

## Questions & Answers

**Oksana Dutchak (Left Opposition, Ukraine)**

**When time for a defensive strategy comes: how should it look like?**

The announced topic and questions to answer cover many issues. They definitely have an intention to provoke broad discussion. For this reason I will try to give some provocative points in their scope.

Another reason for this choice is my outside position, which makes my knowledge on the current situation in the EU a little bit superficial. I hope my colleagues can add their perspective in the discussion.

Karl Polanyi in his book *The Great Transformation* develops the idea that in modern capitalist societies there is a constant struggle between forces of free market and their opposition (protectionists, labour). Because of this struggle, modern society exists in a pendular movement between crisis of profitability and crisis of legitimacy. His theoretical and metaphorical conception was later developed by Beverly Silver in her outstanding research *Forces of Labor*, where she and her research team show, that the most rapidly developing and leading industry coincides with the historical epicenters of labour struggle.

It can appear that the main question here is which stage of the pendulum do you have here in the EU? My personal and very speculative opinion is that it is the final stages of swing from the crisis of profitability to the crisis of legitimacy. It is the constant offence of austerity that makes me think so. At some point the plan of development by austerization, privatization and deregulation should be such a burden to the people that a new cycle of struggle should begin. Additional pressures of historical factors, such as refuge crisis and decrease in temps of grows in Chinese economy also matter in the current situation.

However, I perfectly understand, this assumption can be merely a wishful thinking and that we are still on the long way to final stages before the crisis of legitimacy will actually unfold. Another note should be that response to the crisis of legitimacy should not necessarily be left, and history of Germany perfectly shows that there can and will be attempts to struggle against market forces from the rightist side. Maybe European colleagues will provide their own vision of the possible current stage of the struggle here.

In any case, I argue, the main questions should be different for the strategic and tactical perspective.

First question should probably be on the meaning of such a metatheory for our activists and political practices. It may appear to somebody that within Polanyi’s concept of market and capitalist development there is no or almost no place for agency. That historical development will in this or another way lead us to the moment when anti-market wave of contention will raise. This opinion is, of course, misleading. Without constant attempts to push the market forces back, the whole dialectical concept does not work at all.

This, however, leads to somehow paradoxical conclusion that defensive strategy is not necessarily bad, disappointing or demotivating. It is, actually, more logically to assume that there

simply is time for a defensive strategy – that is what makes contention continual in the context when the cycle of contention is in decline.

How should this defensive strategy look like? I think that in each country it should be its own, but as a social movements' researcher, I can add some important elements, that should rather be there.

- Building networks and coalitions – they are important for getting resources when mobilization is low or in decline. There is even a particular notion – transactional activism – which researchers propose as a way out for a successful campaign in the situation of scanty resources.

- Keeping diversity inside the networks of movement – diversity helps in supply of resources and tactics, it does not guarantee, but facilitate tactical and frame innovation.

- Innovation of modular tactics. Innovation, in any case, is a good way to attract public and media attention, but successful innovation can also significantly influence the whole dynamics of the struggle. But to influence not only single campaign, but broader movement or contention, successful tactical innovation should be modular (which can be applied elsewhere through modification).

- Development of interpretative frame – symbolic layer, lighter than ideology. Development of movements' frame can make its interpretations, goals, messages and narratives more clear and acceptable both for actual and potential supporters. Frame should not be dogmatic and can also be modular – to facilitate inclusion of people, groups and organizations in the network. Some even argue that it is better for a movement to concentrate on frame rather than ideology – it makes compromising easier.

It is, of course, a very brief and general sketch of the possible strategy and many notes can and should be added. For example, too general frames also have their own danger – they can be seized by opponents and even lead the movement itself to something completely different from what it was initially supposed to be. Transactional activism also has some pitfalls of a similar kind – coalitions with too distant ideological groups can work against the movement in a long perspective. Other criticism and nuances can be added during the discussion.

However, in general such a defensive strategy produces to major effects: it minimizes mobilization losses in the time of declining dynamics in the cycle of contention; it maximizes movement's readiness to switch to offense when time comes. Basically, it can help leftists to avoid that kind of situation, which happened in Ukraine and many other countries – when in the crisis of legitimacy leftists had almost no word.

### **Ricard Bellera Kirchoff (Comissiones Obreras, Catalunya)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

The only way to disarm social conflicts is democracy. Democracy needs a political culture and public spaces that are currently not sufficiently available. Media control in the framework of strong liberal hegemonic domination (consume & compete) is limiting the emergence of

class conscience and the possibility of generating open debates and social confluences. In this sense the three main actors to transform the social imbalance are social movements, organized work and students, which need to work strength together at local, national and European level.

