'Lost in Transformation'

The Crisis of Democracy and Civil Society

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Introduction: The Symptoms of Crisis and Emerging Ambiguities

In turbulent times often repeated clichés and conventional wisdoms easily become outdated and quickly forgotten. This happened to the 'end of history' thesis from the early 1990s. Today we not only know that history is not over, but that we are rather seriously challenged by the rapid and constant changes produced by the new course of history in the post-1989 world.

According to another conventional wisdom, closely related to the end of history thesis, 'old' and 'consolidated' democracies serve as models for newly democratising societies and democratic social movements that aim to find alternatives to authoritarian regimes or dictatorships. Taking the consolidated character of West European and North American democracies for granted, and their deep roots as guarantees, only a few believed that potential popular movements with freedom and choice aspirations would not automatically follow the western model and would carve out new frames, institutional structures, and methods according to their cultural context.

We know very well today that neither history nor politics is over. We are learning almost daily that these aspirations reflect non-conventional and not necessarily western values that have a rather universal appeal. If anything is over, or at least seriously discredited, it is the neo-liberal credo with all of its various social, economic, political and cultural implications. The almighty dogma of market fundamentalism supported by media moguls and their global empires are seriously questioned and rejected by expanding and interconnected popular movements and an emerging global civil society. Bushism and Putinism, as well as Berlusconism and Murdochism, have been eroding and provoking vigorous rejection, both locally and globally, by a well informed, and expanding networked public. But the sudden

collapse of firm beliefs and the erosion of powerful ideologies are only the by-products of a deepening and increasingly manifest and manifold global crisis (Kaldor, Held, Quah 2009). As Immanuel Wallerstein has convincingly and consequently argued for a long time, this global crisis is a manifestation and part of a fundamental and irreversible transformation of the modern capitalist world system (Miszlivetz 2010).

The crisis of democracy as a set of legal regulations, procedures and institutions is one of the major and most outstanding and surprizing symptoms of this robust transformation process. The entire set of institutional structures might disappear or get lost in the labyrinths of the global transformation, whereas new forms, structures, procedures, players and institutions might emerge.

From Spain and Portugal via Greece to Turkey, from the new East Central European EU memberstates to Russia, from Scandinavia via Ireland and Great Britain to the United States, we can learn and read daily about corruption scandals, decreasing trust in political parties and public institutions, on the one hand, and about the reactions of an increasingly disappointed, exposed, helpless, disoriented and angry public, on the other. There is a growing conscious understanding of the crisis of democracy in general, or about 'the crisis of capitalist democracy' (Posner 2003), or about 'the crisis of parliamentary democracy' (Gilbert 2009). Even global market players and international guardian institutions such as the IMF have begun to worry about the vulnerability of democracy. However, most of the warning signs of crisis describe symptoms and do not provide proper diagnoses and, therefore, suggested 'therapies' remain superficial, short term-oriented and ineffective.

The roots of the present crisis of democracy can be found in the increasingly unequal and imbalanced relationship between representatives of markets, governments and societies -- in Marc Nerfin's words the Merchant, the Prince and the Citizen. (A fourth powerful player, the Media, should be added to the list as the 'Jester'). As Robert Reich had observed, present day 'supercapitalism' has 'invaded democracy: capitalism has become more responsive to what we want as individual purchasers of goods, but democracy has grown less responsive to what we want as citizens' (Reich 2008). Behind the spectacular crisis of everyday reality

there are some less obvious but profound contradictions and ambiguities such as the tension between global and local, non-territorial vs territorial, exclusion vs inclusion, accountability on the local level vs unaccountability on the supranational level, democracy as an idea vs democracy as a set of legal procedures and formal institutions.

The Idea of Democracy and the Praxis of Democracy

The idea of democracy has grasped the imagination of an overwhelming majority of governments and societies throughout the last century. This process accelerated considerably from the 1960s. As Alain Touraine noted, up until today, most of the countries have adopted democracy as a common good. This fact has serious consequences for both the present crisis and the future of democracies worldwide (Touraine 2009). Expectations -- and consequently disappointments -- about the democratic performance of political parties, governments and institutions is spreading and growing since the so- called 'third wave' of democratization gained momentum in the 1970s and peaked in 1989.

[Box 1 Four Waves of Democratisation]

Thanks to many coinciding factors, like the globalisation of human rights, the changing geopolitical constellation and the emergence of civil society movements and networks, the 'third wave' resulted in the collapse of Soviet-type dictatorships and the Soviet Union led 'socialist camp' as a major challenger to the 'free Western world'. Ever since then, democratic performance has been measured in comparison to its own standards instead of from the point of view of Communist dictatorships. The disappearance of bipolar logic, the collapse of the ideological, political and the military 'threat of Communism' left democracies alone with their internal problems of self-legitimation and with the increasing expectations of a widening public. Their internal quality and capability to deliver became the only measure and etalon and public attention has shifted its focus increasingly to the *quality of democracy*. Behind growing expectations, two major driving forces can be identified:

- the increase of freedom and choice aspirations and

- the aspirations for the improvement of life chances or simply for 'good life'.

