

# Cosmopolitan Futures for Europe

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*A Nordic proverb tells us that a prudent man does not make the goat his gardener. But that is exactly what we have done. In the garden of Europe we have handed over power to the goat of transnational companies and banks and to democratically weakly accountable bureaucrats. The harvest we have reaped is the euro-crisis. I will first present the basic features of what I consider to be the standard view of the political situation in Europe. In the discussion that follows I will try to show that the standard view has made us complicit in empowering the goat. When we see this clearly – what has happened and why it has happened – it will also be relatively easy to agree on responses to the crisis. But clarity of vision is, as we shall see, in this case somewhat hard to attain.*

## I. The standard view

In an interview given to the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies in the spring of 2013, the American philosopher and social theorist Nancy Fraser said:

So there's a mismatch in scale between Europe as a political unit and Europe as an economic unit and that's already bad enough but then you plug it into this worldwide context where essentially private economic powers have wildly outstripped the public political powers at all levels. We don't have the capacity to develop for example global financial regulation that could prevent the bond markets dictating to states what they can do, how much they can spend on social programmes and so on. This is a deeply undemocratic situation, and I think the only way to resolve it is to scale up political power in a democratic way to cope with this huge runaway of economic and financial power. I think the challenges are really enormous and Europe's situation is part of a much bigger set of problems.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Sadinmaa, A. 2013.

In a recent book, Jürgen Habermas writes:

Den darauf folgenden Zeit-Aufsatz (II.) habe ich in Reaktion auf jene historische Nachtsitzung vom 7. zum 8. Mai 2010 geschrieben, in der Angela Merkel von der Gewalt der Finanzmärkte eingeholt wurde. Sie hatte die Proportionen zwischen der unausweichlichen Hilfe für das überschuldete Griechenland und der opportunistischen Rücksichtnahme auf das innenpolitische Klein-Klein (der ohnehin verlorenen Landtagswahl in Nordrhein-Westfalen) verkannt und musste sich nach langen Wochen des Zögerns den immer kostspieligeren Imperativen des Marktes kleinlaut unterwerfen. Damals ist mir zum ersten Mal die reale Möglichkeit eines Scheiterns des europäischen Projektes zu Bewusstsein gekommen.<sup>2</sup>

These quotes together express well the basic features of what I believe is a politically influential view that is widely shared by citizens in Europe; most typically by intellectuals that identify with the social-liberal, green or left end of the spectrum of politics. I will call this view the standard view. It has three basic pillars. We need transnational political instruments as a counter-weight to the transnational power of the markets.<sup>3</sup> There is a European project that serves this purpose. This European project is in a crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Now, as I indicated, it appears to me that in their eagerness to tame globalised market-forces politically, people who accept the standard view have accepted empowerment of the European Union as it is today. In so doing they have turned a blind eye to the fact that the European union is a deeply undemocratic institution with neo-liberal policies at its heart. The eagerness is understandable because there is so much truth in the standard view. It seems clear to the present author that a democratic and strong European Union would be a very good thing to have,

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2 Habermas 2011.

3 In this essay, I will use the word “transnational” as a broad concept whose meaning also encompasses most of the usual meanings of “global” and “post-national.” Distinctions between these terms will be introduced when there is a specific need.

4 My characterisation of the standard view is broad. It will be easy for anyone who disagrees with my arguments against it below to go back and say that if we introduce some more precision to my characterisation of the standard view we can arrive at varieties of the standard view that are not vulnerable to my criticism. But I invite people to consider whether this kind of reaction may not be a case where Hegel’s dictum that “fear of error may be fear of the truth” applies. As Richard Rorty well knew: whenever you are trapped in a discussion, you can get out of the trap by introducing a distinction. For those who want to do so, it will always be possible to use Rorty’s advice to distinguish themselves from my characterisation of the standard view and to claim that my criticism of it does not affect them. But I submit that such manoeuvres will mostly not promote truth. I call on the generosity of the reader to consider the possibility that I may be more in the right than in the wrong when I say this.

exactly for the reasons that form the theoretical nucleus of the standard view.<sup>5</sup> But the questions we must ask are: Do we have this Union today? If not, are we getting closer to it now? If, again, the answer is negative, do we have good reason to believe that we can achieve it tomorrow or the day after tomorrow? If the answers to all these questions is negative, as indeed they may be, we make a mistake of historical magnitude if we think, that because of the element of truth in the standard view, we need to be loyal to the present European Union. The failure to consider this possibility in earnest is the rotten heart of the standard view.

Some people will think that my critical view of this standard view is mistaken, and that it is me, not they, who are making a politically dangerous mistake. They may say that if we start compromising on the standard view and the commitments to post-national aspirations and strategies that flow from it we will easily find ourselves in the same camp with reactionary nationalist, xenophobic and fascist forces.

I shall try to show that this tendency – the tendency to insulate the standard view from critical questioning – leads us wrong. It makes it unnecessarily difficult to see that it will be liberating for our political imagination and work if we can think of other counter-weights to the transnational power of the markets than transnational political instruments. This liberation can only be achieved if we first agree to take a reflective view on the idea of a “European project” and its crisis.

Here, I will pause for some preparatory remarks about concepts and the scope of my discussion.

First, the common goal of people who subscribe to the standard view is cosmopolitanism. I also think of myself as a “cosmopolitan.”<sup>6</sup> Second, I will not be concerned with explaining myself to people who do not share the cosmopolitan ambition. Third, I will not examine critically or self-critically the assumption that

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5 I am, since many years, a supporter of what we may call the obvious political proposal for a democratisation of the European Union in two steps. First we have a democratically formed constitutional assembly. (It can be formed through direct elections for this purpose or in other ways.) Next, its proposals for a new democratic European Union are brought to referenda. There can be national referenda and the European Union will be “re-constituted” if a proposal gathers “double-majority”, that is, a majority of EU-citizens and in a majority of member states. Nations that have had majorities against would be allowed to vote again about joining in the light of the result of the first round. If this way forward is closed there are also other things we can do to promote democratisation of the European Union. We may campaign for a more social European Union, by making a strong social protocol a part of the EU constitution, by reforming labour regulation, by introducing new bank regulation etc. Similarly, Cameron’s suggestion that Britain’s membership-conditions are redesigned on the basis of a plebiscite may be instrumentally motivated, but this should not prevent us from recognising its inherent democratic value. All that is fine, as far as it goes: But the question we must always consider is: Are we getting anywhere closer to what we want? If not, why? And what, then, are the other ideas, visions and proposals that we may need for a politics of freedom and solidarity in Europe today.

6 The concept “cosmopolitanism” is not very precise. I take it to mean simply a commitment to the search for a global polity, and, as a part of it, a European polity that can do better than we do today in terms of social justice, democracy and responsibility for the environment, locally, regionally and globally, both in the short term and in the long term. For current purposes “cosmopolitanism”, as just defined, is interchangeable with “ethical universalism”, a term I sometimes prefer.

what we may loosely call market-fundamentalism and neo-liberalism are threats to cosmopolitanism rather than ways of promoting it.<sup>7</sup>

What I offer is, then, intended as a contribution to a discussion within the family of those who are committed to the goal of promoting cosmopolitan futures for Europe and who are not believers in mainly market-driven ways of realising the goal. This "family" is my family. But as I already indicated, it seems to be an open question whether I myself belong to the family I describe as my family. This is a more difficult question to get right than one might expect. The difficulty has to do with the morally transformative power of argument and our difficulty with that power.<sup>8</sup>

In order to overcome the difficulties it is important not to move too quickly. I will begin with some observations about how my cosmopolitan family has responded to the crisis in the European Union, particularly in the euro-zone, since 2008.

## **II. The standard understanding of the crisis, the standard responses to it and some problems with those responses**

The standard responses to the crisis coming from the cosmopolitan camp have been shaped by a widely shared standard view of its physiognomy. Here is my reconstruction of the main features of this standard understanding of the crisis in Europe:

- (i) The crisis management by the EU-institutions has been built on the premise that the crisis is due to lax fiscal policies and the amassing of unsustainable levels of debt.
- (ii) The premise is mistaken. Even if there is, especially perhaps in the case of Greece, some truth in it, the more relevant and deeply correct diagnosis is that the euro-crisis is above all due to financialisation and to policies that grant financialised capitalism systemically destabilising privileges at the cost of social justice and ecological sustainability.
- (iii) when the false diagnosis is replaced with the correct one we can also replace irrational policy responses with rational ones.
- (iv) on this basis we can come together and produce, with relative ease, a way out of the crisis.

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7 I am a great believer in the beneficial role in society of free markets. But I will not here discuss why I think most policies promoted today in the name of market freedom are actually contrary to market freedom. On this see, for example, Honneth 2011, ch. III.2.

8 See Wallgren 2006.

- (v) proposals for constructive programmes typically maintain that the austerity measures and the European treaties and legislation that have been placed before us since 2009 to promote and enshrine this austerity of the last years need to be rejected or seriously reformed. In their place we need new monetary policies, new fiscal policies and new European institutional designs to back them.<sup>9</sup>

This narrative has overwhelming support on the social-liberal, green-left end of the spectrum of analysis and activism in which I find myself at home. There are of course differences on each point but these are differences within the family.<sup>10</sup> The most talked about difference is over the sustainability of the debt burden. Some cosmopolitans tend to accept the idea that the problem with the debt is such that central bank intervention and Keynesian anti-cyclical fiscal policies will not be sufficient and that there is a real need to combine this kind of measure with “structural reform” of the kind neo-liberals often say are the most important part of responsible crisis management. This difference stirs a lot of debate and, to the delight of the market-fundamentalists, is a fertile source of division among cosmopolitans.<sup>11</sup> One purpose of the discussion that follows is to show that the debate about the issues mentioned here is not very important. In fact, it seems to me that there is a danger that discussion of these issues of economic policy stand in the way of discussing other issues that are fundamental and that when they have been resolved any outstanding issues in the area of economic policy can also be resolved with ease.

We can begin to shift interest in a more fruitful direction by looking at differences that sometimes arise about point (v). The debate is about the egg and the chicken. The egg all cosmopolitans want is a more socially responsible monetary and fiscal policy than the one that prevails today. But opinions differ over how to get the egg. Can and should we fight elections to win power in the institutions we already have or must we struggle to reform the chicken of the power structure first? What is the right balance between the two trajectories? These are pressing issues (and I, for one, would like us to put more weight than we usually do in the power reform basket). However, for reasons only hinted at so far, I am not optimistic about the

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9 See, for example, the information and links provided at <[www.etuc.org/r/1704](http://www.etuc.org/r/1704)>; <[corporateeurope.org/blog/stop-eus-antidemocratic-austerity-policies-different-europe](http://corporateeurope.org/blog/stop-eus-antidemocratic-austerity-policies-different-europe)>; <[etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE\\_Statements.html](http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_Statements.html)>; and <[www.altersummit.eu](http://www.altersummit.eu)>. (All internet sources in this article are accessed 8th Sept. 2013 unless mentioned otherwise.)

10 See, for example, the contribution by Costas Lapavistas at the conference “Dictatorship of Failure: The Economic and Political Crisis of Europe”, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Study, University of Helsinki, 15–16 November 2012, <[youtu.be/4a8pTERRrPQ](https://youtu.be/4a8pTERRrPQ)>. See also the information and links provided at <[www.etuc.org/r/1704](http://www.etuc.org/r/1704)>; <[corporateeurope.org/blog/stop-eus-antidemocratic-austerity-policies-different-europe](http://corporateeurope.org/blog/stop-eus-antidemocratic-austerity-policies-different-europe)>; <[etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE\\_Statements.html](http://etuce.homestead.com/ETUCE_Statements.html)> and <[www.altersummit.eu](http://www.altersummit.eu)> and also, for example Patomäki 2013.

11 In several countries, including France, the Netherlands and Finland, and more generally, in European discussion in left-wing circles, the debate over this issue often works as a dividing line between more “realistic” right-wing social-democrats and a more neo-Keynesian, “radical” left.

prospects for success coming from political analysis and action that is confined by the narrative I have outlined.

One reason is that the narrative outlined above in five steps suffers from a failure to unpack the notion of "a" crisis that affects "Europe" or "our economies" that "we" need to manage. What we may silently suspect, but have failed to put at the forefront of our struggles and debates, is that what we often refer to as the current crisis management is not an outcome of irrational efforts of misinformed actors.

There has rarely been, in times of peaceful reform, a transfer of money and power from the underprivileged to the privileged as rapid as that which has taken place in the euro-zone in 2009-2012. For the winners there is therefore no crisis at all. There is triumph on two fronts. So why not celebrate?

What I want to claim is not that cosmopolitans have not seen that for the winners there is no crisis. My claim is that there has been a strange distribution of attention in our discourse over the European Union during the past few years. Many cosmopolitans and perhaps the liberal press at large have tended to speak of a euro-crisis, and of time-pressure and failings in crisis management.

They have tended to be silent about the triumph by the few over the many. I also want to suggest that as long as the current distribution of attention prevails, that is, as long as we continue to speak of the crisis (rather than e.g. of "their triumph, our crisis"), cosmopolitan political responses to the triumph of the strong over the weak is likely to remain unambitious and ineffective.

To illustrate this point let us look at just one example of the implications of different conceptual terrains and narratives for our political imagination. If we accept the double picture that we live in a time of triumph for some, not of crisis for all, it will, as I suggest, be natural to shift attention away from the struggle against austerity policies (a consequence of the current distribution of power) to a struggle against the disproportionate influence that corporate lobbyists and technocrats have in the formulation of those policies (the cause of austerity policies). It will also be more important for us to consider how we can break up the "Too Big To Fail" banks (also called "systemic banks") and change the role of the ECB, either by altering the quality of its mandate or by reducing its power, than it is to campaign for, for example, the financial transaction tax or to discuss details of the proposed banking union of the EU.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, I do not propose the foregoing two points as a correct political agenda that should replace a false one. Surely, it would be quite nice if satisfactory responses to the current crisis of the many and triumph of the few could be achieved so easily. But things are not easy. The lessons at this point are smaller. The first lesson is a reminder that it still matters to our political self-understanding and dynamics what stories we tell. The second lesson is that the stories we tell are

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<sup>12</sup> "Too Big To Fails" or "systemic banks" refer to private finance institutions the collapse of which may lead to unforeseeable and potentially chaotic consequences for economic actors across continents.

not only shaped by what we know but significantly also by how we place the things we know.<sup>13</sup>

The claim that a redistribution of wealth and resources from the poor to the rich has followed from the austerity imposed needs no elaboration here. The facts are on the table for everyone to see.<sup>14</sup> But I want to turn attention to the other dimension of the triumph of the few, to the redistribution of power from the democratic polity to, let us say, "the oligarchy." My reason for doing so is not primarily to lament that as power flows to the oligarchy we may be likely to go from bad to worse in the plundering by the rich of common wealth. The reason is that there is, as I suggest, a curious, negative double bind between the standard view and the triumph of the few.

The negative relation is not due to a failure of the democratic idealism of the cosmopolitans. The ideals are in impeccable order. But as I noted, cosmopolitans have not discussed much what has happened to these ideals as the European Union has evolved, nor have they asked what happens now. People have of course ever so often mentioned that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit. But there has been little analysis, that is, little effort to understand the deficit and hence, little discussion of how important it is or how to overcome it.

My suggestion is that the standard view is the explanatory factor if we want to understand why the democracy deficit has been relatively little discussed. It, the standard view, is part of us. It shapes and damages our political imagination in two ways. It has a utopian aspect that tilts our imagination in favour of transnational governance. As we have become used to the idea that the European Union serves the post-national needs of our times we are prone to think that when we strengthen this Union we are also taking real steps towards our utopia. The second damage to our political imagination and hierarchy of attention follows from the first. Our prior

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13 On policy options: Of course, it may be, as of today, that after giving up the notion of "the euro-crisis" in favour of more differentiating terms, we may still end up rallying against austerity, campaigning for the financial transaction tax and calling the shots at national governments. But the arguments for doing so, and, hence, the political agenda of which these actions are a part, will change even if and when the current activities remain the same as before in the short term.

