

BUILDING ALLIANCES: SOCIOECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines on the basis of a number of empirical studies which are the social bases of the various possible political coalitions in Germany. We shall corroborate three theses: First: While the better-offs of the German society are split in a liberal market and a social orientated group, the lower social groups are united in a strong social and to a certain extent authoritarian orientation. Second: Who wins the hegemony over the lower groups without losing the base in “his” block in the upper strata, will be able to dispose of stable majorities in Germany. Third: On the basis of social attitudes, majorities for opposite directions of politics can be created – for the liberal market and authoritarian as well as also for the social emancipative orientation. The contradictions a liberal market policy has to struggle with are greater, however, than those of a social policy. The Left needs a dialectic policy that aims at reaching several goals at once to build broad alliances for a solidarity transformation – de-legitimation of the ruling power, the introduction of social, ecological, democratic reforms and finally also revolution of our own way of production and life as well as the property and power relations on which it is founded.

Keywords: social alliances, solidarity, socio-ecological transformation

INTRODUCTION

There are five factors which in their sum can generate sudden political changes – economic collapses, diminishing trust in social institutions, the solidarity of various social groups against the rulers, an ideology that effectively challenges the rulers, and finally, the division among the ruling classes themselves. Due to the crisis of neoliberalism, a number of conditions for such a political change have emerged in Germany. There is deep pessimism concerning their personal prospects among large parts of the populations, a strong alienation toward the institutions of the Federal Republic seen mainly as instruments of power of the privileged classes. The paper elaborates the possibilities of a solidarity alliance for a deep and far reaching socio-ecological transformation universalising social rights.

ALTERNATIVE HEGEMONIC BLOCS

In the following, we shall try to examine on the basis of a number of empirical studies which are the *social bases* of the various possible political coalitions in Germany. We shall corroborate three theses: *First:* While the better-offs of the German society are split in a liberal market and a social orientated group, the lower social groups are united in a strong social and to a certain extent authoritarian orientation. *Second:* Who wins the hegemony over the lower groups without losing the base in “his” block in the upper strata, will be able to dispose of stable majorities in Germany. *Third:* On the basis of social attitudes, majorities for opposite directions of politics can be created – for the liberal market and authoritarian as well as also for the social emancipative orientation. The contradictions a liberal market policy has to struggle with are greater, however, than those of a social policy.

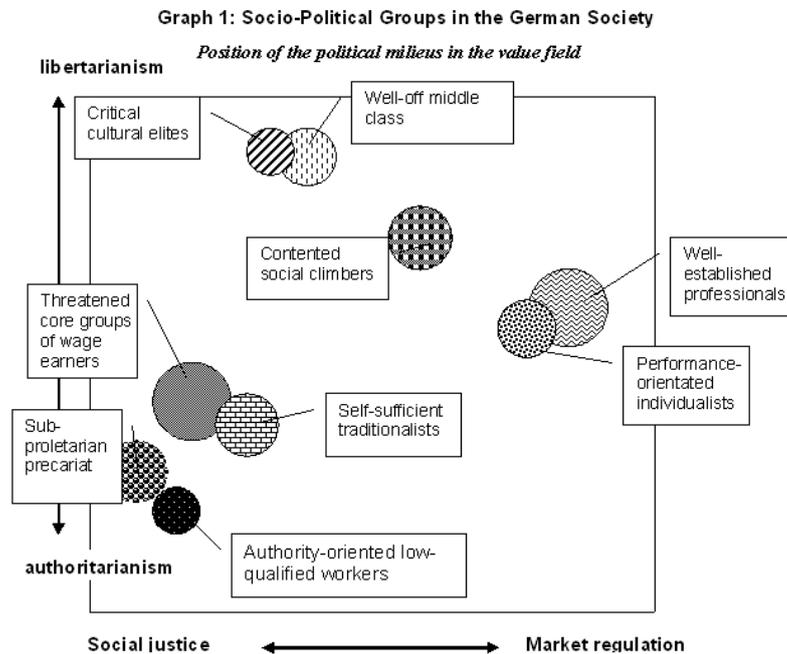
The approach chosen to prove these theses is based on opinion research. The danger linked to that method is to construct types of citizens and their opinions as passive objects of politics. In reality, however, the dispositions and values that are determined by opinion research are results and simultaneously points of departure of active action and communication. They are reflective forms of self-location. And they are always ambivalent.