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

The main enemy is the TINA (There Is No Alternative) narrative. 500 years ago Moro's Utopia was published, an anniversary that is difficult to find in the media discourse. This is perhaps an anecdote, but there is a huge potential in producing scenarios that are important enough to fight for, and strategies that are good enough to believe in. There are alternatives to save the European Social model and to develop the rules and rights of our democracy. To get out of the interfederal logic of Hayek we need social government instead of economic governance, and this means going deeper in the definition of what the European social model means, what are its values, rights and indicators.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and "real" democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

The TTIP (and TISA and CETA) is bringing together a lot of different actors that were working for their own during the last decade. This should invite us to analyse which is exactly the model that TTIP represents and which they are trying to impose us. It's not only about social rules, but about environment, geopolitical balances and social and political solidarity. One of the elements of the European Social Model that should be stressed is its ambition to project the own values outside of the European Union, defending Trade and International Policy as the best way for global solidarity, social growth and political progress.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

One of the main problems to coordinate better trade union action at European level is the difference among existing models and union cultures. Diversity is always a very important richness, but it requires a very high degree of communication and intercultural work. We should give a few steps forward in some important questions:

- reinforcing common campaigns for shared values as the importance of public services, social rights or autonomy of collective bargaining,
- working on a common European membership starting with a common membership for young mobile workers,
- improving the coordination of collective bargaining concerning its goals but also concerning the bargaining system and structure
- reinforcing social dialogue at European level (especially in the framework of economic governance) and defending together the centrality of social partnership

- using the existing networks (EWCs, IRTUCs, European Federations, ETUC, EESC...) to develop the identity of the European workforce as something where people can recognize themselves without shame (that means solidarity, toughness, coherence...)

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

Even if the neo-liberal strategy has weakened the power of the political left and of organized work, there is still more potential at national than at European level. The question is how sustainable can the national way be without a common European strategy. Communication, political education and training, ideological and political confluence can raise awareness and conscience at national level but need a European perspective to overcome the national involution through competitiveness and territorial conflict.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

The architecture of European Institutions needs urgently to be developed and improved giving a central role to the European Parliament and limiting the function of the European Commission as the 'Executive' body. Values and fundamental rights are critical elements of the European identity and need to be at the basis of Europe. This means also a different approach concerning the European Court of Justice. The European Central Bank needs a totally different mandate with responsibility on social, economic and territorial cohesion. To make the European Parliament more effective it should be discussed about the role of European Parties (sum of national parties or something else?) and a further development of legislative or citizen initiatives. More importance should be given also to social partnership. Concerning the function it should be worked on a common tax policy and control which could facilitate resources for social investment (EIB) and to face urgent challenges as migration, climate change or digitalization.

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

Very good question. Perhaps what is uniting us is the consciousness that we need to take this decision together. All three alternatives are interesting. We need to refound Europe developing a social model that gives work and solidarity a central role. In this sense a monetary union with no respect to fundamental social and democratic rights makes no sense, but it should be analysed how we can define the return to a national currency as a step forward. In a wider sense the role of 'money' and 'currency' should be analysed.

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces*

*not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

One of the bigger problems is that an important part of the European Social Democracy has given up the social narrative, and this space has been taken by reactionary forces. At the same time economic governance and other important threads as TTIP, have fed an anti-European discourse that has been cornered by the extreme right. The tolerance of media with xenophobia and racism is also part of the problem. A defensive strategy needs a constant campaigning and political education from the school to apprenticeship and university. It is crazy that at the same time the EC intends to teach youngster in 'entrepreneurial skills', Europe is falling back into the arms of fascism.

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighborhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

There is a strategic need to facilitate the confluence of municipalism and civil resistance, organized work and student mobilization. This means opening spaces for debate and helping to organize three democratic cultures that are in very different stages and very diverse narratives and cultures.

### **Peter Damo (President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Education FSIE, Romania)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

The present situation should not be accepted. Instead, coherent and coordinated actions and standing up should be enforced at local, national and European levels by all progressive actors, i.e. Left Political Parties, Trade Unions, etc. Political Culture and objective Information should be used as means to Educate and change the mentality of the people fallen victims to the common belief that the present status quo, i.e. Neoliberal paradigm, is the panacea for a better society. However, one should realize that this is an uphill and long term endeavor, which, nevertheless, is worthwhile and necessary, but not enough to guarantee success.

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

Most people are not aware that Austerity politics are being continued in a less overt manner. This affirmation is particularly true in Central-Eastern European countries (i.e. Romania),

where it has become a State policy not to speak anymore of Austerity as such. The Government, politicians and the mainstream Media are misleading the population by stating that there is economic growth and growing foreign investments, the average salary was increased, the GDP grew, and so on and so forth. Obviously, all these are either half-truths or incorrect/misused/misinterpreted economic indicators (for instance, the GDP may increase due to the increase of the wealth of the super-rich companies, the average salary may increase due to the increase of the salaries of the super-rich, etc.). In response, a continuous campaign of truthful information based on hard evidence and arguments (critical press releases, seminars, conferences, etc.) should be conducted at all levels of society, i.e. by Trade Unions, Political Parties, Social Networks, NGOs, etc.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and “real” democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

One possible answer resides in having organized a Joint Platform of Cooperation and Action between relevant Political Groups (i.e. GUE/NGL, etc.), important/big progressive Trade Unions and other Social Actors, i.e. Networks, NGOs, etc. Already existing networks and organizations could be used as pillars for such development, i.e. TUNE Network, Alter Summit, TTIP-Free Cities Initiative, TUED, GLI Network, Transform! Network, etc. One focal uniting element of such Joint Platform of Cooperation and Action could be the struggle for the defence and reclaim of Fundamental Human Rights and Liberties applicable both to individual and to groups (i.e. Right to Decent Work and Salary, Right to establish, organize and run Trade Unions, etc.) which should not only be enshrined in a Democratic Society, but, more importantly, lasting indefinitely and be unchangeable in their core.

