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Charter for Europe

End of February / Beginning of March 2014, a hundred activists from various parts of Europe gathered in Madrid for the conference 'El nuevo rapto de Europa: deuda, guerra, revoluciones democráticas', to discuss the topics of Debt, War and Democratic Revolutions. *While a number of panels debated questions of organization in times of institutional crises and new forms of participation and the common, five workshops provided the ground for drafting a Charter for Europe. The conference participants developed both the foundations and a preamble for the entire paper, taking account of the themes of democracy, debt, commons, governance and borders.*

In the following months, a first version of this Charter emerged and circulated via mumbles, skype-conferences, wikis and diverse other virtual communication channels and spaces. This version is planned to proliferate and get distributed over the next few months to discuss and further develop it. Rather than considering this proposition as a text for a future constitution, it is supposed to operate as an impulse for a potential constituent process in Europe — in a way, it is already a component of such a process.

Preamble

1. We live in different parts of Europe with different historical, cultural and political backgrounds. We all continuously arrive in

Europe. We share experiences of social movements and struggles, as well as experiences of creative political work among our collectivities, on municipal, national and transnational levels. We have witnessed and participated to the rise of multitudes across the world since 2011.

In fact, the European 'we', we are talking about here, is unfinished, it is in the making, it is a performative process of coming together.

2. In the wake of the financial crisis we have experienced the violence of austerity, the attack on established social and labour rights, the spread of poverty and unemployment in many parts of Europe. We have faced a radical transformation of the EU which now has become clearly the expression and articulation of capitalist and financial command. At the same time we have lived through a profound displacement of national constitutional frameworks, we have learned that they do not provide any effective defence against the violence of the crisis, and on the contrary are responsible for the dreadful governance of the crisis (proposed). In the ruins of representative democracy, xenophobic chauvinisms, ethnic fundamentalisms, racisms, antifeminist and homophobic processes, new and old forms of fascism proliferate.

We rise up against all this.

Democracy

3. Representative democracy is in crisis. A crisis produced from above, by international financial markets, rating agencies, private think tanks and corporate media. But the credibility of democracy is also questioned from below. To talk about democracy is to (re)appropriate and to (re)invent a common sense of democracy.

The guarantee of rights to the commons, of the transformation of citizenship, of equality, freedom, peace, autonomy and collectivity.

4. The 2011 uprisings across the world have rescued the living meanings of democracy. When we claim democracy in Europe we do not aim to restore the lusters of the old national constitutional democracies, but rather to invent the institutions that can catch up with the cry of "They don't represent us" spread by those uprisings. We want to claim back our belief in the self-government of the 'demos'. Hold on to this concept. Hold on to its reinvention. Hold on to its transformation".

5. We are experiencing a post-democratic turn in Europe. *National (instead of 'liberal')* constitutions are being used for the private interest when the Troika imposes budgetary decisions as well as social policies without democratic legitimation. Security, in a similar way, has become a central process in the emptying of significance and performance of democratic institutions. Austerity and security are prefiguring a general transformation of the role of institutions on the global level, that is rendering democracy impossible.

6. The constitution of the people is what is at stake for us in what we term democracy. How can we re-think a democratic self-governance in pluralist and participatory experimental ways? How can we learn from the democratic practices on the squares around the globe and think of them as re-invention of participatory processes in the assembly of the many, in order to give ourselves our own rules, laws and rights? How can this process be pluralist, federalist, based on networks and assemblages, movements and relations instead of identities, functions and roles? We envision here something beyond the juridical form of democracy bound to a national sovereign. We are opening up this concept, to spread

democratic practices into the social, the everyday, into production and reproduction of life. The state needs to be under scrutiny, challenged by the diffusion of radical inclusion and the invention of democratic tools from below.

7. Democracy in Europe means for us a two-sided process in which both "democracy" and "Europe" are intertwined, (re)appropriated and reinvented on the basis of the transnational social and political struggles of the many. Democracy as a practice. Democracy for Europe.

Income/Debt

8. Nowadays, debt has become the main mechanism of both economic governance and capital accumulation in Europe. It works as a multilevel system throughout the whole society. We are witnessing how debt is affecting everyone. Workers, students, unemployed: no one is allowed to escape from the new debtfare.

9. Debt and income are the two sides of the same coin, when the very reproduction of life is increasingly tied up with the access to credit, and hence with the rise of private indebtment. This is the most distinctive contraposition of the crisis - a contraposition between private and anonymous debtors and the many indebted. Rating agencies, bankers and financial institutions do not represent us.

10. The struggle for democracy is about fighting against the blackmailing of public and private indebtment, hence against the policies of austerity dreadful to the many . The challenge is to transform this generalised private indebtment towards the financial few, into a common indebtment of the many towards the many. Money and finance need to get back in the hands of the democratic

many. Basic income is the tool we can use for our common indebtment of the many towards the many. It is the answer to the recognition that wealth is something we produce in common.

