



QUO VADIS EUROPA?

Die Serie „Quo Vadis Europa?“ entstand zwischen April und Juni 2015 und ist ein Einblick in das noch nicht abgeschlossene Langzeitprojekt des Fotografen, in dem er auf der Suche nach neuen Blickwinkeln und Inspirationen quer durch Europa reisend, die unterschiedlichsten Menschen und Persönlichkeiten zu ihrer Meinung über das heutige Europa befragt. Seine eindringlichen fotografischen Schwarzweiß-Porträts werden von umfangreichen Interviews begleitet, so dass sich auch für den Betrachter die Vielstimmigkeit Europas widerspiegelt.

The series “Quo Vadis Europe?” was taken between April to June 2015 and it offers an insight into Neal McQueen’s not yet completed long-term project, which takes him through Europe looking for new perspectives and inspiration. He interviewed all kinds of people and personalities about their view of Europe at present. His intensive black and white portraits are accompanied by extensive interviews, so that the observer is confronted with the many voices of Europe.

LUBOMIR MARKOV

COMES FROM SOFIA, BULGARIA. HE IS A LAWYER FOR CIVIL LAW AND IS FIFTY-SIX YEARS OLD.



Do you feel as a European citizen?

Yes of course! Especially in my case, because all my family lives outside of Bulgaria, Mostly in other countries of the European Union. My occupation is international law, so I have connections to people of almost all European countries. So in my case I really feel European. I travel regularly to other countries to work there.

Do you think the EU works well like it is?

Yes! Of course, there are a lot of problems, but I think the EU is a very strong system. I am an optimist and I think the problems will be solved, with our help it will be successful.

What are the problems in the European Union right now?

In the future one of the biggest problems, maybe, will be the new members of the EU. If Europe decides to have new members: Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and why not Ukraine. The European Union have to decide if they want to accept new members or not. I think right now the European Union is not complete, it is not fully developed. Besides this, we have other big problems inside the EU. Some of the member countries want to leave the Euro, for example, Italy is thinking about going back to the Lira. In Great Britain they will never give up the Pound. Greece is having a lot of problems, very serious problems, so they might leave the Euro as well and maybe even Spain, even if the crisis there is not as serious as in Greece. Right now the biggest problem for the European Union is the Euro, because the big power like the USA are not interested in a strong Euro and this is well known.

What kind of benefits do you have as a citizen of the European Union?

Well, before we joined the European Union I lived in a so-called communist system. Then there was this kind of difficult periods, but now we are a member of the European Community. I am very sensitive to see the differences of these systems. The situation now is better for me, for the Bulgarian people as well as for all people in the union. We can travel and move freely, work in other countries without any problem. Well, some countries, like Bulgaria, still have limitations when it comes to work in other countries, but that is not a big problem.

We are free to make our business and can buy real estate all over the union. My personal philosophy about freedom is the freedom of choice. If you have only one bread you can choose, you are not free. If you can choose from fifty-five different kinds of bread you are free. That is about your whole life. If you want to work, for example, in England or France, you are free to do so now. In the old system in Bulgaria, you did not even have the citizenship, you had kind of a citizenship, so you could not choose to work and live in Sofia or another city.

Do you think that there might be a threat for the union to fall apart, because of the uprising of a strong extremist political right-wing movement in Europe?

Yes of course this is a danger I remember some years ago in Austria, in the region Carinthia, the extremely right elements won the election with Joerg Haider. Marie le Pen in France and similar movements in other countries are getting stronger because of forces from the outside of the EU like immigration. Maybe the European Union should take very strong actions to solve that problem. As a humanist I do understand the people that immigrate and it is good, but from the view of the people here in Europe I have to acknowledge that for them it is not good, because these people come here with their problems and make them our own problems. Especially in Bulgaria we don't have enough power, enough money to solve their problems, for example the Syrian refugees. Ten years ago I was in Damascus and I know that they are very good people there and it was a very good and interesting country, but now they have a horrible situation. I cannot even imagine how bad it is there right now. I understand these people, I want to help them, but we have our own problems and I believe that Europe has nothing to do with their situation.

What kind of system you would want to have for the European Union?

The system we have now, but more socially orientated. The poor people must have more possibilities for a brighter future, to be able to live a normal life. It is essential so they can have the belief in a good future in Europe.

