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A Good Life for all - A European development  
model

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# **A Good Life for all – A European development model**

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## Abstracts

*Der Artikel untersucht Möglichkeiten eines öko-solidarischen Entwicklungsmodells für Europa unter Rückgriff auf lateinamerikanische Theorien und Erfahrungen. Die Argumentation erfolgt gemäß des didaktischen Dreischritts von Ist-Soll-Tun. In einem ersten Schritt wird die spezifisch dysfunktionale neoliberale Regulation in Europa analysiert, die Chancen für emanzipatorische Strategien eröffnet. In einem zweiten Schritt wird das gute Leben für alle als konkrete Utopie vorgestellt, die aus Lateinamerika inspiriert ist. Diese Utopie polarisiert Bewegungen, Klassen und Lösungsansätze vor allem dann, wenn es um die Entscheidung geht, ob das gute Leben „für wenige“ oder „für alle“ verwirklicht werden soll. In einem dritten Schritt werden die Herausforderungen für eine pluralistische Suchbewegung, die eine große Transformation umsetzen soll, untersucht.*

*This working paper analyses the potentialities of an eco-solidarian development model for Europe by mobilising theories and experiences from Latin America. The argument is based on a didactical analysis in three parts: Is-Should-Do. In a first step, the dysfunctional neoliberal regulation in Europe will be analysed. In a second step, the good life for all is presented as a concrete utopia, inspired from Latin America. This utopia polarizes movement, classes and proposals especially with respect to a decision on whether the good life shall be realized „for the few“ or „for all“. In a third step, the challenges for a pluralistic search movement to implement this great transformation will be analysed.*

It will not have slipped attentive observers' minds that over the past few years the good life is increasingly being talked about. Examples of a successful life and philosophical reflections on a way of life beyond 'more-and-more' or 'faster-and-faster' can not only be found in lifestyle-magazines but also in the feature pages. One finds the good life as a political slogan in diverse organizations such as Attac, the Grüne Bildungswerkstatt (Austrian Green Foundation), IG Metall, the German metalworkers union, and feminist groups (Knecht et al. 2013). Is the interest in the good life merely fashionable or does this concept open up new opportunities for a search movement that does not only offer alternatives to neoliberalism, but leads - in the long run - the way to a (wholly) different society?

The text at hand explores this very issue and offers, learning from Latin American experiences and theories, perspectives for society-changing action in Europe. This takes the form of the didactic triad of "Is-Should-Acting" (Boff 1984; Novy/Lengauer 2008): A focused analysis of the current political-economic situation (Section 1) and a concrete utopia (Section 2) represent the starting point for political strategies presented in Section 3 (Fiori 1995: 11ff; Novy 2000; Jessop 2007: 133). I see *a good life for all* as a "real possibility in history" (Bloch 1959: 285), something that can be achieved. It is an idea with a past, present and future, which identifies "a tomorrow today"<sup>1</sup> (Bloch 1959: 1627). It can drive a European model of development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when it comes to an environmentally sensitive transformation of European welfare capitalism (Novy 2012).

## **1. Neoliberalism's dysfunctionality as an opportunity**

My economic analysis is based on the admittedly quite optimistic assumption that neo-liberalism is doomed to fail. In my opinion, it is doomed to fail because it is inferior to other forms of capitalism, especially to reactionary and progressive forms of state capitalism. Capitalism is certainly no moral economy and far from able to provide *a good life for all*. Capitalism derives its power from the constant effort to make man and nature further utilizable -that is to "turn into

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<sup>1</sup> In German: „das Morgen im Heute”

money”. It is this separation of economic value and moral assessment, of exchange value and use-value as well as the social and natural metabolism, which is essential to the impressive capitalist progress of material wealth and individual freedom. Especially if we want to overcome this socioeconomic system we cannot underestimate capitalism’s capability for progress – also in the context of a better life. Too often capitalist development drew its dynamics from mephistophelian power, which always pursues Evil yet also creates Good. However, the priorities are clear: as long as the circuit of capital doesn’t bulk, hunger and climate change are no spanner in the works of a class society, which “resolves” possible defects by increasing the number of the excluded. This also represents the misperception of environmental economists of the North, who take no account of the underlying power relations in current resource consumption: For some time we can still maintain our lifestyle as long as enough others can be excluded. Yet this is exactly what emerging economies of the Global South are no longer willing to accept.

Yet, in the long run capital tends to undermine its own systemic foundations and to become self-destructive in the absence of systemic limitations. Economies in general and thus also capitalism require social embedding and social regulation. For Karl Polanyi (1978) it is the unleashed market forces that have been embedded by fascism, communism and reformist policy in the 1930s. For John Maynard Keynes it is the financial- and rentier-capitalism that must be limited by state regulations. Marx goes one step further in his critique of the mode of production that leads to privatized accumulation of collectively produced value-added. He sees the need for a transformation that does not present a step backwards to the old ways of embedding, but a step forward towards a society of the free and equal.