TABLE 1: POLITICAL MILIEUS IN GERMANY (FOLLOWING SOCIAL CRITERIA AND BY MENTIONING THEIR SHARE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION)

Upper Middle-Classes	Performance-orientated individualists 11 percent	High social status, high qualification, often executive functions in private business, many independent professionals, high share of men, strong professional self-determination, high income, often private pension insurance Material orientation, striving for freedom and independence, orientation towards performance on the job in difference to the values of tradition or solidarity
	Well-established professionals 15 percent	High social status, many specialised workers, managers, independent craftsmen Good financial situation, far-reaching professional self-determination, high professional satisfaction Material orientation, high satisfaction, strong performance orientation; enemy of state intervention, hardly any engagement for solidarity
	Critical cultural elites 9 percent	Highest social background and education, often in service jobs Highest household net income, strong professional self-determination and mobility Open for social transformation and a tolerant and in particular solidary society, supporting a state providing social goods and regulating the economy
	Well-off middle class 10 percent	High social status, high education, many employees in public service and in socio-cultural professions High income, high satisfaction and security Open for change, want open and above all solidary society, want providing state and condemn social abuse, in part strongly religiously oriented
Lower Middle-Classes	Contented social climbers 13 percent	Middle-level social status, risen from simple backgrounds Highest professional satisfaction, a lot of individual initiative in professional life Somewhat above-average income and high financial satisfaction, see themselves on the winners' side In favour of free play of market forces and at the same time expecting a maximum in social transfers to support upward social mobility, at the same time achievement-orientated and solidary values
	Threatened core groups of wage earners 16 percent	Middle social status, simple to middle educational level Specialised workers and simple employees Lower professional scopes for manoeuvre and traditional understanding of labour (wage, security, regulated work schedules) Slightly below-average income, high insecurity, wish for a state regulating the economy that guarantees comprehensive social security, react to insecurity rather with authoritarian-ethnocentric ideas
Lower Classes	Self-sufficient traditionalists 11 percent	Rather low status, often from lower classes, often simple educational level, many pensioners, many women Low expectations from work and low satisfaction Far below-average income, strong insecurity Want a state committed to the common weal, condemn social abuse, frequently authoritarian-ethnocentric attitudes
	Authority-oriented low-qualified workers 7 percent	Rather low status, often reached "career" at a very small level, many pensioners and women Simple work, low educational achievement, frequently confronted with unemployment, relative professional satisfaction Far below-average income, often dependent on state transfers, fear of loss of their modest prosperity Life is experienced as a struggle, strong insecurity and challenge by society, authority fixation and withdrawal, Strong authoritarian-ethnocentric disposition, see polarisation in rich and poor
	sub-proletarian <i>precariat</i> 8 percent	Low social status, often experience of social decline, highest share of unemployment, 25 percent of the population in Eastern Germany Often simple and medium-level work, strong insecurity and dissatisfaction Strong financial insecurity, often indebted, great fears of the future, feel on the margins and as losers, low self-determination Wish for common-weal oriented society and regulating state, react with pronounced ethno-centrism to insecurity

For the sake of methodological clarification, this remark: the following graphs on the political milieus differentiate according to the attitudes of the citizens toward the economic and social or political order. On the one hand, the different political milieus have different opinions on what serves them and society as a whole: is it rather the unobstructed liberation of market forces or is it the state/the community? This is the conflict between the orientation towards market freedom or respectively social justice, in brief: *the socio-economic conflict line*. On the other hand, there are groups that engage for or against a further

democratisation of society, equal rights to women, environmental protection as well as tolerance, because they see in these tendencies rather chances or threats for themselves and society. Here, the libertarian orientations face the authoritarian and often nationalist orientations. This is the *political-cultural conflict line*.



Quite different from what one usually suspects: Concerning the policy orientations society is split in the upper-middle tiers and united at the bottom. That is one of results of the study “Society in the Reform Process” conducted by Infratest Social Research Berlin on behalf of the Friedrich Ebert-Foundation. On the basis of qualitative interviews and quantified questions, statements on nine political milieus in Germany were made, which in the following will be presented very briefly with respect to their social position Neugebauer 2007: 70 pp., table 1). Let it be noted in advance that there is always question of empirically based constructions which, moreover, for the sake of sharpening of the argument are treated with a certain additional simplification. It is a revelation of connections that act as a general tendency, but not in the individual case.

