



## **Report: The International transform! Hybrid Conference in Copenhagen 12 March 2022**

### **“Planet emergency - why combating climate change demands system change”**

Transform!Danmark organized its tenth international Transform conference in Copenhagen on 12 March 2022. Corona restrictions had been lifted, which made the organizers choose to make a hybrid conference with the advantages of both a physical presence and a Zoom conference – allowing for more direct debate as well as open to more participants online. In fact, nearly all speakers chose to participate in person at the conference. But we were somewhat disappointed with a more meagre physical presence than at our conferences before Corona.

Transform!europe was a great help with the technical side of the conference, and the participants from transform!europe allowed for an aftermath on the Sunday after the conference of a deeper debate between them and a small group of participants and speakers (e.g. Dorothy Guerrero) on global developments and the plans for the future.

A couple of the co-organizers were very helpful as well – one Global Aktion helped with activists, another NOAH, Friends of the Earth, helped with vegetarian lunch, coffee, tea etc.

The conference (programme and speakers) was in place before the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which was a fact just a few weeks’ old at the time of the conference. So, there was no time to discuss the impact of war and rearmament on

climate change at this conference, but it was mentioned and underlined. As this was lacking at the conference, we decided to include it in the climate conference in March 2023.

The Corona crisis has 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: Greenhouse gas emissions and concentrations have increased. At the same time the Corona crisis gave 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 Corona crisis should necessarily be coupled with an ambitious green and just transition with a focus on drastically reducing/stopping emissions.

### **The conference - content**

As opposed to previous conferences, this conference focused more on concrete climate action and had invited speakers and activists deeply involved in the battle to stop or reduce climate change. Keynote speakers in Session 1 in the morning were **Dorothy Guerrero** of Global Justice Now and a central organizer of the COP26 alternative People's Summit in Glasgow, as well as **Paul Figueroa** of Puerto Rico, dealing with the concrete and crude climate impact of American colonialism in his country. The focus in Session 2 in the afternoon was on different sides of European climate action: The trade union perspective (**Ulrike Eifler**, German trade unionist), a study of the French climate movement (**Gala Kabbaj**, Espaces Marx, France), and of the role of academics in the climate struggle (**Fernando Racimo**, Scientist Rebellion, Denmark). And in Session 3, the only session taking place purely online, a discussion on economic growth and degrowth with **Ulrich Brandt**, political scientist from University of Vienna, and **Timothée Parrique**, French ecological economist from Lund University, Sweden. In fact, as this discussion was an online event, we decided to continue it, if possible with the same speakers, at a physical follow-up event later in 2022.

As previously, the preamble to the programme of the conference outlined the basic concerns of the conference:

*“With the increasing extreme weather disasters around the world, climate change has come much closer in the everyday life of ordinary people. This is compounded by*

*the report issued in August 2021 by the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), announcing drastic and much faster global warming. It therefore also weighs on politicians to deliver much faster on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and social and ecological transition. How is the outlook for this?*

*We will address the issue of the present and real state of global warming reflected on the background of the attempts by political decision-makers to address the issue of climate change. We aim to continue to pursue and reinforce our arguments and work for system change. The neoliberal era – as we know it - is at an end and persistent political attempts to combine climate policies with neoliberalism and economic growth will fail, to the detriment of the climate and us all. System change is needed to combat climate change. It is vital for an understanding of the climate struggle that it is part of the class struggle. This is the core of our perspective to build political, economic, social, and ecological alternatives. But global action is needed. As previously, we also wish to include a focus on combating the severe climate problems outside Europe and the responsibility of the global North in this regard.*

*But it is also our role to develop the debate and contribute with this and our conclusions to raising the knowledge and consciousness of climate change in the Danish, and European/international public, as well as combining this with a wider long-term eco-socialist/eco-feminist perspective.”*

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 Solidaritet and Kritisk Revy.

The conference was organized as previously with a plenary, Session 1, in the morning with two speeches, and two parallel sessions, 2 and 3, in the afternoon.

**Marga Ferré**, Co-President of transform!europe, opened the conference.

### **Session 1: Global considerations**

**Dorothy Guerrero**, Philippines and Britain, Global Justice Now, COP26 Coalition, title of contribution: *“COP26 Unsurprisingly failed, next steps for a long-term struggle for systemic changes”*

Dorothy Guerrero said in her introduction: “We won’t be able to tackle climate change without a radical transformation of the global economy and reparations from those who fueled climate change to those facing its worst impacts. Linking the climate crisis with economic, racial, gender and social justice is the only way to cool

the planet. Many are now connecting the dots and getting the message across that the fight against climate change is a fight for system change. We need to rewrite the rules of our global economic system if we want to save ourselves. What are the challenges and conflicts we need to win to put the rules we want in place? How do we strategize around the short-term processes of COP alternative summits as part of a longer-term program?”

