

In Search of Possibilities for Action

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After outlining the question to be addressed – how to overcome the present great and complex crisis – we shall present our own political-economy-based approach to the transformation debate, and focus it on the search for possibilities of action and thus on our ideas of transformation processes within everyday social life. This contribution presents ideas developed in the booklet *Exiting the Crisis. Socio-ecological Transformation*.² With this publication, the authors presented a socialist-accented contribution to the debate on sustainability “from below”, which in no way minimizes the enormous importance of government action, of official international organisations and treaties, but recognises their limitations. Our central concern – in the booklet as well as in this text - is to develop our own understanding, thinking and action – via concrete proposals on the analysis of problems, on ideas for solutions, on available experiences and on other proposals – and at the same time to promote or initiate problem-solving oriented communication and cooperation with socially critical scholars and active participants in social struggles.

Outline of the Problem

In the continuing and expanding financial and economic crisis, and in view of massive global poverty, extreme pollution of air, water and soil, of the rapid disappearance of biological diversity and of the increasing scarcity of natural resources, in view of the palpable and menacing force exercised over people, our booklet proceeded from the idea that humanity should (or could still be) be so embedded in the biosphere that individual people – women, men, girls and boys – could become individually free, socially equal and solidary with one another – and that this would contribute to maintaining, healing and improving the natural bases of their lives.

The booklet was especially meant to offer interested citizens, colleagues, friends and comrades an orientation towards a better understanding of the various crises and their interaction, of the most urgent social and global problems and, via this “detour”, towards discovering possibilities for intensifying out political confrontation and struggles. It takes as its starting point the assessment that the citizens of Germany and of the EU see the crises as proving “that things cannot continue in the same way”; that most people want to live in self-determined dignity and in solidary cooperation within an intact nature and would like this to be possible for everyone worldwide. We do observe clearly that a great part of citizens are ready to engage in politics when they see themselves attacked in their everyday life or when they begin to see possibilities of getting nearer to the fulfilment of their wishes. Furthermore, the brochure formulates from the thesis that the everyday life of citizens offers many starting points for a confrontation with the ruling elites, in general, and the leaders in those economic sectors principally responsible for social and ecological destruction, more specifically: the mutually interpenetrating energy, transport and agricultural/agro business enterprises, the military-industrial complex (MIC) and the security sector, the financial and the high-tech sector. These areas are the pillars of the reigning structures of production and consumption, the

¹ In cooperation with Frieder Otto Wolf

² Lutz Brangsch, Judith Dellheim, Joachim H. Spangenberg, Frieder Otto Wolf, *Den Krisen entkommen. Socialökologiwische Transformation* [Exiting the Crises: Socio-ecological Transformation], Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Manuskripte 99, Berlin 2012. In the present contribution, quoted passages from this publication are not explicitly indicated.

modes of production and life, with which the development and reproduction of capital oligarchies³ are inseparably intertwined.

Energy-related activities are responsible worldwide for ca. 63 % of global climate-damaging emissions, including 77 % of all carbon dioxide emissions. About 28 % of climate-damaging emissions and 36 % of carbon dioxide emissions derive from electricity and heating. The *transportation economy* is responsible for more than a fourth of climate-damaging emissions. It is 96 % energy-dependent on oil, which causes more than 95 % of transportation emissions. *Agriculture* causes ca. 14 % of carbon dioxide emissions. If we add to this the CO₂ absorption destroyed through deforestation, the climate-related value goes up to 32 %. To this are added CH₄ and N₂O emissions.⁴ But more than a billion people suffer from hunger and malnutrition and many millions more from energy poverty. The development and reproduction of the material and social structures connected to these data is essentially associated with *armaments and militarisation*, with violence and wars. The military-industrial complex (MIC) is not only the big customer of energy, transport, and

³ In the booklet, the analysis of capital oligarchies is given special emphasis: The concept of “capital oligarchy” stands for a specific quality of social relations that include: people who in their functions as proprietors, financiers, managers, civil servants, politicians, lawyers, advisors, military, “security specialists”, members of scientific elites and participants in think tanks, functionaries of international organisations, etc. have the capacity to appropriate social resources, across diverse social groups, and thus to usurp even the resources of other capital groups. This capacity results from their position in society. It generates a common interest between them, and therefore similar political and economic ways of acting.

