"Real Utopia proposal"

Postfossil Conversion and Free Public Transport

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Part I. Private E-Car vs. Public Transport for free – Real Dystopia vs. Concrete Utopia (Michael Brie)

Crises create opportunities to set long-range goals for the future. A key question is that of urban mobility in a world in which the great majority of the world's population will soon live in cities of over a million inhabitants, many of them in metropolitan conurbations. Broadly speaking, there are two possible alternatives: one, the US system of mobility centred on private, petrol-driven cars can be ecologically modernized and expanded to embrace the globe by switching to electric-powered cars; or, two, public transport can be ecologized and made more flexible. For historical reasons the factors determining which of these alternatives will be chosen are very different and path-dependent. Whereas rapid transit systems have largely disappeared from many US metropolises, European metropolises are characterized by mixed systems. In many metropolises of the southern hemisphere the car-based mobility of the rising middle classes coexists with the exclusion of large sections of the city-dwelling poor from urban mobility. Long-term experiments with a free-of-charge public transport system could act as a global model.

Part II. Conversion. Towards a Eco-Socialist Economy of Reproduction (Mario Candeias)

How to get from here to there? A Free Public Transport system is deeply connected to the conversion of the car industry and specific modes of dealing with contradictions of a transformative process. The car industry is facing strong challenges between crisis of overproduction, booming demand from 'emerging markets', spatial relocation and ecological necessities. Conversion and a just transition for the workers and communities affected face several strategic dilemma. The paper elaborates on union and (eco)movement strategies and short comings, trying to draw on a political method and projects, which create communalities out of different interests at the same time as appreciating differences. The protagonist of such a process of transformation towards a Green Socialism can only be a 'mosaic left' oriented towards participation, which enables people to become "the drivers of their own history" (Eric Mann 2001)

Private E-Car vs. Public Transport for free – Real Dystopia vs. Concrete Utopia

Michael Brie

Forwards into the past

On April 30, 1939, a very hot Sunday that was also the 150th anniversary of the inauguration of George Washington as first president of the USA, the New York World Exhibition opened its doors in the presence of over 200,000 people. Among the speakers were Franklin D. Roosevelt and Albert Einstein. In 1939 and 1940 this exhibition was visited by 44 million people. The Great Crash of 1929 that had brought the USA and Europe to the brink of economic and social collapse was still not quite overcome. The New Deal on the one hand, and an arms build-up and war preparations on the other, had ushered in structural changes whose consequences were not yet discernible. The Soviet Union was represented as were Czechoslovakia, Poland and Belgium, which were soon to be overrun by Germany. China, fighting for survival against a Japanese invasion, was unable to take part. Germany did not take part in the World Exhibition, denouncing it in abusive terms as an "Exhibition of Filthy Talmud Jews" (Völkischer Beobachter).[1] The Second World War and the shadow of Auschwitz loomed on the horizon. While German panzer columns were advancing on Warsaw and German bombs raining down on Polish cities, while Paris was being occupied and the Battle of Britain was raging, visitors to the World Exhibition were looking at "The World of Tomorrow".

This World Exhibition had been chiefly initiated by large private corporations in the USA bent on presenting themselves as visionaries and pioneers of progress. As the official handout to the World Exhibition – organized by a private company – put it: "The eyes of the Fair are on the future — not in the sense of peering toward the unknown nor attempting to foretell the events of tomorrow and the shape of things to come, but in the sense of presenting a new and clearer view of today in preparation for tomorrow; a view of the forces and ideas that prevail as well as the machines. To its visitors the Fair will say: 'Here are the materials, ideas, and forces at work in our world. These are the tools with which the World of Tomorrow must be made. They are all interesting and much effort has been expended to lay them before you in an interesting way. Familiarity with today is the best preparation for the future.'"[2]

Two places in particular drew crowds at the World Exhibition – the *Trylon and Perisphere* and *Futurama.* However much they might have in common in matters of detail, they can be regarded as opposing blueprints of the future.

The *Trylon and Perisphere* formed the official, architectural centre of the World Exhibition. They were intended to embody the great vision of the next hundred years and foreshadow a new global civilization – the *Democracity* of the year 2039. The over 212 metres tall *Trylon* and the spherical *Periphere* (over 65 metres in diameter) were designed by the architects Wallace Harrison and J. Andre Fouilhoux, while the interior of the sphere, the Periphere, was the work of Henry Dreyfuss, whose *Democracity* drew

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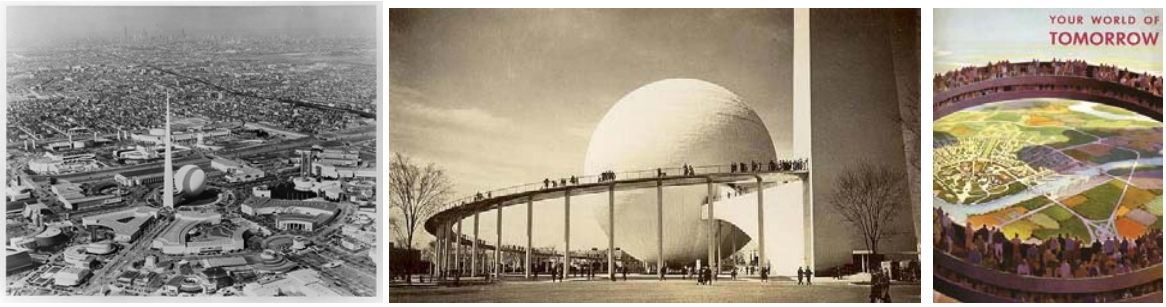
[1] Detlef Borchers: *Vor 70 Jahren: Die Welt von morgen war auch einmal besser* (30.4.2009) (http://www.heise.de/ct/artikel/Vor-70-Jahren-Die-Welt-von-morgen-war-auch-einmal-besser-301540.html, 8.1.2012).

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1939_New_York_World%27s_Fair (8.1.2012).

upon Le Corbusier's design of a v*ille radieuse* (radiant city). The visitors ascended twenty metres on what was then the world's longest escalator into the interior of the Periphere, and looked down at the world of the future mounted on revolving balconies, while one of the most famous radio announcers of the day, Hans von Kaltenborn, spoke the commentary. He described a civilization which lived in harmony with nature; in which individuals and nations lived in peace with one another; in which living and working, democratic decision-making and recreation, industry and agriculture, were organically linked in mutual dependence; from which slums and crime had been banished; where sunshine and clean air were accessible to every man and woman; and which was fuelled by renewable energy in the shape of water power. It was "a brave new world built by united hands and hearts",[3] into which the workers of "office, farm and factory" came and intoned a song by William Grant Still "Rising Tide": "Hand in hand, side by side…". In the centre of this new life form was the place of joint decision-making for a life together in freedom.



