

FROM A FRAGMENTED LEFT TO MOSAIC

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“Actually”, writes Hans Jürgen Urban (board member of the German metal union IG Metall) “a replacement of the social-ecological system should be on the agenda. But that would require an active subject, a left willing to and capable to take action, and that is nowhere in sight” (2009, 72). The alterglobalization movement of movements, which in the beginning of the 1990s initiated a new cycle of transnational struggles and a search for ways to an alternative globalization, seems to be past its prime and is itself caught in a crisis during the crisis of neoliberal hegemony. The Trade unions were able to accomplish at the moment of acute crisis and are regarded once again as a serious partner by the state and capital, but are not able to go beyond structurally conservative measures. The labor market crisis forces them into a defensive position, without a concept for the conversion of industrial structure and export-oriented model. And at least in Europe, only a few of the old leftist-so-

cialist or communist parties were able to profit from the difficulties of parties in the neoliberal power bloc: in France, in Italy especially and to some extent in Spain they are dragged into the abyss together with the social democrats. The exception is constituted by a few smaller countries like the Netherlands or Norway – and the Federal Republic of Germany. Leftists across Europe (the party-based left as well as movement-based left) are drawing hope from the successes of the party Die Linke, and other refoundation attempts, for example in France, have followed. However, this situation raises unsolved and new questions for the understanding of a productive relation between party and movement, self-organization, participation and representation, or civil society and state. Even in the party Die Linke its success cannot gloss over hard political differences and difficulties to carry them out in solidarity. An independent emancipative project of the left does not exist. What does that mean in light of the crisis of neoliberal hegemony?

Establishing a hegemonic bloc does not only depend on the ideological attractiveness of certain ideas and the spaces for articulation they provide for different interests, or on ‘material concessions’ made in favor of subordinate groups. A hegemonic bloc gains its particular strength in those periods, “in which the given social group is really progressive— i.e. really causes the whole society to move forward, not merely satisfying its own existential requirements, but continuously augmenting its cadres for the conquest of ever new spheres of economic and productive activity” (Gramsci 1971, 60) – in case of neoliberalism tangibly

by managing the transformation to high-tech mode of production and the transnationalisation of social relations. No future project can fall behind the conditions thus set. “As soon as the dominant social group has exhausted its function, the ideological bloc tends to crumble away; then spontaneity may be replaced by ‘constraint’ in ever less disguised and in direct forms” (ibid.) It is in such moments that fissures begin to show in the hegemonic apparatus – during the crisis, it is hoped, these fissures can be turned into ruptures. Then, “social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression.” (Gramsci 1971, 210)

But the connection between the erosion of hegemony, the authoritarian protection of dominance and the replacement of traditional parties does not seem to be evident at the moment. Established parties might continue to lose voters and members, but the uncertainty within the population does not result in a dynamic upheaval, rather feeds fears and structurally conservative clinging to what is established. While workers during recent years might have been less willing to accept further cuts in their wages, the lengthening of working hours and more flexibilization, the crisis encourages the tendency to cling one’s job regardless of what is demanded. Although they do not expect much from the state and politics any more, most people are favor a return of the state in times of crisis. It’s the

state that proves to have the capacity to take action and valiantly tackle the problems, and not the leftist advocates of the state (who were for a long time sneered at for this position). Although there is a growing consciousness for the necessity to take things into one's own hands to effect change, this change is still delegated to the state and protests have blown over for now: what has been habitualized and inscribed into the body is changing particularly slow. The dissonance between the crisis' global threat and personal daily life is too big. A return to normality and old orientations helps to create some apparent certainty within the general uncertainty: "it wasn't that bad after all". This is the moment of those in power. The crisis of representation seems to have been overcome.

The causes of the crisis, however (c.f. IfG I 2009, 2ff), are certainly not thereby removed. On the contrary, *contradictions between fractions of the power bloc* are deepened. Restorative forces, using the state to re-establish the old order and intending to loot its financial resources, work hand in hand with reformist initiatives that clearly want to move beyond the status quo ante (in detail c.f. Candeias 2009b). Disagreement exists about the form of the new state interventionism and the management of the crisis, about economic stimulus plans, interest rates and debt reduction, about the re-regulation of the international finance system, about currency relations, about sharing the burden of climate protection and about the solution of international conflicts. Different fractions are pushing in different directions. Everything is tried out simultaneously. Cur-

rently, there is a ruling bloc in power, but no hegemonic *project*.