Capital groups that function as bearers of these networks, strive to determine the development of all the areas of “the economy” and society relevant to them. In particular they carry out speculative activities – in the finance sector in particular – referring to state debts, currencies, fuels and raw materials, food and soil, and other activities aimed at creating or reproducing specific relations of domination. Capital oligarchies developed earlier and quicker in the USA than in other parts of the world. Even though they are not a US phenomenon, they had an enormous impact in shaping worldwide developments and continue to influence them, due to the structure of US society – due to the interlocking of the globally most powerful in the financial sphere, in the high-tech sector, in the energy economy, in transportation, in agribusiness and in the security sector/MIC within the US, and due to the global strategic weight of the USA.

In Germany and in the EU, the financial oligarchies have had a somewhat different development. Here they have to deal with other limits set by the parliamentary system, the traditional “authoritarian state”, and corporatism.

Capital oligarchies essentially reproduce themselves via financial markets, not primarily via their property as entrepreneurs, as owners of specific enterprises. Their interest is thus global in the widest sense. They move fuel, raw materials, food, soil or (potential) agriculturally productive land, especially through financial-market instruments. They can do this in very brief intervals of time and space, and across great distances, thanks to microelectronics and modern information and communication technologies. These movements of resources occur primarily, on the one hand, through the purchase and sale of securities (especially of stocks, corporate bonds, government bonds and derivatives, i. e. fictitious capital), while they are implemented, on the other hand, through interventions in the political decision-making processes by means of the distribution of public finances, the deployment of social resources (knowledge, education, public investments, research subsidies), as well as through laws. That capital oligarchies could and can continually realize their interests in dealing with state debt, decisions on mega projects, privatisation of public goods or social security systems, demonstrates their power in the social reproduction system.

The members and activities of modern capital oligarchies are overlaid and locked together by those of the “old” financial oligarchies via personal ties, similar educational paths or financial interlocking between enterprises. This widens their areas of social influence, which (in the last analysis) always rests on their power positions in energy, transportation, and agribusiness, in the financial sphere/industry, in the high-tech sector and in the security sector.

⁴ <http://cait.wri.org>

agriculture/agribusiness. It has also shaped these sectors.

Due to the role and reciprocal interlocking of these four areas with the consumption of natural resources, the pollution of air, water and soil, the overuse of the ecosystem and their role in the production of violence against people, they are identified as the “destructive quartet” in our booklet.

Illustration of reciprocal relationships between energy economy, transportation and agriculture and the military-industrial complex and thereby of networks of protagonists as well as capital oligarchies

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Energy economy		Fuel, lubricants	Fuel, fertilisers, plant-protection substances	Fuel, lubricants
Transportation	Energy transport		Transportation of fuel, fertilisers and plant-protection products, agricultural products, etc.	Means of transportation and transports
Agriculture	Acreage, raw materials	Biofuels		Biofuels, acreage
Military-industrial complex	Energy security, Excessive land use	Securing of transports	Sealing of surfaces, excessive land use	

Columns (2) to (5) stand for the recipients of goods delivered, who are at the same time producers of new demand. Column (1) stands for the suppliers of the goods.

The “destructive quartet” and, in particular, the MIC/security sector have essentially co-determined the development of the technology sector and of the financial sphere. The technologies and movements of finance form the basis of the development and interconnection of the quartet, its dynamic and its economic, ecological and above all social effects.

