movements in the first place."**
I think that many of the people who remain outside of the movements, do so because they can't identify with any of the projects. One of the specifics of the neoliberal hegemony is that it makes people believe that there is no alternative to the existing neoliberal order. Today, if you go to vote you basically have to choose between Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. Also, nowadays all political issues are considered technical, and of course technical issues are better dealt with by experts. So in fact the citizens don't have a role to play anymore, they don't have a say, and this in turn leads to the depolitisation of people and a lack of interest in what is going on in our societies. This is manifested in the fact that there are more and more abstentions. People get completely disillusioned, instead of getting involved they stay at home and

drink. This is something that is very worrisome for democracy, because it leads to the earlier mentioned development of right-wing populism.

The only way to fight against this is to reestablish an agonistic debate. We shouldn't let it look like there is no alternative to neoliberalism. In fact, there are always alternatives.

*Chantal Mouffe is a political theorist and Professor of Political Theory at the University of Westminster. She has held research positions at Harvard, Cornell, the University of California, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. She is best known for the book "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy" (co-authored with Ernesto Laclau, 1985).*

# Europe's survival depends on solidarity

Ska Keller

Mar Garcia Sanz

The European Union today is witnessing an ideological battle over its economy and politics. A cycle of austerity, fuelled by short-sightedness and irrationality, is creating a major setback for European integration and driving disillusioned citizens to turn away from the European project in even greater numbers. While dissenting voices and visions are silenced, this amounts to an attack on democracy and solidarity. An interview with Mar Garcia Sanz and Ska Keller.

Europe is a complex thing, it's the home of hundreds of millions of people, and it is about much more than just economic gains. Solidarity is one of the key issues that brings them together.

**Joschka Fischer, former Foreign Minister of Germany said not so long ago that the essence of the internal crisis of Europe is one of solidarity, without European solidarity, the European idea will not be able to last. Would you agree with that?**
**Ska Keller:** I absolutely agree that without solidarity there wouldn't be much left of Europe, or at least nothing that we can call "European". But unfortunately, at the moment solidarity is lacking in the European debate. We have the Greek crisis, where the lack of solidarity with Greece is leading Europe to a really severe problem, as the troubles of the eurozone are also troubles for all of Europe. Forcing Greece to leave the eurozone would be a very dangerous precedent. But similarly, in the case of the current refugee crisis, in which thousands of people are dying while trying to escape wars or extreme poverty in their home countries, there is not much sign of solidarity. What are the member states doing? They point fingers at each other. They cannot agree on the relocation quotas, instead, states are talking about voluntary solidarity, a kind of solidarity that cannot work. But we need solidarity in Europe to survive this.

**Mar Garcia:** I completely subscribe to what Fisher said. I think the concept of solidarity is threatened, and it's threatened by austerity policies, by the neoliberal approach of constructing Europe. It's a mistake. If you conceive of Europe exclusively as an economic project you're just having in mind one aspect of many. Europe is a complex thing, it's the home of hundreds of millions of people, and it is about much more than just economic gains. Solidarity is one of the key issues that brings them together.

**Have Europe's politicians always been so arrogant? Or is this just a recent phenomenon?**
**Ska Keller:** I haven't always been around, but I believe that the kind of arrogance we see now is a nationalistic sort of arrogance: everyone thinks "I did everything right, it's the others who are to blame." That's both what we see in the case of Greece and in the migrant issue. It's always a blame game, and this game is the opposite of solidarity.

**Mar Garcia:** I believe that arrogance is part of human nature, but it shouldn't be the driving force. Unfortunately, in the construction of today's Europe we have too much of this sentiment. This is a question of maturity and of our set of values, these determine how arrogantly we behave. This current sentiment is driven by the fact that in the construction of Europe there has been too much egocentrism, and there has been a lack of perspective for a European interest.

**It's quite obvious that austerity programmes have failed, but countries like Germany are still unwilling to revaluate their stances and allow member states to find an alternative way out of the crisis. Why?**
**Ska Keller:** Because they would also need to admit that they have failed? If they would change their view on austerity that would change the fundamental ideology of the current German government. At the moment they are still saying that the only reason austerity hasn't worked is that the countries undergoing austerity haven't implemented enough of the proposed policies. Also, there are countries that have already implemented lots of cuts, and once there would be a change of policy they would start complaining "we had to do it, why are others

The Greens are there in the European Parliament, they are raising their voice, they are trying their best, but it's really difficult to act in a framework in which there is almost no way to deal with the issue differently.

exempted from it?" So that's another question of solidarity: instead of saying "we did it, and we've seen how stupid it is" they insist on making others undergo the same painful procedure they did. All member states are looking for their own national gains, and that's at the core of their behaviour.

**Mar Garcia:** I think this also depends on the kind of ideology that can be found behind the decisions that are taken in the EU, and in my point of view, Germany has unfortunately won the cultural battle. This means that they are communicating the following: "Those people in certain parts of Europe were not doing anything apart from partying, and we were the ones paying their expenses. But we don't want to continue doing that anymore." I think this is a cultural issue, and I think it's a challenge to go beyond this mainstream cultural perspective. The current government of Germany needs to rethink whether it would be possible to judge the problems of Europe according to a different logic. Not only the national logic, but the whole European logic needs to be revamped in order to change this cultural framework. The Greens are there in the European Parliament, they are raising their voice, they are trying their best, but it's really difficult to act in a framework in which there is almost no way to deal with the issue differently.

**Ska Keller:** I would not call this attitude "culture". I am German as well, and this is not how I see things. It's more of an ideology.

**Mar Garcia:** I call it culture, because there is an aspect of this narrative that points at groups of people, people of a different "culture", and says that these people have a different mentality towards life. But this is not something unique to Germany, we can even see this in Spain, when it comes to judging the Catalans, for example. Merkel and the CDU are important in this issue because they have won the battle of framing the issue in a certain way, and this way involves pointing at people and their specific cultures.