Commons/State

11. Democracy as a process goes along with the constant collective production and use of the commons. This collective production of the commons is the only way to prevent poverty and war and to create social and cultural wealth. It is a matter not only of defending the public policies that sustain education, health, culture and social well-being, but also of moving forward towards new institutionalities of the commons as the means we produce to live together. To do that, the people of Europe have the right to organise themselves in the horizontal way of the many thereby creating and performing a new form of democracy.

12. New institutions of the commons are continuously invented and created all over Europe to oppose the monopoly of decision of the State. Many of them are emerging in the struggles against the crisis, the austerity policies and their impact on the everyday life of the people of Europe. They are the first steps to reinvent a political and social space beyond the dichotomy of the public and the private sector that sustained the political and social space of modernity, in which the state on the one hand and the market on the other guaranteed the reproduction of power and profit. State and Market failed to create the well-being of the people of Europe. Institutions of Commons break with the logic of social reproduction that have to be borne by other commoners and the commons of the world. They create collective forms of the reproduction of life that are beyond the logic of capitalization.

13. The institutions of the commons are based on collective decision making and they have to grow stronger in order to have an impact on the everyday life of society for replacing step by step the dysfunctional structures of the nation states. We have to democratise governance and national institutions of education, city development, art, research, social and physical well-being in order to provide the means for these new institutions of the commons to become real, to spread and to be sustainable. This can happen only at a transnational level, fighting the global logic of profit and understanding Europe as the space of a democratisation from below in the affirmation of the commons.

Governing/Governance

14. The problem is not what form of state is the more appropriate for democracy, the question is how we want to be governed: Modern representative democracy is based on the idea that the many should be governed by being reduced to the few in terms of the traditional party system. Distributed democracy instead relies on the possibility of the self-governing of the people regarding the main issues of our lives in common.

15. The prerogatives of absolute command of a separate body of professional politicians and technicians cannot be the guarantee of a political process in the general interest. We have to get rid of the idea itself of the State as One: The power of the One as a master and manipulator of complexity is incompatible with the practice of democracy for the many by the many. Representative democracy has degenerated into a technocratic authoritarian system, a "government of the unchangeable reality", that is relying on the administration of fear and submission.

16. Beyond a technocratic top-down federalism, we think a democracy of the commons has to rely both on the local dimension and the transeuropean one. Natural and artifical commons cannot be "nationalized", neither they can be managed by an oligarchic technostructure. A democracy of the many can only be a distributed democracy; it can only be achieved by expanding open and bottom-up networks for the common interest. There can be no One-and-only Power over the commons, but just a system of distributed democratic counter-powers deciding on the basis their continuous interactions, conflicts and negotiations.

Citizenship/Borders

17. A redefinition of citizenship in Europe must start from migrants' practices of crossing the borders and reclaiming citizenship beyond its nationalistic and exclusionary origins. The various manifestations of borders that we are challenging and fighting against from day to day reflect different situations: they are geographical and state borders, detention camps for migrants, electronic control systems, walls and barbed wires. But they are also internal controls and visa regimes. The borders of Europe now reach far beyond the geographical limits of the EU member-States, establishing an externalisation of migration controls.

18. Physical borders are continuously contested and reshaped by the movement of those who cross and are being crossed by them. Various practices and routes bring people to enter, leave and re-enter the space of Europe. However it is also the multiple movements of the internal migrants, which express and respond to the deepening disparities and inequalities in Europe. These practices are central in contesting what is Europe today and in foreseeing what Europe may be tomorrow.

19. Challenging citizenship in Europe is perceiving it ‘from the border’ itself - we imagine and practice an open, ongoing and inclusive citizenship, disconnected from the place of birth and the place of departure, independent from permanent or temporary residency in one place, not subdued to labour condition and instead grounded on a shared, open and democratic social space.

20. We need to constantly question any position of privilege that downplays demands for ‘inclusion’, however this term may be contested, of anyone who experiences material constraints and differential treatment to access social rights and freedoms. Europe needs to be a project of peace, not for the security of its own borders but for the *safety* of economic, social and political rights.

The Charter for Europe is an open process

21. We want to initiate a different kind of constituent process on the basis of social and political struggles across the European space, a process towards a radical political and economic change of Europe focusing on the safeguarding of life, dignity and democracy. It is a contribution to the production and creation of the commons, a process of democratic regeneration in which people are protagonists of their own lives. In the squares and the networks we have learned something simple that has changed forever our way of inhabiting the world. We have learned what 'we' can achieve together.

We invite people across and beyond Europe to join us, to contribute to this charter, to make it live in struggles, imagination, and constituent practices.

http://chartereuropa.net/wiki/Charter_1.1