



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

## Participation Now! Citizenship Education and Democracy in Times of Change

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### “Our sea! The future in the south”<sup>1</sup>

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“When we dream of human improvement, of the pride and happiness of humanity, our gaze turns towards the Mediterranean”, the French historian Georges Duby once said. Well that used to be the case. Today many would like to get rid of the PIGS, as Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain are disrespectfully called, today rather than tomorrow, and in the south a corresponding “Away from Brussels” mood is brewing. The European periphery from Portugal via the North African states as far as Greece is considered a danger zone, almost like the eastern bloc during the Cold War. In the south, once a political point of the compass that aroused sunny associations, politicians and public opinion today locate the biggest security risks: Islamist terror, euro crash and waves of refugees from the southern part of the globe.

The challenges posed by the national bankruptcy of EU states, the assumption of power by Islamists in the Middle East and the flow of refugees across the Mediterranean are not to be played down. Yet, as is well known, fear is a poor adviser. More helpful would be objective stocktaking of the situation in the area of the Mediterranean, which – like every crisis – always also carries opportunities for innovation.

*Mare nostrum* was the name that the Romans, at the zenith of their imperial expansion along all of the coasts of the Mediterranean, gave to “their” “semi-enclosed sea” which had thus been formed, that they controlled as a maritime power and exploited economically. “Our sea” would today mean rehabilitating the south as the historical core of Europe without any imperial attitudes and without any ambitions regarding use controlled by short-term thinking and there setting up a peace and development project which is just as modern as it is viable for the future.

Four policy areas and task fields seem to me to be able to be combined as priorities and well: that starts with an energy network uniting Northwest Europe, the Mediterranean basin and Africa south of the Sahara, a type of “Coal and Steel Community” of the present day that may trigger integration effects for the whole region analogous to those of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in the 1950s for the communitarisation of the core countries of Europe. The oligopolies of power generation in the north will hence become just as obsolete as the pension regimes in the south.

<sup>1</sup> English translation of the title of his new book: „Zukunft im Süden. Wie die Mittelmeerunion Europa wiederbeleben kann“, published 2012, Edition Körber-Stiftung



For this a revision of the economic division of labour and the demographic movements between the north and the south is required: over decades the trading exchanges of agrarian and mineral raw materials from the south for durable consumer products and expensive capital goods from the north dominated, accompanied by a transnational migration movement in which – for six decades now – the routes of the “guest workers” in search of work and of refugees desiring protection from the south cross those of the sun-hungry tourists, the early retired and business people. Fair trade, decent work for everybody and social justice beyond the national borders must replace this creeping expropriation of the south from which in the end only very few have profited. This must start with a fundamental revision of the inhuman refugee policy of the FRONTEX deterrent regime to which every year hundreds of boat people and illegal border crossers fall victim. The northern part of Europe requires immigration and should welcome them. The wall in Berlin did not fall in 1989 to be rebuilt in the Mediterranean region.

As tourism as a monoculture characterises almost the entire Mediterranean region, the questioning of the traditional division of labour also includes this area which comprises the most dubious forms of cheap drinking tourism as far as advanced forms of “gentle tourism”. What is possible is the transition to an economically sustainable and socially and environmentally compatible mass tourism, which is to be transformed from unconscious sunbathing into a respectful intercultural encounter.

The destination for mass tourism is the Mediterranean coast and the immediate hinterland. The water quality in the Mediterranean is in fact relatively good, but protection of the marine environment, for example by the avoidance of further overfishing, is imperative here, too. The Mediterranean has, like most of the world’s oceans and maritime regions, been degraded to the fountain and the gutter (or sewer), and that is repeated in the symbolic plundering of the myth of the Mediterranean which serves as a projection surface for all possible individual ambitions and nostalgia, but as a Europe narrative providing a collective identity has lost its lustre and had its day. The Mediterranean is now only a flair, a brand, an app.

The European general public, including professional foreign policy and European policy, think tanks and advisory institutes, also most companies, universities and pressure groups and associations have so far largely ignored such perspectives and hardly develop any scenarios beyond *Grexit*, the withdrawal option for Greece and the other “PIGS”. The distorted picture of the Mediterranean region as a problem child, danger zone and exit candidate has become solidified. Also the Arab Spring of 2011 was neither wanted in the north nor was it energetically supported. If it has resulted in Islamist governments in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, in the European corral, in a similar way to the state of Israel, people see their assessment of the Arab Autumn as a security risk confirmed. Stability is still given priority over freedom.

Federal Chancellor Merkel's and President Hollande’s crisis management for the south sets the scene for the sham alternative of ruin by over-economising or ruin by excessive growth. The debt brake alone strangles all initiative; the growth packages are devoid of every socio-ecological prospect of sustainability. The areas named as examples (others are conceivable): energy network, fair trade, gentle tourism and intercultural learning community can, on the other hand, combine to form an alternative development path which would also benefit the north well.