14 With unemployment rates especially in the southern part of the euro-zone rising rapidly and with youth unemployment at catastrophic levels, with harsh cuts in pensions and welfare benefits in the crisis countries, with forced sell-off of public assets at crisis prices and with the easy transfer of profits and wealth to jurisdictions with practically no tax, the widening of the gap between rich and poor in narrowly economic terms is not debatable even if the lack of transparency in the tax and finance systems make it difficult to obtain exact figures about some of the most relevant indicators. The difficulties include, for instance, the difficulty of tracking the destiny and distributive effects of the extremely cheap money that has since 2008 been handed over, in quantities of some trillion (million millions) euros, by the ECB and European governments to the commercial banks – and of estimating exactly the economic gains amassed by the richest 1 %. For overall statistics on income distribution in the European Union, with some analysis, see <[epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Income\\_distribution\\_statistics#](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Income_distribution_statistics#)>. For wage development in the EU, see <[www.etui.org/Topics/Crisis/Wage-development-infographic](http://www.etui.org/Topics/Crisis/Wage-development-infographic)>. For data on child poverty, see <[epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-13-004/EN/KS-SF-13-004-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-13-004/EN/KS-SF-13-004-EN.PDF)>. For data on unemployment, see <[epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-30082013-AP/EN/3-30082013-AP-EN.PDF)>. For the development of the so called gini-coefficient, see, for example, <[epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tessi190&plugin=0](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tessi190&plugin=0)> For estimates of wealth stocked away in tax havens, see e.g. <[www.taxjustice.net/cms/front\\_content.php?idcat=148](http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/front_content.php?idcat=148)>.

commitments make us rather willing – more willing than is good for us– to brush aside concern about the democratic quality of our success.

As a remedy, I suggest three steps. The first step is to attend to what has been brushed aside. This means going from the abstract notion that the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit to a concrete explanation of what this means, that is, to a real discussion of the state of democracy in the European Union. The second step is to draw lessons from the first step. As we try to do so, we will discover a need to look self-critically at the standard view. The third step is to engage in this self-critical exercise. It will involve above all, a questioning of some of the underlying presuppositions that have, inadvertently, contributed to making the standard view attractive in the first place. These three steps define the road-map for the rest of this essay.

The first step is intellectually a straightforward affair. But we will see that morally it is a difficult step to take. In fact the step is so difficult, that cosmopolitans usually find it almost impossible not to step back as soon as they see where it takes them. This is why I must warn the reader that as I invite her, my cosmopolitan colleague, to read on she may find herself reluctant to do so. There will be a reluctance at four levels.

Her first level of reluctance is the one noted before. It is her reluctance to analyse the evolution and state of democracy in the European Union. Her second level of reluctance is her reluctance to look neutrally, without fear, at individual steps of the analysis. Her third level of reluctance is her reluctance to accept the outcome of the analysis if it is very negative. Her fourth level of reluctance is her reluctance to admit her reluctance.

All these levels are intertwined. They are in fact, different aspects of one phenomenon: the phenomenon is the moral and emotional attachment that people have to the standard view. For many of us the standard view has become an identity marker. We feel pride in belonging to an avant-garde elite defined by the standard view. The standard view also works as a source of social prestige and for many it has played an essential role in shaping careers: In both academic studies and public debate and action ample rewards have, since around 1990, been on offer to those who have committed themselves to the standard view. An additional source of irrational attachment to the standard view is that we fear that if we give it up politics will become even more difficult than we ever imagined and hope, too, becomes more difficult to sustain than we ever imagined.

All these factors that explain our attachment to the standard view work also as sources of our will. If the standard view shapes how we see things, these sources of our attachment to the standard view shape how we want to see things. As such they make us prone to reject views that undermine the standard view.



### III. Why we should have expected the crisis: The origins and evolution of the so-called democracy deficit in the European Union

Between the 1950s and 2008, institutional design anchored in explicit post-national legal reform was the core element in the build-up of the European Economic Community and other institutions that have later been brought together under one umbrella in the current European Union. This mechanism of formally agreed juridical integration still plays a role, as can be seen in the so-called six-pack and the TSCG-treaty.<sup>15</sup> But during the past few years we have seen the rise of what Habermas calls “executive federalism” and of what we might also call the rise of soft power to the centre of the polity. The relevant new phenomenon is the redistribution of regulatory power from the constitutional sphere to the extra-constitutional sphere: increasingly, the preferred mechanism for the implementation of policy reforms in EU-institutions and in member-states is through decrees based on agreement that come from closed cabinet meetings and whose compatibility with the European constitution and national constitutions is obscure. In other words, we live in times of an attack that strikes at the heart of the rule of law, that is, on the notion that the exercise of political authority should have a basis in law and be limited by law.<sup>16</sup>

It was perhaps always like that European integration has always partly leaped forward through political agreement first, which has then, with or without real efforts to involve the citizens and give them a say, been followed by belated constitutional reform or treaty reform.<sup>17</sup> But the extent to which politics has moved beyond constitutionality and the speed of the change is, arguably, new.

I will next discuss these general trends in some more detail. I first present an overview over how the democracy deficit in the European Union evolved from the 1950s up to the Lisbon treaty (Democracy in Europe 1950-2007).<sup>18</sup> I then turn to some observations about the last ten years and about the standard responses to it (Democracy in Europe 2003-2013).

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15 The six-pack is EU-slang for a set of regulations of macroeconomic surveillance of member states by the commission that was adopted in the summer of 2011 and entered into force in December 2011. The TSCG is the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, also referred to as the Fiscal Compact, the Fiscal Stability Treaty or the Austerity Treaty. It is an intergovernmental treaty open to EU-members signed on 2 March 2012. (The British veto prevented incorporating the TSCG into EU legislation.) It entered into force on 1 January 2013 for the sixteen states which completed ratification prior to this date.

16 For Habermas’s use of the term “executive federalism”, see his Habermas 2011. Arguably, a major driver in the shift towards executive federalism is the domestic power-battle in Germany. There the constitutional court seated at Karlsruhe has repeatedly imposed limits to Germany’s acceptance of juridically explicit transfer of budgetary power to the European Union. The response by the government has been, paradoxically, to impose its control of the budgets of other Euro-zone countries as a condition for its approval of the bail-out of banks exposed to the crisis of government debt in southern Europe. (See e.g. Watkins 2013.)

17 In this essay, I will sometimes speak, imprecisely, of the treaties of the European Union as a constitution. When more precise terminology is required it will be introduced.

18 Developments in the former Soviet-bloc will not be considered. For some critical remarks on the political semantics of “Europe”, see fn below.

### 3.1. Democracy in Europe 1950 - 2007

There is a widely shared sense that from the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 up to the signing of the draft constitution in 2003 European institutions have suffered from what has been called a “democracy deficit”. The problems were always well known. However, as the European Economic Community had relatively speaking far less significance than the European Union now has, the problems were, reasonably, often looked upon as ones to be addressed and solved later. This attitude of postponement is now, arguably, running into a crisis. In order to see why, we must first provide an overview of the most important problems (“democracy deficits”) as they appeared before the 2001-2007 round of enhanced constitutionalisation and then look at the recent changes. The first item in my overview is more controversial and also conceptually obscure than the other six, which are relatively straightforward and generally acknowledged.

First, in the Treaty of Rome the priority of so-called economic freedoms, that is, the freedom of movement of capital, goods, services and labour, were at the core. Later, as integration has “deepened”, that is, as the European Union has acquired ever-broader competencies, this core has been preserved. In consequence, the heritage from early modernity, in which equal political rights and civil freedoms of individuals were the basic pillar of the constitution, has been undermined. As EU-law has been inscribed as the top-level of the juridical hierarchy and as the constitutionalisation of the European Union has progressed a shift in the balance has followed between rights derived from two opposite sources. The balance has gradually tipped in favour of juridical rights defined in terms of the functional needs of the market leaving ever less weight to rights and freedoms defined in terms of respect for men and women as private subjects and political actors (citizens).<sup>19</sup> In this sense the juridical order of the European Union can with right be called a market fundamentalist order. (Paradoxically, a political order in which regulation of the conditions for the workings of the market is the core of the juridical system is often called liberal or neo-liberal. The term “ordoliberal” might be more appropriate, but all these terms carry a heavy and diffuse historical and theoretical burden. There will always be much confusion about what the relation is between freedom and liberalism on any meaningful and precise sense of the terms as long as the dependence of “free” markets on public authority and regulatory capacity is not properly acknowledged.) Because of this history market regulation has always been at the core of EU-integration and its most richly developed part in terms of legal and other instruments for governance, from the 1950s up to the Single European Act, signed in 1986, and even, as I would argue, up to the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union), signed in 1992. One of the most obvious

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<sup>19</sup> It is controversial whether the charter on fundamental rights that is part of the Lisbon treaty means a step backward or forward for the constitutionalisation of economic, social and cultural rights in the European Union as compared with the constitutional tradition of the member states. The shift I refer to is, however, a separate, more fundamental issue.

features of the conceptual structure and the policy framework of the EU treaties as well as of the political output and the balance of power in the day-to-day running of the EU has therefore been that all of these have been cut loose from many of the key conceptions and aspirations that have been deeply ingrained in the political cultures of the member states in the 20th century.

The EU-treaties, therefore, for a long time had almost no place for a discourse of social fairness based on the acknowledgement of social and economic rights. The juridical context has improved to some extent since the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the policies of the European Union are still rather complacent about issues of social justice and fairness. One major reason for this state of affairs is the balance of competencies. The internal market remains the most richly developed aspect of the European Union. It has developed with slight attention to questions of redistributive justice for the obvious reason that the EU has had little competence in taxation and fiscal policies. Fiscal policy, and with it, most instruments for social justice, have explicitly remained a responsibility chiefly for the member states. For this reason alone it was always easy to predict that as recent crisis management policies coming from the commission, the council, the finance ministers meeting to govern the euro-zone, from the ECB and also from the IMF as part of “the Troika”,<sup>21</sup> increasingly take precedence over national policies, guiding the latter and restricting their room for manoeuvre, the waning of social concern should follow naturally.

This shift in policy, from national controlled fiscal policy with a relatively high social quality, to EU-driven more market-friendly budgets has, together with many substantial provisions of the treaties regarding the functioning of the internal market, common trade policy and the priority of provisions regulating the market as compared with social, labour and environmental provisions produced a historical shift in the system of governance. Power has been transferred from the political system to the market. Legislation and the way in which administrative power is exercised will in the emerging European Union on the whole be relatively more influenced by the logic of the market and market actors and less by the political sphere than they are in the member states or as compared with the former European Community.

The counterargument to the concern just raised is that even if we accept its truth we must acknowledge that globalisation has dwarfed the nation states. Even a European Union with a bad balance in the regulative power of state and market is, because of its stronger governance capacity, better for social justice and democracy, so the counter-argument goes, than nation states with a relatively better balance but weaker capacity. This is all I wish to say here about the first element

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20 See Ojanen 2008a and 2008b.

21 The Troika is common parlance for committees sent from the IMF, the ECB and the European Commission to members states to negotiate terms for international bailouts of their national economies.

of concern in this overview of the democracy deficit in the European edifice before ca. 2000. Other elements are less controversial.

+My second concern is that the European Union is not a parliamentary democracy: Its parliament is not a real parliament in terms of its legislative powers and it does not have a real government in terms of accountable executive power. Instead by far the largest part of the right to legislative initiative and a significant proportion of the mandate for political initiative is vested with the unelected commission, which enjoys a highly indirect mandate and weak democratic accountability. This second concern is of course just the most crucial aspect of a more general feature of the European Union in that, amazingly, its institutional structure does not respect the established doctrine of the separation of the executive, legislative and judiciary powers. I shall not discuss the doctrine here. The initiative monopoly of the Commission appears to me deeply problematic democratically even if other aspects of the doctrine are given up.

Closely connected to these issues, and the third characteristic of the EU that I wish to draw attention to here, is the fact that the court of justice has an unusually large political role as compared with the situation in the member states. Politically active high courts may be compatible with political democracy if highly developed mechanisms for accountability, transparency and legitimacy are in place. This is not the case in the European Union. The politically driving role of the court stands in stark contrast to the quality of its democratic mandate, which is even more indirect and weaker than that of any other major institution of the Union except, possibly, the ECB.

Less often observed, but certainly of no lesser importance is our fourth concern: The administrative apparatus of the Union, which plays a driving role in relation to national and local public administration has only thin channels of communication with governments, elected representatives or the public at large. At the same time, we know that the administrative staff of the EU is small and heavily reliant on services from lobbyists, in particular from corporate lobbyists. The vast influence of lobbyists is all the worse because of the secrecy and culture of corruption in which it is embedded.<sup>22</sup>

Fifth, due to the structural weaknesses of the common public sphere – the many languages and the lack of common fora for debate, the diversity of the cultural and political traditions, the weakness of pan-European civil society structures – the Union cannot effectively draw informal legitimacy and political direction directly from a common European polity but remains largely dependent on indirect legitimation through the member states.

Sixth, this indirect legitimation from the national democracies is extremely ineffective due to such factors as the weakness of public attention to and debate of the agenda and dynamics of Union affairs, the speed and lack of transparency

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22 For in-depth reports and regularly updated information, see <[www.alter-eu.org](http://www.alter-eu.org)> and <[www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org)>.

when Union wide legislation and policy is formed, the weakness of participation in elections for the European parliament and the underdevelopment of mechanisms for the national parliaments to follow and give informed inputs into Union policies.

The seventh item on our list of complaint is economic democracy. Arguably, trade unions have been the single most powerful and fundamental instrument for economic democracy in modern European history. The rise of the European Union has been a difficult time for them. This is partly due to organisational history and, of course, also to the relatively weak positions of trade unions in EU-legislation and institutions. But there are other reasons as well. Trade unions have not been able so far to muster collective organisational capacity and efficacy at the European Union level. We can understand why. It is not easy in the new Europe to achieve coordinative and effective cooperation between unions coming from widely different political cultures. In countries like France and Portugal mass-mobilisation on the streets plays a far bigger role in trade union activity and in the identity of the individual members than in some other member states, such as Germany or Sweden where negotiations between state, employers associations and trade unions have been the most important arena for translating the mass mobilisation achieved by trade unions into influence over economic practices and strategies in private corporations and socially redistributive policies by the public authorities.

There have been some changes for the better in the position of the labour movement in recent years. The Lisbon Treaty recognises fundamental trade union rights and in practical politics common trade union action at the pan-European level has been an effective force recently in some individual cases, with the struggle over the so called Bolkenstein directive on the liberalisation of services as the most important individual example. Nevertheless, important political goals of trade unions, such as that of adding a social protocol to the Lisbon treaty, remain distant dreams. Thus, while the struggle is on, it is clear so far that the contributions of trade unions to economic democracy remain smaller in the European Union as compared with the situation in most member states.

Historically, the democracy deficit and its evolution are easily understandable. In the 1950s the common European institutions were rather weak and uninfluential as compared with the member states. Hence, there was, as we already noted, little need to place demands for a democratisation of the European community high on the political agenda. But as the balance of power has gradually shifted the other way the relative importance of the inherited democracy deficit has grown dramatically.

Against this background it becomes essential to assess to what extent the pinnacle of European institutionalisation so far, the Lisbon Treaty that came into effect in 2007, brings progress with respect to the legacy of democratic deficits.

On the positive side we may note the following. There are (i) a provision for the right to citizen's initiatives; (ii) some improvements on rules of access to documents; (iii) improvements on transparency in the workings of the council of ministers when it performs its legislative function; (iv) some strengthening of the indirect chain

of legitimacy through the slightly enhanced role of national parliaments in EU-legislation; (v) an increased clarity in the balance and distribution of power between the ministerial council, the commission and the European Parliament that includes a strengthening of the role of the elected Parliament, and also, as noted already, (vi) improved recognition of social and economic rights.

Less often noted in public debate, but equally clear, is that with the Lisbon Treaty the European Union has also taken several important steps backward in terms of democracy. I will mention six such regressive steps. I will provide some discussion only of the sixth, controversial item on the list.

