



act*TV*ism

Transcription of interview with Yanis Varoufakis & Srecko Horvat

Zain Raza:

We're here now with Yanis Varoufakis and Srecko Horvat, the founders and participants of Democracy in Europe Movement.

So I want to ask you a question based more on the activism and grassroots movements part. DiEM25 - a lot of movements have occurred in the past like Occupy, which was a success in terms of consciousness but not in terms of its longevity or sustainability. What are the strategies that you guys are using to make sure that this movement lasts for a longer time at a grassroots level?

Yanis Varoufakis:

Well look, let's talk about the anthropogeography of this meeting that we just - think about it. We have representatives from Green parties, from feminist organizations, we have have from Blockupy as you mentioned - but at the same time we have the head of IG Metal, a trade union in Germany that everybody knows with 2.4 million workers - with people from the SPD, with people from the Linke, people from Barcelona, from the movements at level of municipality. People from Britain, who are not usually part of central European movements. We have people from the Czech Republic, people from Poland - that is unique - I don't believe we have managed to do this before in the movements in the last few year. Something is brewing in Europe. These movements have now had a chance, and there is no guarantee, a chance of coalesces, of convergence into a surge - the democratic surge that we want.

Srecko Horvat:

Yes as Yanis said both of us but also other people who are present here in Berlin have been participating in many social movements, networks and forums in the last decade starting from the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001 to Genua protests and then of course these huge wave of protests all around the world in 2011 with occupation of squares Puerto del Sol, Syntagma Square, Zuccotti park in New York and so on. But what it is new here I think, I hope at least, what is new is that we don't only include movements, we don't only include Trade Unions, classical political parties but for example during these meetings today we had people who are activists of Tor or Wikileaks, never before I have seen that so many people who come from the field of technology

were interested in bringing more democracy - and we know there is no democracy without technology - actually technology could help us today to bring more democracy. So what we can see only from this first meeting but also other meetings and people who supported the manifesto for example from Ken Loach, Eva Illouz, Toni Negri, Julian Assange - we can see that people got together who usually weren't together - so we also have people from PaDeMos people from Degrowth, the Labour Party is very interested and supportive of DiEM. What we can see is that we are really in a political momentum currently in the European Union where I think that we can go only in one direction - and the one direction is democracy - or the other direction will be the dystopia which will be very similar to the dystopia during the first World War and second World War.

Zain Raza:

So we are faced with forces that have immense power, some people call them "Totalitarian Institutions" like the banking & hedge funds, be it the NSA surveillance state, be it the Monsantos. People feel hopelessness - let's take an example of a single mother whose on unemployment benefits. She's just lost her husband. Or a person studying in the University burdened with a lot of deadlines - people working on bar jobs - what would you advise them if they are facing fears or questions about engaging in such a movement?

Yanis Varoufakis:

The only thing that you can use as a weapon to pose this panoply of evil, to use rather a moderate term, is hope. So how do you inspire a single mother? How do you instill hope in her? Through this convergence of the movements, of movements that are powerful but which tend to shrivel and die when left on their own - this convergence with existing established organizations from previous generations and centuries of struggle like the trade unions, for instance, it is the only possible source of hope for a single mother, the disaffected unemployed 58 year old who is unemployable given technological change, to the people in Greece who have to survive whole families on one puny little pension which is being cut to the people in Ireland who have been battered for years by austerity now are coalescing around one issue "water". So as so to not allow this kind of movement to die out - we need to bring them all together with established institutions to produce the possibility of hope.

Zain Raza:

Srecko, you want to comment on that?

Srecko Horvat:

I could only agree. Not because we agree on all the things and I think the perspective of DiEM25 comes from precisely from the fact that we don't have to agree on all the things, so it is pluralism which should be the DNA of Democracy in Europe Movement. But I could only agree completely with Yanis Varoufakis because I had [the] opportunity to be in Greece, in Athens, during the Summer last year when the referendum was happening and when Yanis Varoufakis was still the Minister of Finance in Greece. And what I could have seen on the squares, on the streets, preceding the referendum and also what I could have seen from the votes of the referendum, 62% of the people voted "NO" to austerity measures was precisely hope that there is a political force which can change the status-quo in Europe and there is an alternative. But also what is very important to see is that you could have seen on the European level at that time, that many other people who are in the

same situation as you say mothers, unemployed people, young people - I come from a country from Croatia where you have 54% of unemployment among young people - all of these people during the Greek referendum also came together and they were looking at Greece as a symbol of resistance. And I think what we have to do, and this is our responsibility if we want to save the European Union, and if we don't want to go into the direction of new wars and new fascism which is around the corner already, we have to revitalize precisely this hope which existed during the referendum in Greece as one of the symbols, we can take also other symbols in Europe: refugees, people who are helping refugees today, we can take occupation of squares and all this energy and I think it is bad if we don't come together and if we don't work on all these energies and I think it's very important what Yanis what you just said - it's not just the energy of the last 2 or 3 years or Arab Spring or Occupy, it's actually centuries of struggle and we cannot forget the centuries of struggle. We should learn from it and we should go a step further.

Zain Raza:

So last question to make it short. This is from the public, this question, and there is a big complain about this so I want to pose this to both of you starting with Yanis.

The architects of policy, when they make a decision to go to war don't go to the war themselves. When they vote for wage cuts they don't have a wage cuts themselves. So from the public this question comes - whatever you decide and vote for, should policy-makers be also, be it a minimum wage whatever it is you know, should they also be part of what they voted for - face the consequences themselves? Is this something that DiEM25 could implement?

Yanis Varoufakis:

Well let me tell you something from my personal experience of the last year. The first decision I took as the Minister of Finance was to reduce our salaries - the politician salaries. To get rid of the two luxury BMW cars that were in the Ministry, just go to Ministry on my motorcycle and also to reduce by 40%, 40% that's a big sum, the salaries of the former bankers that were staffing the Hellenic financial stability facility, that was part of the bail-out fund from Europe that was operating in Greece. So your question has already been answered.

Zain Raza: So vote for war, you go to war?

Yanis Varoufakis:

There is no such thing as a good war. We will never vote for it.

Zain Raza:

Srecko, any last comments on that?

Srecko Horvat:

I comment on only on this situation where we are. All of us, including me and Yanis, all of these people who are here and we have activists from all European countries but also beyond and not only

Europe - they paid by themselves flights, trains, cars. They paid by themselves hotels, some people are staying at friend's places and so on and we are happy to have the event at the Volksbühne who had sort of budget, but you know when you organize such a huge thing you need simultaneous translation, you need independent media as you are doing and so on. So we are very happy and that's partly answer to your question that what we are preaching, what we are trying to achieve and this is democracy it has to be self-organized [Crosstalk Yanis: We practice, we practice] and we practice it and we are happy that many comrades practice it as well.

Zain Raza:

Yanis Varoufakis Srecko Horvat thank you for joining us today.

Yanis Varoufakis:

Thank you!

Srecko Horvat:

Thanks!