

Some ideas on the five workshop questions we have asked

a. What is new in the EU after "entering into the complex crisis" and what does this mean for the approach of modern left/modern socialist politics?

- Whole generations of the population have grown up or are growing up under neoliberal hegemony. They learned thinking as individual, singular human beings, but they suffer a lack of thinking in terms of real self-determination, solidarity and justice.
- The technological basis of mass social isolation has been broadly established in modern societies. But at the same time this technological basis is intimately linked to a rising, already extremely high degree of cooperation and of the 'socialization' of practices.
- The natural conditions of life are continuously diminishing. Global warming and shrinking biodiversity have become irreversible. The consequences for the globally weakest are brutal. A rising number of people have accepted that there is "only this one earth". They are concerned about global poverty, social exclusion, violence against people – above all the socially and globally weakest.
- An increasing scarcity of natural resources is used for pushing through a new stage of surveillance and militarisation; it is also functioning as the driver for scientific research, for technological development and for innovation – in socially, ecologically and globally destructive or constructive ways.
- The crisis of the EU is linked to and embedded within a global financial and economic crisis on the one hand and with global food and environmental crises, with global energy and resources crisis. A renewed EU is needed for enabling and promoting a development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable.
- The development of the EU has been motivated and is motivated by the interests of the economically and politically ruling categories, that is by the interests in global competitiveness, although still backed up by the necessary "social normality" in the EU and its member countries. At this point, there is still a link to the social consensus with larger parts of the population, quite capable of ending this kind of social consensus.
- The economically and politically ruling forces in the EU are not identical with the economically and politically ruling forces in the different EU member states: They first one are capital oligarchies in the globalised society/economy with a controversial relation to capital oligarchies in the USA on the one hand, and with controversial relations to the different more or less national, European and globalised capitalist fractions and elites based in the EU on the other hand. The different capitalist oligarchies, fractions and elites have specific interests in the development of the EU: forced integration with different

speeds and centres, even accepting a declining and shrinking EU. They have specific social linkages to different social groups in socially, economically and culturally different countries and regions.

- The economically and politically ruling forces in the EU have an interest in forced integration, because they are faced with advancing globalization featuring new and dynamically growing actors and the trend towards a declining global role of Europe. They have identified the following challenges:
 - * Demographic change
 - * Migration
 - * Energy and resource security
 - * Climate change, global uncertainties or threats
 - * The need to harness human capital, technologies, public finances, and the labour, commodity and financial markets so as to succeed against the global competition and become the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economic region.
- The capitalist oligarchies embodied by elites in Germany, France and the Benelux countries have different interests from those with mainly British or US related elites. The first one want to empower and to force the EU as their basis in global competition.
- While the Left continues to be weak, the EU's rulers focus their "crisis management" efforts on making sure that any economic or market regulation to be implemented is oriented by the interests of today's capital oligarchies and on "security". Their recipes for success are:
 - *"Economic government" and "more Europe"
 - *"More self- and above all budget discipline" to overcome the "debt crises"
 - * New trade, "partnership" and "neighbourhood agreements"
 - * A common foreign, security and defence policy.

These conclusions don't fail to address real problems but, given the present balance of power in the field of social policy, what they boil down to is:

- * Rollback of democracy and increasing repressions which fuel political, ideological and religious "fundamentalisms", which in turn are used to legitimize surveillance, repression and increased power in the hands of the state
- * Commercialization and privatization of the public sector (justified as "releasing growth potential"), thus further deregulating the economic life of society in contradiction to the avowed policy of strengthening regulatory bodies
- * New – equally growth-oriented – free trade agreements; a foreign-economic strategy aimed at integrating the BRIC states and progressive Latin American actors in the traditional capital-dominated international division of labour in such a way that resources and markets are organized in the EU's own interest ("new extractivism");
- * New uncertainty-generating "security-policy measures and agreements", continuing militarization of international politics, not least in relation to development policy.

- The left have to develop their own political strategies from the perspective of a long term political defensive and structural weakness. So they have search for

contradictions which could be used and for ways to create new political unions. This demands a permanent self-critical reflexion.

b. What is the connection between debt and financialization and how does it work - in relation to centre-periphery relations within the EU and the relations between the EU and the poor/developing countries?

- By “financialization” we do understand the penetration of economic processes and domains by actors and operations in the financial markets. This process is not new. But only with the development of the modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the global neoliberal hegemony financial markets have reached such a dimension that no societally resp. structurally relevant economic transaction could be realised without any influence on mass financial market participation. But behind the financial markets stand the financial oligarchies and the basis of their consensus with large parts of the society. And this consensus and its basis closely are connect to a whole mass culture resp. to the social behaviour of many individuals.