(i) The Union now has a president and foreign minister with unclear, indirect and hence democratically weak mandates. (ii) The Lisbon Treaty, with its many layers of cross-references, is by any standards a technically highly complex document. It is much less understandable to the public than any national constitution. It is even considerably more difficult to master, even for specialists, than the previous treaties, adding to the challenge of forming an active and informed citizenship. (iii) There are many unclear clauses in individual policy areas, such as social and health services, making the workings of the upcoming Union unpredictable and paving the way for an even greater political role than before for the democratically problematic court of justice. (iv) Extremely problematic for transparency, predictability and democratic accountability is the scope the Lisbon provisions on international trade allow for influence on national and EU-wide labour, social and health legislation and policy, and also, for example, on environment policy, through external trade agreements and the dispute settlements mechanisms agreed for them, most notably under World Trade Organisation agreements.<sup>23</sup> (v) We must also note that the new provisions for “fast track” authority for heads of state to revise the Treaty (art. 48) open up the prospect of constitutional development with even less transparency, public debate and democratic participation than has been the case until now.

(vi) The sine qua non of any democratic constitution is a provision according to which the power of the state belongs to the people. There is no such core provision in the Lisbon Treaty. This fact is rarely noticed. The technical argument for overlooking the lack is that the Lisbon Treaty is not a constitution in the classical sense. The argument is, however, today a weak one. As long as the European cooperation structures were clearly intergovernmental, any foundational, constitutional provision would have been anomalous. In the new treaty some foundational provisions are introduced but not, however, the democratic core principle. At the same time it is clear that in many respects the Lisbon Treaty is the symbolic and functional equivalent of a constitution. Therefore the fact that what I call the democratic core principle is not there in the treaty marks the end of a historical era and the beginning of a new one. Even some of the most fundamental democratic achievements that European citizens have got used to since the British and French revolutions have now vanished in thin air. One aspect is this: The Lisbon Treaty defines the rights

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<sup>23</sup> For some references, see footnote 52 below.

and liberties of citizens of the European Union. But these rights and liberties are no longer brought by the citizens themselves, as the authors of the Treaty, to themselves, as subjects to the law it imposes. The rights now belong to the citizens only thanks to the benevolence of the Union.

One sometimes hears the claim that thanks to the multi-layered structure of the EU-law the citizens of the European Union have retained their sovereignty nevertheless. The suggestion is that there is no need to make the uppermost level of law, that is, Union law, a direct expression of the will of the people because the people are sovereign at the lower level of their separate member states, and the upper level, where citizens are not sovereign, only has power over the lower level to the extent that the lower level has given explicit agreement to giving it away. This is the so called principle of deferral in the European Union that, supposedly, should explain why there is no need, or even a reason, to state in the Lisbon Treaty that the power of the Union belongs to its peoples. It is, however, a juridical fig leaf only.

The first problem is with the process whereby power has been deferred. In many cases transfer of power from member states to the European Union has happened through procedures with weak democratic quality.<sup>24</sup>

The second problem is the unidirectionality of the principle. According to art 3.b. of the Lisbon Treaty, the Union derives whatever powers it has from the member states, according to the principle of deferral. But deference is difficult to control democratically. There are two issues here. The most blatant issue is the difficulty of reversibility. For treaty change unanimity between member states is required. This is of course all right as far as expansion of EU-competencies is concerned (and as long as the EU maintains its always partly fictional identity as an organisation with sovereign member states as its members). But when member states democratically seek to retract an earlier transfer of competence the unanimity requirement becomes a trap. The sole instrument that the citizens have at their disposal in order to maintain their reflexive sovereignty, or their control over so-called competence-competence (i.e. their right to withdraw powers that have been given away to the Union) is the purely black and white instrument to decide, through national procedures, about membership in the Union.<sup>25</sup>

The third challenge to member states who wish to exercise control over the principle of deferral is the reflexive problem of understanding and defining exactly the scope and nature of the powers that the member states have deferred to the Union according to the Lisbon treaty. This problem finds a technically elegant and precise solution in the articles defining the competencies of the Court of Justice of the European Union, together with the Protocol on the application of the principles

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24 For the Finnish case, I refer to two collective petitions by Finnish intellectuals to Parliament; one from the time when Finland decided to join the European Monetary Union in 1997 and the second from the time when Finland ratified the TSCG-Treaty in 2012. (The latter letter was delivered to Parliament on 11th December 2012.) See also my remarks below on the process in Slovenia, France and the Netherlands.

25 Procedures for the cessation of membership have for the first time been included in the treaty of the European Union with the Lisbon Treaty.

of subsidiarity and proportionality, esp. art. 8, to the same treaty: With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, the European court has sole jurisdiction over the existing division of competencies between member states and the Union. In other words, whenever it is not clear what powers member states have deferred it is clear that the power to resolve the issue has been deferred to the Union, specifically to its court. Moreover, the principle of deferral in the treaty ignores, but is not designed so as to actually remedy, the democratic calamity that the realm of Union competence has, since the late 1960s, expanded only partly on the basis of explicit revisions to the treaty. To a large extent the expansion has happened through decisions by the European court and through a post factum juridical codification there of processes of coordination and harmonisation that were originally conceived only as political measures agreed upon at the summits of European heads of state and at other fora as well. A further source of obscurity concerning the nature and extension of powers conferred to the Union is due to the expansion of Union competence in the realm of external economic cooperation. The future impact of this external competence on internal legislation and policy formation in the Union and its member states and for the competencies of the Union depends on global political and juridical dynamics and cannot easily be foreseen.

Is the crudeness of the tools available for citizens wishing to exercise their reflexive sovereignty a problem for democracy? When seen from the perspective of a formal conception of democracy, the problem may seem marginal, perhaps even as a routine case of legal layering in a time when international legal instruments proliferate. But from the point of view of effective democratic sovereignty there is a decisive difference between the implications of EU membership as compared with membership in any other international agency to which some authority has been deferred. The vital difference is that the EU competencies are large in most policy areas. In consequence, the functional costs for any member state of leaving the Union are unusually high. They are in fact so high as to be incomparable to the costs of leaving any other intergovernmental body. This seems to me to be the rational element behind the unpleasant but recurring, often rather inarticulate, idea that sometimes surfaces in public debate, that the European Union will eventually disintegrate through chaos and violent internal conflicts.

I close my discussion of what I have called the lacuna at the heart of the Lisbon Treaty. The main point here was that with the Lisbon Treaty we have entered a stage in the evolution of European democracy when it is, at best, unclear, whether we can say that the citizens of the European Union are sovereign in the classical modern sense that the power exercised by the highest public authorities that they are supposed to support, trust and obey is their own power.

The overall picture we arrive at of the development of democracy in the EU-area from the 1950s to 2007 is clear. The "European project" that has been since its inception criticised for its shortcomings in terms of democratic quality has during this time in many respects gone from bad to worse. This has happened through steady evolution and has proceeded without much notice of the legitimate demand



according to which the increased shift of power from the member states to the European Union creates a need for a deepening of democracy at the Union level.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.2. Democracy in Europe 2003–2013

From the mid-nineteenth century through much of the twentieth century European history was significantly driven by widely shared high hopes that mobilised mass movements in the various nations. In recent years utopian yearnings have, for good or bad, become marginal in political life. There is a lot of functional pressure: global warming, the transnational restructuring of the world economy, the new security threats and the increased competition for natural resources and skilled labour are often seen as new factors that place strict limits on the choices available in public policy, especially at the national level. The shift to what has been called TINA-politics (There Is No Alternative -politics<sup>27</sup>) has pushed the utopian aspiration that remains to the margins of electoral politics, as is the case with social-liberal and social democratic political formations in most countries in Eastern and Central Europe, new left autonomous politics in South Europe or green localism in North-Western Europe and the USA. The political idealism that still exists has during the past decades largely been recast in a new mode. It is now often either rather defensive and culturally unambitious or ghettoized and decoupled from hope for radical betterment for whole nations, regions or globally.

It was in this context of a heightened sense of necessity and weakened utopian energy and also in the context of the worry that the growing significance of the Union had not been coupled with democratic reform that European integration entered into a new phase of development in the early years of the new millennium. The new phase has had two distinct stages. The first stage was the “constitutional process” that led to the Lisbon Treaty and the second stage is the current crisis with its “executive federalism” discussed above.

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26 The European Union is often presented as a model of integration for other regions as well, especially for Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. (For a critical analysis see e.g. <[www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/eula-integration\\_0.pdf](http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/eula-integration_0.pdf)>, accessed 30 July 2013.) For this reason the regressive shift in Europe need not be of interest only to Europeans. It may, despite Europe's decline, be of world historical significance. It seems reasonable to look at the period from the French Revolution to the fall of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc as a period of global progress for liberal, constitutional democracy. But in view of the post-war development in Western Europe and also of more recent developments in Russia (during the last ten years or so), in China (since May 1989), in India (since the rise of the BJP into significance), in sub-Saharan Africa (with the great African war and the difficulty of consolidating of democracy in major countries, including South Africa and Nigeria) and in the United States of America (since 9/11), the overall picture globally now seems bleak. This is true even if there are important positive cases as well, thanks to the great effort by the democracy movements in many countries in Latin America in the past decades as well as in some other countries including Nepal and, of course, despite all the present difficulties, some of the Arab countries.

27 I first learnt the term TINA-politics from conversations with Tariq Banuri in the late 1980s and he may have coined it. It is sometimes attributed to Margaret Thatcher. I have not traced its history. In my experience it is an established critical term since many years among activists in international non-party movement politics and a term that also finds powerful, repressive use in public debate.

In May 2003 Jacques Derrida and Jürgen Habermas published a co-signed essay on European integration.<sup>28</sup> The essay was published at the time when inter-governmental negotiations about a Constitutional Treaty for the European Union were at a crucial stage.<sup>29</sup> The timing of the publication together with the place of publication – a leading daily newspaper – made it impossible not to read the essay also as an intervention into day-to-day politics. The message in that respect was clear: Derrida and Habermas were in favour of the constitution and also, even more sharply, in favour of deepening integration in which the core states (“Kerneuropa”) take the lead in a process that other member states will need to adjust to. The desired result should be a constitution without “separatism.”

As indicated above, I have great sympathy with Habermas and Derrida’s basic agreement that the European Union needs a constitution. Nevertheless, one might think that it is of some relevance to uphold a clear distinction between a principled commitment to an explicit constitutionalisation of the integration process that encompasses large parts of Western and Central Europe and the political judgement of the day that the constitution that was discussed in 2003 deserves support. It was therefore disappointing that there was nothing in Habermas and Derrida’s essay that suggests that they had read the draft of the constitution the acceptance of which they advocated. The observations we made above about the democratic shortcomings of the Lisbon Treaty all apply to the draft constitution that Habermas and Derrida raised their voice to support. Nevertheless, Habermas and Derrida paid no attention to these matters. In this they were by no means unique. On the contrary, the only reason to mention their joint essay here is that it is typical of the cosmopolitan moods of those times: Many cosmopolitans wanted the constitution long before they had read it and with little regard for its substance and democratic quality.<sup>30</sup> We may also note that in that essay there is nothing that suggests that the authors had, in this particular case, any real concern for the internal connection, so powerfully and creatively explicated by Habermas and so incisively questioned by Derrida elsewhere, between the democratic, rational quality of the process through

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28 Habermas & Derrida 2003.

29 I continue to refer to the entire process, since the 1950s, of founding and developing the juridical framework for the European Economic Community (as it was called up to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992) and the European Union as a process of constitutionalisation. I will call the document proposed by a convention formed by the EU member states that was entitled “Constitutional Treaty for Europe” the constitution. The uncertainty concerning the basic political and juridical terminology, reflected in the neologism “constitutional treaty” and partly addressed in scholarly debates about the so called new constitutionalism, is symptomatic of the opacity of the European integration process. (Optimists would perhaps speak of the creativity of the process rather than of its opacity. Such optimism invites the question, not pursued here, creativity for what?)

30 In my country, Finland, it was seen as trivial that the government and parliament committed themselves to ratification of the constitution (and later, also of the so called Lisbon Treaty) long before it had been subjected to analysis and public debate. In fact, it was seen as normal in most EU-countries that the political decision to approve the constitution could be taken long before any details of the text, or even of many of its fundamental provisions, were known. See for example, the note on the political quality of the Slovenian ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by Slavoj Žižek entitled “What Does Europe Want”. Žižek 2008: <[elpais.com/diario/2008/07/08/opinion/1215468004\\_850215.html](http://elpais.com/diario/2008/07/08/opinion/1215468004_850215.html)> (accessed 24.7.2013)

which the constitution is drafted and approved and the identity of the emerging political entity and the self-understanding of its citizens.<sup>31</sup>

This, then, is one side of the new Europe that was formed through the constitutional process that gave birth to the new European Union of the Lisbon Treaty: There is in this Europe a new readiness of intellectuals, elected politicians and others to sign up to political changes that everyone agrees are of historical significance regardless of content and irrespective of access to information. The readiness is all the more surprising as it has arrived in times of peace and hence in times with no obvious time pressure. This *undoing of informed consent as a norm* that serves a vital, critical function in democratic proceedings and public debate, is, as I wish to suggest, an important novel, regressive feature in European democratic history.<sup>32</sup>

A related feature of European integration, and the second theme that needs to be addressed here, became visible in the run up to the French and Dutch referenda on the proposed constitution in 2005. When the referenda were announced the pro-side had the support of a comfortable majority of the voters, according to polls in both countries. When the votes came in the safe yes to the constitution had turned into a 54,9 % NON in France and 61,6 % NEE in the Netherlands. What had happened?

One thing we know is that a clear majority of people belonging to the political and economic elites in both countries were vigorously in favour of the constitution throughout. We may also suspect that there was, favourable polls notwithstanding, always some lack of clarity about and confidence in the level and quality of mass-support for the constitution. Nevertheless, even just half a year before the referenda, many would have thought that the kind of massive campaign for a yes-vote that was seen in both France and the Netherlands – a campaign that enjoyed the active support from an overwhelming majority of the leaders of the most significant political organisations and large corporations as well as solid backing from the

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31 Habermas 1992; 1999; Derrida 1990. In their joint essay in 2003 Habermas and Derrida point to the massive demonstrations against the war on Iraq that took the place all around Europe in the early spring of 2003 as a reason for a new mild optimism about the emergence of a common European public sphere that would help remedy the democratic deficit of the EU. My empirical reading of the demonstrations is that the World Social Forum process played a crucial role in making their global coordination and the synchronisation of their political message possible. The call for common demonstrations on 15 February 2003 emerged from a meeting of the European Social Forum. The demonstrations were thus arguably, at least to some extent, more the regional expression of a new global movement (or, as I would rather say, of the World Social Forum as a new vehicle for intercontinental dialogue and democratic public space) than a European phenomenon. Probably the best book on the world social forum is still Whitaker Ferreira 2006.

32 In defence of the legitimacy and rationality of the current democracies in the European Union it may be said that many of the parliamentarians in the member states who cast their vote in favour of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty did so on the basis of a concern for the “Big Picture” rather than on the basis of detailed knowledge and assessment of the actual text. If we grant this we will still need to assess the significance of the gap that exists between the more demanding democratic expectations concerning, for example, time, transparency, expert assessment and other reflective and deliberative procedures that regulate constitutional change at the national level and the lesser demands that have always been in place in the constitutional process for the European Union.

media – would have made acceptance of the constitution a safe bet. Nevertheless on the day of the referendum the constitution was rejected by clear majorities.

The standard explanation of the surprising result has been that the effort of the elites backfired. Supposedly, the people in France and the Netherlands voted in protest against the politicians, rather than against the EU-constitution as such. The point is speculative and not easily proven wrong. Yet it seems to me essentially false for three reasons. Firstly, the empirical findings of the exit-poll studies conducted by the European commission on the reasons voters gave for their voting behaviour do not match this explanation.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, the Non/Nee came out after a display of phenomenal grass root mobilisation and energy among the population at large. This was the case especially in France. In the Netherlands local campaigning and public participation in debate was comparatively lower whereas in France books on the constitution became best-sellers, hundreds or even thousands of campaign groups were organised from below, thousands of debates and rallies took place. It is difficult not to conclude that as many people in France, and probably also in the Netherlands, learnt more about the constitution they became more, not less, critical of it than they had been initially.<sup>34</sup> The third problem is that even if we interpret the rejection of the constitution in the two referenda primarily as protests against the current governments and their policies it is difficult to keep this protest apart from the protest against the current mode of European integration. People protested against the social and economic consequences of their government's policies. But these policies are intimately connected to the ordoliberalism of the increasingly powerful European Union described above.

