First thoughts on our 2014 project:

Working title: “Core and periphery in the European Union – a new phenomenon? Challenges for modern left policies in the EU and in Europe”. Fourth meeting of RLF EU experts’ discussions”

I. On our history

a) On content

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 thinking in terms of “nation states” vs. the “European Union”, making clear that we have to deal with different, socially heterogeneous member states and the “European Union” made up by them.

That is a big difference, especially for working on left wing political strategies.

We concluded that 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, in order to prevent even any first beginning of a highly necessary socio-ecological reconstruction, a socio-ecological transformation.

Debt expansion and ensuing austerity are being used to impose a new, different stage of neoliberal development in Europe.

As a next step, the second workshop has been prepared and realized under the working title “The Debt Issue and a New Stage of Neoliberal Transformation of the European Union. Consequences for the Left, Alternatives of the Left.” The workshop took place in November 2012.

We highlighted the “Greek Case” and cases of the other “crisis states”.

We have analysed and discussed and we had concluded that our work on alternatives needs a much deeper analysis of financialisation, that the current debt problem is used for forcing a new type and a corresponding new wave of financialisation.

Talking about how “it is used” unavoidably provokes the question “how, by whom, and with what consequences?”.

So at the end of our discussion in autumn last year, we have formulated three tasks for the further research:

• Analysing the concrete interconnection between debt – financialisation – capitalist oligarchies – production and consumption pattern; production,
consumption and ways of life – social structures and their social, ecological and global consequences;

• Analysing social actions of a democratic, emancipatory and solidarity based agency;
• Formulating conclusions for focusing on the work on new political alliances within research itself and in different fields of politics.

In this connection the “Greek Case” and the cases of the other “crisis states” remain of special interest.

It has been a collective result of our conversation to highlight the triangle of “Financialisation – Capitalist Oligarchies/Hegemony – Production and Consumption Patterns – Work on Analyses and Alternatives” on our third meeting at the beginning of October this year.

As the workshop organisers we do understand financialisation as a special form of reproduction of finance capital. Therefore, we had a contribution on that issue. Modern finance capital and, consequently, financialisation are globalized. We, therefore, are facing a global financial crisis that is interconnected to a global economic crisis, as well as global food, energy, resources crises, within a complex crisis of reproduction.

This fundamental part has been used for coming to a political conclusion explaining the qualitatively new situation that we have to deal with, when working on left wing political strategies, effectively responding to the fact that the accumulation of finance capital is going on in different areas, concerning diverse and socially unequal people, and on very different levels of the multi-level system of the global polity.

The tendencies and developments we were analyzing do have very concrete consequences for the lives of people. The accumulation of finance capital and the financialisation processes and, in consequence, the reproduction of power relations, however, are specifically connected with concrete production and consumption patterns, with concrete modes of life. This again has very specific consequences for the life of people in concrete territories, in concrete countries and regions, especially with regard to the interests of people, social groups and classes.

Discussing the question what all that means for our work on political strategies, and, consequently, for a type of research useful for this political work we have deepened the conclusions already arrived at in order to organize a discussion on the core and the periphery in the European Union and on perspectives for modern left policy in Europe.

b) On organisation
We are interested in having a long collective preparation process. For that we prefer to use a blog. So please see: http://debt-issues.blog.rosalux.de and http://kapacc.blog.rosalux.de

We were ca. 25 participants with the organizing team Judith Dellheim, Lutz Brangsch and Frieder Otto Wolf. Joachim Spangenberg had also helped strongly by giving very useful suggestions.

We prefer a good mix between “regular customers” or “again comers” and “new comers”. Of course, every time the young people from Croatia and Slovenia have been extremely well prepared and could leave an impressive impact.

All meetings so far have started on Friday at 3 p.m. and finished on Sunday at 1 p.m..

II. On the project for 2014

The workshop will take place in Belgrade from Friday 24.10 to Sunday 26.10.2014.