TRYLON AND PERISPHERE IN THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD EXHIBITION, THE ASCENT INTO THE SPHERE AND A PUBLICITY POSTER GIVING AN INSIDE VIEW OF "YOUR WORLD OF TOMORROW"

While *Trylon and Perisphere* incorporated a vision of the future derived from open discussion, *Futurama* was nothing more nor less than a corporate blueprint of the coming society. It was the pavilion of *General Motors,* having a surface area of over 3,300 square metres with half a million (!) houses, a million trees, and 50,000 miniature vehicles.[4] The whole was conceived by the industrial designer Norman Bel Geddes. The time horizon which *General Motors* had in mind was not a hundred, but only twenty years. Its future was "the wonder world of 1960", which the blurb described as "the greater and better world of tomorrow …", a "tribute to the American scheme of living where by individual effort, the freedom to think and the will to do are giving birth to a generation of men who always want new fields for greater accomplishment". Flying over the USA of the year 1960 in 552 mobile seats, seeing a land criss-crossed by mighty motorways constituting the arteries of the nation, swooping down into a city in which residential, service, administrative and industrial areas are separate ("all have been separated for greater efficiency and greater convenience") and the city centre is dominated by 400-metre skyscrapers that helicopters can land on. It is a world built "in

[3] Ibid. An impression may be obtained from the video, which contains the commentary and the song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pd-6sWzLiFA (8.1.2012).

[4] Details taken from: http://www.expo2000.de/expo2000/geschichte/detail.php?wa_id=14&lang=2&s_typ=8; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1939_New_York_World%27s_Fair (8.1.2012).

the spirit of individual enterprise in the Great American Way".[5] And as the visitors "landed", they found themselves back at precisely that crossroads they had encountered when they left Futurama – only now it was life-size.

As Bel Geddes wrote: "Futurama is a large-scale model representing almost every type of terrain in America and illustrating how a motorway system may be laid down over the entire country – across mountains, over rivers and lakes, through cities and past towns – never deviating from a direct course and always adhering to the four basic principles of highway design: safety, comfort, speed and economy." He had acknowledged this in the belief that "a free-flowing movement of people and goods across our nation is a requirement of modern living and prosperity."[6]

THE PAVILION OF *GENERAL MOTORS*, SEATED VISITORS LOOKING AT "FUTURAMA" AND A NON-CLOVERLEAF INTERCHANGE OF THE HIGHWAYS OF THE FUTURE

Within the orbit of the USA's view of itself *Democracity* and *Futurama* formed two opposite poles – free communality vs. individual enterprise, democratic institutions vs. corporate headquarters, organic link between work and life, politics and economics or their complete separation – both alternatives were given visual form. And each of these two visions had a different concept of mobility: one combined public local and long-distance transport and pedestrian traffic, while the other focused on the private car and long-distance freight transport.[7] Perhaps the time has come to rediscover the vision of *Democracity* rather than the crisis-racked world of *Futurama* as the year 2039 draws nearer!

Back to the Future

In the context of the cultural changes of this period the oil crisis of the early 1970s triggered a new debate on mobility. Rising prices and the prospect of an oil shortage on the one hand and the sense of private mobility on the other gave rise to a broad discussion of alternatives which continues to this day. There were individual, short-lived experiments at local level like in Rome or Bologna until the *zeitgeist* and the real policies of emergent neo-liberalism turned against it. In the early 1960s the public transport

[5] The quotations are taken from the publicity film for Futurama http://www.wired.com/entertainment/hollywood/magazine/15-12/ff_futurama_original (8.1.2012).

[6] Quoted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurama_%28New_York_World%27s_Fair%29 (8.1.2012).

[7] The opposing nature of the two concepts has been deliberately stressed here at the expense of the points they had in common, although they would have been perceived by contemporaries as forming a unity.

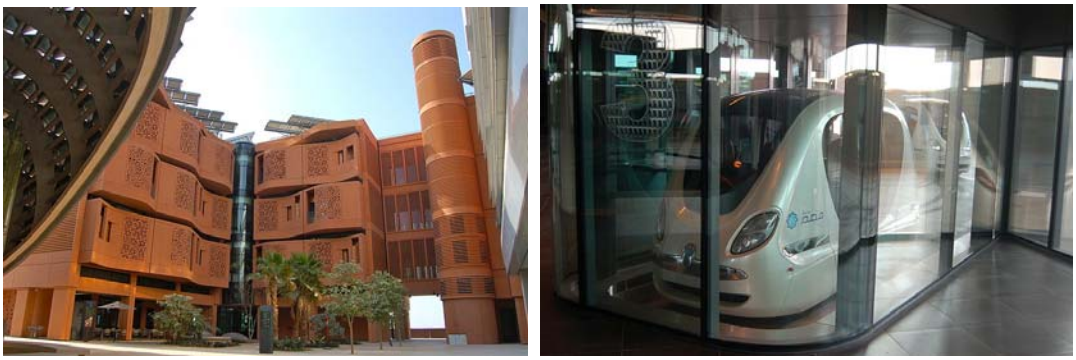
system in West Germany accounted for as much traffic as personal motorized transport – thirty years later its share had fallen to below 20 per cent.

The discussion resurfaced some thirty years later, in 1997/98, when the Brandenburg towns of Lübben and Templin began to experiment with the introduction of a free public bus service. Today the most prominent exponent of this is the Belgian city of Hasselt, which is home to 70,000 permanent residents and 40,000 students while also being visited by many so-called "in-commuters", i.e. people who drive into the city to work, study or shop.

In 1995, following a change of mayor (the left-wing Socialist Steve Stevaert had been elected in 1994), a decision was taken to drop plans for a third ring road and offer the public a free bus service instead. A Mobility Agreement was concluded with the Flanders Region and a transport company called "De Lijn". By 1997 Hasselt had eight city buses carrying a thousand passengers a day. By 2007 there were 46 city buses and the number of passengers had increased tenfold. The inner ring was greened and revamped. The inner city became more attractive and mobility increased.[8] At the same time car-sharing, car-leasing and car-renting schemes are springing up all over Europe. The car has lost, especially among the younger generation, its pride of place as a symbol of individual (male) freedom and has become just another, albeit interesting, consumer good. Meanwhile there are also experiments with completely CO_2-free mobility in Masdar City, Kuwait, of all places, a country whose wealth is exclusively due to oil. They include a public transport system based on renewable energies and the construction of a pedestrian-friendly city under desert conditions and temperatures of up to 50º C(!). The new Information and Communication Technologies are creating the conditions for systems of mobility that are both public and highly individualized, combining equal access for all with freedom for each and everyone.

There exists, however, the possibility of a different line of development. The elements of new ways of living and producing have long been embedded in the pores of the car society. The classical division of labour between the male "breadwinner" and the housewife/ mother no longer prevails, while the assembly lines and open-plan offices of large corporations are no longer as dominant as they used to be. Individualization/flexibilization/subjectivization of work, teamwork, network organizations, flat hierarchies and Enterprise 2.0 are not just ideological slogans – they also describe new realities. In people's own four walls the Internet, with its chat rooms and role-plays, is replacing the merely passive enjoyment of television programmes imposed from outside. In the Internet individuals are much freer to move about than on the streets of the cities. The wealth of the human spirit, the possibilities of play and direct communication across the globe, may have assumed perverted forms in some cases, but they can also have an emancipatory function.

[8] For an overview on such experiments see Karl-Heinz Schweig: Fahrscheinfreier Stadtverkehr. Deutsche und ausländische Beispiele. In: Petra Kelly Stiftung: Mobilität nach Maß! Wege zu einer zukunftfähigen Verkehrspolitik. Dokumentation der Tagung am 22. Mai 2003 im Eckstein. München 2003, pp. 37 – 38.