For years, Critics of Neoliberalism (Brenner et al. 2005; Theodore/Peck 2012) have pointed to the ideological flexibility and political opportunism of neoliberal governance. Therefore, they speak of neoliberalization as a process of continued crisis management instead of neo-liberalism as a free-trading, market-friendly and anti-state theoretical structure. Despite its flexibility neoliberalism proves incapable of establishing social and territorial cohesion and thus (incapable of establishing) a "spatial fix" (Harvey 1985). There is a lack of coherence of short- and long-term and private and public decisions. With declining purchasing power in the domestic market, falling profitability of long-term investments and decreasing international competitiveness, neoliberalism undermines the systemic foundations of accumulation. In this, neoliberalism is no

different from the "unleashed" liberal capitalism before 1929: "We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals; we know now that it is bad economics. Out of the collapse of a prosperity whose builders boasted their practicality has come the conviction that in the long run economic morality pays" (Roosevelt 1937). Even within capitalism neoliberalism is "bad economics" - which manifested not only in the 1920s, but again in the wake of the neoliberal structural-adjustment-policies in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. In order to prevent the depreciation of the national currency and therefore securing assets, stagnation generating measures - like in Brazil until 1998 and in Argentina until 2001 – are needed: high interest rates, a decrease in imports or a reduction of wages and government spending. However, the related reduction of purchasing power lowers tax revenues – and thus neoliberal austerity policy usually leads to rising budget deficits. Foreign trade imbalances, loss of market share and recession with all the associated human suffering follow.

In the 1990s Latin America was suffering from a hangover. The election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 marked a turning point. Subsequently reformist governments came into power in many countries and strengthened the internal market, stabilized national sovereignty over natural resources and expanded social services. These measures boosted economic growth, facilitated fiscal consolidation and reduced the foreign-trade and financial dependencies, but also exacerbated ecological conflicts via neo-extractivist policies (Novy 2008). In times of so-called globalization, the new rulers realized - supported by rising commodity prices - an embedding of unleashed market powers which was superior to neoliberal capitalism even in respect to those indicators that neoliberals like to compete in: economic growth, competitiveness and national debt.

Europe, however, suffers from its policy model of European Governance – a globally unique form of shared sovereignty between the Member States and the European institutions. European nation-states are still economically significant on a global scale but are provinces in geographic and demographic terms. Additionally it makes policies of more self-reliant development difficult - the respective production systems and financial capital interlocking go far beyond the narrow national boundaries (cf. Becker et al. 2013). Best case for Europe is the constitution - by way of Multi-level Governance (Hooge/Marks 2010) - of a polity organized on several levels that allows for context-adapted economic activity and living. In fact, there is 'Kompetenzwarrwarr' (confusion of responsibilities) - caused by a "scalar mismatch" (Martinelli/Novy 2013: 311f) -

that makes political action more difficult: central monetary policy and fiscal rules, decentralized allocation of funds and national social- and environmental-policy. No territory in the world is as permanently and as negatively affected by the 2008-crisis as Europe. While the neoliberal strategy has (originally) deliberately served the erosion of the room for policy-making (Apeldoorn et al. 2009) at first, we are currently observing a paralysis that even makes the EU's disintegration seem possible (Krastev 2013).

While the crisis after 1929 was a systemic crisis, but one that preserved the hegemony of North Atlantic capitalism, the current crisis does not only unsettle the politico-economic (dominance) but also the centuries-long cultural dominance of the West. For Europe, this is new, since European capitalism has benefited from its outer-orientation (proselytization, colonization) and a policy of free - albeit always selective - trade (classical imperialism or modern forms of Good Governance) for more than 500 years. Over the past three decades however the continued weakening of both the industrial base and the mass purchasing power – that has begun with Margaret Thatcher - has sustainably undermined Europe's competitiveness and advanced the rise of Asia (UNDP 2013).

Without going into detail about the assessment of China's development path (Arrighi 2008; Dunford/Yeung 2010), the dynamics of peripheral-capitalist development and the erosion of Western hegemony seems to continue unabated (Arrighi 2005a, 2005b). Nowadays there is the aim in the emerging and the Latin American countries to steer social and economic development by stronger government control. Domestic markets are growing, while they are shrinking in Europe. Infrastructures are being expanded, while in Europe public investment is being reduced. By now this also affects key industries such as software and automotive industries whose production and sales are increasingly being relocated. If the European and US-American capitalism of today were similarly dominant worldwide as in the 1930s, a deep global depression would be likely. But because the Global South is currently changing the centuries-old hierarchy of center and periphery (UNDP 2013: 13) the recession in the North continues - without tipping into a global crisis.

I do not see a final crisis of capitalism, but certainly a deep, perhaps final exhaustion of European capitalism. A wider range of demographic groups and capital fractions can sense the neoliberal dysfunctions. The deepening of the European Single Market has above all strengthened the

economic power of the centers, especially Germany's, but also Austria's. Pre-2008 the one's "export miracle" largely corresponded to the other's "import frenzy". Now one can observe that the decline in purchasing power at the periphery affects the export economy of the center. Thus, it is expected that the uneven development in the entire European production system, i.e. including the export-oriented center-economies, will lead to destructive dynamics. Not only large parts of the middle and lower classes in all parts of Europe, but also smaller businesses that primarily focus on local and national markets and also suffer from difficult credit-access, have a vested interest in a change of course.