Four of these milieus are attributed to a very broadly conceived upper middle-class (45 percent of the population), two to the lower middle-class of society (29 percent) and three to the lower part. The main criterion seems to be the question to what extent the respective group by education, work, income, social capital etc. seems relatively more resistant towards a decline (upper middle-class), sees itself threatened (lower middle-class) or respectively finds itself at the bottom without realistic chance of climbing up the social ladder. The data raised in 2006 yield a relatively precise impression of the present attitudes of important political and social groups in the population. What is missing are the small, but extremely influential groups of the ruling elite in business, politics, law, culture and security apparatuses. They make up the real top, controlling the society.

Graph 1 illustrates that the upper middle strata of society are split. There is, on the one hand, the market-economy-oriented and moderately authoritarian group, and there is, on the other hand, the social-libertarian group. The market-economy oriented and moderately authoritarian group consists of the milieus of the performance-orientated individualists and the well-established professionals. Their overall share of the population with right to vote is around 26 percent. The social-libertarian group is composed of the critical cultural elites and the well-off middle classes. It has a share of around 19 percent of all male and female citizens.

The market economy-oriented, moderately authoritarian group is larger in the sector of the private economy, among the free professionals, the managing personnel of business. The members of the social-libertarian group are mainly active in the service sector, the public service and the socio-cultural sectors. The members of the critical cultural elites are often public servants, academics, many of them are students and

pupils. The well-off middle classes are constituted of many qualified employees and public servants in the higher or medium-level career track. The critical cultural elites and the performance-orientated individualists often consist of the younger groups of the social-libertarian and the neoliberal upper-middle classes, they constitute their successors.

The market-economy-oriented group and the social-libertarian groups have their focal points in two different sectors of society. The former are active mainly in the private sector, the latter mostly in the public sector. This different social and cultural anchoring of the two groups has serious consequences. The opposite attitudes of the two groups result from basically different daily experiences. The market-economy-oriented group sees their interests safeguarded mainly by a competition-oriented economy, the social-libertarian groups in their majority by a healthy and strong public sector.

The private and the public sector in their logic and in their reproductive interests are completely different. The market-economy sector is subject mainly to the logic of concurrence and the market, in its upper levels rewards primarily individual performance and often aggressive self-assertion. To these groups, the society appears as completely permeable from the bottom to the top – if the individuals only made the necessary efforts for that. Market success is the decisive criterion. High financial and professional recognition is considered as commensurate to personal performance. The members of these groups often participate in the profits of their firms or receive performance-oriented bonuses. The view on society is mainly business-centred and short- to medium-range. The state appears – at least with view to the economy – as an inefficient and costly interference into the markets. An authoritarian management according to business criteria is considered appropriate.

The public sector functions differently. The function of the public sectors consists mainly in securing the social reproduction (shaped by capitalism) and to assure the supply of those goods on which the development of society depends: education, culture, health, environment, security. In this sector, the higher middle strata are often also confronted with problems that are devoid of any business-economic rationality. These are problems that develop from the crises of reproduction, of integration, of legitimacy and security of society. Capitalism has another face here than in the private sector.

The success of those who are active in the public sector measures itself mainly by the contribution to the long-term security of these public services. It is a success that cannot be determined by the market economy. Governance in the public sector demands the ability to combine management with democratic intermediation of contrary interests on the basis of broad participation. In these sectors, a special “densification of relationships of forces” (Nicos Poulantzas) takes place. They are the terrain of social struggles and conflicts with a stronger impact of democratic legitimacy and the balance of interests.

The lower part of the society is split as well, but in a different way. The two groups that the above-mentioned study makes out in the middle, locate themselves along the socio-economic as well as also the political-cultural conflict line in completely different areas.

