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Analysing Development to Shape the Future

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Abstract

This article links theory and politics in a systematic way by proposing Is-Will-Do as a didactical model for analysing a concrete conjuncture, relating it to the desired future in the form of a concrete utopia. Aware of structural limits and potential space of manoeuvre for political agency adequate practical steps to implement the concrete utopia are elaborated. The paper is divided in a first section which exposes three interwoven aspects of development: the the idea of a good life, the complexity and multi-dimensionality of development and the relationship of knowledge and power. Section two exposes the model of Is-Will-Do abstractly, while section 3 exemplifies it by exposing the challenges for the European left. The analysis of conjuncture as a concrete analysis of a concrete situation is centred in Europe today on the topic of inequality produced by finance-based accumulation. As the concrete utopia of a good life , the authors propose the values of the French revolution, freedom, equality and solidarity which are unfulfilled promises of European development. The paper ends with a plea for organising democratic and egalitarian alternatives.

This paper tries to understand socioeconomic dynamics with the practical objective of elaborating normatively rooted strategies for emancipatory change. Interest in the future must not be de-connected from understanding the past and the present. The search for the new does not start from an empty sheet, but often mobilises past experiences. A contemporary example is Venezuela's *Bolivarian revolution* and its search for socialism of the 21st century which relates to the 19th century liberation struggle. The scientific and political undertaking of DEMOLOGOS is to fight collective amnesia and to insist on the power of emerging new visions of socioeconomic development¹. Theoretically, DEMOLOGOS links “old” institutionalist theories to political ecology, a territorialized regulation approach and cultural political economy. It analyses discourses, institutions and structures at interlocked spatial scales. Empirically, DEMOLOGOS connects past development trajectories to current emblematic moments, thereby elaborating strategic perspectives for emancipatory agency. The task of this paper is theoretical and practical. It presents a didactical model to grasp development in its multiple, but related dimensions². Shall-Is-Do is a model composed of three steps. It links a conjunctural analysis of the current situation with an ethically based concrete utopia which permits elaborating political strategies. In Latin America it has been part of participatory techniques in social movements, labelled “See – Judge – Act”³ and might get relevant for critical research with political intentions as well⁴. The solution we propose is not simply a better analysis, but a plea for *phronesis*, the form of rationality the Greek philosophers used for solving concrete problems⁵. The presented model for analysing and shaping development is transdisciplinary and problem-centred. After presenting the model abstractly in section 2, it is applied to grasp current challenges for the European left in section 3.

1. Theory and practice of development

To study the theory and practice of development has to take three interwoven aspects into account. First, *development as the idea of good life* which we aim to realize has to be differentiated from development as a process. Development as a normative idea is an underlying concept of many of contemporary theories of social and political intervention, deeply rooted in Western philosophy. Nussbaum goes back to Aristotle to elaborate a multidimensional concept of development as a good life for all⁶. Development must not be confounded with growth and progress⁷. Progress, “potentially limitless”, is connoted to the “linear unfolding of the universal potential for human improvement”⁸. It is the liberal creed that development – subsumed as material improvement and economic growth - will follow

spontaneously in case the state removes the constraints on a free civil society. But capitalist development is “terrible and tragic convergence, sealed with victims’ blood”⁹, a movement of “creative destruction”¹⁰ which is the opposite of states of equilibrium proposed by neoclassical economics. J.S. Mill, a liberal social reformer, while exalting competition and the market, was critical about the glaring inequality in the distribution of property¹¹ This is also true for Marx who “did contrast the positive intention of development with that “development” which had happened in the name of progress”¹² It was the dark side of progress – poverty, unemployment and social disintegration – that gave rise to the positivist idea of development as conscious human intervention. Auguste Comte and Saint Simon in France, Chamberlain in Britain and Mill and Burke in India understood development as the coalescence of progress and order. This intention to develop is not only different from the liberal understanding of progressive development, it is its opposite. While liberal theories trusted in the invisible hand of the market, more critical voices ascribed a decisive role to the visible hand of human actors, especially the state¹³. Especially after World War II, the nation state was the power container used to implement development strategies with a strong focus on growth and modernisation. Since the 1960s, critical theories aimed at dethroning these economic approaches to development¹⁴. Today, social indicators, as for example the Human Development Indicator (HDI), offer important and politically relevant tools to measure development. However, all too often, political discourse and mainstream economics still privilege GDP growth as the prime indicator for development and promote competitiveness as its main objective.

