

EDITORIAL

Editorial: The Future of the European project

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Diverses persones observen l'incendi a la catedral de Notre-Dame, a París

IDEES is embarking on a new phase of its life as a magazine, adopting a new editorial approach that focuses on monographically analysing the major issues currently being debated on the global level. After more than twenty years and forty-five issues, IDEES is making the transition from print to digital, moving forward with a fresh image and design to take an in-depth look at today's world from new standpoints and perspectives.

Publishing a magazine on contemporary thought, particularly from within the Government of Catalonia, is no simple task and might be described as something of a fool's errand. This is especially so if the aim is to not fall prey to predictability, banality or appeasing the powers that be. A short time ago someone told us that if we wanted to use IDEES as a tool to transform Catalonia and the world within the current context of repression, we would end up being charged and persecuted by a Spanish court like so many others have been in recent history. Accordingly, now more than ever it is legitimate to ask ourselves whether

radical thought need always be associated with the obligation to rebel. Catalonia has historically been a fertile ground for rebellion, as we all know, and today there is certainly no lack of inducement. Of course, our aim as a contemporary thought magazine is undoubtedly to freely question the status quo; this is our duty.

Accordingly, in this new stage we want to consolidate IDEES as a critical, free and plural publication. Critical, because we strongly believe that we should submit mainstream hegemonic thinking to review and remove the conceptual limits constraining the modern world. A world that, however, is not pre-determined for us and one that we want to help reshape from its outer limits to its very core. Free, because in times of reaction, authoritarian changes of direction and repression we want to harness impending, and soul-stirring, paradigm shifts to serve as the impetus we need to strengthen our desire for emancipation, on all levels, as citizens and as a people. Plural, because thought is by its very nature anti-dogmatic and the complexity of the world requires the inclusion of all outlooks, if we are to understand each other and properly interpret diversity and current global trends.

We are increasingly aware that we live in a world that is becoming more and more divided by inequalities and we are adrift on the swells of the major challenges we need to face, without the ability to steer the ship with the right tools. Challenges diagnosed decades ago have now become real dangers that threaten the present and future sustainability of our societies and of our planet. Liberal democracy is besieged by a growing polarisation that is destroying our most basic common ground and consensus, and we are now living in the final chapter of ineffective political systems that have become too obsolete to handle such complexity.

In this context, the image we have chosen for the front cover speaks for itself: people passively contemplating a part of their world being consumed by flames. Dystopia is unfortunately becoming more and more real in light of the pathetic pusillanimity with which we are combating global emergencies. In a world in which solutions do not currently appear to be within our reach, some people, as the photograph shows, take a selfie, raising their category to in situ spectators of a catastrophe. As [Oriol Caba](#) says in relation to the front cover, Notre-Dame in flames is without doubt a powerful image that is asking to be interpreted, and its burning evokes in us a string of metaphors and symbolisms closely related to this Europe in the process of redefinition to which we have dedicated issue 46 of IDEES.



People watching Notre-Dame in flames from the left bank, Paris 15 April 2019.

It should be made clear, however, that our aim is not to reproduce the myth of Cassandra and have a clear conscience while uttering prophecies; quite the contrary, in fact. The monographic issue we are presenting bears the title *The Future of the European Project*, because we are aware that we are at an inflection point with major opportunities for the evolution of the European Union. We are using the term 'project' because it means 'something that one aims to achieve', that is, something that must be designed and defined before its implementation. Once again, it is time to decide whether to move forward or backward in the political union and integration process. Europe is, then, a process and a path that has not yet been determined and is still under construction. But who is designing this Europe? Are the citizens of Europe the protagonists of this project? Is it possible to design and define a common project? The European question has too often become a rhetorical one and, despite everything, the public finds its stories and its alternatives too abstract and its decision-making spaces too far away, all the while suffering its tensions and their consequences. Bringing the public to the European debate has ended up becoming a banal commonplace, even for the institutions themselves. However, without the commitment of the public, and of the institutions, the European project is not, and never will be, possible.

IDEES #46 is, then, wholly dedicated to thinking about Europe. From start to finish, from analysis and proposals to the creation of new stories. With very different starting points and perspectives, from history and philosophy, from politics and democracy, from the economic and social perspectives or paying close attention to the evolution of demography and key reflections on immigration. It also considers Europe from the perspective of its struggles and its activists and in terms of culture and literature, providing a forum for writers and authors from numerous places in Europe from a generation currently aged around forty, allowing us to recreate diverse conceptions of today's Europe. A constellation of ideas that

we are putting in motion to provide content for a continent that is finding its new place in these historic times.