MASDAR CITY (HTTP://DE.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/MASDAR)

The economic, technical and cultural prerequisites for a new revolution in urban transport are largely in place. But as with the transition to the car cities as symbolized by the General Motors pavilion at the New York World Exhibition's *Futurama*, the switch to cities with a largely public transport system represents a comprehensive transformation. Vested interests, cultural stereotypes and billions invested in motorways and roads stand in the way of such a transformation. If they are to be overcome, attractive models, *concrete utopias*, must be created to trigger a new dynamic. Such a utopia is free public transport. For years now there has been a steady flow of new initiatives envisaging this option that have been under discussion.[9] There has been a whole series of studies examining the technical and financial consequences of such a step.

What are the arguments in favour of free public transport as an all-German and ultimately European project, particularly in the present crisis? What reasons are there for opting out of the system of individual motor transport?

1. The first question is, can we afford free public transport? The answer is that the costs of a public transport system would come to at most 50 to 70 per cent of the costs of personal motor transport.[10] If one includes all the follow-up costs, the outlays are much lower in comparison. The community would save enormously. An equally high Gross Domestic Product would suddenly be worth much more. The wealth of society and its citizens would increase without any corresponding rise in growth! But the costs would be differently distributed. They would have to come from the state. This would mean a redistribution from the private to the public sector, so that private individuals could save as well. The thesis of "more net from the gross" turns out to be sheer demagogy. For less from the gross of the individual would in real terms mean more for many individuals if it were really spent on the right things, i.e. on the building up of the transport system. In the UK car owners spend about a third (!) of their net monthly earnings on things connected with their cars.[11] Simply looking at the petrol costs, as many do, is

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[9] Mark Diesendorf: The Effect of Land Costs on the Economics of Urban Transportation Systems (PDF). Proceedings of Third International Conference on Traffic and Transportation Studies (ICTTS2002): 1422-1429. Retrieved on 2008-04-15.

[10] Diesendorf, Mark. "The Effect of Land Costs on the Economics of Urban Transportation Systems" (PDF). *Proceedings of Third International Conference on Traffic and Transportation* Studies (ICTTS2002*): 1422-1429,* 2008-04-15.

[11] Hilary Osborne (2006-10-20). "Cost of running a car 'exceeds £5,000'". *The Guardian* (London: Guardian Media Group). http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2006/oct/20/motoring.

completely misleading. In Germany, for example, a small car costs its user about 320 euros a month and not, as its user thinks, 190 euros.[12]

If society were a company, we would say that the capital tied up in the means of transport ought to be exploited as intensively as possible. Precisely the opposite is true of private cars. They stand around on the roads taking up space. Enormous areas are devoted to roadways and parking places for them. Their productivity lies too far behind that of public transport to ever catch up. Their average speed in cities when in motion is many times less than that of rail transport systems. In order to make up for these cost disadvantages private cars are massively subsidized. The costs that are privately charged are – depending on the source – only 70 to 50 per cent of the real social cost.

2. About a quarter of the CO_2 emissions in the highly-developed countries are caused by motor transport. The use of public transport could reduce CO_2 emissions by a factor of 5 or even 10. In order to prevent an extreme climate catastrophe, reductions of this order of magnitude will be necessary over the next two or three decades. In the field of transport this would be possible on the basis of existing technologies merely by switching to public transport systems. There is no comparable technological alternative. Even the so-called electro-car would have to rely on electricity which many countries will not be able to generate using renewable sources of energy in the foreseeable future. Fuels derived from agricultural products ("agrofuels") have proved themselves to be a major contributor to environmental pollution, to the ruin of rural production, especially that of small and medium-sized farms, and to increased hunger.

3. In a famous article entitled *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) Garrett Hardin showed how pasture land, if owned in common, was in danger of being overgrazed and destroyed. What he left out of account was that for many centuries well-run communities have prevented this very thing from happening, unlike the car- and capital-fixated western societies which give their darlings free rain. They have allowed cars to destroy the globe, congest the cities, poison the air with exhaust fumes, use up resources, and to carve up the country with more and more roads. In 2007 there were over 800 million cars, 250 million of them in the USA. About 70 million new cars leave the assembly line every year.[13] The number of deaths per kilometre travelled by car is six to eight times higher than in the case of bus or rail. Cars not only wage war on nature, they also cause a slaughter among motorized and non-motorized citizens. We have literally decided in favour of the most lethal system of transport there is.

4. A specious argument in favour of cars is enhanced individual mobility, the possibility of getting directly from door to door. This must be set off against what are often long driving times. Furthermore the basic switchover of passenger traffic from private to public vehicles could be combined with a highly subsidized or equally free taxi system for short distances. Also, the possibility of car-sharing for "the last two kilometres" should be considered, the use of which would be free of charge for distances of up to 50 kilometres (or longer in thinly populated areas) per month. Purchases would be delivered not by private car, but by mass suppliers. Countries like Switzerland show that a good dense network of public transport systems markedly reduces the use of private automobiles. On the other hand the thinning out of the public network, its deterioration, or the sheer absence of relevant services, are a major cause of the increase in motorized personal transport.

[12] http://www.focus.de/auto/diverses/umfrage_aid_119549.html.
[13] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automotive_industry.

5. The banishing of the car from the public spaces of our cities would allow them to be reclaimed as meeting places, as places for the public life of the streets and non-threatening encounters with strangers. The pollution caused by noise, dirt (particulate matter) and exhaust fumes would fall drastically. Many major thoroughfares could be made green. Imagine for a moment the centres of Rome or Paris without cars! The possibilities of democratic participation in the running of the city would increase. With greatly strengthened municipal transport companies enterprises incorporating more citizen involvement could be developed. Instead of being subordinated to the constraints of private mobility, cities could be democratically shaped in quite a different way. The cities of "having" are cities of motor traffic and temples of consumerism, beneath whose concrete slabs meadows lie buried, while the cities of "being" are places of public transport and culture.

6. A free public transport system is a typical Middle-Bottom alliance.[14] It shows solidarity with the weak, with those who cannot afford a car, with those who are dependent on public transport, who are particularly affected by its drawbacks, and who in some cases do not have the money for a season ticket. And it is an invitation to the middle classes to practise their mobility not as a private luxury of the few, but as a "public luxury" (Mike Davis), which is accessible to all and excludes no one.

7. A fully developed system of free public transport would be one of those projects that facilitate real global cooperation. Private motor transport cannot be a global solution, even if it seems to be what we are working towards. In the rich countries of the northern hemisphere it is still possible today to finance both a private and a public transport system, but it won't be tomorrow. In the southern hemisphere, where the social limits on mobility are extreme, it is already out of the question today. A switch to free public transport in the northern hemisphere would be an effective aid to development, as it would reduce the demand for resources, alleviate the threat of climate change (which mainly affects the southern hemisphere), offers a model which, unlike personal motor transport, really can be applied as a global solution, and could be linked with a cost-free technology transfer from North to South. Some of the costs the developed economies would save could be invested in the promotion of suitable infrastructure projects in the developing countries.

