

1. What has changed since the open outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007/08, and why this is the case?

Short answer would be: *everything has changed*. Though dramatic changes that have occurred on almost all areas of social life can easily support such a bold claim, we still need to be weary of the very nature of such change. Ultimately it is a change of capitalist nature, one that, as have been said many times before, changes everything in order to keep everything the same. It seems that the changes that have been going on since the beginning of the global financial crisis have been precisely such changes. The urgently needed changes to safeguard the neoliberal capitalist hegemony. Beginning with the crisis of real estate market in the USA and then spreading throughout the globe, the response of the governments was basically the same.

All have injected enormous amounts of capital in order to prevent the total collapse of banking system and eventual spread of crisis onto the so-called real economy. Though these bailouts did manage to avert the most catastrophic scenario, at least from the banking systems perspective it did not imply any meaningful changes to the banking sector itself which was soon back to business as usual. The real cost of this financial maneuver was and still is socialized. Instead of governments using their leverage to demand radical changes in banking policies, the banks were once again given a blank check. Basically the cost of the whole operation was socialized, meaning that public debt and budget deficit of a great many countries skyrocketed. This in turn meant that in order to pay off these debt governments begun cutting its own budget, i.e. the public sector cuts and austerity measures.

Teachers, nurses, doctors, clerks, policemen etc. were all forced into austerity. Basically here is where everything had to change and the consequences of the crisis were and are really felt, in order to make it possible for the banks and the financial sector as such to remain the same. Why was this (and still remains) the case?

Despite the obvious fact that neoliberal capitalism is a morally bankrupt system, one that even figures such as former chief of FED have put into serious question, this system continues and is, incidentally, now stronger than it ever was. One could argue that the reasons for such a state of affairs lay in the fact that at the end of the day there simply was no alternative. There was no political force that could seriously challenge this hegemony. Although protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street, Indignados movement and other movements that explicitly challenged the general world view, were quite visible and vocal, they never managed to develop a firm organizational and ideological framework that could seriously challenge national, European or even global organizations of capital, such as European Commission,

European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund etc. Still, eventually such forces did emerge.

Perhaps most important one and the one that generated most enthusiasm was Greek Syriza, even moreso when it won the elections. Syriza vowed for a different kind of Europe, one not suffocated under the yoke of austerity measures. Sadly, and all too early it became painfully obvious that the “actually existing” European Union is simply not possible without harsh austerity measures (and other neoliberal policies for that matter). It is an either/or situation, one that doesn’t allow for having both options. Syriza eventually subjugated to the austerity dictate from Brussels. The question remains why was this the case and especially – could everything turned out some other way?

2. Which have been the actual consequences of these developments for the issue/for a country/for the EU/for Europe/for the world?

The consequences are severe social inequality, record high youth unemployment, endemic proportions of precarious job regimes. European Union, the very political organization that received Nobel Peace prize unmasked itself as rigid neoliberal economic framework. Differences between member states have deepened during the crisis and it became painfully obvious that the union functions strictly according to the interests of the most powerful capitalist oligarchies on its top. Eurozone provided for monetary homogeneity but this did not entail any kind of fiscal homogeneity as well. European Central Bank is not a lender in last resort, member states are, when it comes to issues of fiscal solidarity, first and foremost sovereign national states. Thus this asymmetric development of EU in the last decades, one characterized by pushing through almost exclusively interests of capital, has shown its true face in the time of financial crisis. Surely people have become disillusioned by the very concept of European Union and its policies are becoming more and more conservative and right-wing. This is especially obvious in the fact how EU is dealing with refugee crisis.

Regarding the international trade agreements such as the one between EU and USA (TTIP) or the one between EU and Canada (CETA), crisis did not halt them. On the contrary, it seems they are being pushed through more aggressively than ever. As both sides of Atlantic have been actively working on these or similar treaties for many years now, it seems realistic that in one form or the other, sooner or later, these treaties will be implemented. Official arguments about free trade, GDP growth, creation of new jobs etc. have all been debunked time and over again. That never was their real intention anyway, the rationale behind these treaties and what makes them so dangerous is much more worrying. Simply put, these treaties will further the liberalization, privatization and deregulation (LPD) on previously unseen scale. In

stark contrast to the, lets call it LPD 1.0 when states themselves were implementing these measures, LPD 2.0 promises to change the very nature of the state as we know it. With emphasis on instruments like Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) or Regulatory Cooperation the whole legislative process will be undermined.

Instead of corporations just lobbying for their interests, they will now effectively write the legislation they desire. The space for any kind of democratic opposition to such proposals will become extremely limited. It seems that this perspective will change the national parliaments as well as governments into national/local administration of international corporations. Their main task being one of implementing the policies that they had very limited influence upon.

3. Did other possibilities exist in or for the EU and why haven't they been realized?

Bearing in mind that EU was from the very beginning an economic project and one that still pays almost exclusive attention to such interests, it comes as no surprise European commission wholeheartedly accepted the TTIP and other so-called "trade agreements". It is telling that even MEP have an extremely limited access to the documents that are being negotiated, and even then under surveillance. Such security measures of course do not apply to corporations that are to a great advising on what should be written in these documents. Civil society around EU has mobilized, more than 3 million signatures were given in protest to TTIP but EU Commission refuses to hear these voices and continues with the negotiation process.

4. Which scenarios are possible and shall emerge, and with which consequences for the next 10-15 years, and what are the conditions for the actual realization of such trends?

Regarding the TTIP and other such trade agreements it seems most realistic that they will come in force in the next 10 or 15 years. That is presupposing the European Union will be able to withstand the multilevel crisis it is currently experiencing (social, economic, refugee etc.). If that is the case, and that is highly questionable, the very nature of EU will dramatically change. European and member states parliaments will become even more redundant. It is highly likely that the greatest challenge to this status will come from the far right that will have the objective argument that nation states have lost all their sovereignty.

A more radical left alternative will have to take into account the fact that current state of affairs is to the benefit of far right. It seems that before giving any serious alternative such will first have to be imagined.