The *contented social climbers* occupy an unusual position. They are both more market-economy minded and rather more libertarian, even if not quite so market-economy minded as the neoliberal parts of the upper classes and also not so libertarian as the critical educational elites or the involved bourgeoisie. Among the contented social climbers belong many “peasants and petty free professionals, but also workers trained on the job”, who have “made it.” Many of them share directly in company profits. From their experiences of climbing up, they support a society that honours and promotes performance. Yet, they also know that this does not come from alone: They expect support by state transfers and state subsidies in order to be able to make it. They are ready to accept social responsibility *and* invest in personal development. According to them a good life is measured both by material recognition *as well* as democracy and tolerance.

The *threatened core groups of wage earners*, by contrast, are composed mainly by industrial workers in the plants of the giant corporations that stood at the centre of “model Germany” and now feels threatened. Over decades they formed the stronghold of the SPD. but now they feel left alone by the SPD and by the state in general. They are not fuelled by hopes for career, but experience fears of decline. They do not wage upon free competition, but upon social security. Therefore, they ask for social (and also national) protection. They perceive the transformation of the social state of Germany into a state concentrating on economic competition and global export an immediate threat.

As among the upper middle classes, the split of this lower middle of society is conditioned likewise by the socio-economic interests and by direct personal job experiences. Again both groups, contented social climbers as well as threatened core groups of wage earners, are centred in sectors with different logics. They are integrated in different ways in the social division of labour and confronted in different ways with markets and the state. They have clearly different attitudes towards the relationship between state and economy as

well as between leadership and democracy. Yet differently from the higher groups, especially among the threatened core groups of wage earners the advocacy of state intervention into the economy goes partly hand in hand with that of authoritarian leadership.

After World War II, the Federal Republic resembled an elevator society in which all moved upwards; even those who needed to get one's bearings on the ever better carpeted floor of that elevator. With the neoliberal policy shift, the floor of this elevator got knocked out. Freed from "ballast", the upper groups rise faster. Those, who dispose of sufficient social, economic and cultural capital, hold on with all their abilities ever more ferociously to the ever weaker support line. The weaker rest of the society, however, drops. It is fear that chains the centre to this policy. In other words: "In the last years, the lower and middle-class quarters have decoupled themselves more and more from each other. At the latest when their children reach school age, those who can afford it move away from those districts marked by social problems... Left behind is a socially homogenous under-class without self-confidence, without network competences, without social capital" (Micus; Walter 2007: 91). And this hits mainly the young generation: "

At the bottom of society, the study by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation reveals three groups. This is on the one hand the already "dying" species of the *self-sufficient traditionalists*, many of them retired, mostly with simple education, who were often active as unskilled workers or trained on the job. Many of them are active church goers. The share of women is above-average. Abuse of social support is condemned; at the same time, however, there is the expectation that the state should intervene in a regulatory manner in the interest of the common weal.

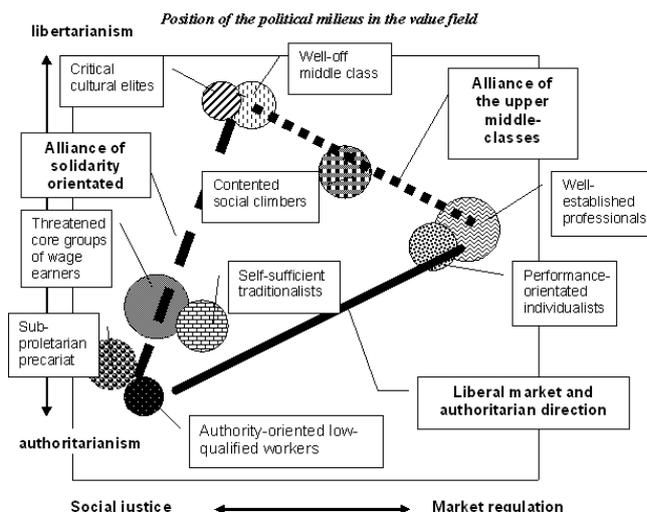
Among the *authority-oriented low-qualified workers* are many unskilled workers. Many of them are also already retired. Their incomes are far below average. They often experience their life as a battle; many of them are affiliated to religious institutions. They are still beholden to the idea of performance and react to the threat of their status both by calling on the state as an ordering power, demand protection against foreigners and advocate state regulation and prevention. They notice a split of society into rich and poor in a particularly drastic way. Although they rather vote CDU, they think that socialism is a good idea.