This leads to increasingly polarized strategies. For one thing, there are the answers of the right, for which the solution is to accept or even aim at an exclusion of certain population groups and territories. The neoliberal mainstream model is operated by a faction which legitimizes itself in a cosmopolitan way. A faction concerned with creating a European area of power that divests economic policies of democratic decision (Krastev 2013). This centralized European competition project will ensure its resource-requirements with the help of state-like structures, and if necessary with the help of the military. Withal it is accepted that patterns of unequal development and dependence within Europe are being reinforced. Protagonists of this faction are European Commission Vice-President Olli Rehn and the President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi as well as the majority of current national heads of government. Since neoliberalism dysfunctionally undermines its own foundations - in particular social cohesion - a right-authoritarian model has developed in recent years. Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban relies on the classic concept of territory of a strong nation-state, which enforces its interests against international banks and corporations and simultaneously administers social cohesion by differentiation from 'welfare scroungers', Roma and dissidents. Depending on the appropriateness either neoliberal or Keynesian policy elements are adopted.

For another thing, there is the European left with its three groupings. The largest faction is the reformist, eco-keynesian movement, basically consisting of Social Democrats, the Greens and the majority of the cosmopolitan-minded intellectuals who focus on ecological modernization and forms of green growth. Democracy, social welfare and ecological policies are supposed to be Europeanized. The second, also party-politically organized faction is a Eurosceptic, more statist and pro-welfare state left (Dutch socialists, various Communist parties). The third faction

comprises a motion-oriented and libertarian-state-critical movement, which strives for fundamental changes in the mode of production and way of life that go beyond capitalism and in the process also draw on traditional concepts such as the Commons.

These groupings are more or less isolated environments with little common tactical and strategic objectives. A solidarity-ecological model of *the good life for all* based on care and attentiveness could in my view be the foundation for a cross-milieu utopia. An utopia that can provide orientation to both; those who strive for improvements in the existing, as well as those who want to evolve beyond ongoing capitalistic valorisation and (beyond) a way of life that is geared to acceleration and expansion.

## **2. A good life for all**

In order to become potent each utopia needs to build on specific traditions and achievements, and has to identify the potential of the existing that goes beyond the currently available (Hartwig 2007). For many in Andean America this combination of tradition and potential, this concrete utopia is *buen vivir*; in Europe - as I will argue - it is the democratic welfare state. There and here the "working, the creating individual, reshaping and overhauling his/her surrounding"<sup>2</sup> becomes an actor, who "realizes in the future, what shines into everybody's childhood and where no man has been: home"<sup>3</sup> (Bloch 1959: 1628). *The good life for all* is not just about a shift in emphasis from having to being, but about a collective strategy of becoming and thus the development of the potential for a life as long, as creative, as healthy and as successful as possible for all. Such strategies differ from place to place and do not only require creativity and organization but also collective action. In Latin America, the resistance against exclusion culminated in political alliances and new social majorities. In Europe, the political left is disoriented, not at least because there is no consensus on the objectives. I suggest both as a short and long-term goal to realize the opportunities based in the 20th century's welfare state. In my judgement in today's Europe it is

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<sup>2</sup> In German: "arbeitende, schaffende, die Gegebenheiten umbildende und überholende Mensch"

<sup>3</sup> In German: "in der Zukunft verwirklicht, das allen in die Kindheit scheint und worin noch niemand war: Heimat"

about the defense and advancement of democracy and the welfare state, based on the insight that we are (on the verge of) losing something important (Judt 2010: 221).

## 2.1 Good Life

Striving for a successful life inspired thinking about economy and society in all cultures. In continuing Elisabeth Schmid's (2013) considerations. I am mainly interested in two cultures. In Europe, the debate revolves about the fundamental question of a successful life: What are "standards and criteria of a successful life" (Rosa, 2009: 90)? How much is enough (Skidelsky/Skidelsky 2012)? How can a good life be made possible? (Colson/Fickett 2005)? Here, occidental-enlightened thought references Aristotle, whose ideas were picked up by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum and which - in contrast to ideas of liberalism - assume a "substantive conception of the good": People are only equal in the respect that, "if the life of each is viewed with imagination and if as a result each individual receives what he or she needs to be able to lead a rich and in the fullest sense human life, to the extent permitted by the natural ways" (Nussbaum 1999: 45). Nussbaum (1999: 49-58) starts from the "constitutive conditions of the human being" such as mortality, hunger and connectedness with other humans. Sen's capabilities approach is guided by the possibility of self-development and the empowerment to freely shape one's own life - that is, being able to choose (Sen 1999). In modern societies, it is about the good life of the individual, about "autonomy and authenticity, the ability to remain true to oneself" (Rosa 2009: 95), which advances private interpretations of the good life. However, western individualism developed in a civilization characterized by sharp class hierarchies. Therefore, a few have always had the privilege to live - according to the respective state of development - a good life. But this privatized good life for an elite only, leads to social conflict between the privileged and the mass, which - as shown by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2010) - also diminishes the quality of life of the beneficiaries. A *good life for all*, however, requires vision of social cohesion and environmental embedding, from which certain lifestyles and production methods are promoted and others are prevented (Skidelsky/Skidelsky 2012: 193).