Consequently, the ruling power bloc has no productive solutions to offer in face of arising manifestations of the crisis, solutions that could induce a boost of accumulation while at the same time incorporating the interests of the subaltern, and thereby would be able to once again create an active consensus in favor of the neoliberal project. Neoliberalism exhausts itself – its Institutions will continue to have an effect for a long time, their position still being dominant but not hegemonic in the sense of organizing active consent (Gramsci 1971, 244). Still this authoritarian 'solution' – namely domination without hegemony (Haug 2003) – might be successful. Alex Demirovic and others point to the structurally unbroken power of transnational capital groups, such as banks and the financial institutions, and their influence on governments. Demirovic describes this "technique of domination, which systematically produces and uses the silent coercion of economic relations in order to liberate the state from a responsibility that it experiences as political overload" as "domination through contingency" (Demirovic 2000, 41f.). The crisis aggravates uncertainty, and economic necessities to save the "system" and to reduce national debt are set as the immovable priorities of national politics. Needs for secure employment, higher wages and social ecological measures are consequently treated as secondary. As political resistance as well as productivity are weakened by the subjects' exhaustion/fatigue (Candeias 2009c, Hüttner 2009, Richter 2009), the situation is met with

passive acquiescence and the value of labor is further under pressure. At the same time, the crisis remains unsolved. The age of precarization has therefore only begun.

Two antithetic scenarios seem possible in this situation:

1 | The social bloc of those who aim at the restoration of authoritarian neoliberalism, gathers its troops. It has lost the government position in the USA and no longer represents the majority of the population. Nonetheless, it is still able to mobilize a loud, radicalized and anti-state civil society movement: in the tradition of the tea parties this movement fights against state interventions, national debt and impending tax increases as well as against the introduction of public health insurance, using populist media campaigns as well inflammatory lies (Soltz 2009). Hand in hand with the powerful corporate lobby they block Obama's central reforms in congress, namely The Employee Free Choice Act (allowing so-called 'card check' recognition in trade union organizing campaigns), the public health reform and the stabilization of banks and economy and re-regulation of financial markets. They also inhibit the entry into the 'green economy' and international agreements to lower US carbon dioxide emission. This right wing strategy of blockade is supported primarily by capital fractions on Wall Street, in the health-care industry and oil and coal companies. Obama launches plans to divest the big financial institutions, for programs against unemployment and for higher taxation of the financial industry and the wealthy. Yet he does so only after he has lost his decisive majority

of 3/5th in the senate, without secure backing for the reforms from the Democrats and without connection to active social movements and workers' unions (c.f. Mayerson 2010).

In Germany the picture is somewhat different: the unsettled winners of neoliberalism who understand themselves as a 'middle class meritocracy' are radicalized, cling to the past and try to prevent a remake of a 'social-democratic' grand coalition under Merkel. Social-democratic neoliberalism à la Schröder and Blair has lost its credibility and has become indistinguishable from conservative-authoritarian neoliberalisms. National debt reduction dominates the political direction within the entire European Union and thwarts expectations for tax reductions. At the same time, the new government is unable to realize deep cuts into social services. No fraction of the power bloc is able to establish its leadership over the other groups, which contributes to the "characteristic incoherence of present-day government policy, marked as it is by lack of a long-term, articulated strategy for the power bloc and by the absence of a global politico-ideological or social project" (Poulantzas 2000, 245). As a result of this incoherence, tendencies of authoritarian neoliberalism (Candeias 2004/2009, 409ff) will be further promoted. Already, Berlusconi in Italy is staging an example of how democratic political culture can be substituted by authoritarian 'charismatic leadership'. In the wake of the crisis, social conflicts will grow in severity. Where protests are to be expected, preventive policing measures are being installed already. Even though in Germany the crisis has lead to

a strengthening of the parliamentary left, it remains impossible, given the fragmentation of the left wing in general, to develop enough pressure to change the political course – and the same is no less true in the center of the crisis, the USA. It is possible that the forces of restoration can cement their ‘domination through contingency’ for a longer period of time by strengthening the executive in authoritarian ways, limiting democracy, and through repressive measures and politics of insecurity. As the problems that have led to the world economic crisis remain unsolved, new speculative bubbles are already developing (not least in the emerging markets). As a consequence, new and even fiercer crises and ‘barbarism’ during the downfall are lurking around the corner – while economic and political power is relocated towards other geographic regions. This “molecular accumulation” of crisis elements can “produce an ‘explosion’” (Gramsci 1971, 280).