The development of structures of production and consumption, of modes of production and life on the one side, and of power structures and dominant politics on the other side, is not explicable without the interactivities and intermeshing between the leaders in these six economic domains (in the “destructive quartet”, in the technology sector, and in the financial sphere with the finance industry: “4+2”). “4+2” are dependent, in turn – due to their form and mode of functioning – on mega projects and therefore on state finance policy and legislation, which makes the leaders “in policy”, “in ideology”, and thus “in the media” so important for them. In the capitalist centers, the consensus of large parts of society is organised through income structures, financial markets participation patterns, production and consumption structures and the array of life styles made possible by them, with all their destructive social, ecological and international effects.

A socialist approach

Socialist goals are already reflected in the idea cited at the outset of this article, which recalls Karl Polanyi’s notion of an embedding of economic relations that sets people free, making them socially equal and solidary in the biosphere the saving of which is made possible in this way. The authors think of this process of re-embedding as the result of people’s striving for the fulfilment of their individual life-goals, while defending themselves against heteronomy, discrimination, violence and the destruction of nature, therefore they orient themselves towards the actions of all those who share this thinking or may be won over to it.

The analysis of problems undertaken in the booklet and the proposed solutions are motivated by the concern of coming to grips with the prevailing conditions, as they present themselves or with everyday social life: first to actively organize solidarity with the socially and globally most vulnerable and still the weakest. This concern is a moral imperative and criterion for socialist politics – also in view of the continuing situation of political defensive imposed upon the left. The cumulative experience of the left is that it makes more sense to focus on common processes of searching instead of the presentation of finished and closed conceptions. Such search processes include the and solidary accompaniment of specific concrete projects, which in turn aim at mitigating or solving special problems in everyday life, individually and collectively. In so doing, the idea is to strengthen and further develop European left politics at the same time – relying upon shared historical experiences, present engagement with realities, while taking full responsibility for global trends and processes.

In seeking possibilities of political action within contradictions, in analysing and discussing, the authors have, in particular, identified three political areas of action, which are interconnected (liable to be connected): The striving for democratic, for social – in particular, a poverty-proof minimum social security – and for ecological standards (1), for the maintenance and democratisation of the public sphere, above all of public finance (2) and for an active striving for a constructive local and regional development (3).

Participatory processes as such do constitute an essential connecting bridge between (1), (2) and (3). The authors here see existing real and potential possibilities for people to appropriate knowledge and capacities for solidary cooperation, for dealing actively with the causes and perpetrators of social and ecological problems, and in so doing for creating (or being able to create) viable political alliances, and for positively changing (or being able to change) collective and social life in

a sustainable way – acting in the European and global context via solidary networking, locally and regionally, supra-regionally,. In particular, the three following contradictions can and must be used productively: The capitalist mode of production requires cooperation among people. The people co-operating on this basis can defend themselves to some degree against the pressures to be just isolated individual workers (this is also true for those who are highly qualified) producing social and ecological destruction (a). The new technologies and financialisation⁵ not only open up new fields for the accumulation of capital but also new possibilities of individual independence. They create needs for more possibilities of choice in the shaping of one's individual life. The new technologies not only offer the capital oligarchies new possibilities of expanding their power but also those who are fighting them and working on social-political alternatives (b). People in very diverse social situations are interested in their – and at least in their children's – health and education , in self-determination and therefore in reasonable work and secure income, in intact nature and in a peacefully functioning everyday life. They see themselves as being thoroughly threatened by competition, the destruction of nature, social and global divisions, by political and religious fundamentalisms, and by surveillance and militarisation. They can also refuse to accept the explanations and political answers of the rulers. Even those who in diverse ways participate in the administration of society mostly work towards a certain identity of interests of socially and politically very heterogeneous forces: Under conditions of the reigning mode of socialisation and in particular of global competition, the “quality of human capital” and competitive national positions are indispensable conditions for success along with “relatively reasonable” use value of air, of water and of land. In addition “there is only this one world” (c) – so that struggles over interests among the factions of capital become unavoidable.

The decisive question for the left arises of whether and how “certain identities of interests” can be used in order to successfully act against social and ecological destruction and to introduce sustainable solutions to problems.