Revisiting Europe, from history to values

‘The future is no longer seen as a promise, but as a threat’, asserted Marina Garcés a few days ago within the framework of a dialogue with Philipp Blom organised by IDEES. Reversing this threat will only be possible if we come together and place on the table the sum of our ‘desires’ for a shared and better future; and if this is not possible, it will be necessary to decide which futures we should at least try to avoid. That would be enough.

But when we discuss the present and the future, above all we need to reinterpret the past and ask ourselves what the values that have shaped Europe are and which of them are still applicable today. Philipp Blom invites us to dare to question and reconsider everything that surrounds us, in the same way as the Enlightenment radicals did in their day. Our first step towards developing critical thinking, without fear or censure, is to stop being afraid and stop being intimidated. We know that the European ‘artificial paradise’, resulting from its colonial past and its economic and technological development, and the Western hegemony are reaching their end and are facing a fragmented world full of global challenges that will endanger the social conquest of rights and democratic freedoms. This is a reality check that provides evidence that history is not a linear, inexorable progression and, in light of this sea of uncertainties, Blom warns that we need to be acutely aware that ‘since the end of totalitarianism there has never been such a far-reaching and powerful attack on Enlightenment in Western countries as there is today’.

In a world in the midst of transformation, Jan Zielonka reminds us that, in essence, what is in play is not just the future of the EU, but also that of our open and liberal society. The statehood crisis and the mirage of sovereignty in a world rife with supranational powers that are not rooted in democracy and ignore borders are forcing us to rebuild Europe on new foundations. And he indicates the need for larger roles for other more legitimate, local political actors, such as cities and regions. The EU should be leading the fight to create democratic spaces beyond the nation state that has dominated our political systems for the last 250 years. This represents a horizon to consider for Catalonia, where the idea of the state either persecutes us or obsesses us along the path toward the recognition and democratic emancipation of the Catalan people.

IDEES also includes an incredible journey taken by Norbert Bilbeny through the idea of Europe. In his article Bilbeny reinterprets history with the purpose of determining whether there are sufficient non-speculative grounds to properly discuss European values. Paradoxically, Bilbeny opens the door to the urgency of modern times and states that Europe is growing as a political concept in tandem with our increasing awareness of its divisions as a continent. The need for Europe as an intrinsic value with respect to all its variables is explosively emerging from these divisions and fragmentation and, he adds that, regardless of whether there are values that are truly European or they are all universal, it can be affirmed that there is a European way of having or recognising certain values.



People watching Notre-Dame in flames from the right bank, Paris 15 April 2019. (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

Democracy and legitimacy

The EU has been dragging along with it a number of notable deficiencies in terms of legitimacy since its very creation, and for many people the effects of the financial crisis and austerity policies have ended up deeply undermining the credibility of the European project. Authors like Philippe Van Parijs, who was invited by IDEES to give a lecture, have stated that the Austrian philosopher and economist Friedrich August von Hayek's dream for Europe has come true in that the only asset to be preserved is the free market, and the institutions, where justified, act solely in benefit of the economy without any other effects. However, the construction of a social Europe as a political objective within our grasp, despite the inequalities, would open the door to a public mobilisation effect that would reinforce commitment to a European project currently being deconstructed. This would mean orienting the reforms of the next mandate to wellbeing and the common good as the defining goal of the EU.

Daniel Innerarity, who has helped us coordinate and shape this issue, proposes conceptual innovation as the fundamental starting point, if we are to find our way out of the dead-end street in which we are parked. Politics is above all creativity, Hannah Arendt would say, freely thinking in the public forum to face today's conflicts, committing ourselves to their resolution and not running away from them. And Europe can only resolve them within a complex democratic theory. This means preserving complexity, managing it rather than suppressing it, and as Innerarity says: 'Europe's agenda should definitively rid itself of the semantics of harmonisation and unity to move towards the balanced management of complex constellations'. The aim should be to create a narrative that can be understood and accepted by the public. It is an ode to the pluralism of complexity and liberal democracy,

given that ‘the increase in actors, interests and instances of government gives balance to the exercise of power and hinders unilateral imposition. Democracy permits articulation of this plurality better than any other system of government’.