**In an op-ed Yanis Varoufakis, the former Greek Minister of Finance, has asked for a "Speech of Hope" to be held by Angela Merkel in Greece, in order to "hint at a new approach to European integration". Would you agree that Germany has additional responsibilities in this process?**

**Ska Keller:** Merkel has never even managed to hold a speech of hope for Germans, so I am not sure she would be able to hold a speech of hope for the Greeks. But indeed, Varoufakis touches on an important point. Merkel has the final say in German politics, and in German politics the mainstream mindset is focused on austerity at the moment. We need to acknowledge that whatever decisions we make at national or European level will always affect others. We need to find a way to make people accountable. But this issue of the speech goes both ways. Tsipras could also go to Germany and explain to the parliament why the Greeks need more guarantees. The European Parliament should also play a more active role in dealing with these issues, because in the European Parliament we have a large number of different opinions, from all member countries, and all political formations, it could be the perfect place discuss the issue. But instead, in the

The European Parliament could be a place where you can discuss the issue of Greece beyond national points of views, but this aspect is underused at the moment.

case of Greece we see that the big parties are just blocking the debate. The European Parliament could be a place where you can discuss the issue of Greece beyond national points of views, but this aspect is underused at the moment. Just imagine what could happen if Merkel and Tsipras came here and presented their views.

**Mar Garcia:** I agree on that point. Giving a speech would be a symbol, but from my point of view the real value is in acting. I think it's really important to frame this problem in a different way, different from the national one. That's maybe even more important than visiting each other's countries. And the Parliament would provide a perfect framework for that.

**With the kind of strong rhetoric we hear from Syriza or Podemos, do you think there is a serious challenge to the austerity doctrine dominating Europe? Or do you think these voices are still marginal in the political discourse?**

**Mar Garcia:** I think Tsipras and Syriza won the election with a clear mandate against austerity, and I hope that the majority-choice of the citizens and of those in political roles are going to play a role when it comes to tackling austerity. We have elections this year in Spain, and we hope that there will be a similarly strong anti-austerity vote. It's so bad that France and Italy could have played an important role in strengthening this anti-austerity attitude in Europe, but they did not, in the end.

**Ska Keller:** The anti-austerity voice is there, it's quite loud, and the outcome of the current situation in Greece will determine a lot. It depends on this outcome whether it will fail or whether it will become stronger. I think at the moment one cannot see which way it will go. Not to mention that there is also the question of what the "anti" in anti-austerity means.

**Mar Garcia:** But I think it's important to add that, besides Syriza and Podemos, we as Greens are also calling for a different policy and an alternative to austerity. I hope that we can grow in the future, and thereby make the anti-austerity voice louder.

**Sigmar Gabriel, Vice-Chancellor of Germany and Emmanuel Macron, the French Minister of Economy penned an opinion piece for the Guardian in which they argued for stronger integration and a union of solidarity and differentiation which needs to be achieved through French and German leadership. Would you agree that whatever happens in Europe needs to be based on French and German leadership?**

**Ska Keller:** I personally don't agree with that. We are a union of 28, and all the member states need to have their voice. It's good when there are initiatives and impulses for member states, so I don't mind if France and Germany say "look, we have an idea, and we want to propose something to you" but that shouldn't be about all the member states having to do what Germany and France came up with. All member states need to have an equal role to play and an equal voice to speak.

**Mar Garcia:** I wouldn't mind leadership. Germany and France are big countries that can really make a difference. But of course this shouldn't be the kind of leadership that imposes something on the member states, but an inclusive one that takes into account the interests of all 28 countries. Unfortunately, this is not the kind of leadership they are showing now. Today, the way they act is very unilateral. The only good leadership is the one that addresses the problems and considers the needs of member states.

**We have spoken about the anti-austerity parties in the South of Europe. These parties are supported by popular mobilisations; how do you see this in Spain and in other countries where these movements have gained momentum. Can they promote more solidarity in Europe?**

**Mar Garcia:** Obviously in the South the crisis is not only economic, it is a systemic crisis. It's also political in nature, and has led to a social crisis. From my point of view these movements are an expression of the citizens' will. People want the current political elites to stop what they are doing. "Basta, we're sick of it!" and now, in the South we are seeing things that we would have never imagined. The last local election was a result of that change. A number of citizen candidates have gone to the institutions and started dealing with political issues. In the South these refer to the deficits of the political system that were not tackled in the last 30 years. The political system has allowed the corruption to strive, and the situation was just unbearable, and now something has started. It is really an answer to a model of governance that hasn't worked.

**Ska Keller:** I share the enthusiasm, but it is also important to ask whether these movements will stay on the local or national level, or whether they will emerge and turn into a European movement. Today a European dimension to these movements is still lacking.

**In this issue of the journal MEP Philippe Lamberts, concerning the issue of the disillusioned people of Greece and Spain, expresses his frustration that it was the radical left and not the Greens who managed to reap the benefits from these people turning their back on the centre-left and centre-right parties.**

**Mar Garcia:** I think it's a problem that we, as Greens, were not able to read between the lines. And now I think that we Greens need to sit down and think about changing the narrative. We were not able to identify the problems at that time or at least to communicate effectively what our answers would have been to them. But I also have to say that those movements that are now crystalizing in the South as political parties are not that far away from what we are demanding. Sometimes we are even cautious of calling them "radical left", because those political parties are really the expressions of the will of the people. The reason why the Greens couldn't become this expression is because we were not ambitious enough. What do I mean by this? In the narratives of the radical left parties you can hear that they want to win, they want to govern. While we Greens were dreaming of a 10 percent share of the votes; and we didn't show the kind of leadership that is necessary for people to follow us.

We could have achieved more, but it's not that easy. We can never be as populist as others, and that is both our strength and weakness.

**Ska Keller:** We could have achieved more, but it's not that easy. We can never be as populist as others, and that is both our strength and weakness. Also, the Greens, compared to Syriza and Podemos, don't have the image of being very new. We Greens have been here for more than three decades, which is nice because people know who we are, but it doesn't allow us to have the kind of new image that Syriza or Podemos do. To overcome this, we need to be closer to the grassroots movements. I am not saying that we need to forget about the normal NGOs but we need to go to the grassroots, to see where the movements are happening.