These two aspects of human dignity are closely intertwined in reality even if they were separated for a long time by mainstream economic and political science theory. There were and still are powerful economic and political interests manifested in the daily practice of liberal democracy and consumerism to keep this separation intact and alive.

The complex and deepening global crisis is, among other things, the manifestation of unprecedented social and political tensions created by this artifically maintained separation. More importantly, it is the manifestation of an accelerating and irreversible global transformation. The entire modern capitalist world system was built upon this separation and has been functioning and 'developing' accordingly. The tension which arose out of this division produced the dynamics and energy of what we call technical and economic development and innovation, which has positive and negative consequences. This dynamic was exhausted when the capitalist world system reached its present phase of irreversible imbalance, chaos, uncertainty and unpredictability. Although conventional economic and social science theory (still seen by many as 'mainstream') suggests that this is only one of the more serious and destructive crises to be followed by 'business as usual', there are good reasons to believe that the perspectives and possible outcomes are more severe in the medium and long run. The transformation into something unknown started already decades ago.

The outburst of the 2007-08 global financial and economic crisis only made it obvious and undeniable. It became chrystal clear that the crisis has many interlinked and interdependent aspects as revealed in the domino effect caused by Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution and the 'Real Democracy!'-type of protest movements throughout EU memberstates, including 'old', 'matured' and 'consolidated' democracies. The decreasing legitimacy and increasing disappointment of voters in old, or in Schmitter's words 'archeo', democracies (Schmitter 2011), demonstrates that the present system of political and institutional regulations,

dominated by 19th century visions of successful Western nationstates, is not maintainable

and has begun to erode.

Democracy as praxis, as a set of institutions, regulations and legal guarantees has to face

fundamental challenges and it is already on the way to profound transformation. In other

words, democracy has to be reinvented. But democracy as an idea has a more profound

appeal than the single world economic system and its fragmented political units known as

'democracies': it entails the eternal desire of the individual for freedom and dignity and a

deeper recognition of the necessity of human cooperation and mutual support and

dependence.

From Annus Mirabilis to Annus Horribilis?

As the ongoing global turmoil demonstrates on a daily basis with surprising frequency, it

seems to be more and more self evident that one cannot detach the ever deepening

problems old and new democracies face from the consequences and interdependencies of

the equally deepening and complex global economic and financial crisis. The narrow path

and space for maneuver of chief executives of nationstates is increasingly determined more

by major global market players, transnational financial guardian institutions and media

moguls, than by their own constituencies. Promises of election campaigns are therefore

rapidly forgotten, if ever taken seriously, by increasingly skeptical, apathetic and frustrated

voters. Nobody is surprised anymore if it turns out that politicians lie in order to be voted into

power. But as a consequence, public trust in democratic institutions, especially in the case

of political parties, parliaments and politicians, has dramatically fallen during the past

decade; elections are becoming empty rituals, the difference between center right and center

left is disappearing. Rhetoric, style and amusement -- a combination of circus and scandal

-- take over the scene, with a strong xenophobic agenda on the far right tacitly but

increasingly backed by the conservative middle classes of 'old and consolidated

democracies'. The rapid strengthening and increasing popularity of xenophobic and

nationalistic political forces is emerging not only in newly democratising societies with recent dictatorial and authoritarian pasts, but also within 'archeo-democracies' with strong democratic credentials such as Denmark, Sweden or Norway.

[Box 2 Far Right Parties in Northern Europe]

The Infinite Process of Democratizing Democracy

Philippe Schmitter raised a number of highly relevant questions about the future of what he calls the 'REDs', that is, 'in reality existing democracies'. He first concerns the expression 'RED' itself which requires further attention to definition. There is little to no consensus among political scientists, experts and practitioners about the definition of democracy. As Larry Diamond formulated it in one of his recent books 'defining democracy is a bit like interpreting Talmud (or any religious text): ask a room of ten rabbis (or political scientists) for the meaning, and you are likely to get eleven different answers' (Diamond 2008: 21). Avoiding hopeless academic hurdles of definition games, Schmitter talks straight about reality, that is about 'democracies' recognized as such by themselves and by others (mostly by politicians, political scientists and political experts). The number of such entities has increased dramatically during the past half a century which can be seen as a result of both changing values and growing freedom and choice aspirations globally, as well as the consequence of hazy rules and vague and abstract criteria. Except for China, North Korea and perhaps Cuba, very few countries remain that are without aspirations for being called democracies. Even within these explicitly non-democratic political units of one-party systems there is a growing fear of the spreading of the spirit of democracy and liberty aspirations. In North Korea, for example, the government recently suspended the functioning of universities for the entire academic year and sent students to the countryside to do agricultural work. In China, the Chinese Communist Party tries to control internet usage with all means and banned certain words such as 'Egypt' from search engines.