Moreover, as paradoxical as it may be for the Left, the principle according to which, when a Government turns against its people and oppress them, it becomes the Right of the people to stand up and re-establish their own Fundamental Rights and Liberties, might just be used as a mobilizing psycho-social factor.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

To answer this question one should see the main problem with Trade Unions, a problem that has always been swept under the carpet. The problem is that the ETUC and some of the big Trade Union Confederations in Europe have been promoting, through their top Leaders, a non-combat, non-Syndicalist and subdued Trade Union policy which is favourable to the Neoliberal Power. Probably the most relevant example is in Central-Eastern European countries where the National Trade Union Leaders are corrupt, incompetent and the same for 25 years and obediently support whatever Government comes to Power only to maintain their own personal/group oligarchic privileges which have nothing in common with true Trade Unionism. Karl Marx said that *‘To Be Radical, one should go down to the Root of the Matter. But for Man the Root is Man himself.’* Therefore, starting-points should be radical, i.e. Democrati-

zation of Trade Unions by overturning the old National Leaders; establishing strict internal Union Constitutional rules that forbid Presidency for Life by limiting the number of consecutive mandates at maximum two for the top Leaders; obliging by Union Constitution the top Leaders to be active and fighting in the classical Syndicalist style (see the battles in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the best moments of the 20th century such as CGT Strikes in France in the 1960s and the UK General Strikes of the Miners in the 1980s) both at National and at transnational level; forbidding by Union Constitution the National Leaders to promote cohabitation policies with the Government; enforcing sanctions by Union Constitution against top Leaders who break the Union rules and collaborate with the Governments, etc. Barriers derive from the aforementioned drawbacks and reside mainly in the hidden cooperation/cohabitation policies of the National Trade Union Leaders with the Political Power.

5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?

As it looks like today, realistically speaking, a breakaway with the Neoliberal paradigm seems not to be at hand, but it is not impossible in the future, though. Probably the main conditions for a successful Left in Government reside in keeping their electoral promises in their political program/platform and not repeating and continuing the Neoliberal policies. For instance, one should take heed of the situations in Greece and Romania where Left Governments fell into agreements with the Troika and continued the same Austerity policies as the Right Governments before.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

We should aim at building a Europe of people, with people and for people, a Europe of Democracy, a Europe of Rule of Law with respect for the Fundamental Human Rights and Liberties, a Europe of stable core Legislation as opposed to the present day ever-changing Laws, Treaties and Directives, a Europe with Respect for Social Rights and Social Security, a Europe of Peace, a Europe with much greater Respect and Care for Environment. Since any organization or institution is made up of people and led by people, European institutions may be democratized by means of changing the people acting and being in charge, i.e. by shifting the Balance of Power from the Neoliberal paradigm to a progressive Left paradigm. Actors having capabilities of shifting the Balance of Power may be formed by long-term Political Culture education and proper support for their development and actions.

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

I do not think it would be profitable, nor realistic, for the Left to try to apply plan B or plan C. Therefore a plan A of re-foundation Europe could and should unite Left forces. Acting together should derive from the understanding and agreement that the enemy is the same.

8. *How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

Not applicable, since I am not a politician.

9. *How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

Organizing, connecting, and coordinating should happen at all levels. Civil disobedience should play an important role, but in order to happen there should be a certain level of Political Culture and Culture of Protest in that respective society.

### **Kenneth Haar, Pascoe Sabido (Corporate Europe Observatory, Brussels)**

1. *What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

KH: There is a link between solidarity with refugees (or its absence) with solidarity in society at large (or the lack of it).

PS: It requires a step back to be able to show these as symptoms of a broken system, but not one drenched in theoretical analysis but based on the everyday and in language people understand. And to move beyond the critique towards the construction: dealing with the very pertinent question of what sort of society do we want, what underpins it, how we can get there and what's stopping us. We need a shared positive vision.

2. *How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

KH: Developing national struggles against austerity at the national level is key. But it must be combined with an organised resistance to EU austerity policies, and more; we have to address the power of the EU institutions to impose such policies.

PS: They have to be developed beyond defending the status quo, and that the 'alternative' is completely different. We wouldn't use money currently in tax havens to bail-out the banks - as the 'don't owe, don't pay' has to be really front and centre. We need some rebel cities to be leading such a claim, to base it in far more local democracy, and potentially participative economics. This is about 'them' and 'us', bringing out democracy far more: if we were in charge, what, concretely, would we spend the money on? What does the just transition look like? There's been quite a lot of work done in the UK on that - the Green New Deal (not that it's perfect). But I agree with Kenneth - it's about linking this to the structural drivers of austerity in the EU - that hands are so tied that we need a serious conversation on the institutions and the treaties underpinning them.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and "real" democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

KH: Combining all struggles under one powerful hat is a dream we should stick to. But putting all of this together in the present conjuncture would not lead to a powerful movement.

PS: It depends on the scale we're talking about, where this could be combined. At national level it remains to abstract, but at local municipal level it's possible - new cities and regions in Spain are doing just this, and the TTIP free zones movement (over 1600 in Europe) is a network with huge potential to do so. Combine the 'NO' against TTIP with a multiplicity of yes in terms of the ecological transition, new forms of economic organisation via the solidarity economy and using public procurement, local participation and management of the commons. The TTIP movement could be our own Trojan horse that allows us to have the conversation about commons and alternatives, about the future we want, with many of those we would not normally talk to on the left, while also providing the right scale for experimentation and for participation and political power. It also begins to show possibilities for confederating such experiments and local movements.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

KH: That question should go to trade unionists. Outsiders' opinions on those important questions are often unqualified.