2 | Yet, another scenario seems to be possible, too: reform-oriented forces from within and beyond the power bloc work towards ‘post-neoliberal’ projects which are supposed to tackle the roots of the crisis in different areas: starting with a new state interventionism, to a Public New Deal and those comprehensive initiatives for a Green New Deal (c.f. IfG I 2009, 10ff). Each one of these projects is hotly contested and in itself controversial, as leftist as well as rightist options are available. It is not the singular elements but rather their articulation that will make the difference: a new state interventionism could be made to

guarantee the conditions of capital accumulation (even against the interests of some specific capital fractions) and a repressive social order (containing some limited additional social measures). It could, however, also mean to realize a leftist state project by limiting the power of the market and of capital, reconstructing and democratizing the state itself. Similarly, a New Public Deal could – within such a state project – mean to restore the public sector as a sphere where decommodified means of reproduction are openly accessible, and to sustain such a project by widening public sector employment. It could, on the other hand, also mean that public services are indeed expanded, but further commodified via Public-Private-Partnerships, their access being regulated through high fees, the population’s influence reduced to their capacity as consumers, while employment is made even more flexible.

Likewise, a Green New Deal could come close to a real transformation of mode of production as well as mode of living. It could be oriented towards reproduction rather than growth and challenge the logic of capital accumulation or it could, to the contrary, add a new dynamic to capital accumulation and handle the unequal consequences of a green capitalism and an ecological crisis in ultimately authoritarian ways. Nothing has been decided yet.

“The crisis alone does not politicize anyone; growing protest is not an automatism.” (Urban 2009, 77) In the 1930s for example, the US government was able to implement far reaching reforms as a strong movement of the unemployed, of workers and trade unions had developed which did not shy away from

even the hardest confrontations. In the 1960s, too, it was the civil rights movement, the Black movement, the movement of the poor and the women's movement that developed the pressure necessary to enforce reforms. Unless the currently fragmented left does not grow into a mosaic left, namely creating a picture and developing at least a minimum of agency in order to exert pressure and frame common positions, even the reform oriented fractions of the power bloc will lack the strength to implement the above mentioned project, or they will take on an authoritarian character, implemented 'from above'.

But how is a "mosaic left" as a "heterogeneous collective actor" supposed to emerge across specific cultures of movement and organization, across political interests, classes and social environments, and across social cleavages along attributions of gender, ethnicity and nationality? How can it grow from its fragmentation towards a generalization of interests and towards a common counter-hegemonic project of transformation? In fact, such a project is not only directed against another ruling and hegemonic project, but it is directed against hegemony as a form of domination in itself and towards the overcoming of any forms of relations of domination. In light of the diversified "aggregate state of the working class, of social movements" and of the subaltern classes generally, it might be useful to apply the "decentered and 'field-theoretical' concept of 'hegemony without a hegemon' or 'structural hegemony'" (Haug 2004, 24; 1985, 158).

Fragmentation of the left and particularization of interests

But how did the fragmentation of the left happen in the first place? Neoliberalism's "passive revolution" (Gramsci, PN 1) can be described as a form of restoring a dominance that had become brittle by revolutionizing all social relations. The aim was not only to reinstall the old order, but to develop bourgeois capitalist rule and to actively advance society. The passive element consisted in the hierarchical integration of subaltern interests, while keeping the subordinate groups in their subaltern position away from power and at the same time absorbing their intellectual groups and leadership into the power bloc. The subalterns were thereby deprived of their leadership (a process coined by Gramsci 'trasformismo'). Globalization and the internationalization of production, culture and commodities, as well as the leap in information technology and the scientification of labor by incorporating the knowledge of the immediate producers were thus promoted by the neoliberal management. Self responsibility and the economic emancipation of women were also enforced. The first wave of neoliberal transformations considerably weakened the power of wage earners, trade unions, social movements and social democracy. During the second wave, namely the ideological and political turn to New Democrats, New Labour and New Center (Schröder's project in Germany) (Candeias 1999; 2004/2009, 408), it was possible to integrate important oppositional elements and potentially counter-hegemonic groups respectively and thereby "absorb part of the antithesis itself" (Gramsci, PN 7). A similar path was taken by the ecology movement, whose party