Richard Bellamy once again hits the nail on the head, reminding us of the legitimacy problems based on Rodrik’s trilemma and the impossibility of simultaneously achieving democracy, conserving the sovereign space of the nation state and being fully integrated into the global economy. In this sense, he advocates that the best way of preserving the EU’s legitimacy, very much in line with Wolfgang Streeck, is to consolidate the democracy of the Member States and reinforce the role of the States’ democratic representatives, specifically national parliaments, in the supervision of matters as far-reaching as the banking union. Collaboration between European democracies should be seen as an indirect way of reinforcing democracy on the European scale.

Institutional challenges and the European economy

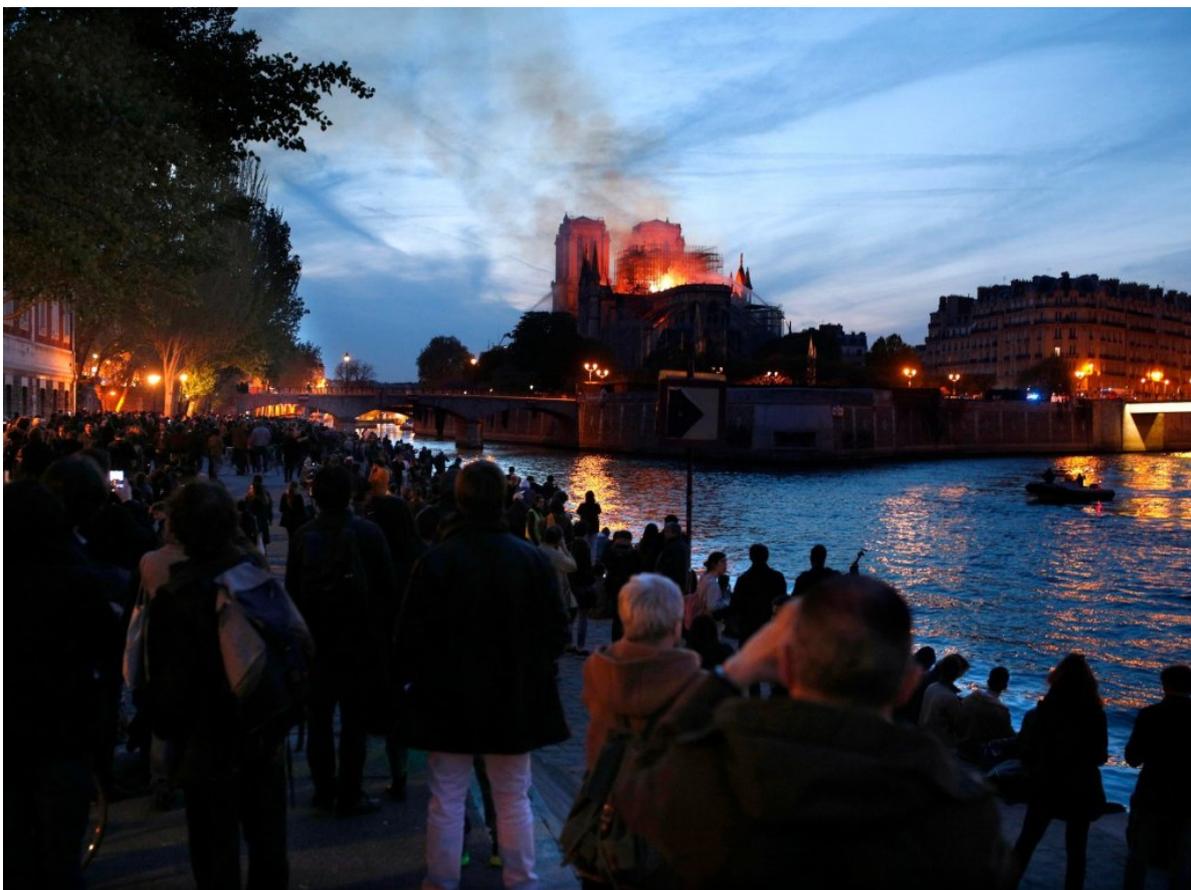
Josep M. Colomer traces the parallelisms of the EU with the creation of the United States of America and its slow federalisation process. He also examines the benefits of the options available for the construction of a more solid union based on strengthening the EU’s financial capacity, preserving the power of the European States but also fully assuming the responsibilities of their policies and their shortfalls.

