

Intro: The following podcast will be represented by the partners of the project Ecogreen which is funded by the Erasmus+ EU program.

Speaker 1: A very good day to you. We are here today with Ulrich Brand, Ulrich Brand is Professor of International Politics and he is also Head of the Institute of Political Science at the University of Vienna and Head of the Latin America Research Network.

Speaker 2: Good afternoon.

Speaker 1: What would interest me is that you are researching multiple crises. And what does the term multiple crisis actually mean?

Speaker 2: I was invited to write a study in 2009. 2009 was in the middle of the economic and financial crisis. Why was the focus back then on dealing with the crisis with 3 solution strategies, so to speak? Growth, growth, growth - and I, coming from environmental research, so to speak, from North-South research, asked why the danger now is that if the crisis in 2009 is only dealt with through growth, more cars, perhaps bigger cars, more consumption, more investment, then this can shift to other crisis dimensions, namely the climate crisis, the environmental crisis, and that was totally missing from the debate. It's different today, very, very interesting. And I argued in this study that we need to look at the shift or the danger of a shift in dealing with certain crises to other crises. At the time, I really did call it a multiple crisis, the term was a bit unwieldy. And now it's interesting that it has become so popular in the last year or two, and you really need to do a media study. For 10 years, hardly anyone has used a second example, which I was very concerned about at the time and which is highly topical today. If we now want to tackle the climate crisis by making our economy greener, decarbonizing, that's the big keyword, by having e-cars or renewable energies, then there is a danger that if we don't fundamentally change the growth model. So if we really switch the mobility system to e-cars, then the question is where the resources come from, where does the copper come from? An e-car needs about four times as much copper as a current combustion engine car. We need lithium for the batteries and other things, and that comes from the global South, which is another crisis shift, hence the multiple crisis, many countries in the South have crisis dimensions and we also need to take that into account. So if we are rebuilding here, decarbonization, a future-oriented economy, then we should always keep in mind what the effects are elsewhere and I think the term is also quite good here. The exciting question of the discussion was then and still is today, is there a common cause in these crisis dimensions, i.e. climate crisis, economic crisis, financial crisis, you could also say the social divide, no, i.e. a crisis of social integration, migration crisis, refugee crisis, i.e. do the crises each have their own dynamics or is there a common cause? I would say it has to do with a capitalist growth model that is very north-centric. Of course, a lot is happening in China now, but it's also externalizing a great deal, meaning that it hardly cares about the conditions, the consequences, the negative consequences of its own economic activity, and that means destruction in the global South, for example, that leads to migration, that means a climate crisis, because there is no accountability for the consequences of burning fossil fuels, that means social polarization, because the rich - the Oxfam study has just come out - gain even more in the crisis. So I would say of course you have to discuss it in more detail, but first of all yes, the common cause of many crisis dimensions is a capitalist growth model that is initially very destructive and is also based on preconditions. We can also say care work, unpaid care work, natural resources, exploitation of the Global South, which is not compensated, but which then comes into crisis.

Speaker 1: With regard to this capitalist growth model and criticism of it, you and your colleague Markus Wissen have also coined the term "imperial way of production and life". And now I would like you to explain a little more about what you mean by this.