Second, *socio-economic development as an integral and articulated process needs multiple explanations*. Economists, all too often, focus on economising¹⁵, offering a model of optimisation and one respective explanation. But the economy has to be understood as an ensemble of socio-cultural, political and economic relations, as an integral economy¹⁶. From the 18th century onwards different theories of political economy, culminating in Marx critique, have perceived that there is no single logic of capital, but the concrete confrontation of different strategies of fractions of capital, labour, states and movements which shape development and make history and geography¹⁷. Capitalism is a mode of production and a social system. The structure of class domination, based on the uneven access to the means of production, is secured by a complex interplay of governance and regulation, scrutinized in DEMOLOGOS¹⁸. Political ecology, cultural political economy, historical-geographical materialism and institutionalism are inspiring recent elaborations of this tradition¹⁹. They perceive reality as a process which has no stable essence, but is created and re-created. The

Marxist tradition emphasises production as the base of social life and labour as the key process of human creation. Capitalism is based on the production of commodities. In critical realism the concept of production has a more general meaning, as socioeconomic dynamics are processes, flows and relations which can never be fixed permanently²⁰. Lefebvre introduced the concept of the “production of space”²¹, Sum (2005) reflects on the production of hegemony²². This implies a shift from static concepts as territory and structure to dynamic concepts that express the evolving dimension of social reality: territorialisation, structuration, hegemony- and state-building, institution-building, empowerment. This profound shift in the way reality is represented privileges processes to the detriment of static representations.

Studying socioeconomic development needs to embrace all aspects of development, comprising the social, the economic, the political, the ecological and the cultural. It has to proceed from the simple logic of capitalist accumulation to the complex study of culture, gender, ethnicity and socioecological metabolism. This implies a constant interplay of abstract and concrete analyses, of conceptual and field work which proceed in a spiral movement²³. The historically-geographically determined form of capitalist relations is at the centre of analysis. Analysis has to lay open this historical-geographical concretisation of abstract concepts. Dialectical analysis avoids analytical fragmentation by context-sensitive research on the specific determinations which structure a concrete territory and delimit the range of strategies available for agency. This requires a holistic methodology, aware of the contradictions inherent in socioeconomic development, trusting in the multitude and variety of arguments rather than in the conclusiveness of a single one²⁴. Economic and political events are contextualised and relate to path-dependent dynamics, an endeavour undertaken by an analysis of conjuncture. An awareness of the power of structures as well as the potential of agency is needed to fully exploit the horizon of possibilities²⁵.

Third, development as the conscious shaping of individual and collective life is intimately linked to knowledge. *Relating knowledge to power* has been at the root of European development. Over the last 500 years, Western civilisation has defined itself as the trustee of universal values like freedom, human rights and democracy²⁶. In general, theories of development are often based on the concept of trusteeship understood as “the intent which is expressed, by one source of agency, to develop the capacities of another”²⁷. Trusteeship is either exercised by intellectuals, the state, political parties, international organisations or NGOs. Possession of superior knowledge is often seen as the justification of a hierarchy in development strategies. On the one hand, there are the agents of development such as the state, development agencies, capitalists or intellectuals. On the other hand, there is the mass,

the victims, beneficiaries and target groups which are often those who suffer from modernisation and progress. Within this discursive structure, there are – often politically and economically defined – subjects of development who shape growth and progress and there are – often socio-culturally defined – objects who receive social assistance. All too often, paternalism and authoritarianism are characteristics of developers²⁸.

Democratic socioeconomic development presupposes equal access to knowledge and overcomes the hiatus between actors and beneficiaries of development. Avoiding or using trusteeship requires self-criticism and reflexivity on the part of the intellectuals who are not part of the dominant class, but have to act within the given power structure. A new politics of knowledge and a new relationship between experts and the people as experts of their everyday life are needed. A participatory form of rationality transcends the boundaries of academic reasoning, entering in a broad democratic dialogue with society²⁹. It opposes fragmentation and specialisation and relies on the transdisciplinary dialogue between different specialists and disciplines, within academic research as well as in politics and society. To tackle complex problems and different dimensions of development requires transdisciplinary research based on the joint elaboration of socially-useful research³⁰. Joint political activism which uses academic knowledge as well as experience-based knowledge of activists might improve the effectiveness and rationality of politics.

2. Analysing and shaping development

DEMOLOGOS does not only propose a broad theoretical approach to analyse socioeconomic development, but dwells on utopia and discusses political alternatives. The future is the more or less shaped mode of possibilities of becoming. Development is about emerging spatio-temporalities³¹, including “the speculative leap into the unknown and into the unknowable”³². Shall-Is-Do links the idea of development and socioeconomic dynamics. Strategic planning of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, while similar to Shall-Is-Do, does not take the structural selectivity in socioeconomic dynamics into account which direct available strategies. Normative theories of development have to relate to ongoing processes of development, correlation of forces and power relations. What we want as our future is linked to existing structural constraints and available strategies. Shall-Is-Do deals with normative questions as well as with the politics of the possible which is sensitive to time-space constraints. While normative, analytical and practical elements are intertwined, they have to be separated in analysis for grasping all aspects of this contradictory process. If they are

confused theoretically, chaotic conceptions emerge³³. In this section we outline this research programme aiming at integrating analytical and normative perspectives.

