



**Report: The International Transform conference in Copenhagen,  
Saturday, 16 March 2024:**

**“How to avoid climate collapse - European Parliament elections and the role of the Left at a time of climate policy failure of the EU and national governments.”**

**The 12th international Transform conference in Copenhagen in March 2024 was held more or less on the background of the same European and global crises as the 2023 conference. Only these crises have reached a point when the prospect and threat of war along with climate disasters have become so commonplace and regarding the threat of war even promoted by responsible politicians leaving ordinary citizens in an untenable predicament.**

**However, these dangers this was not the focus at this conference. The South-North divide, at the detriment of the Global South, the dire consequences of a receding Left and advancing Extreme right in Europe, as well as the political focus on militarization were reflected. Also as the conference coincided with the run-up to the European Parliament elections just a few months later in the beginning of June.**

We had chosen a different structure of the conference compared to earlier, already anticipated after last year`s conference, by replacing the two parallel sessions that we have had for some years as part of the afternoon programme of our March conferences with a proper panel debate.

The conference was a hybrid conference. WE were helped with the Zoom and the power-points by activists from our partners in Global Aktion.

We had the huge advantage at this conference that all the speakers were at the conference in person, which clearly attracted a larger public in the morning, also compared to the afternoon. As we experienced with last year`s conference there

was a fall in the number of participants later in the day. It is our evaluation to this that the days are over when it was possible to attract a live public for a whole day's programme, which was highly successful just a few years ago, mainly before Corona. We have arrived in the times of Zoom and SoMe.

### **The content of the conference**

The morning session consisted of two Keynote speeches. One by a speaker from the global South: **Irene Velez-Torres**, former mines and energy minister in Colombia, speaking on the challenges of just energy transition in the Global South. And one by a speaker from Europe: **Cornelia Hildebrandt**, from Germany and Co-President of transform!europe, on the challenges of the Left in Europe with a rising Extreme right and facing the European Parliament elections.

The afternoon session was a panel debate, where the morning speakers as well participated in the debate.

The session started with four opening speeches: one by **Nelson Peralta**, the National Board of the Left Bloc in Portugal, and former MP and environmental policy adviser; one by **Didem Aydurmus** from Germany and climate politics expert; one by **Gavin Rae** representing Naprzod, Poland, affiliated to transform!europe; and lastly one by **Laura Horn** who is an Associate Professor at RUC University Centre and a member of Scientist Rebellion, Denmark.

These speeches were on different topics (see below), but together with the morning speeches they were a splendid all-round introduction to the ensuing debate.

Here follows our introduction to the programme of the conference, focusing on our main concerns behind this conference, but reflecting the continuation of the content of the 2023 conference:

### **Programme - introduction**

*“It is striking how little the climate crisis weighs in the political priorities of today’s governments and politicians - compared to their fast and resolute actions around Covid 19 in the spring of 2020, and likewise the speedy decision-making after Putin’s attack on Ukraine with huge sums of money allocated to military spending.*

*The extreme weather conditions have been still more present this year, however the budget allocations from the European countries as well as from the EU have diminished, to a great degree because of rising costs of military spending.*

*Rearmament and militarization as such are some of the worst factors increasing CO2 emissions. Also, the legal space for climate activism has narrowed in many countries.*

*On the background of the European Parliament elections in June 2024, our main focus in the coming international Transform conference on 16 March 2024 is the radical left and its role in the EP elections with regard to furthering climate and environmental policies and a social and just green transition and avoid a climate collapse. We will look into specific cases in a number of European countries as well as the EU Green Deal from 2019, the EU recovery plan from July 2020, the Climate Law ("Fit for 55"), the EU strategy for adaptation to climate change as well as the steps to confront the energy crisis.*

*We will also take a look at the budgets and planned climate spending of the EU national governments and the EU and evaluate the priority given to climate and environmental policies compared to military spending.*