*Ska Keller has been a member of the European Parliament since 2009 in the Greens-EFA Group. During the most recent European Elections in May 2014 Ska was the leading candidate of the European Greens. Since her re-election Ska is vice-president of the Green Group in the European Parliament.*

*Mar Garcia Sanz is the Secretary General of the European Green Party (EGP). She has previously served as a committee member of the EGP, and as a member of the Cabinet of the Deputy Mayor of Barcelona.*

# Counter-democracy to the rescue of Europe

Etienne Balibar

Europe is dead. Or is it long live Europe? There are those who believe the threat of paralysis and dissolution remains, and those who optimistically seize any small positive sign as a reason to announce (yet again) that Europe's crises can serve as a springboard. But what is lacking is a deeper sense of history, which would help us to understand the current crisis as a turning point in a process that has lasted over 50 years.

*A longer version of this article was published in the French edition of Le Monde diplomatique in March 2014.*
*The English version was first published online in the 8th edition of the Green European Journal, "The Green fights for Europe".*

The European project always presents alternatives. But the possibility of grasping them depends on forces and plans that are not always on the table.

The European project has gone through several distinct phases which are closely linked to transformations in the world system. The first lasted from the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 to the aftermath of the 1968 events and the oil crisis; the next, from the early 1970s to the fall of the Soviet system and German reunification in 1990; and the last from the subsequent eastern enlargement of the European Union to the crisis sparked by the bursting of the US speculative housing bubble in 2007 and Greece's sovereign debt default, averted in extremis in 2010 in circumstances which are well known.

**Europe's deliberate choices**

It would be mistaken, though, to see the development of the European project as linear and the speed at which it progresses the only variable. For each phase has involved a conflict between several possible paths.

The initial post-1945 phase can be seen in the context of the cold war, but also of Western Europe's industrial reconstruction and the creation of social security systems. This phase included a pronounced tension between Europe's absorption into the US sphere of influence and the quest for a geopolitical and geo-economic renaissance of its own. The latter prevailed, within a capitalist framework of course.

The same goes for the most recent phase, with the opposite result – not to the advantage of (now declining) American hegemony, but assimilation by globalised financial capitalism. Here, Germany played the decisive role: the support of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998-2005) for industrial competitiveness through low wages was critical.

But the crucial issue is understanding how choices operated and power relations changed in the middle period of the Franco-German condominium and the Delors Commissions (1985-94). In this period, two supranational developments intended to be the twin pillars of the "great market" were proposed: the creation of a single currency and "social Europe". As we know, the euro became the EU's central institution and social Europe was restricted to formal employment legislation. This turnaround would merit a detailed history in its own right, to explore not only individual responsibilities but objective political causes. These include, alongside neoliberal pressure, the European trade union movement's inability to influence EU decisions. Meanwhile businesses continued to relocate outside the EU. There is an important lesson for the future here:

*The European project always presents alternatives. But the possibility of grasping them depends on forces and plans that are not always on the table.*

## The re-emergence of a divided Europe

Let us turn to the economy, including its social and political dimensions. If, as is generally accepted, no policy can be defined independently of economic constraints, it is conversely the case that there is no economy that is not also an amalgam of (collective) decisions and the product of power relations.

From the late 19th century, class struggles and social policies had given the working classes a standard of living above the minimum defined by "free and fair competition" and which presumed certain limits to social inequalities. Today, in the name of competitiveness and the control of public debt, we are seeing a two-pronged movement in the opposite direction. Real income from labour has been squeezed and made precarious in pursuit of competitiveness, while mass consumption has continued to grow, fed by workers' spending power or their capacity to take on debt. It's conceivable that "zoning" strategies and social or generational differentiation could delay the moment when the contradiction between these incompatible objectives explodes. But in the end, it can only get worse, as can the systemic dangers of a debt-based economy.

European integration that pursues an almost constitutional neoliberal path has produced another effect that undermines its own political and moral conditions. The possibility of overcoming historical antagonisms within a post-national structure, with shared sovereignty, presupposed moving towards the convergence of states in three domains: synergy of their capabilities, resource sharing and mutual recognition of rights. Yet, the triumph of the competition principle has created increasing inequalities. Instead of joint development in Europe's regions, we are witnessing a polarisation, which the crisis has made much worse. There is increasingly unequal distribution of industrial capacity, jobs, opportunities and education networks – to the extent that it could be said, looking at the Europe-wide trend since 1945, that a major north-south divide has replaced an east-west one, even if this disjunction does not take the form of a wall, but a one-way drain on resources.

## The "German question" continues

What place does Germany occupy in this system rooted in unequal development? It was predictable that reunification after half a century would bring a resurgence of nationalism, and that the reconstitution of Mitteleuropa in which German companies have profited to the maximum from a "low-wage, high-tech" labour force[1], would give them a competitive advantage over other European nations. But it was not inevitable that these two factors would produce a political hegemony (even a "reluctant" one, as the current formula goes[2]).

It results from the pivotal position that Germany has managed to occupy, between exploiting European economic resources, or even their weaknesses (as is the case with German borrowing at negative interest rates on the financial markets, compensated for by

1 According to Pierre-Noël Giraud, L'Inégalité du monde: Economie du monde contemporain (World Inequality: Contemporary World Economy), Gallimard, Paris, 1996.
2 See "Europe's Reluctant Hegemon", The Economist, London, 15 June 2013.

the high rates other European countries pay), and German industries' specialisation in exporting outside Europe. And so for now Germany finds itself at the sweet spot where the national advantages of unequal development are concentrated – all the more so since it is less committed than other countries (notably France) to neoliberal financialisation.[3]

But the impression of hegemony has other causes, ranging from the absence of EU mechanisms for developing "communitarian" economic policies collectively to the foolishness of other governments' defensiveness (notably the French, who rule out alternative formulas for developing supranational institutions). Finally, this impression of hegemony is now one of the factors that divide the "Europe of the rich" and the "Europe of the poor" – a structural impediment to the European project. There is likely to be a "German question" in Europe for a long time to come.