PRESLAVA

COMES FROM A SMALL TOWN IN BULGARIA AND LIVES IN SOFIA.
SHE IS A GRADUATED DENTIST, TWENTY FIVE YEARS OLD AND WANTS
TO MOVE TO BELGIUM FOR GOOD.

Do you feel as a European citizen?

Yes.

What is your opinion about the European Union?

After Bulgaria has entered the European Union some things have changed, some for the good, some for the bad. We have a lot of inflation and the salaries of the people even decrease, no matter what your profession is. For young people it is good that you can go anywhere in Europe and study for free.

What are the benefits of the EU for you as a citizen?

I can travel through Europe freely and my diploma is accepted in all the countries, so I can work everywhere.

What should the citizens of the European Union should do to fill the union with life?

They should be more open-minded, open for people from all over the world. In Bulgaria we welcome all kinds of people, but if you go to countries like Belgium or Germany they are much for themselves, almost antisocial. I will visit a friend in Austria soon and she told me that in Austria it's the same.

What about the crisis of the European Union during the last 5 years?

I don't think that this will have a happy end. Maybe soon the European Union will be destroyed, at least a few countries will leave it, because those countries believe that they would do better economically without the EU, countries like Greece.



ALESSANDRO MONTI

IS A MANAGER AT THE TRADITIONAL BOOK PUBLISHER FELTRINELLI.
HE LIVES IN MILAN.



Where do you come from?

My name is Alessandro, my surname is Monti. I was born in Como but I grew up in Milan. So I'm a true Milanese. I'm the son of two Milanese and grandson of four Milanese. We are few Milanese today in Milan, because after the war a lot of movement happened in Italy. A lot of people came to the north from the south and in the last twenty years a lot of people came up from the south of the world to the south of Europe. But I'm not scared about this and not fearful and I think we all as European people live in one of the most incredible, lucky and rich periods of all history. Everybody who studied a little bit of history knows that it's very, very rare in the last four thousand years that one man could be born, live and die without having the experience of a war.

I think we don't have to lose this certainty, this fact. Otherwise we are waking up each morning sad because we are not as rich as we were twenty years ago. We are not as safe as we were twenty years ago. We are not sure about our retirement, we are not sure about the future of our kids. But the fact is, we are among the richest people in the world and we have the longest life of all times.

I think there was not a lot of happiness not even one hundred years ago or one thousand years ago. When you had ten kids and you saw five of them starve, you were not that happy.

What about the next generation?

I'm not sure if they know (about the suffering of their great-grand generation), but I can see that they don't feel the difference between them so much. They travel a lot, they have a lot of friends, they communicate a lot from one part of Europe to another and all the world and they feel much more similar to one another, Spanish and German.

This is an opportunity and I think that the future generation will recognize the benefits of Europe, because they travel the world and they see how big the world is.

What about the European process to unite as citizens in one Europe?

I think this process will go on, back and forth, with all these stops (financial crisis), but I think it will be fine. I believe in Europe and I think that Europe was very, very positive for Italy. We had an economy running very fast, but on a week's basis we had ten, twelve, fifteen percent of devaluation

every year. It was unsustainable, it was crazy. Nobody remembers this. If you speak with people on the street they say, oh, we were richer when we had the Lira, before the Euro. But it's simply not true. The fact is that people love to remember the past better than the present. So, they can attribute their suffering to the change. The suffering is their own, it is not the environment.

What about the class of people in Europe, that were usually working in the industry and cannot find this kind of jobs any more? Do they have a chance to be a part of this European society as well?

I think it's possible, I think it's difficult, but I remember that it was difficult even twenty or thirty years ago. I am forty-four and I started working at twenty, I was at the first or second year of university and I was living at home. I got the first job I could, it was a very simple job, just to live and to study and there were a lot of people who didn't work at that time. They had the possibility too, of course. In Milan you have so many more possibilities than if you were born on the countryside of Sardinia. You can move from there. Plenty of people moved from there and arrived in Rome, Milan and everywhere, in Germany. For example all the hundreds of thousands people that left their country to go to Germany. The poverty you had in Italy seventy, eighty years ago, between the two world wars, it's inconceivable today. I think this movement from the south of the world to the richest countries, that is simply obvious. If you are poor you hope to get somewhere where you get less poor and this is true forever, in every age of humanity. We have to manage it, we cannot stop it. You cannot stop a starving man, because he wants to survive. So you have to manage and we could manage, if we want. It is an effort. People should do the effort to manage this change. It's much more comfortable to stay at home and watch TV. My great-grandfather left Italy at the end of the 19th century, to go to Buenos Aires and he lived there twenty years as a housekeeper, cleaning homes and as he came back, he built a home and that is where I grew up. In my own family we had immigration. You cannot stop anyone to do the same, it's not possible.

