

### **The Future of European Integration (Tamara Ehs)**

Asked to talk about the future of European integration I decided to make an intervention on the concept of future. As a political scientist I'd try to focus on what "future" means for democracy. You maybe remember the famous quote by Karl Marx that goes, "The social revolution [...] cannot take its poetry from the past, but only from the future." The question therefore is: What is our poetry? What is our poetry of the future?

When we think about the future of Europe there are two possible poetries, two emotions: fear or hope. The emotion of fear is well-played with by the conservatives, the far-right and even by the so-called social democrats that have accepted neoliberal politics and only promise to do the dirty work somehow more humane, least harshly. Our political emotion as leftists is and has to be: hope. To imagine, to have a concrete political utopia for a future-to-hope-for, a passion for a better life, for what is worth living for, because that's also what's worth fighting for.

#### What do we have to do?

We have to sketch out this concrete utopia. Therefore, we have to involve and mobilise all possible sources of counter power: locally, nationally and whenever possible continentally. Those sources of counter power are already there, they are for example the housing activists, the people involved in the solidarity economy like food cooperatives, student protesters, people who welcome refugees and so on. Their action points out as well as disrupts the day-to-day impertinence and oppressions and injustices on which the neoliberal order depends. And by disrupting it those people do things differently. They show us what the world could look like, that there is a better life, another future. They break the fatalism of the idea that you cannot change the world and that every fight is in vain.

We should support their actions as the movement called *Solidarity for All* does; moreover, we should give politically sound answers, generating political coherence. There is a lot of resistance out there, protest, protest-in-doing-things-differently; we have to solidify their struggle as well as their hope. That's what a party or a European alliance today can only be: offering technical support, capacity building, and network-scaling. We have to offer our infrastructure, our personnel to act as a facilitator, a mediator - nothing more and nothing less. Those movements are multipliers of possibilities and capabilities, indeed multipliers of hope. Because there people experience what's most important: humanity and dignity.

When you ask people: What do you fear most? What do you want to preserve? Then, the answers are fear of losing the job, the house, the social standard etc. But if you drill down on these answers, it's all about dignity. People don't feel treated in a decent way because

austerity politics is the opposite of a life in dignity. But they can experience this again within those movements. Sadly these movements have been undervalued, if not ignored. The political left saw it as just another “social movement”.

But what they are doing is what really has to be done: They set up self-organised, democratic, participatory social structures, an alternative to our old ones. That’s what Karl Marx told us, that we “cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes”. That’s what Marx wrote about the Paris Commune that was established on this very day 145 years ago.

Our long-term objective has to be to build new institutions, to dismantle the “ready-made machinery” of the capitalist state and replace it with something new like a decentralised confederation of communes. We have to act on both stages at the same time: conquering the old institutions (as a party in parliament etc.) and building new ones. We have to articulate parliamentary politics with popular mobilisations. Because when the second is lost the first becomes weightless and actually reinforces the ongoing collapse of representative politics.

Therefore, we have to work on an anti-capitalist vision of society. That’s what the solidarity movements are doing. They are building hope, and they are doing it in a democratic, participatory way. That’s the task.

For the arguments brought forward here also confer to:

Alexander Kolokotronis (2016): *Building Alternative Institutions in Greece: an Interview with Christos Giovanopoulos*, online at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/11/building-alternative-institutions-in-greece-an-interview-with-christos-giovanopoulos/>

Stathis Kouvelakis (2016): *Syriza’s Rise and Fall*, in: New Left Review 97, online at: <https://newleftreview.org/11/97/stathis-kouvelakis-syriza-s-rise-and-fall>

Jerome Roos (2015): *Towards a New Anti-Capitalist Politics*, online at: <https://www.popularresistance.org/towards-a-new-anti-capitalist-politics/>