

Post-Brexit: Imagine a New European Community

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Global Research, June 26, 2016

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

The news of Brexit triggered shock waves around the globe, chaos in stock markets and plunging Pound and Euro exchange rates. As the surprise settles an even more uncomfortable sobering spreads: the disintegration of the globalized power blocks may happen much faster than we have originally imagined. Our sense of stability and reliability to the political and societal order we have grown accustomed to may not reflect reality. The British referendum has opened Pandora's box; similar initiatives for leaving the EU now pop up in several countries, as Scotland, Northern Ireland and even London consider leaving the UK in order to stay in the EU. At this stage we enter a roller coaster without clarity of where we will arrive. Nobody can precisely know how long the EU, a complex economic and political union ailing with many crises already, will still be able to keep up, but its disintegration is under way.

After their vote, the British had to take a lot of ridicule from around the world for their decision. Why would they do this? A satirical headline of The New Yorker read, "British Lose Right to Claim that Americans are Dumber." The 17 million Brits who voted in favor of Brexit might in fact not have been aware of the consequences of their decision and may have been deceived by lies, nationalistic propaganda and xenophobic instigation, yet there is more.

Let's not be mistaken: The European Union has alienated countless millions of workers and ordinary people all over the continent; for many "EU" has become the very synonym of a hostile "establishment." While it began as a progressive project for freedom and solidarity among the peoples of Europe, committed to never again repeat the terrible wars of the 20th century and authentically humane initiatives, the EU has developed into an anti-democratic, neoliberal technocracy with ever decreasing legitimacy and benefit for the people. Preaching noble values of human rights, social democracy and peace, the rulers of the EU have led a scrupulous austerity regime, gradually expanding precarious work conditions for millions. The wide gap between its social rhetoric on the one hand and the implementation of free market policies on the other, gave many people the feeling of being constantly betrayed by an anonymous superstructure, which they cannot participate in or reach out to.

In their blind obedience to the orders from Washington and the corporate world, European leaders have endlessly fooled their people. Whether it is about secretly handing the last remaining democratic powers over to multinationals and abolishing fundamental environmental, consumer and workers rights, as it is prepared in the TTIP negotiations, about ruining their own countries' trade by installing economic sanctions against Russia, or about participating in the extremely dangerous deployment of NATO troops to Eastern Europe - there hardly seems to be any demand from the US government, which EU and European leaders would not fulfill, however devastating its consequences for Europe may be. Just how narrow the ideological tolerance within Europe has become, could be seen last

week when German foreign minister Frank Walter Steinmeier courageously dared to condemn the military drills in Eastern Europe as “warmongering” against Russia. As he stated the obvious, he provoked pure outrage from fellow politicians and the media in the Western world.

Or take Greece – a year ago, the EU establishment carried out collective punishment against an entire nation for being so impertinent to demand an exit of the austerity policies. How enthusiastically have countries like Greece, Portugal and Ireland joined the EU, dreaming of economic progress, continental integration and solidarity and how badly have they been impoverished and robbed their sovereignty by being trapped in astronomic debt. However, this is not an issue of Southern vs. Northern Europe, but one of redistributing wealth from the 99% to the 1% throughout Europe, which can be felt by the people from Athens to Liverpool. “Austerity is,” as Chomsky noted, “really class war.”

Capitalist globalization has corroded the social fabric of societies around the world, destroyed solidarity among people and established an anonymous hyper-individualized climate of fierce competition, loneliness and struggle for survival. People are left without any positive prospect for the future, feel constantly cheated on by something or someone that they cannot even precisely name – and immense anger ensues in people’s hearts. The tension emerging from the extreme levels of inequality, corruption and lack of prospect has become massive in nearly all Western countries today. Societies – both in Europe, North America and basically worldwide – cannot be kept together for much longer on the basis of the existing social, political and economic orders.

In France there have been endless mass protests and strikes against the neoliberal labor reform of President Hollande for months now. It is a resistance of dimensions unheard of in recent decades; a few days ago the police were exhausted from the street battles they asked protesters to give them a break. Some already speak of the “second French Revolution.”