What is therefore of particular importance for the current debates is the concept of the good life originating in Latin America - in Spanish *buen vivir* and *sumak kawsay* in Quechua (Fathauer 2011: 11; see also Schmid (2013)). This is a cosmovision, a holistic, human- and nature-comprising worldview whose representatives understand it as a counter-concept to the Western-

dominated concept of development (Gudynas 2012). *Buen vivir* usually presents itself as a negation, as a departure from all that development has brought to date (Acosta 2013). On this reading development would be equated with capitalist progress, faith in technology and cultural unification of Western-style blank cut (Escobar 2008). Development and modernization - embodied in road construction, power plants and mining projects - would therefore be the opposite of *buen vivir*. "Buen Vivir is sharply delimited from the idea of *individual good life*. It is only conceivable in a *social context*, mediated by the community in which people live" (Fatheuer 2011: 20, emphasis in original). By emphasizing the dark side of materialistic modernization and fragmented individualization *buen vivir* guides the resistance of the strongly indigenously influenced, often rural population and its associated social movements against neoliberal capitalism.

Although the approach of *buen vivir* remains unclear concerning specific strategies of transition from neoliberalism to the good life, for me this utopia impresses by its bottom-up approach. A bottom-up approach feeding on collective experiences and struggles, impresses by a holistic and ecological point of view as a corrective to Western individualism and by its explicit contextual approach - three aspects which are also important for European utopia designs, without those simply being copied.

## **2.2 For all**

Norberto Bobbio has proposed a simple distinction between left and right: The right stands for freedom, the left for equality, more precisely for the equal freedom of all and therefore for putting emphasis on the importance of social rights in addition to the traditional rights of freedom (Bobbio 1994: 82). This is not only reminiscent of Sen's concept but also of considerations of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1986: 69) of the "free development of each being the condition for the free development of all." The core of the *good life for all* thus constitutes the link between freedom and equality – 'Gleichfreiheit' (equal freedom) (Balibar 1993) or, put differently freedom for all (Lipietz 1998).

The motto of the government Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was *Brasil para todos* - Brazil for all. For Lula it was not about more and not about less than for European social democracy in the 20th century: to allow all, and not just a privileged part of the population the hedge against the risks of

life and the participation in capitalist consumer society. Brazil's governments of the past ten years, just like most other reformist governments of Latin America, pursue a policy of inclusion. Regardless of a sometimes radical rhetoric it is about state capitalism - about a better form of capitalist accumulation. This constitutes a continuation of an environmentally alarming policy of extractivism and does not exclude that a "happy bourgeoisie" - in line with Gosta Esping-Anderson's analysis of Swedish development - persists (Esping-Andersen, n.y.). A part of entrepreneurs benefit greatly from this policy - but so does the emerging middle class and especially low-paid earners (Pochmann 2012). In contrast to the trend in rich countries, income inequality decreased significantly across the continent (OECD 2011; Cornia 2012). The core of a policy "for all" is the creation of dignity of those who were excluded until recently and enabling a comprehensive form of *cidadania* (citizenship), which leads to participation in society that goes beyond voting. But at the same time *Lulismo* (Singer 2009) tries to create win-win situations and thus to prevent polarization and radicalization of the political right.

In accordance with the definitions of the good life given above, the policy models in Latin America that aim for *a good life for all*, for me are not limited to the Andes region, where the connection to nature is more pronounced than in more urban Latin America. The objective of Brazil's President Lula to facilitate three meals a day for all, also falls within this model just as the Venezuelan Chávez' government's literacy programs. Lula and Chávez differed in their choice of words, their tactics and strategies. What they had in common, was that they came from a humble background, were self-taught, represented the poor and - just like European social democracy - regarded environmental issues as secondary. Yet they succeeded in areas that Latin American structuralists consider as preconditions for independent development (Fischer 2013): A social policy - by now even undisputed amongst critics - that strengthens the internal market and expands the scope of action in the national productive system. In Chávez' case by government control over the key sector oil, in the case of Lula by the expansion of infrastructure and rudiments of an independent industrialization. Although their reforms improved life chances of many - allegedly impossible in times of "post-democracy" (Crouch 2004) - both models are not without contradictions and are fragile, as we have seen in particular after Chávez' death and as mass protests in Brazil during the Confederation-Cups 2013 have demonstrated.

What is being criticized particularly harshly by the international civil society and the radical left edge of the Latin American political spectrum, is the reformist governments' environmental policy. The unexpected dynamic rise of the Latin American development state has increased the perverse effects of motorization and uncontrolled real estate business in the cities. In turn, in the country, the conflicts intensify over dams, rail- and road-projects and the ecological devastation caused by mining and monocultures. All this encourages ecological criticism and turns the Andean *buen vivir* into a 'Realutopie' (real utopia) of a post-growth-society for parts of the global justice movement and the environmental movement. Its representatives ask about the sense in fairly distributing a cake that is spoiled. If higher salaries are immediately spent at the pumps, aren't wage freezes better for the climate? Thus growth critique is simultaneously a critique of progress and of civilization, of mass culture and of consumerism (Jackson 2009). In fact, European consumerism is neither ecologically sustainable nor compatible with global justice, because car ownership and long-distance travel is not possible for all seven billion inhabitants of the planet. However, a further essential quality of European lifestyle that was picked up by reformist governments, results from a public sector that improves life chances and is organized outside of short-term capitalist exploitation interests: good and free education, health care and old-age provision for all. The following section generalizes the antagonism central to the Latin American argument - the antagonism of the *good life for all* and neoliberalism.

