

January 2017 | Invitation: First preparation meeting for the conference "Migration, development and ecological crisis"

With this e-mail we want to invite you to a first preparation meeting for a conference, which is going to take place in October 2017 and is supposed to deal with the connections between flight and migration, self-determined development and ecological crisis from a practical and political perspective.

The first preparation meeting will take place either 4/5 March (saturday/sunday) or 1/2 April (saturday/sunday) in Leipzig. At which date it will actually take place depends on those, who want to participate in the meeting. So please let us know as quickly as possible, if both dates fit you or if you have only time on one of the dates: l.lierke@knoe.org (Lydia from Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie) oder: nolagerbremen@yahoo.de.

Travel costs can be payed if needed – but please travel cheaply (bus, Sparpreis, weekend ticket or similar things). Those who want to arrive already on friday evening, can already get a sleeping place in Leipzig from friday to saturday. There will also be food etc. in the frame of the meeting.

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When we are talking about 'practical and political perspective', we want to express, that the conference will not be an academic conference, even though we wish that also academic people will have their say. We rather want to invite very different players to a fundamental debate: self-organised refugees and migrants, antiracist groups, climate activists, agricultural networks, members of NGOs, scientists and all others, who consider the topic being important and relevant.

The idea for this conference has come up at the last two climate camps in the Rhineland (2015 and 2016: <http://www.klimacamp-im-rheinland.de/>), where among others the transnational network Afrique-Europe-Interact (<https://afrique-europe-interact.net/>) held workshops on the Degrowth summerschool about the connection between migration and climate change. (Degrowth is a movement in different countries, which speaks up for a society, which aims at the well-being of all humans worldwide and which protects the ecological resources: www.degrowth.de/de/). In this sense, so far, those are mainly activists from Afrique-Europe-Interact and from Degrowth networks, who invite for the first preparation meeting. Apart from that, everything is still open – because we are of course hoping that we can gain many further fellow campaigners.

For reasons which we are going to explain more in detail soon, the conference makes in our view only sense, if from the beginning refugees and migrants are involved in the preparation. This is, of course, not so simple. Because many self-organised refugees and migrants are mainly involved in struggles about residence – especially in times, when Germany and other EU-countries are in a process of massively forcing deportations. It is therefore even more important that these different realities of people with and without a background of flight respectively migration are always taken into consideration.

Finally: Even if everything concerning the content and the personell composition of the conference is still open there is at least one highly positive aspect already clear: The Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie from Leipzig, which also belongs to the Degrowth movement (<https://www.konzeptwerk-neue-oekonomie.org/>), has agreed to support the conference in terms of finances and logistics on a big scale. This is the reason, why not only the preparation

meetings, but also the conference itself will take place in Leipzig (either on the 6 – 8 of October 2017 or 13 – 15 October 2017). The Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie would be very happy, though, if also others participate in the practical preparation of the conference.

In short: Those who want to get involved in the content preparation of the conference, please get in contact with l.lierke@knoe.org – simply so that it is easier for us to plan. Besides the first meeting on the 4/5. March (saturday/sunday) or the 1./2. April (saturday/sunday) two more preparation meetings are going to take place until the conference in October; in between we will communicate via e-mail and telephone. We are looking forward to the responses.

Best regards,

Afrique-Europe-Interact
NoLager Bremen

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Below we want to describe more in detail, which are going to be the questions and aims of the conference – at least according to the previous state of debate:

The connection between migrations, self-determined development and ecological crisis is in our view absolutely fundamental. Because of course it is downright cynical and fatal, that in Europe flight and migration are predominantly discussed with keywords like migration control, upper limits or allegedly lacking willingness to integration. In this way the slogan 'We are here because you destroy our countries', which has been used by refugee self-organisations for a long time, is systematically blanked. In contrast we want to discuss at the conference, which development perspectives are linked with flight and migration. Most migrants and refugees (no matter if activist or not) have more or less precise ideas, what development could respectively should mean for themselves, their families, their villages and cities or their countries and continents. Quite similar with activists from social movements or civil society groups without personal relations to flight and migration: Also with them something is 'ringing' in their head, when the topic development or better said: self-determined development come up.

But all these perspectives are seldomly discussed in public. Rather the opposite is the case: Many activists from Europe shy away even from using the term development at all, only for the simple reason that in the mainstream-debate development is often understood as being a mere copy of the destructive model of society of the (capitalist) industrial and emerging countries. That is such model, which has asserted oneself on a world-wide level with for example colonialism as well as politics of development, IWF structural adjustment programs and globalisation politics and furthermore has relevantly captured the ideas, what is meant when talking about a good life. In addition there is the intensification of the different ecological crises. Because after the rich industrial countries have, especially in the past 150 years, massively plundered the natural resources of the planet, the world is in a menacing situation – mainly because of the climate change. A simple „ Keep at it !“ is therefore out of question. At the conference we therefore want to discuss very different questions:

>>> What do we (all of us, who each have very different experiences, backgrounds and political ideas) mean when talking about development ? Do we involve the satisfaction of basic needs or do we have concepts in mind which go further and conce the change of whole societies ?

>>> Which alternative concepts or strategies to the dominant western model of development do exist already ? What can we learn from concepts like „ food sovereignty“, „Buen Vivir“, „climate

justice“, „Degrowth“ or „Post-Development“ ?

>>> In which direction do the rich industrial and emerging countries (including the transnational consumer classes in the north and south) have to develop, so that it does not come to a final ecological (climate) collapse ? More concrete: To which extent do the economies of the rich industrial countries have to shrink (respectively be replaced by another economic system), so that the people in the countries of the global South, which have been made poor for centuries finally get air to breathe respectively for self-determined development?

>>> In which areas have to be changes on a global, national and local level, so that something like self-determined development is even possible ?

>>> How can migrants and refugees in Europe – or the diaspora-communities as a whole (those are the migrants abroad) – politically, financially and socially support alternative ways of development in their countries of origin? And how can non-migrant activists contribute to this ?

>>>To which extent does the isolationist policy of the EU lead to a point, that exactly such support by the diaspora is prevented – especially by the fact that there is no freedom of movement and therefore also no circular migration ?

>>> And many other questions – depending on the interests, which will be formulated...

Finally a word on the geography: Because Afrique-Europe-Interacts belong to the initiators of the conference, we have so far mainly been talking about West African countries, because most activists of Afrique-Europe-Interact live in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Togo and are active there (whereby we want to explicitly emphasize, that Afrique-Europe-Interact is a small network, which consists only of voluntary grass root initiatives). But this does not have to stay that way ! The questions of the connection between migration, self-determined development and ecological crisis is also relevant for other countries and world regions. In the end it will depend on the activists, who will actually want to participate in the conference.

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The german and french version of this invitation are available on the website of Afrique-Europe-Interact. In addition one can find there articles, studies etc. about the relationship between migration and development as well (until now unfortunately only on german): <https://afrique-europe-interact.net/1594-0-1-Einladung.html>