2.1. Analysis of conjuncture (IS)

Theories of political economy emphasise structural development. Institutionalism as well as the regulation approach stress regularities. In every territory specific socioeconomic relations are fixed. Spatio-temporal fixes are contextualised arrangements which structure the terrain, on which social struggles take place, empower or weaken actors and facilitate or complicate power strategies. The regulation approach studies accumulation and regulation dynamics separately to grasp development in its multiple dimensions. The stability of accumulation regimes and modes of regulation is always under threat. Actors' capacity to stabilise spatio-temporal fixes expresses the strength and depth of hegemony³⁴. In DEMOLOGOS we propose the ASID- and CHID-model to study the dynamics of systemic reproduction. The stability of historically shaped spatio-temporal fixes decides whether a situation opens possibilities of more radical and enduring changes.³⁵ While periods of stabilised accumulation facilitate coherent modes of regulation, crises open perspectives for deviance and change³⁶. If consensual-oriented forms of domination begin to sway, force is becoming a more attractive means of conflict resolution.

While structural analyses emphasize economic determinations, studying a conjuncture focuses on the political dimension of development³⁷ as a “concrete analysis of the concrete situation”³⁸. A conjuncture is an emblematic moment when the future is open and there is “uncertainty in the movement of structural time”³⁹. These events force decisive political decisions which “later become instantiated in discourses and institutions”⁴⁰. In DEMOLOGOS, we relate discourse analysis to political economy, as the power of capital is relational, embedded in all social relations and regularized via institutions. Discourse is an arrangement of knowledge and power, shaped by power relations and structuring power games and fostering consensus. It is crucial for constructing identities, imaginaries and hegemony⁴¹. To change the dominant discursive field is a key target for every political movement. Therefore, social and political movements need a common understanding of the current conjuncture and common objectives for a coherent praxis.

In an analysis of conjuncture, a subject-and resource based concept of power in the tradition of Hobbes has to accompany a relational one which has become the dominant approach in critical social research. The stage of political events, apparently voluntaristic, have to be embedded in the *longue durée* of system reproduction of state, capital, gender and race

relations⁴². Emancipatory politics requires a power-sensitive analysis to empower actors to consciously transform society: Trade unions and left wing parties as the representatives of the working class have been the traditional subjects of left politics. These traditional actors and other social movements remain important, as they still dispose of crucial resources and occupy key nodal points in the power field of the state. Acting strategically in a given conjuncture requires knowledge not only of discursive, but also of organisational possibilities and limitations. Even progressive theories stress discourse, institutions, regulations and structures to the detriment of organisation, conflict and struggle. Gramsci's famous war metaphor - a "war of position" - presupposes antagonistic social actors and political projects⁴³. Their respective power depends on the terrain where conflict takes place. „Topography in this instance will always be the result of previous and current contest. In organizational life, such a field structure has to be reproduced by strategic agencies or it will be open to transformation“⁴⁴.

The integral state is a decisive organisational field for transformative agency which offers structural privileges to some but not all kinds of political strategy⁴⁵. Political parties are of key importance, as they aggregate social interests and mediate between state and society. „From this perspective the party system involves far more than electoral strategies and the relation among voters, parties and leaders. For political parties actively link different spheres of society and different social forces and in securing the social bases of states, help to constitute specific state forms. In turn a crisis in the party system is often associated with a crisis in the state - especially if it affects the natural governing party“⁴⁶. Lenin emphasised the crucial importance of political organisation of the oppressed to counter the power of state and capital. For Gramsci, the party was the collective prince, a collective will, to organise social change. But the traditional organisation of interests in political mass parties has changed over the last decades. „Most significant here are the loosening of the ties of representation between the parties of power and the power bloc and of those between the parties and the popular masses“⁴⁷. While the political party as a progressive organisational form has been discredited, hope has been directed towards civil society. However, alternative strategies have often not been sufficiently aware of the Gramscian analytical definition of civil society as part of the enlarged state⁴⁸. NGOs are only a minor part of civil society, while religious institutions and the media form that part of civil society which is powerfully stabilising existing structures of domination. Concentration and centralisation of the media are a crucial difficulty for rational public debate and progressive alternatives. New forms of governance that integrate civil society in development policies are always janus-faced. Their anti-statist bias and their plea

for autonomy have served well as a Trojan horse to dismantle the welfare state and the capacity to shape development⁴⁹.

2.2. Concrete Utopia (SHALL)

The idea of development might appear as mere invention, but in general relate to its historical context and potentialities of a concrete situation. The slogan of “Another world is possible” is a contextualised answer to the Thatcherite “TINA - There is no alternative”, the profoundly anti-utopian leitmotif of neoliberalism. “Should be” concepts of development, from self-reliance to sustainability, contain a utopian and oppositional element, but lack systematic reference to socioeconomic dynamics. It seems as if resistance against dominant strands of thinking is part of the power game in development studies, constitutive for its functioning⁵⁰, as “contestation is always internalized within the discursive moment”⁵¹. But they remain limited to the world of ideas. These alternatives in thinking will never escape its discursive cooptation. Only praxis, the conscious, theory-based involvement in social struggles, the production of alternative hegemonies and new types of organisation can overcome misery and oppression.