political representatives were incorporated into the Red-Green project, while the active movement-oriented elements were transformed into lobbyist NGOs. Both wings consequently reduced the social-ecological question to a politics of modernization. Even the feminist movement got lost on its way towards institutionalization in a controversial and managerial project of gender-mainstreaming state politics and administration. Simultaneously, the trade union movement was tamed in alliances for work and co-management and its leading functionaries and works council representatives turned into significant supporters for the competitive power of 'Standort Deutschland'.¹ Remaining factions such as union 'traditionalists', 'radical' feminists and 'greenies' or leftist 'extremists' were driven into political irrelevance. While leading minds and impulses of the movements were selectively absorbed, this situation resulted in the disintegration of oppositional groups while the remaining parts of the movement were marginalized and consequently turned passive. The result was a fragmentation of the political and cultural left and a disconnected coexistence of activities.

Nonetheless, there is no shortage of political movements. On the contrary, we are confronted with a plethora of political movements and demands that do not translate into one another. With reference to Gayatri Spivak, Hito Steyerl therefore concludes: "In terms of becoming a political subject, these politics of difference proved to be fatal, as they produced a cacophony of monads, which had nothing in common and had the tendency to either compete with" or ignore one another (Steyerl

2008, 13f). In this voicelessness in which each one speaks only for their own particular, even identitarian interests, one thing has become specifically inexpressible, namely "a solidarity beyond identity" (ibid. 14). Diversity thus has been turned into a sophisticated power technique of neoliberal and imperial hegemony. Being split along multiple lines, the subaltern groups lack a common language and an understanding of their common interests. It is therefore not enough to point out the differences and celebrate the newly won plurality as a new dogma of post-classist politics in order to avoid false unity. And it is furthermore not enough to lament and analyze fragmentation while once again calling for a unitary project under the same flag, which would once again negate the differences and split off what is supposedly dissident or deviant. In this case, the mosaic's joints would be plastered over and its margins chipped off. Rather, what is necessary is a productive dealing with fragmentations and differences – and that is also true for party projects of a pluralistic left. But, recognition isn't easy and its collapse has caused the decomposition and break up of the left (Benhabib 1989, Fraser 2003, Sennett 2002).

From the dissonant constellations in which everybody is caught, it is, in order to recover agency, necessary to work out a generalization (instead of 'unification') of interests that respects differences. Specific interests must be newly connected and solidarity must be developed. This is what Gramsci meant when he talked about the development process from the corporate-economic to the politico-ethical

phase (Gramsci, PN 7). A revolutionary or radical *realpolitik* in the style of Rosa Luxemburg will operate conscious of the social relations of force, but with the perspective to shift them; it will start from the real conditions and contradictions in which each one is caught, from the worries and daily interests of everybody; it will start from the interests and passions, but re-articulates them in an ethico-political way in the sense of Gramsci, i.e. generalizes them such that different groups' immediate interests can be transcended and become universal in relation to the interests of other groups and class factions (instancing precarization c.f. Candeias 2009d, 10ff). Solidarity here means to take into account the interests of various participants in a counter-hegemonic project when own interests are formulated. That is not only true for organizations with relative organizational power, which need to take into account the interests of others; it is also true for positions of smaller groups, who, by sticking to important immediate yet narrowly defined interests, reproduce their own powerlessness when speaking, as they do not consider the interests of others.