**The purpose of neoliberalism**

Yet the current situation contains a paradox for neoliberals. At the moment when there are hints of downturns and even IMF economists are themselves criticising austerity – for creating recession and worsening the insolvency of indebted countries – it seems that Europe, as an economic unit, is among the least well-placed parts of the world when it comes to stimulating fresh activity. There is no simple explanation for this, but some ideological reasons can be advanced. Some relate to the projection onto the single currency of the "ordoliberal" model of an absolutely independent European Central Bank (ECB) in relation to the aims of "real" economic policy. Others relate to the European ruling classes' bad conscience: having had to concede more than others to Keynesian public policy, they perceive fresh demand-driven economic growth, which comes through improved working-class living standards, as a grave danger, risking relapsing into the logic of "social" capitalism.

Finally, I think that another, more sinister, kind of calculation cannot be discounted, shown by the stubbornness with which the dismantling and colonisation of the Greek economy have been pursued under the pretext of "structural reforms". The idea here is that, however injurious the results of austerity and monetarism to general prosperity, they at least lead to increased profitability for some investors (or some capital): those who, whether European or not, are already largely "deterritorialised" and can instantly relocate their activities. Clearly, this calculation is only politically viable as long as "creative destruction" does not significantly affect the social fabric and the cohesion of dominant nations, which is not guaranteed:

*Applied to Europe, the neoliberal project does not lead to the transformation of its object: it tends towards its disappearance.*

3 See Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, La grande bifurcation: En finir avec le néolibéralisme (The Great bifurcation: Finishing with neoliberalism), La Découverte, Paris, 2014.

## The search for legitimacy and democracy

The European project has reached a turning point, which contains the possibility of a new phase, pointing in directions that are radically and mutually incompatible. But neither the crystallisation of the conflict nor its evolution can take place outside a political space of confrontation and representation. In short, they depend on the way in which the twin problems of legitimacy and democracy are resolved. This is the third dimension I want to emphasise.

How can it be tackled realistically?

First of all, we have to move beyond the opposition between "sovereignist" and "federalist" discourse, which is based on two imaginary situations. On the one hand, we have the idea of national communities as in some way natural and the source of institutional legitimacy derived from the expression of popular will. And on the other, we have the idea of a virtual European demos, in a sense called upon to constitute and express itself as a result of there being a representative structure at supranational level.

The first idea supports the fiction that the nation-state possesses unvarying legitimacy and is the only framework within which citizens can realise their rights. The second restricts itself to a procedural conception of legitimacy. It is necessary to recognise the fact that the European political system, however incoherent it may seem, is now a mixed system with several levels of responsibility and authority. It is far more federal than most citizens realise, but less democratic than it claims, since the division of powers among community and national institutions allows each of them to make unaccountability structural and block the creation of counter-balances.

This system has never been stable. But the current crisis has further destabilised it by causing the rise of a quasi-sovereign institution in its midst: the "independent" Central Bank, located at the intersection of states' financial institutions and the international financial market. Its increased power is not just a technocratic development or the result of the control of private capitalism. It is rather an attempt at "revolution from above" at a time when political power is no longer separate from economic, especially financial, power.[4] The key question is whether it could lead to a new system of sovereignty, and what alternatives can counter it.

From this stems a second confusion, worth dispelling, about the links between legitimacy and democracy. If we stick to a realist, rather than ideological definition, we cannot claim that democratic processes confer the only effective form of legitimacy: all of history suggests otherwise. It is in so-called exceptional situations that authoritarian structures tend to claim and obtain power over populations, with or without constitutional procedures. But what is striking is that the urgency of fending off speculative attacks against the single currency and

4 See "Union européenne: la révolution par en haut?" (European Union: revolution from above?), Libération, Paris, 21 November 2011.

partially regulating a financial system has brought the European Commission no new legitimacy. Faced with the "extraordinary" measures by the ECB and its president, governments and heads of state have been able to present themselves as sole embodiments of popular sovereignty and people's rights of self-determination. Democracy has been undermined on both sides at once, and the political system as a whole has taken a step towards de-democratisation.

**A profound change for the nation state**

This state of affairs requires us to look back at the historical causes of nation-states' privileged position as far as the legitimation of power is concerned. Some of these causes derive from the affective power of national or nationalist ideology in societies which forged their collective conscience through resistance to waves of imperialism. But with hindsight, another factor has acquired strategic significance: the fact that – especially in western European countries – the transformation of the police state into the social state took the form of the construction of a national social state, in which winning social rights was closely linked to the periodic reconstruction of a sense of national belonging. This explains both why the mass of citizens saw the nation as the only context for the recognition of and integration into the community, and why this civic dimension of nationality is eroded (or degenerates into xenophobic "populism") when the state begins to function in reality, not as an enabling structure for social citizenship, but as the powerless witness to its degradation or enthusiastic agent of its dismantling.

So the crisis of democratic legitimacy in contemporary Europe comes both from the fact that nation states no longer have the means or the will to defend or renew the "social contract", and that EU institutions are not predisposed to seek the forms and contents of a social citizenship at a higher level – unless (eventually) pushed to do so by popular insurrection, or by becoming conscious of the political and moral dangers which Europe runs, through the conjunction of dictatorship exercised "from above" by financial markets, and an anti-political discontent fed from below by the precariousness of living conditions, contempt for labour and the destruction of hopes for the future.

**Indignation must cross borders**

But however hard times are and however bitter the missed opportunities, we must hope that pessimism, resulting from experience, will not destroy our imagination entirely – which also results from a better awareness of the facts. The introduction of democratic elements into the EU's institutions would already provide a counterweight to the "conservative revolution" which is under way.[5] But it does not deliver its own political conditions. Those will not come except through a simultaneous push from public opinion for revised EU priorities, with an emphasis on employment, integrating young people into society, the reduction of inequalities and equitable sharing of the taxation of financial profits. And this push will not come unless social movements or moral "indignation" cross borders, and gather sufficient strength to rebuild a dialectic of power and opposition across the whole of

5 See Jürgen Habermas, Zur Verfassung Europas: Ein Essay (On Europe's Constitution), Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2011.

