

When we had the workshop on the Brexit issue we concluded a need in a much deeper concrete analysis of the connections between production relations and the other societal relations and of the connections between all of these relations and the behaviour of individuals.

Our discussion will try to respond to that. For giving some more drive to it, I would like to give some remarks to the asked five workshop questions.

I.

From a perspective of critical political economy, the crucial question in approaching “Right Wing Populism” and “Authoritarianism” is about the aim and the mode of the on-going process of the socialization of labour, with its consequences for the development of relations between the members of the society and the metabolism. The term “right wing populism” is misleading: We should focus on the ideology, policy and especially economic policy of such right-wing agents, who claim to act in the interest of the “(above all) ordinary people without any alien background”. These forces are opposing the dominant political management for ignoring or counter-acting the interests of “our ordinary people”. They aim at blocking the dominant kind of globalisation, and especially the dominant practices concerning the management of migration and the rules for granting the asylum status. These forces do ignore or openly hurt the real interests of the majorities of populations in the EU, in Europe and in the world. Often they are more or less directly connected to right-wing extremist resp. fascist forces.

We want to understand their “nature, background and successes”, in order to better understand our societies and to become able to work more efficiently on left-wing policy and societal alternatives.

II.

In the beginning of the years 2000, three interconnected developments have reached a new stage, in their dimension and in the intensity of controversially acting together:

- Deep global and European changes,
- the EU enlargement processes, the pre-history and the implementation of the Lisbon strategy,
- Ongoing changes in societal and social structures, with the effect of intensifying societal and social contradictions.

This has been connected to increasing pressure on the middle classes in the old EU member states and on the majorities of the populations of the new EU member states. We face

- ongoing liberalization, commercialization and privatization, rising social gaps, rising social disillusion, frustrations, and fears, as well as diminishing possibilities to shape the society in a democratic way
- a crisis of traditional conservatism, of social democracy and, as a result, of political representation.

Both tendencies have provoked a critique of globalisation which has not been answered by strong

left-wing forces in a political offensive, but by an advance of anti-emancipatory and more or less anti-liberal forces. These forces appeal to all possible society members, but preferably to the “middle classes” which have “something to lose” or are thinking that they would deserve something better – in a sharp contrast to the people getting or needing social benefits, above all to refugees and to migrants.

III.

The societal and social problems which have emerged and above all increased more or less in the years 2000 have been further reinforced by the ways of how the ruling powers have reacted to the recent global financial crisis. This applies in particular to the management of the Euro and EU crises, which has included the strategy EU2020 and the EMU “improvement”. The underlying societal and social problems have even been further forced by the wars, conflicts and huge disintegration problems in the EU neighbourhood, even promoted by the specific EU neighbourhood policies. The most tragic and crassest consequences have been the enormous migration and mass escape of people evicted by violence and hoping for a stay in the EU. Immigration and islamophobia, racism, anti-liberal EU criticism and a so called “Euroscepticism” have been growing and in many cases they have been influencing specific policies of member states and of the EU. Efforts of coping with ecological and global problems have been marginalised in the very same process. The repertoire of the “more moderate fundamentalist right-wing and authoritarian forces” with regard to a more narrowly conceived economic policy is in no way compatible with any claims for a protection of “ordinary people”. It is also rather strongly ambivalent with regard to their demands for an authoritarian state, as it includes key elements which clearly weaken the capacity to act of the respective states. But at the same time, these “populist” forces put forward additional demands for state subsidies in various economic and social areas and for benefits for those who “really” need them, for families, for “security” and especially for reinforcing the police. Their programs and their propaganda efforts combine the economic aims of neo-liberal deregulation with the mobilization of feelings of anti-globalisation and antimodernisation, on the one hand, and of income redistribution in favour of higher income groups, with social demagogy, and with elements of a selective welfare state protection, on the other hand. Deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation are supposed to strengthen the position of their national economies in global competition. But the respective “own” state should be protected against other states by additional regulation. Global competition by low-salary countries is being made use of in finding a justification for protectionism. Therefore, the “right-wing populists” do, in fact, try to put into practice a contradictory strategy, in order to address extremely different voter spectrums. Different “right-wing populist” forces have very different positions concerning the dissolution or continued existence of the European Monetary Union and the European Union.

IV.

The central challenge for the left-wing forces is and will be to search for possibilities to act politically in an effective way, defending the real liberty and equality of all concerned. This starts with initiatives on the local level constituting the left as an attractive and living force, capable of

helping the weakest, of working on specific projects concerning the everyday life of “ordinary people”, of effectively dealing with any kind of threat emerging from anti-emancipatory forces. This should be connected with a radical left critique of the forms and the modes of the on-going globalisation processes, of the really existing European Union and its agencies, especially addressing those based in their “own” country. This should be connected with short- und middle term alternative proposals and with political demands aiming at improving the social situation of the socially weak, as well as the effective social security of the middle classes. The specific ways of living accessible in everyday life – and with them the free access to the commons – should be put into the centre of left-wing strategy. But all of this must be connected with a process of radical self-criticism and with the clarification of the fact, that the dissolution of the EU would increase the emerged societal, social, ecological and global problems.

V.

Five questions – which are closely interrelated – are to be addressed by further research:

The *first* and central question is an old one: why is the left so weak?

The *second* question should be about the different agencies – who is doing what, and why, and with which political, economic and societal consequences for the different – neoliberal, “right-wing populist” and fundamentalist – agencies?

The *third* question is simple: What does all this mean for the political conditions of left-wing agencies? How can we improve the own political economy and the economic policy?

The *fourth* question should be about the consequences to be drawn from our analyses for the different scenarios of societal development.

The debate leads to a *fifth* question: to a deeper analysis and a more comprehensive discussion of the “political economy of ‘security’”. Because, very important EU leading politicians and state rulers want to organise a new consensus within the EU by basing it on issues of security.