CHALLENGES FOR THE 'MOSAIC LEFT'

1 | One thing might seem to be paradox here: marking differences and power relations, discursively as well as in terms of organization, is a precondition for generalization. It is essential to name contradictions, to emphasize what is underrepresented and to make visible relations that produce subordination and ascribe 'identities'. A rupture with the rules of corporatist negotiation processes and political

representation is inevitable (strategic antagonism). It is necessary to articulate particular interests and create separate organizations and networks in order to be able to associate with other groups and class fractions and, through debates, not only find but indeed produce common ground. The 'multitude' does not come together on its own, the mosaic-left's individual parts are not given and must assemble themselves in ever new ways. Producing common ground – on top of reformulating one's own interests and developing common interests – also means generalizing experiences and recognizing (as well as supporting) demands that are non-common, but indispensable for a specific group. The latter also refers to the recognition of different (political) cultures and organizational forms. What is important is an open process that allows for framing the particular and conceiving relations in new ways. What remains irreconcilable can possibly be resolved in a second step, namely in a emancipative transformative perspective and when building new comprehensive and mediating institutions (and practices).

2 | New forms have to be developed, too, for dealing with the discontinuity of the left. "The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily disaggregated and episodic. Undoubtedly these groups have historically shown a tendency toward unification, if only provisionally so. Yet this tendency is continually undermined by the dominant groups". (Gramsci 1971, 54f) To organize the subaltern groups and to assemble a mosaic left can result in a shift of power relations and prepare the ground for

further emancipative steps towards transformation. The ruling side on the other hand, namely its progressive initiatives and reforms, in the sense of a passive revolution will continue to try and lever out important parts of the mosaic, such as single groups and their organic intellectuals, and integrate them into their power bloc. For these groups this might be rational, as they might thus be able to achieve certain objectives. But in the medium-term, establishing such a subaltern position within the power bloc and limiting the struggle to a preset and circumscribed terrain (such as politics of environment, politics of pay scales, or social politics), cut off from other parts of the mosaic will result in weakening one's own organization and its goals. Orientation towards a counter-hegemonic transformative social project stimulates the mosaic's regular re-grouping. Therefore, a break up does not necessarily equal failure, as long as flexible forms of common initial projects are built on the way to transformation or, at least, the knowledge about their necessity is passed on through the less active periods of the movement cycle. Without a proper transformatory project of the mosaic left though, the centrifugal forces of differing interests and most of all the gravitational pull of the power bloc are likely to tear apart any popular alliance.

That is even more true as the specific logics of field specific experiences – on the shop floor, civil society, state or parliament – additionally divide a left that is a minority on all levels. Moreover this could be triggered through the power asymmetries between these levels that can be enormous. It is obviously

difficult to connect poverty movements, trade unions and party/parties in practice (Piven/Cloward 1977): unions grow desperate in face of the fact that the multiply divided precariat can hardly be organized at company level, that community organizing as well as other methods of organizing are extremely arduous and tie up resources immediately but prove successful only in the long-term – if at all. For unions' 'core-business' therefore, these interests are only secondary. Movements of the poor and the precarious, on the other hand, no matter if they manifest themselves in *Monday Demonstrations*², burning suburbs, or *right-to-the-city* initiatives, have always been subject to periodic cycles, unstable and discontinuous, and often articulate their interests through simple negation. According to Piven and Cloward they reach their social-political relevance when they succeed in disrupting institutional routine. Institutional actors are disturbed by that. It is a great achievement by the party *Die Linke* to have given parts of these groups a voice again in parliament and media. But uncertainty is growing, as this does not involve lively representation, but is rather based on mutual projections and suspicions. Neither are the marginalized trusted to have the capacity to act (in terms of being functional in the logic of the party), nor do the marginalized know when they will be 'dropped' again. Then formal representation often leads to pacification and passivation, produces the same political paralysis and indifference which were supposed to be counteracted. The party will take care of it... Herein lies a responsibility on big leftist organizations: to transform unequal

power relations, autonomous structures must be created, supported and nurtured. Yet again, this is not always in the immediate interest of these organizations, which simultaneously and paradoxically have to continue to represent these groups and their concerns. Here it would be necessary to more specifically determine the “dialectics of field-specific and field-transcending practices” (see Urban 2010) – an enormous task for organic intellectuals from trade unions, movement and party (and their development as comprehensive and mediating who simultaneously pass on their skills and work on their generalization).

