

Wie links ist der Feminismus – Wie feministisch ist die Linke?

Workshop: How feminist is Solidarity Economy?

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Within the Workshop „How feminist is Solidarity Economy?“ Milla (Finnland), Maria (Greece), Magda (Greece) and Utta (Austria) discussed on one hand their experiences about decision-making processes in left parties and on the other hand new social and collective forms concerning decision making and solidarity economy.

New collective forms and processes of decision making in parties?

Political Parties often seem to be hierarchical, closed, fed up with their own problems, without the capacity to open their minds and ears to the problems of other people. Especially for young women often it's difficult to be able to influence the dynamics, the decision making, the topics within left parties. So how would it be possible to change the communication structures, the power relations within the left parties so that women and other minorities could have more impact on the important topics a party emerges?

How can we develop new collective forms within parties, which are less hierarchical, less violent, more participatory and inclusive and more open-minded and transparent? Which forms of decision-making and which collective forms could help to install some of the principles mentioned above?

What is Solidarity Economy?

“The **solidarity economy** can be seen a) as part of the "third sector" in which economic activity is aimed at expressing practical solidarity with disadvantaged groups of people, which contrasts with the private sector, where economic activity is aimed at generating profits, and the public sector, where economic activity is directed at public policy objectives, or b) as a struggle seeking to build an economy and culture of solidarity beyond capitalism in the present.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_economy)

In Germany Carola Möller differs among alternative economy on one hand, which is solidary inside the group (inside) but not towards the market (as Mondragon par example) and solidarity economy on the other hand, which is solidary within the group (inside) and outside the group towards society as a whole. (http://www.leibi.de/takaoe/84_17.htm)

Solidarity Economy has a big tradition in south and latin america.

(http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarische_%C3%96konomie) They have developed new collective forms such as participatory budgets

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_budgeting), which was evolved in Porto Alegre in Brasil.

Let's discuss and demand for new methods of decision making and collective forms in parties and municipals!

One of the most interesting ideas in this kind of social movement is the application of demarchy, the choosing of people per lot for municipal budget boards. This also were done in Paris and Berlin as experiments, which is described by Anja Röcke. (<http://www.lit-verlag.de/isbn/3-8258-8544-5>)

The concept of demarchy applied on a society as a whole was worked out as a thought experiment by John Burnheim an Australian Philosopher. The method of choosing per lot for example one third of the representatives of a municipal or a party board makes sure that it's not only the most powerful people, who come to make important decision, but people e. g. like young women, who were chosen by lot.

This is an example for more creative forms of decision making like rotation, choosing per lot, or consensus, which should be demanded in left parties or in municipals. They should be demanded because they assure that it is not only the rich, eloquent, mighty, popular people who make the important decisions. Installed as a culture this would help the more shy and silent people also to be very important participants of the most crucial decisions in their parties.

Solidarity Economy and Feminism

Like always feminists have to be very vigilant when it comes to the claim that with solidarity economy feminism isn't necessary any more. In the contrary feminism should become more important and much stronger through methods and social forms of Solidarity Economy. During the processes in the social movements in south and latin america the new culture of decision making and collective forms could be used by women's organizations like Friederike Habermann shows in her book (Friederike Habermann: Aus der Not einer anderen Welt Gelebter Widerstand in Argentinien). But as in the processes of Solidarity Economy in South and Latin America the demanded forms of decision making like demarchy or rotation were applied only in deficient ways (for example the participatory budgets were done without paying the people for coming to the meetings), often the women's status didn't improve as a matter of course. (this showed Stefanie Kron: Der stumme Schrei des Entsetzens. Frauenrechte und radikale Demokratisierungsbewegungen – eine Kritik. In: Marchart/Weinzierl, Stand der Bewegung? Protest, Globalisierung, Demokratie-eine Bestandsaufnahme, Westfälisches Dampfboot, Münster, S. 115ff.)