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

KH: The main condition is massive popular backing, and a political movement able to communicate the choices at hand. With a progressive/left-wing government in place, the consequences of accepting the constraints of EU rules and the power of the EU institutions are severe.

PS: Agree, and that communication - of having hands tied in order to build enough support for disobedience/rupture - is vital to ensure the popular legitimacy for the disobedience that will be necessary for Leftist reform parties to carry out their programme under the EU. International solidarity for a rupture/disobedience will be equally vital, and can help to keep pressure on domestic leaders who may be wavering as well as on EU member states. But a left-wing party is unlikely to be successful in government during an EU of austerity without rupture - but it depends on your definition of success.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

KH: It depends on what you mean by "democratized". The EU institutions, in particular the Commission and the European Central Bank have not been set up to be "democratic" in any standard meaning of the word, but to provide the bureaucratic power deemed necessary for the EU to function properly. Small gains can always be made, but the EU institutions suffer from something more severe than "a democratic deficit". For that reason, we should be clear that the Europe we want is entirely different, and that it cannot be achieved within the confines of the EU Treaties. Nor should we scare away from attacking the legitimacy of actions of the EU institutions, or indeed the institutions themselves.

PS: Agree with Kenneth, and it feels like there is a huge gap in knowledge on the left in terms of how the EU actually functions, why and for whom. This has to be brought to light before having any debate on what could happen to the current institutions (would a bit more transparency help? would more popular participation? would it be simply cosmetic), and particularly on whether any new institutions could be built. Building counter-power will depend on counter-power to do what, i.e. which institutions do we want to intervene in and with which impact? Until we have a serious debate about the EU and what may prove to be some fatal flaws in the institutions, putting energy into building a counter-power with a specific focus (e.g. a citizens' lobby to influence institutions - crudely put) will be a waste of time

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

KH: The present monetary order is inimical to social justice and democracy - in particular if the underpinnings adopted and planned on a stronger EMU are taken into account. Any strat-

egy would have to bear that in mind. There will be people on the left that will adhere to a plan A, B, C and D for a long time to come, so the best is to identify symbolic struggles, and win them, in order to create a dynamic that will facilitate unity and strength in the future.

PS: I agree - finding common points of unity, but not the lowest common denominator, will be key. And victories, e.g. TTIP, can reinforce that. But A, B or C should all contain a story-telling element of the future, of where we want to get to (which hopefully most of us can agree on), and that will inevitably lead to sites of construction/contestation (i.e. where we try and concretely realise these alternatives) that can allow a far more real-world debate about different plans (i.e. can we achieve what we're trying to achieve at the local/national level with Plan A, B or C?). I think much of this is already known, but it allows us to base it more in people's lived realities and therefore be far more effective when campaigning on it.

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

KH: The struggle against racism and xenophobia is becoming even more key at the moment. To be on the offensive, however, much more is needed. To be on the offensive means to have clear alternatives and plausible strategies. Putting our faith in the EU institutions is not one of them.

PS: I Agree. And I think doing this at a more local, human level, is also important. With increasing likelihood of further economic recession, the only way we're going to stop that leading to the right is by community organising and showing that there's an answer on the left. It also means looking beyond 'leftist' alliances to engage other sectors. E.g. the Barcelona stop ttip campaign is working with 2000 taxi drivers, not because they're leftists but because they're threatened by Uber. Yet by creating that alliance has brought them much closer and fostered mutual learning and discussions about what we do want.

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

KH: That's a funny question. We need to develop struggles at all levels. The art lies in combining them. But frankly, it's not that difficult if you have a focus. The TTIP campaign is a small example of a struggle that is indeed taking place at all those levels. There seems to be

only two conditions for successful linking: first and foremost, we need to identify real links, not vague or abstract connections, second, the movement in questions needs to include people that are integrated at those levels in the first place.

PS: I Agree. All levels. Re: civil disobedience, yes it's important, but it's a tactic not an end in itself. It's about escalation, but that can take many forms and has to be appropriate to those taking the action. But disobeying as a concept - institutionally or individually - is a really strong way to show we're not accepting the current Plan A. It has a nice ring to it.

**Kees Hudig (www.globalinfo.nl, Netherlands)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

I would say that the most urgent task we all have (but there are a lot more, alas) is to find ways to rebuild grassroots social movements. Everything starts from there and is anchored in functioning and blossoming movements. We have to find new ways to make them work, as the double development of neoliberalism and NGO/professionalisation has all but killed the 'old' versions that seemed to be rooted in the welfare & nation state.

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

- a) Attacking the political and business powers framing the current austerity policies
- b) Offering viable alternatives to the capitalist model
- c) Direct solidarity to those fighting against austerity
- d) Networking those activities on all possible levels (from the local to the transnational)

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and "real" democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

It would have to be a vision of a world without borders and without capitalism that still offers the security of wellbeing for all. Worldwide social security, organised by mutual solidarity 'entities'.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

That is difficult since it will not be possible in the current EU, in which the surplus-situation of the Northern European countries relies on refraining from demanding much concessions from capital. This could only change if there was to emerge a real transfer of wealth from North to South, which no political power in the North will support. But an interim adjustment

would at least be if trade unions and workers/wage-receivers in the European North would demand a larger wage-quote.