Speaker 2: Here, too, the starting point is the 2009 crisis, the economic and financial crisis. And we just asked ourselves why, despite the already relative politicization of the climate crisis, there were already 15 or or 12 climate conferences at that time. There had been a debate on sustainable development since Rio in 1992. Why was the most successful policy measure in 2009 the so-called scrappage scheme in Austria, the scrap bonus, where people receive a bonus from the state if they scrap their car prematurely? Why haven't these billions been invested in the expansion of public transport, in the dismantling of automobility, so that people have another option? And we thought about this not because people are bad, but because they have to live like this to a certain extent if they live in the countryside and have no other means of transportation or because they think it's cool. But what was missing in the debate and is still missing today - I already mentioned the keyword, externalization - is the fact that the prerequisite for our lives, our everyday lives, everyday consumption, everyday work, when it comes to production, is based on the fact that elsewhere, especially in the global South, products are manufactured, computers, cell phones, clothes, soya for animal feed and so on, which are mostly produced under poor ecological and social conditions, i.e. that labour is very heavily exploited and nature is destroyed. This also takes place in Austria, there are also meat factories in Austria, the working conditions in the harvest, in the Marchfeld or elsewhere are really exploitative. And this imperialism is not called imperialist, but a way of life that is based on the fact that it is a matter of course that it exploits everyday life, yes, that it resorts to resources, to labor, that lie beyond its own. Of course it depends on the wallet. We, we consume, we don't all live the same, we don't all work the same, but that would be the basic idea of this imperialism. We call it the imperial way of life because it's a bit more catchy as a term, but we mean, as you say, the imperial production of a way of life. And this is deeply anchored in everyday life. So we are saying that the driving forces behind the current crises are of course capitalist interests, corporate interests, profit interests, state policies such as free trade policies or here in the country itself, that people with bad jobs are systematically not better off. But it also has something to do with people's everyday perceptions, everyday desires and everyday practices. Yes, we don't have to fool ourselves, people want a cell phone and don't ask under what conditions it was produced. In Austria, I always say the supposed human right to the daily schnitzel. Cheap meat bred to a high standard, so to speak, with soy from other countries, which is produced there under less than ideal conditions, that is the idea of imperialism, and we'll take that a step further, but that's basically the core idea.

Speaker 1: And you have, so to speak, countered this with an alternative model, the solidary way of life, which also takes up a good life for all. And I would be interested to know what you mean by a good life for all?

Speaker 2: I can't define it clearly myself. First of all, it's a starting point in the debate that says we need to discuss and define the goals of the economy. The goals of economic activity today are growth, profit and then, of course, something for the employees. The argument is always about jobs. But first of all, in a capitalist economy it is very much about those who invest having more, whether they are large financial funds or direct companies and others, and that the basis of the state, in terms of taxes or customs duties, is very much dependent on this growth model and that is the debate. All I have to do is open the newspaper and if growth is slightly higher, it's considered positive news and if growth is lower, it's considered negative, and nobody asks what the basis of growth actually is. We know that every car accident leads to growth, every major rear-end collision on the highway etc. etc. That is the starting point - a good life means a shift in discourse and perception. We first need the prerequisites for a good life for people, and these are not growth per se, but a good education system, a good healthcare system, a good food system, a good mobility system, that people can live appropriately, that they can also move around well, that they have cultural facilities. And it is good that certain areas are growing. We need more education, we need a better healthcare system, a better care system, but it doesn't have to be driven per se by this capitalist growth imperative, by the

profit imperative, which in my view is a core idea of a good life. How it is then filled is different, but it is a starting point to say that the good life is not more meat consumption, more short flights, more clothes, preferably an SUV as a second car. Many would say that this is a good life, and that's where we get into a socio-political debate, which is why I said at the beginning that I wouldn't define it 1 to 1, but under conditions of ecological crisis under conditions of the North-South divide, i.e. that most people on this planet don't even have an adequate life, we must of course discuss whether we need upper limits as well as lower limits in Austria, which are all people who can live well and we need upper limits. And then it means a good life for all. And that is the second normative thing to say, it is not the Dolce Vita for the few in Austria, which also includes the middle classes, but to systematically keep in mind that there are processes of impoverishment, there are processes of exclusion, and living conditions should also be improved here. Above all, a good life does not mean egalitarianism. So it's not that everyone should live this way and that way, but I would insist on that. It's about living conditions. If people still want to smoke themselves to death or drink themselves to death, yes, of course, there are often psychological causes, but again, how this is dealt with is a secondary issue. But the first priority would be to create the conditions for a decent life for all people, something meaningful with a good education, a good healthcare system, good job opportunities etc. with democratic participation or opportunities for participation etc. etc. But one last thought. I think that the debate is currently shifting very strongly, in addition to the lower limit, what are the conditions in Austria, a welfare state that really applies to everyone and that really creates living conditions, that we urgently need this debate about upper limits. That we don't need this concept of freedom, that if I have enough in my wallet, I can fly wherever I want, I can afford a second SUV, that we urgently need a debate, I think it's at the very beginning, politicians don't dare to do it at all. What it means, for example, that the size of cars will be regulated, that flights will become so expensive that at least from the second third flight onwards they will be properly taxed, so to speak. We immediately have the debate when people want to fly on vacation or when migrant workers want to fly home. There should be exceptions. Yes, but this, let's say cynical freedom, yes, I'll let the pig out because I can afford it - to feed that into a discourse and then also into political measures, that's what it's all about, and that's what I think this label good life for all is about.