The existence of small groups of leaders in the energy and transport sector, in the areas of “security“, in the agro-business and high-tech or in the spheres of finance is the basis for understanding the specificity of the contemporary capitalist oligarchies which have newly emerged in dramatic crises or the simultaneous transformation of the old capitalist oligarchies into modern ones: their capability of controlling the reproduction of economic processes and societal everyday routines essentially by using the mechanisms of the financial markets, while unflinchingly redistributing income, assets and property in their own favour. They are capitalist elites who – within our highly socialized economies – can rely upon highly concentrated (financial) capital, and on informal and formalized mutual relations – among themselves, with those in government and in politics, with legal practitioners, scientists and professionals, with cultural creators, as well as with the leading forces in other areas of the economy. On the one hand, they have created labour processes and production structures within society, which have offered possibilities of attractive consumption for relevant sectors of the population. On the other hand, they have organized financial markets, in which relevant parts of the society could participate with the aim of facilitating attractive life styles or simply making it possible to have a dwelling, an education, health services, old age provision and nursing.

In this perspective, participation in the financial markets has served the function of making the boundaries between social classes and strata more permeable in the sense of an upward movement, in spite of growing differences of income. Certainly, in this way, they also have become more pervious for a movement downwards – the dangers of social descent have been further increasing. And the growing participation of broader parts of society in the financial markets has in no way contributed to decentralizing the economic or the economic and social policy decision making. In this way, the capitalist oligarchies have created new relations of dependence; they have modified and intensified relations of exploitation, exacerbated social inequalities – but at the same time they have successfully disguised existing contradictions and oppositions, they have successfully corrupted social attitudes and they have intensified the waste of resources and the destruction

of the environment; all in all, they have successfully reproduced their hegemony (Gramsci), not lastly by means of coercion, when needed. A decisive tool in this respect has been the privatization of the public sphere.

- Based on the notion of shareholder value as a philosophy of economic activity, and with hedge funds and private equity corporations as real agencies, finance capitalist relations have reached a new dimension in quantitative terms and have produced new qualitative forms of financialization. „The State“ as such has actively furthered the increase of the available masses of capital on the one, and the enlargement of the spectrum of potential ‘rentiers’ (rent earners) on the other side, bringing in a great number of investors from outside the sphere of finance proper – by simply creating respectively permitting new instruments of finance, on the one hand, while deregulating the financial market and privatizing systems of social security, as well as of public services, on the other hand. This has created new possibilities of managing sovereign debt incurred by governments: by lowering social expenditures and by putting state debt based securities into circulation on financial markets.
- The „normal workings of society“ presuppose that energy security can be taken for granted. On a global scale, the energy related activities alone are responsible for ca. 63% of climate gas emissions, among them of 77% of carbon dioxide emissions. About 28% of climate gas emissions and 36% of carbon dioxide emissions come from the use of electricity and heating. The transport sector alone is responsible for more than a quarter of climate gas emissions. It depends to 96% on oil that is responsible for 95% of emissions linked to transport. The agrarian sector is causing 14% of carbon dioxide emissions. If we add the effects of the destruction of CO₂ binding forests by agrarian land cleanings its destructive value rises to 32%, with the effects of the emissions of CH₄- and N₂O still to be added.

According the ruling forces, these facts should be used for commercialisation and financialization of nature, under the names of “environmental protection”, “rational natural resource management” and of combating air pollution – see the carbon markets resp. the carbon trade.

- Research in the field of political economy has to take up the continuous task of analysing capitalist oligarchies and provide insights into their activities. This includes reconstructing their conditions of reproduction and identifying their basic interests in order to determine their foreseeable lines of action and their probable projects. In this way it can be seen that capitalist oligarchies will work towards a continuing build-up of public debt, towards privatization, financialization, surveillance, militarization, as well as towards the corresponding technological developments and mega-projects, the required legislation and the production of the needed „human capital “. Without these developments, capitalist oligarchies would be unable to secure and to augment their resources, their property, and their domination. They simply have to redistribute, to appropriate, to subalternate, and to subdue – and in so doing they destabilize entire states, they de-solidarize entire populations, they push people into ruin, and they destroy human living conditions. Under the conditions presently prevailing, the capitalist oligarchies are taking up the challenge of making use of the „debt crisis“ (which they have caused themselves) for starting a new strategic offensive. This will specifically focus

upon the issue of extending their spaces of appropriation – which is essentially done via the processes of globalized financialization respectively of financialized globalization. In this very process, the capitalist oligarchies are pushing for economic growth at any price and are trying to marginalize everything which could impair their own economic and ‘security’ interests. Hans Jürgen Krysmanski refers to this by talking about „capitalism based high-tech-refeudalization“ and about the construction of a “high-tech-fight-machine spanning the globe“ (Krysmanski 2009, 2012¹). They try to build the capability of rendering impossible any articulation of alternatives to our present societies.

- In the territorial dimension the stressed processes led into deindustrialization and subordination “as a kind of colonialization” of economically weak(er) regions. These regions are located in countries and are more or less “useless” locations in globalized/global competition. So a kind of a raising new periphery is growing.

c. The "case of Greece" as a challenge for the European Left - what does it mean in terms of politics?