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

There is necessity and perspective for leftist politics (not necessarily reform politics) on all levels, including the national level. But this is not to say it can be a *nationalistic* level, as that is contradictory to everything the left should stand for. Especially now any demands we make should count for everybody everywhere, no more 'special treatment' for specific national groups.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

This might be the most difficult point. The institutions of the European Union cannot be democratised, but at the same time we can neither just leave them like they are, or return to the previous national constellation. Of course we have to collaborate as much as possible on the European (and all other transnational) level. Maybe a parallel process and structure (like the Sao Paulo Forum in Latin America) would be an interim solution. We would aim at 'phasing out' the current EU in favour of a new transnational European structure from below. The difficulty also lies in the necessity to act now and think and formulate more utopian new models at the same time. A 'double trajectory' must be possible though, because only acting without vision is also no solution.

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

Plan C should be the final aim. The other two are mainly tactical. But it can coincide with A if that goes far enough.

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

First I would say that there are many successful 'attempts to confront the new right-wing forces'. Both on the direct action level, as on the political/ideological. Imagine if there would not have been left forces and proposals as an alternative to the populists... But admittedly, it has often been weak, and in some countries almost invisible. The only way to get out of the defensive is to have an offensive, honest vision for a better world for everybody (well, not everybody, but you know what I mean). It starts with believing ourselves that that is possible

and needed, otherwise you cannot convince anybody. And secondly the best example is the good practice that shows why it is a lot more fun and works better to share and to take care for each other, than to try to get rich for yourself only. The Zapatistas understood that, but also many initiatives in Europa like Marinaleda, Longo Mai etc. Starting from there you can expand it to any level you want.

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

That is a lot of questions. I would repeat my conviction that it is about 'autonomous' social movement. They grow 'organically' from local to transnational levels, as they grow. The problem is what to do in times of recession, how to survive. And many policies are nowadays decided on the most abstract international levels, if you want to influence them, you have to be able to counter that too. But that does not mean that you have to do it on 'their' terms and in their arena. Building counterpower is something that has to do with creating active and conscious mobilised citizens, on all possible levels. That is what frightens those in power and forces them to retreat. Direct action (or civil disobedience if you want to call it that) - be it by a small group or massive - can have many functions, but in the first place it gives people a perspective to act. It breaks through the normality, forces media (sometimes) to write about something, it can stop certain things. It is, to paraphrase the Salvadorean poet Roque Dalton "An aspiring the size of the sun".

### **Mariya Ivancheva (LeftEast, Bulgaria, and Attac, Ireland)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of defensive?*

There doesn't seem to be a one-size fits all solution, but there is a tendency to call for unconditional solidarity in time when EU countries are fighting wars abroad and performing economic warfare at home through austerity. The Left has more recently offered benevolent statements in support and solidarity with refugees, but that happens in a situation of sheer

powerlessness and rise of the right extreme which has taken up many of the main topics of the Left but promoted them as suited for 'ethnically clean' national majorities. The Left's first message has to be one of redirecting attention to and campaigning on the root causes and not to the quick-fix solutions: refugee crisis cannot be resolved on EU territory without stopping the wars that rage outside of Europe; it cannot stop unless an international effort is made for reparation of the territories which have been destroyed by war and by neo-colonial economic warfare. The refugee crisis cannot be solved on EU territory at times in which South and East European countries suffer historically extreme forms of unemployment and flight of their own citizens to the North, where they are often second class labour force. With no jobs for nationals in these countries, refugees will only create a dumping of the already meagre labour market in the periphery and even in the core of Europe. The situation might become even graver if TTIP & CETA are ratified, in which question job loss will increase. These are questions which need to be treated altogether and not in isolation, with a strategy of action connecting single issue campaigns.

Besides, the Left has very much focused on winning arguments rather than winning people's emotions. Electoral politics is important but if it happens without a significant social base it is useless. We cannot afford to spend the next years investing in high-brow production and intellectual debates only. We need to engage communities and individuals across Europe in their own terms, and look for ways to act out of downtown capital cities, locally, and with an understanding movements precede and succeed electoral moments. The far right has been much more advanced on this level and they have already won over a very large group among the working people who are dissatisfied with the politics of austerity. We need to see what we can learn from them and what can be the points at which their hateful, xenophobic and exclusive rhetoric malfunctions. This does not happen naturally, in fact we're working against time, and against a rather natural human fear which the right easily mobilizes, and the Left can only counter through its own disciplined example: one that shows solidarity is not just an empty slogan which people living a comfortable life can repeat at fancy conferences, but a principle of action which we hold each other and ourselves accountable to.