In the present crisis public stimulus packages are necessary to prevent a lasting recession. The only question is, should these be programmes like that of the "environmental bonus", which promote industries and technologies that have been completely superseded and belong in a past age, or should they be such as are aimed at a long-term socio-ecological transformation. The planet has grown too small for even more resources to be wasted at its expense. The situation is too grave to maintain outgrown structures by increasing national indebtedness. The opportunities of a change are too obvious to let a mindless, destructively business-as-usual attitude to prevail. It is time to turn the crisis into an opportunity, to do what we always wanted to do – build a society based on solidarity and free from cars. The car-dominated cities of having can be replaced by cities of being (Erich Fromm). People will only survive if they can take the "auto" out of "automobile" and stop turning the planet into one gigantic motorway. This,

[14] Cf.: Michael Brie: *Segeln gegen den Wind. Bedingungen eines politischen Richtungswechsels in Deutschland* in Michael Brie; Cornelia Hildebrandt; Meinhard Meuche-Mäker: *Die LINKE. Wohin verändert sie die Republik?* Berlin, 2007, pp. 259 – 318.

however, can only be achieved if we, children of nature that we are, finally learn to treat the world gently and cautiously and mine the wealth that resides in public effort. Then perhaps people with a sense of social solidarity would determine the measure of things and the earth would become a home.

How to get from here to there? A Free Public Transport system is deeply connected to the conversion of the car industry and specific modes of dealing with contradictions of a transformative process. This should be elaborated in the next section.

Conversion: Advancing towards an Eco-Socialist Economy of Reproduction

Mario Candeias

The car industry is a key instance and focal point of the current multiple crises (cf. LuXemburg 3/2010). In 2009, car sales dropped by up to 50%; today, this crisis appears to be over, and sales are booming again. Carmakers in Europe and North America are planning to double their output and increase exports even further. In other words, the notorious overcapacities in car production are not being reduced; instead, competition is intensifying – which primarily affects the workers.

Moreover, in China and India, powerful competitors to the established car producers are emerging. It is common knowledge that the global climate will collapse if countries like China or India achieve levels of automobilization comparable to the West – a kind of ecological 'crisis of overproduction'. Nevertheless, carmakers in the West invest their hopes in these emerging markets. Some commentators argue that, viewed from a global perspective, there is no overproduction in the 'real' economy. According to this view, the expanding 'middle classes' in the global south have to be supplied with cars, and global society in its entirety, including the most remote places on earth, has to be modelled on the idea of 'automobilized' individuality.

Yet before this new level of global 'automobilization' can be achieved, there will be break-downs of traffic in mega cities like Mumbai, Shanghai or Istanbul, and the inhabitants will ache under the smog. In the light of this scenario, nearly every carmaker is working on a 'green' strategy ('go green!'). However, this only means that the companies in question are continuing to advance individual mobility and are carrying on – now driven by different forces – with the same old business model. The electric car may represent a new opportunity for image improvement and accumulation, but it does little to alter the structure of private transport and address its problems: the terrifying number of injured and dead people, the exponential growth in traffic density, soil sealing, and the increasing use of highly poisonous and rare resources, for example lithium. Besides, the use of electric cars does not prevent traffic jams or even the total standstill of traffic. The strategies of carmakers are based on increasing output and exports, not on ecological requirements. They aim at sidelining competitors and thus intensifying competition, not at redressing ecological imbalances.

The introduction of new technologies is usually accompanied by substantial investments in development and infrastructure, and it cannot be predicted, most of the time, whether a certain technology or technological standard will prevail. Hardly any corporation can afford to get involved in the development of all relevant technologies and become a true competitor in their production. A handful of 'global players' like Daimler Benz and Volkswagen have been able to prevail in the world market, but 'at home', they have been cutting jobs for decades. Thanks to the new markets, new sites of production are springing up – but not in Germany, the US or France. Increases in productivity are being forced, which results in job cuts in the 'old' car nations. Soon, the competition between different sites of production will intensify further, and there will be even more attempts to play off work forces against one another. This suggests that trade union strategies based on 'competitive corporatism' do not offer prospects for the future. The crisis has revealed that to a large degree, the new sites of production in

Eastern Europe and Turkey are, and remain, dependent on the decisions made in Western company headquarters. And if costs – especially wage costs – increase, capital will already be moving to new sites of production in Asia that are located close to the growth markets. It is more necessary than ever to establish new, and stronger, forms of transnational unionization – based on the cooperation with social-ecological associations and other forces from civil society. The aim is to link the issues of employment and workers' right with initiatives for alternative modes of production and consumption.

A member of the Porsche works council describes the situation thus: "We're doing well again. This means we have to start developing alternatives *now*. Otherwise, there is a real threat of a 'hard conversion' in the near future".[15] Due to the current boom in orders, however, the recent, subtle signs of an emerging debate on conversion are already disappearing. The latest pronouncements from IG Metall, the German metalworkers' union, fall short of the unions' progressive debate in the 1980s, and most of the unions' representatives do little to change this (exceptions apply). Left-wing site committees [Betriebsgruppen] are confronted with other problems, e.g., the intense competition between the different sites of production, the intensification of work, defeats in collective bargaining disputes and the gladness felt by some workers about keeping their jobs in times of crisis. The site committees are too weak to motivate workers to rethink their situation. Similarly, if someone says 'conversion', capital always seems to hear 'e-cars'. "These corporations aren't capable of conversion, not by themselves", remarks a young member of the Volkswagen works council (ibid.). "Conversion is an illusion", is the resigned statement of a member of the works council at Bosch, a car parts supplier. According to him, the current state of affairs is simply a reflection of the given relations of forces (ibid.).

The Current Growth Model at its Limits

We have reached the ecological and economic limits of the current 'growth model' – and this does not just apply to the car industry. In theory, all political camps agree that it is no longer adequate to just focus on the quantitative side of GDP growth. Official commissions are discussing additional, qualitative criteria and indicators that can be used for measuring and re-assessing (economic) development. Especially people on the left agree that a socio-ecological transformation is required. For decades, 'ecology' and 'economy' were seen as conflicting principles. Today, many politicians grasp the ecological modernization of society as an opportunity for economic, and thus for social, development – at least at the level of rhetoric. Of course, there are enormous differences regarding the path and aim of the proposed social-ecological transformation. Some of the different conceptions are: a) 'social' or 'qualitative growth'; b) 'green growth' and a 'Green New Deal'; c) a steady-state economy without growth.

All these approaches portray the social-ecological turn as a win-win situation – everyone is supposed to profit from it: the economy gains due to new growth and export markets; wage-labourers get new jobs; the tax income of the state increases; and nature benefits from the de-coupling of the economy from its dependence on an ever larger

[15] Quote from a debate at the conference 'Auto.Mobil.Krise.', which took place in Stuttgart from 28-30 October 2010 and was organized by Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in cooperation with the Bundestag group of the Left Party and Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE), www.rosalux.de/documentation/41066/automobilkrise.html.

amount of resources and energy.