I have hope. My arms are open. Of course, if I were aggressive with the people, they would hurt me, they would defend themselves. So, I think, that you have to know that life is difficult, you have to know that people can be good and they can be evil, but it really depends on how you relate to them. And if you are stable enough in yourself you are able to accept their differences, their mentality.

ANTONIO FRANA

IS A STYLIST FOR FASHION AND CELEBRITIES DRESSING.
HE LIVES IN MILANO AND ROME.

What do you think about politics in Europe, the recent crisis and where it's heading?

I don't care! I work all the time and don't think about politics and this kind of stuff at all.



JOHN ORIETTA

IS PENSIONER, HE WAS A PHARMACIST, BUT NOW HE IS SELLING ALL KINDS OF THINGS AT THE ANTIQUE FLEE MARKET IN THE OLD CITY CENTRE OF ATHENS. HE TOLD ME THAT THIS WAS HIS HOBBY BEFORE. HE IS SIXTY-SEVEN YEARS OLD.



What do you think about the European Union?

Well, I think it will be better in twenty to thirty years. It will be like a thousand years ago, with the Holy Roman Empire in kind of the same way. It will be one union. I believe it is going to have more than just one culture in it, but because we will be so many people inside of it, we will be like one. I am not a communist, I have to point that out. I believe that all people are the same, like women and men. Why I am saying that? Because I was divorced three times. Each of my wives came from another part of Europe. My first wife was from Constantinople, my second wife was Swedish and the third one was Greek, so I know a lot about the nations. I lived in Sweden for seven years and I was born in Egypt, in Alexandria in 1947, so I am a kind of world citizen. All the nations of the world were born inside of Egypt, Israel, England, Italy, we were all inside of Egypt. Then Nasser came to power and threw us all out. So inside of me I have the roots that all the nations are one.

What about the recent crisis in Europe?

The capitalists are creating the crisis, they want the rest of the money. They want all of what the common people still have. Look what they have done to Greece! The people sell everything they have. They have even an office here to buy the gold, the people sell the gold, they will take it all. They bought all the gold, Germany and I don't know who else and now the Greek people are trying to sell what is left, houses, land, anything they have. And one of the most important things that is happening now are the immigrants that are coming to Greece. I don't feel bad about the fact that they are coming to Greece, but right now the Greek people themselves went to other European countries to find work. Now they are opening the gates and let the people in from Asia and Africa and we don't have the space for them and no work at all. The well educated people leave the country, most of them left already and now only pensioners or without proper or no jobs at all live here. I was a pharmacist and now I am sitting here, selling things. What should I do, leave Greece in my age?

Do you have hope for a change in Europe?

Yes, we have a chance, but not for a hundred percent, but it is a chance. Why? In all these fifty, sixty years it was all the time under the control of a government led by a capitalist system. But in all those years all of us could experience, that it doesn't matter who was in power, it was all the same, they didn't really change anything, just changing governments. Now everybody wants something new, to see what they can do about it. So now we have a government that is half communist. For good reasons we didn't want that for the last seventy years. We are out for something new. New people, young people. No old people that were part of the old system that have not do anything good, the old capitalist system. We have to overcome the capitalistic system.

Do you have an idea what the system in Europe should be like?

Europe is going to be like that everyone will be the same. People like John Lennon said "Once Upon a Time" (Imagine) and now we are at the beginning of that.

So when the well educated people leave Greece, who is going to bring the change?

The government will bring the change. The people that are under the control of the money, they will disappear. They cannot live like that here any more. The people have to pay more money to the state and after a few years they will realize that they get back more than they were able to think about, like in Sweden.

What about the Euro?

I don't believe in the Euro. They are trying to create an international currency, but it doesn't work. I think the dollar will rule all kinds of money, even the yen. The Euro is only good for Germany.



