

How to incorporate system change as part of ideological foundations of the left and in the trade union?

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The title of our panel is: How to incorporate the idea and the aim of a system change as part of ideological foundations of the left and in the trade unions. The answer to this question is both quite simple and incredible difficult. It is simple, because we live in radical times and because we need radical answers to them. There are huge opportunities for the left, because we live in times with huge protest. The contradictions of capitalism are that big that more and more people are questioning the existing system, which is based on social production and private appropriation.

There are not just the impressive school-strikes of Fridays for Future, there are also big movements like Me-too or Black-lives-matter and currently perhaps a new peace movement. This movements give us an audience for our ideas and the aim of an alternative, a better system.

In Chile the people win the fight against the dictator's old neoliberal constitution and bring a new one on its way - an impressive victory over neoliberalism. In Berlin people successfully organized a referendum for the expropriation of large housing groups. Almost 60 percent voted in favor.

And Klaus Dörre, a German sociologist, describes in his new book, how he took part in the founding meeting of „Students for Future“ in May 2019. The lecture hall was full - hundreds of students were come. And he actually should give a lecture on global warming and the social consequences. And then he asked the audience whether sustainability is possible under capitalism - and the audience called NO. And then he made the suggestion to socialize large corporations because of their blocking attitude towards climate goals and he received thunderous applause.

To say it clear: In my opinion it is not a matter of course that people question the bourgeois ideas and the system where they live. Many of us have been leftists for decades and we still know times, when people called us crazy because we talked about expropriations and system change. But this is normal in the times today.

The reason for these breaks in people's heads are huge social, ecological and political upheavels and deep contradictions of capitalist society. What we experience is quite more than a normal crises - it is a multiple crises with different tipping points that can existentially change the world and our coexistence.

There is first of course the climate change. Not a single country's trajectory is in line with Paris Agreement. Contrary to promises, limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees is no longer tenable. In the best-case scenario the earth will warm up to at least 1.8

degrees and only if all states keep their promises, for which they do not have often measures or implementation plans. More likely is a much stronger global warming to around 2.7 degrees or more.

But the climate change is not the only one with tipping points. Also the old question of social justice we still have not been able to solve has a tipping point as well as increasing authoritarianism or the danger of war - what we could see now in Ukraine. I do not want to go into detail here about everything that has led to the situation escalating in the past. But never was the danger of a third world war nearer than today.

Each of these developments has a tipping point, that - once passed - causes irreversible damage that cannot be reversed and of course these individual developments are interrelated. They stand for the deep crises that goes far beyond the crises of the last few decades.

The German sociologist Klaus Dörre calls this an economic-ecological double or pincer-grip crises. That means, that economic growth and the dynamics of capitalist production have been transformed into an ecological destructive force. The pincer-grip crises says that the most important means of overcoming economic stagnation and pacifying internal conflicts in capitalism, the production of economic growth, is ecologically destructive and therefore socially destructive.

So, what we have to understand is: This is not a normal crises, it is a fundamental, it is a historical crises. And the answer of the Left must be in line with this historical situation - the answer of the Left must be a kind of Eco-Socialism. Eco-Socialism, which does not take care that the production costs are not passed on to the workers and the environment.

Eco-Socialism as an answer to the most urgent questions of our time to refuse the different tipping points. It should be a vision which unites all the people who in different ways fight against the many negative impacts of capitalist production and appropriation. It should be a vision, which unites all this activists behind the idea of a better, socially just, ecologically sustainable and peaceful society.

And we need a vision. Social-ecological system change is not just buzzword, but prerequisites for preventing the climate catastrophe. But it is not enough to demand system change, not climate change - we also need to know, what kind of society we want - that's why we need a vision of Eco-Socialism.

We know: without changing the way of doing business and living it will not be possible to save the climate. Thats why a system change is not just a question of ideas, it is also a question of power relationships. And trade unions are a relevant actor we cannot do without.

An examination of the University of Oslo in 2019 came to the same conclusion. Researchers have studied all social movements over the last hundred years. And they figured out, that they won their struggles, if the working class, especially the industrial working class, played a relevant role in this movements.

This has to do with the organized power of the working class. Through their work they are used to cooperate with each other. And they have a very clear idea of which side of the class conflict they are on. And in the company there are many different opinions on many different questions. But the crucial question is: How do you feel about the union? Did you decide to join the union or not? Did you decide to push through improvements together or not? Are you there, when everyone stands together or not? This is the value of the union. And social movements need the collective experience and the strength of organized labour.