### **2.3 Polanyi or Hayek?**

Karl Polanyi (1978) criticized the destructive dynamics of a market society in which the social and environmental livelihoods are being destroyed by free markets. He set his hope on the re-embedding of economic processes by reformist policy. For Friedrich August von Hayek (1978) neoliberalism serves the establishment of a "Constitution of Liberty" that stabilizes the status quo of political and economic power. In practice the choice of means was quite opportunistic ever since the 1970s: If required - as in Chile under Augusto Pinochet - dictatorial, in other cases by market-friendly regulations, or bank bail-out- and industrial-subsidy-programs. For David Harvey (2005) neoliberalism is an ideological "class struggle from above". As a political project, it is above all directed *against* something: against a society that is humane and just and shaped by individuals in a given territory as it was first implemented in local experiments and then, after

WWII, on a grand scale as welfare capitalism in the North and as national development state in the South.

Both Karl Polanyi and Friedrich August von Hayek were impressed by the Red Vienna of the 1920s - for the one as an example of an embedding of economic processes, for the other as a step towards serfdom (Peck, 2008: 9). And how do we deal with Red Vienna and the welfare state as attempts to provide *a good life for all*? Are they central historical benchmarks, positive references? For the right, be it the right-authoritarian variant or the neoliberal mainstream, the answer is clear: their project is only for the few. The left however, is strangely ambivalent, as I want to show by way of example on the basis of the 'Journal für Entwicklungspolitik' (Journal of Development Studies) 3/2012 - which is also dedicated to the theme of transformation. For instance, there is a clear commitment to development and the welfare state in Birgit Daiber's (2012: 15) text: "Making development possible requires a welfare state, a democratic state under the rule of law that is functional and powerful, and provides legal and civic security as well as access to the vital goods and services for the population." Daiber thus sets the framework for a socio-ecological transformation towards *a good life for all*, which distinguishes itself from right approaches of authoritarianism, exclusion and privatization. However, other texts of the booklet remain silent on the successes of the fight against poverty and the beginning construction of welfare- and development-state structures in Latin America. Rather, those texts spot excessive 'Staatszentrierung' (state centering) of the traditional left, a blinding out of environmental problems and detect a "developmental illusion" (Svampa 2012: 52). Maristella Svampa (2012: 56) therefore sympathizes with a third path that equally rejects both the neoliberal and neo-developmental "Commodities Consensus" (Svampa 2012: 55). Edgardo Lander (2012: 76) affirmatively refers to Walter Mignolo's distinction between "the left, the right, and the decolonial". After a thorough critique of left realpolitik by Latin American authors, it remains unclear whether right and left are still relevant categories. Ulrich Brand's (2012a) final remarks also remain abstract. This is not surprising, since he explicitly dissociates himself from the concept of "green socialism" (Candeias 2012), because it doesn't sufficiently expose the problems of the welfare state and Fordism (Brand 2012b: 115). Brand speaks of the *American/European way of life* as an "oligarchical mode of living" (Brand 2012a: 130) or the "imperial way of life" (Brand 2012a: 131), in order to address in what way power relations can be

found in lifestyles. The uneven development of center and periphery that Latin American structuralism and dependency theory deal with in detail (Fischer 2013) is also expressed in certain ways of life. Yet the concept of the "imperial way of life" lacks relationship to its imperial mode of production, meaning to the capitalist world economy with its current dynamics that is also turning Europeans into losers. In all countries of the world some individuals are living "imperial" - that is living "beyond their means." In Europe, where achievements are eroding, fears of social decline become reality and neoliberal decision-makers are again creating a society "for the few", the concept of an "imperial way of life" increasingly seems "fora do lugar" (Cardoso 1993), meaning out of place. Because if it is in fact - for the purposes of a critique of a "labor aristocracy in the centers" - directed at the European middle and lower classes, it either produces a guilty conscience because of complicity or it reinforces those conservative environmental economists who think that all Europeans have to tighten their belts. If one wants to address imperial relations of exploitation, the concept would have to connect - learning from Latin America - to the strands of theory discussed in this issue and conduct an analysis of the actual political situation. So it is important - amongst all internal conflicts and cleavages within the left - not to forget that the harshest and most powerful critics of reformist governments are - not surprisingly - coming from the right: US foreign policy is funding the opposition, the media are criticizing the government and in Honduras and Paraguay coups were already successful. On the ground it is a powerful alliance of traditional actors - especially the media, agricultural oligarchy, financial capital, asset owners and an established middle class, with distinct pride of place - that again wants to limit development for a few. The media's strategy of splitting is based on the continuous double message, that on the one hand they put reformist governments in the vicinity of authoritarian statism and on the other hand criticize that they have allegedly adapted to the existing corrupt neoliberal system.