Contrary to these approaches, a certain fraction of the left denies that the de-coupling of economic and material growth is possible. They believe that a contraction of the economy ('de-growth') is necessary. According to them, the current, dramatic intensification in the exploitation of the biosphere and natural resources forces us, under time constraints, to rethink our ways of life. Some authors link this negative message with the prospect a 'good life' ('buen vivir'). This is based on the idea of replacing the existing, ever-expanding patterns of consumption with a focus on increasing the wealth of time and relationships (Bullard 2009, Larrea 2010). In the statements of a majority of these authors there is, at least, a hint of an appeal to ethics. They call for a more modest, less 'material' way of life in harmony with nature (e.g., Gudynas 2011). This entails a 'change of values', which embeds the renunciation of ever-increasing material wealth in a just, ascetic way of life. Andrew Simms (2010: 34), the director of the New Economics Foundation, quotes John Maynard Keynes in this context: In the future, social justice is about addressing "the problem of the distribution of sacrifice".[16]

Neither approach has much to say about the unequal distribution of the costs incurred by the social-ecological transformation or transition. Both of them keep quiet about the 'losers'. In the first scenario, everyone is a winner: particular interests are absorbed by the common good. In the second scenario, everyone has to tighten their belts (in some cases with, and in some without, redistribution) and adopt a new way of life. Particular interests have to be suppressed in favour of the common good; people who do not recognize the need for this are unreasonable.

Both approaches conceptualize the mediation between particular interests and the purported common good in an abstract, top-down fashion. Following them, transformation is a process without transition – a continuous process without ruptures. Next to the internalization of consumerist, 'imperial' life-styles (Brand), this is a key reason why the path to the ecological transformation remains blocked – despite the fact that people are constantly invoking the idea and large parts of the political scene subscribe to it, at least at the rhetorical level. The contradictions inherent in this conception are revealed in concrete social processes; the unequal distribution of 'costs' becomes apparent. If these contradictions are not discussed openly and managed politically, it will be difficult to create a broad consensus behind the advancement towards conversion. Advancements are in danger of getting squeezed between the clientelism of the trade unions, which are catering for a (dwindling) base of core workers, and the policies for a 'good' natural environment pursued by the affluent middle classes on behalf of their children and themselves.

'Just Transition'

About 15 years ago, Canadian and US trade unionists like Brian Kohler coined the term 'just transition'[17]. They demanded that the necessary ecological restructuring of the

[16] For neoliberals like Meinhard Miegel, the approaching end of growth means that we simply have to tighten our belts: "The big bash is over, the bar is now closed… The sign says 'closed'; it is both for the thirsty and for those who aren't" (2010, 165, translated).

[17] I would like to thank Jana Flemming for her research on the origin of the concept, cf. mehring1-blog: http://ifg.rosalux.de/2011/01/14/just-transition/.

economy proceed on the grounds of social justice: "current patterns of production and consumption must change for environmental reasons". This will have profound effects on employment: "Businesses will adapt (with government subsidies), highly-paid executives will gently glide to new positions on golden parachutes, and the environment will presumably improve, to the benefit of the general population. Who will pay? Left to the so-called free market, workers in affected industries who lose their jobs will effectively suffer for everyone else's benefit". The 'just transition' approach "asks that society consider who benefits from, and who pays the cost of, implementing measures to protect the environment" (5). "Simply stated, 'just transition' means fair compensation to impacted workers and communities for economic and health losses due to changes in production", remarks Jenice View from the Just Transition Alliance (2002, 2).

The experience of structural change and conversion in certain branches of industry led to the emergence of this idea. Examples are the arms industry and the first 'environmental' strike, which took place in the US in 1973 and targeted Shell, the oil company (cf. Young 2003, 3). Workers and environmentalists formed a strategic alliance – in the case of Shell to protest against the threat posed by the company to the health of the environment, the population and the workers, and to claim compensation for those who were already ill.

The Just Transition Alliance emerged from such locally rooted initiatives linked to the labour movement. It is operating as a part of the climate justice movement, standing up especially for 'front workers', as well as creating awareness of racial discrimination. After all, the people worst affected by pollution, climate change, and work hazardous to health are people of colour, indigenous people and other disadvantaged groups: "Our dependence on fossil fuels comes at a high price for our health, our atmosphere, and our economic and political strength. Workers and community residents are contaminated, injured and killed in the processes of extracting and refining fossil fuels. In fact, more workers die in oil, gas and coal extraction than in all other industries combined. Low-income, people of color and Indigenous Peoples are affected even more than other populations by fossil fuel use" (Just Transition Alliance no year, 1).

Consequently, 'just transition' does not concern workers in danger of losing their jobs and workers in the global north, but everyone whose existence is affected by climate change, says Stine Gry from Climate Justice Action.[18] On the whole, subaltern groups and classes from the global south are even more vulnerable than their counterparts in the global north.

At the global summits in Copenhagen (2009) and Cancún (2010), the demand for a 'just transition' was included in the final document of the governments (cf. Sweeney 2011). However, the term – just like 'sustainable development' and 'climate justice' – is in danger of remaining an empty signifier, behind which hugely different social and political forces can gather, and that covers up real contradictions – as Jana Flemming rightly points out. Nevertheless, public "references to the costs of an ecological transformation" could be an opportunity for "creating awareness of the contradictions inherent in the hegemonic management of the ecological crisis. Wherever costs are accrued that disadvantage certain groups, it is possible to point to the structural causes of this unequal distribution" (Flemming 2011, translated).

[18] www.climate-justice-action.org/news/2009/10/19/climate-justice-movement-to-take-mass-action-during-un-climate-talks/

Green Jobs

Time and again, trade unions are reminded to "tell [their members] the truth" (Schumann 2011) and inform them that due to climate change, their jobs cannot be protected. It will not be possible to keep quiet about the fact that "the changes needed will have grave consequences" (Strohschneider 2011, translated). But how is it possible to gain support for these changes by the people affected? After all, these changes entail that, for the common good, they will have to make sacrifices and cope with job losses and insecurity. Trade unions and employees in industries that are highly detrimental to the global climate are often accused of being structurally conservative and blocking the unavoidable social-ecological transformation. One example is the strategy pursued in Germany during the crisis in order to protect the car industry. This included a cash for clunkers scheme, 'short-time working' benefits and the controversial bail-out for Opel (the European GM branch). People are right to criticize these measures.

But how can concrete interests be reformulated in such a way that the interests of potential allies are considered from the start and different struggles are linked up (cf. Candeias 2010, 11)? The International Federation of Transport Workers (2010) suggests cutting jobs in transport and creating new ones in other sectors – a ground-breaking step for trade unionism. The Campaign against Climate Change (2011), a trade union group, demands the creation of one million (public) green jobs – now. At the same time, it requests guarantees for all workers who will lose their jobs. All participating groups including the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) demand that the transition to a "low carbon economy" cannot be based on "the vain hope that the market alone will provide". Rather, "planning and proactive policies by government" are required (TUC 2008, 7).[19] Most of the time, this campaign links the resolution of conflicts over aims to the existence of sustainable and social growth (17).

These examples demonstrate how ecological reforms can be linked with prospects of reform in social and employment policy – based on conceptions of a just transition for those who are most heavily affected. Nevertheless, strategic contradictions emerge once processes of transition are organized in practice.

Strategic Contradictions I: A Dilemma for the Trade Unions

Speaking in the abstract, the protection of the environment, a social equilibrium and good work for everyone are not diametrically opposed goals. Everyone in the 'mosaic left' is united behind these (minimal) requirements of social transformation – despite divergences in people's more far-reaching political conceptions. And yet, there are considerable divergences, strategic contradictions and conflicting political tactics regarding the entry points and the paths of transition: short- and medium-term perspectives differ, and there are conflicts over aims. As a result, different left-wing groups tend to act at a distance from one another.