See Dorothy Guerrero’s speech *on the Transform!Danmark website*:  
[www.transformdanmark.dk](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

**Paul Lippert Figueroa**, Puerto Rico, Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), title of contribution: ***“Climate emergency in Puerto Rico – as a result of United States colonialism”***.

Paul Figueroa underlined that “Puerto Rico is a nation in danger of extinction. If the climate crisis does not kill my nation, then twenty-first century settler colonialism will. In Puerto Rico we are experiencing the worst excesses of the capitalist climate crisis. The Fiscal Control Board of Puerto Rico, imposed by the United States’ PROMESA (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability) Act have privatized our electric energy authority, putting 100% of our electric power and 50% of our freshwater resources in the hands of one American corporation. This same corporation refuses to pursue green energy alternatives and is non-compliant with pre-existing climate standards....”

See Paul Figueroa’s speech *on the Transform!Danmark website*:  
[www.transformdanmark.dk](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

**Session 2: Green Capitalism or system change – two competing understandings of how to combat climate change. The roles of the left parties and the climate/environmental movement.**

The speakers of the second session focused on the experiences and expectations within the social movements and their role in fighting for system change:

**Ulrike Eifler**, German Trade Unionist and Chairwoman of the federal working group « Company and Union » within DIE LINKE, had chosen the title:

***“How to incorporate system change as part of the ideological foundations of the left and in the trade unions ?”***

See Ulrike Eifler’s speech *on the Transform!Danmark website*:  
[www.transformdanmark.dk](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

**Gala Kabbaj**, France, Espaces Marx (transform!europe network). Her contribution was a power-point show with the title:

***“Climate movement and the environmental issues as part of an anti-Capitalist agenda. Opportunities and difficulties for the green and left parties.”***

Introduction: “On the basis of data collected from climate protestors and signatories of environmental petitions, Gala Kabbaj will draw a portrait of the climate movement in France and present the ideological and strategic questions it poses to the left-wing parties, as well as the relationships it establishes with each of them.”...

See Gala Kabbaj’s power-point presentation *on the Transform!Danmark website*: [www.transformdanmark.dk](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

**Fernando Racimo**, Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen. Member of Scientist Rebellion Denmark, focused on the important part played by academics in promoting system change:

***“Scientist Rebellion: what is the role of academics in enabling system change?”***

**Session 3: The impact of economic growth on climate change and systemic alternatives. The role of degrowth – is there such a thing as sustainable green growth ?**

**Timothée Parrique (speaking online)**, France, ecological economist at the School of Economics in Lund University, Sweden. Title: ***“What is Degrowth? - Capitalism or socialism without growth”***

Timothée Parrique introduced his contribution as follows: “ The presentation will articulate the case for degrowth, then explain why under capitalism it is impossible to have degrowth, and why degrowth requires a post-capitalist transformation. I will engage also with arguments by modernist socialists that unlimited (green) growth is possible under a hypothetical socialism.”

See Timothée Parrique’s power-point presentation *on the Transform!Danmark website*: [www.transformdanmark.dk](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

**Ulrich Brandt (speaking online)**, Austria/Germany, political scientist, Professor of International Politics at the University of Vienna, from Sept 2021 to August 2022 Research Fellow at Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Berlin, had the following title for his speech:

***“Degrowth as a cornerstone for eco-socialist strategies against emerging green capitalism”***

He explained in his introduction: “I will approach the topic in a complementary way. Current debates on leftist Green New Deals or eco-socialist strategies focus – besides the questioning of the power of private capital - often on a stronger

economic role of the state and massive public investment. Therefore, and in line with current debates on degrowth, a first argument is that radical alternatives need a realistic understanding of the state. Second, that a critical analysis of current capitalist dynamics and radical alternatives need to consider the international dimensions that need to be changed - i.e. the imperial mode of living. And thirdly, the emergence of a Green Capitalism is the context in which radical alternatives need to be formulated and pursued. How to refer politically to those green-capitalist dynamics?"

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](http://www.transformdanmark.dk)

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

[www.transform-network.net](http://www.transform-network.net)

Transform!Danmark

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