This opens the way in two directions: both for almost limitless governmental cynicism and arbitrariness of self-interpretation and for ever growing popular, bottom-up, self-organizing and mobilizing civil societies worldwide. The growing gap between aspirations and realities can be interpreted as a 'crisis of democracy'. This leads us to what Schmitter calls the 'great political paradox of our times': exactly at the historic moment of the unexpected blossoming of new democratic aspirations in parts of the world seen as hopeless for democratisation, old established democracies are facing deepening crises and are getting lost in the turmoil of global and national transformation which they obviously cannot predict, interpret or control efficiently in harmony with each other.

Following the path of Robert Dahl, Schmitter rightly emphasises the ever changing forms and content of democracies in terms of size, scale and scope. Some of these 'revolutionary' changes -- like the professionalization of politics or the 'associational revolution' -- are recognised and accepted features of democratic regimes, whereas other changes are not yet completely understood or recognised. One of the great challenges is the increasing role, for example, of international 'guardian institutions' such as the World Bank, the IMF, the EU or the European Central Bank. Especially new democracies with often weak and exposed economies like the post-Soviet, post-Communist countries, can partly be described and in many ways as 'no choice democracies' by their respected constituencies. Local and national politicians, the only ones who can be made accountable for their decisions, refer to the faraway and unaccountable guardian institutions as leaving them no choice in decisionmaking in cases of fundamental importance. This tendency has serious and far reaching consequences:

- first of all, it empties out national sovereignty and delegitimises democracies on the national level;
- it supports the general feeling that 'nobody can be made accountable';
- and consequently further strengthens the tendency of growing mistrust of democratic institutions, political parties and politicians.

The decreasing public trust in politics and democratic institutions is a worldwide tendency which is clearly identifiable in certain neo-REDs, like Hungary. According to a recent opinion poll in Hungary, more than 80% of respondents do not trust politicians and political parties and not even the parliament despite the fact that the present ruling coalition has a vast and unprecedented -- more than 2/3rds -- majority. People have more trust in NGOs and civil society, or the police and the church.

Although the process of crossborder/regional/transnational democratisation processes, as well as the establishment of an effective and democratic multilevel governance, have been held back, the democratisation of democracy might gain new momentum with the awakening in MENA countries. The Arab Spring started by the Jasmine Revolution had an unstoppable domino effect throughout the entire Middle East. Unexpected freedom and choice aspirations surfaced one after the other from Tunisia through Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Syria and Libya. The great transformation of the Arab world is far from over: political change has not yet chrystallised and violence could not be avoided. It is obviously too early a stage to predict the outcome of the eruption of freedom. But it has been proved clear that the idea of democracy has an undeniable and growing global appeal and that the democratisation of democracy or rather reinventing democracy is unavoidable on all possible levels.

The European Paradox

In close connection with the emptying out of democracies and weakening of the nationstate, another important 'revolutionary' change in the scope of democracies is multilevel governance**.** Obvious weaknesses of the nationstate could be well compensated by introducing new levels of aggregate decision making. This was the case, first of all, in post-WWII Europe where the process of integration produced conceptions and policies in order to delegate political responsibilities and decisionmaking on interconnected but separable sub-national, national and transnational levels.

Expectations were high in the early 1990s about introducing and empowering new players on the mezo-level. Regional decision making, however, was taken over by memberstates pursuing overwhelmingly centralized national interests and these efforts have not yet materialized. This has created a second, in my words, 'European paradox' of existing democracies. In the case of the European Union, nationstates became member states of a larger supranational entity, freely delegating decision making and, as a consequence, part of their sovereignty at the supranational level. At the same time, their own democratic legitimacy is being emptied out at home while the new supranational entity is unable to reach full democratic legitimacy.

Voters can only hold their elected politicians accountable at the national level for decisions being brought by the new collective, semi-sovereign (the EU) on the supranational level. This discrepancy in the process of European construction of multilevel governance offers the opportunity for national politicians to blame the EU for unpopular decisions which in turn further alienates citizens from EU institutions and undermines public trust in supranational guardian institutions.