What shall be done here and now is an analytical, an ethical and a political question. While utopias as places of paradise are useless, reflections on a good state of development are necessary for the elaboration of political strategies. Theories of development have to be reflexive, never fixing the process or coming to an – illusory - final understanding of good development. Human actors can consciously intervene in shaping the future as a new moment of development. Although, development is about a good life, it is only through working that human beings sustain their lives. Capitalism has liberated productive forces in an unprecedented way and made capital, not human beings the main agent of development. But “capital cannot find a purpose for development. However much capital self-expands and acquires empirical complexity, the unifying principle remains simple because the mind of labour cannot find its universal expression of freedom in the production process”⁵². Capitalist development has increased life expectancy, but not reduced misery. It has advanced productive forces, but alienated labour under authoritarian conditions has remained widespread. Therefore, reducing the necessary working hours is a prerequisite of freedom⁵³, and would allow new arrangements to link social, political and economic work and self-realisation⁵⁴. How people work, for whom they produce and how ones labour relates to nature are key topics of development. Changing the purpose of work can only be realised through the activity of production itself. Work in this sense is a creative, innovative and productive

activity which is part of the development of capitalist productive forces. Capital cannot exist without labour. The potential for free development or “the free play” of “physical and mental powers” exists in work as a general attribute of the labour process⁵⁵. Self-development is not antagonistic to or outside of the productive sphere, as consciousness and knowledge are crucial productive forces. Human beings are not working bees, but architects⁵⁶ endowed with the will to create and to shape development⁵⁷.

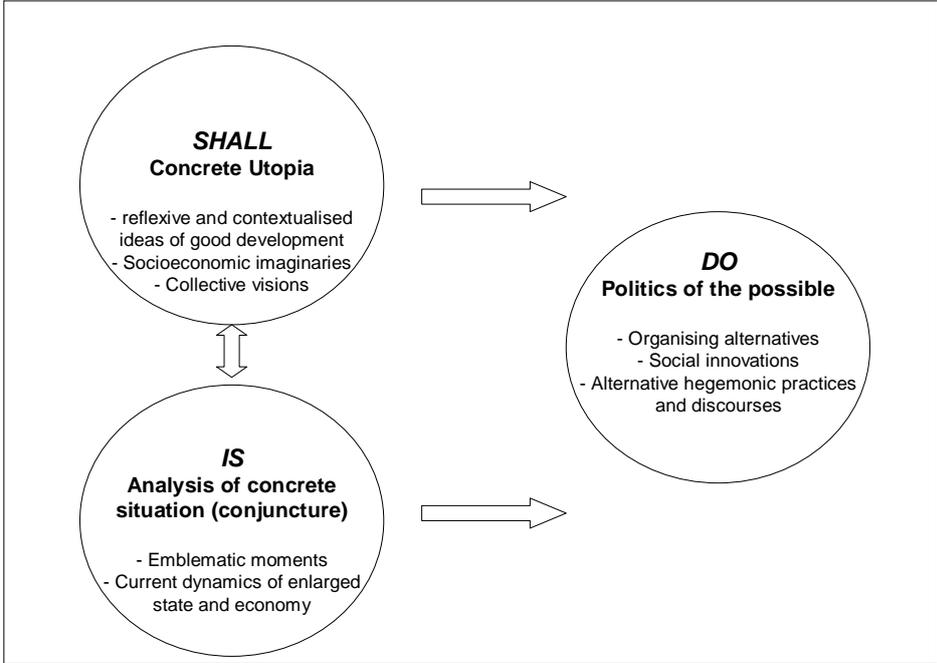
2.3. Emancipatory politics (DO)

Conscious action is reflexive as well as practical. A practical form of rationality (*phronesis*) involves a peculiar interlacing of being and knowledge⁵⁸. Development as self-development deals with the subject-object-divide and refines the Foucauldian “art not to be governed that much”⁵⁹. In development theories this is associated with grassroots development and bottom-up approaches. It is the crucial problem of self-help and self-emancipation: How can the powerless empower themselves without help? How can the oppressed become liberators without external agents empowering them⁶⁰? Goethe’s Dr. Faustus has become a prototype of a developer and the collateral problematic⁶¹. Developers are educators and occupy a privileged position due to its power and its merits. But who educates the educators⁶²? Even a liberation pedagogue with deep respect for the people like Paulo Freire acknowledges the importance of leaders who abandon the dominant class and opt for the oppressed⁶³ or emerge organically out of the subaltern classes⁶⁴. There is a tension between the respect of autonomy and the intent to develop which can only be resolved by emancipatory practice. Experts are necessary to organize society, intellectuals organise political movements. But they have the tendency to deviate good development towards maintaining the hiatus of the educated and the not that educated. But by dissociating themselves from the mass, the elites foster their proper self-isolation.