Speaker 1: Very exciting. And now, finally, we work with vocational schools and vocational school teachers and why do you think it's important to address these issues in the context of vocational schools? A second point, and where do you also see perspectives for action and opportunities for action to initiate a debate for a good life for all in the vocational school sector?

Speaker 2: Well, first of all, I think in general, if we're talking about education, that includes vocational schools. All people should get a great education, the best possible education, the best possible education also means a world view, an understanding of the world that is not just a narrow professional qualification, but that can also competently assess social problems, deal with them, participate in political debates, understand the world better, that would be one point, so to speak. The second point, which is probably more central, and I don't want to say central, but it is just as important. The fact that the debate on social and ecological restructuring is often focused on the state. The state should provide the right framework conditions, through laws, regulations, finances, the public sector. And when it comes to companies, people often still think about management. No, with the right decisions in green industries. But what is left out, and this is a central argument of Markus Wissen and myself in the solidarity-based way of life. If we want a truly far-reaching social and ecological transformation and drive it forward, we also need the skills to do it. And the skills lie with the people, they don't lie with the management, we are just seeing with the replacement of oil heating, heat pumps and so on that it is now becoming obvious that there is a lack of workers in care work, in paid work. So the starting point for a social change in vocational schools and other educational institutions would be to create the skills so that people, even when they have completed

their training, can also act, so that they can act in sectors that will make society good, not in sectors that are fit for the future. And at the same time, that would be the link to my first point, that they do this in the awareness of a social perspective, so to speak. So it's not just me doing my job - everyone should do it well, professionally, with pride in a good job, well trained. But I do relate it to society as a whole. I contribute as a caregiver, as a person who makes or drives public transportation and many other ecological farming activities. I help to ensure that I live adequately, that I do something meaningful, and that makes sense in society. And the third thing is why I think it's really important to focus on these skills, on the job, on the work, on the activity I say, doesn't just have to be a job, on the activity is another narrow view of the sustainability debate. One is that the state should do it. The companies, perhaps also the management. And the third strong topos is that social change is happening because people are finally consuming green. No, there is an incredible individualization of responsibility, the young people, my students can hardly walk because of the burden on their shoulders that they now have to do the right thing: not flying vegan and so on and it's all right in the individual, but it's also an easy game for the unsustainable forces, because it's moralized. You, the younger generation, have to do it, we've missed it, we older ones - and therefore consume properly. And here my perspective is clear: an imperial way of producing and living is not exhausted as an alternative to a solidary way of producing and living in green consumption, but the things that are lived and consumed must also be produced. And to look at this and say that green restructuring is not just state management and consumerism, but is precisely the activity of people, the activity of how we shape society. And here, perhaps as a final thought, in addition to the specific professional perspective, we should always ask: How are people integrated into the social division of labor? Yes, how can they have a say, including in the workplace? How can they organize themselves in trade unions, how can they become active in the works council? So how can people learn to consciously shape their workplace, their job - it's not easy - and then do it? In other words, I would say that we can achieve a democratization of companies with a socially and ecologically sound approach. And that also means a perspective in addition to the concrete activities. Yes, I also want to get involved so that my workplace is better, that the products are better, that what I do is meaningful.

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