Although reformist policy in Latin America questions the basic structure of capitalist societies only marginally - e.g. in relation to the control of natural resources and attempts at strengthening a public banking system - it still encounters fierce and systematic opposition of the elite(s). With this Latin America's left is still a giant stride ahead of Europe's. In Europe it even lacks a coherent alliance against neoliberal policies, let alone a political movement for a great transformation. In the following concluding chapter *a good life not for the few, but for all* is

proposed as an utopian horizon, which can offer guidance to all those who want to participate in such an ecologically-solidarity search movement.

### **3. A *good life for all*: From a search movement to a hegemonic project**

The debate on who can live well in Europe, has long been contested. Over here, in the 20th century, the labor movement has achieved participation in the existing system for the vast majority. Red Vienna and many other experiments at local and national level are part of this story of social progress. In the 21st century, a further step will be necessary - one that is both more courageous and at the same time more humble: It is necessary to organize the *good life for all* in a way that it is compatible with the life chances of future generations, global development opportunities for all and preservation of a variety of life on this planet. This implies a system change, which will not be enforceable without resistance of persisting powers. Thus it is the more problematic that the forces that oppose neoliberalism, are facing a strategy problem. Social Democrats, the Greens and various left-wing parties often practice - although dissatisfied with the status quo - Realpolitik without an utopian horizon, which - since aimless - do not bring any significant structural changes. In civil society, however, it is not only a few who dream of the good life, yet without being interested in realpolitical transformations, and have to observe that "power-less" areas of life and business for creativity, subsistence and autonomy are increasingly being restricted in an authoritarian way.

What is needed instead is a "as well as"-strategy - a "revolutionary Realpolitik" (Haug 2007) - improvements within the existing as well as long-term changes of institutions and structures.

A great transformation of production and life is a hegemonic project that needs to clarify three key questions: Are there any design options and, if so, is there a will to implement? What kind of alliances are needed in Europe? What are the key starting points of this transformation?

#### **3.1 The possibility and the will to shape society**

Every effective political project changes society. Great transformations are therefore primarily social revolutions, the change of routines, practices and attitudes that lead to new modes of life

and production. Therefore, the transformation of the capitalist mode of production must not be conceived as a "großer Wurf" ("big hit") - attainable by a political revolution (Singer 1998: 11). Rather, it takes a variety of social innovation that experiment with the new. This is often triggered in self-organized spaces as capacity building and represents a social search movement. In addition to these social initiatives it essentially needs the crucial transformation of state institutions - hospitals and kindergartens, schools and railway, retirement homes and parks - into truly open and public facilities that are created by and for people. To ensure that all people can live well, it needs this transformation of the state into a community that enables access and participation for all.

With this, Europe, a continent structurally geared to expansion would be posed with special challenges: it is necessary, to restrain the dynamics of expansion, growth and acceleration and increasingly appreciate and utilise what this continent has to offer in terms of resources and human skills. Such a strategy that draws more on sufficiency can learn from different approaches: from approaches inspired by dependency theory of "Self Reliance" and "auto-centered development" (Fischer 2013), but also from the current criticism of "expansive modernity" (Welzer 2013: 58) or neoliberal capitalism, in which social acceleration, continued activation and the inner land grabbing (Dörre et al 2009) prevail. This includes breaking with neoliberalism and simultaneously needs a utopian horizon: "objectively - historically it is time for 'ripe' capitalisms to proceed to a reproduction economy that is only growing on qualitative, high-technology paths" (Haug 2012: 338).

After the weakening of global economic interdependence after 1914 and especially after the crisis of the 1930s, capitalist market economies were socially embedded, which was accompanied by ecological delimitation. In welfare capitalism control over money, budgeting and legislation was united in national container space, which is why political and economic space overlapped stronger. In Europe, this was due to the war and the broad-based consensus to never again repeat fascism. In the US similar processes already took place in the 1930s: A courageous President, the pressure of the people and the system competition with the Soviet Union allowed the New Deal - a policy of redistribution, of economic planning and capital controls. Especially the latter strengthened the national capacity to act, because it made capital flight difficult. Latin America also has a tradition of independent policy-making. Already since the 1950s Latin American

structuralism's goals have been greater national room for manoeuvre by strengthening the internal market and import substitution. Commodity exports were supposed to lead to foreign exchange earnings, which enable autonomous industrialization. Over the past ten years there has by no means occurred a decoupling from the world market, but neo-extractivism emerged (FDCL/RLS 2012). In some areas, though room for manoeuvre was reclaimed. Examples include the end of the Dollar-peg, reduction of external debt and public access to natural resources. Above all, Argentina - in contrast to the current development in Southern Europe - was able to lift itself from the depression in a remarkably short time with the help of the violent act of change of government, devaluation and debt reduction.

