SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION AS BASIC CONDITION FOR A REALISTIC POST-2015 AGENDA

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Something seems to be going on in the international discussion on development politics. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are only applicable to the so-called developing countries, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as envisioned at the Rio+20 Conference, are supposed to be of global range and also applicable to the societies of the global North. The SDG's ten goals – inter alia in the areas of food security and sustainable agriculture, water and hygiene, energy, climate change and resource management – are currently being substantiated in a dedicated working group (UNO 2012).

In order to appraise and advance the implementation of the Post-2015 agenda and particularly the SDGs, at least three dominant trends which contravene the SDG goals have to be considered and modified: The expanding development model of resource extractivism in many countries of the global South, the intensifying imperial mode of living in countries of the North and the South, as well as the low effectiveness of global governance. In the following paragraphs I will outline these three trends.

According to my analysis, development policies nowadays must focus on the necessary global transformation of the prevailing mode of living and production towards a more equitable, solidary and ecologically sustainable one. Otherwise, promises are threatened to remain empty and well-intended strategies are going to fail. Development policies need to be transformative and should support alternatives and, in order to be able to do so, undergo processes of societal self-transformation, i.e. move away from paternalistic structures and practices dominated by Northern thought-patterns (exemplary for the area of aid politics Gebauer 2014; in general Ziai 2014). This will be the focus in the second part of the article.

Trend 1: Resource extractivism as old-new development model

The phrase "resource extractivism" was coined by Eduardo Gudynas (2009) and points to an important tendency: An old-new development model is currently updating itself on the basis of inner as well as global conditions and dynam-

ics. The high prices for resources in the world market, geo-political shifts (particularly the economic rise of China and the high demand for resources accompanying the country's industrialization), modified strategies of capital valorization and the competition for resources have increased the general importance of resources and their appropriation. In relation to Latin America, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) states a tendency towards reprimarization, i.e. the region's return to the production of primary goods, as an option for a successful development strategy in Latin America (ECLAC 2011). According to Maristella Svampa, resource extractivism is a development model "based on the excessive exploitation of (…) increasingly scarce natural resources and the extension of this process to territories which beforehand were considered "unproductive" (Svampa 2012: 14; see also Brand/Dietz 2013).

The observed continuation of resource-intensive modes of living, consumption and production in the global North and South (see next section) keeps raising the attractiveness of resource extractivism and abets a developmental and social model that predominantly builds on the exploitation of resources and appropriation of resource rents. Even in Latin American countries with progressive social movements and governments, as in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and most obviously in Venezuela, this development model is strongly represented (for Indonesia, see Pichler 2014). On the other hand, the continued exploitation of fossil and mineral resources as well as the agro-industrial production of food and energy crops exacerbates existing social-ecological crises such as climate change, deforestation and water pollution, in addition to the loss of food sovereignty and biological diversity – which is exactly what the SDGs seek to combat.

Trend 2: An attractive imperial mode of living

The conscious and democratic formation of global societal conditions, the establishment of free and solidary, equitable and ecologically sustainable conditions, has to transform a constellation which Markus Wissen and I call "imperial mode of production and living" (2011, 2013).

The global North's mode of living is "imperial" insofar, as it implies a principally unlimited, politically, legally and/or violently secured access to resources, space, labor power and natural sinks elsewhere. For a long time, the development of productivity and prosperity in the capitalist centers was based on a world and resource order that was advantageous for them – and based on suffering and misery in many countries.

During the process of capitalistic globalization, the imperial mode of living was deepened in two directions: On one hand, access to global resources and labor power was restructured and intensified via the world market. Formerly Northern fossilist consumption patterns such as automobility and agro-industrial production remained persistent and were intensified. In addition, in the course of its liberalization, global air traffic increased significantly and access to cheap industrial products was expedited. The second direction is that we currently experience the dynamic expansion of the imperial mode of living especially in the emerging economies (Brand/Wissen 2011).