While austerity is a real problem, another important question is climate change and overheating – a process accelerated with consumption in the core countries of the EU and America. Degrowth and ecological survival is a subject we need to speak about, including in countries like Venezuela where socialism is built on oil revenue. The fight against budget cuts should not be coupled with strive for overdevelopment and overconsumption. It is crucial to craft a strategy that recognizes the necessity to strengthen public services and redistribution, but also creates awareness of the huge environmental apocalypse we're headed toward if extraction and war around the world goes on. We also need to think of institutions of mutual care and comradeship that treat those who suffer increasing mental health problems in the contemporary capitalist society: isolation, anomie, marginalization with consumption and depoliticized feel-good practices. In this, we on the Left need to set the example and show actively that/ how we care for each other and can – among each other – produce a safe, solidary, and just society with little consumption. It is too often that we reproduce competition, hierarchies, asymmetries and abuses of power on the Left, and we show we do not follow the principles we profess. In the latter, it is crucial that the Left engages with profound rethinking of its own elite

practices, and starts working with those excluded from the chauvinistic, sexist, racist, homophobic right extreme: women, migrants, ethnic and sexual minorities. This is not a question of head count but of opening up to participation that can shake off some of our old ways of doing Left politics. We also need to work with community organizers and popular media platforms to get the Left and anti-austerity rhetoric into pop content.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and “real” democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

In too many countries trade unions have become redundant bureaucratic structures which facilitate the relation between state and capital despite the interests of workers. This can be seen in most extreme forms in Eastern Europe where they have become part of the socialist establishment and now act as land and property owners and lenders rather than protectors of workers' rights. What is more, while by now it is well known that new forms of precarious labour have become a norm, rather than an exception in the EU core, this reality is not reflected in most unions' politics. Despite the rise of the EuroMayday movement in the early 2000s and the critique it made, trade unions still mostly reflect the interests of the works' aristocracy of permanent workers, rather than that of precarious, part-time, fixed-term underemployed ones, who have become the majority labour force. The Left should look for ways to challenge unions and to engage with such workers more actively. Relying on an old-fashioned orthodoxy of the urban, male, national citizen, manual factory working proletariat as carrier of social change in this case is not a realistic strategy. It is crucial to reopen the debate from the early 2000s and look again for ways for the Left to engage with and articulate the interests of (often migrant) workers in precarious office jobs, agriculture, small-scale manufacture, tourism, domestic, sex, and care workers.

What is important to recognize on EU level is that we are working with Europe on at least three speeds (core, Southern Periphery, and Eastern Periphery). Building dialogue and solidarities among those is the most difficult part of the struggle. It can only happen with an understanding that there has been a long process of dispossession in the periphery based on asymmetric power relations with the core, to which Association Agreements with the EU have played a crucial role. The struggle against trade agreements can't happen if we do not connect the current predicament of the European South and East to already existing bilateral trade agreements that need to be terminated: TTIP might look like a gloomy future for the north but it's the reality especially of the Eastern European countries, where bilateral trade agreements have long functioned to safeguard corporate interests in times of accelerated privatization. It is important to think of reparation in many ways that would help revert these inequalities that capitalism has created through forms of investment in social production in the peripheries that would give meaningful income and dignified existence to people there. Sadly, the Western Left has not used the opportunities to do that in the aftermath of 1989 and now

that we are not in power and too weak we might not be in the position to offer such investment, unless we manage to relate to farmers, small enterprises, and against the backdrop of the coming ecological catastrophe. Reclaiming the commons can perhaps be realized in terms of human resource and engagement with local cooperatives/ workers/ farms against huge transnational corporations: for which a new focus on the decaying European village is due. Production and employment needs to be a key word though, instead of just thinking of abstract financial instruments from which redistribution can happen.

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

The European Union as it is structured at present, represents a machinery of large, dysfunctional, resource heavy institutions that wage collective war and economic warfare and safeguard the interests of elites. Under these circumstances and in this form the EU is not just futile but should not continue its existence. In order to make a meaningful reconstitution, however, plan A can only be merged with plan C. The EU needs to be profoundly dismantled, reconstituted, and made to work in a much more frugal regime, in which its workers are tax paying workers as all others, have no special privileges, and are subjected to stricter popular monitoring and control. In this, there should be a better transversal system of coordination between local, regional, national and EU level, in which issues are not only viewed from the interest of one group, but in their implications for the whole currently unequal system. People need to feel represented and/or find ways to participate in decision-making at all levels. In this process, party politics and new municipalism should not be thought of as conflicting or parallel processes – they need to work together in meaningful ways and be accountable to each other, monitor and sanction each other and themselves internally in cases of power abuse which happens on the Left locally, nationally, and internationally as well.

Constructing such institutions cannot be an easy task, and their structure needs to be achieved in detailed process of deliberation with regard to local specifics of political culture and structures. Ideally, there should be a revisiting of theories and successful practices of coun-

cils/soviets (but also realistic and in-depth historical examination and critique of past failures, which the Left has not really engaged in doing). A dual power strategy should eventually be aimed at gaining more power locally and activating people to participate. This is, however, a long-term strategy and cannot happen through short-term plenums and shallow implementation of direct democracy that has no impact beyond the local and beyond limited networks of like-minded people. It is a process that the Left has to come together to discuss, and which it should experiment with at least in the countries where it is in power.

If that is not possible – and there should be some deadline to decide on that e.g. the next term of the European Parliament – countries should split and work together on federal principle when it comes to production and redistribution of resources. This, however, should not look like splitting the rich club to protect its revenues from the countries the territories of which its corporations have plundered. The Left will have to find ways to make sure that certain reparations are made, and policies of equity are at place on international level. It should also try to make sure, such federal establishments function to provide locally grounded economic exchange with a clear degrowth strategy, based on local food sovereignty and reduced consumption and preservation of resources crucial for planetary survival.