Let us note also that only three years after the Non/Nee in the referenda the European Union was back on track. The constitution that was rejected in 2005 was abandoned at first, but only to be replaced soon by the proposal we now know under the name of The Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty differs from the constitution that was rejected in 2005 in two significant respects. The word "constitution" was scrapped in the title of the document as also the paragraphs about European symbols; the hymn, the motto, the flag and the nation day. The second difference is that the Lisbon Treaty does not have the linear book form of the constitution. It rather retreats to the complex mode of presentation of the old EU-treaties. In consequence, the treaty preserved almost all the material provisions of the constitution that were rejected in the French and Dutch referenda but it did so in a way that makes it almost impossible for non-specialists to decipher. The difficulty is thorough. It is, to take just an example that adds drama to some of what

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33 See <[ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl171\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl171_en.pdf) and <[ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl172\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl172_en.pdf)> (accessed on Nov. 11 2008).

34 Many will remember the dry comment by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former president of France and chair of the convention that drafted the EU constitution, when the Non was a fact, that the government made a crucial mistake in distributing the proposed constitution to all households in France. Giscard d'Estaing would surely have preferred uninformed consent over informed rejection. (See the article by Elaine Sciolino, based on an interview with Giscard d'Estaing, in the New York Times, June 15, 2005.)

was discussed above, quite difficult even for specialists to understand the exact extent of the powers deferred to the union by the member states.

As we saw above, the Lisbon Treaty raises intricate issues for the question of ownership of general juridical competence, (i.e., competence over competence or “reflexive sovereignty”). Here one more problematic observation must be added to our earlier discussion. For the idea of a society whose citizens enjoy political autonomy as carriers of a democratic constitutional order the lack of perspicuity of their highest legislation is a very severe challenge: The reason is that it will be next to impossible for the citizens of the European Union to give informed contributions to the long-term development of a polity and society whose defining juridical documents are in fundamental respects beyond their comprehension.

The Lisbon treaty, which replaced the draft constitution of 2003 that was rejected by French and Dutch citizens in 2005, has not been brought to a new referendum in these countries. Astonishingly, the explicit argument by political leaders favourable to the constitutional project was that referenda would put it at risk.<sup>35</sup> The case of Ireland is different but not less problematic. In Ireland a referendum was obligatory for domestic reasons. When the Irish rejected the Lisbon Treaty on June 12, 2008 the referendum was repeated a year later. Only then, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009, was the “correct” outcome achieved and the Lisbon Treaty could enter into force soon after, on 1st December 2009.

The developments we have just registered reinforce our overall suggestion that, despite the growing need for democratisation, the democratic quality of the European Union has in recent times in fact gone from bad to worse. From the cynical perspective of the disinterested observer we may even take some delight in this occasion to test empirically, on a grand scale, who was more in the right, Jürgen Habermas or Niklas Luhmann, in their 1970s debate about legitimation in our times: Was Habermas right when he claimed that governance in contemporary societies remains dependent on democratic legitimation or was Luhmann right with his vision of ethically purified systemic integration in which rational and moral legitimacy is just one integrative resource among others with no functional privilege?<sup>36</sup>

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35 French president Sarkozy was during his term particularly explicit in arguing publicly against referenda on the ground that they might yield the wrong result. For a similar pronouncement by the president of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, see *Het Financieele Dagblad* 6 February 2007.

36 Habermas & Luhmann 1971. The Habermasian framework for conceptualising legitimacy has of course met much criticism. At the level of abstraction we engage in here the choice is however not so much between different theories of legitimacy but rather between theories in which politics remains conceptualised within a framework where the ideas of self-determination and citizenship have a moral, critical potential and others in which this is not the case. From our perspective then, alternative approaches to the legitimation issue that are critical of the abstractness of Habermas’s communicative idealism, of his alleged lack of sensitivity to postmodern, feminist and postcolonial problematisations of subjective freedom and human plurality or of his lack of sensitivity to the problem of conflict and antagonism in political life, all remain at the Habermasian side of the debate between him and Luhmann. Cf. Derrida’s note on the commonalities between him and Habermas in his note to the article he and Habermas co-published in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 31 May 2003. For some reflections on the intellectual history of the debate over whether societal reproduction requires widely shared cultural values, see Honneth 2011, 18ff., and references provided there.

Be that as it may, a fundamental feature of the liberal, republican democratic tradition in Europe and North America, which found its first mature theoretical expression in Kant's political philosophy, was the notion that men and women can give up their sense of political participation and responsibility, their understanding of themselves as citizens, only by giving up a large part of their sense of self-determination, and, hence, of an essential dimension of their vision of a fulfilling life. In this framework, the modern state, when democratic, can provide a basis for a politically free life for each person as a citizen.

The happy unity of individual autonomy and lawful citizenship is, as Kant and other thinkers of the Enlightenment envisioned and many have later agreed, made possible by the fictive but normatively consequential and politically immensely productive idea of a rule of law grounded in constitutions, which are the expression of the rationally formed and free will of the citizens.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, in the light of the considerations presented above, the quality of the constitutional process of the European Union makes it almost impossible to think of the emerging Union as a democratic, constitutional entity in the Kantian sense. Not only is the Union not getting a constitution that is a genuine and clear expression of the desires of the people. This in itself would be no news since an after the fact acceptance has been the ground for the legitimacy of European constitutions at the national level. But now, with the European Union, we see the emergence of the functional equivalent of a constitution of which we have very good, empirically tested reason to believe that it is one the majority of the people, at least in some member states, do *not* want. We have reason also to say that this functional equivalent of a constitution is one the majority of the population neither knows or understands well.

So far we have in this section gathered two diagnostic observations: one about the undoing of informed consent as a normative standard and a second about the demise of concern for the Enlightenment ideal that constitutions ought to serve as expressions of the aspirations of the citizens and have their approval, at least post factum. In order to understand the full significance of the recent dynamics in European politics for democracy the rise into ever larger prominence of the European Union needs to be seen in the light of these two democratic shortcomings of the constitution-building process of the last decade. They must also, thirdly, be considered in the light of the actual quality of the rules, norms and processes that have governed the ordinary functioning of the common European institutions up to now and continue to do so, regardless of the fate of the Lisbon Treaty.

The case in point is fiscal power. According to the main principles governing the distribution of competencies between the European Union and its member states in the Maastricht Treaty and even in the Lisbon Treaty, the intention has been to respect the sovereignty of national governments and parliaments in budget matters. Recently, especially in Germany, but also in other countries, there has been much debate about the compatibility of the management of the euro-crisis, with respect

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37 Kant 1949.

for the national fiscal sovereignty. Costly bailouts of banks and loan packages to indebted countries, the costs and risks of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM), as well as the new agreements that give both soft power (including ex ante evaluation of national budgets) and the right to enforce sanctions on in breach of common agreements (most clearly in the case of the TSCG, the “Fiscal Compact”) are key ingredients in the debate.<sup>38</sup>

The debate strikes me as belated: It was always unrealistic to think that we can keep fiscal policy strictly national while constructing a common monetary policy for the euro-zone.<sup>39</sup> But this unrealistic fantasy has remained important throughout the European Union, not least as a source of legitimacy for national governments claiming in national politics some sovereignty, and fighting national elections on the premise that the elections are decisive for access to power over the redistributive aims and effects of nationally executed fiscal policies. In 2011-2013 we have seen trust in the promise of sovereignty in fiscal policies whither away rapidly, most obviously in the countries living under the diktats of the Troika,<sup>40</sup> but increasingly also in other Eurozone countries. The withering away in the eye of the public of national fiscal sovereignty is deeply problematic for the legitimacy of national democracies. The consequence for EU-legitimacy is severe. The Union is, as we have seen, extremely weak in terms of legitimacy acquired directly from its citizens. The less convincingly it can claim indirect legitimacy via the democracy derived from the member states, the deeper the crisis of democracy for the Union.

The main response so far, among the citizens, to all the regressive developments we have recorded above, has been twofold. We have seen the rise of the populist right in electoral politics and also widespread resignation and depoliticisation. Cosmopolitan politics is on the decline all through Europe.

The fundamental assumption of this essay is that there will be no shift from the current drift in the flow of money from poor to rich and power from the democratic

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38 See, for example, Tuori 2012.

39 It was clear to the people who proposed the euro, that is, the European Monetary Union and its position in the EU edifice as whole in the present form, that the separation of monetary and fiscal policy is problematic and creates a potential for crisis. Awareness of this fact was widespread and visible since the inception of the euro, and it has, as we know, been used to galvanise support for the so called Stability and Growth Pact agreed originally at EU summits in 1997 and to legitimise the Pact and later rounds of reform of it, in 2005, 2011 and 2013. The occurrence of a crisis like the one we see today should, therefore, have come as a surprise only to the rather small community of economists and lobbyists who preached, between somewhere in the 1990s and the crash of Lehman Brothers, that capitalism has entered a post-crisis era. In public debate and academic debate the predictions of a crisis, and the warnings that the structure of the euro is crisis-prone, were always a significant topic. See, for example, Roos 2002; and Patomäki 2012.

40 The most notorious cases of extra-constitutional action by EU institutions are the interventions by the ECB in the sovereign debt market, but the problems are very many, including, for some years already, the obscure role of the EU summits. (See again Tuori 2012. In member states the most striking cases of breaches by governments of the rule of law come from the countries put under the surveillance of the Troika. See, for example, <[blogs.euobserver.com/phillips/2013/01/21/decreed-omatic-the-peripherys-permanent-state-of-exception](http://blogs.euobserver.com/phillips/2013/01/21/decreed-omatic-the-peripherys-permanent-state-of-exception)>, accessed 31st July 2013). But the problem reaches deep into the political systems of other countries as well.

system to technocrats and corporations unless an improvement of the quality of power can be achieved first.

Radical deliberative democracy is, arguably, the most important source of rationality, freedom and justice in politics. Hence, if we want to avoid a further consolidation of authoritarian, post-democratic capitalism in Europe we need to address, honestly and without confusing our legitimate post-national idealism with the realities of the present, the question of the quality of power in the European Union that we have today, especially the quality of its democracy. That may be clear to all cosmopolitans. Nevertheless, there has been a lot of silence where there has been a need for debate. I think it is important that we reflect on the sources of this silence. In order to do so I suggest we go back to where we started and reflect again, from a new angle, on how many good people in “the cosmopolitan family” have reacted to the eurocrisis or to what I prefer to call “the crisis of the many and the triumph of the few.”

#### IV. Europe’s existential crisis

The idea that the crisis of the last few years is an “existential crisis” for “Europe” or for a “European project” has been popular in debate. Cosmopolitans like to use this phrase. I suggest that this reaction should make us pause. Why is that we find it apt to say of the crisis of the many and the triumph of the few that it is an existential crisis?

Let us ask first what “Europe” stands for? What idea of Europe must we already have accepted before we can think that it, “Europe”, is in crisis now? Apparently, “Europe” is here equated with the European Union. When people say that Europe, or the European project, is in an existential crisis what they mean is not that some or any European project is in a crisis. They mean that because of things that happen today it is possible that the European Union will fall apart and cease to exist *and* they suggest that if this happens it bears a much larger significance than the falling apart of any ordinary institution.

The suspicion is that people think that there is an internal relation between the European Union and some idea of Europe or some European civilisational ideals such that the collapse of the European Union will be harmful for the idea or the realisation of some valuable ideals. I have my qualms about the usefulness of the notion that there is such a thing as an idea of Europe and about the usefulness of the notion that there are “European ideals.”<sup>41</sup> But, even if we accept without

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41 Even the fine recent study of the idea of (esp. in Husserl’s work) by Miettinen (2013) stops short of critical reflection on the discursive regime that controls the potential of discourse about Europe today. I have argued elsewhere that cosmopolitans would be well advised to avoid the word Europe (and associated words) when they explain their moral aims and political strategies. When a universalist semantic framework is in place it is, of course, alright to turn to the issue of how politics and the institutional design of Europe can best serve overall cosmopolitan global projects. (Cf. Wallgren 1998).



argument, that some legitimate use of those concepts is possible, the ease with which the European Union is equated with some ideal Europe is strange. In view of the regressive shift in democracy that we have reported on above, should we not have expected that cosmopolitans would have welcomed the possibility of the collapse of the present “European project”?

The idea that the crisis of Europe has the character of an *existential* crisis provides the clue to understanding the phenomenon I suggest we first regard as strange. Let us take a step back.

The crisis in Europe we talk so much about today is primarily a functional crisis of the euro. Secondly, the sense of crisis is due to the fact that crisis management has served the interests of the few at the expense of the many. Thirdly, there is unison agreement that democracy has been jeopardised in managing the euro crisis. Governments in all countries, but in particular in the worst hit countries, have been pressed to accept and enforce severe austerity policies rapidly, with minimal time for public debate and parliamentary participation. The same is true of structural changes: the European semester, the six-pack, the two-pack, the austerity treaty have all been pushed through with little time for democratic scrutiny and discussion of alternatives.

If I am right, it is when people claim surprise at the three factors I have just mentioned that they raise the alarm call that we are on the brink of an “existential crisis” for “Europe.” Nevertheless, in view of our earlier discussion it seems almost impossible that any cosmopolitan should have been the least surprised at any of the three facts of the crisis: the functional, the social or the democratic.

The real surprise is, then, that people have been surprised. If we should have been alarmed way back about what happens to democracy in Europe, why do people ring the alarm bells now, and why did the bells not ring before?

Something has gone wrong in the self-understanding of those who speak of Europe’s existential crisis. Their concerns are genuine and well grounded. But they come late and, as we see in the popularity of the notion that the crisis is “existential”, they come with an intensity of self-identification with “Europe”, and hence, with an intensity of emotion, that calls for some explanation.

Here is the explanation I wish to propose: We, many good cosmopolitans, who are now shocked and angry, have a sense that when things go wrong in the EU we ourselves are to blame. This is *our* Union after all. We have invested our political capital, our dreams, our support, our strength in this union. Without our loyalty to this union its legitimacy, even the shaky one it enjoys today, could not have been achieved. We threw ourselves into this particular stream of history, always in the hope that we will get our act together later. But now, when things turn out bad, we are shattered to learn that we have not lived up to our promise to ourselves. The failure we see is our failure. We have not acted – we have lived a life sustained by false optimism – and now *this* has happened to us.

Not only is our reality becoming miserable, worse still, our dreams are becoming miserable, they are being turned against ourselves. And the real problem is deep.

We never had the right to have this dream. It was always built on sand and we knew it: We know that we should have known all along. So, our European project was never even a dream. It was always a delusion. Hence, when we lose confidence in the European project we lose something we never rightfully owned. The loss, therefore, is one we cannot afford without losing face in front of ourselves. For this reason repression, denial, nostalgia, shame and the cynicism that all these sentiments tend to breed are all likely to play a huge role in the moral and political economy of cosmopolitan responses to the crisis.

There is a sinister relation between the false optimism and delusions diagnosed in this section and the silences and bad judgement I have described earlier. The silences are not due, as they may be in other cases, to ignorance, that is, to a morally innocent intellectual mistake. They are due to our delusions. And the delusions and silences together are the conditions for the possibility of the success of the narrative, “the standard view”, presented in section 2 above – that is, for the widespread belief in the notion that this narrative will be useful for our cosmopolitan political aspiration.

There is, as I will go on to suggest, a way out of the suicidal moral and political semantic regime defined by the standard view, and a way forward to more open and promising landscapes. But only if we are Lutheran enough to repent. It will not be enough for us to give up our false optimism. We must acknowledge its falsity and our part in producing and sustaining the falsity. Only then can we engage with brutal realism with the issues we have brushed aside and which we now need to address.