*As previously, we also wish to include a focus on combating the severe climate problems outside Europe and the responsibility of the global North in this regard, this time by inviting a representative from Colombia, where they have struggled to elaborate specific climate policies.*

*Can the left parties, together with the climate movement, address and impact on the situation and postpone a climate collapse? How to develop a social and just green transition?*

*How to change the priorities of governments and politicians? Militarization and rearmament have been made such a huge priority in most Western/NATO countries that it is practically destroying the effort to cut CO2 and boost green transformation. The problem is not only that the huge increase in military spending undermines the spending on climate and welfare. Rearmament and militarization as such are some of the worst factors increasing CO2 emissions.*

*We wish to continue the debate on how to combat climate change, and why the current policies and state of affairs in EU/Brussels, nationally and globally are insufficient. The need for system change is central in understanding the insufficiency of present policies focusing on reform of the system and not systemic change. This is the core of our perspective to build political, economic, social, and ecological alternatives. The conference will also as previously offer a bid for more long-term versions of transformed societies: eco-socialism and eco-feminism and continue the debate on the role of degrowth."*

The conference was Co-organized with Enhedslisten/Red-Green Alliance, the Danish radical left party, and a number of climate/ environmental organisations, NOAH, Friends of the Earth, Global Aktion, Scientists Rebellion Denmark, as well as Left web-magazines Solidaritet and Kritisk Revy.

Below we will go through the sessions, introducing the speakers and their own abstracts of their speeches. Some of the speakers had power-point introductions. We have inserted the links for these.

### **Session 1: Global considerations**

**Irene Vélez-Torres**, Colombia, former Mines and Energy Minister philosopher and PhD in political geography, environmentalist. Title of the contribution: ***“Just energy transitions in the Global South. - Between old inequalities and new green assets, the case of Colombia.”***

Irene Velez accompanied her talk with a power-point introduction (see link below) and introduced her talk as follows: “The current climate crisis is a consequence of the hegemonic development model based on intensive consumption of fossil fuels over the last two centuries (IPCC, 2021). To counter the effects of this crisis, governments around the globe have set subnational targets to reduce their CO2 emissions and limit global warming (IEA, 2019). Efforts to counter this crisis, however, are enabled and materialized in different ways according to dissimilar trajectories of inequality. In the Global South, inequality gaps, colonial trajectories of dispossession, and the economic and fiscal dependence on carbon-intensive commodities are central aspects that limit the speed, available resources, and scope of energy transition pathways. At the same time, green markets are proliferating as a “solution” to the climate crises, raising questions about the risks of deepening old inequalities and enlarging existing distribution conflicts. This conference addresses the energy transition not only as a goal of technological substitution, necessary for the reduction of greenhouse emissions, but, above all, as the most important global challenge for the transformation of social, ecological and economic relationships. Analyzing the case of Colombia, we problematize the politics of change from the opportunities and difficulties that a progressive government face to materialize a just energy transition.”

Find Irene Velez’ power-point presentation *on the Transform!Danmark website:*  
<https://www.transformdanmark.dk/>

**Cornelia Hildebrandt**, Germany, Co-President transform!europe; consultant on parties and social movements of the Institute for Critical Social Analysis of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation (RLS). Title of contribution: ***“On the new challenges facing the left in 2024”***

Conny Hildebrandt accompanied her talk with a power-point introduction (see link below): “The situation before the 2024 elections is different from 2019: we are still seeing the effects of the pandemic, Russia's war against Ukraine, the difficulties countries are having in responding to the climate change that is taking place. The lines of social conflict and also the conflicts in the EU have shifted in the face of global problems.

In many EU countries, there are signs of an increased social and political shift to the right.

What does this shift to the right mean for the future direction of EU policies? But what does all this mean for the left-wing parties in Europe?

How can they formulate their own answers to these open questions? How do they deal with differences between the left-wing parties themselves, e.g. on issues of peacekeeping?

What are the central projects and concerns of the left-wing parties in Europe? The lecture will focus on these questions.”