### **Dawid Krawczyk (Krytyka Polityczna, Poland)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

All the issues enlisted in the question above have basically the same foundations – they stem from the economic problems or the threat of such problems that people face nowadays in European countries. And either one is an office worker in Germany or a freelancer journalist in Poland they both face (to different extent but still) precarious conditions of contemporary job market. So the answer in short is to stabilize the housing, living, and labour conditions along the lines of solidarity. If it is done, the issues mentioned would be no more than a technical problem to solve – refugees coming to Europe won't be called crisis, and neo-fascists would be an extremist margin, a subculture rather than a political movement.

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

It can be successful only if the cooperation on this topic is transnational. Activists from the South (e.g. Greece), Eastern European Countries (e.g. Poland), and the West (e.g. Germany) should act collectively, and explain for the citizens in their countries what actually austerity politics means in practice. I believe that Eastern European countries that have been experiencing austerity politics since 1989 (that are not called austerity politics, by the way) have a lot to contribute in this topic.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and “real” democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

I believe the word that joins all the issues mentioned in the question is solidarity. Because the fight for “real democracy” or against the austerity regime and free trade agreements are only ways to achieve the society in which the individual is not scared to live the next day, and is free to dream and plan his or her future. The society organized by the fences, borders, and agreements giving more to those who already have them is basically everything but solidarity. So, I believe, at least on the discursive level, it is important to remember that solidarity joins all these struggles.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

The important idea and the possible goal for the European labour, which is also relatively easy to apprehend by the people is the European minimum wage. It would demand a stronger cooperation between the EU member countries and more commitment to develop the peripheral countries in the EU, but isn't it also the point of it? It is also crucial to remember about the migrant labour working right now in the factories across Europe. Including migrant workers that are usually in more precarious conditions than the citizens of the country they are working in, in the struggle for better working conditions is probably one of the most essential challenges for the labour movement.

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

Honestly, I don't believe there is a way the leftist politics can be successful only on the national level. The capital, the labour market, the companies, are not operating on the national scale (they probably never did), so the means to counteract their actions should be provided also on the transnational level. But it's not like that we should just sit, laid back and watch the world burn. The present democratic process is founded on the elections to the national institutions – so the left should of course be taking part in it, but always reminding their supporters and the people in general that the really effective reforms can be done only in cooperation with their partners abroad.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

The answer to the first question is the one in which those citizens who want to get involved directly in the decision-making process have right to do so, and those who prefer to be represented have the representation that mirrors their views and political interests. When it comes

to the way it can be done, it gets more complicated – but I believe that local struggles should be studied and examined closely to answer this question. People have generally a tendency to get involved in the issues that directly affects their neighbourhood rather than their country or some global problem. And they do get involved more and more (at least in Poland recently), so probably somewhere in their actions there is an answer. I don't think that we should spend much time debating if the European institutions can be democratized, because we are kind of doomed with them – they exist, and the question if we are going to try to democratize or leave them be, which is totally undemocratic and influenced by lobbyists.

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

For me the most tempting is the plan C, because it empowers people the most, it shows how strong and rewarding can the bounds of solidarity can be, and gives hope. So on the strategic level I believe it is relatively easy to convince people to form networks of solidarity, especially in the reality which is particularly harsh, as it is in the regions of Greece that are impacted by the crisis the most. It is a serious question to answer, the one about the way left forces can act together, but for now I haven't find an answer unfortunately.

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

The best way to get out of the defensive is to provide an alternative that is easy to understand. We should not lie to ourselves that there could be something easier than typical racist scape-goating, but there are examples of providing more just and fair narratives which are also not super complicated. One of them could be the ongoing Bernie Sanders campaign, which shows how the language of class struggle can be funnelled into the mainstream. Recently there was a big media scandal concerning tax evasion. Again, to make the connection between the precarious living conditions and actions of tax evaders probably is more demanding than just saying all the problems should be blamed on ethnic or religious minority, but possible.

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

Many questions you have left for the last one. To be honest, the idea of a strong transnational political party is tempting. I see for example in the Polish political reality how great success was achieved by the Razem party, a new leftist party based on the political values of Po-

demos. And much of this attention and support they get is because they formed a party, not an alliance, not a network of progressive communes, but a (not very traditional, but still) a party. The priorities for such a party should be transnational, but the commitment to these priorities should be visible on the most grassroots level. The answer to the question how we can organize in our neighbourhoods and workplaces seems to be pretty simple, it is important to take part in conflicts and build a safety net that gives workers and citizens an assurance that they can step-up for their rights.

### **Neil Michiels (LCR/SAP, Belgium)**

*1. What is to be done in the present situation, given the continuity of austerity politics, the so-called refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist, nationalist and neo-fascist forces, and the declaration of the state of emergency following terrorist attacks?*

In Belgium, a big strike movement against the new right-wing government in the autumn of 2014 put the topic of austerity against the working class high on the media agenda. In the summer of 2015 the refugee crisis and the 'refugees welcome'-response of a broad solidarity movement put at the time that question high on the public agenda. However, since the terrorist attacks in Paris, the topics of struggle against terrorism, as well as the struggle against 'illegal' migrants, became very predominant. The answer of the left should be to continue to advance 'our' subjects such as the struggle against austerity, but at the same time also have an answer on subjects such as how protect society against terrorism, safeguarding liberties and opposing racism and islamofobia.