As far as precarisation goes, East Germany has really turned out the avant-garde. While in West Germany only 4 percent of the population belong to the *sub-proletarian precariat*, it is 25 percent in East Germany. Many people have had to make dramatic experiences of decline and deprivation, among them many former specialised workers and simple employees. Two-thirds were already unemployed. The precariousness of the personal life corresponds with the experience to be the loser of the reforms (and of German unity). They expect from the state that it works for a common-weal-oriented society and intervenes in a strongly regulating manner in order to provide for social security and real equality of chances. They judge the idea of socialism rather more positively and at the same time consider themselves disappointed by the way today's democracy is functioning. They are looking for alternatives in party policy and have turned far above proportion to the Left Party.

A NEW CONTRACT OF DOMINANCE AND ITS WEAKNESSES

What are the chances to win majorities for a socially oriented policy as against a liberal market policy? Both political orientations have a basis in the upper groups of society. That also means: majorities must be won below! The representatives of the political direction that wins hegemony over the lower groups of society without at the same time losing the basis in "its" respective block in the upper class can dispose of stable majorities for decisions over basic directions in Germany. Facing this fact which became obvious in the elections 2005 the ruling parties have developed new strategies to shape financial market capitalism. These strategies offer two types of a new social contract – a neoconservative and a social and democratic contract.

Graph 2: Alternative Majorities for Different Policies



As Graph 2 illustrates, political majorities in Germany can be created in three ways. *First*, it can come to an alliance of the upper middle-classes in which the liberal market and the social libertarian groups join forces. The neoliberal project itself began mainly with the transition from the hegemony of the social-libertarian elites of the late 60s and early 70s to the elites oriented more towards the liberal market of the 80s and 90s. The mutation of the SPD from Willy Brandt to chancellor of the neoliberal Agenda 2010, Gerhard Schröder, is maybe the clearest expression of this change of hegemony.

The neoliberally dominated alliance of the power elites with the upper middle classes as the core basis was put into question by the medium and lower social groups. They saw their interests massively hurt. The policy “new middle”, proclaimed by Schröder, was not able to bridge the top and the bottom, but demanded that those below converted from social state citizens into “working poor”. They were supposed to provide the lacking public services for the well-to-do at poverty wages as private services of child care, old-age care etc. From 2000 and 2008, the gross wage quota declined from 72 percent to 65 percent, while the gross profit quota jumped upwards from 28 percent to 36 percent. The wage quota in Germany had never been as low since 1945.

CDU just like SPD, since they formed the government together in 2005, have tried to combine the neoliberal market radical approach with an offer to the lower social groups. That way, the financial market capitalism produced by the neoliberal vague is supposed to be established for the duration. In the light of the obvious fact that unleashed markets undermine the social and cultural basis of society both parties now react with a limited extension of the state and public functions. That concerns especially the educational system, the integration of women and men migrants, a limited ecological modernisation, and reinforced investments into science and research. Moreover, CDU/CSU and SPD stand for an extension of military security.

Departing from the interests and attitudes of the “well-established professionals” of private economy, the middle and bottom groups are offered a *new social contract* – subordination under performance criteria of the market economy in exchange for state provision of the necessary conditions to accomplish to the demands of the new capitalism. This social contract is a contract of dominance that is offered in order to counteract the protest of the women and men citizens. The state is supposed to make the society more “permeable” for those who are ready for that. The large group of the excluded, marginalised and precarious should be transformed into agents of low-paid services for the established performers, in the private households as well as in a state-sponsored low-wage sector. Part of the profits from growth should flow into increased state incomes in order to finance public tasks that are growing again, including increased public investment. The time of complete wage restraint was declared as finished even by the FDP.

Social forces that want to avoid a grand coalition need a social anchoring at the bottom of society. The CDU and the CSU adjusted to that. Such a neo-conservative double strategy of “growth and participation” places the responsibility to offensively create those conditions by which the integration of as many people as possible into a market-determined society can be secured to the state. The SPD – under the pressure of the anticipated re-elections it had to call – executed a turn back to the rediscovery of the social question already in summer 2005. The hedge-funds it had itself called to Germany were suddenly declared a grasshopper plague of capitalism, and neoliberalism that since the Schröder-Blair document of 1999 had been

governmental creed, was suddenly declared public enemy no. 1 next to the Left Party. Within the grand coalition, the SPD in a number of questions (minimum wage, savings allowances for working people, health reform) has pushed for solutions that in comparison to the CDU ideas put their stakes on greater state regulation. On the one hand, the continuity to the Agenda 2010 is emphasised, the corporate tax reform supported, and on the other hand, the inheritance tax reform demanded. Renewal in conformity with the market and justice continue to be the guiding orientations of the SPD. This includes the real dominance of neoliberal economy. At the same time, however, basic security, future investments and a well-performing state are demanded that are supposed to harness the “centrifugal forces” of the market.