It may be disturbing to some, but perhaps instructive nevertheless, to compare the commitment of many good social-liberal, green and leftist supporters of the “European project” of the 2000s with the commitment of many a good communist to the Soviet-Union and other “really existing” socialist projects of the 1900s. I think it was Habermas (again) who asked, a few years before the wall came down, how long communists loyal to the DDR and the Soviet-Union would be willing to sustain the tension between their dream and the reality created in its name. Habermas’s question is good because it admits of no armchair answer or high moralism. We all know fine people who remain committed communists in Europe today. Their communism is yet to come. The question Habermas put to idealist communists

in the 1980s can, as I believe, with growing right be put to those who continue to support the European Union today.<sup>42</sup>

## V. Sources of the standard view and their problems

### 5.1. Review and preview

Let me sum up the discussion so far. In section 1, I proposed that there is what I have called a standard view – that is, a basic political perspective that is widely shared by cosmopolitans today – about how to understand the global political needs of our times and the mission of the European Union with respect to these needs. I also announced that a key purpose of this essay is to suggest that what I call the standard view, for all its merits, is problematic and that it has made it difficult for cosmopolitans to understand the euro-crisis well and to respond adequately to it.

In section 2, I began to explain my main thesis. There I described how people who subscribe to the standard view defined in the first section have typically understood the euro-crisis and responded to it. I presented some sceptical remarks on this understanding and response. One suggestion was that there has been a surprising neglect of the fact that what we often call the euro-crisis has actually been a time of spectacular success if we judge events from the point of view of how they have served the interests of the elites. Another suggestion was that in the discussion based on the standard view there has been an even more surprising neglect of democracy issues.

In section 3, I turned to the question of democracy in the European Union. I argued there that the integration process through which the European Union has evolved has been marked by a democracy deficit since its inception. I also argued there that the efforts, in the first decade of this century, to constitutionalise the European Union have not ameliorated its democracy deficit and that the lack of democracy has been exacerbated during the last few years of the “crisis of the many and triumph of the few.”

In section 4, I reflected on the lessons of the previous sections. I suggested the following: The standard view has prejudiced cosmopolitans to take a positive

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42 In the run up to the Finnish referendum on EU membership in 1994, cosmopolitans here sometimes discussed the relation between being true to one’s ideals and honest about how one’s ideals meet their reality-test. I remember particularly well discussions with a friend from the “alternative movement”, as we used to call it before the green parties were formed, who was then an adamant supporter of “the European project” and who later served some terms as a member of the European Parliament. On the day after the Finnish referendum on EU membership, on 25th October 1994, we met. She knew that I was disappointed about the result and found her partly responsible because of her active support for membership. On that day my friend told me to call her back “if the day comes when the EU tanks roll into our Prague”. When I see anti-austerity riots now, in Portugal, Greece and other countries, and I see the tear-gas and the tanks, I wonder whether this is the day to pick up the phone and call my friend. Or is it tomorrow? How long is it right for an idealist communist or for a true believer in the European project to wait for the tomorrow of good communism or the good EU to arrive?

view of the European Union. Because of this prejudice they have neglected the democracy issue. Because of this neglect they have had false hopes about the European Union. Because of these false hopes they are now shocked by what is happening in Europe, they feel ashamed about their naivety and have a sense of guilt. To back my claims I suggested that we pause to reflect on the curious fact that the notion that the euro-crisis is an existential crisis has found wide resonance. I claimed that many cosmopolitans have been satisfied to speak of the euro-crisis as an existential crisis. I suggested that this existential and moral response serves as evidence for the diagnosis that it is one of the consequences of the euro-crisis that cosmopolitans who subscribe to the standard view are becoming sensitive to and alarmed by their complicity in the creation of a “European” project that is now in crisis and that is not, and never was, worthy of their support.

In this section it is my aim to show how cosmopolitans who can identify with the analysis so far may move from criticism and self-blame to a restructuring of our vision of how to realise cosmopolitan ideals in Europe today. I will do so by looking at two themes. One is the idea that the European Union is a peace project, the other is the idea that the *only* way to be realistic and responsible cosmopolitans today is through fidelity to the project of enhancing our transnational, democratic governance capacity. The two topics have between them a rather different significance in the construction of the standard view. The former topic needs to be discussed above all in order to remove the emotional and moral obstacles that stand in the way of an unprejudiced analysis of the European Union and its crisis. The moral urgency with which people often hold on to the standard view and its tilted perspective on the European Union can only be properly understood and successfully deconstructed if the peace issue is addressed. The latter topic allows us to move pretty directly from straightforward analytical criticism to a discussion of how we can begin to re-imagine and reconstruct cosmopolitan political idealism in ways fitting for the contingent factual conditions of our times.

## 5.2. Is the European Union a peace project?

The positive idea of the European Union that is part of the standard view described in section one is not only nurtured from the source I described there: that is, from the ambition to respond to the “globalisation of the market” with a “globalisation of (democratic) politics.” Its second source is the idea that the European Union promotes peace. This is a powerful idea. It has been used to delegitimise all criticism and its widespread support has made it difficult to create a space where a down-to-earth, critical analysis of the European Union could make itself heard. Hence, as long as we fail to do justice to this part of EU-idealism we will also fail to do justice to the depth of its roots and the breadth and complexity of its consequences. Only if we can uproot the irrational parts of the idealistic attachment to the European Union fully can we truly hope to convince members of the cosmopolitan family of

the grim reality that the European Union that they have invested their hope in and whose growth they have made possible is not worth their allegiance.<sup>43</sup>

The basic story we have of the European Union as a peace project is the following: when the founding fathers of the post-war project for European integration, with Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann as the most visible figures, came out from the shadows of the second world war they were convinced, through shattering experience, that the citizens of modern European nation states are not to be trusted in matters of war and peace. Their desire was peace and they had a vision of achieving it through a gradual process of deepening economic cooperation between the core countries of Western continental Europe. The rational core of their vision was the argument from modern political philosophy that functional integration, and more specifically economic exchange that leads to interdependence in the satisfaction of needs and pursuit of interests, fosters peace between nations by making the costs of going to war very high. Once functional inter-dependence has been created through economic cooperation, political integration that fosters post-national sentiments and a culture of peace will also become possible. This, we have been told, was the vision of the founding fathers.

It is very difficult to assess the validity of this story.<sup>44</sup> For present purposes no assessment is, however, required. The debate can proceed effectively if we grant the EU everything as far as the relations between the countries that matter most – France and Germany, in particular – in the story go. Let us therefore generously assume that the European integration that we have seen has given us 60 years of

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43 For people who are old enough to have experienced the second world war the idea that “more Europe” is good for peace has probably been the primary motivational source for their “European idealism.” It seems to me, that younger cosmopolitans are often less deeply moved by the idea that European integration brings peace. It even often seems to me that what is for the generation of Habermas and Derrida a deeply genuine need is for many younger intellectuals and activists shallow and corrupt identity politics (shallow, because not founded in formative experience and a serious intellectual effort. Corrupt, because nourished more by opportunistic ambition, lazy compliance with group pressure and a desire to belong to a fictitious avant-garde than by independent study and self-searching). I recognise the corruption more from my own activist life than from anything I have read. Already for me, but even more so, it seems to me, for people ten or more years younger than me, it has been a source of self-esteem that we have portrayed ourselves (to ourselves and to others) as people who have grown beyond patriotism and nationalism and who are therefore better people than the nationalists of old and present times. The older generations look upon us with sympathy: they see in us people who live their dream of post-national political identities, and who will not lend themselves to the belligerent politics of national self-interest. I sometimes think that we do not deserve the sympathy of the older generation: I wonder whether the will to peace really goes deep in us? And I look with suspicion upon the revival of interest among many good “post-national” leftists in notions of politics in which antagonism and conflict are judged to be integral to what politics in essence is and in which non-violence is frowned at as a romantic, unpractical and dispensable ideal. (There is sometimes a strange air of light-heartedness in how even card-carrying anti-essentialists today rely on the essentialist metaphysics of Heidegger and Carl Schmitt as resources in their intellectual and political work. I do not want to suggest that we should not touch upon Heidegger or Schmitt. But we should handle them with care, as if ideas, including theirs, were, still, explosive. To avoid misunderstanding of this point, let me also stress that I think the liberal and Kantian and Gandhian and eco-philosophical heritages that I tend to rely on in my thinking about politics, must also be handled with care. Ideas are dangerous, like life itself.)

44 I bracket here the question to what extent it is idealistic to accept the idea that European integration has been at its core a project for peace and not also driven by other, less admirable motives. On this, see, for instance, Durán 2007.

peace in the heart of Europe. The question we are then free to ask is what can we say about the EU as a project for peace now?

We must note first that in political philosophy there are two great visions, not only one vision, for the construction of peace in modern times. Besides the functional argument that lies at the core of the original plan for European integration we have the argument from democracy. This second argument proposes that if the same people who carry the burden of war have the power to decide about war the likelihood of war will decrease. For this reason war between democracies should, as Kant thought we could reasonably hope, be unlikely.<sup>45</sup>

If we consider both ideas of how to build peace in modern times, the “functional idea” *and* the “democracy idea”, the idea of the European Union as a peace project becomes quite ambivalent.

It is a conspicuous feature of the history of the European Union, that the founding fathers who conceived of it as a functionalist peace project were suspicious of its citizens. To them, who had just come out of the war, their project for peace was coloured through-and-through by anthropological pessimism. It was clear, they thought, that in order to achieve lasting conditions of interconnection, cooperation and unity, European integration would have to proceed behind the backs of the citizens. That is why they envisioned what has often been called the “salami” strategy of integration pursued in the development of the European Union: knowing that the deep integration that the founding fathers wanted would be rejected by the citizens if it was presented to them as one huge package, they decided to sell the package to them little by little. This strategy has been skilfully pursued over many years and the result, so far, is the European Union of today.

It is clear, then, that when the EU today suffers from a “democracy deficit” this is no coincidental feature. Since the inception of post-war integration the democracy deficit has been purposefully and carefully created and protected in order to achieve the higher goals of an ordoliberal or market fundamentalist regime (as discussed above) and of peace (as discussed here). When we see this clearly we can also see, better than before, why cosmopolitans who subscribe to the standard view (as defined in section 1) above have tended to neglect an analysis of the state of democracy in the European Union. The topic has not only been overlooked because of some vision of a future good that we want and will take care of later (i.e. the good of transnational political governance), but also because of the notion that democracy itself is a problem, perhaps even a threat, to another good that we want and need to care for now, that is, the overriding good of peace.

When we put matters this way the following becomes evident: The idea that we can use the salami strategy of integration for constructing peace is well-founded only as long as we assume that the connection between democracy and peace is not vital. This assumption is problematic. In Kant’s analysis, the democratic and functional arguments are interdependent: Kant claimed that republicanism

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45 Kant 1977 and 1996.

is a prerequisite for economic success. As Kant also thought that economic success is the most important condition for military might his vision was one in which democracies would not only achieve peace between themselves but they would also win wars against states that are not democracies.<sup>46</sup> From this same perspective one can argue that a project that promotes economic interdependence but does not also promote democracy is self-defeating both as a project for welfare and as a project for peace.

We learn from these considerations the following: The idea, that the vision for the European Union from the 1950s and the current reality that this vision has inspired can bring peace, can be maintained only on the double condition that we give up the idea that democracy is not needed for peace and we accept the idea that functionally integrated societies can remain economically successful and harmonious internally and will not be belligerent externally. Both conditions seem to me highly unlikely in principle and especially so if we consider the political realities of our times. I will explain only my reasons for scepticism about the second part of the second condition, that is, the idea that a functionally integrated European Union will be peaceful in its external relations.

If we ask what the greatest threats to peace are in our times the shortage of economically crucial raw materials and natural resources, especially metals, energy, fertile land and water, is a major candidate. There is a tension today between two different kinds of interests that the large political powers of the world attend to. They share an interest in maintaining peace between them in order to safeguard current trade and capital flows on which all are dependent for their economic stability and prosperity. But they may also have an interest in going to war in order to secure their access to scarce resources. The less the current international economic regime delivers growth the more the balance between these diverging logics may tip in favour of the latter.

The dynamics of the balance between the pros and cons of the present “functional world peace” will be different for different actors depending on their relative strengths and weaknesses. The European Union is relatively well-placed with respect to land and water, but it is relatively short of energy and many metals. Hence, whether or not the recent wars in the Middle East and Africa (the wars in Iraq and Libya especially) have been “oil wars”, it is clear that access to raw materials and energy poses a real challenge to the long-term economic interests of the European Union.

In this context the obligation (anomalous for any constitution) given by the Lisbon Treaty to the member states of the European Union to “progressively improve their military capabilities” and the fact that the same treaty gives the EU-countries a mandate to decide go to war (to enact “peace-keeping, conflict prevention and

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46 Kant 1977. I allow myself the conflation of Kant's notion of republicanism with my broad conception of democracy.

strengthening international security”) anywhere on the planet without a UN mandate (“in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter”) seem ominous.<sup>47</sup>

We should also notice the relevance of the more fundamental questions of political philosophy for any comprehensive assessment of the notion that the EU is a project for peace. Kant’s belief in progress relies on a very specific theory of the internal cohesion between providence, hope and reason in history. Kant argued that through the force of a law that is backed by complex institutions and the division of labour, reason can exert a civilising influence on politics. But, if we are less convinced than Kant was about the compatibility of large institutions with real democracy, the Kantian idea that cosmopolitan law and institutions can secure peace will seem like a gamble. The great danger with the Kantian paradigm from this perspective is that it gives us no space for debate about a possible need to limit societal complexity or the potential for mass destruction. The idea that cosmopolitans should not only focus on the building of eternal peace but would also do wisely to put limits on the means at our disposal if and when peace cannot be sustained is, it seems to me, of obvious importance in the light of developments in science and technology since Kant. In the Kantian paradigm, it is difficult to assign such concern a proper place but it does not follow that the concern can easily be dismissed (I will come back to this topic).

When we wish to assess whether a functionally integrated European Union is likely to be a force for peace in its external relations we also need to look critically at, at least, one further aspect. We need to ask how authentically it is a post-national project in the sense assumed here, namely, as a project that establishes a polity that, because of its new quality of social integration, carries the promise of overcoming nationalism of the kind that in the Westphalian era was often mobilised for war.

In this context we must turn again to the constitutional process of the European Union in the first decade of the new century. Interestingly, the various drafts of the Preamble to the proposed constitution of 2003 were wrapped in a high rhetoric of praise for the fine values and unique achievements of “Europe”. As already mentioned, the drafts also gave a prominent role to the constitutional introduction of common, Union-wide symbols and even a Europe day. Later the rhetorical elements were deleted. But whether they were deleted on paper only, or will be scrapped in practice too, remains to be seen. So far the record is not promising. The EU flag flies high, school curricula across the Union have been reformed to accord with a new pan-European historical narrative, EU-day is celebrated across the subcontinent and, in recent years, we have even seen that willing young men and women have been recruited to military campaigns under EU-command. In short, it seems that in the European Union we see efforts to construct a new post-national “imagined community” (Anderson) that is in form, style, emotional effect

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47 Treaty on the European Union, section 2, article 42.1. and 42.3.



and political practice modelled on the old imagined communities of the European nations.

Moreover, not only the symbolic practices, but also the substantial provisions of the failed constitutional treaty, that fit a new post-national, but still belligerent, collective aspiration are also still in place in the Lisbon Treaty. There is the reference to “European interests” in article 2. There is a military solidarity clause, a clause on close cooperation with NATO and, as we saw already, an ambiguous formulation regarding respect for the UN charter combined with a preservation of the right to engage in peace-keeping with military means even without a UN mandate. In sum, what we see does not look much like a peace project. It looks more like a preparation for new imperial wars. The Lisbon Treaty clears the way for the Union to develop into a new military alliance formed by the old colonial masters on the premise that their combined military might should, at the end of the day, be unfettered by the limits set by the current international legal order.

Now, it may be contended that one consequence of the euro-crisis is that the construction of the European Union as an imagined community capable of collective patriotism on the lines of the nation-states of old, is failing. But for those who have invested hope in the European Union as a project for peace the kind of erosion of a common European patriotism that we witness today is hardly a promising development: What we see is not, I believe, unfortunately, the rise of a new European identity that goes beyond the “euro-nationalism” of the failed constitution of 2003, to a more universal sense of collective responsibility. What we see today, bears more, it seems to me, the semblance of a return to regressive, nationalist pasts.<sup>48</sup>

For all the reasons given here, it appears to me that it probably was never right to think of the European Union as a promising project for peace. It is even more clear that even if we grant the European integration project a role as a promoter of peace and stability in Western Europe from the 1950s up to the late 1980s there is little reason to say that the deepening of European integration of the past twenty years has contributed to peace. All in all, I suggest that it is high time for cosmopolitans to give up seductive idea that if we want to stand for peace we ought to be loyal to this European Union.

