

Could you, shortly, describe the development of Attac Germany up till today?

When we founded Attac Germany in 2000 it was named „Network for the democratic control of international financial markets“. It was only renamed in „Attac“ on the initiative of local groups a bit later. In 2001 Attac Germany was hyped through the protests of Genua and has grown very fast to a bit more than 10.000 members. We were able to gather a lot of people from different political backgrounds behind our key demands and the criticism of neoliberal globalisation. As this was the time of the red-green coalition in Germany, there was no progressive opposition in parliament. Thus Attac became a driving force in the resistance against the German involvement in the war in the Middle-East. This contributed to the later refusal of Germany to send troops to Iraq. In 2003 the government launched a major attack against the German welfare state. Attac again reinvented itself and focussed much more on the effects of globalisation in Germany. We could form a new alliance with the trade unions and create a political atmosphere against the destruction of the welfare state which continues until today. When the new left party was created and the Greens got into opposition, both took over some of Attac's demands. Attac was in a strategic crisis. With the huge mobilisations against the G8 summit in Germany in Summer 2007 and the concentration of all our forces on specific campaigns, we found another trick to reinvent ourselves. This concentration of resources allowed Attac to play a key role in the halting of the privatisation of the German railways.

What differs Attac Germany from other Attac chapters?

First of all, we have a lot in common with the other Attacs. Politically this is demonstrated by the common declarations of the European Attacs such as the „10 principles for a democratic EU treaty“.

In comparison Attac Germany has probably extended its thematic focus more than others. Globalisation is happening in Germany and therefore we have also played a role when it came to issues such as the welfare state or privatisations. Furthermore, Attac in Germany is more open towards actions such as large demonstrations and forms of civil disobedience than some other Attacs.

We have also gathered quite a lot of resources on the national level including our national office. The office secures the administration of Attac and helps to co-ordinate our campaigns and media relations. While we professionalised quite a lot of things we were always careful to guard the political control of the activists and develop national activities which strengthen the local groups.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Attac gathers more than 100 national organisations as well as 19.000 individuals and 200 local groups. This allows us to mobilise quite a lot of resources if needed and combine the advantages of social movements, NGOs and civil society networks. This large alliance is held together by our „consensus principle“. This means that we only do campaigns and take positions if the progressives in society more or less agree on an issue. This is often a strength but also a weakness, if we e.g. cannot take positions on issues such as economic growth or employment policies. The consensus principle can be quite conservative. Furthermore, the public face of Attac was dominated by some of the (male) founders. This did not correspond with the plurality of the basis of Attac. Therefore a new leadership was elected to the „coordination group“ which is younger and more female.

What role do you think Attac can/should play in a German context? In an European context?

In Germany I see Attac as an organisation which runs large campaigns for alternatives on specific issues of altermondialism. But in the medium term that will not lead us anywhere. If we want to control globalisation and global capital it will not be enough to slow down the process and try to limit the negative effects. We will have to globalise social and ecological rights and regulations. The nation state will remain an important space for struggle but more and more democratic control will have to be exerted on the international level. The EU will be the decisive ground for our alternatives in the years to come. If we cannot civilize capital in Europe, we will not be able to do so on

the international level. Attac could be a key actor to suggest European alternatives and to build large alliances for them. Our project should be a radical social, ecological and democratic reform of the EU. This EU has to respect the will of the majority in Europe which is for inner and international solidarity rather than market radicalism.

What issues are you focussing on at the moment?

At the moment we work on three campaigns: First, the campaign against the privatisation of the German railways is its hopefully final stage to stop the plans of the government. Second, we are running a campaign to democratise the production and distribution of energy. We demand renewable energy for all under democratic control of the people. Third, triggered by the big tax scandal in Liechtenstein and the global financial crisis we are working much more on financial market issues now than in previous years. This is an opportunity for our demands and discourses we cannot miss!

Which do you see as the biggest challenge for Attac in the future?

I think the key challenge is to learn to act together internationally. So far Attac is an international network of national Attac. As for all social movements grassroots' democracy is important and must be strengthened. But if we want to win against the globally well organised interests of capital we must reinvent grassroots' democracy in social movements. We must learn not only to meet and discuss on the European and international level but to take decisions for common campaigns and to concentrate resources internationally. This will be one of the key issues during Attac's first European Summer University (ESU) which is going to take place from the 1st to the 6th of August in Saarbrücken (Germany). It would be great to welcome many activists from Sweden at the ESU!