The expectations arising from the so-called third generation of human rights, i.e. the collective rights and the right to development, are one crucial aspect of this expansion. "Development" still means economic growth and commodification – more or less at any price and especially at cost of sustainable societal nature relations. Let us refer to the agricultural sector: The Argentinian Pampa, previously known as fertile grasslands for extensive stock farming, was covered almost completely with genetically modified Monsanto-soy within the last 10 years in order to grow feeding stuff for swine production in China.

Trend 3: Enduring global management illusion: global governance

The purpose and objective of global governance is often formulated as "developing a system of international rules and institutions and new international cooperation mechanisms which permits the continuous treatment of global challenges and transboundary problems" (Messner 2000: 125). By this, the state and the intergovernmental system become some kind of problem-solver in accordance with the common good, as it is assumed that everybody has an interest in solving problems like hunger, poverty, unemployment or destruction of the environment. This understanding is also reflected in the debates around the MDGs and SDGs. Whether state policies as such are involved in causing the problems, or whether the proposed solutions are to the benefit of countries and population groups determined selectively, is not being questioned. On the example of newer initiatives in the field of trade politics – keyword: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Raza et al. 2014) – we can see that it is first and foremost about neoliberal forms of global governance, i.e. about establishing liberalization and deregularization policies.

According to Lothar Brock, the global governance debate itself became part of a hegemonic discourse and should better reflect this, "in order not to bury the explosiveness of its own approach under fantasies of socio-technological feasibility" (Brock 2003: 84).

From such a perspective it is hardly ever asked whether and how far effective sustainability and environment policies could rather be pursued against than under the conditions of a capitalist world market and all related interests, strategies and competitive relations. This becomes particularly clear in the field of resource politics, but also in climate politics with instruments such as emission trading and paying ransom for pollution. Controversially, we can say that the purpose of global governance to improve political regulation and put things in order is part of the problem, as long as the resource extractivist development model, the imperial mode of living as well as the general dominance-based neoliberal imperial order are not being discussed.

On this basis, global governance, as well as the associated orientation by a Post-Washington consensus and the strategies of eradicating poverty or the Millennium goals, can be interpreted to the effect that it safeguards the ruling North-South relations (Bello 2005; see also Raza 2005). Already in the beginning of the discussion, the "South-Centre" criticized that the institutionalization of global governance is not being discussed independently of questions of international power and legitimation of authority (South Centre 1996: 32). Hence it is not surprising that global governance is understood in parts of the non-Western world as "continuation of imperialism and as re-colonization of one's future through neo-imperialistic institutions" (Conrad/Randeria 2002: 9, cit. acc.to Ziai 2006: 88).

The MDGs and SDGs risk to continue the predominant perspective of international politics which has actually failed: a top-down-approach which assumes that the basic parameters for fundamental changes can be established by means of Western and white knowledge – but without questioning the existing thought patterns, politi-

cal structures and power relations. The socio-economic nucleus of global development which is problematic at least from the political perspective of poverty, distribution, environment and gender politics, cannot be changed that way; it can at most be embellished by expressions such as the "green economy" (Brand 2012). So not only the development models at local and national scales should be changed, but also the international political system that safeguards these models.

THE POST-2015 AGENDA IN THE HORIZON OF A GLOBAL SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

On the politico-strategic level, expressions such as "social-ecological transformation" or "great transformation" were coined (WBGU 2011; Brie 2014; Bauriedl/Wichterich 2013; Klein 2013; Dellheim et al. 2012; Demirovic 2012; Brand 2012; with similar expressions New Economics Foundation 2010; UNEP 2011). They are supposed to point to a solution for the multiple crises the developmental and ecological crises are part of. In contrast to "change" or the increasingly toothless expression "sustainability", the term "social-ecological transformation" has radical semantic implications. The similarly used term "great transformation" stems from Karl Polanyi who described in his 1944 book "The Great Transformation" the transition to industrial capitalism in the 19th century. In discussion nowadays, we need to think of transforming away from a capitalism that depends on fossil energy sources and is in permanent need of natural sinks and resources. It is high time to initiate the often-quoted post-fossil age. As already mentioned, this discussion, including the concept of transformation that emerged from it, is being led in the light of the environmental, climate and resource crises.