HANNAH LAM

LIVES IN GERMANY. SHE IS HALF VIETNAMESE, HALF GERMAN, TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS OLD AND WORKS AS A SOCIAL-WORKER FOR YOUNG FEMALES AND YOUNG MOTHERS IN MANNHEIM. HER PASSION IS MUSIC AND SHE IS A SINGER/SONGWRITER, TOO.

Do you feel as a European citizen?

Yes.

What kind of benefits and downsides do you see for yourself as a citizen of the European Union?

I have plenty of rights, because I live in Germany, I can travel freely in a lot of countries because I am a German citizen. Downsides, well, the system of control is getting stronger and stronger, in Germany as well. Politics create more and more security rules. When something happens, they launch new and stricter security laws. The electronic passports, the surveillance of the internet is getting way out of hand, as well as of the mobile phones and what you actually see is personalized, so you want to consume, it's all about consumption these days. I believe that there are certain people that actively control the direction of what the people should do and believe.

What about the crisis during the last years?

For myself I can't say that it affects me in any way.

What kind of hopes and fears do you have about Europe in the future?

Well, I hope that it will get better for the people who suffer, but I actually believe that the poor will get poorer and the rich will get richer. The disadvantaged group will grow strong and they have to take care of themselves, because the state won't

do anything for them. Or in Bulgaria right now and if you look, for an example, at the Sinti and Roma and the handicapped persons, you will realize that they have almost no chances and this is definitely a European problem.

If you think of a better system in Europe, what would it be like?

We should have equal standards in every country, like the right to work, that the state covers for a payment that covers the basic needs like housing, food, medical welfare, education, etc.

Do you think in ten years it will still be like now?

I think it will fall apart, maybe not in ten years, it is a slow process, but people will be more and more unhappy with this kind of system and after some time the European Union will fall apart.

DANIELE TORRINI

IS FROM FLORENCE. HE IS A HOTEL MANAGER IN A BEAUTIFUL HOTEL NEARBY THE FLORENCE CENTRAL TRAIN STATION.



What do you think about the European Union?

I think it's quite important. I'm really proud to be European, more than just being Italian. It will become like a big family, if the European citizens will be convinced about it. I am totally convinced that we will be one union, even economically and politically. I think that every single nation in Europe needs to match with the others and try to give the best things that every nation has, all together and even without being only one big nation, by keeping the specific aspects of each nation. Concerning laws and economics, especially laws it would be very interesting to have common laws for all nations. Laws when it comes to social aspects, in the financial area and also in economics. I think it's better that the laws, the rules are made centrally in the European Union. If you mix all the best things that you can take from each nation and if the decisions are made from all nations together, then we can make better specific laws and that this will make us proud and connected being European citizens.

Is there a real chance for that kind of union?

I think we are on the right way to do this, after some countries, like Italy, have solved their economic problems.

Is the German economic change of the past fourteen years a guide for this transition, or do you see a danger, because a lot of people will be left behind with no more chance to climb up the social and economic ladder, so these people might switch to the political extreme left or right?

It will be a problem, but that has to be solved. We have to find and give answers to that. After that the people will be open for the transition.

What are your personal benefits from the EU?

On a personal level I will be more than happy that probably my son will have the chance of being a European, will have the chance to freely move

around, find better opportunities for studying, working, meeting and knowing other people all over the EU, not being just stuck in one country. This could be really interesting and I would be sure that he will be protected by the same laws. So this could be much, much more helpful than just a simple hope.

What about national and European bureaucracy?

Working on that could be a solution. Working on a European mind is the only way that bureaucracy, politics and economy will come and grow together. It could make it easier, everywhere and it could be clearer. The problem here in Italy, you have specific laws for everything, but it is very difficult to find your way through and actually use them.

Will the nations, regions keep their cultural differences or will they merge into one big culture?

I think the cultural differences can probably be kept. Individual cultures, that's something else. We all come from the same kind of history, mediaeval history, it's very common in Europe. It was separated after the sixteenth, seventeenth century. Until then we have a really similar history, because of the Roman Empire, Italy, Germany, France, even England were part of it as well. After that, I don't want to point my finger on it, but the churches made the differences and the beginning of the banking system as well. Here in Italy we had the chance to discuss about Europe, when we had the last time a left-wing head of government, after that is had always been a problem. But he did the right thing and directed us towards the European Union.