Similarly, there is a tendency among political scientists and analysts of European integration to believe that the EU itself is responsible for the crisis of democracy at the national level. They claim that transnational decision making weakens the functioning of democratic institutions on the nationstate level and, at the same time, does not lead to automatic democratisation at the transnational/European level. There is an undeniable element of truth in this observation. But presumably we need to dig deeper if we want to find the core of the problem and remember where the very roots of creating multinational governance stem from. One has to remember the wise but often neglected warning of Jean Monnet about the undetermined nature of transnational European political power. Jean Monnet emphasised that European democracies have yet to invent and build up a new kind of unprecedented political power. It is rather the capability (or lack of capabilty) of European democracies to construct such a new political power that is at stake.

Obviously, to create multilevel decision making and 'governance' is not an easy job, especially not under circumstances of crisis and the erosion of public trust in political institutions. This is certainly a task which would require more time and more serious and concerted efforts, accompanied by political courage, and maybe even just good luck, for stakeholders to seize the right moment to take action.

Taking the larger picture, outside of the European orbit, there is no doubt that we are again in a new phase of global turmoil. 2011 reminds many of the observers and analysts of 1989. Indeed, there are some similarities: although there were plenty of signs of escalating social and political discontent, these revolutions were seen as unexpected surprises. Superpower and big power interests for keeping the geopolitical status quo were in collision in both cases with bottom-up social movements and self-mobilizing civil society aspirations.

There are of course many important differences and special characteristics of the Arab Spring of 2011 compared to 1989: the pull effect of the West is far less obvious or maybe even absent in 2011 compared to 1989, where European peace movements and crossborder networking for East-West dialogue played a significant role in mobilising democratic dissent within the former Soviet bloc. Although there was a strong media presence in 1989 in East Central Europe, ICT and social media plays a new and unprecedented role in organising demonstrations and sharing information with the largest possible public today. Using the new technologies in creative ways contributes to a large extent to the emergence of a global public and its potential to become an agregate globalising political pressure group. This might have unforeseeable and far reaching consequences for the future of democracy on the global and regional as well as on the local levels.

The Legacy of 1989

1989 signaled a paradigm shift in the history of democracies: civil society became an indispensible agent and dynamising engine of democratisation. It heralded the twighlight of the exclusive Grand Narrative. It integrated some characteristics of the alternative 'new'

social movements such as self-mobilization, civil autonomy, self-limitation, non-violence, the pluralist understanding of sovereignty and the ethics of disagreement. Altogether the 'Velvet Revolutions' differed in many ways from previous revolutions. The emergence and self-assertion of civil society has far richer consequences than mainstream social and political sciences have ever recognised.

The normative program of self-restriction as the internal brake mechanism preventing violence and Jacobean revolutionary spirit worked successfully throughout the 1980s. Fundamentalist projects were successfully avoided, but facing up to the past has not yet happened. The particular merit of 1989 is that societies engaged in Velvet Revolutions managed to avoid giving 'one great and final answer' to the flaws, sins and failures of the past. Instead, a dynamic, vibrant and oscillating civil society became engaged in constant self-reflection and self-correction in an effort to prevent the democratisation process from floundering. On the theoretical level, this is substantiated, among others, by the concept of autonomy proposed by Castoriadis. This notion is based on the freedom of different forms of thinking and political action, keeping alive the possibility of questioning and of breaking out from existing institutional frames.

The lesson we can learn in 2011 from 1989 is that no single discourse can claim any more to convey an exclusive truth -- today it is hard to question the fact that democracy has many different voices. We can safely declare that one of the most important goals of 1989 has been met. Instead of a uniform frame of discourse regarding liberal democracy it has become possible to guarantee heterogeneity. Structural conditions of political plurality are in place.

The other great achievement of 1989 was that it did not follow the classical logic of revolutions in so far as it did not invent a mythological 'people' with the right to create the constitutional order of the new political regime. In other words, the homogenous 'will of the people' and the fiction of the 'sovereignty of the people' did not gain dominance. However, as democracy in its present forms erodes further, this danger may surface once more. Since democracies are fragile constructions, there is no guarantee against setbacks and relapses.

The Velvet Revolutions left more questions open than they answered by expressing a 'negative' consensus -- what they were rejecting was clear, but what they wished to create was not. This is often interpreted as a lack of revolutionary ideas (Offe 1996, Kaldor 2003). The lack of a guiding revolutionary idea does not prevent us from claiming that this was a time when a great number of novel ideas, programs and thoughts surfaced. Ulrich Preuss offers an excellent summary of the main achievements of 1989 (Preuss 2001). Accordingly, these self-restricting revolutions connoted a considerable shift from the monistic model of political sovereignty toward a pluralist model which prioritises civil society and guarantees a wide arena for its development.