Resisting de-democratisation is not a sufficient condition for crystallising a historic leadership, but it is a necessary condition to "remake Europe".

European society. "Counter-democracy" must come to the aid of democracy.[6]

The legitimacy of the European project cannot be decreed, or even invented, through legal argument. It can only result from Europe becoming the framework for social, ideological, passionate conflicts about its own future – in short, political ones. Paradoxically, it is when Europe is contested, even with violence, not in the name of the past (which has been relegated) but in the name of the present and of the future (which it can control), that it will become a sustainable political construction. A Europe capable of governing itself is undoubtedly a democratic rather than oligarchic or technocratic one. But a democratic Europe is not the expression of an abstract demos. It is a Europe in which popular struggles proliferate and block the removal of decision-making power:

Resisting de-democratisation is not a sufficient condition for crystallising a historic leadership, but it is a necessary condition to "remake Europe".

**A struggle of ideas not nations**

Europe's current crisis – genuinely existential, because it presents its citizens with radical choices and ultimately the question "to be or not to be" – was probably prepared by the systematic imbalance of its institutions and powers, to the detriment of people's ability to take part in their own history. But what precipitated all this is that Europe began deliberately to function, not as a space of solidarity among its members and of initiatives to confront globalisation, but as an instrument of penetration for global competition within the European arena – ruling out transfer between territories and discouraging common enterprise, rejecting all harmonisation of rights and standards of living "from above", and making each state a potential predator on its neighbours.

Clearly it is not possible to escape this self-destructive spiral by replacing one form of competition with another – by substituting tax regimes and interest rate competition through devaluation for wage competition, for example, as has been advocated by some supporters of a return to national currencies.[7] We can only escape it by inventing and continuing to propose another Europe than that of the bankers, technocrats and rentier politicians. A Europe of struggle between antithetical models of society, and not between nations in search of their lost identities. An altermondialist Europe, capable of inventing its own revolutionary development strategies and enlarged forms of collective participation, and proposing them to the world – but also of taking on board and adapting ideas which originate elsewhere. A Europe of peoples – of the people and citizens who make it up.

*Etienne Balibar is professor emeritus (philosophy) at the Paris West University, and a Distinguished Professor of French & Italian and Comparative Literature at the University of California Irvine. He has published "We, the citizens of Europe? Borders, the state, the people", la Découverte, 2001.*

6 See Pierre Rosanvallon, La Contre-Démocratie: La politique à l'âge de la défiance (Counter-democracy: politics in the age of distrust), Seuil, Paris, 2006.
7 See for example Jacques Sapir, Faut-il sortir de l'euro? (Should We Leave the Euro?), Seuil, Paris, 2012.

Giorgos Kallis

# Can we prosper without growth? Ten policy proposals

For many people it seems easier to imagine the end of the world, or even the end of capitalism, than to imagine the end of growth. To break this spell of growth, we bring you some of the policy proposals that are derived from the theory of degrowth.

*This article originally appeared on The Press Project on January 7.*

Even the most radical political parties do not dare to utter the 'D word', or at least question the desirability of growth.

A new Left, new in terms of ideas, but also in terms of the young age of its members, is rising in Europe, from Spain and Catalonia, to Greece, Slovenia or Croatia. Will that Left also be green and propose an alternative cooperative model for the economy inspired by the ideas of degrowth? Or will this new Left, like the new Left of Latin America, driven by the demands of global capitalism, reproduce the expansionary logic of capitalism, only substituting multi-national corporations with national ones, distributing somewhat better the crumbs to the populace?

Many people who are sympathetic to the ideas and critique expressed in our book tell us that even though the critique of degrowth sounds reasonable, its proposals are vague and in any case they could never be put into practice. It seems easier to imagine the end of the world, or even the end of capitalism, than to imagine the end of growth.

Even the most radical political parties do not dare to utter the 'D word', or at least question the desirability of growth. To break this spell of growth, we at Research & Degrowth in Barcelona decided to codify some of the policy proposals that are coming out of the theory of degrowth, policies that are discussed in more detail in our recent book: "Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era".

In what follows we present 10 proposals that we wrote in the context of Spain and Catalonia, and which we submitted to progressive political parties such as Podemos, the United Left, the Catalan Republican Left, CUP or Equo. The context to which these proposals refer is specific; but with certain amendments and adaptations they are also applicable elsewhere and relevant for radical Left and Green political parties all over Europe.

**1. Citizen debt audit**

An economy cannot be forced to grow to resolve accumulated debts that have contributed to fictitious growth in the past. It is essential not only to restructure but also to eliminate part of the debt with a people's debt audit, part of a new, really democratic culture. Such elimination shouldn't be realised at the expense of savers and those with modest pensions whether in Spain or elsewhere. The debt of those who have considerable income and assets should not be pardoned. Those who lent for speculation should take the losses. Once the debt is reduced, caps on carbon and resources (see 9) will guarantee that this will not be used as an opportunity for more growth and consumption.

**2. Work-sharing**

Reduce the working week to at least 32 hours and develop programmes that support firms and organisations that want to facilitate job-sharing. This should be orchestrated in such a way that the loss of salary from working less only affects the 10% highest income bracket. Complemented by environmental limits and the tax reform proposed below (see 4), it will be more difficult for this liberation of time to be used for material consumption.

**3. Basic and maximum income**
Establish a minimum income for all of Spain's residents of between 400 and 600 Euros per month, paid without any requirement or stipulation. A recent study suggests this is feasible for Spain, without a major overhaul of the tax system. Design this policy in conjunction with other tax and work reforms so that they increase the income of the poorer 50% of the population while decreasing that of the top 10%, to finance the change. The maximum income for any person – from work as well as from capital – shouldn't be more than 30 times the basic income (12,000-18,000 Euros monthly).

**4. Green tax reform**
Implement an accounting system to transform, over time, the tax system, from one based principally on work to one based on the use of energy and resources. Taxation on the lowest incomes could be reduced and compensated for with a carbon tax. Establish a 90% tax rate on the highest incomes (such rates were common in the USA in the 1950s). High income and capital taxes will halt positional consumption and eliminate the incentives for excessive earnings, which feed financial speculation. Tackle capital wealth through inheritance tax and high taxes on property that is not meant for use, for example on the second or third houses of individuals or on large estates.