- If and how the left in Europe’s countries deal with the “case of Greece” will be decisive for the future of an European Left. The decisive questions are already and will be:
 - * Do the left appropriate the “Greek problem” as their own
 - * Are they willing and able to practise real solidarity with Syriza/Synaspismos
 - * Are they willing and able to accept the EU as a challenge to them and as their space of political action?
 - * Are they willing and able to develop political strategies fully making use of their comprehensive possibilities of action?

“Their comprehensive possibilities of action” means

- All political levels (from the local to the global)
 - All forms of emancipatory-democratic politics (from street blockades and occupying spaces to participation in a government; from protest and resistance to elaborated conceptions and legislative initiatives).
- Such an approach will have to develop its social-emancipatory activities especially in four interrelated dimensions:
 - * Public finance and social security systems, development aid, budget consolidation and debt cancellation.
 In so doing, it will have to address effectively the comprehensive problematic of financial markets
 - *‘Special projects’ of the ruling forces, of those in government, with regard to concrete concerns such as privatisation, PPP (public-private partnership), megaprojects or problems in the municipality or region. These often have to do with energy, transportation, agriculture, with agrobusiness, “security/defence” and as a whole, therefore, with the competitive national positions of the perpetrators of those problems, with concrete technologies and investment
 - *struggling against Poverty/social exclusion, discrimination and repression/violence – especially by advocating and implementing social,

¹ Krysmanski, Hans Jürgen (2012): Hirten & Wölfe. Wie Geld- und Machteliten sich die Welt aneignen oder: Einladung zum Power Structure Research, Münster.

democratic and ecological (minimum) standards

* struggling against socially and ecologically destructive projects/practices of governments and international institutions (EU, WTO) such as the EU services guidelines, free trade agreements and WTO regulation, as they are already realised or about-to-be-realised.

Any further analysis of the actual social activities will point to the consolidation of the three interconnected strategic areas of action resulting from this analysis:

- Struggling for democratic, social and ecological standards
- Acting for the democratisation of the public space and of political decision-making processes, especially with regard to priorities and principles for the mobilisation and use of public finances
- Building practices of an active and strongly participated local and regional development. In this respect, political initiatives and a general commitment for the structural improvement of the conditions of life of the socially and globally poorest and for the organisation of actors and participatory processes should be especially emphasized. Political confrontations, the struggles against privatisation, destructive projects, corporate practices, megaprojects, and so forth, take place primarily in the municipalities or regions.

d. Which are the criteria for defining left wing alternatives to the ruling policies and their underlying politics and to the dominating types of development?

- Proposed solutions should help to change the political balance of power and thereby help to promote democratic, just, socially and ecologically sustainable development resp. effective solutions for social, ecological and global problems. So they should
 - * Be motivated by the concern of coming to grips with the prevailing conditions, as they present themselves or with everyday social life: first to actively organize solidarity with the socially and globally most vulnerable and still the weakest. This concern is a moral imperative and criterion for socialist politics – also in view of the continuing situation of political defensive imposed upon the left. The cumulative experience of the left is that it makes more sense to focus on common processes of searching instead of the presentation of finished and closed conceptions. Such search processes include the careful analysis and solidarity based accompaniment of specific concrete projects and initiatives, which aim at mitigating or solving special problems within everyday life, individually and collectively. In so doing, the idea is to strengthen and further develop European left politics at the same time – relying upon shared historical experiences, present engagement with realities, while taking full responsibility for global trends and processes.
 - * Initiate, empower, strengthen, and link really existing actors, for which it is required in parallel to analyse specific social activities in themselves, on the one hand, and to identify really existing contradictions between them – especially in underlying perspectives of interest –, on the other hand.
 - * Address the causes and attack those who cause them
 - * Protect, use and enlarge all possibilities for action (see c))
 - * Address the capitalist oligarchies and the development of structures of production and consumption, of modes of production and life on the one side, and of power structures and dominant politics on the other side, which are

connected with them. This will not be possible without addressing the interactivities and intermeshing between the leaders in the six economic domains (in energy, transportation, agribusiness, in the military-industrial complex, in the technology sector, and in the financial sphere). They are dependent, in turn – due to their form and mode of functioning – on mega projects and therefore on state finance policy and legislation, which makes the leaders “in policy”, “in ideology”, and thus “in the media” so important for them. In the capitalist centres, the consensus of large parts of society is organised through income structures, financial markets participation patterns, production and consumption structures and the array of life styles made possible by them, with all their destructive social, ecological and international effects

* Address and stop the debt driven process of financialisation connected especially with the privatisation of social security, nature and its pollution.

e. Which conclusions to draw for further research to be carried out and for redefining left/socialist politics?

- Further research should

* Analyse the concrete interconnection between debt – financialization – capitalist oligarchies – production and consumption pattern, production, consumption and living modes – social structures – ecological and global consequences

*Analyse social actions of democratic, emancipatory and solidarity based agents

* Formulate conclusions for focussing on the work on new political alliances within research itself and in different fields of politics.