Carrying the idea further, Paul Blokker draws our attention to the difference and potential tension between legality and legitimacy (Blokker 2009). He is right to emphasise that democracy cannot be reduced to a simple justification of proceduralism or legalism. However, if we wish to speak in terms of legitimacy instead of mere legality, we need constant endorsement of the society and the permanent re-evaluation of civil society. Consequently, the rule of law cannot be a sufficient condition of democracy. Legal systems -- formal democracies -- need permanent correction by 'dissenting' citizens so that the rule of law does not become an 'herbal cure-all remedy'.

The New Language of Civil Society

During the 1980s, the activities and new way of thinking of democratic opposition groups and independent actors created a new language which is now, after two decades, able to convey critical thinking even in opposition to those who were the first to use this language. The new discourse of civil society simultaneously represents the idea of legality and the insistence to the rule of law and the position of radical self-restriction and disagreement. The new language of civil society is the self-expression of a new paradigm. This aspect, the 'democratization of democracy', is perhaps the most innovative and original product of 1989. Civil society as the guarantee of the self-correcting capability of democracy is a new

definition which goes beyond the criticism of totalitarian regimes and the attempt to overcome this which was characteristic in the 1980s and can become organic part of a new theory of democracy. It provides a theoretical grip as well. It may offer a way out for people who have become disillusioned with democracy. It may help to discover new ways to rejuvenate democracies and overcome the present crisis which, at least in the case of the 'new democracies', has a lot to do with disillusionment with democracy. Thus interpreted, the concept of civil society will open up the 'democratic space' and leave it open. It will contribute to the plurality of democratic practice and at the same time enhance the democratic legitimacy of democracies.

In this context, civil society is a public arena where different actors, ideas, values, aspirations and interests influence, contradict, alter and enrich each other. It is a sort of creative chaos, a hotbed of reproducing and redefining the temporary and transitory order of the public sphere or rather the 'publics'. Although different actors have different ideas of what constitutes the public good, civil society itself is part of the ever changing consensus about public good. Researchers of the Civil Society Network ('CiSONET', organised by the WZB für Sozialwissenschaften, under the leadership of Jürgen Kocka as an FP7 research program) project concisely summarised the different aspects of this complex notion, accordingly: 'civil society refers (a) to the community of associations, initiatives, movements and networks in a social space related to but distinguished from government, business and private sphere; (b) to a type of social action which takes place in the public sphere and is characterized by non-violence, discourse, self-organization, civility, recognition of plurality and orientation towards general goals; c) a project with universalistic claims, which changes while it expands across boundaries...' (CiSONET 2010).

Michael Edwards clearly distinguishes the three major aspects of civil society: 1) a kind of a 'good society' or utopia, 2) associational life, 3) public sphere. The real dynamics of civil society lie in the interaction of the different constituting elements: 'An intergrated approach to civil society that unites elements of all three models increases the utility of this idea both as an explanatory tool and as a vehicle for action' (Edwards 2004: 91). This complex and

integrated concept of civil society might be useful for the analysis and deeper understanding of the changing relationship between the Merchant, the Prince, the Citizen and the Jester on the global level.

Conceptual Interventionism

During the past two decades of the post-1989 era, resource-rich actors (guardian institutions, the EU, global philanthropists, among others) have increasingly promoted the notion of civil society. This conceptual interventionism is partly responsible for the global diffusion of the concept and the widespread debate about it. Guardian institutions are especially attracted to nominating and listing civil society interlocutors with whom they are eager to enter into public dialogue. The World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, the Commission of the EU are known for their civil society discourse and 'devotion'. As the Final Report of CiSONET observes, such conceptual interventions are similar to other forms of military, diplomatic or economic interventions that altered the socio-political constellations into which they intervene without being able to predict or control their consequences. (CiSONET 2010: 45-46). The growing discrepancy between words and deeds, between the civil society language used by representatives of the Merchant and the Prince, on the one hand, and the Citizen, a genuine civil society of self-organizing citizens on the other, proved to be a creative confrontation. It is an expression of the growing role of civil society in settling global matters.

The pluralistic character and increasing fragmentation and fragility of modern societies demand the further chrystallisation of new forms of social imagination which is self-reflexive and at the same time self-restricting (Miszlivetz, Jensen 2005). Most importantly, it needs to view all forms of institutionalised democracy as by nature transitory. These forms must always be open to transformation in the future. This approach radically points beyond the way in which democracy is interpreted today, which is essentially elitist and reduced primarily to questions of the rule of law and legality. It is based on the assumption that legality and

formal, procedural stability in themselves cannot constitute a democratic regime in the 21st century.

The most innovative achievement of 1989 was perhaps the legitimization of the 'ethics of disagreement'. Any self-respecting democratic system which accepts and supports autonomy and a broad, emancipatory concept of politics must be open to civil disobedience and at all times respect dissent. It should also reckon with the idea that civil movements, initiatives and social flows, starting up at the peripheries of the political community, are the most promising resources for reviving democracies which are in crisis or emptied out in terms of content: they are our best chance for democratising democracy.