Transformative agency shapes the material world which shapes oneself. Analysing the socioeconomic dynamics of the revolution of 1848, Marx exemplifies that *Menschen* (men and women), developed and not that developed make history and shape development⁶⁵. To change, not only to interpret the world, to educate the educators and to prove truth in praxis are some of the insights exposed in the “Theses on Feuerbach”. Merely representing the world critically, as proposed by apparently radicals who remain delinked from concrete revolutionary struggles is insufficient⁶⁶. Over the last decades, the will to develop others has become discredited in academia as Euro-centric and paternalistic. Hope is put into spontaneous organisations of civil society, applying the liberal concept of the invisible hand

to politics⁶⁷. In development studies, non- and post-development have been proposed as the alternative⁶⁸. But non-development is only another form of socioeconomic dynamic – the conservation of the old, camouflaged as “a return to the past”⁶⁹. Change, “creative destruction” is the only constant element of capitalist development. To understand the current situation and to identify a potential future is the starting point of emancipation. “What Marx called “the real movement” that will abolish the “existing state of things” is always there for the making and for the taking. That is what gaining the courage of our minds is all about”⁷⁰. The intention to develop is crucial for achieving transformations as deliberate intervention. This needs courage and being prepared to use opportunities opened by concrete situations⁷¹.

Figure 1: Development as a dialectical process in three steps



3. Current challenges for the European left

In this section we exemplify the model of Shall-Is-Do presented in section 2, analysing current challenges for the European left. Objectively, increasing inequality and insecurity due to finance-driven accumulation and carbon-based industrialisation are fertile grounds for a political movement that tries to overcome the resultant cleavages. Subjectively, however, the European left is in a pitiable condition, best symbolised by the dropping out of parliament of the prestigious Italian communist party, inheritress of Antonio Gramsci. We relate this to the broad diffusion of an elitist ideology within the left and the lack of an inspiring and mobilising idea of development.

3.1. *Finance-based accumulation, inequality and a post-political elite*

The current conjuncture is characterised by an ongoing crisis of capitalism which followed the spatio-temporal fix of Fordism and Keynesianism. Together with the disaster of World War II the economic crisis of the 1930s formed the basis for the European anti-fascist consensus and the inclusive hegemony of a social form of democracy⁷². After 1945, even the conservatives were aware of the limits of fascism and of exclusionary liberal capitalism. Social struggle, war and the threat of the Soviet Union facilitated a consensus based on the dignity of labour and the citizenship of workers, an inclusive hegemony of freedom *and* equality within individual nation states. Keynesianism and Fordism as virtuous accommodations of class struggle accompanied the foundation and expansion of the European Union, the peaceful construction of a political union on an especially belligerent continent. At the end of the 1960s, however, a sharp decline in the rate of profit in manufacturing, severe social unrest and the Vietnam War constituted a “*political threat to economic elites*”⁷³. The objective of the ruling classes in the West was to restore class power by weakening the socio-spatial fix of national welfare, based on political and social citizenship. This implied a shift within the conservative parties from an inclusive one-nation project to a divisive two- nations’ project, first introduced by Thatcher⁷⁴. The changes in accumulation and political strategies were profound. Outward-oriented finance-dominated accumulation and internationalisation of production and financial markets substituted industrial capital and inward-oriented strategies⁷⁵. The internationalisation of production was intensified and finance capital was freed from national regulations. The accommodation between labour and capital in the

national power container was substituted by ongoing liberalisation and a more direct control of capital.

In the G7, growth rates of GDP fell from 5,1% p.a. in the sixties to 2,1% p.a. in the nineties, unemployment rose in the same period from 3,1% to 6,6% while the increase in real income shrank from 5,6% to 0,6% in EURO 11 in this period⁷⁶. “The top 1 per cent of income earners in Britain have doubled their share of the national income from 6,5 per cent to 13 per cent since 1982”⁷⁷. The economic policies pursued in Europe have been used to impose a “greater degree of inequality”⁷⁸, increasing wealth and insecurity, while maintaining poverty. High interest rates, low public investment and low rates of growth serve to put the system of social protection under severe pressure. In social policy the transition from welfare to workfare⁷⁹ links rights to obligations only for the poor, while the rich can buy themselves out of social obligations. Economic policies protect wealth instead of income, promoting high interest rates, subsidising private pension schemes and limit taxation on capital and property. In 2008, this is resulting in the most severe financial crisis since the 1930s⁸⁰.

The socioeconomic polarisation of a finance-led accumulation model has important political repercussions. The world economic crisis in the 1930s strengthened fascism. Today, socioeconomic crisis is again strengthening authoritarian solutions, but this time with the approval of important segments of the left. While neoliberalism was a reactionary ideology to restore class domination, the 1990s saw a renaissance of liberal thought on the political left. Ethical consumerism, free choice of sexual preferences, tolerance towards cultural diversity and an embrace of cosmopolitanism indicate how deeply rooted liberalism is within the Western left. The EU is based on the principles of economic liberalism which are shared by all political forces of the establishment. Oppositional movements – be it trade unions or political parties – are weak and large parts of NGOs have to cooperate with the establishment, be it state or EU agencies or private sponsors, that can influence civil society by their funding decisions. There is a broad consensus in the main political parties (conservatives, social democrats, greens, and liberals) and the media, that a liberal order is the supreme form of a “constitution of liberty”⁸¹, a “self-regulating system of markets”⁸². Paraphrasing Nixon, we – this time restricted to the affluent and educated - are all liberals today. The Keynesian spatio-temporal fix was substituted by a liberal one. But even liberals have become aware of the fact that a dismantled nation state cannot perform policies of good governance⁸³. The neoliberal state enhances capabilities and the capacity to participate and succeed in the market economy by subsidising locational advantages like infrastructure provision, regional marketing and

cooperation. Competitiveness as the basic political direction has been dominating European policies since the early 1990s and has left its marks in the Lisbon Treaty.