In this same reconsideration of the roles, responsibilities and objectives of the actors on the European stage, but from a different perspective, Jordi Angusto breaks down the limits of the social democratic pact that led to sustained post-war growth and the greatest period of equality that we have experienced. This stage was replaced by neoliberal consensus and the conservative and neoliberal revolution led by Reagan and Thatcher, which coincided with or propitiated the start and expansion of an increasingly interdependent and global economy. Given the crisis caused by deregulation and fiscal and social dumping, Angusto proposes a new pact for inclusive and sustainable shared prosperity, which symmetrically penalises exterior surpluses and deficits and deploys an integrated fiscal policy whose aim is regional convergence policies.

Three members of the CaixaBank Strategic Planning and Studies Department, Àlex Ruiz, Javier Garcia-Arenas and Rosa Ferrer, analyse how Europe will have to deal with the major challenges of the future such as the far-reaching economic changes resulting from technological disruption, demographic transition and climate change. They also analyse the migration challenge, Europe’s estrangement from the USA, the rise of China and Russian revisionism and highlight the importance of greater European coordination and integration in foreign policy, defence and security. In this context, they also ask themselves how Europe will meet the challenges of the next five years following the election, in addition to the eurozone’s mid-term growth perspectives and the economic mechanisms that will be available to it. This is a question that is now becoming especially important, given the deceleration in activity in recent quarters and the expectation that the economy will continue to advance at a more moderate pace. Finally, with regard to institutional aspects,

they also analyse whether over the next five years we can expect major advances in the European integration process and, if this is the case, where political energies will be focussed in this sense.

We have also included, due to its relevance, an article published a few months ago by a number of leading French and German economists. In this collaborative text they highlight that the eurozone continues to have critical lacks as a consequence of the poor design of its fiscal and financial architecture and they decry that the Member States continue to be divided on how to tackle current problems. In this sense they propose six reforms that, taken together, would improve the financial stability of the eurozone, political cohesion and the potential prosperity of the public, while responding to the priorities and concerns of the member countries.



Notre-Dame in flames, Paris 15 April 2019.

Demography and migrations

In a recent survey conducted by the European Council on Foreign Relations, immigration stood out as one of the major concerns of the public throughout the continent. We have paid special attention to this issue in this IDEES monographic issue. Accordingly, Andreu Domingo, from the Centre for Demographic Studies (CED), describes how migrations will, in one way or another, be at the heart of the EU's demographic evolution in the coming decades. A leading role will also be played by the debate around regulating flows and the integration of the immigrant populations, that is, migratory policy and the redefinition of the European identity itself. According to Domingo, in the EU there will be countries with

positive and negative net migration, with different protagonists depending on the economic situation. However, Domingo opines, demographically considering the future of migrations in Europe and especially in relation to the future of the African continent, that we must fight against certain preconceived ideas and think of co-development plans that are not based on neo-colonialism or political manoeuvring as the backbone of Europe's migration policy. As Domingo states, it seems evident that 'a policy based on curbing migratory flows may turn out to be one of the worst self-fulfilling prophecies'.

In the same line, in her article, Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez examines how lack of consensus, fragmentation, a security-based perspective, externalisation and conditionality have left their mark on the construction of European immigration and asylum policy, noticeably affecting the objectives that it had established. She proposes that the most probable option is adapting and increasing the flexibility of regular access routes, not just for developing a well-regulated and balanced public policy, but also to avoid the dysfunctions that irregularity engenders. Pinyol-Jiménez commits to a scenario in which there is dialogue on inclusion and diversity in society, in a debate based on the principles of democracy and welfare, which are the foundations of European societies, prioritising the fight against discrimination and hate speech. Finally, she believes it is essential to advocate for the Global Compact for Migration and states that not doing so may have a high cost in terms of the survival and legitimacy of the European project.

Finally in this section, Tania Adam postulates how emancipated minorities are changing and intensifying their presence in the public sphere and demanding an end to the essential division between hegemonic and subordinate cultures. Accordingly, Adam affirms, 'The rise of collectives and groups of antiracist and migrant resistance and the inclusion of people with diverse cultural baggage (immigrants or their children) in politics herald the arrival of new patterns in the way European civil society operates'. And she highlights: 'In this changing and uncertain panorama, management of the citizenry could foreseeably take precedence over management of diversity'. It represents a paradigm shift that means no longer just talking about identities in terms of differences, but placing the emphasis on mechanisms of common memory and shared citizenry, while bringing an end to stereotypes, reductionisms and essentialisms associated with migrant populations.