Such a “Hercules plan” must go hand in glove with the development of the constitution of the entire European Union. Not only will the “problem countries“ lose national sovereignty in the process, also Germany (like France etc.) will in future be a country of the united Europe, as now the Saar, North Rhine-Westphalia and the Free State of Bavaria are states of the

Federal Republic of Germany. Germany can also no longer be, whether in union with France or not, the hegemony. Such considerations are not only difficult to tolerate in Paris and Berlin (or by analogy in London and Warsaw), if only the nation states and the sovereignty of the people bound to them were put into perspective and the creation of a structure was not simultaneously ensured which provides them with space within a subsidiary and federally loosened up federal state of a new type. A united Europe requires strong cores just as much as lively peripheries, linked by sub-regional federal associations.

The germs of such associations are the informal Baltic Union with the Baltic and Scandinavian states, Poland and Germany or the Alps-Adriatic Union (with Austria, Italy, Slovenia), also the Balkan Union and the privileged partnership of the EU with Russia and Turkey.

And indeed the renewed Mediterranean Union, which can be the model for a federal and sub-regional order in Europe and beyond the borders of the present-day EU. The “Europe of the regions“ was so far a term for the linguistic and cultural variety of the continent and the rights of the ethnic minorities in the different nation states, which was supposed to be translated into regional autonomy. Today a “Europe of the regions“ should be designed less provincially, rather as a loosely jointed combination of sub-regional networks which, alongside the parliaments and associations of civil society can stand up to a “Super-state” established in Brussels and provide supranational decisions with democratic legitimation.

Only on this emerging path, in the turmoil of the crisis, can a diversified European society and public, genuine EU citizenry and a supranational sovereign arise which – and this is something the world is waiting after years of crippling European “self-switzerlanding” and crisis rhetoric – also reports back as a global player. A Europe which provides a political alternative to the raw material imperialism of the Chinese autocracy, of the ideological self-destructing of the declining superpowers USA and Russia, to the disastrous dominance of the financial players which has gone off course and to the growing threat from political purveyors of violence from failed states.

## Ten Theses for Encouragement

(published in “Mut statt Wut. Aufbruch in eine neue Demokratie”<sup>2</sup>)

1. *We, the people*, must regain the initiative. We react all too often only to a political apparatus and its reflections in the media, allow ourselves to be convinced of practical constraints and delegate the business of politics to professionals whom we at the same time disparage and berate. The problems which have accumulated over decades are solved neither by the invisible hand of the market nor by a strong state; the citizens themselves have to become more active.
2. *More indignation* about all situations in which people are humiliated and insulted beings is appropriate. But let us not be persuaded of any false, antipolitical *We* by populists of all colours. Politics means passion *and* a sense of proportion and responsibility. A good part of the indignation is aimed at our own tiredness and passivity.

<sup>2</sup> published October 2011, Edition Körber-Stiftung

3. *All politics is local*, is the election slogan of grass roots democrats. But out of the neighbourhood of our shocks and concernment we must take up challenges of a planetary nature and not only undertake exertions in order to ward off the worst in our vicinity, but also in order to do what is better for today's world and for future generations.
4. Whoever has learned to think *in the future perfect* – what we will have had to do tomorrow” cannot wait for external incentives and constraints from markets and legislators. Political responsibility starts in everyday life, including seemingly unpolitical activity as a buyer and consumer: they are the sleeping giants of democracy; consumer boycotts and intelligent consumption are armed weapons.
5. *Private life is political*. Everyone can without further delay and any great expenditure experiment with the guiding principle “Less is More”, check his/her own mobility and nutritional behaviour, stop the waste of material, energy and areas of land and abandon the production and marketing of superfluous and harmful things.
6. Individual action can lead to *collective learning* and contribute to the political identity of sustainable democracy. It provides the pioneers of change with a feeling of self-efficacy and those who wish to follow with confidence in the possibility of a different policy.
7. Social movement is good, but without *institutions* its stimuli for ideas and action easily come to nothing. Among such institutions are also interest groups as unrecognised mediators between the government and society. They permit routines and make the habitualisation of sustainable policy easier. Citizens, join the parties!
8. The *new social contract* combines the organising state with more citizen participation. It imposes on the citizens more ecological and social responsibility, but at the same time creates more and new opportunities for sharing in organisation, involvement and in decision-making.
9. *Yes, we must!* The efforts of protest movements as a rule aim at the elimination and prevention of detrimental infrastructures in the local area. The Major Transformation demands more constructive imagination and initiative and the weighing up of directly avoidable evils against medium-term and long-term benefits in the more distant future and in the wider surrounding area.
10. *Energies for Europe*. What is referred to as the Old World is currently better equipped to handle the planetary tasks than other regions of the world. Europe should stop its self-dwarfing and, instead of falling back into national camps initiate powerful supranational and global initiatives at eye level with the southern periphery. Democracy is a cross-border project.