Perspectival Conclusions: Towards a Great Reconnection?

Most democracy theories and theoreticians agree that one of the great and unbeatable characteristics of democracy is its capacity to renew and even more to re-invent itself (Keane 2010, Schmitter 2011). This self-reinvention does not seem to be an easy game or an automatic process among the perplexities and complexities of the present profound transformation and the diverging expectations and aspirations of decisive players. Nothing seems to be sure and unquestionable from the arsenal of the post-WWII economic, legal and social institutions. Nationstates, supranational regional institutions such as the EU, international guardian institutions such as the IMF, the WB or the European Central Bank, not to speak of powerful and unaccountable media empires, seem to be in disarray and are increasingly unable to convince the global public about their delivery and capability to solve, manage and control rapidly changing realities. As the global crisis unfolds daily, it is less and less possible for these formally unquestionable and formidable players to hide their weaknesses and decreasing legitimacy. Public trust is today at its lowest level concerning economic, political and legal institutions, be they on the national, regional or global level. Both markets and democratic legal-political institutions are made by people and are reflections of public and individual needs, expectations and trust. If this complex consensus

and respect which legitimates their existence and functioning is seriously eroded, they become disfunctional, redundant and sooner or later disintegrate. Except for some nationstates, most of these players were born after WW II as economic, political, legal, and institutional guarantees of democracy and even a democratic world order. These partly imagined, partly real guarantees have seriously eroded and evaporated today. We have arrived at a stage where we need a new, inclusive and decisive debate about different possible interpretations, meanings, institutions and functioning of democracy on all possible levels. The process of deliberation and re-interpretation will neither be rapid nor without conflicts. The harmonisation of regulations and interests on global, regional and local levels is rather a politically correct slogan than a reality today.

The 'fourth wave' of democratisation that started with the revolutions in the Arab world has resulted in a major shift of focus in interest and action. Democracy has received an irreversibly global dynamics, initiated and led by unexpected actors who were almost completely out of the scope of democracy debates and discourse dominated by politics, media and other institutions of the West. Since most of Western democracies themselves became or are becoming 'no choice democracies' and therefore loosing their legitimacy, democracy is out of joint in the Western world; meanwhile, the idea of democracy, the spirit of freedom and dignity, is rapidly and unexpectedly spreading in 'impossible' regions. This global stretch of the boundaries of possible democratisations not only heralds the end of a set of Western prejudices and racist conceptualisations such as the 'clash of civilizations'. It also needs new methods and approaches to dialogue and analysis. In a conventional sense, following a 19th century paradigm, it is true that democracy assumes congruence between the state, the people and the territory. But facing the realities of the 21st century, such as the formidable increase of migration, the uncontrollable global financial capital flows and the unaccountability of international and domestic guardian institutions, we need to find new configurations for matching the expectations of an increasingly de-territorialised and growing global public.

Escaping from the Iron Cage of the Nation State

It is widely recognised by recent social and political science literature that in the present era of globalisation we have to face 'a strong growth of transboundary problems' (Tinnevelt, De Schutter 2001: 1). Although territorialisation is not at all a new phenomenon, its intensity has reached a critical level today. It is undeniable that our social existence cannot be reduced to territorially bounded units called nationstates. As Jan Aart Scholte has observed social and political space is 'no longer wholly wrapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders' (Scholte 1999: 3).

This robust and irreversible tendency poses serious and inevitable questions for both the praxis and theory of democracy. Stepping out from the iron cage of the nationstate, there are no clear answers to questions like: who is responsible to whom? or where are the boundaries of democracy? or, can one imagine democracy without boundaries?

According to a powerful argument made by those who believe we need to reconsider the basic assumptions of conventional democracy theory and consequently the framework and actio radius of democracy 'nationstates are no longer able … to guarantee the successful realisation of their basic principles of justice and democracy' (Tinnevelt, Schutter 2010: 4). As a consequence, exposed citizens have to pay for the one-sided decisions of 'sovereign players'. To overcome the democratic deficit of the nationstate paradigm, democracy needs to be expanded and established on the transnational and regional, as well as global level. As global and transnational democracy theorists and activists argue 'whoever is affected by a ppublic decision should be included in the democratic process that makes the decision' (Tinnevelt, Schutter 2010: 2). This principle again poses new questions about the transnational, global consituency:

- who are 'we'?

- who is able to define who is affected?

- what kind of common identity supports global/transnational democracy?

- must citizens of all kinds of democracies share a common identity, in other words, is it true that a unique identity is the condition sine qua non of democratic self-determination?