### 5.3. Transnational governance and the European Union

The fundamental element of the standard view described in section one is the conviction that nation states as we knew them in the 20th century are not up to the task of putting the checks and limits that we need on the globalised market forces

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48 Worrying evidence does not come solely from the growing support for the fascist party in Greece, The Golden Dawn, or from the totalitarian policies of the ruling parties in Hungary, or, even, from the rise of parties from the populist right in other countries. Worrying is also the lack of readiness in the less afflicted countries of the north of Europe to stand in solidarity with the peoples of the southern EU countries, who are suffering the most from the current crisis.

of our times. Even if the argument about peace is given up, this conviction remains in force. Must we not now, finally, consider its truth? Is it not true, whether we like or not, that further economic integration is unstoppable, that political integration must (therefore) try to keep pace and that (therefore), even after all our criticism, we still need this European Union!? Is the EU not, despite all its weaknesses, our only hope, or at least our best hope, unless we want to succumb completely to the wild forces of the markets?

I want to repeat, first, that I share the dream that a democratised European Union could be brought to serve cosmopolitan ambitions. But I am critical of the idea that this dream is the only relevant alternative for cosmopolitans. There are three reasons for this. One is realism. For reasons already given that I will not expand upon, the idea of a democratic Europe that works as a counterforce to global market forces is becoming an ever more distant dream. The second reason is closely connected to the first and draws a lesson for political strategy from it: only if cosmopolitans get together and make their allegiance to the present European Union conditional on democratic and social reform with tight timelines will real, necessary change become possible. Thirdly, and more fundamentally, if we wish to retain a fair degree of freedom in our political theory and practice I think it is essential that we address critically the assumptions that have made the standard view so attractive to us in the first place. Below I will discuss only the third of these reasons.

To explain myself I will take the following steps. First I will say a few words about the idea that this European Union is our *best* hope. I will move from this practical question of rather short-term tactics to the more fundamental question of whether the European Union or its functional equivalents is our *only* alternative. We will quickly see that this is not the case, but also that the “decoupling” or “localisation” alternative that I think we must consider is quite problematic too. The fundamental idea here is that we do not seek control over (market) forces, which are now beyond our reach. Instead we seek to make eliminate the power of these forces by overcoming our dependence on them. Serious discussion of what localisation politics at best should involve, and how it could be advanced responsibly and realistically, is not possible within the limits of this essay. Instead, I turn to another, more manageable and more pressing issue: We all know that there is truth in the routine criticism that localisation, as a political strategy, can easily be utopian in an irresponsible way. But supporters of the standard view all too often neglect the fact that the “only” alternative to the standard view is also utopian, and possibly even more thoughtlessly and irresponsibly so than the localisation strategy. In the following discussion I will identify topics and main lines of this argument. The aim is to show that they are worth of serious consideration, at least in view of the gloomy perspectives that we otherwise need to face.

*(i) The European Union: Our best hope?*

People might say, “All right then: This European Union is far from ideal. But in a global perspective what do we have on offer? There is the United States of America. There are the BRICS with China and India as potential world powers. In this comparison, surely the European Union is by far the best hope, if we want to curb the power of finance capital and TNCs.”<sup>49</sup> This stance is unrealistic in two ways.

First, we do not have good reasons to expect the European Union to be a more benign force in world politics in the long run than the alternatives. There are three issues we need to consider to make this clear. One is military power. The United States of America is presently the only military super-power and, of course, the European Union does not share its bellicose track record. But in recent global history the role of the European Union has, I would maintain, been more to provide political and economic support to military campaigns led by the USA than to work for a different and more peaceful international order.<sup>50</sup> We must also recall that the European Union does not entertain a vision of itself as challenging the hegemony of the USA by constructing a new benign post-military source of global power. On the contrary, we have seen that in this respect the future vision of Europe that we find in the Lisbon Treaty is quite traditional. The second dimension of analysis of the quality of power exercised by the European Union in world politics is “soft power”, that is, policies, goals and track record with respect to multilateralism and the rule of law, human rights, climate, trade, etc. In this dimension there is, despite the highly questionable role of the European Union in world trade politics and my serious misgivings over the question of trade, some real evidence of the merits of

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49 Immanuel Wallerstein is one among many who has expressed this view. My impression from personal conversations and from the reading of various contributions over the years by Wallerstein and other proponents of this “realistic” argument, is that it is to some extent rooted in a preoccupation with the incurable vileness of Washington. For many political theorists in North America this experience dominates the motivational horizon in a way that I think can be compared with the tendency of many German political theorists to let their political analysis be guided by the felt need to overcome the catastrophic legacy of German nationalism. In both cases, I find the motives most appropriate. But they may also sometimes be a cause of imbalance in our judgements.

50 I recognise the scope for debate of this point e.g. in view of the differences in the positions taken recently by the European Union and Washington over Israeli occupation of Palestine territory. See, for example, <[www.eccpalestine.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/COM-Notice-guidelines-on-IL-and-EU-funding-instruments-compact.pdf](http://www.eccpalestine.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/COM-Notice-guidelines-on-IL-and-EU-funding-instruments-compact.pdf)> (accessed 31st July 2013).

the European Union as compared with other powerful countries and blocs.<sup>51</sup> The third issue is future prospects. If we assume that there is a positive relationship between democracy and cosmopolitan ambitions, this is where there is seriously bad news. We have seen that the European Union has developed more and more in the direction of post-democratic governance. Its democratic structure (and, arguably, also its practices) already compare unfavourably with those of the USA and many other large countries. There is no evidence that speak in favour of an upcoming turn to the better. I suggest that the time is now ripe for us to give up the idea that, because of earlier democratic achievements in Europe, we have the right to invest hope in the European Union today, no matter what the quality of its current institutions is and whether we even have bothered to analyse it.<sup>52</sup>

The second problem area for the idea that the current European Union is our best hope for cosmopolitan politics comes into view if we look critically at some presuppositions that often inform diagnosis of current challenges to politics with cosmopolitan aims. Fundamental here is the notion that the need to respond to the growth of transnational markets and corporate power is the issue that a cosmopolitan world political strategy needs most urgently to address.

This focus is inadequate to the current situation in various respects. It invites us to ignore several deep changes that take place before our eyes in the relations between market-forces, corporations, citizens and political institutions, and also the qualitative changes in political power that these changes bring with them. Some aspects of the emerging constellation of postdemocratic, authoritarian capitalism that will not come into view as long as the centre of our attention is the idea that we need “politics” to domesticate the markets and corporations are the following:

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51 A substantial assessment would require consideration of a whole body of technical detail. It is not possible to go into any of this here. My general sense of where we stand is the following: In climate politics the European Union favours multilateral agreements more than other powerful entities. However, as long as the policies that the EU promotes remain market-driven in the way that presently dominates its agenda the advantage of this for ecological stability and justice seems to me to be small. (For critical analysis of the approach that still dominates the toolbox that the EU brings to the climate negotiations, see the pioneering study by Larry Lohmann (2006). In trade politics the European Union has stood for many years as an aggressive champion of selfish interest with human rights commitments in a hypocritical role. But in this field, too, there are some good things to be said about the record of the EU as compared with that of the US, for example, in the fields of consumer safety, checks on market-driven development of GMOs and commercialisation of culture. (For some critical analysis see the resources provided during many years by the Third World Network, [www.twinside.org.sg](http://www.twinside.org.sg), and the South Centre, [www.southcentre.org](http://www.southcentre.org)) But it is in its commitment to multilateralism as the backbone of the global governance regime that the EU stands out most in comparison with the US. See, however, the discussion that follows.

52 Richard Rorty once wrote that the European Union “just as it stands, even prior to the adoption of a constitution –is already the realization of what the Realpolitiker thought was an idle fantasy”. (Rorty 2005, 38). Habermas later praised the contribution by Rorty to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as the “politically and intellectually sharpest” of the contributions to the debate to which he had invited intellectual colleagues on 31st May 2003. (Habermas 2004, 89.) In a similar vein, Habermas once argued that even though a UN mandate was blocked in the Security Council, the bombing of Serbia in 1999 earned some legitimacy from the alleged fact that the 19 countries that supported the military campaign are “without doubt democratic”. (Habermas 1999, my translation). Of course the European Union is not one of the countries Habermas refers to here. I quote his statement because I see the use of the words “without doubt” (the original German word is “zweifellos”) as symptomatic of a tendency Rorty and Habermas share with many others, to speak sometimes of the leading Western political entities, and especially of the European Union, from a perspective of hope that is not always anchored in reality.

First, the changing nature of socialisation and conditions for citizenship in times of (a) mass-migration between continents of the poor and inter-continental mobility of the elites; (b) globalised consumer culture and (c) the rise to prominence of mass-communication over the web. On the last of these points we have seen some growth in public attention to the seamless cooperation between the Big Four global corporations (Microsoft, Google, Apple and Facebook) and the “Big Brother” of state surveillance.<sup>53</sup> But the issues involved are many and complex, and real developments are running far ahead of any critical assessment of their effects. We simply know very little about important matters, such as the extent and effects (e.g. on social identity formation and solidarities) of the globally individualised marketing made possible by the accumulation of gigantic amounts of data by private companies. Second, the enormous growth of juridical and technical detail and institutional complexity in market regulation at the post-national level: a change that has made the notion of free markets an oxymoron and that has, it seems to me, created a new level of dependence for corporations, political institutions as well as citizens on the services of administrative and juridical experts moving swiftly back and forth between public and private service.<sup>54</sup> Third, (possibly as a consequence of the first and second item on the list, or possibly, as a cause of them?) “depoliticisation” in Europe, that is, the shrinking voluntary, non-careerist participation of citizens in social movements, trade unions and parties, and the consequent changes in structures of democratic accountability.

The three items are by no means intended as an exhaustive list of the new challenges facing cosmopolitan politics. They are put forward as examples of issues cosmopolitans need to deal with, if we wish to have success in the more visible task of domesticating transnational capital. Depoliticisation is perhaps the clearest case. Democratic politics can only be saved if participation, citizenship and the very idea that the quest for political freedom (collective self-determination) is a part of human dignity can be brought to life in our age. If we take electoral participation as our measure the experience so far is that the already depoliticised populations of European nation states are even more difficult to mobilise for active

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53 The stir around the information leaks by Manning and Snowden is however, above all, belated. It has been public knowledge since 1988, when Duncan Campbell published his first stories on the matter, that the NSA and other intelligence agencies have very comprehensive schemes for communications intelligence. “Key findings concerning the state of the art in Communications Intelligence include: \* Comprehensive systems exist to access, intercept and process every important modern form of communications, with few exceptions \* Recent diplomatic initiatives by the United States government seeking European agreement to the “key escrow” system of cryptography masked intelligence collection requirements, and formed part of a long -term program which has undermined and continues to undermine the communications privacy of non-US nationals, including European governments, companies and citizens\* There is wide-ranging evidence indicating that major governments are routinely utilising communications intelligence to provide commercial advantage to companies and trade.” Quoted from the summary page of <[www.duncancampbell.org/menu/surveillance/echelon/IC2000\\_Report%20.pdf](http://www.duncancampbell.org/menu/surveillance/echelon/IC2000_Report%20.pdf)>. See also <[www.duncancampbell.org/content/echelon](http://www.duncancampbell.org/content/echelon)> and the report to the European Parliament in 2001: <[www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A5-2001-0264+0+DOC+PDF+V0//DA](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A5-2001-0264+0+DOC+PDF+V0//DA)>.

54 With a focus on the European level, this “revolving door” phenomenon and its consequences have been documented in a series of studies by Corporate Europe Observatory. See, for example, Eberhardt & Olivet 2012, with contributions from Tyler Amos & Nick Buxton.

citizenship at the level of the European Union than at the national or local level. The idea that the democracy deficit in the European Union can be fixed just by giving more power to the European Parliament is therefore only a delusion as long as the European elections do not change character deeply. The question of participation is the single most important factor.<sup>55</sup> But also the quality of the deliberative process in the run-up to the elections is important and quite problematic today, when voting behaviour in European elections is often determined on the basis of narrowly national perspectives. I conclude from these considerations that we have some reason to say that the European Union is indeed our best bet when we seek to promote cosmopolitan transnational governance. But if we have nothing better to build our dreams for a better future on our prospects for success are bleak indeed.<sup>56</sup>

(ii) *The European Union: Our only hope?*

At this point we can, finally, and now without unnecessary romanticism, bring to the fore the question of whether Nancy Fraser and others who support the standard view are – all things considered – nevertheless right when they suggest that the construction of transnational institutions for political governance is the *only* way if we want to tame transnational corporations and that therefore the European Union deserves our allegiance. There are two questions here. One question is, if the European Union disintegrates, does it follow that “Europe” will no longer be able to play a positive role in building transnational governance capacity?

The answer is obviously no: It is easy to imagine other institutional futures for regional cooperation in Europe that may carry more and better hopes than the current European Union does. Naturally, I share the worry that the more the disintegration of the present EU happens through the rise of regressive nationalism and a collapse of democracy and cosmopolitan ambition, the greater may be the difficulty, at least in the short term, to build something better in its place. However, I find it difficult to see why it would follow from this consideration that the loyalty to the Union that we de facto have is our only responsible option in political life. I would

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55 The turn-out rates in elections for the European Parliament are generally extremely low, with an average last time of only around 40 %. See <[pxweb2.stat.fi/Database/Eurostat/vaa/vaa\\_fi.asp](http://pxweb2.stat.fi/Database/Eurostat/vaa/vaa_fi.asp)>.

56 In fact, even after the issues I will raise below have been addressed, the best argument there is for investing hope and political energy in the current European Union is the following: “The question whether there are any important differences in the democratic quality of the power that the major powers in world politics hold is sentimental and unimportant. What the weaker players always need is not lofty democratic idealism but a world politics with multiple players. The interests of different players will differ and they can then be played out against each other, to the benefit of all small countries especially in the global south.” This kind of simple “Hobbesian” argument merits serious attention. Nevertheless, it lies beyond the scope of the present essay for the following reason: If this is the perspective from which we assess the role of the European Union in world politics we are far removed from the optimism about the relevance of normative arguments in real politics and from the utopian aspiration that informs the cosmopolitan standard view. In the present essay, I confine myself to discussion in which normative ideals, other than survival and self-interest, are taken seriously as motivating factors and standards of success in politics.

rather say that as the risk of regressive collapse grows it becomes increasingly urgent for us not to accept loyalty to an ever less legitimate European Union as the only alternative for “European” cosmopolitan idealists. A two-prong strategy is more attractive. Radical democratisation of the European Union is one prong,<sup>57</sup> and the other is to gradually work out ideas, programmes and political coalitions that look forward to the disintegration of the present European Union and the building of a new Europe on cosmopolitan premises. Unless this work is conducted it will be even more difficult than otherwise to maintain space for cosmopolitan political alternatives after a collapse of the current European Union, if it happens. More importantly, I think the rise of authoritarian capitalism can only be countered if cosmopolitans refuse the blackmail that our *only* alternative is *this* European Union.

The refusal will seem unrealistic and unattractive as long as we fail to ask the basic question: Is it true, as presumed in the standard view, that no matter what we think about the current state of and future prospects for the European Union and about our other pressing political challenges, such as the need to counter depoliticisation, that we need post-national political governance of some kind? The answer is less obvious than cosmopolitans sometimes think.<sup>58</sup>

Strategies for post-national governance can have two forms. They can bet on the large scale and seek ways forward through enhanced transnational governance capacity, with or without the nation states of old in a leading role. We can call this *the transnationalisation strategy* or the move up strategy for post-national governance.<sup>59</sup> They can also bet on the small scale and seek remedies through the dissolution of dependence on transnational markets and corporations. This I will call *the localisation strategy*, or the scale-down strategy, for post-national governance.<sup>60</sup> National protectionism and the socialisation of banks, energy and services may be useful intermediate steps the scale-down strategy. It is often perceived as a “green” project, rooted intellectually in eco-philosophy and politically linked to the Degrowth movement and ecological pessimism. This picture is seriously flawed. The real heart of a localisation strategy for post-national governance is the search

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57 See footnote 5 above.