In this context, a great importance is normally assumed by the defence, by the using and expanding of individual and collective possibilities of action, by the possibilities of choice in everyday life. Such “choices” between “more” or “less” competition, between “more” or “less” participation in the exploitation of those who are weaker, or in the wasting of resources and in environmental pollution and destruction become common-place. In any case, the booklet focuses on the limits within which individuals can choose their life style in a socially and ecologically responsible way, because people have not learned to do so and the needed learning processes in society have not been ; because in society reasonable modes of behaviour are not effectively honoured and destructive modes of behaviour are not correspondingly sanctioned, if not provoked and abetted; because the required individual possibilities of choice are not opened up, due to the given social structures of production, consumption and social everyday life – because those actors who are in the end economically, economic-politically and socio-politically hegemonic are, in fact. capable of carrying out their interests and thus determining the development of the social structures of production; because those who know that this is socially and ecologically destructive and who want to live solidaristically and in an ecologically reasonable way, are too weak to fight the existing leaders of society in a politically effective way – in order fundamentally to change the power structures and social everyday

⁵ Ayturk Aydin and Ozan and Kurtalan Kozanoglu are the authors of an overview of definitions, modes of approach, characteristics and consequences of financialisation (Ayturk et al. 2011). By “financialisation” we do understand the penetration of economic processes and domains by actors and operations in the financial markets.

life.

In the globalised economy, the local food producer in the southern hemisphere has the smallest or a comparatively small share in the socially and ecologically destructive structures of power and reproduction. At the same time these producers are the special victim of the reproduction of these structures. However, the conditions of life of the populations in these places depend on their social, economic, and global strength.

Therefore this question was especially important for the authors of the booklet in their study and their critique of the relevant literature, media and the public debates conducted.

Intentional search processes

Although in the German debate on sufficiency with its orientation to solidary local and regional cooperation, and also in the dominant German eco-socialist debate with its orientation to social cooperation that can lower the turnovers of materials and energy, important approaches can be recognised for a developmental, economic, and environmental policy strengthening of the local food producer in the global South, one can only discern in a very limited way conceptual and political aids to coming nearer to an emancipatory-solidary embedding of the economy. Neither debates are aimed at the “normal” citizens who need to be won, who can here and now – in the confrontation with the “crises from which we want to exit” – begin to take steps toward the socio-ecological reconstruction or transformation.

The sustainability debate shows how the concept of “sustainable” or “sustainability” has become a contested concept. If it is interpreted in the sense of the Brundtland Report then we can enquire, as in the booklet, if a given programme of measures can be accepted as an “authentic sustainability strategy” in contrast to “false sustainability strategies”. Such false versions are being upheld by the defenders of the primacy of economic interests, in particular the strategists of so-called ecological modernisation. The differences and the confrontation between authentic and false sustainability strategies can be exemplified clearly in the confrontation around the various conceptions of a Green New Deal.

The advocates of authentic sustainability strategies want to provide orientations for reasonable and responsible action in order to promote sustainable development (including the development of more sustainable structures). In this way, or rather for this reason, they work with criteria and indicators. They have no problem in recognising the necessity of political struggles, but they do not focus on fundamental changes of social relations among people. At most, they can explain, which social forces have no real interest, or hardly any, in reasonable, socially and globally responsible action, and why this is the case.

“Ecological modernisation” means a more or less drastic reduction of the material and energy turnovers as well as of the climate-damaging emissions under the existing social relations – that **reproduce and renew** structural social inequality, as well as centralised economic structures, and the “production” of violence and militarisation. Only some Green New Deal projects go clearly beyond this.