For decades, the trade unions have been struggling to reconcile short- and medium-term goals. The process of social-ecological transformation entails the shrinking of certain sectors of industry, for example the car industry. Conversion and deep structural

[19] There is a certain scepticism towards the decisions made by both capital and governments: "we recognize that corporate (and, too often, governmental) interests regularly injure workers, communities, and the environment for profit. We refuse to abandon one another for economic security or environmental health and safety, as we want both" (View 2002, 1).

changes will result in many workers losing the jobs they are used to. Under conditions of crisis and unfavourable relations of forces, short-term requirements and long-term goals tend to diverge.

For people currently employed in the car industry or in certain sectors of the chemical and the energy industries, the structural change towards 'green technologies' and renewables does not just entail a move from one sector to the next. The restructuring of the car industry will not necessarily take place at the existing sites of production. In other words, it will lead to job losses and the relocation of production to other countries. For the workers, the contradictory experience of (ever shorter phases of) job security for some (for longer working hours, cuts to Christmas and holiday bonuses, intensification of work etc.) and training agencies for others who have been laid off is hardly an attractive prospect.

Very few workers who have been 'parked' in training agencies for some time find new jobs comparable to their old ones; many experience unemployment and, after a short time, Hartz IV [German welfare/workfare benefits]. There are almost always job losses – and, for the people affected, losses of purpose and of social connections. Over the short term, 'green growth' hardly helps people – even if it is a long-term improvement. Under such conditions, trade unions are obliged to stand up for the workers' interest in job security – even if this does only offer relief for a short time.

There is "no way around a drastic reduction in working hours", says a member of the Opel works council.[20] But so far, public acceptance of this instrument is limited. During the crisis, short-time working has protected core work forces in Germany from job losses while 800,000 temporary workers were dismissed. The extra time gained by the people on reduced working hours hardly opened up new prospects for them. In fact, due to the uncertainties over future developments, it caused fear. Similarly, collective bargaining agreements that lead to the reduction of working hours have contradictory effects: either they require people to agree to wage cuts – or there is a significant intensification of work and further flexibilization. As a result, workers hold on to well-tried patterns of work. It would be wrong to assume that it is just the 'pride of the producer' that leads car workers to defend, against their better judgment, the production of ecologically detrimental luxury cars. After all, the production of such high-tech products makes possible more group work and slightly slower cycle times. Considering the increasing intensification of work, this is an important point – especially if people "are supposed to carry on until they are finally entitled to a pension", as Susanne Nickel from IG Metall Bremen explains (ibid.).

Moreover, even if new sectors compensate for job losses in the old branches of industry in quantitative terms, the employment relations and conditions of work are often worse. In the renewables sector (and the 'green sector' in general), many companies are 'free' from trade unions. This does not only reflect the unions' weakness in organizing in new industries, but also the partly open, at times aggressive rejection by management of minimal standards of co-determination, collective bargaining and freedom of association. This is especially the case with small and medium-sized 'green' companies, which often are not members of the Confederation of German Industry (BDI) and therefore not part of general collective agreements.

Currently, IG Metall is attempting to actively counter this development. With international help, the trade union has launched an organizing project in the 'green tech'

[20] Quote from a discussion at the conference "Auto.Mobil.Krise." (see above).

industry. In this sector, work is remunerated more badly than elsewhere, and the standards of collective bargaining do not apply across the board. In short, job losses in the old industries are not fully compensated for by the creation of new jobs in new sectors – even if quantities are similar. Moreover, the shrinking of the old industries poses a threat to the core area of the organizational power of the trade unions, that is, large, highly unionized firms characterized by high standards of collective bargaining. These firms are *supposed* to serve as (a) point of orientation for other companies in terms of the standard of working conditions, (b) safeguards in the politics of power that protect achievements and the legal regulations underpinning them, and (c) a base for organizing in other branches.

People are right to demand the expansion of the service and infrastructure sector; however, under the given conditions, this will not lead to the creation of a sufficient number of jobs characterized by high wage levels and standards of collective bargaining. Moreover, the competition between the different sectoral trade unions in Germany is complicating matters further. IG Metall argues thus: It is understandable that ver.di [the service and public sector union] demands the expansion of the public sector, and this is indeed supported by IG Metall. But this expansion does not open up new prospects for a metal workers' union. As a result, IG Metall demands a turn in industrial policy and flanking measures – as have been formulated by Ulla Lötzer (2010), member of parliament for the left party Die Linke, among others.

Yet if the route of the market is taken, the transformation of carmakers into integrated providers of mobility services will create conflicts with the competing strategies of other fractions of capital such as the energy industry, construction and local transport. All of these fractions want to secure shares of this market.

This suggests that (industrial) trade unions are not structurally conservative because they are narrow-minded, but because rapid structural change threatens to undermine their organizational power. However, even if they refrain from pursuing a strategy of transformation, they are still exposed to changes triggered by management (relocation, restructuring, and transformation), ecological reforms, and crises. Addressing this dilemma requires orchestrating strategic interventions based on the idea of a 'just transition' (which should also target the trade unions themselves as organizations) – not waiting passively for structural change to happen. What is needed is transformative organizing (Mann 2010b), that is, the redefinition of the tasks, conception and organizational culture of trade unions (cf. Candeias/Röttger 2007).

Yet the strategic interventions required diverge from the observations of individual unions regarding opportunities for action. Unions may regroup, undergo a sweeping restructuring and enhance their capacity to intervene – but this still requires substantial resources and carries risks. It usually takes a long time until positive results come into being; they require endurance and the preparedness to act without guarantees of success. Against this backdrop, strategies of restructuring are risky – a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. From the perspective of an individual union, it makes sense to be worried about being worse off than before and to hope that one will be spared by the effects of a crisis – even if others (the 'competitors') are hit. The (longing for a) return to normality, to the old orientations, creates a sense of security in a time of general insecurity (even though there are growing feelings of unease and an increasing, silent awareness that things cannot go like this): "All in all, and compared to others, we've done pretty well…" – this sentiment is quite common.

In the current crisis, it has been fairly easy for unions in Germany to build on the old

strategic links to the state. German governments had been ignoring trade unions for a long time. Since 2008, they have become, once again, a serious partner for the state and capital, and they are being listened to. At company level and at the level of collective bargaining agreements, there has been little progress in recent years. Nevertheless, the unions have managed to force through the extension of the short-time working benefit, the cash for clunkers scheme, economic stimulus packages, and the introduction of co-determination at companies formerly hostile to unions (for example at Schaeffler, a car parts supplier). These structurally conservative measures – a kind of 'crisis corporatism' – are supposed to stabilize the situation until surging demand from abroad – especially from China and South East Asia – brings relief and opens up new prospects for German industry. The project of a social-ecological transformation or shifts in strategy have to wait; immediate, short-term interests are prevailing over long-term interests. At first sight, it seems obvious that the unions should do one thing without stopping the other; however, this frequently fails because their financial, staff and strategic resources are overburdened with the pressures of short-term (and partly conflicting) requirements.