Some take another step further and think of a great transformation away from a neoliberal capitalism that does not only push ecological destruction, but also social polarization and the decline of solidarity. In the progressive and developmental political spectrum and also among some conservatives, the demand to exit financial market capitalism is part of the basic political vocabulary. Besides the ecological dimensions, the focus here is on the social and economic dimensions of the matter.

Rather few understand it as a transformation away from capitalism as such, which means away from a society in which central areas of societal life are first and foremost subject to the principles of profit, capital accumulation and economic growth. This would not only mean to weaken the financial markets, but the economic and political power of capital altogether and its structural dominance in society.

Dieter Klein, however, sees a risk that the term "social-ecological" or "great transformation" is taken as a diffuse and noncommittal everyday term which, besides its radical semantics, does not say or mean much. And indeed, many approaches stay behind their own diagnoses. One example of this is the main report of the German Advisory Council for Global Change (WBGU 2011). A radical diagnosis is being followed by rather toothless proposals: politics should do the trick.

When reflecting on the project of a social-ecological transformation and exploring the current conditions for this endeavour, we should at first clarify one issue: As Alex Demirovic kept pointing out in the context of the transformation debate, the logic of transformation is inherent to the bourgeois-capitalistic society itself (2012). The same applies to post-colonial societies. So it is not about saying yes or no to societal change per se, but instead about the underlying logic of change or transformation. With this, we can undertake an important clarification of the term "transformation".

The dominant logic here is that of making profit, of accumulating capital and of expansive economic activities which comes along with the familiar problems: the extensive use or even overuse of labor power which frequently leads to agglomeration of people, burn-outs and the informalization of employment in the societies of the global South. On top of this comes the increasingly dramatic overuse of nature.

Here, the term "social-ecological transformation" unfolds its significance, even if it is only implied in many contributions to the discourse. The ruling logic of change and the constant self-revolutionizing of capitalistic societies becomes a problem, as it causes ever stronger and less controllable crises. Hence, this term and the associated strategies hold quite a potential, particularly for a progressive project at the height of the time: The project of a global solidary modernity.

My point is that, in the face of the multiple crises, a progressive socio-political project which is thereby also an alternative to the powerful dispositive and practices of "development" (Lang/Mokrani 2013; Sachs 1992), is not defined through little political steps but through a concept

that puts the societies of the global North and the global South on a different basis in order to create and safe-guard prosperity and well-being.

Such project requires a material basis or nucleus, as Antonio Gramsci put it. It is undoubtedly about opening public disputes and questioning seemingly self-evident matters (i.e. terms like "growth", "development", "progress" and the embedded interests and power relations). However, it is also and particularly about liveable conditions which are appealing to people. Hence, "if hegemony is politico-ethical, it cannot be other than economic too" (PN 13: 1567). And all of this under conditions of strong ecological restrictions with all related implications for the distribution of power and wealth.

A new model of prosperity which we already rudimentarily know has to be shaped, conceptually and practically: other forms of alimentation and mobility, of energy supply and communication, of housing and clothing that differ from the purely capitalist, industrialist and fossilist ones. We do not have to start from scratch, as there are manifold discussions, proposals and practical approaches already available – especially in (semi)-peripheral societies. For this, we need many actors with progressive claims and actions who bring forward the project.

Among them are social movements, often in the margins of society and in the function of "molecular organizing" (Candeias 2013), as well as progressive associations and NGOs (to which I would count many political foundations), often closer to the mainstream. Among them are critically-minded people and groups in science, think-tanks, media and progressive entrepreneurs. Among them are also people who might be willing to engage with alternative day-to-day practices in a non-organized manner, but who need to be offered opportunities for getting started and getting involved; as this usually does not emerge out of nothing. Furthermore, such project is not clearly separated from other spectrums including the social-ecological changes formulated and initiated there, e.g. progressive religious groups and churches.

The horizon of a progressive, social-ecological transformation requires a far-reaching reconstruction of the mode of production and living beyond one-sided perceptions of growth, classical concepts of development, technological options and the myth of decoupling economic growth from resource consumption (Lang/Mokrani 2013; UNEP 2011 on the false promise of decoupling).

