

This is the fourth meeting of our EU experts' discussions and I should like to remind or to inform you, very briefly, about its history and also about the main ideas of this project or its underlying "philosophy".

Our first EU experts' discussion has taken place in December 2011. It had the ironic title "**Crisis, Crisis, Euro Crisis**" and helped to overcome a simplifying thinking in terms of "nation states" vs. the "European Union" and/or "Europe". It helped making clear that we have to deal with different, socially heterogeneous member states and the really existing "European Union" made up by them. The workshop helped also making clear that we have to analyse the complex accumulation of capital in a globalized and globalizing world, especially in the form of financialisation. So we have concluded that above all the debt issue must be analysed in a much deeper way, because debt expansion is being used to deepen all social inequalities and to strengthen all existing social hierarchies, with a view to prevent even any first beginnings of a highly necessary socio-ecological transformation. As a next step, the second workshop has been prepared and realized accordingly under the working title of "**The Debt Issue and a New Stage of Neoliberal Transformation of the European Union. Consequences for the Left, Alternatives of the Left.**" In this connection we have highlighted the "Greek Case" and have addressed the cases of other "crisis states". We have concluded that the current debt problem is used as an instrument for enforcing a new wave of financialisation. Talking about how "it is used" provokes the question "how, by whom, and with what consequences?". So at the end of our discussion in autumn 2012, we have formulated three tasks for further research:

- ◆ Analyzing the concrete interconnection between debt – financialization – capitalist oligarchies – production and consumption patterns; societal, ecological and global consequences;
- ◆ Analyzing social actions of a democratic, emancipatory and solidarity based agency;
- ◆ Formulating conclusions for focusing on the work on new political platforms within research itself and, likewise, in different fields of politics.

In this context, the "Greek Case" and the cases of the other "crisis states" remain of special interest. Our respective discussions last year have made it even more clear that the left forces within the EU which want to organize solidarity and societal alternatives are more and more challenged to effectively address the two following, quickly rising problems:

- First, the social inequality relating to countries and regions with populations of different national and cultural backgrounds and nationalities;
- Second, the dramatically rising intensities in the relationship with EU-members as the EU and their neighbours [??].

Both problems are interconnected and we face rising nationalism, racism and fundamentalism. We also have to understand left forces in Scotland, Catalonia, in

the Basque region, or in Wallonia having strong arguments for an exit from their existing multi-national “nation states”. With a view to all this, last year we have decided to deal with the core and periphery debate as a next step.

Belgrade seemed to be an excellent location for doing so. Since our third experts’ discussion, the development of uncertainties and problems has been even further reinforced.

Looking to the Ukraine with its different parts, especially with its Eastern part, but also at the left “separatists” in the afore-mentioned regions – and there are many more rather similar ones – we are concerned about new identitarian and authoritarian models of politics and we are shocked by open and mounting recourse to violence.

We look at Russia both as an aggressor and as a country facing aggression and we do not know whom to support.

Before the open outbreak of the global financial and economic crisis which is interwoven with food, energy, resources, climate and environmental crises, the global role of the United States has been weaker than it seems to be now, in the present time. But this crisis has started in the United States.

Living in a world with dramatic changes, new and old tendencies increasing societal and global inequalities, new and old developments increasing violence we have to enquire, whether the core – periphery – model could help us to develop strategies dealing with the causes and the “causers” of these problems and the crisis effectively.

Such strategies must help us to organize solidarity within and across our societies in a globalized world. Such strategies must strengthen us respectively the alternative forces struggling for societal alternatives.

Rosa Luxemburg has clearly demonstrated how political economy can be a tool for doing so. She has understood that administrative and political borders effectively define the conditions for struggles against social and ecological destruction as well as for struggles aimed at a society of free and socially equal people. But she did not see these borders as defining the limits of her own scientific and political approach. She did not think in nationally limited terms.

If we want to speak with Luxemburg about “peripherisation” in the EU, in Europe and in the world we first need to express solidarity with people living in regions where their living conditions are deliberately worsened and where their opportunities for political influence are limited simply because they live where they live. In other words, “peripherisation” is about a political struggle over social conditions, because social inequality and hierarchies are potentiated, distributed ever more unequally, across territorial and political boundaries.

Our discussion in the workshop will consist of four parts:

- The first part should clarify the global context and the theoretical basis of the discussion.

- The second part should continue our discussion on the complex of Financialisation – Capitalist Oligarchies/Hegemony – Production and Consumption Patterns
- The third part will show how this complex is reflected within concrete countries.
- When the fourth part is called “More Concretely on Alternatives”, it does not mean that the alternatives would be of interest only here.

Of course as all of our work, the entire workshop and the series at large are oriented towards identifying and clarifying societal alternatives, alternatives of society.