**5. Stop subsidising and investing in activities that are highly polluting**
Move the liberated public funds towards clean production. Reduce to zero the public investment and subsidy for private transport infrastructure (such as new roads and airport expansion), military technology, fossil fuels or mining projects. Use the funds saved to invest in the improvement of public rural and urban space – such as squares, traffic free pedestrian streets – and to subsidise public transport and cycle hire schemes. Support the development of small scale decentralised renewable energy under local and democratic control, instead of concentrated and extensive macro-structures under the control of private business.

**6. Support the alternative, solidarity society**
Support, with subsidies, tax exemptions and legislation, the not-for-profit co-operative economic sector that are flourishing in Spain and include alternative food networks, cooperatives and networks for basic health care, co-operatives covering shared housing, credit, teaching, and artists and other workers. Facilitate the de-commercialisation of spaces and activities of care and creativity, by helping mutual support groups, shared childcare and social centres.

**7. Optimise the use of buildings**
Stop the construction of new houses, rehabilitating the existing housing stock and facilitating the full occupation of houses. In Spain those objectives could be met through very high taxes on abandoned, empty and second houses, prioritising the social use of SAREB housing (those falling under the post-crash banking restructuring provisions following the Spanish real estate crisis), and if this is insufficient, then proceed with social expropriation of empty housing from private investors.

We do not expect parties of the Left to make "degrowth" their banner. We understand the difficulties of confronting, suddenly, an entrenched guiding principle.

**8. Reduce advertising**
Establish very restrictive criteria for allowing advertising in public spaces, following the example of the city of Grenoble. Prioritise the provision of information and reduce greatly any commercial use. Establish committees to control the quantity and quality of advertising permitted in the mass media and tax advertising in accordance with objectives.

**9. Establish environmental limits**
Establish absolute and diminishing caps on the total amount of $CO_2$ that Spain can emit and the total quality of material resources that it uses, including emissions and materials embedded in imported products, often from the global South. These caps would be on $CO_2$, materials, water footprint or the surface area under cultivation. Similar limits could be established for other environmental pressures such as the extraction of water, the total built-up area and the number of licenses for tourist enterprises in saturated zones.

**10. Abolish the use of GDP as indicator of economic progress**
If GDP is a misleading indicator, we should stop using it and look for other indicators of prosperity. Monetary and fiscal national accounts statistics can be collected and used but economic policy shouldn't be expressed in terms of GDP objectives. A debate needs to be started about the nature of well-being, focusing on what to measure rather than how to measure it.

These proposals are complementary and have to be implemented in concert. For example, setting environmental limits might reduce growth and create unemployment, but work-sharing with a basic income will decouple the creation of jobs and social security from economic growth.

The reallocation of investments from dirty to clean activities and the reform of the taxation system will make sure that a greener economy will emerge, while stopping to count the economy in GDP terms and using prosperity indicators ensures that this transition will be counted as a success and not as a failure.

Finally, the changes in taxation and the controls in advertising, will relax positional competition and reduce the sense of frustration that comes with lack of growth. Investing on the commons and shared infrastructures will increase prosperity, without growth.

We do not expect parties of the Left to make "degrowth" their banner. We understand the difficulties of confronting, suddenly, an entrenched guiding principle. But we do expect radical left parties to take steps in the right direction, and to pursue good policies, such as the ones we propose, independent of their effect on growth. We do expect genuine Left parties to avoid making the relaunch of economic growth their objective. And we do expect them to be ready, and have ideas in place, on what they will do, if the economy refuses to grow.

*Giorgos Kallis is an environmental scientist working on ecological economics, political ecology and water policy. He teaches political ecology and ecological economics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and recently co-edited the book "Degrowth. A vocabulary for a new era."*

José Bové

# Greens need to be radical in actions and in words

For a politician, being close to the people means constantly being present in their struggles – argues José Bové in an interview with the Green European Journal. In his opinion going institutional can only work if the members of the Green movement don't forget to "persevere radically".

*This interview was first published online in the 11th edition of the Green European Journal, "Connecting the Struggles".*

The vitality and diversity of activism across Europe is tied to the fight to defend a land, a territory.

**You have stood beside activists and participated in numerous demonstrations throughout Europe, in Hungary, the United Kingdom, Poland, and France. What are the major issues and challenges facing the world today?**

There are currently a number of important demonstrations taking place around Europe. First, there is a lot of mobilisation related to territorial issues, for instance, protection of rural areas and nature... There has been an increase in this type of activism around Europe and this is clearly a very important course of action in the quest to fend off industrial, infrastructure and commercial projects.

Perhaps the most emblematic example of this is the plan to build an airport near Nantes at Notre Dame des Landes (dairy farmers, locals and environmental activists are protesting for years now, as the €556m airport would lead to a loss of homes and a precious woodland). The Lyon-Turin high-speed train connection (a 270 km-long railway line in; the Italian No TAV Movement is protesting against its environmental and health risks since 1995), is also an excellent example of the fight to defend a territory against a specific project. There have also been instances of small-scale demonstrations against the construction of supermarkets. The mobilisation to fight open-pit coalmines in Germany is apparently gaining impetus.

Destruction of a territory is something that mobilises categorical rejection and opposition. This has taken the form of opposition to airports, coal mining, or shale gas (in Great Britain)... The reason for the increase in this type of activism is simple. There are differing reasons motivating each fight but they all have one thing in common. In each case, there is an affront to something essential like water, land, or natural resources. Moreover, resistance grows stronger as people come to realise: "we could actually win this one!" Each fight is local but the sum of all of these local fights equates to the rejection of a given model.