58 Often people who accept the standard view endorse prejudiced views of the nation-states as patriotic, exclusive, culturally monolithic, selfish and incapable of learning. But the history of the modern nation states is a multiple affair. We have Albania and North Korea, but also many countries in which collective learning processes have taken place that cosmopolitans may welcome. It is simply not clear that internationally cooperating nations will be less capable than new regional entities to take on the pressing challenges of globalised markets, climate change, inter-continental migration. For present purposes we may assume, however, that the prospects for successful global governance for our times by nation-states are no better than the prospects for success with the help of the European Union. If these two are our only alternatives the future looks bleak.

59 See, for example, Held 1995; 2004. Patomäki & Teivainen together with Rönkkö 2002. See also Habermas’s blueprint for a cosmopolitan world order: Habermas 2006.

60 The unrivalled classic in the field is still, Gandhi 1936 (first published in South Africa, in the Indian Opinion, in 1908/1909.) See also, for example, Hines 2000, and Pasanen & Ulvila 2009.

for self-determination and radical democracy and the promotion of local political autonomy and economic self-reliance are means to these ends.<sup>61</sup>

As a preview to our discussion of transnationalisation and localisation strategies for a post-national world order let us note this: The taming of Transnational Corporations and “Too Big To Fails” (TBTFs) and the construction of political institutions of high democratic quality is a tough and, perhaps, an impossible task within the framework of the transnationalisation strategy. At least the empirical record is not encouraging. It therefore seems utopian also to expect that transnationalisation will help to solve global ecological problems, at least if minimal social standards are also aimed at (see however, our notes on technology below). But, if locally self-reliant communities with cosmopolitan aims can be achieved, transnational corporations and TBTFs will be no problem at all. They will all simply be out of business as no one needs their products or services. Similarly, in a scale-down framework the governance of global markets will also be simple. The scale of exchange between self-reliant communities would be so small as to make most formal governance obsolete. The scale of environmental degradation and risk is also likely to reduce when local control over technologies and economies is achieved. If we ask whether localisation would foster exclusionary chauvinism the answer is also clear: there is little reason to expect local communities that are the product of democratic, cosmopolitan aspiration to do worse in serving inclusion as compared with nation states or the present European Union. All this is simple enough.

The critical question for those who want to advance localisation as the main strategy towards post-national world politics is, however, also obvious. Is the strategy realistic?

I will not respond to this question directly. I have two reasons for not doing so. First, putting this question early and abstractly is, it seems to me, often an expression of lazy middle-class fear of the obvious consequence: If we pursue the localisation strategy it may mean the end of the consumerist life-style. While it may be true that it is difficult to galvanise the support of the consuming classes for such a shift in ambition it may be sobering for our political imagination to consider this observation in the light of two further ones. One is that in the name of realism we need to admit that the consumerist life-style as a life-style available to the many may be coming to its end rather soon, whether people choose the ending voluntarily or not.<sup>62</sup> The other is that, in the name of a free cultural imagination, we should consider the possibility that the end of consumerist life can be the beginning of the emancipation of a significant proportion of humanity from the opaque and

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61 For some arguments, see Wallgren 2012.

62 For one recent assessment of the long-term viability on a global scale of the present-day “American”, consumerist form of life see Barnosky 2012. For recent discussion of the feasibility and promise of liberation inherent in the scale-down strategy, see, for example, the materials presented at the third international conference on degrowth, available at <[www.venezia2012.it](http://www.venezia2012.it)> (accessed 4th Dec, 2012).



problematic role it, the well-offs of our time, plays in anonymous exploitation and exclusionary practices (Johan Galtung's coining of the term "structural violence" was an early effort to conceptualise the kind of problem and promise of emancipation that I point to here).<sup>63</sup>

The second, more pressing and immediate reason for not discussing the "realistic" prospects for success through the localisation strategy here is that such a discussion would preclude attention to another, more urgent question. The question we need to ask *before* we ask whether the localisation strategy is realistic is whether the transnationalisation strategy is realistic. In this case, too, the answers we need cannot be given in the abstract. I turn, therefore, to a discussion of four topics that we must consider in this respect. The topics are huge and the discussion will be short. Nevertheless, what follows suffices, it seems to me, to establish that *it is not at all clear that the transnationalisation strategy for a cosmopolitan post-national politics holds a more realistic, and in this sense better, promise for our present predicament than does the localisation strategy.*

#### 5.4. Transnational postnationalism: The only alternative or a false utopia?

We have seen above that it is not easy for cosmopolitans to invest their hopes and political energy in the European Union. We have also seen that if we want to respond to the needs of our times by enhancing the capacity for transnational governance – or if we think (courageously?) that it is a question of duty to do so (because integration is unstoppable?) – the European Union may, unfortunately, nevertheless be our best bet.

Now, if our best hope is no better than this, maybe it is high time for us to turn the axis of our political analysis around and inquire critically into the premises that underwrite the standard view. I will consider four such premises. Each of them works as a mostly unacknowledged foundation for the preconception shared by many cosmopolitans that the transnational strategy for post-nationalism is a more promising and, above all, a more *natural*, political strategy for cosmopolitans than localisation.

##### *i) The myth of replicable success*

There is the myth of easily attainable success, which has many supporters among cosmopolitans. According to this myth, we basically already know what we need to do. In the past we, the happy citizens of the democratic welfare states, tamed capitalism at the national level. Our task in the 21st century is to repeat the miracle

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63 Galtung 1969.

of the 20th century, only on a grander scale. The myth lends itself to political slogans such as “global problems require global solutions.” Here are some objections.

a) The myth builds on a false understanding of the history of the welfare state. Its material condition of success was always the exploitation of the South and the externalisation of ecological costs. Hence, the global realisation of the welfare state is only possible if all people can join it without transgressing ecological limits.

Is this objection to the replicable success -idea valid? The issue is complex. Theoretically there are no objective limits to growth. We can always hope that with new breakthroughs in science and technology and improved governance we can take care of biodiversity, ecological long-term stability and material abundance for all. The search for paths to sustainable development and green growth epitomise efforts to make this theory work. Unfortunately these efforts have so far not been crowned with success. Whatever hopeful theory tells us, the negative relation between economic growth and environmental degradation has so far not been broken anywhere. If empirical evidence matters the suspicion grows that all talk of sustainable growth is just an expression of wishful thinking and false opportunism. The point is not that we know that the ‘limits to growth’ thesis is basically true. The point is that in the light of our experience so far it seems that the risks and the uncertainties that we take responsibility for if and when we seek to tame capitalism through the construction of a global welfare state modelled on the experience of, for example, the Nordic countries in the previous century are truly enormous and grow by the day.<sup>64</sup> It seems, therefore, that prudence requires that we give up the dream of sustainable growth globally. This we may call the “ecological argument” against the myth of replicable success.

b) The political condition for the welfare state compromise of the 20th century was, it seems to me, the struggle of mass-based social movements, especially the workers’ and the feminist movements, success in unionising and success in the political mobilisation and organisation of the left parties. In none of these respects are we anywhere near developing transnational or global political tools that would in their relative strength be appropriate to our task. Hence the political conditions for a repetition at the transnational level of the national welfare state compromises of the past century seem like a distant dream only. This we may call the “political condition argument against the myth of replicable success.

It might be said that the difficulties I point to only give us more reason than before to roll up our sleeves and to work even harder to make our transnational political response more effective than before. I repeat my question: Is this reaction not premature unless we have first considered the possibility that the unthinking commitment to the transnationalisation strategy from which such a response almost mechanically flows is irresponsibly utopian and dooms us to an ever deepening complicity in planetary destruction?

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64 For some arguments, see my “Some Remarks on the Brundtland Report” - Lokayan Bulletin (Delhi, India) 2/90, pp. 21–33.

*ii) The conceit of expansivism*

A basic presupposition of the standard cosmopolitan vision is its inadvertent optimism about the compatibility of large-scale political organisation with solidarity and democracy. Even among those who consider public debate and deliberation to be central to democracy and who acknowledge the practical difficulty of realising post-national deliberative democracies, more effort usually goes into envisaging solutions, no matter how unrealistic they are today, and into tracing weak signals of progress than to critical study of past experience or sober reflections on the weaknesses of the propositions.<sup>65</sup> One reason is that, just as in the case of the theories of peace, in the context of democratic theory as well, the challenge of technology is rarely discussed. I will soon come back to that. A more surprising lacuna that informs the optimism of the standard vision is the following: The rational engagement of the citizens is a condition for democracy as a practice of freedom. The rationality requirement has two dimensions, one is procedural, the other substantial. On the procedural side, transnational cosmopolitan strategies need to ask how much complexity we can master if we want to regulate and design rationally the dialogue between equal citizens and also the relation between the citizens, their elected representatives and experts. On the substantial side, the critical question we need to ask is how much complexity we can have in relations between citizens and also in the interaction between people and the environment without placing a burden on the citizens' time, intellectual capacities and moral imagination that no one can carry.

The deepest problem in this field has to do with the motivational and rational conditions for solidarity in abstract and indirect relations. It is easy enough to be convinced by and sign up to the basic ethical principles of universalism. But there seems to be a structural difference between the force of moral motives in relations between people who interact closely and the force of the motives that can move us to solidarity with the "remote others". It is of course a central task of politics and law in complex societies to create conditions for practices that would allow us to realise cosmopolitan ideals despite the motivational gap that in such societies makes overview, decency and moral self-understanding difficult. The question is, however, how well we think the task can be accomplished.

The links between the challenges to democracy and to solidarity in the transnational strategy for cosmopolitanism are intimate. Bridging the motivational gap indirectly, through political self-determination, is necessary for global solidarity. But understanding is also a requirement and the understanding needs to be

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65 Theorising about post-national and global democracy has probably, together with evolutionary social science, been the biggest career-making topic for the generation of social and political scientists that is now in power in Western academia. On my bookshelf, Anthony Giddens, David Held and Zygmunt Bauman stick out as some of the influential voices in this successful field. My sarcasm about the "tracing of weak signals" is triggered in particular by the opening remarks of the joint piece by Derrida and Habermas referred to above. See also, for example, Sen, Anand, Escobar & Waterman 2004 and Sehm-Patomäki & Ulvila 2007.

anchored both in empirical facts and in access to the interpretations by remote others, especially by those who are most vulnerable and seriously affected, In order to achieve unsentimental understanding and informed practices we would need effective communicative procedures with a global reach that grant fair and equal access to all in deliberative practices.<sup>66</sup> A lot of fine work has been done since the first meetings in the 19th century of the socialist internationals and the international feminist movement to create institutions and practices for such procedures. A lot of sophisticated theoretical work has also been done to provide normative and practical orientation for modern politics aiming at globally integrated democratic governance. But again, the challenging question that we have pushed aside for too long is the one about the balance between what we have aspired to achieve, the “global village” or the “weltbürgerliche Zustand” (Kant), and what the historical record tells us. And, again, there is the underlying question how long it is right to remain loyal to the transnationalist programme for cosmopolitan politics in the face of its empirical failures.

The questions are difficult. In this context I cannot help that I find myself thinking that Gandhi has something to tell us, something that we may not find easy to place in the routines of our debates, and that we may therefore dismiss all too lightly, when he writes in November 1908, aboard the *Kildonan Castle*:

We have already considered the railways. I should, however, like to add that man is so made by nature as to require him to restrict his movements as far as his hands and feet will take him. If we did not rush from place to place by means of railways and other such maddening conveniences, much of the confusion that arises would be obviated. Our difficulties are of our own creation. . . . I am so constructed that I can only serve my immediate neighbours, but, in my conceit, I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve every individual in the Universe. In thus attempting the impossible, man is . . . utterly confounded. According to this reasoning, it must be apparent to you that railways are a most dangerous institution.<sup>67</sup>

Gandhi was probably committed as much as anyone to cosmopolitan ideals.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, his words may strike us as out of touch with reality, at least with the

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66 My very clear impression from many personal encounters and discussion, for example, in the World Social Forum framework, is that efforts by the super-rich, epitomised most visibly in the foundations set up in their names, to use their wealth to promote cosmopolitanism, strike most cosmopolitan activists and intellectuals as, at best, sentimental and pathetic, especially when they live in the global South.

67 There are many features of this key passage from Gandhi's early pamphlet, the *Hind Swaraj* that are bound to strike contemporary secular readers as backward and naive. Such reactions should not stand in the way of appreciating the urgency of Gandhi's challenge. I have used the translation by Sharma and Tripid in Sharma & Suhrod 2010, here p. 44.

68 At least to its ethical core, the dignity and well-being of all and special concern for the dispossessed and underprivileged. For this, see, for example, Gandhi's "Talisman", available, for example, at p. 609 in Iyer 1987. The Talisman is both problematic and enigmatic. The much needed and popular discussion of Gandhi's political failures and moral limitations should not blind us to his achievements and innovations e.g. in synthesising Emersonian perfectionism with political efficacy based on mass-mobilisation or in the redefinition of search for truth and salvation as the practice of satyagraha.

reality of our times. Perhaps we say: In Gandhi's times railways were still new. Perhaps life without them would then still have been possible, maybe even a realistic path for India of his time? But now, a hundred years later Gandhi's "luddite" ideals are quite impossible. If this is what we think, our dismissal of Gandhi bears, of course, the mark of the passing of history. One century that was the future for Gandhi and his times is the past for us. Thanks to fantastic ingenuity and effort the "railways" (modern technology), and also the "doctors" and "lawyers" that Gandhi made short shrift of in the *Hind Swaraj*, have been integrated into the web of life of all peoples and have changed the face of the planet. That is what we have seen. In a material, everyday sense, surely our habits and practices today are much further removed from a life without railways than in Gandhi's times. Achieving liberation from our dependencies through deliberation and choice is a remote possibility, at least for more than a few marginal small communities. And therefore it may easily appear to us that Gandhi's criticism of any reliance on technical mediation in efforts to realise solidarity beyond the local realm, is for us of historical interest only. Let us pause to ask: Is this all we need to say about Gandhi's criticism of technology and institutional complexity?

The question presents a peculiar difficulty for us because it is the converging point of one undecided and vocal debate and another debate, also undecided but strangely muted.

The vocal debate is the one about progress. When Gandhi wrote the *Hind Swaraj* progressivism was the dominant mood: Most people agreed that the present age was a troubled one, but also that the right choices and the right struggles could bring us a brighter tomorrow. Today there is disagreement over the present. Brutal poverty and oppression remain widespread. Nevertheless, at least among the better-offs many would say that we have progressed and that today is really, all things considered, the best of times. At the same time optimism about the future has become rarer, uncertainty looms large and pessimistic forecasts are common.

The muted debate is the one about freedom in history. A century ago the modern notion of politics, according to which people acting together can shape the future in the image of their ideals, was still a relatively newly won and hugely inspiring one. History was seen as an arena of choice, struggle, freedom and responsibility. Mass-based social movements throughout the world that drew their energy and sense of mission from this conception emerged and history did change. For Gandhi, too, this experience and conception of history and of man's place in it played a large role.

The same notion that politics is collective, wilful control over future life-conditions, has made itself felt in the recent Latin American turn to the left and again in 2011, in Tahir Square. I have no doubt that this modern idea of emancipatory politics is also present daily as a real force in people's struggles in other less symbolic places. My sense is, however, that the wings of the dream of freedom have been clipped: as the violence in Syria continues and developments in Egypt are bleak, and as Evo Morales struggles to find the right balance between the

development demands coming from the peasants and workers who constitute his mass-base and the ecological and cultural demands of his smaller indigenous and green supporters, the resurgence of modern trust in the possibility of politics typical of the early 20th century looks more vulnerable than ever. This takes me to my next topic.

### *iii) Developmentalism*

I claimed above that for many cosmopolitans the transnationalist strategy appears more *natural* than the localisation strategy. One explanatory factor is that we live in the grips of a particular, modernist view of historical time and of man's role in it. We can call this view developmentalism. Developmentalism can mean many things. Here are some aspects of the semantic potential of the concept and its detrimental political effects today.