Find Cornelia Hildebrandt’s power-point presentation *on the Transform!Danmark website*:

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**The debate** after the two initial contributions centered on the question of degrowth. In Irene Velez’ view degrowth needed to be more post-growth and to be fought at a geo-political level. There is now a new extractive frontier, the global north is also reflected in the south, between countries there. How to create a new economic model that is not green capitalism.

Concern about the difficulties to win over the majority for green transition. A really left project, according to Conny Hildebrandt. But problems to connect with the trade unions. An opinion in the audience that leftist parties and people are considered an elite by many working people.

**Session 2: Panel debate on EU/Europe in a time of war and crisis: The radical left and its role in the European Parliament elections with regard to furthering climate and environmental policies and a social and just green transition to avoid a climate collapse**

**Nelson Peralta**, Portugal. Left Bloc National Board member. Former member of the Portuguese Parliament. Biologist. Environmental policy adviser. Title of contribution: ***"Climate change: the role of the market and democracy"***

Nelson Peralta sent the following introduction: "There is no money to tackle climate change. The "no rules free market system" will solve the problem by encouraging big business and individuals to take action in their own interests. While we are living in increased temperatures and extreme weather phenomena these are ideas we listen to often. But are they working? Are they true? Does the "consumer" really have a choice? Does the market reward companies with climate change friendly approaches?"

The carbon market allowed the most polluting companies in the European Union to profit 50 billion euros from 2008 to 2019. The carbon offset schemes are worthless. The communities that contributed less to climate change are the ones suffering the biggest impacts. And there are also portraits of a massive transfer of wealth, a huge social inequality. This social injustice explains the history of climate change and the history of other crises we are living through. In our view how should the EU respond?"


**Didem Aydurmus**, Germany, expert in climate politics. Title of contribution: ***"Abstract Claims vs. Reality: Barriers to Effective Climate Politics in the European Parliament"***

Didem Aydurmus introduced her talk as follows: "Climate change and environmental pollution are not new problems. However, after decades of climate talks and parties claiming to fight for sustainability, emissions still increase. This input will discuss the inconvenient truths behind the inaction beyond capitalism and unfortunate complacency of the Left."

**Gavin Rae**, Poland, Naprzod, affiliated to transform!europe. Title of contribution: ***"Military Keynesianism and the Growth of Military Spending in Poland"***

Introducing his speech, also with power-point presentation (see below): "The military conflict in Ukraine has accelerated the process of militarisation in Europe. Poland is at the forefront of this trend, with the government committing huge funds to build the size and strength of the Polish military. These state investments could signal the rise of a new form of military Keynesianism in Poland, whereby

government military spending creates new sources of effective demand. Military Keynesianism is limited in Poland however due to fact that the majority of military expenditures are spent on orders for equipment produced abroad (primarily in the USA and S.Korea). It also potentially reduces the amount of government resources available to be spent on other things which have would have a greater social and environmental use.”

Find Gavin Rae’s power-point presentation here:  [Military Keynesianism presentation.pptx](#)

**Laura Horn**, Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences and Business, RUC (Roskilde University Centre), Denmark, Scientist Rebellion Denmark. Title of contribution: ***“The EU as social terrain for left strategies and climate struggles”***  
The contribution was accompanied by a power-point presentation.

Laura Horn sees the European Green Deal as an eco-modernist, top-down project. Referred to the “Beyond Growth Conference” of the European Parliament in 2023, which turned into a talking shop. There is a focus on green capitalism as a strategic target. A lot of mitigation going on. The role of the alternative left as opposed to the parliamentary left

The conference programme, the recording of parts of the conference (the morning programme esp.), some of the speeches, and some of the power-point presentations from the conference can be viewed on the Transform!Danmark website: <https://www.transformdanmark.dk/>

The report of the conference will be published by transform!europe: [www.transform-network.net](http://www.transform-network.net)

Transform!Danmark

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