The international RLF Conference on Rosa Luxemburgs “Accumulation of Capital” http://kapacc.blog.rosalux.de/2013/05/19/100th-anniversary-of-the-accumulation-of-capital-a-contribution-to-an-economic-explanation-of-imperialism-a-century-old-work-remains-current-provocative-and-eminal/ should be used for the preparation process. This concerns three dimensions: 1) the historical: the debate on cores and peripheries is connected with the development of capitalist mode of production, especially of imperialism, and the discussion on dealing with imperialist policy; 2) the methodological: we face two poles in the scientific and political discussion: the neoliberal theoretical and ideological construction and the dependency theories derived from Marxist or more Marxian interpretations of capitalist development.

The neoliberals believe or declare that a linear economic and social progress unites the different areas involved in reciprocal trade relations which would lead to an increasing and enlarging spread of well-being. The dependency theorists agree that the global capitalist system has created rich, developed, technologically sophisticated core and poor exploited and disadvantaged peripheries.

The third dimension concerns the analysis of capital accumulation: People lives in territories – in municipalities, regions and countries. Their living conditions depend on the role of the concrete territories for or in concrete capital accumulation processes and on their concrete role in these accumulation processes.

The accumulation of the capital in the EU and in Europe is closely connected with financialisation and oligarchisation, with the development of concrete social structures, of concrete production and consumption patterns, of concrete territories.

Our work on collective analyses and conceptions of the problematic of peripherisation within the EU and in Europe is of high importance – as it focuses upon the relations among peoples, social groups, classes, generations, women and men of different
ethnic origin. The central challenge is and will be to work on strategies against competition, for organizing solidarity. Here we have to recognize that we were and are not successful regardless all Social Forum Processes, many conferences, workshops and so many activities. It means, we have to ask about the reasons of our failures.

On the one hand, the EU institutions are officially oriented towards reducing social and territory gaps and inequalities and were declared interested in processes bringing poor regions into the line with the richer and rich. So they developed special instruments and funds. On the other hand the EU institutions have focused and continue to focus upon competition among the territories and their inhabitants. But the ensuing development of contradictions threatens the security and the successful development of the EU as a global actor. So the EU institutions have to deal with these contradictions.

Because of the central role of the peripherisation for the life and future of the EU many sciences and many very different scientific, social and political actors deal with this problem: e.g. the Joint Social Conference, Prague Spring Platform, the Platform Solidarity Europe, transform!, EuroMemo, IAPEE, network “Critical Research on Europe”, European Left Party, GUE/NGL are engaged in the discussion. But their discussion is going about the relations between countries, regions and institutions above all.

But working on conceptions and political strategies to transform the society demands the already highlighted analysis of peripherisation in connection with capital accumulation financialisation and oligarchysation, with the development of concrete social structures, of concrete production and consumption patterns.

So one of the main challenges for the workshop preparation is to develop an own approach to the complex of problems to be addressed. Doing so the book “Cores, Peripheries and Globalization”, edited by Peter Hanns Reill and Balazs A. Szeleny – with chapters of Love, Batou, Chirot, Wallerstein, Weber, Kocka, Schultz, David and Spilman, Szelenyi, van der Wee, Brenner, Berend, Hobsbawn – seems to be extremely helpful.

A new workshop blog should be established very soon and should be started by an invitation to read this book, to present own working results, to ask questions and to give suggestions on the workshop challenges and its preparation process.

A possible agenda proposal could be:

**Friday 24.10., 3 p.m.**

“Stocktaking” of the discussion:

- EU officials and EU history
- Own activities
- Overview of the history of the debate
- The history of the Marxian debate
- The accumulation of the capital in the EU and in Europe – closely connected with financialisation and oligarchisation, with the development of concrete social structures, of concrete production and consumption patterns (1)

Saturday 25.10.
- The accumulation of the capital in the EU and in Europe – closely connected with financialisation and oligarchisation, with the development of concrete social structures, of concrete production and consumption patterns (2)
- Analyses
- Case studies
- Scientific consequences
- Political consequences
- Work on alternatives and political strategies (1)

Sunday 26.10.
- Work on alternatives and political strategies (2)
- Consequences.