LORENZA



LIVES IN GREECE. HER MOTHER IS ITALIAN, HER FATHER IS GREEK. LORENZA IS TWENTY-SIX YEARS OLD AND SHE GREW UP IN GREECE, BUT SHE GOES TO ITALY ON A REGULAR BASIS. SHE STUDIES MOLECULAR MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY, SHE IS A BIOLOGIST, FINISHING HER MASTER IN GREECE AND WILL GO TO ITALY NEXT YEAR TO DO HER PHD.

Do you feel like a European citizen?

I feel European, I think this is due to the fact that I'm half Greek and half Italian. I travel a lot and I love traveling. I feel as a citizen of the world, not only from Europe. I think it is a real benefit of the European Union, that I can travel that easily.

What about the EU and the current situation in Europe?

I don't really have a good opinion about the EU, it brings mostly problems. Economically it's really bad for a lot of countries of the EU. The EU is mostly political. I would love it if it would be really a union of the people, actually all of the world, but it is mostly political and it was built mostly for economic reasons. Naomi Klein's book "The Shock Doctrine" pretty much describes my beliefs about what is going on for that matter.

What about your hope and vision for Europe?

Well, there are a lot of things that I don't know much about. I don't have the time to read as much as I would like to, because I have to work so many

hours, but I do read and watch a lot of documentaries. My way of thinking is more zoomed out, on the bigger picture. When I think about hope, the future, I don't believe in the capitalistic way that we have now I am somehow pessimistic. Maybe the system will fall apart by itself, but I don't think that the people can do much about it. I go on demonstrations, so we can talk with each other and I believe that this way we can change the mind of the people, but in order to change the society, we would have to change every single person. I believe that there are too many people that are so closed-minded, that we actually will not be able to reach them and so we can't really change the system. If capitalism will fall apart, it will fall apart from itself. Maybe Tsipras (new Prime Minister of Greece) is a good start. He does things for the people. Here in Greece we are having huge economic problems, almost everybody is affected, my own family is. My father is a doctor and we had and are having problems, because the previous government changed some laws and now every person that I know has a problem in every-day life. For the system in general, I don't want to fix it, because I don't agree with it in general.

MARIE-SOPHIE PEYRE

IS FORTY-FOUR YEARS OLD AND COMES FROM PARIS. SHE LIVES IN BRUSSELS AND WORKS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE AGENCY. SHE IS IN CHARGE OF ETHICAL QUESTIONS, SO IT'S ETHICS IN RESEARCH.



Do you feel as a European citizen?

Yes, I do feel, definitely. Europe as a political project has a meaning for me. The way it's going on presently is probably not what I was expecting and what I want Europe to be, but Europe as a political project is definitely something I look for. Yes, I feel like a European citizen and of course it's also not only a political aspect of the European Union, it's also about culture and all those things. I really feel like a citizen of Europe, I strongly feel linked to the European Culture and to this big amount of culture mix.

What do you think, what is your benefit and the downsides of you being citizen of the European Union?

The benefits: Of course it makes it easier to travel and to communicate. It's a bit complicated because for me as I also work in this domain it's hard to see what comes from my work and what comes from like the invasion of the European Union as a project. And anyhow I have always travelled a lot. What I like is the feeling that we are together, that this culture, that existed before the European Union was launched, is translated into something political, that we have a common citizenship and so I like this idea that we are linked. The other benefit is also, that I strongly feel that each country on its own would be much worse than being together.

What do you mean? Like socially, economically and culturally?

Yes, I don't like the American model, I don't like the Chinese model. And even though the European Union doesn't fight as strong as it should, it still makes it possible not to be completely crushed by those two other models. So I think it's a good thing that we are together on that level. What's going on presently, specifically since the nineties, since the fall of the wall is not what I expected. What I expected from the European Union was to put forward our specifics especially on the social level. It looks like we are more running after what the US want us to do, rather than trying to promote our own values, our way of dealing with things. I think there is a real European way of dealing with things, of protecting people, of ensuring social rights and things like that. And for the moment I don't see it. And it's weird because the economic part of the Europe-