Our intervention in the on-going scholarly and political debates is based on a socialist approach. It therefore aims in particular to influence and cooperate with the “authentic” sustainability advocates/actors of the further-reaching Green New Deal projects. It therefore above all takes up the concepts

and activities of the “authentic and further-reaching” varieties of such projects. At the same time, our intervention carries on with the common and open-ended work on a transformation concept, which is effectively capable of translating our vision of a society of personally free and socially equal people, who live solidaristically with one another and deal responsibly with the natural conditions of life into daily practical life: Socio-ecological reconstruction, and the socio-ecological transformation that begins with it, are our notions for a profound and complex reshaping and reconfiguration of the social division of labour and of the metabolic processes of people/of society with nature. In this project, the obligatory goal is pursued that humanity as a whole should acquire the capacity to reproduce itself – not at the cost of others – and that it may consequently at the same time give the space needed for the reproduction of its natural bases of our lives in coexistence with the lives of other species. “Socio-ecological reconstruction”, in our understanding, means nothing less than the beginning of the development of a solidary cooperation, which uses local and regional resources to satisfy the needs of the population living in the area and in so doing consistently reduces and minimises the burdens on the biosphere, as they have been emerging as their social and external costs. Such a social division of labour and such a use of resources decisively involves primary local and regional development and the use of renewable energies. In this process, labour will be socially re-valorised and newly valorised, newly distributed and organised – among and between women and men, within the communities, between regions and states, between the world-economic macro-regions and economic blocks (Dellheim 2008: 236).

Transformational processes in societal daily life (not least of all of the left itself)

The idea presented here is not new. It is based on the practices of the left in parties, trade unions, and ecological and social movements developed over the last decades.

The booklet is oriented to the radical renewal of the left, which includes that the left will be going where people are acting here and now in more solidaristic, more socially and ecologically responsible and more reasonable ways than the mainstream of our societies, and helping to strengthen and spread such trends, instead of the left just declaring “what one would have to do”, or what it “actually would want to do”.

Such an alternative practice of the left will have to cope with social activities especially in four interrelated dimensions: public finance and social security systems, developmental aid, budget consolidation and debt cancellation.

It will have to address effectively (a) the comprehensive problematic of financial markets, as well as (b) ‘special projects’ of the ruling forces, of those in government, concrete concerns such as privatisation, PPP (public-private partnership), megaprojects or problems in the municipality or region. These often have to do with energy, transportation, agriculture, with agrobusiness, “security/defence” and as a whole therefore with the competitive national positions of the perpetrators of problems, with concrete technologies and investment; (c) coping with poverty/social exclusion, discrimination and repression/violence – especially by advocating and implementing social, democratic and ecological (minimum) standards; and (d) struggles against already realised or about-to-be-realised socially and ecologically destructive projects/practices of governments and international institutions (EU, WTO) such as the EU services guidelines, free trade agreements and WTO regulation.

Further analysis of the actual social activities points to the consolidation of the three interconnected strategic areas of action mentioned above (p. 4): struggling for democratic, social and ecological standards; for the democratisation of the public space and of political decision-making processes regarding priorities and principles for the mobilisation and use of public finances; and active and participated local and regional development. In this respect, political engagement for the structural improvement of the conditions of life of the socially and globally poorest and for the organisation of actors and participatory processes should be especially emphasised. Political confrontations, the struggles against privatisation, destructive projects, corporate practices, megaprojects, and so forth, take place primarily in the municipalities or regions. Local and regional development is highly relevant for political activities against social and ecological destruction and thus for the critique and reconstruction of the economies of energy, transportation and agriculture and the dismantling of the MIC/security sector. This is where citizens can and do operate effectively as collective actors, on concrete problem solutions and alternatives. This does not imply a restricted horizon or a 'not-in-my-backyard' attitude: Quite to the contrary – in defending their own very interests, they are obliged, from the very start, to "think European", because their own concrete problems always have an EU dimension, explicitly or in a latent way.