SOCIAL MAJORITIES FOR A SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

On the one hand, top and bottom in Germany, more than ever in the last 40 years, are divided according to income and wealth, position and recognition, access to education and health. Simultaneously, there is a quicker speed of upward or downward move – from *working rich* you can turn very quickly also into *working poor* or into unemployed.

Along with the project, for the time being failed in 2005, of a neoliberal alliance between the upper strata of societies and the project now pursued of a social cushioning of market-centred politics by the social contract of is an alliance between the socio-libertarian upper middle classes and the rather socio-authoritarian middle and lower-level political milieus of German society. A different contract than that of neoliberal conservatism is possible. This is still a mere possibility, however, for which many prerequisites are lacking.

As Graph 1 exemplifies, the social-libertarian upper groups are close to those in the working-class middle and the groups further below mainly as far as the social question is concerned. Together, in their majority, they support the demand: “The state should guarantee comprehensive social security of the citizens.” The well-off liberal market groups, by contrast, are united with the same groups at the social bottom of the society by an understanding of the state as national protection community. They admit to the thesis: “The state should limit the influx of foreigners, so that these don’t take away jobs from the Germans.”

A centre-left alliance for a social change must solve the conflict between the strong emphasis on democratic values of the better-off groups, on the one hand, and the authoritarian patterns and ethno-centric positions in parts of the lower middle classes and those at the bottom of the social pyramid in a way that social and democratic orientations win the upper hand. A centre-right alliance, by contrast, needs to deal with the contrast between the liberal market positions in a part of the upper middle-classes and the social orientation further below in the Federal Republic. And for this contrast of attitudes, there is every conceivable reason. From 1990 to 2005, the net profits and net incomes from wealth grew by 38 percent, the net wages on the contrary by merely 2 percent – for the lower wage groups, they even sank drastically. Together with the deep cuts in the supply of public services, the lower groups of society have hard times behind themselves and probably – so they see it – even harder ones ahead.

Left politics for a social-ecological and democratic change is a policy of transformation. It fits into an understanding of politics that sees the European Left Party as a contribution to “create a broad social and political alliance for a radical change of politics”: “We want to establish an independent self-confident project that encourages the realisation of solidary and democratic, social and ecological alternatives.” It is a policy that begins within capitalism and points beyond it.

Still, the political conditions for a change in Germany are not given. They can be created, however. Seven factors that could contribute, will be presented in the following: (1) the crisis of neoliberalism, (2) the strengthening of trade unions and social movements, (3) the challenge within the political system by the Left Party, (4) the potentials for change by SPD and Greens, (5) the ever clearer recognition that social and ecological transformation, on the one hand, and an alternative type of economic growth on the other do not contradict each other, and (6) the emergence of ideas for a new historical project of the Left. That can lead to a change of direction if (7) the Left is capable of a radical *real policy* at the height of the times.

What projects can drive ahead society, address its existential requirements and mainly explore new productive sectors of activity and that way enlarge the individual life perspective especially of those groups that might possibly support such a change of direction? The significance of these projects might hardly be in question; however, are they productive as well? Do they create more freedom, self-determination, conditions for individual creativity and solidarity? Can a formation of forces be built-up that is capable of action?

Is there the possibility to challenge neoliberalism and financial-market capitalism by *counter-hegemony*? How would projects look like able to link the broader social bottom and the lower middle classes of the threatened women and men workers as well as the employees with those upper-middle groups

that were called “well-off middle class” and “critical cultural elites”? Would this alienate the market-orientated upper middle class groups? Can the interests of the mentioned groups be linked to a “solar revolution” and the solidary commitment to global social rights? And how does all of that secure the transition from neoliberal authoritarianism, de-regulation and privatisation, to serious democratisation and broad participation?