As Nixon ascertained the dominance of Keynesianism in the 1970s, when it was already in decline, the same might be true of liberalism. US-policies only pay lip service to liberal values and free trade. Fiscal, monetary and trade policies in the USA are pragmatic, more Keynesian and protectionist than monetarist. This cannot be said about EU-policies which are more dogmatically liberal, except for the protectionist agricultural policies. There is a widespread liberal trust in overcoming conflict by rational deliberation which inspires European intellectuals like Habermas, Giddens and Beck. Their post-political vision substitutes political confrontation of interests by rational deliberation of policies and a neglect for antagonism and oppression⁸⁴. A cosmopolitan left sticks to the upper and middle classes, while the popular classes are increasingly represented by right-wing populism which does not adhere to the post-political liberal establishment. It obtains popular support because it insists on inclusive strategies for natives, while discriminating against non-passport-owners. They use democratic tools at the national level for organizing their interests while undermining popular democracy at the same time⁸⁵. The liberal mainstream which prohibits open public debate about socioeconomic alternatives – e.g. concerning the political and economic organisation of Europe beyond neoliberal capitalism – and moralises against politically incorrect attitudes creates a fertile ground for anti-systemic sentiments and anti-democratic attitudes. Liberal hegemony is contested by a generalized discredit of politics by common people. The left has no alternative political project to offer. While the cultural dimension of Gramscian politics is appreciated, there is widespread scepticism about the possibility of jointly constructing hegemony. Social movements often abdicate state power. Political parties, which represented social interests in the past, like the social democrats or the greens, have been delinking themselves from their former clientele. Articulations hardly exist as there is no common idea of good development.

But the politics of inequality is not restricted to internal policies. Geopolitics and geo-economics are changing profoundly as well⁸⁶. Until recently, European integration was an inward oriented continental project. Over the last years, however, European foreign policy has become increasingly active and interventionist. Europe has successfully given emphasis to export-oriented strategies, increasing Europe's share in world trade⁸⁷. Foreign trade policies oscillate between the promotion of liberal principles and neo-mercantilist strategies in favour of European corporations⁸⁸. The emphasis on competitiveness is accompanied by militarisation and uneven access to global resources⁸⁹. In the 1990s, the USA and the EU were

able to foster international coordination by fostering good governance and creating institutions of global governance, based on human rights, democracy and market economies. The newly formed structures and mechanisms of coordination supported a mode of development designed to fit capitalist accumulation strategies and building a consensual world order of peace, markets and democracy. The emerging anti-globalisation movement was able to question this consensus and is calling for regulation of markets and corporations. Russia, Latin America and China have opted for political regimes which diverge from the liberal consensus and challenge the geo-economic world order. The new geopolitics is becoming multi-polar. At the same time war against terror has put violence, police surveillance and imperialism back on the agenda. The Euro-American way of life, based on uneven resource depletion, is spreading while resources are becoming scarce, increasing geoeconomic competition⁹⁰.

3.2. *Equal freedom for all*

The European left has an idealistic and harmonious understanding of good development, compatible with Amartya Sen's idea of development as freedom⁹¹. But aspiring freedom in societies structured by cleavages of class, race and gender is difficult. Enlarging capabilities and freedoms of the disadvantaged quickly touches structural limits which have become naturalised by neoliberal discourse. TINA has become hegemonic. The apotheosis of the present and widespread collective amnesia complicate creative strategies to shape development, as "invention is helpless without tradition"⁹². But the past can be mobilised to construct the future, as Chavez demonstrates in Venezuela. Although all utopia need a horizon beyond capitalism, patriarchy and racism, certain conjunctures demand a defensive strategy of safeguarding certain historical values and dreams within capitalism⁹³. We propose the republican utopia of the French Revolution as the concrete utopia of the 21st century in Europe. Defending its values is becoming, once again, a revolutionary undertaking. The republican ideal of social citizenship does not overcome capitalist class structure, but gives dignity and rights to those without access to means of production and the control of knowledge. European history shows how knowledge and power have been related, how dominant interests have used the educated for their class and imperial interests. European trusteeship of civilisation and economic progress went hand in hand with genocide, colonialism and imperialism: Although Europe and the US are market leaders in clean technologies the West remains the main responsible for global pollution and climatic change. Hypocrisy was a constant companion, as European values are neither universally valid nor

intrinsically superior to non-European. The dialectics of European enlightenment is linked to the dialectics of capitalist development⁹⁴. The French revolution was and remains a scandal: It postulated and implemented equal rights for earls, carpenters and even slaves. Until today, this republican credo of equal citizenship has not been digested by European society. The promise of citizenship has shown to be profoundly hypocritical for second-generation immigrants, school systems in a lot of countries remain segregated by class and the labour market is still unevenly gendered. Freedom, equality and solidarity remain a promise to be urgently realised in a society which is increasingly suffering from the disintegrative effects of enlarged freedoms of a few and generalised inequality and insecurity.