There are more arguments for stressing local and regional development: It does constitute, in fact, the other side of globalisation, in particular within the six economic sectors named above. Labour power is not as mobile as capital. It is capable of meeting capital's needs only to a certain extent – and may want to so in an even more limited way. For the social life of the municipalities and the regions the prevailing social, democratic and ecological standards and the decisions taken on public finance are of decisive importance. Municipalities and federal states in Germany, for instance, are the actors in the revenue sharing in and between the federal states and in relation to the federation. The municipalities and regions are the places, where actors from diverse social and political groups come together most immediately, and whose alliances on the state, EU and international levels are needed in order to impose social standards, rules and laws on public finances – including help for the global poor – and in a perspective of reconstructing sustainable economic structures and corresponding ways of life.

The political confrontations and struggles around the raising or setting of social, ecological and democratic minimum standards – standard setting – reflect or change the existing socio-political relations of force, and their real dynamics. After all, set standards imply the right to make one's claims effective, and therefore they are the object of demands of concrete actors with their specific interests. However, they can also define limits of what is admissible or they also be re-articulated as demands for concrete limits (e.g. maximum working hours). The setting or changing of standards involves complicated processes: First, those affected – citizens and, not least, critical scholars – articulate what they and others regard as necessary and desirable in order to be able to mitigate or solve problems in a sustainable way, for example to redress shortcomings in services of public care or to reduce traffic noise. Then it is a matter of the collective formulation of demands – such as comprehensive school (Gesamtschule) or the introduction of limits for admissible noise levels – which are primarily addressed to state or supra-state and political institutions, but also to other actors, such as corporations and multinationals, etc. The addressees should accept the demands as norms of action and regard them as binding, make them into laws and regulate their implementation legally. Third, it is a matter of struggles to reinforce and realise demands for concrete democratic and

social rights, for social and ecological minimum standards, for limits set on socially and ecologically destructive actors.

The following table illustrates by means of examples the role of standards in the confrontation with the “destructive quartet”

Energy economy	Transportation economy	Agriculture	Military-industrial complex
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timelines for exiting from nuclear and carbon energy - Reduction of the consumption of concrete fuels - Increase in energy efficiency - Share of renewable energy in electricity and energy production - Reduction of CO₂- and other harmful emissions - Share of decentralised producers in electricity and energy production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of long-distance transport and means of transportation - Share of rail transportation and of public transport in total transportation - Reduction of CO₂ and other harmful emissions - Reduction of land use - Decrease of the energy consumption of means of transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in the deployment of chemical and plant-protection materials - Phasing out gene technologies - Reduction of land and water use for animal breeding - Observance of animal rights - Agrodiversity - Reduction of CO₂ and other harmful emissions - Preserving Soil quality - Increase of the tree population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cutting back offensive capacity - Abolition of NBC weapons - Abolition of weapons that affect climate and weather - Cutting back troops and personnel as well as armaments orders

The table reflects, among other things, that the confrontation concerning technologies, related investments and, therefore, public finance – concerning public budgets and with actors in the financial markets – is extraordinarily important.

That the struggle for standards which would effectively change social life and for influence over public finance belong together can be illustrated by means of demands actually articulated by important protagonists of these struggles:

1. Demands regarding the conditions of life of the socially and globally weakest

- Minimum income in Germany and in the EU at a level of 60 % of the national or sector-specific average wage; an integrated approach to the fight against poverty
- realisation of the Millennium Development Goals
- a 40 % reduction of CO₂ emissions in Germany by 2020 measured against 2000, through the phasing out of nuclear energy, halting the construction of further coal-fired power plants and of CCS plants
- halting projects of military arms build-up and upgrading, abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction as well as landmines
- the discontinuation of the privatisation of social-security and of public infrastructure systems;

2. Regarding the financial markets

- the introduction of capital movement controls and of a financial transaction tax and the deployment of tax revenues for combating global poverty and climate change in the poor countries
- outlawing financial-market speculation with food, agricultural land, raw materials, state debt and currencies
- outlawing high-risk speculative operations that can destabilize the social processes of production and reproduction;

3. Regarding production and trade

- realization of the ILO norms according to the “Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work”
- realization of the OECD guidelines for transnational corporations, translation of the Global Compact⁶ into binding international framework agreements
- a 20 % reduction of absolute energy and resource consumption by 2020 measured against 2000
- realization of the recommendations of the Bundestag Commission of Enquiry “Protecting People and the Environment”;

4. Regarding consumer protection

- disclosure of the components/ingredients and of the complete production process of the final product, of the health, ecological and economic consequences of its production and delivery, of its consumption and disposal;

5. Regarding democracy

- realization of human and basic rights, of gender equality, of protection for asylum seekers, of the fight against discrimination; introduction of referenda at the federal level and of citizenship based on the principle of residency.