But this issue does not shape European intellectuals' debate on political scope of design. In Europe, it is primarily about whether to "Europeanize or re-nationalize" and "euro exit or not." At this, the solution is usually seen in greater political integration (Beck 2012; Heise, 2013), in less nationalism and "more Europe" - a zero-sum game of national and European responsibility under constant political objectives. Yet the European specific is that political power remains fragmented in a "scalar mismatch" (2013 Martinelli/Novy: 311f). The solution approached in recent years is multi-level governance, where the EU Commission and the European Central Bank at the European level as well as heads of government and finance ministries at the national level make decisions isolated from public debates and access by parliamentary and other democratic participatory tools (Oberdorfer 2013). This strategy - without naming it as such - amounts to the formation of a new, increasingly authoritarian-led European power vessel, geographically comparable with the US, China, Russia and India. The implicit assumption being that the decisions taken under clear decision-making structures will be better (ones). Yet, given the current state structure in Europe, with its "strategic selectivity" (Jessop 2008) what is to be expected is mainly a solidification of neoliberal institutions and structures.

Nevertheless there is room for shaping development within Europe at every level. Instead of an abridged discussion on which spatial level is "best" for progressive politics, it is important to utilize the respective capabilities of each policy level. At a superordinate level (Europe, nation) a suitable framework has to be specified, especially via monetary policy and a financial system that serve societal goals and are not solely focused on banking interests. Furthermore, it takes consistent action against monopolies and the freeing up of space for regional and democratic

experiments. As Keynes noted in 1933, civilization is liberation from economic constraints: "Once we allow ourselves to be disobedient to the test of accountant's profit, we have begun to change our civilization" (cited in Skidelsky/Skidelsky 2012: 218). Isn't it about time for Europe, to learn from Latin American constitutional processes? Indeed, weren't it necessary to replace the overall objectives of "competitiveness" and "austerity" by the constitutional goal of a *good life for all*? Although constitutions alone do not create any new realities, a significant shift in emphasis in dealing with the current crisis could be expected: to move away from subsidizing banks and towards concern for exploding unemployment and the increase in infant mortality and suicides. All this would not yet constitute the great transformation, but it would be the first step into transition (NEF 2010).

From a realpolitical point of view the scepticism of Becker, Jäger and Weissenbacher (2013) regarding the practicability of a European progressive strategy is understandable: An eco-social change of course of the EU toward a mixed economy that doesn't systematically promote privatization and liberalization, would necessitate radical changes of the European legal- and institutional framework similar to the changes nation-states experienced after 1918 and after 1945 - in other words, after a long war and revolutionary upheavals. But history also knows of radical changes without war and devastation. In Europe system change occurred after 1989 without violence, and in Latin America no one expected an erosion of the 500-year-old "development of underdevelopment" in 1998. That is (exactly) why I set the pessimism of the intellect against the optimism of the will in the following section.

### **3.2 Broad Alliances**

One cannot deny the optimism of the search movement for a good life. A unifying bond amongst those who work on the good life is looking to the future: some tell several "counter-stories" of a new elite (Welzer 2013: 254), others remodel the "relations between reality and the symbolic order creatively in a new way" (Knecht et al. 2013) and (still) others are followers of *buen vivir*, of degrowth and the Commons movement. The enthusiasm for their own respective project is contrasted with a lack of interest in bringing the various initiatives together into one mosaic. It lacks a hegemonic project that does not only describe the goal - a society beyond neoliberalism - but also the joint steps into transition to this new order.

Hegemony, meaning effective and lasting stabilization of a social order, is a project of power - "for a given society" and especially "against a certain order." It has to persuade, inspire and mobilize people (Gramsci 1994). But in order to be sustained and to be institutionalized, it always needs a change of government as well. In contrast to the past 30 years in Europe, this (change of government) would have to be accompanied by the will to change, because neoliberal elites do not step down voluntarily. They did not (do that) in Latin America, they will not do so in Europe. In order to break the power of the neoliberal elites, an alliance of social and political movements, trade unions and political parties is needed. In Latin America this was crucial in the fight against neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s. Leading by way of example is the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement, which maintained its autonomy from the state apparatus and political parties, but always sided with the reformist government in crucial moments (Stedile 2006; Loureiro/Novy 2012). The movement practices autonomy and solidarity. At the beginning of this century *buen vivir* was recognized to such an extent in the Andean region, that it was elevated to constitutional status in Bolivia and Ecuador by qualified majorities.

But the Latin American example also shows the danger in this fight for change: In case of alienation of government and social movements, this jeopardizes the effectiveness of both. A recent example from Brazil is the mass mobilization against fare increases, which was partly successful but has on the other hand led to a massive loss of popularity of the ruling Workers' Party PT and has given neoliberals and conservatives hope that the current President Dilma Rousseff could be voted out of office in 2014. It is encouraging that Rousseff welcomed the demonstrations and supports the concerns of the movement, which are better public transport, better health care and quality education for all. In other countries, however, especially in Ecuador, it seems to have come to a permanent alienation of state and movement - and this is harming both.

