

# Europe: A peripheral outlook

---

## Marga Ferré, La FEC/ transform!

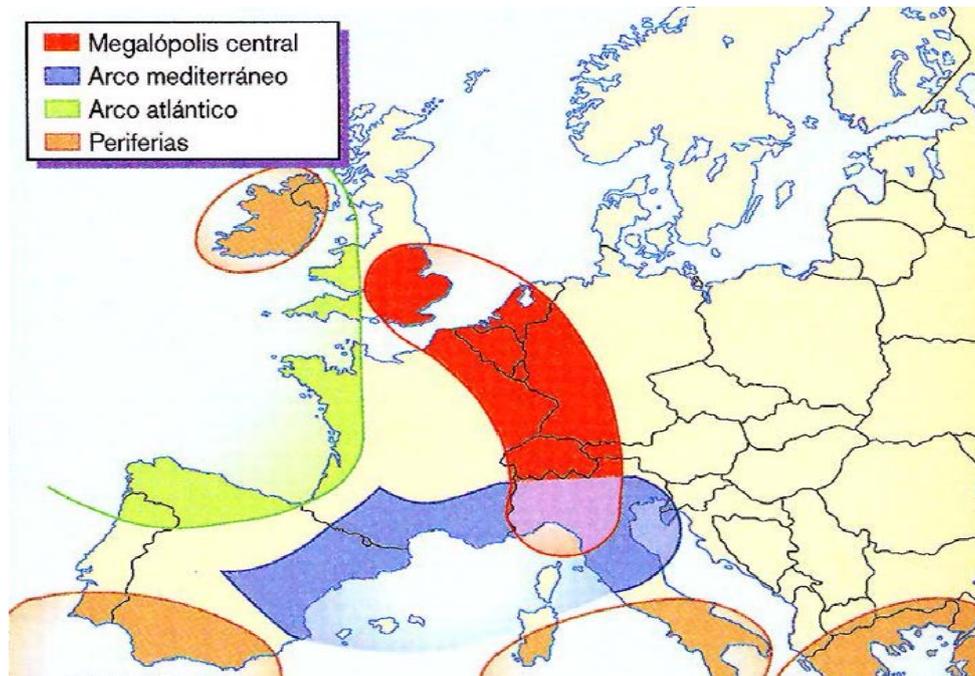
For years, I dare to say that especially from Maastricht Treaty, debates around Europe inside the European left was focused on the political architecture and the critics to this model. Such was the case that the left was almost define related to the position each political party had in relation to the European political construction process.

In terms of economics, conventional theoretical frameworks proposed for years an explanation of the diversities among economies inside the EU making comparisons of per capita incomes or export specializations or goods and services technology intensity in each country. According to these approaches, there was no structural inequality inside the EU that could not be overtake, no international division of work that could not be corrected.

We see today that the main problem is not the UE, its institutions or its state interventions, but the way capitalism is re-organizing Europe. International division of work comes from a particular way of capital accumulation in Europe that coming from center-north Europe, concentrate productive and financial capital and this fact creates different peripheries. In my opinion, these maps can help us to understand and react better to the global attack of our rights as workers and citizens

### PERIPHERIES

There has been a productive fragmentation, linked to an economic decision process concentrated around transnational companies and the countries in which those companies have its headquarters, and that determine the constructions of a certain economic geography inside Europe, explaining (among other things) the existence of a European division of work.



Fuente. Méndez y Molinero.

This division is concentrated in three main areas, articulated in a center/periphery connection dependent on its specialization inside European division of work:

*Center* is defined by European dorsal zone: London City, Rhine and Ruhr industrial basins, Holland, Switzerland and the north of Italy, plus development areas in Mediterranean dorsal: Marseille, Lyon, Paris and Berlin-Hamburg and its influence zones.

A *first periphery*, formed by Eastern countries specialized in subcontracting tasks, mainly articulated around German industries.

A second periphery, mainly Mediterranean, specialized in tourism, agro-export companies and broad coastline urbanization (Fernández Steinko, 2010) (Map 1).

In order to keep this situation, capital needs these countries with low salaries and low taxation. Mediterranean and Atlantic arrow, which wealth was based on a strong industrial sector, is in fast declining. European south periphery is simply out of accumulation circuits of capital, condemning these countries' economies to low salaries and qualification jobs in tourism and service sector.

### The power moves

Communitarian center of gravity moved to the East, in a way that the "equilibrium" between continental and Mediterranean Europe was shifted to *Mitteleuropa*, in an hegemonic continental process that was deepened after British Brexit.

**Map 2. Geopolitical power in the EU today**



Fuente. El Orden Mundial.

In this current European division of work, European Social model is no other than labor precariousness as a structural reality, because in order to keep this division, capital needs to increase work intensity, generating surplus value implementing, at least, these four mechanisms:

1. Keeping high unemployment and informal work high.
2. Work intensification, imposing a labor model based on the principle of more work for less salary.
3. More hours working with the same salary
4. Undermine public services, pensions, salaries and other redistributions mechanisms.

Paradox is the while this division of work is acting and while decision making center is moving to center-north Europe, if we look at the map in socio-political terms, is in the southern countries of Europe where we can find better conditions to create an alter-power. It is not only the case of Greece, but the strength of Unidos Podemos in Spain, the case of Portugal or the propulsion made by Melenchon in France. This contradiction is what we have to explore generating alliances among political, social and trade union forces to strengthen a bloc to stop capitalism outrage in Europe.