

Rebuilding Europe's polity by both ends

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The political institutions of the European Union and those of National states have something in common: they are crumbling apart. At the European level, the now predominant European Council is stuck into narrow egotisms and service to private interests, incapable of putting forward policies that truly address climate change and the rise in inequalities. It constructs a Europe-wide surveillance state and outsources brutal policies towards migrants and refugees to failed neighbouring States. The European Parliament is still impotent by design, having no right of initiative and it does not dare reject even the worse nominees for key positions. The European Commission is comatose, acting as a secretariat for the Council and watching the world falling apart around it. But National states do not look better. Not only are they largely responsible – the UK included – for the state of European institutions, but they all face similar or worse disasters at home. Apparently, each is a special case, but a closer look finds them struggling with a common crisis with differences only in degrees. In every part of Europe, the triumph of neo-liberalism, and its “strange non-death” according the expression of Colin Crouch², leaves us on a disaster ground. Labour or social-democratic parties have conducted socio-economic policies that hurt severely their own electorate and proved unable to reform their policy agenda, dominated by a narrow economicism, to address contemporary challenges. As a result they adopted securitarian policies formerly supported by conservatives. Meanwhile, large segments of center-right parties adopted the key elements of a fascistoid agenda, only to find that it fuelled the growth of real fascist groups. This chaos is made worse by globally organized influence groups and technology companies that have strictly no consideration for human rights. The emergence of new progressive political forces seems to be blocked in most countries by the electoral systems in place or newly introduced. When these forces nonetheless emerged, such as in Greece, they were treated with an insane brutality by the powers in place in order to [restore the status quo](#). This disaster happened all across Europe with limited exceptions, or so it seemed until recently.

At this very time, however, never the events in each European country were of more importance to citizens of other countries. Just when one can fear that, as Kate Tempest wrote three years ago, *Europe is lost*, for the first time it could be gained as a construction of peoples instead of a project of experts and interest groups. Just when unrelenting hatred and unlimited greed seem to triumph, the youth and less-young and formerly unpoliticized citizens try to take each country's, Europe's and the world's fate in their hands, and they do it for the common good. It happens in the United Kingdom, in Italy, in Portugal, in Spain, in Germany, and in France. It happens in confusion, because any historical moment is also one of confusion.

In every place where these movements develop, they expose the weakness of the ruling politicians. [Matteo Salvini is gone](#) and Boris Johnson is soon to follow. Emmanuel Macron is exposed in his brutality and service to the hyper-rich. But their sort or worse can return by the back door. [When a pact is being negotiated between the Brexit Party and what remains of Tories](#), what is needed in a coming election is not just a government pact, but a true electoral pact between democratic parties

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Last book in English : [Sharing: Culture and the Economy in the Internet Age](#), Amsterdam University Press, 2012.

2 Colin Crouch, *The strange non-death of neo-liberalism*, Polity, 2011.

where only one candidate will stand in the ballot in each electoral district. And if it does not happen, it will be for voters who massively register to do the choice. Finally, one will need for some significant European politicians to stand firmly for a generous migrant policy, based on a reinstated freedom of circulation in (at least Schengen's) Europe instead of just putting the blame on other States and the burden on Mediterranean countries.

None of this will happen without them being motivated and forced by a huge mobilisation of youth and other citizens. There would not be a Corbyn without the youth, and he would not have been convinced by other Labour MPs to refuse a vote before October 31st without the [Our Future Our Choice](#) and [Stop the coup](#) campaigns. The timid changes in climate policy owes much to the [Extinction Rebellion](#) campaign and it is very meaningful that some scientists now [call to join the civil disobedience actions](#). These are not just matters internal to each country. The rescue to migrants in the Mediterranean sea rests on German, Italian, Spanish and French boats and teams from many more countries. They are now joined by some official boats only because of the courage with which the crews challenged the racist and xenophobic policy of Salvini. If a decent Europe is rebuilt and reformed, it will be by both ends, but the most important part lies in our hands.