



Intervention prepared<sup>1</sup> by  
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for the Society for International Development (SID)'s  
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"One World or several: Towards a Strategy for Growth,  
Sustainability and Solidarity in an Interdependent World"  
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*Western Europe at the cross-roads of the processes of  
interdependence*

(Notes prepared for the discussion)

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

1. Living in Western Europe at this phase of history, we get a dazzling sensation: Every day the picture of our world is changing, new ingredients are brought into the picture, new questions emerge in situations where everything seemed settled and quiet.

Several myths are present in the whole history of this continent. They all are relevant in the shaping of the new continent.

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs Pintasilgo has to renounce to participate at the last moment.



I. Inderdependence, a new horizon

Western Europe is now facing its own truth about disarmament. The reluctance in accepting the peace movements is now shown at its root: Mary Kaldor puts it, many people "at heart wanted communism to continue, so as to provide a perpetually unfavorable contrast to capitalism and a permanent reason for maintaining high levels of armaments."

"What happened in 89 has been presented in the Western media as a victory for the West - a triumph for capitalism and Western military strength."

"As Western governments struggle to impose order on the post Cold War turmoil, citizens and leaders alike need to understand the Western's responsibility for the failures of the past - and for the shape of the future."

"Both sides needed to change. So far, it is mainly Eastern Europe that has changed." "It is my view that democracy can only be sustained in the East if the West changes too."

"Wheter or not we avoid a new economic division of Europe depends to a large extent on Western aid policies. What is needed is not just an increase in the amount of aid, but a reorientation away from exclusively neoliberal policies."

- Western Europe in the past: fights among groups/nations  
expansion towards international

- Interdependence intra-muros

- a) the political and economic process (cf. Delors - Europe 92)

Main question: widening?

- b) the cultural challenge - ecology
  - Science and Technology
  - ...
- c) the reinforcement of democracy  
(the citizen/the associations/the groups)

- Interdependence extra-muros

- a) new regional spaces on security/economy  
(support from Western Europe)
- b) creation of new ideology and its consequences
- c) exploitation of outside spaces as threat to security.

- Crucial issues of interdependence for Western Europe

*Cultural tasks:*

- a) beyond the marxist and liberal discourse, though acknowledging their relevance
- b) what was important in the marxist understanding of society?
- c) what is important in the liberal economy approach?



- Labour is redistributed through the delocalisation of enterprises in ever wider circles to all peripheries where wages are lower and, at the same time, provoke unemployment in Western Europe.

A global economy is the visible part of international civil society by which it is possible to create meaning for interdependence.

With the axis of the global economy determined in the last decades first by the USA and then by Japan, is Western Europe most and foremost attempting to be an integral part of such an international civil society?

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- "The new system of power is a product of the technologies developed to redeploy US hegemony in the crisis of the 70s' and early 80s' - especially computers, fiber optics, laser and managerial techniques drawn from cybernetic and organization theory."
- The global culture is becoming more and more the culture of modernity. This culture is the culture of the dominant Western powers.

The culture of modernity as it evolved in Western Europe has been expressed in several pillars:

- . a pillar built on sovereignty together with market economy and welfare state, all embodying in different ways a concept of State where human rights are a fundamental vector;
- . a pillar built on the security, being at the same time safe-guarded in regional spaces and alliances and in international covenants;
- . a pillar built on the citizenship, expressed in the free circulation of ideas and in the diversified forms of association.



- New interdependence

implies contemporaneity to all events, ideals, institutions, re-arrangements of knowledge and society. It is a challenge.

The new interdependence was for some the relation between States expressed at various levels of international organization.

New political conditions have emerged.

During the Cold War period, the zones of influence kept the interdependence at a stable level. The military alliances seemed to provide a platform for democratic decision for those in Western Europe. Suddenly, the collapse of the communist block and of the Warsaw Pact has shaken that precarious equilibrium. In fact, Western Europe discovered that the whole world became under the domination of a sole power.



The discussions and the diplomatic actions previous to the Gulf war have clearly shown that there was one center of decision, at the most a few Western Europe countries were informed, and the rest of the world was marginalized.

Can we still speak of interdependence in a modern sense?