*2. How could the struggle against austerity politics become successful? How could a campaign against austerity politics be developed?*

We need strong social movements to fight austerity successfully. In Belgium the labour unions have the capacity to develop action plans with strikes that can block the economy and obtain victories. However, the union leaderships have a double role: on the one hand they can call and mobilize for strikes, while on the other hand they can break the mobilization by calling it off, like they did in the winter of 2014-15. Besides the basis of the unions, also other categories of the population (students, unemployed, small independents, ...) should find their place in campaigns against austerity. In Belgium, the movement 'Heart above Hard' was initiated by workers in the cultural sector and organizes and mobilizes citizens against austerity.

*3. How could the struggles against austerity, against free trade agreements, for the defence and re-appropriation of the commons, for the freedom of movement, for social rights and "real" democracy be connected? What could be the focal point which unites a broad spectrum of democratic and emancipatory oriented actors?*

A political perspective on capitalism is necessary to understand how these various struggles are led against a same system of profit over people. It is therefore the anti-capitalist – or at least anti-neoliberal – struggle for more democracy in politics and economics that can unite different social movement actors.

*4. How can the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions be organised at the European level? Which starting-points and which barriers are there for union organising at the transnational level?*

International networking and organizing is an important weapon in the class struggle on a European level. It includes the exchange of information, common discussion, co-ordination of struggles and the build-up of solidarity. Even though positive results can be booked, two problems reduce the effectiveness of efforts and struggles: one the one hand austerity is still very much organized on the level of nation-states with specific measures on specific moments (for example the latest labour law in France and the huge national resistance against it), on the other hand the EU decision making process is very far away for most workers and citizens.

*5. Which scope is there for leftist reform politics at the national level within the European Union? Is a rupture with neo-liberalism possible at the national level in the EU, and if yes, how? What are the conditions for a successful left in government?*

The combination of left-wing governments with organized popular support to confront the attacks of the ruling class have indeed a margin to change the relations of power between capital and labour at the national level. These left governments have to call upon popular support to implement their left program and should not adapt to the pressures made by the right and the media.

*6. Which Europe do we want – and with which strategy can we achieve it? Can the European institutions be democratized, and if yes, how? How could a constitutive process be shaped? How can we form actors who are able to develop counter-power and to intervene in institutional processes effectively?*

The EU treaties have developed an antidemocratic and neo-liberal machinery which is the EU today. On the one hand it is difficult to reform its institutions, while on the other hand the creation of a Europa with more and more connections between people of different countries and less borders between states are important progresses that need to be valued. On the one hand it is necessary to come off with the EU, while on the other hand this cannot be done without the constitution of the 'Social(ist) United States of Europe' to prevent a return to a Europe of individual nation-states. In practice, it is important to oppose exits from the EU for xenophobic reasons, such as the Brexit-campaign of the eurosceptic right in Britain. On the other hand, when the EU machinery is at war with countries such as Greece, Spain, etc., left governments in these countries can only change politics in a social way by leaving the EU.

*7. What is uniting us: A plan A in order to found Europe anew, a plan B, i.e. a left exit from the monetary union, or a plan C to develop an economy of solidarity from below? How could left forces divided by different attitudes towards the European Union act together?*

A plan A of a complete change of the institutions of the EU or a plan B of (a group of) countries leaving the EU and constituting the Social United States of Europe are different possibilities which still seem very far away today with the current balance of forces to be able to define them more concretely. However, left forces nowadays should avoid to divide on such

'institutional' options. Instead of defending to stay in the Eurozone and the EU or defend to get out, more programmatic slogans such as 'no sacrifice for the euro' can be defended. In practice, this would also mean that leaving the euro and the EU should not be a taboo, but a possibility when the pressure of the EU institutions only leaves left governments with the choices of complete capitulation of their program or an exit ('Grexit in the case of Greece) from the Union.

*8. How could a class-based and popular-democratic strategy against right-wing populism and neo-fascism look like? Why have previous attempts to confront the new right-wing forces not been successful? Does the social and political polarisation hold the possibility of an emancipatory rupture? Or do we experience the beginning of a process of fascistisation which makes necessary a new defensive strategy? How do we get out of the defensive?*

In different countries, from Greece to the US, discontent with mainstream politics translates into the success of alternatives, with spectacular political earthquakes in the last years. Social movements play a crucial role in the canalization of discontent towards social change. When there are few social struggles and right-wing politicians dominate public life via the media, right-wing populism might be seen by many people as the only alternative to mainstream politics. On the other hand, in recent years we have seen how social movements such as the 15M in Spain or Occupy in the US gave rise to the rise of – sometimes new – left political forces who can form a real alternative from right-wing populism.

*9. How, at which level do we act – with a European platform, a party or a new municipalism of communes connected at the European level? At which level (local, regional, national, transnational) are our priorities? How do we connect the different levels of action in the face of limited resources? How can we connect organizing in every-day life (in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces), at the national parliamentary and extra-parliamentary level, and at the transnational level? Which role do actions of civil disobedience and other practices play?*

European and international initiatives have to be strengthened, whether it is on the level of social movements or on that of political parties. The historical initiatives of 'Internationals' of the left-wing labour movement are probably the most developed form of internationalism. But also more specific initiatives such as for example co-operation of the climate justice movement on a European and international scale, with the possibility of European-wide and worldwide actions, should be supported strongly in order to foment internationalism.