an Union is the one which is the most developed. I think it was like completely apart from the political project from the social values. Europe was launched after the Second World War to avoid having wars to promote human rights, to protect human values as they had been created for two hundred years and it looks like all this being forgotten to give more importance to the economic aspects. So of course there is always a link with market, but the main aim was like avoiding war, gathering countries. Now it's just like economy for the sake of economy and in the end it doesn't even work, because we see in which situation we are. I don't really know what is going on. I'm a bit puzzled ... it's weird because it looks as if they pretended it would be easier to work on the economy and I think it's not and the results are poor. At the beginning there were the values and the economy was a tool. Then after that there was economy and not much more. And now it's even like the economy is the risk of our own values. When we see the rise of the far right parties in all the countries of Europe, when we also see what is going on in the countries like Greece and Portugal and others. For me the identity of Europe is also democracy, human rights, protection, social protections, all those things that we created.

What about free education?

Free education of course, like in France we had this reform on education. There are lots of persons saying "But you know, we could simplify all this. People they only need to master, mathematics and French and that's about it.

That is happening all over Europe. They go for the American system, the bachelor and actually they are cutting all kinds of education and simplify the wisdom of the people. I think this is for a reason, actually.

I think that there are two approaches, one might be like the less people know the easier they are to manipulate. The other one is maybe worse, it's linked, it's not cynical in the aim, but it's much more cynical than values, it's always like this approach of the elite saying like "Well it's just good enough for them" and we keep the real thing, because we are the one who are able to deal with it. Knowledge is power. So I'm not one hundred percent sure that it's like really definitely in the idea of



manipulating, I'm always a bit frightened with those theories, I always hope that people are not that cynical. Ok, maybe I'm naive. But like definitely there is some cynical approach to it what is like "Let's give basic things, because it's good enough".

Good enough for them to function in the system?

Yes, and like "they're not developed or wise enough to need all the rest." **So is that an elite?** In France it's a bit complicated because we have a double elite. Like the intellectual one and the financial one, which have links, but don't overlap completely. I got aware of that when I started working abroad, not being in my country anymore. Because intellectual things are still very, very important in France. And the thing is for that kind of things the approach is not the same from both those elites, but in the end the ... there are some like more the managing elite who says like "well, if it's limited, it's very nice". The intellectual elite is not that way, but ...

But they are both snobby in a way?

Yes, they are both snobby, that's for sure. Their approach is, ok we can carry on teaching everything which is good, but with the approach you are saying. So like "if you are food, you'll manage it.". So there's also a sort of snobby thing behind it. Which is true in a sense. If you let people make their proof, and try to do things, it's much better than if you don't even let them try to do it.

Do you think that we, as citizens of Europe, actually know about our rights and what is more important, fulfil our obligation as democratic citizens?

There are some tools in the European Union. For instance, there was this right of petition. Unfortunately, those who used this right first were anti-abortion persons. **It's democratic.** But in the end it's always those guys who are more organized than

us. People who want to restrain others' rights are more organized than people who are in favor of rights, more liberties, letting people be what they want. Then there are the elections. This is a bit awkward, because people either don't vote for the European elections, but when people vote, they don't consider it as a real election, so they vote whatever. So really weird things are happening. And of course a lot of far right parties. But on the other side, I mean, when we had the voting on the constitution, one in France and Denmark, people said no and it was the same in Ireland when they said "no" twice. In those three cases people said "no" and in the end they said, actually what you really meant was "yes". That's like devastating for democracy and the credibility of the project and the process.

TIZIANA

IS FROM THE CENTRE OF ITALY, PESCARA, SHE'S TWENTY YEARS OLD AND STUDIES CLASSICAL PIANO AND PSYCHOLOGY.



Do you feel as a European citizen?

Probably I'm too young to know if I am European or Italian. I feel that I'm an Italian citizen, but maybe it's just because I'm not used to travel abroad. I have only been once to the Netherlands once and once in London, but I was very young. So probably I don't know a lot of things about other countries, right now I mostly travel in Italy.

What do you think about the European Union?

I think it can be useful to have the other countries as partners. I don't know if it actually works or not, but it could be useful to support the others, not to be alone, to help each other if help is needed, like in a family.

Do you think you benefit from the union on a personal level?

Yes! The European law system provides human rights to me, that can protect me, like it does with the rights for children, for example.