- can democracy bypass the insider vs outsider , friend vs foe assumption? in other words, can democracy become non-exclusive?

As Chantal Mouffe asked a long time ago 'why does every definition of "we" imply the delimitation of a "frontier" and the designation of "them"?' (Mouffe 1993: 84).

We won't find clear answers to these profound, new and old, questions rapidly or easily. Most likely blended versions of different forms, frames and content for democracy will emerge on transnational and global levels. The process of hybridisation has already begun in global governance (Jensen 2009), but this does not mean that we can predict what shape effective institutions and mechanisms of global governance will take. What we can say with certainty today is that if we want to shape a new global democratic order, without an exclusionary political character, the divided parts of democracy, that is, human dignity and human rights on the one hand, well being, 'good life' and economic democracy on the other, need to be reconnected.

Democracy today seems to be lost in the labyrinths of intertwining transformations but, at the same time, it is gaining new strengths and reinventing itself in unexpected and unorthodox ways and forms. In the end, this means that it is not democracy per se or certainly not the idea of democracy that is lost in transformations, but all of those forms, procedures, power structures and political and financial regulations which proved to be inadequate to serve local, regional and global public good in all of the increasingly interdependent and intertwined levels of governance and, more importantly, social existence.

[Box 2]

Far-right parties in northern Europe				
	Political status	**Latest opinion poll, % support**	**Seats in parliament**	**Key issues**
Sweden Democrats	Opposition	5.7	20 of 349	Immigration, crime, Islam
Danish People's Party	Supporting minority government	15.2	25 of 179	Immigration, Euroscepticism, traditional values
True Finns	Opposition	16.9	5 of 200	The EU and euro bail-outs, immigration
Freedom Party (The Netherlands)	Supporting minority government	17.6	24 of 150	Islam, anti-establishment, law and order

Sources: *The Economist*; Demoskop; Gallup; Taloustutkimus; Synovate

Source: *On the march - Populist anti-immigration parties are performing strongly across northern Europe,* The Economist, March 17 2011 http://www.economist.com/node/18398641
Rise of Far Right Parties Across Europe
The rise of Marine Le Pen, daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, whom she succeeded in January 2011 as current leader of France's National Front, has her polling ahead of both President Nicolas Sarkozy and any likely Socialist challenger in the French presidential elections in 2012.[1] As her popularity and credibility as a presidential candidate has grown among a rising number of French voters, comparisons are often drawn between Le Pen and extreme-right figures elsewhere in Europe, including Dutch politician Geert Wilders, British National Party leader Nick Griffin, and Italian Gianfranco Fini before he shed his overt fascist trappings to gain more mainstream influence.[2]
However, it is not only France that is seeing a surge in popularity of far-right political parties. In an arc of countries spreading north-east from the Netherlands, populist parties are cutting a swathe through politics, appealing to electorates with various blends of nationalism, Euroscepticism (and euro-scepticism) and outright xenophobia.[3] The country to watch is Finland where the True Finns emerged from relative obscurity to join the government following elections held on April 17, 2011. Surging poll ratings (see above table) prior to the April 17th elections placed the True Finns on a par with Finland's three main parties: the National Coalition, Social Democrats and Centre Party. Following the elections, the True Finns made incredible gains in parliament, winning 39 seats or 19% of the electoral vote, compared to 5 seats or 4.1% of the electoral vote in 2007.

FINNISH ELECTION RESULTS ON APRIL 17 2011 (compared to previous ballot)[4]

	2011		2007	
	pct	seats	pcts	Seats
National Coalition	20.4	44	22.3	50

[1] Crumley, Bruce. *New French Poll, Same Result: Marine Le Pen Leads All Presidential Rivals,* TIME March 8, 2011 http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2011/03/08/new-french-poll-same-result-marine-le-pen-leads-all-presidential-rivals/
[2] Crumley, Bruce. *Marine Le Pen And Sarah Palin: Who Is More Extreme?* TIME March 11 2011 http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2011/03/11/marine-le-pen-and-sarah-palin-who-is-more-extreme/
[3] *On the march - Populist anti-immigration parties are performing strongly across northern Europe,* The Economist, March 17 2011 http://www.economist.com/node/18398641
[4] *TABLE-Finnish election results,* Reuters April 18 2011 http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/18/finland-election-results-idUSLDE73H0J620110418

Social Democrats	19.1	42	21.4	45
True Finns	19.0	39	4.1	5
Centre Party	15.8	35	23.1	51
Left Alliance	8.1	14	8.8	17
Green Party	7.2	10	8.5	15
Swedish People's Party	4.3	9	4.6	9
Christian Democrats	4.0	6	4.9	7