**Are these just simply cases of NIMBY (Not in my Backyard)? Or is it more than that?**

Promoters often claim that the protest is just a case of NIMBY. Obviously, awareness is piqued when the land to be destroyed is "your" land. And people have every right to take part in decisions affecting the economic future of their territory – big or small. Resistance of this type is legitimate. Frequently, it is the only right that people have left: they no longer have any control over their wages, jobs, etc. When it comes to their land, however, people can still act: they can stand up and say "you will never destroy the water and land on which I stand." These are the things that mobilise people; and this expands the mobilisation beyond traditional activists or political groups. We are dealing with concrete issues here and that creates a community dynamic, which in turn, creates alternatives. That is what is interesting. The fight for land and territory often brings about concrete thinking on what type of alternatives exist: alternatives for energy, transport, and consumer habits... These communities, through debate, find the right thought process to shake free of the NIMBY mentality. At times, as was the case in France recently, the people who spearheaded the fight have gone on to be elected to local government.

I believe that there currently exist two major global struggles that are not linked to a given territory: TAFTA/TTIP and climate change.

The vitality and diversity of activism across Europe is tied to the fight to defend a land, a territory. For example, initially the demonstrations in Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland – aimed to fend off a land grab by the extractive industries (shale gas, gold mining, etc.). Sometimes it seems as if these movements are piecemeal. Yet, when we take them all together we realise that there are solid networks out there. These are not examples of just short-term election campaign politics.

**In addition to environment-related mobilisation there has also been a lot of activism related to social issues, specifically in Southern Europe.**
There is a difference. Of course there is some overlap, i.e., the rejection of a model, but the end result is the setting up of an alternative – cooperatives for example. And there is a lot of social turmoil surrounding these movements. From time to time we get good news: the election in Catalonia of Ada Colau, a member of the *Indignados* from the Barcelona anti-eviction campaign, for example. When the time comes to get involved in politics everything gets much harder because you immediately come face to face with a nearly insurmountable challenge: it is very difficult to offer alternatives to the European construction process in its current conception based on the mainstream liberal economic model. For instance, Greece has been gradually forced to make concessions and the Greek government made to adapt. In Spain, Podemos had to dial back its anti-hegemonic-system designs in favour of realpolitik and entering coalitions. Inevitably this will be a source of frustration.

Therein lies the challenge and complexity of a movement like the Greens in the broadest sense of the term: striking the balance between leading radical struggle and being pragmatic as to the alternatives – with – why not – attempts at forging compromise – without of course caving in on value of fundamental importance. I believe that there currently exist two major global struggles that are not linked to a given territory: TAFTA/TTIP and climate change.

**The fight against free trade has always been one of your major causes. The idea behind destroying the Millau McDonald's in 1999 was to attack a symbol. The mobilising symbolism of water and land is easy to see: they both affect us directly. What sort of symbol exists for the climate, which can seem overly abstract?**
That is precisely what is challenging about the climate. When it comes to TAFTA, the concrete harmful effects are easily discernible: GMOs and food, for example. How can we establish a strong resolve on something the effects of which are very slow (except of course in moments of acute crises, like drought or severe storms) and delayed? It is very difficult to organise the mobilisation. That is why I believe that the climate movement can and must join forces with the anti-free trade movement. The role of multinationals in destroying the climate is overwhelming, in terms of energy, industrial farming, transport, etc. What's more, all of the economic structures in place are designed to expand the space and the power of multinationals. Therefore, the fight against climate change must inevitably challenge the dominant economic model; failing to

The fact that I was arrested and then the power game I played turned out to be very effective – I refused to post bail and in doing so flipped the logic around: I decide when I got out of jail and not the authorities.

see the link between the two would be tantamount to greenwashing. We will need targeted actions to put pressure on all the stakeholders. A good recent example of this was the Anglican Church's decision to divest in gas and oil. This is not a street protest, of course, but had there not been all of the protests in the lead up to this decision, the pressure on the church would not have been there. We have to continually make the connection between the two.

**You were arrested after the incident at McDonald's. Activists are arrested every day for their actions in the field. Are you under the impression that there is a crackdown on protests and activism? If we take the examples of Notre Dame des Lands and Sivens, do you believe that the French government is an example of stringency in its approach?**

That is a question of strategy essentially. In general, nations and economic powers are not very fond of dissent – it makes sense really – because it runs counter to their interests. So, when you contest a model – the first thing – and the most important to me – is to win over the general public, otherwise it will be impossible to create a power struggle. Therefore, the strategy must aim to convince the widest public possible; that is the only way to flip the logic of repression, vis-à-vis the State. That also means that some forms of action are counterproductive: radicalisation, violent clashes, Molotov cocktails are not conducive to winning over public opinion. Back at the time of Larzac (a movement protesting the expansion of a military camp, which would have led to the displacement of farmers), if we'd have tried violence against the army we would have lost. With the army on the other side it was clear that we had to convince people that "armed" resistance made no sense. I am convinced that a strategy of non-violence is essential in all of these battles.

That is not to say that we are doing nothing. It just means that we are trying to come up with the best approach to resistance. For example, in Notre Dame des Landes, the blockade was maintained non-violently, i.e., through the establishment of a demarcated area to defend known as a ZAD (for the French Zone à Defendre), areas that were occupied (essentially the same thing: occupy an area to prevent construction, to block the process). A small minority in Notre Dame des Landes became radicalised, which brought on an exaggerated deployment of law enforcement. The out of proportion reaction prevailed despite all of the solidarity and reinforcement of people. It could have gone the other way.

All of these actions are symbolic and aim to grab the attention of the greater public, very often they get run through the media, which serves as a conveyor belt of information. The problem is, we never know ahead of time, precisely what is going to serve as a trigger.

Often, like with McDonalds, the arrest and jail time were what resonated with the general public. The actual dismantling and rally cry of "The WTO is taking over our plates" could have been completely lost had it not been for the subsequent reaction of law enforcement. The fact that I was arrested and

In my opinion the long term future of political ecology will only be ensured if it is able to persevere radically – in discourse (that is of course necessary) but not only. It will also have to be radical in its actions.

then the power game I played turned out to be very effective – I refused to post bail and in doing so flipped the logic around: I decide when I got out of jail and not the authorities. Ultimately, American farmers from a Via Campesina union posted bail for me stating that they supported the effort. In doing so they added breadth to the story. In a case of non-violent civil disobedience, repression is part of the action. Jail time strengthens action and builds the movement, things happen because we force the state into the trap of a repressor.

