



Report: The International transform! Zoom Conference in Copenhagen 13 March 2021

Short version

“How to Combat Climate Warming – Green Capitalism or system change ? “

Transform!Danmark organized its ninth international Transform conference in Copenhagen on 13 March 2021, after a year of Corona restrictions which had severely impacted on our lives and work: Last year’s international conference planned for 14 March 2020 suffered a last-minute cancellation. Many transform activities, including ours, during the past year have been conducted online as webinars. As a positive development this has also widened the scope of the activities which have reached a broader public.

Continuing Corona restrictions forced this year’s conference to be organized as an online event, but with essential assistance by transform!europe. Our experience with an online event of this size – both the long hours and the many participants - were somewhat mixed. The content of the conference was impressive with high-quality speakers. The technical side of the conference worked, and we had ensured that there was the usual time for debate. But the debate turned out considerably reduced and subdued compared to previous annual conferences. The usual political, social, and other inter-action at physical conferences was also greatly missed.

The Corona crisis has also underlined the inter-connectedness of the multiple global crises of our time: The need for system change, which had been accentuated by the climate crisis, was in no way reduced by the Corona crisis. WE saw some slow-down of CO2 emissions due to the economic stand-still of many activities during the Corona crisis of 2020 – but this did not last: Last autumn greenhouse gas emissions and concentrations increased. At the same time there was a new experience of the need and the possibility to solve problems in society differently – with more focus

on collective responsibility and input – as opposed to individualism and competition furthered by neo-liberalism. This underlined that a recovery after the Covid crisis should necessarily be coupled with an ambitious green and just transition with a focus on drastically reducing/stopping emissions.

We underlined at the conference two years ago the 2018 report by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) indicating that with no change in emissions temperatures were expected to rise above 1,5 degrees Celsius between 2030 and 2052 already. In the EU adaptation strategy temperatures rising to 3 or 4 degrees at the end of the century are mentioned as realistic if there is no change in policies. Compare this to the Paris Agreement goals of 1,5 or maximum 2 degrees temperature rise by the end of the century. The social and other consequences of these scenarios are enormous. We are talking about global disasters.

As a new development since a year ago the EU and the national governments have put forward more concrete climate policies and plans, enabling the speakers of the conference to contribute with evaluations of these policies, which are seen more or less as attempts to combine green policies with market policies: Green Capitalism.

This year's conference was therefore inspired by the same ideas as last year. The conference was a contribution to the debate on if and how to initiate system change and not rely on the inadequacies of green Capitalism. The climate crisis highlights the need for system-breaking initiatives, especially to mobilize for an urgent strengthening of the movement and of radical efforts to work for red and green alternatives. For this reason, we chose to keep the title of the conference and some of the headlines of the sessions.

The preamble to the programme of the conference outlined the basic concerns of the conference:

“The industrial and economic slowdown due to the pandemic is no substitute for sustained climate action. How can concrete and more ambitious goals in climate and environmental policies be achieved? Are the measures and goals adopted by the EU, governments, and institutions much more than a greening of capitalism? And how much can be achieved by green capitalism/green growth against the background of the real challenges of climate warming? Climate action should be part of the recovery programmes, but are they not being absorbed by neoliberal policies?”

Besides Transform!Danmark and transform!europe, the conference was co-organized by Enhedslisten/the Red-Green Alliance, the Danish radical left party, as

well as a number of left-wing and environmental organizations, including NOAH - Friends of the Earth, Global Aktion, and web-magazines.

The conference

The conference was organized as previously with a plenary in the morning with two speeches, and two parallel sessions in the afternoon.

The speeches in the morning by two speakers of the South were global and general. Whereas the contributions in the afternoon were by Europeans and Scandinavians focusing on one hand on an evaluation of present EU and national climate policies and the contributions and actions of grassroots movements; and on the other on the long-term system-breaking solutions to climate change.

Walden Bello, writer, professor, and climate activist from the Philippines, was opening the conference and had been invited to contribute with an economic/ecological perspective and overview of the global crises. I.e. a more overall perspective of global developments and not primarily on the climate crisis. The content was a wake-up call: The end of Neo-liberalism is near, the centre of politics is falling apart, not least induced by the spread of the pandemic the past year in an economic system already in deep crisis. His speech was displayed on the screen and read aloud by himself and has been published on the transform!europe website (www.transform-network.net) as well as translated into Danish.

Whereas **Sabrina Fernandes**, a scholar and climate activist from Brazil, with a view from the South, focused on the urgency to build successful climate action and radical mass movements and worldwide solidarity between and with the oppressed peoples.

WE had deliberately tried to include both politicians, academics, and grassroots activists in the parallel afternoon sessions for a diversified view of climate policies, the input of the grassroots movements, and the long-term alternatives. Just a couple of weeks before the conference, **Fernando Racimo**, an activist of the Extinction Rebellion, agreed to speak about their movement and positions and spoke just after the lunch break.

The speakers of the second session were **Helmut Scholz**, an MEP of Die Linke (The LEFT group in the European Parliament), **Laura Horn**, an associate professor at the Danish RUC (Roskilde University Centre), and **Jacob Sørensen**, an activist of NOAH – Friends of the Earth. Whereas the last contribution dealt mainly with the positions and activities of NOAH in a power-point presentation, the two other speakers reported very negatively on - on one hand, - the effects of the EU trade agreements, and on the other, the Climate Law of the Danish Social Democratic minority government.

The speakers of the third session, running parallel to the second session, were **Lotta Hedström**, a former spokesperson of the Swedish Miljöpartiet/Green Party, and **Jean-Claude Simon**, transform!europe and La France Insoumise, France, who dealt exclusively with systemic alternatives to climate change, focusing on two strategic perspectives: Eco-socialism and eco-feminism. Both were power-point presentations.

The conference programme, the recording of parts of the conference (the morning programme esp.), some of the speeches, and the power-point presentations from the conference can be viewed on the Transform!Danmark website:

www.transformdanmark.dk

The report of the conference will be published by transform!europe:

www.transform-network.net

Transform!Danmark

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