The True Finns have been able to broaden their appeal from its rural base, adopting an anti-immigration stance as well as hostility towards the European Union: opposing the bail out of euro zone countries and demanding changes in the Portugal package. Its leader Timo Soini, has said the party wants to balance public finances by lowering EU member dues and development aid.[5]

In Denmark, the Danish People's Party (DPP) under its leader Pia Kjaersgaard, hopes to do well in elections that must be held by November 2011.[6] Under its influence, the minority centre-right coalition it has propped up for the past decade has turned Denmark's immigration regime into one of Europe's tightest, all in return for agreeing to the government's budget for next year.[7]

Their Swedish counterparts, the Sweden Democrats – a party with roots in the neo-Nazi movement[8] – enjoyed success at a general election last September 2010, gaining more than 4% of the vote enabling them to enter parliament for the first time.[9] For a short while, there was speculation that the Sweden Democrats would become an ally of the government: the narrowly re-elected four-party centre-right alliance under PM Fredrik Reinfeldt, that won 173 seats out of 349 in parliament.[10] Of note, is that this is the first time a Swedish conservative government has been re-elected in about a century, whereby the centre-left Social Democrats have ruled Sweden for 65 of the past 78 years and are largely credited with setting up the country's generous welfare state.[11] However, despite being shunned by other parties, with Erik Ullenhag, Sweden's integration minister recently accusing the Sweden Democrats of intolerance and Islamophobia, poll ratings for the Sweden Democrats are holding up.[12] Immigrants make up approximately 14% of the country's population of 9.4 million, with the largest immigrant group from neighboring Finland, followed by people from Iraq, the former Yugoslavia and Poland.[13]

In the Netherlands, polls put the anti-immigrant Freedom Party (PVV) under Geert Wilders, second only to the Liberals whose minority-led coalition with the Christian Democrats Mr. Wilders has supported in parliament since last year, in a Denmark-style arrangement.[14] Since

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[5] Ibid

[6] *On the march* - The Economist March 17 2011

[7] Traynor, Ian. *Immigration: Far-right fringe exploits European coalitions.* The Guardian UK November 15 2010 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/15/europe-immigration-far-right-threat

[8] *Factbox: Anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats party,* Reuters September 19 2010 http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/09/20/us-sweden-election-swedendemocrats-idUSTRE68J06420100920

[9] *Sweden narrowly re-elects centre-right alliance,* BBC News Europe September 20 2010 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11360495

[10] Ibid

[11] Ibid

[12] *On the march* - The Economist March 17 2011

[13] BBC News Europe September 20 2010

[14] *On the march* - The Economist March 17 2011

2009, the British National Party has been represented in the European Parliament and the Vlaams Belang continues to remain a political force in Belgium's dysfunctional politics.[15]

In Central Europe, Jobbik, a Hungarian far-right party took 15% of the vote in the June 2009 European elections, sending shudders across the continent, as it ran on an anti-Roma (gypsy) platform as well as being against Jews and homosexuals.[16] Jobbik joined existing right-wing extremists in the region, including the Slovak National Party (SNP) that has won seats in every Slovak parliament but one since 1990 and has been part of the government since 2006, and whose leader, Jan Slota, is known for pungent anti-Hungarian remarks. In Bulgaria, Ataka, with continues verbal assualts against the country's Turks and having taken 10% of the vote since 2005.[17]

In Vienna, the Freedom Party, under far-right leader Heinz-Christian Strache, more than doubled their vote to 27% following a xenophobic campaign that featured free computer games which involved firing at mosques and calls for the city's "blood to remain Viennese". In some working-class areas of the city, Strache's Freedom Party took 37% of the electoral vote.[18]

On a European level, encouraged by their recent success in the polls, the Austrian and French far right parties have also pushed for respectability in the European Parliarment – with Austria's Freedom Party in particular calling on the Eurosceptic alliance in the chamber between the Europe of Freedom and Democracy grouping led by Britain's Ukip and Italy's Northern League, to let their two MEPs join.[19] Heinz-Christian Strache and Marine Le Pen, leader of France's National Front, have also recently expressed a strong interest in deeper co-operation between their two far-right parties.[20]

(This box was written by Renie Butalid, an MA student in the ISES Corvinus program International Relations, Köszeg, Hungary.)

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[15] Ibid

[16] *Right on down - No direct threat, yet far-right ideas seep into the mainstream,* The Economist November 19 2009 http://www.economist.com/node/14859369

[17] Ibid

[18] Traynor, Ian. *Economic gloom fuels far-right growth in Europe.* The Guardian UK October 17 2010 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/far-right-growth-europe

[19] Phillips, Leigh. *Austrian far-right in fresh push for EU respectability.* EU Observer June 9 2011 http://euobserver.com/843/32466

[20] Ibid

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