One aspect is the idea that the things that have happened in the modern West represent universal models. This idea has been under attack for many years. Human rights, individualism and secularism have been targeted so often that one might almost get the impression that the modern West no longer dominates imaginations of the future in mainstream discussion among cosmopolitans about possible paths of development. That would however be a half-truth at best. The critique of Western hegemonisation of universalism has been selective and the routine assumption is still that civilisational breakthroughs coming from Europe and the USA, not from Russia, Somalia, China or Ecuador, are the true makers of the future. Otherwise we can hardly explain the gap between what happens before our eyes – the European Union sinks into a condition of post-democracy and authoritarian capitalism – and what many still like to say: that the European Union provides a globally pioneering model for post-national, democratic institution-building (see discussion above). The controlling influence that the legacy of Western modernity continues to hold over social and political imagination globally has, it seems to me, its deepest roots still in the notion that the intimate connection between modern natural science and technology is morally unproblematic and can serve emancipation and human dignity under varying political and cultural conditions. At least in most contemporary post-colonial discourse that I am aware of the kind of technology developed in the modern West during recent centuries tends to remain accepted as an unquestionably universalisable aspect of an otherwise often harshly criticised legacy of the West.<sup>69</sup>

A closely related aspect of developmentalism is the “we can't go back”-idea. It is a strange idea for many reasons. My main objection is the utter lack of clarity

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69 In the vast field of criticism of development and postcolonial studies one does occasionally come across studies that are not selective in their theorising of developmentalism in the way I here criticise. One example is Illich 1973. In the 19th century, and still a century ago, the discursive landscape was quite different, with people like Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Gandhi as visible figures in the debate about development alternatives. See also Sachs 1992; Nandy 1983; Kothari 1988; Mignolo 2000 and Escobar 1995.

of what people mean when they say, for instance, that life-forms of old times can not be brought back and practised again. Often, when people say that “we can’t go back” it is not clear what perspective is suggested e.g. on real events that bring people, whether out of necessity or choice to engage in practices, that have been set aside that have been rare for longer or shorter times.

Nevertheless, the basic problem with the “we can’t go back -idea” is the enormous tension between it and the idea of political freedom as self-determination, referred to above: If history is pre-determined at least in the (obscure and undefined) sense of “there is no going back” to earlier ways of life, values, practices or technologies, then all that is left to us of the high modern idea of politics as freedom in history, is what Marx described in the 1867 Preface to his *Capital*. Our freedom in history consists, according to this Preface, at best, in “shortening and milderding the birth pangs” of inevitable historical development.<sup>70</sup> In the case of Marx, the tension between the historical determinism of the 1867 Preface and his political activism is a wound open for all to see. By contrast, when the idea that “we can’t go back” is invoked in debates about the European Union or, to take another example, about capital controls, its usual place is not in reflective debate about history or the philosophy of history, politics and citizenship. Its function is, rather, that of a conversation stopper in public debate about current policy options: It is used as a tool used to curb “anti-European nationalism” or “anti-globalisation” mobilisation by presenting these as undesirable (because regressive) and as unrealistic (because based on impossible, infantile fantasies). It is also used as a tool to marginalise suggestions that capital controls (or e.g. protectionist trade policies) be introduced. In these and many other similar contexts the “we can’t go back idea” has no intellectual content. Its only function is to defend the status quo against political alternatives

#### *iv) The failure to politicise technology*

In many places above, I have mentioned the question of technology in passing. A mystification of technology seems to me to be, together with expansivist conceit, the deepest reason for the popularity of the transnationalist strategy for postnational politics among cosmopolitans.

To clarify this point let us look at the disquieting imbalance between the political discourse of economy and that of technology. During the past decades it has been popular among left-leaning academics to criticise the de-politicisation of economics. We all know the kind of experience that feeds the debate. It is when so-and-so, who is the chief economic adviser of such-and-such or the prime minister of X informs his board or the general public that for the city of Manchester or the government of Tanzania or Portugal there is no alternative to, say, tight budget discipline and,

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70 Marx 1973, quote from p. 16. My translation.

hence, no alternative to the selling of public property, the down-scaling of public expenses relative to GDP, cuts in unemployment benefits etc.

Nevertheless, we must be clear that for this kind of experience cosmopolitans have had for many years a clear concept. We call this TINA-politics.<sup>71</sup> Where there is a concept there is awareness and where there is awareness there is political debate and struggle. What we see, therefore, is the paradox that we have a mass movement of activists and academics who build agendas, careers, identities and solidarities on their common agreement that they address politically the lack of political debate about the economy. In consequence, nothing is more politicised today than economic policy, and yet we say that it is not politicised.

Take recent political developments in the EU as one example. The problem for left and liberal intellectuals and cosmopolitan activists is not that the economy is not seen as political. Politicians listen to the wrong economic adviser, that is the problem. The fact that the advisers who are listened to like to dress up as neutral and unpolitical experts is unmasked as a political trick every day. Why then do people insist that our problem is TINA-politics in the economic realm?

My suggestion is that we like to continue the intensely political debate about the lack of political debate about the economy partly in order to hide from view – from ourselves and from others – that we fear what will happen to us if we start barking up the much taller tree of technology. We are afraid of the subject of technology as a topic for critical attention in political analysis and action. We are afraid of it because we seem to know in advance that if we begin to discuss technology honestly, the implications for what we can hope, and what we must do, will be more radical than we have the courage to even think of. Nietzsche captured the problem social-liberal, left and green cosmopolitans have with debating technology well when he speaks about people “wanting not to see something one does see, wanting not to see something one sees as one sees it is”(AC §55).

Even though we often seem to forget it, we are all well aware that a hundred years back criticism of technical progress was an important aspect of radical modernism, and not only for Tolstoy and Gandhi. We also know that this was only part of the picture. In those days extreme technological optimism also flowered. This was true among liberal and socialist radicals and also in aesthetic movements such as in the futurist avant-gardism of Filippo Marinetti. What we learn from these reminders is simple: A century ago critical discussion of the relation between modern technology and emancipation was a *natural* topic of debate within what I call the cosmopolitan family.

Today the discursive landscape has changed. Technology remains a focal point of public attention, but the centre of gravity has shifted from the political arena to that of advertising, marketing, and to science fiction and scientism. In cartoons and popular science magazines, utopian and, more frequently, dystopian visions of how new technology will change our circumstance are as common as rain. In the trams

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<sup>71</sup> See footnote 28 above.



and metros people will speak with a mixed sense of curiosity, awe and excitement about a future where human brains are integrated with computers and wonder how that will change our notions of self and society. But in politics technological choices and the moral change and social responsibility they bring with them is a marginal topic. To the extent that technology becomes a topic at all the debates typically focus narrowly either on risks connected to technical applications of recent advances in bioscience, with genetic modification as the most popular topic, or on corporate power in technology governance, as in the “open access” movement. Other topics, and, hence, of course also the general question of which technologies can and cannot serve cosmopolitan purposes, remain marginal.

To back this claim let me give just one illustration of how the debate goes – or rather, of how it does not go. In the 1980s, the Norwegian eco-philosopher Sigmund Kvaløy, himself a pioneer in computer-aided design and music in the early 1960s, suggested that computers, satellites and the internet are dependent on an extreme division of labour and the large-scale extraction of rare earth metals, that this division of labour and these extraction practices may be incompatible with ecological democracy, and that for these reasons alone, we should suspect that any economy and social organisation that assumes that we will be able to continue to use computers or cell-phones, is incompatible with cosmopolitan idealism. Kvaløy’s argument and others of the kind are important. It argues among other things that we have rarely considered the challenge to democracy and solidarity that follows as long as the technical devices that we are dependent on in our daily lives can only function as long as a large number of people must be educated and socialised into the role of experts in narrow fields whose capacity to understand their citizenship is often weak.<sup>72</sup> Again, the problem is empirical and practical rather than abstract and theoretical. It is conceivable that socialisation into responsible citizenship and global solidarity is achievable in a system of education that secures reproduction of very many different kinds of experts. It is conceivable that we have dependency by everyone on cheap rare earth metals that are required to keep computer screens working in a world where decent work is available for all and dangerous mining practices no longer exist. It is also conceivable that new technologies that are now on our doorsteps, such as technologies that make genetic manipulation of micro-

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72 Kvaløy’s argument brings together two strands in the history of the philosophical discourse of modernity. One is the criticism of the division of labour that goes back in particular to Rousseau, another is the criticism of extraction technologies and pollution that has been criticised on ethical, aesthetic and cosmological grounds long before the ‘limits-to-growth’ debates. I am familiar with Kvaløy’s argument primarily through public lectures he gave in Helsinki and Juva, Finland, in the mid- and late 1980s. For some printed sources, see Kvaløy 1976 and 1992. Interestingly, in the so-called deep ecology movement in the anglophone world, in which Norwegian eco-philosophy is respected and often mentioned as a source of inspiration, the critique of technology has, if I see things rightly here, attracted less attention than discussion of animal rights (inspired by Peter Singer and others), or other ethical, epistemological and ontological issues (as articulated by ecofeminists, by Kvaløy’s Norwegian colleague Arne Naess and by others). From the perspective of our present discussion it is striking that the more popular topics in the deep ecology debate all pretty easily lend themselves to progressivist language. When people say “we can move from smaller to larger circles of solidarity or awareness and from more to less restricted moral reasoning and identities” we see the developmentalist view of history doing its silent work.

organisms or market trade in human genes or cloning of people easily accessible, will be used in ways which remain under enlightened, democratic control and with a keen attention to unintended consequences. All this is conceivable – but, as I believe we can say in the light of the experience of past centuries – it is also extremely unlikely to happen.

It may seem, nevertheless, clear why the question of technology has disappeared from political debates. So overwhelming has been the power of technology to transform our everyday social and cultural habits, our relation to nature and our relation to self, and so strong the aura of new technologies, that we almost forget that technological development is the result of choice. This forgetfulness explains, we may think, the lack of political attention to the question of technology today.

Once more, however, the explanation is likely to strike us as absurd as soon as it is made explicit: We have put a lot of money, organisational skill and political prestige into technical development. Millions of people have also invested a lot of personal effort in it. It takes a fantastic effort every day to keep the wheels spinning. How can we forget that? If the technological development we see is only possible as a consequence of massive investment, commitment and concerted action, a change of course is also positive, if that is what we decide.

And how can we forget (or how can we claim that we forget) that natural catastrophes, such as a massive Carrington event, could bring the satellites and the internet down in a short time.<sup>73</sup> Are we not, in fact, often reminded that quite simple terrorist attacks targeted at infrastructure could achieve the same as a Carrington event? Nevertheless, technological development on the whole appears to us almost like an unstoppable force of nature.

One reason for the co-existence of these two incompatible notions – the notion that technological development is vulnerable and the result of choice, and the notion that technological development seems more like a matter of fate than of choice – may be that the enormity of the dependence of most of us, for our daily routines and our bare survival, on technologies beyond our control, makes us nervous. It is almost as if we had asked ourselves and others: “Can we get of out our current dependence on the satellite, penicillin, high energy consumption, the railway ,etc.” And almost as if we had answered with a carefully considered “No.” It is almost like that. And yet, it is not quite like that.

If there had been a dialogue, the technology question would not make us nervous. It would be one question among others that we are quite willing to take on, even though, perhaps, we are worried that we will be a bit bored by the need to restate the obvious. But we are not bored. We are blind and nervous. Or rather, we are blinded by our fear.

Am I suggesting that in Europe and elsewhere the discussion of progress among cosmopolitans gets muted and our sense of political freedom gets crippled by a

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, <[www.raeng.org.uk/news/publications/list/Space\\_Weather\\_Full\\_Report\\_Final.PDF](http://www.raeng.org.uk/news/publications/list/Space_Weather_Full_Report_Final.PDF)> (accessed June 5, 2013).

sense of helplessness in the face of technology and, hence, of historical fatalism? Am I also, then, suggesting that, possibly, cosmopolitan ideals can only bend political responses to the so-called euro-crisis in new and promising directions if this fatalism is overcome? Am I suggesting, thirdly, that the failure to address the question of technology as a political issue lies at the heart of the standard view and is a major reason for the popularity of the transnationalist strategy for cosmopolitanism? Am I suggesting, fourthly, in the light of all this, that the failure to discuss technology critically is a major and blatantly irrational condition for the popularity of the standard view? And am I suggesting, finally, that the failure to discuss technology is one root cause of the unfounded optimism about and loyalty to the current European Union that afflicts the cosmopolitan family today. Indeed, I wish to suggest all of the foregoing. All these points are of course controversial and taken together they may seem almost ridiculous. I am also not unaware of the fact that when critical theorists last debated technology the “reformists”, who wanted to tame the deadly power of unbound instrumental reason and its technical realisation, had the better of the argument in their debate with pessimistic fatalists (such as Spengler or Adorno) or luddite optimists.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, it is clear to me that the questioning of technology, which has come from “anti-modern” sources as diverse as Thoreau, Spengler and Heidegger, has not been able to deal well with the question of the sources for the validation of this criticism. I nevertheless submit the proposition that if cosmopolitans wish to be clear about their strategies, they need to place the question of technology high on their agenda in political philosophy and activism.

## **VI. Political strategy, solidarity and hope for cosmopolitans**

It is time to sum up. I have had one main concern: To explain why it seems to me to that many cosmopolitans are lured by their commitment to what I have called “the standard view” and “the transnationalist strategy for post-national political governance” to be more loyal to and less critical of the European Union as it is today than is rational. In order to make myself understood, I have covered a large number of topics and painted my landscape with a broad brush.

My purpose has not been to say how things are or what the right perspective on them is. In a way, my purpose has been much more ambitious than that. The purpose has been to bring home a huge message to those of my fellow cosmopolitans who think localisation strategies for post-national governance are unrealistic, silly and irresponsible. My message is that as long as the issues I have raised are not

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<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Habermas 1982. For references to the debates on technology in the Left-Hegelian tradition of critical theory up to the mid 1980s, see my review article Wallgren 2004.

brought into our discussion, there will be no end in sight to the complicity of the majority of cosmopolitans with the drift towards authoritarian capitalism in Europe.

It is important to see what I am not suggesting. I do not suggest that cosmopolitans give up the struggle to achieve a democratic European Union that serves social justice and ecological responsibility at all levels. I do not even suggest that cosmopolitans are, in any straightforward way, wrong if they continue to insist that this project, perhaps as the regional expression of a large, planetary struggle for the creation of a transnationalist post-national cosmopolitan order, is our best or only hope. What I do suggest is that cosmopolitans of this bent should strive to be humble enough to debate with and stand in solidarity with other cosmopolitans who put their effort into what I have called the localisation strategy for post-national governance.

The political challenges we face in the European Union and globally are colossal. I will not be surprised if history will crush, terribly, the optimism of believers in the capacity of markets, science, technology and transnationalist cosmopolitanism to solve the problems of our times and if a humanity much reduced in number will within a few centuries find itself confined to a localism borne not out of choice but of necessity. Such forced localisation may, at least in the beginning, be a horrible time.<sup>75</sup> But all this is fantasy and we are, still, quite incapable of predicting the future. Better then to try to struggle and learn. I will give the last words to Habermas, whose many concrete judgements about recent European politics I have criticised above, but whose engagement and breadth and acuteness of analysis I still find more useful and admirable than most:

Even in established democracies, the existing institutions of freedom are no longer above challenge, although here the populations seem to press for more democracy rather than less. I suspect, however, that the unrest has a still deeper source, namely, the sense that in the age of a completely secularized politics, the rule of law cannot be had or maintained without radical democracy. The present investigation aims to work this hunch into an insight. In the final analysis, private legal subjects cannot come to enjoy equal individual liberties if they do not themselves, in the common exercise of their political autonomy, achieve clarity about justified interests and standards. . . . I have no illusions about the problems that our situation poses and the moods it evokes. But moods -- and philosophies in a melancholic "mood" -- do not justify the defeatist surrender of the radical content of democratic ideals. . . . If defeatism were justified, I would have had to choose a different literary genre, for example, the diary of a Hellenistic writer who merely documents, for subsequent generations, the unfulfilled promises of his waning culture.<sup>76</sup>

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75 For one forceful imagination of such a future, see Lessing's 1982.

76 Habermas 1996.

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