Possessive individualism emphasises “personalized private property vested in the self”⁹⁵, as it has a monadic understanding of the self. The reactionary utopia of neoliberalism which promotes freedom against others can only be realized by a Hobbesian form of authoritarianism which manages socioeconomic and ecological constraints in favour of the few: dominant nations and classes. A progressive utopia has to call for freedom for all, not only the wealthy⁹⁶. Assuming that “amour de soi is the basis of altruism, as only the empowered can empower”, “a relational conception of social life avoids the pitfalls of individualism and collectivism alike”⁹⁷ Ego-centric individualism faces its proper limits in a complex division of labour which cannot avoid climate change, the food and energy crises, thereby showing the necessary sociability of human beings. Self-development and world development are linked, as socio-ecological problems call for collective solutions which respect a social form of individuality. In 1844, the Communist Manifesto aspired for a synthesis of the free development of everybody and all⁹⁸. In 1967, the catholic encyclical “Populorum progressio” defined true development as the integral development of all, specified from a feminist point of view as indicators of life quality⁹⁹. This shows a convergence in philosophy about the content of a good society¹⁰⁰. What astonishes is the lack of zeal to realize it.

3.3. *Organising democratic and egalitarian alternatives*

The European left, disarticulated by the end of state socialism, the crisis of social democracy and elitist attitudes, faces multiple challenges. Neoliberal reforms have depoliticised universities and the commercial media have become the interpreters of the current conjuncture. A first task is, therefore, to reconstitute public spaces and alternative media for common deliberation about Europe’s future¹⁰¹. Political education and efforts to jointly read the world differently from the pre-given dominant discourses is crucial for the effectiveness of

Shall-Is-Do as a model for emancipatory agency. Our analysis of conjuncture stresses the fact that finance-based accumulation and liberal policies have increased the cleavages between winners and losers. Left politics is always about overcoming class-, race- or gender-divided societies to create a society and polis of the equal. To represent the losers of capitalist modernisation is a difficult task, as the European left is profoundly permeated by anti-popular sentiments. This prejudice-based attitude stresses the cleavage between the educated and civilised and the uneducated and barbarian. It resembles the 19th century attitudes of culturally progressive liberals like J.S. Mill who had no problem in assuring that “despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians”¹⁰². To put it in a nutshell, a pluralist left has to abandon its elitist isolation and focus on the fight against an updated version of authoritarianism. Unfortunately, it has accepted a discursive field – the cultural domain – which the extreme right has already appropriated by linking culture to race¹⁰³. In fact, however, the struggle is not about ideas, but about material life, ways of living and working. Good housing, health care and education, together with good work and decent wages are the aspirations of natives and migrants. Up to the 20th century, the left has aimed at linking intellectuals and the people, understanding ordinary people and their aspirations. Today, these efforts are undertaken more by the extreme right and religious fundamentalists¹⁰⁴.

While the extreme-right defends workers on the ground of their national citizenship, the left has to elaborate an inhabitant-based concept of citizenship which ends discrimination between fractions of wage earners. Etienne Balibar’s concept of *égalité* connects the absence of discrimination to that of repression. Equality is the very premise upon which democratic politics is constituted¹⁰⁵. If we take this seriously, the acceptance of the equality of all inhabitants of a territory becomes the starting point for emancipatory and democratic politics¹⁰⁶. The adversary of the working class in any country is not the immigrant worker, but rent-based privileges of capitalists, native or foreign alike. The left has to vigorously engage itself in experimenting. Openness, curiosity and collective creativity have to guide the search for good development. Social innovations offer no simple recipes and ready-available best practice models to be copied. Experiments are required that connect social innovations with socio-spatial organisations different from the all-embracing logic of profit and commodification¹⁰⁷.

Public spaces for reading the world, abandoning its elitist inclinations and fostering a culture of experimentation are the pre-requisites for an alternative hegemonic project which has to cover other ways of producing. This includes a state project based on an open and public