How would you like Europe to be in ten or twenty years?

Well, the first thing that comes to my mind is that we need to stop the era of greed, in order to solve the economic crisis that is immanent right now.

My wish would be that we solve our political as well as our economic problems, and I think that at the top of our crisis there's the way people use to think in general. I study psychology, so I'm probably influenced from it, but I think the main problem that we need to solve is our thoughts, we have to rebuild our way of thinking. I believe that in the economic and political world there are a lot of people whose only aim is to earn as much money as they can, pure greed, and this is not working well for us as a society.

Do you feel like you share cultural roots with people from other countries in the EU?

I had only one real experience so far. I was in the Netherlands with an exchange program and so I hosted a girl from there and then lived at her home. It was the only experience that I had so far with another part of Europa. I loved this experience, because I'm very curious about other traditions, other places and way of thinking. I'm sure that it can help me to grow and to open my mind. I really hope to have more of this kind of experiences.

MARCO

IS LIVING IN MILAN, GREW UP IN BERGAMO AND MOVED TO MILAN TO STUDY. HE IS A STUDENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND LIVES IN AN OLD PART OF THE CITY, AS ONE OF THE LAST PARTIES IN THE HOUSE, BECAUSE THE HOUSE OWNER WENT BANKRUPT TWO YEARS AGO.

Would you call yourself an Italian, European or world citizen?

I love my roots, but I understand since I was sixteen, when I started traveling on my own almost all over the world, that we have one life. We have 6 billion people in the world and I'd love to meet everyone, to learn from other cultures for sure, because it teaches you about life. We are living, not as members of a big game. We need to share.

What do you think about Europe right now?

It is strange. For sure the globalisation never started, we have always been in a global system. Countries that share ways of life, share things, cultures, need to be linked and it's great, because it makes it easier to move for citizens. It is a hard job to make them work together and we can see right now what the problems are like. All the countries that are not included in the EU want to enter.

Some people are in and some people are out of this process. In Italy we have a right-wing politician that is really against the European Union. They have sent really stupid people to the European Parliament, really stupid people, people without brain, xenophobes.

The news are, that big boats are arriving to Italy from the south, from Africa and these people talk about them like "Leave them in the ocean, let them die there".

I believe in the process and I think that people who don't believe in this process are out of the game. They never really ask themselves what's going on, probably.

What kind of hope do you have for Europe?

I think that it can work, but it will take time. Fifty years maybe? We need fifty years because each country, I talk about the citizens needs to understand that we are not different. One generation at

least, because with the last one, things change very quickly in an irreversible way. Technology, traveling, the money!

Do you think the Euro will last?

Yes! Because I can't imagine getting back to the Lira. Money is part of our life. If I go to Spain I pay with the same currency and that's something that unites us.

What about the recent status of Europe and Italy?

Because of the financial crisis the right-wing party has ten to twenty percent. They have a crazy vision about Italy. For sure this crisis brings fear to the people. Probably we haven't overcome the crisis by now but for sure we are not in the middle of it. I am talking about Italy now, we are at a low level and this is the moment to wake up. One more time, people and politics have to work a lot on it, because in Italy the situation is really bad. Everyday 7 Italian companies close down business, since 2010. I have friends that tried to start a business here. Before you can start it takes one year and a half because of the bureaucracy. You have to pay thirty thousand Euros just for that, a friend of mine paid that money to start the whole business, stuff included. You don't make money in that time, you don't have the time to work then. So actually you can only start something if you actually have money in the first place. It is kind of impossible to start something under these conditions and that's one of the main problems here right now.



JOAO LOPEZ

LIVES AND WORKS IN LISBON. HE COMES FROM PORTUGAL.
HIS MOTHER COMES FROM FRENCH/ITALIAN AND HIS FATHER COMES
FROM SPANISH/PORTUGUESE BACKGROUND.



What do you think about the European Union?

Europe began as a very good project, born out of solidarity, but as it grew up, it is no longer about solidarity but only about the national countries themselves. Instead of uniting in the face of the crisis, they are uniting against certain countries that are facing the crisis most and the northern countries are benefiting from that crisis. I don't think and feel this is solidarity.

I know that the European Union paid us, Portugal, for not having any more industry in order to relocate the textile industry to China in the interest of Germany, to benefit the cheap labor.