On Sunday, Spaniards will elect a new government; there is a realistic chance the new president will be Pablo Iglesias, the young charismatic political science professor from Madrid leading a creative grassroots movement called “Podemos,” which emerged from the 2011 Indignado protests all over the country. Podemos is an anti-capitalist party; their number one goal is to take down the austerity regime in Spain and across Europe.

In addition, there is the ticking time bomb of the Greek debt crisis, there is a looming global financial meltdown, there is a refugee crisis, which we have not solved but just sealed from our attention. Furthermore we have ecological crises of planetary dimension with existential threats to our survival... Brexit is just a tiny puzzle piece in a much larger process of entropy taking place all over the world – the systems of society, politics, economy, but also of culture and people’s coexistence are bound to disintegrate because they have produced crises that have corroded social cohesion and destroyed our basis of life on this planet.

We live in the beginning phase of a global revolution which will turn societal conditions upside down. We cannot stop this transformation, but we can influence where it will go. Will the disintegration of the globalized systems lead to fascist violence and molecular civil wars as some fear or will it lead to a process of planetary renewal and liberation?

Alongside the collapse of the inevitable old system and rise of right-wing specters, there is

another vision for the future. The entropy of the centralized systems of power must not lead to chaos and destruction, but to the emergence of a new type of free society based on autonomous *communities*. Community is the key word for a humane future in Europe and worldwide. We human beings are communitarian beings in essence, we genuinely thrive to the extent that we are bound with fellow human beings in solidarity and trust. The insanities of today's late stage capitalism could only be invented and executed by people who have lost their social and ethical anchor. The era we are coming from, the epoch of patriarchy, imperialism and capitalism has systematically destroyed communities and isolated people from one another. Imagine the collapse of this system is accompanied by the emergence of new types of communities everywhere - in cities and on the countryside. People would develop an autonomous cultural life; they would organize new networks of regional self-sufficiency and take basic resources back into their own hands, creating authentic forms of bottom-up grassroots democracy. They would develop new forms of social coexistence based on transparency; people would participate in each other's lives instead of closing their private doors behind them. Imagine people could dare so much truth and compassion among each other that a society would come into being that no longer needs to be kept together by static rules, police and authoritarian structures, but by the quality of life we all most desire: trust.

Imagine a new European community and eventually planetary community will develop, replacing the centralized power systems with an alliance of interconnected autonomous communities setting the foundations for a new epoch based on solidarity among people and cooperation with the powers of nature. Imagine this growing planetary movement would share an essential ethical code and would replace the drive for personal profit with the drive towards participation in and service for the greater benefit of humanity and the Earth. Imagine this movement would gradually dissolve the old nation-states, power blocs and cultural borders. Communities would be home to people from all over the world, including refugees from crisis areas. Once people have again found home in a real community, they no longer need to violently defend the construct of their "fatherland" against people from elsewhere. (Isn't nationalism anyways just a compensation for the sense of "home" we have lost as humanity!)

In order to start such a transformative movement, we need models which show that a new society based on communitarian coexistence, trust between people and regenerative autonomy is possible. We need places for new types of holistic research to develop the ecological, technological, economic, political, social, spiritual structures necessary for our society to become once again compatible with life, nature and humanity's deeper longings and motivations. There already exists an enormous amount of knowledge and solutions in this direction, but they need to be fused into a coherent blueprint, a concept for a new global culture. The Healing Biotopes Plan attempts to introduce such a process of cultural creation.

You say this is too utopian and far-fetched? Well, the more we see the dimensions of the current global crisis we also see the necessity for a fundamental redesign of the way we inhabit this planet. This is not the time to be "realistic" in the narrow conventional sense, because if we think like this we do not even have to begin. It is not the time to think about slow incremental change, but to think about complete revolution, to dare a lot, dream big and see the most beautiful vision of what our world can be. This is what it is to be radical in times of such tremendous transformation.

Evolution does not advance gradually, but in leaps - once a pattern of organization is no

longer functional, living systems undergo a period of turbulence until they suddenly leap into a more complex pattern of organization. This is the process we are undergoing as a species right now, the process we are participating in and co-creating. The clearer our vision, the more we can help birth the future we want. We cannot leave this up to some president, institution or guru; nobody else will do it for us. Now is the moment to start building a new humane culture and it begins by seeing its actual possibility.

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