

# Madrid Conference & Britain - The answer to the EU referendum: Plan B for Europe

Thursday 25 February 2016, by [DEARDEN Nick](#) (Date first published: 22 February 2016).

A former Madrid slaughterhouse, renovated to show the awe-inspiring beauty of its architectural design, was last weekend's venue for the rebuilding of Europe. Two weeks after former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis told the EU to 'democratise or disintegrate', Spain played host to this convergence of political parties and movements to thrash out what our 'plan B' consists of [[1](#)].

After Greece, Spain has been on the frontline of the battle against austerity, with mass unemployment, a crisis of housing evictions and draconian laws to prohibit protest. Political tensions are running high here, after a hard-fought election produced no workable coalition. Last week two puppeteers made headlines when they were jailed for 'glorifying terrorism', after unfurling a flag of armed independence group ETA in a satirical glove puppet show. After a public uproar, they've since been released.

But Spain has also produced the most vibrant and creative resistance to austerity - from the 15-M movement which saw mass occupations of public space and inspired the various Occupy amps around the world, decision-making by local neighbourhood assemblies, a civil disobedience anti-eviction campaign which propelled an activist to the position of Mayor of Barcelona, and the formation of political party Podemos born of the movements.

The vibrancy of Spanish civil society was on display in Madrid, but most interest was reserved for former Syriza MPs Yanis Varoufakis, Zoe Konstantopoulou and Costas Lapavistas. The European left were eager to learn the lesson of how Greek sovereignty had been undermined by an unelected Troika. Konstantopoulou insisted that "no more people must be sacrificed for the Euro". What's more she said "when we get the chance of power again, we must be bound by this Plan B."

After two days of discussion, a declaration was published - a framework for building a democratic Europe [[2](#)]. Primary in this document is the need to overthrow the domination of debt. Spain's movements are working on a debt audit to show which of the country's debts are illegitimate and unpayable. "Not a penny should be paid until we know who we are paying and why."

The 1,500 people attending (nearly 5,000 tried to register) needed no convincing that the EU had been captured by corporate interests. The campaign against trade deals like TTIP has brought together those fighting for democracy in Europe and must be escalated. But it must go further, by building alternatives to food and energy systems controlled by big business, and by working with countries like Ecuador, who sent a government representative to the conference, to create global rules to bring corporations to heel.

A common refrain was "A plan b will be for women or it will not be". Women have been affected particularly badly by austerity, and Europe has become more and more unequal. Panels were generally very well balanced, but we need to work on economic models which transform women into equal actors in a new Europe.

Perhaps more than any other issue, the refugee 'crisis' was seen as one which would define the Europe of tomorrow. Speaker after speaker condemned the way the EU has ripped up international law in its treatment of refugees. There was condemnation of the steps underway to militarise the refugee 'response' - with NATO discussing Mediterranean patrols, and the brutal Turkish government being offered billions of euros to keep refugees out of Europe.

It is impossible to imagine a fairer Europe, while we treat human beings from the rest of the world in this way. Europe's economy is based on those from outside Europe - whether they toil within our borders or outside. Building higher walls, topped with more powerful weapons, represents the end of any possibility of a democratic Europe. It must be resisted at all costs.

The framework ends by stating that the state of Europe is now so dire - a political project taking its final heavy steps - that our task is urgent. Civil disobedience is the only way to restore our democracy. We democratise or disintegrate.

On 23 June, Britain has the opportunity to help that disintegration. But what will we be left with? Exit from the EU on the basis of less immigration, less human rights and more financial power, is unlikely to inspire activists across Europe. Rather, Plan B surely gives us an alternative to the choice of a unelected, corporate controlled EU and a little englander, human rights-free Britain. We can reject both - and join activists from across Europe in rebuilding a very different politics.

Another Europe might just be possible.

**Nick Dearden**

---

**P.S.**

\* "The answer to the EU referendum: Plan B for Europe":

<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2016/feb/22/answer-eu-referendum-plan-b-europe>

---

## Footnotes

[1] <http://planbeuropa.es/?lang=en>

[2] Available on ESSF (article 37268), [A Plan B for Europe ? Declaration For a Democratic Rebellion in Europe](#).