In Europe, the coalition of social and political movements is not the only one that is currently weak. The social basis of a left project is unclear as well. Left reformist policy can only be successful democratically with a coalition of middle and lower classes. In Europe, it is especially the Social Democrats and the Greens who only have a weak connection to the lower class (Walter 2010a, 2010b). Yet in many parts of Europe, especially north-western Europe, the middle class is numerically still strong (Herrmann 2010). Halting neoliberal accumulation and upward-

redistribution increase the middle class' threat of relegation and exclusion. The crisis of the European model of production endangers the European way of life, as it has developed in the 20th century: as consumerism, but also as welfare states. While the political right openly promotes strategies "for the few" as the answer and thus also practices an exclusionary approach to physical limits, the political left is characterized in part by a remarkable indifference to the fears of Europeans to descent socially, to their - on a world scale - "suffering on a high level". Real existing Europeans, however experience these developments ambivalently. They benefit particularly from cheap imports of consumer goods. But, they suffer from rising unemployment and cut welfare budgets. However, the middle class is no guaranteed alliance partner of a *good life for all*. Although much of the middle class owe their existence to a functioning welfare state, a part of them is supporting policy of those who own substantial assets, meaning, the top one percent and the top part per thousand (Herrmann 2010). Three examples about the good life illustrate the ambiguity of the middle class: Should they take a stand for good public schools or no longer be interested since their children already attend private schools? Should they support the expansion of public transport and cycling trails, even if it restricts the amenities of driving a car? Should they endorse property taxes and higher income tax progression? This is exactly where a search movement, creativity and reason is needed especially, so that the answers to these questions lead to solutions "for all".

### **3.3 Starting points for the Great Transformation**

The proposed hegemonic project is based on at least five pillars that can be implemented at different spatial levels in varying degrees of efficacy: first, and fundamentally it takes democratically negotiated priorities in a caring government based on the "nurturant parent model" (Lakoff 2008: 81). This includes ethical appraisal of different forms of consumption and production, without resorting to coercive economic planning (Skidelsky/Skidelsky 2012: 193). Because a democratic community does not only have the right but the duty to institutionalize a resource-saving, more regionalized mode of production and life. Democratic budgeting processes can support this by setting new priorities for the use of public funds and use innovative forms of participation and knowledge in the process (Leubolt et al. 2009). A democratic debate on how private wealth can be used for public functions is of crucial importance in Europe.

Second, it needs a new ecological-solidarian mode of production with ecologically sensitive high-tech sectors, a new ecological infrastructure and the large area of care-economy. All these areas exhibit a strong or relatively strong tendency to socialization, small-scale regionality and participation and require massive public support: for coordination, planning and promotion of cooperation. This is not only true for the Internet and the knowledge economy, but also for the energy sector. Yet this potential for emancipation and holism is also always being monopolized by the state and capital - not only online. In this manner, renewable energy is provided both decentralized (as with a variety of models of civic power plants and energy cooperatives in Germany) and centralized by corporations (as in England and Spain) (Haas/Sander 2013). Also in the education and care sector municipal and public providers, voluntary work, solidarity economy and the third sector are operating parallel to purely commercial enterprises. It will be up to ingenious frameworks and strategic political alliances, whether these sunrise industries will be able to unfold their progressive potential "for a good life" and "for all".

Third, it is about new modes of working. The Four-in-one perspective of Frigga Haug (2008) presents a feminist model of work, starting from a radical reduction in wage working hours and a new balance of working: spending four hours a day dedicated to gainful employment, four hours of social, political and individual work, i.e. activities for oneself. This revolutionizes the concept of performance, since "top performers", who are working 60-hours, turn out to be underperformers in this model when it comes to the care of the elderly, volunteering at the fire brigade or voluntary participation in NGOs and political parties. Care work is being socially appreciated, work is being distributed equally and is both meaningful and pleasurable.

Fourth, good public infrastructure and public services in education, health, care, housing, public transport and public credit are needed. A high-quality reproduction economy includes a public supply of leisure activities, such as nature, sports and cultural activities that reduce the high financial and environmental costs of searching for recreation in distant locations. These services further include communally owned and publicly owned infrastructure companies, the extension of the Commons, local cooperative banks and public banks.

Fifth, it is about an inversion of priority away from the neo-mercantilist external orientation, whose overall economic-political objective is to achieve export surpluses. This leads to social acceleration by constantly increasing competition, which leaves no time to deal with the ultimate

goal of development, precisely the good life. Strengthening and expanding the internal market and independence does not mean compartmentalization of the world market, but consciously designing Europe's integration into the world market. A design that is accompanied by selective protection mechanisms, which strengthen ecologically and socially important industrial sectors and enable resource-efficient, small-scale and non-commercial modes of living and working. These mechanisms are primarily duties - that prevent social and environmental dumping by corporations - and capital controls. A regional circular economy does not emerge without political support. Selective design of world market integration whilst taking into account ecological limits represents the completion of the historic project of the democratically organized embedding of the economy in society and nature (Lipietz 1998).

To focus on these tasks "at home", would be Europe's most important contribution to world development. This is already quite ambitious, as in its expansive history this continent has brought - in addition to technical and social progress - much suffering, war and exploitation to the rest of the world. Instead of fighting the declining importance in the global market with ineffective means it were about acknowledging the emergence of a truly multipolar world and about focusing our attention on tasks that arise here from affluence and inequality. In the best case solidarity and ecological alternatives for *the good life in Europe and in the world* could develop in a politically supported search process. Perhaps this way Europe will find a new role as a partner for global responsibility.

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