Who wants to seriously confront the lower class-problem, the question of sub-proletarians of the present, must change simultaneously the exercise of power, social and economic policy. Lutz Brangsch writes: “We will be confronted increasingly with a disintegration of society on the one hand, and tendencies of growing repression on the other. Before this background the fusion of demands for democratisation as a political goal, for a realisation of poverty-proof social security system as social policy, and active employment and structural policy as economic policy corner stone is necessary. A developed network of public services that are offered free of discrimination and repression (education, culture, public transport...) is a decisive moment of such a counter-strategy” (Brangsch 2006).

If this is correct, then the most important common project of a socio-ecological transformation could be the renewal of the public sectors. This would include the extension of democratic community life, the development of education, culture, health care and care as core tasks of strong communities and backbone of self-determined shaping of individual and family life. This renewal of the public represents the actual “core scaffold” of a life in freedom. It would create the real basis for strong social rights and the precondition for an ecological turn of modern development. Such an orientation, however, requires a change in economic policy, the concentration on job-conducive areas of growth, reduction of work time and just redistribution of work, the building-up of a solidary economy from below and the extension of the public service and publicly sponsored employment.

Ever again the question of a service society emerges. This can develop into a servant/maid society, where ever more services are paid privately by a well-to-do middle class relieved from taxes. It may also develop by the expansion of a publicly-financed sector that provides these services communally for everyone. The latter would mean also, however, to change the character of these services and to increase the cooperation of the concerned.

Social services and a high employment quota (especially also of women) are the basis of a modern social state. Basic security for children, the transition from monetary transfers to cost-free services especially for children and the youth, but also in the cultural sector on the whole, the promotion of the real compatibility of job and parenthood and a higher degree of self-determination in the disposition over time are important elements of a renewal of the social.

If we do not want to end in a next-to-one-another of slums and the ghettos of the wealthy middle classes, there is reason to replace the private luxury of the few by the public luxury of the many. Poverty in this society of plenty is due to the privatisation of this overflow. Where swimming-pools need to ask entry fees, where libraries can no longer pay any books, are no longer present in the residential areas, and then even have to ask fee in order not to decay completely, where cultural centres and youth clubs are lacking and no longer have any women and men moderators any longer, society is being divided. The consequences are fatal: The restriction of public spaces, meaning equally accessibility to all people (material as well as intellectual) alienates from society, withdraws to solidarity the basis of the common experience of social differences, inequality and injustices and that way forcibly shifts the relationship to the shaping of social security. Where the public firms are privatised and the state withdraws from offering public services of existential care, the way into social apartheid is pre-programmed.

Yet, also the private firms will have to change. The brutal subordination under the shareholder value hurts their status as institutions in which there is also a private interest – from the side of the teams, the municipalities, the clients. *Reclaim the public* also means (re)appropriation of firms. On the one hand, they expect flexibility, competence, and motivation of their women and men colleagues, on the other hand, they provide ever the less of the prerequisites required for that – life-long education, social institutions, participation in the decisions of the firm. That, on the other hand, demands more influence on capital control – already so that the short-sightedness of today’s financial investors is slowed down. Co-determination is really no relic.

The renewal of the community can also be approached from the standpoint of the necessary revolution of the relationship between man and nature. A reduction of the employment of mineral energy sources by three-fourths or the use of primary raw materials by nine-tenths is not possible by the techno-freakist perfecting of today’s production, consumption and life style. Common use, long life, regionalisation and communalisation of production and consumption, decentralisation with simultaneous global communicative networking are winning in significance.

If there was a free competition, which entrepreneurial forms and which locations were best adapted to ecological requirements, many giants of the present would die out just as mercilessly as the dinosaurs did 65 million years ago. That way, the offering of eco-efficient services, the offering and functioning on the premises, and for a concrete goal and for a limited period would be rewarded. Egalitarian utilisation of nature, regionalisation, realisation of the principle of consensus and sufficiency are incompatible with financial-market capitalism and at the same time indispensable conditions for solidary sustainability. Yet, the ecological agenda is still not linked in a comprehensive way with questions of social justice. But the solidarity linking of social and the ecological question both at the global and the national levels are the key stone of a solidarity policy of transformation toward a society based on strong social rights.

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