Europe in the global context

Since 2016, the global context has been marked by a rise in national populist political options, in favour of the renationalisation of the geopolitical stage and distrusting multilateral institutions. For these 'strong men' leaders with their authoritative tendencies, international regulations constitute a constraint, and they believe that without them they would be free to recover a dominant position from which they could bilaterally renegotiate a new international order. Given the correlation of forces, the principals on this new global stage appear to be the USA and China, which is why in this issue we have also sought to analyse the EU's relations with the two main blocs with contributions from the two protagonists.

Analysts on both sides agree on the uncertain nature of the global stage upon which these relations are being played out. From the USA, Spencer P. Boyer informs us that the USA 'is perhaps more divided than at any point' and the 2020 presidential election must determine whether the Trump administration's disdain for transatlantic relations lies within the framework of a long-term ideological change or whether the 'tribal' dynamics inherent to America First will soon be reversed. China, on the other hand, is facing this uncertainty with its flagship project the Belt and Road Initiative, an investment and commercial relations project that according to Li Xiaoyu aims to articulate relations with the EU and consolidate their union in the face of common challenges such as 'protectionism, populism, splittism and terrorism, [which] have threatened the world order built after World War II'.

Finally, our aim was also to reflect on the future of the EU's defence. The main risk in this new global scenario with multilateral institutions reduced to a testimonial function is that conflicts would also respond to the satisfaction of domestic policies and not to the maintenance of international regulatory order. Moreover, the fact that Trump has referred to Europe as an 'enemy' increases the urgency of this reflection on community security. Mariola Urrea interprets that it is actually the defence scope that may help overcome the 'integration fatigue' that the EU is suffering and that it offers an unbeatable field to explore differentiated integration options. But, what should the objective of European defence be? Is it securing its borders or keeping the peace? With Pablo Aguiar from the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) we review the principles that have guided the EU's peace policy and its instruments.

The European imaginary

As Marina Garcés states, Europe is living in permanent conflict and dispute concerning its institutions, but above all concerning its collective imaginaries. It is an open conflict in which the stakes are the narrative that describes our situation and the capacity to conquer the new political and economic hegemony. Highly aware of the importance of this imaginary, Ingrid Guardiola proposes contemplating modern Europe in the form of an allegory based on a number of recent films.

Using films like Alice Rohrwacher's *Lazzaro Felice* (2018), which is about voluntary servitude, and Albert Serra's *The Death of Louis XIV* (*La Mort de Louis XIV*, 2016), Guardiola shows us the Europe of the IMF, of the ECB, of financial advisors and of markets, which treat the continent like a cadaver. She also cites the films of Godard and Kaurismäki which 'conjure up the parable of the Good Samaritan in a world in which bureaucracy, cruelty, hate and indifference have put a name to everything', in addition to films like *Le Havre*, which portray the reality of refugee camps and migrants in Calais and 'the "reconstructed identities" of those who have had to flee their home, leaving everything behind, creating a false identity to cross borders and start again from scratch in an atmosphere of hostility and recurring violence'. It is an eloquent review of European cinema with more than fifteen titles in which Europe has become a factory churning out and revisiting our ruins and contradictions, forming our collective memory.

The issue that we dedicate to Europe from IDEES is rounded out with a view from literature. Specifically, by the hands of twelve European writers chosen by the CETC and by Martí Sales, who show us their vision of the old continent from anger, personal experiences or from daily life. A mosaic of diverse and particular gazes that are a sample of today's Europe from essays, poetry or fiction. Because Europe and its future are above all a blank page that we write every day and right now we are collectively writing a new chapter.

**Pere Almeda**

Pere Almeda is the director of the Institut Ramon Llull, a public body founded with the purpose of promoting Catalan culture and language abroad. Previously, he has been the director of the Centre for Contemporary Studies of the Catalan Government and of the IDEES magazine. Jurist and political scientist, he holds a MA in Political Science and a postgraduate in International Relations and Culture of Peace. He is also an associate professor of Political Science at the University of Barcelona. He has collaborated and worked as advisor in different institutions such as the Catalan Parliament, the European Parliament or the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs at the UN Headquarters. Has served as coordinator of the International Project of Sant Pau and Director of the Think Tank Fundació Catalunya Europa leading the project *Combating inequalities: the great global challenge*.