- In Western Europe the market economy has been traditionally associated to what we call now "the social safety net" or, in other terms, the regulatory and distributive mechanisms. However, the changes inside Western Europe have led to a questioning of the traditions established for several reasons:
  - a) difficulty to find the funds for the budget when the birth rate is still decreasing and life expectancy is growing;
  - b) too much "comfort" brought about by protection from the State (too many people with sick-leave);
  - c) too much bureaucracy and impersonality in most countries.

Need to find ways and means for new processes of solidarity among groups of people; need to restructure the pattern of life according to its natural cycles and making conditions of labour compatible with such cycles; need to envision the minimal norms to codify the system; need to establish the organic networks of society for assuming responsibility for those who are/become marginalized by productive forces.

- Western Europe is not "settled" into its own code of behaviour. In Western Europe there is among many strata in society the conviction that the triangle Europe/Japan/USA

through a major element in the stability of the world economy, is still in a process of change. If left only to the market economy and if the "imperial" attitude remains unchallenged, the marginalization of Latin America and Africa and to a lesser degree of Asia is unavoidable.

This is the greatest paradox of Western Europe: it has asked of other countries an internal democratic order expressed through political and economic conditions; but those very economic conditions, if fulfilled, contribute to the reinforcement of undemocratic and unjust democratic order.

It is ethically unsustainable to remain in this situation.

New as well as old democracies have to find paths of economic viability.

This is why we have to consider the moment we live in as a world process of transition.

This process will lead us from an interdependence which still hinges on past forms of domination to new forms of partnership and cooperation.

- During the Cold War and throughout the two oil shocks, Western Europe lived under the feeling that it had become a mere No. 3. It used to be self-centered and all its vision of the world was Euro-centered. Often this was linked with several centuries of colonial domination and of its inherent illusion that European models prevailed.

At the grass-root level, all NGOs were fighting to be attentive to each culture and not to import without any judgment the values Europe was exporting.

And now, suddenly, we find ourselves facing the most pervasive ideology: it had success in Europe/USA/Japan/NICs/... and to prove it to the core is the aspiration of Eastern Europe!

Consumerism is one of the main attractions of the market economy. And yet the problems Western Europe is facing with excessive consumption leads us to formulate the question: how to devise a political economy where we may change the patterns of consumption without preventing economic growth?

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"Like in other parts of the world

. Europe has not produced any major original synthesis in the political conceptual frame, over the last few decades."

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"In the short run, its future depends more on its capacity to react to the changes that have taken place in the last twenty years than on its capacity to act in the world."

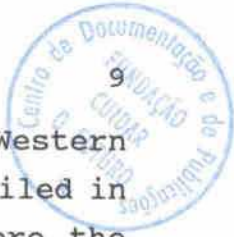
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Running parallel with economic transformations some political values stand out as having shaped Western Europe.

In fact what we see is the institutionalization of legal political social rights.







The civil rights were the first to separate Western society from the feudal system that for centuries prevailed in Europe. Basically, the equality of individuals before the law, thus assuring the foundation for their freedom.

Political rights were gradually established during the XIXth and the XXth Century (association, freedom of expression, participation in elections).

Social rights during the XXth Century giving to the individual some minimum right of economic and social security.

Hence the generalization: new rights to culture, to a sound environment, to information (Equality and security tend to play a larger role than in North America).

Hundred years of experience: some fifty years of experimenting.

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The new wealth created by the industrialized revolution led to the demands for social securities and individual rights as well as participation in that wealth.

Social insurance, public education, hospital organization, mental treatment, unemployment relief, etc.



Questions like: should all individuals be covered or only the very poor? How much should governments be involved? As a permanent basis for all or temporary for those who were disadvantaged?

After the depression: employment, housing, education and health policies.

1930-1950 - welfare state consolidated.

After World War II, with economic unprecedented growth - great expansion of Western state.

"Western state has reached its limits in a too large and restricting state sector and too high levels of taxations."

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Science and Technology is the basic force behind a changed and new future. Western Europe lagging behind.



De Michelis:

(en portugais)

- Podemos-nos relever le défi et opérer les changements nécessaires dans nos institutions afin d'obtenir une union démocratique, consacrée à la prospérité, la justice sociale, la protection de l'environnement et aux droits de l'enfant ?

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