**With the issue of the relationship to power comes the question of political parties. Political ecology has its roots in activism. However, recently, activist movements seem to have side-lined or even rebuffed the Greens. Was this inevitable?**
The problem goes back to the setting up of political parties. The pan-European anti-nuclear movement of the late 1970s – protest through concrete action – served as the foundation for the European Greens. The battles on the ground and the demonstrations built the idea that there needed to be a way to fight politically too and therefore a need to establish a political wing as emissary of these ideas.

Any movement that decides to establish a political entity is immediately forced to grapple with the following question: do you go institutional or do you dissolve? If the decision is made to go institutional as a political party in the public space, two options are available: go forward in compliance with all of the codes that be or persevere radically, by taking a slight step to the side.

In my opinion the long term future of political ecology will only be ensured if it is able to persevere radically – in discourse (that is of course necessary) but not only. It will also have to be radical in its actions. The problem is that the Green parties that exist today are essentially parties of elected officials, and not parties of activists. Therefore, the political wing revolves around those who are sitting members of assemblies – local and national – and not around those who are working in activism daily. Perhaps that is why those actively fighting every day do not necessarily relate to the Greens and do not necessarily expect them to come up with the solutions or to support them in their fight. Because those who embody the political movement, are not considered, rightly or wrongly, those who embody the protest or those who are able to stand up to the powers that be.

Therefore, the elected officials and political leaders of the movement must always be able to shake things up and be "just a step off to the side." They must remain tuned in to social movements and to what people are really thinking in society. Movements of political ecology run the risk of shifting too far into the institutional side of things and then forget to stay tuned into the rest.

To wrestle back and to own this ideal again will mean being able to be active in the field, to be a reliable conduit for the major societal concerns and to be able to transform those concerns into acts. Being close to the people means constantly being present in the struggles that they embody, in the area of energy,

farming... We cannot expect to win every time, but we must be able to give body to the fundamental stories and subjects when the expectation is there and when we are able to move the lines. The Greens must show constant indignation and ire when a subject means something to the people; not to strike compromise, but to lead a true battle.

**Considering all the weaknesses of the European political system – insufficient democratic accountability and overly powerful lobbies, such as you have written about in your book *Hold up à Bruxelles* – how do you envisage the future of activism? Are you more optimistic or pessimistic?**

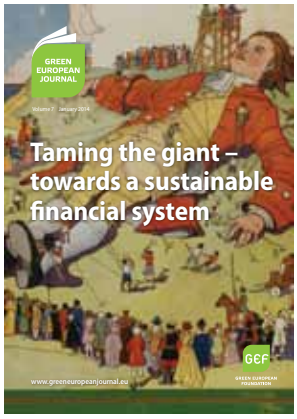
I always strive to be an "active pessimist". When you look at how the world works and you see that the forces have coalesced around a project that is diametrically opposed to ours, the obvious conclusion is that you are never going to prevail.

And yet, we are making progress; we are winning battles. Even in the area of climate change – the fact that it is even an item on the agenda is an amazing accomplishment. It has become one of the major planetary political issues, thanks to the 40-year process of re-evaluating our models for growth, energy, and consumption. Political ecology's major victory is to have forced fundamental issues onto the political agenda. Over the last 40 years, we have clearly shown our ability to get our issues addressed.

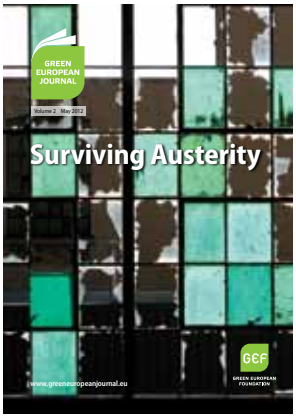
The message is clear: we must continue unrelenting in our combats on the ground and in our efforts to make sure that all of those endeavours coalesce.

*José Bové is a French farmer and a Member of the European Parliament. He was one of the twelve official candidates in the 2007 French presidential election, and one of the Green leading candidates for the European Elections in May 2014.*


















## About the Green European Journal

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

The Green European Journal has published eleven quarterly editions and three print editions since its launch in February 2012. In addition, the Green European Journal regularly publishes articles on its website on a wide range of topics.

Today it is very clear that Europe is facing the greatest crises of its post-war history: crises, in plural, because they have not only hit the European economy, but have also seriously damaged the political and social dimensions of the European project. The EU still hasn't managed to deal with its economic problems, and at the same time there is an increased hostility between member states of the South and the North manifesting itself in scapegoating and a blame game about who's at fault for all the problems of the EU. Not to mention that there is a war raging in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, claiming thousands of innocent victims, with no end in sight.

Our politicians seem to passively condone all this, while European citizens struggle to understand what is happening around them. Worse still, they don't know how to expect to address today's problems. In the European post-democracies everything is driven by technocrats, it's they who decide which problems are worth dealing with, and what the best treatment would be for our ills. Political projects play a marginal role now, not to mention voters' voices. In this context it's no surprise that right-wing populists are stronger than ever before.

Now we need to ask ourselves a number of questions. Can we offer an alternative to the neoliberal status quo and the looming xenophobic threat? Can we address Europe's obsession with growth, its lack of solidarity and the crises inside and outside the EU, while still keeping intact the European project? Is there a sustainable and humane solution to today's problems? These are the questions the Green European Journal seeks to address in the 15 articles that make up this edition, each of which shines a spotlight on an area of Europe's challenges, its soul-searching and the the path that lies ahead.

While the diagnosis of Europe's problems might seem gloomy, we have not given up on finding a solution. And Greens should be there in the front line when it comes to building a sustainable Europe of solidarity; a Europe that emerges from these crises stronger.

GREEN
EUROPEAN
JOURNAL

3, rue du Fossé – L-1536 Luxembourg

Brussels office:
15, rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels
T +32 (2) 234 65 70  F +32 (2) 234 65 79
info@gef.eu  www.gef.eu

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu