

Interview with Unai Oñederra, representative of the Manu Robles-Arangiz Institute

Why an Observatory on the fair distribution of wealth?

"To distribute the wealth, first you have to create it and that is what businessmen usually do", "to attract businessmen you have to reduce taxes", "to be competitive you have to reduce wages", "if unions generate conflicts, companies leave", "the private system is more efficient than the public"... a lie repeated a thousand times takes on the appearance of truth. And, what is happening? That the wealth distribution is getting worse, as much in time of growth as of crisis.

And so we live as if floating, with our feet on the ground and our heads in the sky: working hard to face the daily routine, finding increasingly difficult situations, but listening in the media how well things are going. It seems that we advance at the cost of working more, for less money. "You can not do anything else, it's what you get."

The Observatory can be a good tool to change this situation. On the one hand, to reveal what is really happening (and in this it is important that the different protagonists participate); on the other hand, to promote research that can help strengthen the labor movement. At least, we see those two potentialities to the Observatory.

Why is the accumulation of wealth and the inequality it generates a problem?

Because it is a robbery. The wealth that we create among all remains in a few hands. They take over what we create with our work. The public services that we finance with the money of all remain in the hands of private companies: they are enriched by precariousness supported by public money.

Because it creates crisis. The worse the wealth is distributed, the more often there will be a crisis. The last crisis, was motivated precisely by it.

Because it increases subordination. People are forced to accept working conditions that they do not want. Precariousness further unbalances power relations, increasing oppression among workers, women, migrants and young people.

Because it destroys democracy. When wealth accumulates in very few hands, its power increases. It increases its capacity to condition that political decisions favor their interests, without taking into account the needs and will of the majority, and extending the purchase of wills and corruption. No matter what people vote, fundamental decisions go in the direction that capital decides.

Because it commodifies life. When less and less wealth is destined to the public system, that is to say, to the extent that the privatization of the public system is favored, of the basic services that must be free and universal (education, health, social services,

pensions, nurseries, residences. ...) they go from being services financed by all and for all, to become individual services that are paid individually and that generate private benefits.

Because it breaks the cohesion. This generates distrust and affects the solidarity among the people: why pay taxes, if those who have more do not pay and use what we pay for the enrichment of few people instead of to satisfy the needs and the will of all?

What are the proposed solutions?

It is a matter of correlation of forces. What for us are solutions, for those who have power is a disaster. Therefore, it is one thing to propose measures (salary of € 1200, progressive fiscal policy, promotion of public employment ...) and another thing is how to achieve the necessary strength to implement these measures. Today, those of us who wish to distribute wealth in a fairer way do not have enough strength to change things, so we give importance to small achievements and achieve a greater accumulation of forces.

For example, it is fundamental for us to organize workers in workplaces, especially in the most precarious ones, and through strife and strikes to reach good agreements, since, to a large extent, the distribution of wealth depends on collective bargaining. In the fight the great results are those that originate from the union of forces. This has happened in the residences of Bizkaia, in the Museum of Fine Arts, with the subcontractors of the euskalduna palace, with the cleaners of the NH and Barceló hotels...

They are small victories, but these successful experiences show that things can change; they are a model and source of experiences for workers of other centers, and in this way it is easier, with greater organization and more strikes, to expand the number of workers who have good agreements. In this way, at the same time that we distribute wealth better, we accumulate strength, which is necessary to achieve new achievements.

But, in the same way, when the system is reducing benefits in public services and to respond to the increasing basic needs of the people, it is essential to promote the transforming social economy that allows them to respond collectively to these needs, without leaving nobody abandoned (especially those who have less resources). In this way, with the aim of achieving a good collective life, collective projects are being built that will respond to different needs (energy, food, care, financing, communication ...). There we have consumer groups, Koop57, Agrarian Chamber of Euskal Herria, Euskoa, Izarkom, Enargia, I-Ener, Goiener, Fiare, Olatukoop, community housing, community care ... are small projects, yes, that will benefit few people, but they are real practical examples that improve life and, therefore, good models to be extended in the territories. This helps to accumulate strength, since it shows how the collective organization achieves results.

Therefore, when the relationship of forces is unbalanced against us, the key to achieving small results is collective organization and struggle, generating networks of alliances between different movements, the creation of alternatives that improve resistance and life, to go accumulating forces. It is not something immediate, it will take time, but through that path it will be achieved.