Strategic Contradictions II: Knee-jerk reactions from the green camp

Trade unions surely have to become 'greener', but green movements also have to take into account, to a stronger degree, the interests of workers. In the course of the 1990s, the social question and the ecological question were increasingly discussed separately from each other. Under the hegemony of neoliberalism, environmental policy became institutionalized in the state. The 1992 UN conference on the environment and development triggered ambitious processes of global governance, which increasingly included green NGOs. While representatives of the green movement and party immersed themselves in the red-green project, the active elements of the social movements transformed themselves into professionalized NGOs committed to political lobbying. Both sides trimmed down the social-ecological question by transforming it into a set of policies aimed at ecological modernization. This may have facilitated the pooling of resources and increasing media coverage of 'green' demands, thereby boosting public awareness of the issue, especially in Germany. However, this strategy ignored a number of key requirements for a social-ecological transformation. The 'green' current of the labour movement became marginalized, the interests of the workers were neglected, and the link between the green and the labour movement was cut. For years, there was hardly any public debate on (global or local) questions of social justice.

Ecological transformation should not be reduced to technological modernization. It affects most social relations of inequality: class relations and gender relations; relations of production as well as relations of consumption. Environmental policy produces problems of justice because its effects and costs are distributed unequally. Certain groups and classes profit from the much-propagated net dividend of an ecological transformation – as is the case with any dividend. At the same time, some important questions are ignored: which branches of industry need to shrink, which needs should be restricted and, crucially, who is affected by all this? It appears that environmental policy currently remains a one issue-agenda for affluent, urban, middle-class consumers who are the buyers of expensive e-cars, organic food, fair trade clothes etc. The interests of 'lower' classes (healthier environmental conditions and affordable 'conscious' consumption) and the interest of workers (more and stable 'good' jobs) are only addressed in a superficial fashion. Unsurprisingly, in the last 30 years, the unions' have recognized the green movement as a political ally only to a limited extent. Similarly, for

the 'precariat', the green movement does not play any political role whatsoever.

Consequently, the 'green new dealers' are counting on compromises with certain (progressive) fractions of capital and on the 'creativity' of business. Fücks and Steenbock from the green Heinrich Böll Foundation argue that in the light of increasingly scarcer raw materials, politics is all about the "efficient management of resources" (2007, translated). They don't see, that it is likely that struggles over resources, which have started already, will intensify, and that imperial policies will become more important. Besides, Fücks and Steenbock express their hope that those "who have missed the green turn will be punished by the markets" (ibid). Obviously, for the privatized power companies in Germany, this is not the case. They are making windfall profits due to price increases, and they are banking on the extension of the operational life of nuclear power plants (against the declared end to nuclear energy in Germany), the construction of new coal-fired power plants, and megalomaniacal projects like offshore wind parks and Desertec. Highly moralistic, glossy brochures about a new agenda based on *corporate responsibility* are of little help here, and so are the token green projects launched by BP and Shell. I have already remarked that the German car industry is attempting to expand into the rising countries on the global periphery – not so much by exporting cheap, green microcars, but by selling heavy limousines and SUVs suited to only the small number of people who want to put their newly acquired wealth on display. At least, supposedly 'green' funds have good prospects in the financial markets, and at least the big insurers are worried about the costs of catastrophic climate change. Yet this does turn finance into an ally of those advocating a social-ecological transformation. After all, the financial crisis has lowered social and ecological standards, and the trade with emission certificates is stagnating.

The "system of guards" (Fücks/Steenbock 2007, translated) composed of all the green associations and NGOs rooted in civil societies around the globe can do little to counter this. And yet, many of them argue that the leap into green capitalism is within our capabilities – just like the 'social taming of capitalism' achieved in the 19th century. The idea of the 'social' appears to be dead. This has contributed to the unsatisfying results of attempts to 'green' the mode of production and the mode of living (cf. Candeias 2008).

It remains controversial whether there is really a green fraction in the middle classes that is capable of successfully taming and integrating capital without the support of a broad alliance between the middle and working classes. After all, a sweeping (social-)ecological transformation will be accompanied by the destruction of capital on a massive scale, and this will affect the most powerful fractions of capital: the 'fossilistic' corporations that include the oil and car industries as well as everything in between. It is rarely discussed what this implies for social struggles, for the relations of forces and for crises. In all likelihood, the envisaged transition will be accompanied by deep crises and fierce struggles.

The same can be said about strategies of mitigation through redistribution. All (left-wing) approaches advocate redistribution – whether 'de-growth' or 'qualitative growth' and 'green jobs'. Redistribution is surely indispensable. However, in the context of social-ecological transformation, it gives rise to problems not experienced before. In the Fordist era, high productivity and big growth ensured that wages could be increased and that the welfare state could be expanded without squeezing profits. In other words, there was a great leeway for redistribution. 'Green New Deal' approaches aim at recreating this situation (on a global scale). Other approaches build to an even greater

extent on the expansion of the public sector – a sector that has be funded, under capitalist conditions, by tax revenues and, first and foremost, by the sectors of industry organized along capitalist lines. If the goal is shrinking the economy, things will get very 'tight' and struggles over distribution will intensify. The decline in growth in the neoliberal era provides a foretaste of things to come.

Becoming Drivers of Our Own History

Social-ecological transformation, conversion and just transitions, redistribution and green jobs – who is supposed to advocate all this? The different projects aiming at a green renewal of society address wage labourers as individual consumers or as members of a civil society with vague contours, but not as political subjects. Other than that, the existing (self-)interpellations are directed towards the state, (green) capital, the NGOs, and, on the odd occasion, to the trade unions. However, even the unions do not really regard the class of (more or less pre-carious) wage labourers as actors behind the movement who are actively making decisions. The people affected still have to become the protagonists of change.

The issue of social-ecological transformation raises the question how we should conceptualize the practice of the 'mosaic left' (cf. *LuXemburg* 1/2010): How should we advance, starting from a diversity of single interests, the formation of a common project, how is it possible to instigate pilot projects and open up prospects of social transformation? So far, most of the time, all the different organizations involved act separately: Understandably, IG Metall promotes the interests of people employed in the car and export industries and, in a situation of crisis, favours interventions aimed at quickly stabilizing industry in a structurally conservative fashion. Ver.di (the service union) advocates the expansion of the public sector, public transport and the railways. Green associations fight against state subsidies for car traffic and the no 1 threat to the environment: the car. Feminists groups criticize the fact that ecologically detrimental 'male' jobs are protected at the expense of those sectors that either provide mostly 'female' jobs (e.g., retail, as in the case of Arcandor) or address the reproductive needs of society (childcare, education, health). Associations of the unemployed wonder why they should defend the interests of core work forces, why billions of Euros are mobilized for the banks and the car industry while recipients of Hartz IV (workfare benefits) are facing the next round of cut backs. What is needed are concrete projects and aims with a uniting effect, which create communalities out of different interests at the same time as appreciating differences.

This can be exemplified with reference to the car industry. In the light of global over-capacities, the pressures of competition will intensify even more – they will increase centralization and pose a serious threat to certain sites of production and certain jobs.