3 | It is clear that a Hollowayesque distancing from the state is of no further help and is subject to a problematic mythology. The state is misunderstood as a closed apparatus of domination and the movement is isolated on the terrain of civil society. The history of poor people’s movements illustrates this point, that the state in a narrower sense is a contradictory terrain of struggle and its form is the result of the condensation of a social relation of forces. Sensible reforms – particularly those of a leftist state project – cannot simply be rejected and are not irrelevant simply because they occur upon inherited terrain. Leftist movement politics cannot stand impassively in opposition to institutional (leftist) politics; rather it must develop pressure and engage in interpreting and dealing with such politics within a matrix of generalized interests. This demands however that the autonomy of movements is secured, and that means creating independent institutions and an independent “moral

economy” (Thompson) or solidarity economy. One example of such a strategic relations to the state is the politics of the Brazilian landless worker’s movement MST. The MST does not allow itself to be satisfied with posing demands toward the government. It critically supports the policies of the Lula government – but as soon as these start flagging, the MST raises the number of land occupations in order to create facts on the ground and build further pressure. The MST resorts to state politics, but only insofar as the aim is to secure and extend the room for maneuver for the movement and the appropriation of living and working conditions (such as land rights). Land occupations are the motor of organization, a communal mode of production constitutes the economic foundation, and independent schools and education facilities secure political, organizational, and productive development. The MST attempts to win the furthest reaching independence, without succumbing to the illusion of autonomy beyond the state. John Holloway once formulated this as being *in and against the state* (before departing from the first half of the slogan). This has as a precondition the constant re-activation of elements of the movement, in order to break up the bureaucratization of the organization and the passivity of the members, to strengthen organizational power.

4 | The development of a critical strategic relationship between movement and state is very demanding and goes beyond the problem of forming an alliance-like mosaic left. For that reason it requires new institutions of mediation that are capable of gradually absorbing

the state into civil society, such as “consultas populares”, participatory budgeting and democracy, people’s planning processes, and councils primarily at the workplace, communal, and regional level (and beyond). However, such participatory institutions for the decentralization and democratization of power are only effective if there is truly something to be decided, particularly with regard to the socialization of the function of investment: for what and where do we want to employ our social resources? This should not be purely the task of the state, and certainly not of private-capitalist enterprises.

INITIAL PROJECTS AND TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS

So how could a generalization of interests while following quite different interests look? For the concrete example of saving Opel, the initial, structurally conservative demand of the works councils and trade unions for the maintenance of the productive facilities as an independent European corporation was correct and necessary. But this demand hardly mobilized any actors beyond the circle of those directly affected, and it could not be effectively conveyed as to why the general public should participate in the financial rescue without being able to participate in decision making, whereas a corporation like Arcandor (department stores/retail) – that employs primarily women – is abandoned to bankruptcy proceedings. Beyond that, in light of the structural crisis of the automobile industry it offers no sustainable perspective for Opel. It would therefore be more sensible to make state

capital assistance dependent upon a share in ownership (or to completely socialize the enterprise), connecting the share in ownership to an extended participation by employees, trade unions, and the region, for example in regional councils, who can then decide upon concrete steps toward the conversion of the automobile group in an ecologically oriented public service provider of mobility. A social-ecological conversion is certainly not reachable overnight and not every job in each existing enterprise can be saved, since the capacities of the automobile industry as a whole have to be reduced. In order to save the greatest number of jobs, the debate concerning a general reduction in working time would have to be unfurled anew.

But conversion does not simply mean building electric cars or windmills, but rather bringing forth an entire lineup of new products, technologies, and social needs (new concepts of mobility, new forms of living and working, of energy use, of consumption, etc.). This cannot be achieved at the level of a single company or branch, and demands a profound structural change. This must be embedded in a macro-economic orientation: the promotion of ecological industries is not sufficient in light of the necessary limitation to the growth of the production of material goods. What is required is the extension of other sectors, primarily public and social infrastructure, public employment and a “reproductive economy” oriented toward the needs of the population with the core areas of education, health, care, childrearing, nutrition, and ecology. Such a structural change also means that people will

in part lose their usual jobs. To that extent it is necessary to create transitions, to take up the experiences of the unions with job creation companies and re-training, and mobilizing company and state means for this purpose.