Such standards can only be achieved and implemented through new political alliances. These would indeed have to be supported by the citizens but would have to go far beyond the still indispensable “citizens’ movements”. There will have to be alliances of organizations on various levels – of trade unions, social and ecological movements and associations, of associations based on professions, specialized activities and associations of entrepreneurs; of parties with their various possibilities for action through the work of their members, associations and groups,

⁶ See <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>

their parliamentarians and parliamentary groups, their representatives in administrations and governments; of parliaments, governments and states. Working on the question of standards is necessary for these alliances to emerge and to develop – taking advantage not least of discussion in open local and regional forums (social forums). The local, the municipal and the regional are decisive places and spaces for changing relations of hegemony and therefore making it possible to change societies meaningfully.

This applies in particular under current conditions – since the rulers are using the “debt crisis”, which they have caused themselves, for a new offensive in dismantling social and democratic standards. In so doing they preach growth and marginalize everything that is to be subordinated to their economic and “security interests”. They thereby increase social and ecological destruction and aggravate global problems. If their “arguments” and the EU’s legal framework based on them were to be globally accepted, there would be no alternative but to see a further lowering of standards and an on-going neoliberal transformation. The left should therefore pursue the logic of “first people and their rights, then all the rest!” and earnestly consider and appropriate the “systemic explosive power” of the politics of human and citizens’ rights.

The considerations presented in this section, as developed in our booklet, should serve as material for a broad discussion on first steps toward a socio-ecological reconstruction or socio-ecological transformation. They were not simply generated at an office desk as technocratic blueprints, although they could not have emerged without scientific work. For every social and social-political activity worthy of support the authors have asked, how these activities can become sustainable. “Sustainable” also in the activating sense that their actors remain active on the social-political level and learn and organize in an increasingly politically effective way; “sustainable” also in the sense that their action promotes and accelerates socially and ecologically sustainable development and helps to initiate structural change. Finally, social-critical activists have had the experience that emancipatory and reasonable demands are often first fought against by the rulers but then taken up and perverted by them in order to intensify the competitive pressures. When, for example, people fight against paternalistic administrations and as a result become responsible for their own social interests in an independent way, but without the preconditions being provided for their being capable to be independent, social standards will unavoidably be lowered. If people struggle for participatory processes, for example participatory budgets, but not for another kind of fiscal, budgetary and social policy, participatory processes will legitimize the promotion of competitive societies. If people want to give their region a better quality of life, but do not conceive of “better” in terms of inward and outward-directed solidarity, then in our globalized society we will continue to see social exclusion, repression against its victims and national competition for better positions. Only in relying upon simultaneity and therefore in the solidary connection of struggles against competitive pressures and its proponents and perpetrators, as well as for greater democratic, social and ecological standards as stepping stones towards finding one’s own guidelines do the authors see the possibility of success. In this process it will be imperative that there is a sufficiently clear focus on the political confrontation with, and the struggle against capital oligarchies. In addition, their structures and complex effects explain why focused left politics has to go beyond specialized departmental politics and why left social politics/policy cannot be simply the sum of left specialized politics. They also explain why the struggle for hegemony must go together with information concerning the concrete networks of the “4+2” leaders. The structures and complex

effects further explain why left political strategies must include pushing governments and administrations to defend, exploit and expand their possibilities of action against the “4+2” leaders and in the interest of the socially and globally weakest, of citizens and popular majorities.

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