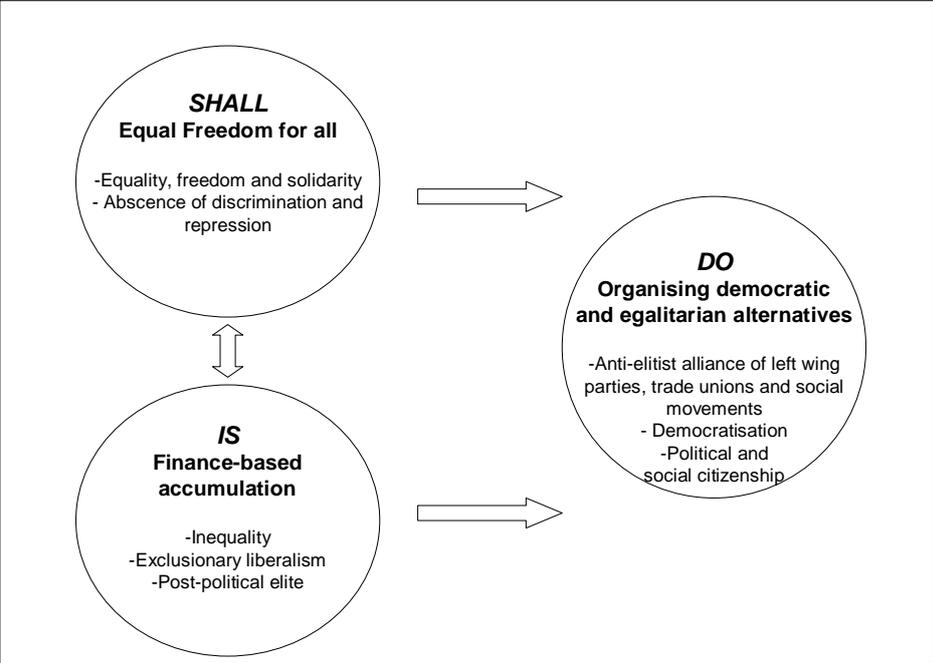
state. Europe, the motherland of democracy, is currently suffering a severe erosion of democracy. There is the danger that an elite destroys democracy in the name of freedom¹⁰⁸. Existing national forms of representative democracy have been weakened, while European governance offers no republican form of democracy to constitute popular sovereignty. This always favours reactionary forces. The merit of democratic politics is not the search for consensus, but consists in transforming antagonism in agonism, enemies in adversaries¹⁰⁹. Democracy is not appreciated because it automatically leads to better decisions, but because it permits antagonism to be expressed in public terrain. Parliamentary democracy, a constitutional state and non-violence are basic civilising institutions which have to be defended. Beyond these defensive measures, a broad, but coherent alliance needs to re-invent European democracy by coupling political with social democracy, direct with representative democracy. Founding new progressive parties, like *Die Linke* in Germany, fighting for internal democracy in existing political parties and new mechanisms of accountability for elected representatives vis a vis their constituency are important. Social movements have to deliberately overcome their inclination to single-issue-politics and foster political alliances with other movements, parties and trade unions.

This emerging democratic politics of scale has to be based on common European values expressed in political regulations of socio-ecological and politico-economic development. Subsidiarity should be the principle in implanting context-sensitive diverse concretisations of general rules. The most inspiring experiences in this respect no longer come from Europe. A new democratic form of governance, based on the idea of a public state, was successfully implemented in Porto Alegre via popular participation in the local and regional budget. It constructed a public and open form of state, integrated social movements in public affairs, redistributed public money and regained a democratic space for open discussion and the confrontation of opposing political projects¹¹⁰.

Beyond mere political democracy, it has to cover economic democracy and give special emphasis to a democratic organisation of production. All forms of work have to be valorised against rents obtained from capital or real estate. Trade unions and emerging organisations of precariously self-employed are key actors for this hegemonic project. Good work should be socially and ecologically useful. Alternative socioeconomic development must elaborate forms of economic democracy and innovative forms of democratic socialism which take achievements and failures of reformist strategies into account to clarify the space of manoeuvre available within and beyond capitalism¹¹¹. New forms of accountability and ownership have to be tested and the emerging solidarity economy has to be promoted¹¹².

Finally, democracy and welfare neither end at the borders of nations nor of a fortress Europe. The reactionary project of inequality, which might take even more authoritarian traces if the crisis deepens, is directed against the European wage earners and precariously self-employed in general, but especially against migrants. A pluralist left which organises democratic and egalitarian alternatives must think and act on a world-wide scale. It must criticise aberrations at home, like human rights violations against migrants, as well as abroad, where human rights issues camouflage economic or geo-strategic interest. European actors can only assume an ethical position in world politics, if homework concerning human rights is done. This means a critical stance towards European hypocrisy of double-standards. Only then, the European left, internally pluralist, can be a prime mover in fostering a multi-polar and pluralist world.

Figure 2: Current Challenges for the European left



4. Notes

¹ We want to thank the team of DEMOLOGOS, especially Pasquale Tridico and Bob Jessop, for their comments on former versions of this paper. Furthermore, we thank Joachim Becker and Bernhard Leubolt for their feedback.

² A first didactic version of this model was elaborated by Novy and Jäger in <http://www.lateinamerika-studien.at/content/wirtschaft/ipo/ipo-24.html>

³ Clodovis Boff, *Theologie und Praxis. Die erkenntnistheoretischen Grundlagen der Theologie der Befreiung*. (Chr. Kaiser, 1984) p.23; and Herbert José de Souza, *Como se faz Análise de Conjuntura* Vozes, 23 edition, 2002). Recently, the idea of linking a concrete utopia of development to planning and popular participation has been proposed for Brazilian development policies in João Sicsú, *Planejamento estratégico do desenvolvimento e as políticas macroeconômicas* (IPEA, 2008).

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