Now we have the situation that both unions and social movements need to clarify some strategic questions. The unions for example are in a difficult situation. In Germany we can see, that employers want to take something away from their employees' wages. This is new and a real paradigm shift. Because until the pandemic it was normal that employers did not want wage increases. But they never wanted to take anything away from the employees, therefore they were too afraid of the unions. Everything should always remain as it is, because for employers there was never the right time to raise wages.

But now we could see in the last big collective bargaining rounds in the metal industry and in the public sector that employers wanted to change the wage system and eliminate special payments. This means trade unions have to play a more conflict orientated role than in recent years. They need to do this also because the current industries transformation is mostly not in the interest of the workers.

In the focus of the capital is substantial money to be made from renewable energy technologies, green infrastructure, the transition from oil powered to various forms of electric transport, low carbon construction and so on. The capital is embracing the ecologic transformation as long as they can make profit.

But good working conditions reduce profits. Thats why trade unions must fight the struggle for both an ecological conversion of industry and good working conditions. And they must do this because trade unions never only fight for good working conditions, but also for good living conditions. This means at a time when destruction of climate has become so existential that social and ecological question are organically linked. Thats why the labour movement needs a climate turn.

But of course also the climate movement needs to have a strategic discussion. After Glasgow is clear: limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees is not longer tenable. The central question for the climate movement is: how can it reorient itself? In the past three years, the strategy of large parts of the climate movement has been to oblige

governments to adopt consistent policies or to use widespread protest to work towards progressive parliamentary majorities.

From Germany I can tell you: this strategy didn't work. The result of the federal election in last September was not enough for new green and left-wing majorities. Despite the climate protest the results of the Green Party with 14.8 percent and the left party with 4,9 percent were disappointing. And the coalition agreement of the new government is disappointing as well and very far to be a program to stop the climate change.

Protect the climate or be deselected - this political threat of the movement to raise the pressure to the government is no longer credible since the elections - at least not in Germany. Many climate activists are frustrated by the drastic contradiction of the slow pace of political processes. While governments taking tiny steps forward the climate crises is in the fast lane.

Not only at Fridays for Future but also in other parts of the climate movement a discussion is now erupting about how to proceed. The radical part of the movement demands further radicalization. They plan to sabotage fossil fuel infrastructure, cars and buildings of industry. After Glasgow, they said, the climate movement needs to decide between militancy and irrelevance. If the climate crises is progressing more and more radically, then the actions to stop it must also become more radical - this is the logic of the discussion.

But as much as I can understand the impatience, I also say clearly: sabotage is an expression of weakness and a substitute for a lack of anchoring. There is no shortcut - we must identify the pressure points to change the existing power relationship. Without social allies and certainly without the trade unions, the movement cannot win the fight against fossil industry interests. What the climate movement needs is a labour turn.

What the left has to understand is its role in this situation. We must be a part of the strategic discussion in the different movements and bring them together. We must be the ones who politically generalize current social developments and connect the different struggles.

The transport sector in particular offers a wide range of opportunities for cooperation. In the collective bargaining disputes between public transport employees, the climate movement can use its strong position in public discourse to legitimize and support the strikes. They exactly did this in Germany 2020 - they showed that climate friendly jobs must also be well paid.

Thousands of transport workers shoulder to shoulder with climate activists - and that happens not by coincidence. We, the Left, were the ones who organized the solidarity. That's why I say: We must be the ones who guide people and help them understand

the chaos that is happening around them. And we must become the pole of hope with a vision of a different society. If not us, nobody will probably do this.

Clear is: The urgently needed change of direction which would have to be enforced against the interests of corporations and their profit logic and which would have to be combined with new forms of ownership and a fundamental democratization of the economy and the society is not to be expected from any government. For the Left must be climate issues social and class issues - in double sense.

The ecological footprint of the consumption of a wealthy person in the top one percent is much more higher than the footprint of a poor person. However, the lower income groups are already being hit the hardest by the consequences of the climate catastrophe. The fight against the climate crises is at the same time a fight against poverty, even a central prerequisite for it. Climate policy is therefore an integral part of social justice and a class issue. And when we talk about class issues related with climate issues, then is clear: the working class must play an active role in the struggle for a social-ecological system change.

I know all this is not very simple, its quite difficult in general and because of the current situation. The war in Ukraine changes a lot and is a very big backlash for the left, for the unions and for the climate movement as well. But there are no shortcuts. We need the political impatience, the moral compass and the energy of the climate movement as well as the power, the proud and the solidarity of labour movement - and then we have a world to win.