The development of such realizable initial projects and reforms and the compromises that go along with them must immediately improve the ability of individuals to act and at the same time make visible a perspective that points beyond, that orients and combines diverse interests, reforms, and struggles – in this case the interests of employees in the automobile industry, but also those in the service sector, of ecologically oriented milieus and movements, of people in the affected regions, of the struggles against privatization as well as for political participation in workplaces and state institutions, of women and the unemployed – by prioritizing the areas of reproduction and the extension of employment

Even the rulers are conducting such comprehensive projects as the Green New Deal. At the same time, the bloc in power secures its rule by subdividing the overall social context, disarticulating the interrelated social problems and changes, and thus individualizing problems and social groups. In this way, oppositional interests are easier to integrate or marginalize. Such a departmental politics also dominates the thinking in many leftist movements, parties, or in unions. For that reason, the connection between multiple crises, between the financial crisis and the social crisis, between the economic crisis and the ecological crisis, between all these crises and the capitalist mode of production and its

mode of life must be constantly emphasized or rather developed. The struggle to interpret the crisis, the situation, is an essential aspect which organic intellectuals have to perform in their various positions. At this point, in the sense of a radical transformative *realpolitik*, it's about the whole social formation as such, concerning the question of the common disposal over the immediate conditions of existence, the configuration of the future. This orientation towards the whole is more than just a pretty distant goal, but rather a necessary element to avoid a reduction or falling back upon corporatist, that is to say narrow group interests, which leads to an intensification of subalternity that always threatens when struggles or individual reforms are not conceived of as conflicts of hegemony for the configuration of society as such. When this happens, a particularized, comprised integration into the ruling bloc occurs.

The “affirmation, from positions of marginality, of a set of anti-system demands“ (Laclau/ Mouffe 2001, 189) acts to protect against cooptation, but does not fulfill the demands of an integrative project. Nor is it sufficient to “portray” such interests as general interests of society as a whole. Rather, what is required is a strenuous real process of “generalizing interests in an unstable balance of compromise” (Demirovic, 1992). Such a project of “determinate negation” (Marx) includes the construction of an effective antagonism: “construction starts from negativity, but is only consolidated to the extent that it succeeds in constituting the positivity of the social“ (Laclau/Mouffe 2001, 189).

Building upon the example of rescuing Opel, the project of a social-ecological transformation that turns against the scenario of an authoritarian-neoliberal securing of rule (without hegemony) as well as that of a Green capitalism, constitutes such a determinate negation or a positive sociality/perspective. The conversion of a growth-oriented capitalist economy into a 'reproductive economy' that can limit itself while still creating new wealth concentrates upon a needs-oriented Care Economy expressing solidarity, a reorientation toward public health, childrearing and education, research, social services, nutrition (sovereignty), caretaking and the protection of our natural environments. This would be a contribution to a truly ecological mode of production and of living (since this work with people and to maintain nature is accompanied by less environmental destruction) aimed directly at the crises of reproduction and labor (it is already the case that these branches are the only ones with continuous employment growth), makes possible an emancipative configuration of gender relations and the development of a praxis of "buen vivir". The intrinsic orientation connected with this, the partial tendency towards de-globalization and regionalization of the economy, would also contribute to the dismantling of the (especially German) fixation upon exports as well as toward the equilibrium of the balance of trade. With the extension of the public and its economy would follow the rollback of the market, of privatization and valorization. If reproductive labor in the broadest sense is made the center of a transformative project, this finally allows

a renunciation of the fetish of growth – and at the same time calls into question the capitalist mode of production in the medium term. This is ultimately a question as to who makes decisions concerning the deployment of resources in society, and as to which labor is socially necessary. It is about a radical democratization of state and economic decisions. It is about defining anew and distributing anew socially necessary labor – not through the continued extension of commodified wage-labor and the production of surplus-value, but rather through the extension of collective and cooperative forms of labor, oriented according to their efficiency in contributing to human development, to the wealth of human relationships on all sides, and the disposal over time.

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1 The closest definition for ‚Standort Deutschland‘ is maybe ‚Germany as an investment and industrial location‘. However, the Standort debate means an agonizing concern and increasingly acrimonious public discussion about the future of Germany’s economy, social makeup, research, social welfare, and international competitiveness (<http://static.highbeam.com/g/germanlife/september301994/thes-tandortdebategermanysmountingconcernoveritseco/>).

2 Demonstrations directed against the labor market reforms in Germany in course of the introduction of Agenda 2010 under the Schröder government.