The relations of forces are not favourable and people's motivation is limited, but it is time to restart the debate on conversion and develop new conceptions. Whenever the next crisis hits, there will not be time to make up for everything that has been neglected for decades. Once this happens (the next recession is already impending), state bail-outs should be attached to conditions: there should be an alternative path of development; the employees of the companies affected should be offered a stake in them or there should be a full collectivization (as happened in the case of GM in 2009 – however, without the federal government exploiting this opportunity and triggering a process of conversion). Who decides over what gets produced? "I don't need Porsche at all", says a

member of the works council at this famous producer of sports cars.

Public stakes in companies should be premised on the extended participation of employees, trade unions, green association and people from the region affected – for example through the establishment of a regional council that decides which concrete steps should be taken to convert a carmaker into a provider of green public mobility services promoting integrated conceptions of transport. This would shift the balance between public and private transport and would favour trams, buses, pedestrians and (electric) bicycles over cars (cf. *LuXemburg* 3/2010). Car workers threatened with losing their jobs would use company-level and regional councils in order to discuss, work out and decide how the conversion of their industry and a just transition could be organized. There is an enormous knowledge about production among workers that is rarely used (see, for example, the experiences of the 'future workshops' of IG Metall in Esslingen). From this vantage point, it is easier to connect interests that diverge and to create organizational ties between different factions.

A process of conversion of this type cannot be completed at the company level. It requires deep structural change. Conversion is not simply about building electric cars and further advancing on the path of private transport in order to protect jobs. The entire structure of cities and spaces has to be transformed. The distances between work and home have to be removed, and the separations between them have to be overcome – i.e., the separations between being at home, doing the school run, driving to work, driving to the supermarket after work, spending a lot time in the daily traffic jam, preparing food late in the day, and finally falling asleep on the couch in front of the TV.

It is necessary to reduce forced, unwanted mobility. We need a whole range of new products, technologies and social needs; new ways of life; and new forms of work, energy consumption, and consumption etc. It is only possible to develop new conceptions of mobility and new ways of life together with the car workers – not against them. At the same time, the unemployed and marginalized people from a region affected by structural change also need to be able to determine and decide how new prospects can be created for them.

There is a need to shrink certain sectors of production, which also means that we to have to develop strategies of a just transition. In this context, we can draw upon the (good and bad) experiences made by trade unions and other organizations operating in the areas of mining (and, in particular, coalmining), steel production, arms production and shipbuilding – both of structural change and, more specifically, of employment and training agencies. The costs of a just transition for workers and communities have to be covered by both companies and public funds. Moreover, we should return to the debates on the reduction of work hours and revisit company-level and national initiatives dedicated to this issue (Krull 2011).

A just transition also requires the initial growth of some sectors of the economy – while a relative decoupling of the economy from material growth is taking place. For the period of transition, qualitative growth is necessary due to the deficits existing in certain areas of reproduction – especially in the countries of the global south.

If conversion is embedded in a macro-economic strategy, it also entails transforming our growth-oriented, capitalist economy into an '*economy of reproduction*', which knows its limits and still produces a different kind of wealth. In this context, reproduction means, for a start, focussing on the 'care economy', which is based on needs and solidarity, that is, on the social infrastructure of public health, education, research, social

services, 'food sovereignty', care, and the protection of the natural environment. This would put the crisis of employment in the car industry into a broader context. After all, the needs in question are key needs concerning areas where everybody have been complaining of shortages for years. In countries like Germany, France, Sweden or the US, the sectors belong to the social infrastructure are the only where there has been employment growth recently. In the new capitalist centres like China, India and Brazil, these sectors are growing quickly – and it is of vital importance to keep them public and not hand them over to the market. The existence of an economy of reproduction also entails a qualitative development of needs and economy, not quantitative growth.

Especially in the global south, this kind of transformation will focus the economic process on addressing the basic needs of the rural and the urban poor, that is, on stabilizing rural communities. People would take control over their modes of production and ways of life, for example through land reforms with the aim of establishing 'food sovereignty'. As a result, people from rural areas would no longer be forced to secure their survival by moving to the mega cities. In these cities, it would be of key importance to develop (or, first of all, introduce) a material and social infrastructure and the corresponding systems of social security. Investments should not be directed towards creating a socially unjust and expensive infrastructure for millions of privately-owned cars. After all, this would come at a high price – both for the people and for the natural environment. Instead, people should be granted free access to the public transport systems, which, in turn, should be expanded rapidly. The so-called growing middle classes in India, China and Brazil – the western carmakers' objects of desire – will continue to represent only a small share of the increasingly polarized populations in these countries. A strategy for the left cannot be based exclusively on their purchasing power.

This new orientation towards the needs of reproduction requires focussing on internal markets and internal production. Global chains of production are in a state of overstretch, and this results in the squandering of resources. Transport, one of the main causes of CO_2 emissions, needs to be reduced; production needs to be reorganized along ecological lines – what is required is not a "naïve anti-industrialism", as Hans-Jürgen Urban, member of the IG Metall board, puts it, but an alternative mode of production. There need to be new, alternative products: it is not much more than a bright spot that Volkswagen and the green energy provider Lichtblick [bright spot] are now cooperating in the construction of block-type thermal power stations tailored for private, de-centralized use (cf. Röttger 2010). But maybe it can also serve as a "door opener", as Stephan Krull, former member of the workers council at Volkswagen, puts it.[21]

The de-globalization and re-regionalization of the global economy would reduce current account imbalances and the fixation on exports of certain national economies. The (non-commodified) expansion of the public sector would sideline markets and privatization. Apart from the conversion of individual industries like the car industry, there needs to be a conversion of our growth- and export-oriented economic models, and there needs to be a left-wing state project.

This process and the necessity to trigger deep structural change under conditions of "time pressure" (Schumann 2011) requires participative planning, consultas populares and processes of people's planning, as well as decentralized democratic councils (the debates on the crisis of the car and export industries have already covered regional

[21] Quote from a discussion at the conference "Auto.Mobil.Krise." (see above).

councils, cf. IG Metall Esslingen 2009, Lötzer 2010, Candeias/Röttger 2009). Moreover, transformation always also involves the reduction in working hours in support of the expansion of reproductive work – not least because political participation and self-organization require time. After all, transformation is all about the radical democratization of state and economic decisions. There have been processes of restructuring in the past where quickness was unavoidable, and these were usually completed with the help of planning (e.g., in the US in the 1930 and 40s). But this time, it should be participative planning (Williamson 2010). The dispute about Stuttgart 21 and about the extension of the operational life of nuclear power plants in Germany in autumn 2010 have demonstrated that there is an unmistakable call of the German population for democratic participation – not to speak of the Arab Spring, the Indignados or Occupy Wall Street.

Ultimately, this gives rise to the question who decides over the use of soacial and natural resources, and which work is socially necessary – not from the perspective of wage labour and the production of surplus value, but from the perspective of extending collective and cooperative forms of work. The criterion for 'social necessity' should be the efficiency of a certain type of work in terms of its contribution to human development, the wealth of human relations, and disposable time. Placing reproductive work, in the widest sense, at the heart of the project of transformation allows us to leave behind the growth fetish. At the same time, it undermines, over the medium term, the capitalist mode of production.

The protagonist of such a process of transformation towards a Green Socialism can only be a 'mosaic left' oriented towards participation, which enables people to become "the drivers of their own history" (Mann 2001, 273; cf. 2010a).

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