Such transformation process towards a truly sustainable energy and mobility system, towards other forms of agriculture and alimentation, towards long-living products and, at least with respect to the wealthier parts of society, towards less material consumption, must not be pursued on the expense of ordinary people.

They, who usually have less room for action and experience powerlessness, must be freed from their fear of changes. For most of them, "reform" is too strongly associated with the increase of insecurity and anxiety, with redistribution from bottom to top. For this reason, matters of distribution remain important, such as the distribution of wealth and income, of power and chances in life. They remain central in terms of redistribution from social top to bottom and are the *differentia specifica* of progressive politics in contrast to economically liberal, autocratic and many conservative approaches.

Particularly during the current crisis in the global North and in light of the fear of increasing unemployment and expanding informalization and precarization, in my opinion, a central starting point is the linkage between social-ecological restructuring and a policy of social rights and progressive working time policies. Via the topic of working time policy, many ecological issues come into view, especially in the societies of the global North: those of production and consumption for their own sake, of unconditional export-orientation and the question how much value we attach to wage labour and how much to other activities such as unpaid care for the young or the old or social engagement.

With the transformation into a solidary modernity, attractive orientation models come along: Wealth of time, moderation in the face of demands for resource use and in the face of the everyday amenities of products that are cheaply provided by the world market. Frigga Haug (2011) excellently expressed this with the term "four-in-one-perspective". The main focuses are care for oneself, for others and for the environment; wage labor is only a minor part of individual and societal activities. There are elements which were formulated in the feminist debate long ago (Bauriedl/Wichterich 2013) and are being applied in many concrete projects. In Latin America an intensively-led discussion about the "good life" is taking place (Acosta 2009; Vega Camacho 2012; Novy 2013).

Socio-political achievements are rather to be strengthened than cut. However, this is not merely about the

return of the state. Rather, its material basis has to be modified which requires a financial transaction tax as well as a capital tax, the prevention of tax fraud in addition to higher inheritance and top income tax rates. However, beyond state and market, it is required that the commons for which society should consider itself responsible, are strengthened.

With such a broad understanding of change, we have reached another core element of emancipatory politics: the democratization of society in the sense of collective discussion and decision-making processes concerning all common affairs, including transparent forms of representation. Who can participate in decisions about societal matters? Democracy in times of environmental damage also means that people feel responsible again for society and therefore for society's relation to nature.

Yet a democratic process of social-ecological transformation also requires the "intellectual and moral competences of the people entitled to participate" (Marti 2006: 22) which is to be understood as general advice rather than clear criterion for inclusion or exclusion from participation. Nevertheless, the question who possesses the knowledge and power resources to advance or impede important social developments remains important. How are powerful interests enclosed accordingly and how are their material foundations relativized in terms of influence and capital?

This question is particularly important in countries of the global South where economic dynamics often come along with autocratic or even dictatorial conditions.

OUTLOOK

Even if scepticism is indicated in general terms, the beginning SDG discourse and the policies formulated in this context focus their attention on *all* societies. This is a great chance, as this perspective could diffuse from the sustainability debate into other sectors such as economic- and fiscal politics. So it is about a global project which needs to be formulated more specifically in the respective fields.

Currently, several actors and forums position themselves in order to play an important role in the process. Rainer Falk (2014) argues that particularly the Monterrey process on finance for development (ÖFSE 2008) and the debate about effectiveness after the Paris Declaration

are major fields of contested development politics (Six/Langthaler/Obrovsky 2007). What needs to be emphasized: Issues of (global) cooperation and partnership should always be accompanied by questions of power: Who controls the discourses, strategies and institutional settings around MDGs and SDGs? Why are empowering concepts and perspectives of human rights and solidarity less present within these debates and politics than the more paternalistic ones like poverty and aid?

Another precondition for a potential success of certain SDG goals would be a broad alliance of actors in Europe who criticize and overcome the dominant austerity policy. This would go hand in hand with putting development policy on a new foundation in light of the project of a social-ecological transformation. International politics and especially the United Nations system are supposed to safeguard the transformation towards a global solidary modernity with many concrete initiatives.

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