It was all about cheap labor. Thomas Piketty, who wrote the book "The Capital in the 21st Century", is right.

The more we go down this path, the bigger the gap will be between the rich and the poor.

So it is not about solidarity anymore, because it is about getting richer for the rich countries and getting poorer for the poor countries. More and more poor people and less rich people. But those rich people will be much richer than before.

Do you think the citizens of the European Union know about their rights and obligations as citizens of the European Union and do you think they fulfil it?

No, because the citizens still feel as citizens of their own countries and I think one last step is needed for the European Union as a European Union. We need elections on a European level, with executive power on a European level and budgets at a European level. Same taxes, social security and rights in Hamburg as in Faro, for example. So when my grandchildren are born, they will have the same opportunities in Germany as in Finland, the UK or wherever. That final step is needed.

Are you a socialist banker?

I am definitely a socialist banker! That might be a problem for me. (laughs)

Do you think the European Union is a democratic system?

No, definitely not. It looks like it is democratic, but look at the elections that are going to happen in Portugal. They are democratic, but we have to bow to a system that is organised by the Central European Bank, by the IMF and the European Commission. They tell you that you have to stay in certain boundaries, you cannot rule over these boundaries.

What do you think about the Euro?

It is a good idea, but it stays as an idea. Until you have one budget, same taxes in every country, it is only an idea. Right now the consequences are that the rich countries get richer and the poor countries get poorer. What do you think would have happened, if the Deutsch Mark would not be in the European Union? When they joined the Euro the rate was 200 Escudos, now the value would be at 600 to 800 Escudos. Germany would not be able to export that much, so the only benefit from that is for the German people not for the Portuguese people.



TACO STUIVER

IS A FIFTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD HAIRDRESSER FROM AMSTERDAM.
HE HAS HIS SHOP IN THE OLD INNER CITY OF AMSTERDAM.

Do you feel as a European citizen?

Yes I do. I think it is a good idea to combine all the different cultures in Europe. That we all learn from each other.

On a personal level, what do you think are the benefits and downsides of the European Union for you?

When you look at history, we are used to live and let live, that is a benefit. There is a deep understanding about communication and also about manipulation. The nice thing about that is, you give each other space to communicate. We had so many wars already, we are kind of done with it. We always will have wars and misunderstanding and miscommunication. Meanwhile it is nice to have so many values from different countries. That I think is the upside. The downside is, because we are so divided, we will never be strong as a union. Within each country there is already a dividing structure, each country got their own regions. There is a lot of immigration, a lot of different cultures living together. I think it is beautiful, because we all learn from each other.

What do think of the Euro?

Worst thing ever happened. The Euro is about interest. Once money comes into the picture, social behavior goes down.

Do you think the European Union is a democratic system?

No. There is no politics any more, only corporate interests. That's all that's left. The Dutch invented the modern capitalism, the corporations. When money gets involved everybody goes down on their knees.

If you could change the system of the European Union, what would you change?

That's simple. The most important factors are the people in the society. There should be more doctors, teachers and policemen. Give them better education and a more important place in the society.

What about artists?

They are inspiring and important, but they are not the backbone of the society. Teachers are most

important and the justice. If you had more well-educated jurists, you would have less aggression.

What is a good education?

To teach the people to think for themselves.

Do you think the citizens of the European Union know their rights and fulfil their obligations as citizens?

They are forced, because they are governed by fear. Their fulfil their duty, while in the meantime their individual space to be themselves becomes smaller and smaller. If you fulfil all your obligations to the state, you don't have any more fucking time to live.

What do you think is your obligation as a citizen in a democratic system?

To be, to learn from each other and to give each other space, because all you want is to have space to live. It is actually the foundation of socialist thinking.

What do you think about the crisis in Europe?

What crisis? There is no crisis.

What about the rise of extreme right-wing movements all over Europe?

I think the right-wing problem starts with the capitalism. I like to make money, I like to have a nice life, a nice wife as well. But I think these crises are made by the economic elite. There is no political system any more, it is all about money. So the people in charge are only interested in profit and they don't care if people have to suffer for it. There is no crisis, there is only a shift of the money.

Do you think the European Union will still exist in 10 or 20 years?

Yes. We need to believe in something, in an ideal.