

## 11 THESES

about organizing and revolutionary practice for a fundamental reorientation  
of radical left-wing politics – critique and perspectives

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we want to thank everyone who helped us with this translation

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## Introduction

While there is a silent helplessness that currently affects many of us, caused by rapidly aggravated assaults of the capitalist system and the lacking strength of leftist movements, we have also noticed a hopeful search for new beginnings among leftists and radical leftists during the last few years.

The topic of a viable, real alternative to capitalism is being discussed more intensely again - or at least, people are voicing a strong need for such a discussion. This is also true for the discussion over the precise methods and means with which the capitalist system can conceivably be overcome. These new searches show up in numerous discussions that we have experienced with comrades no matter where we go, and in numerous discussion papers, strategy papers, which have been published in the last few years; and in the criticism expressed in these – criticism of our current politics as radical leftists and the search for strategies that reflect the current developments.

The eleven theses presented below should be taken as a contribution to this discussion and the search for a new direction of radical left-wing politics. We are (so far) a small group of individuals coming from different ideological traditions (marxist, marxist-leninist, autonomous, anarchist and libertarian communist) and from different geographical backgrounds (FRG<sup>1</sup>, Turkey, Iran, Kurdistan). We have met each other through the usual actions and political alliances in Bremen and started an increasingly dedicated discussion on what a specific change in this society could look like and which specific steps are needed. What we shared was our dissatisfaction with the current politics and lacking perspectives both of the radical German as well as the migrant leftists in the FRG. Over time, these initially easygoing encounters grew into a stable political group. Alongside our own personal experiences, we have also read and discussed together strategy papers and analyses published by other groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Translators Note: It is quite common among German radical leftists to refer not to „Germany“ but to the initialism of the official name of the state, FRG for Federal Republic of Germany (BRD or Bundesrepublik Deutschland in German) in order to explicitly underline the construct of the nation state and its borders and not give rise to the mythical idea of a supra-historical nation. We will use FRG accordingly throughout this translation.

The theses presented below are a result of our discussions. We have tried to express in them our critique towards our own past politics and respectively the politics of large parts of the left-wing radicals living in the FRG. They also contain our thoughts on what we think the necessary changes in our practice need to be. While the analysis of current social developments constituted an important foundation for our discussions and results, in the theses we have, however, focused more intensely on the conclusions we drew from these for a specific change in practice. This is also because we feel that such concrete practical steps are not given enough thought and space in most of the current strategy papers.

We do not consider the theses to be the last word on the issue, but rather as a summary of our current state of debate. We have raised many questions rather than answering them. With this publication we want to contribute to the ongoing debate and enter into an exchange with all those, who find themselves at a similar point or discussing similar questions. Therefore, we would be happy to receive your critique, feedback, additions, further points of discussion, invitations to discussion meetings etc.<sup>2</sup> As for ourselves we are planning to invite interested individuals to meet and exchange ideas, so that the discussion on organization and revolutionary practice in the FRG can be intensified. Our further aim is to begin the actual organizational process.

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### *Revolutionary politics in the FRG*

We are aware that in non-revolutionary times no revolutionary practice can be introduced to the masses. Despite of that, we are convinced that the reality of revolutionary politics in the FRG does not correspond with its potential. And this has something to do with the current orientation of radical left-wing politics. We cannot expect any direct revolutionary development, but we can definitely do a lot to help develop this potential and be better prepared. And this despite of the fact – or maybe even for the very reason – that more and more people are turning to rightwing populist and racist ideologies, in which

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<sup>2</sup> If you are working on an answer or on a paper of your own, then let us know. Unfortunately, we didn't do this ourselves and as a result, some groups whose papers inspired us only got to know our reaction to their work a year later. Furthermore, we believe personal meetings within the scope of mobility on all sides to be the most meaningful and important addition to publishing papers.

the authoritarian and militarized reorganization of society is increasingly escalated.

Against the backdrop of racist and nationalist mobilizations and the absence of broad social movements, a widespread reaction of the local radical left is to deny the possibility of real revolutionary change in this society as naive or illusionary and write off the society in the FRG as reactionary and unchangeable. The first thesis, named *Revolutionary politics means knowing about society's potential*, is dedicated to this aspect and its critique. Another central point of our analysis was the realization that one of the main causes for the lack of strategy and ineffectiveness of the radical left is its lack of organization. Therefore, the second thesis, *The foundation of a social force is organization*, takes a central place to the whole paper.

In the theses following we try to outline more clearly some basics for organizing the radical left and revolutionary practice. Due to the composition of our group and our combined analysis, *Internationalism as a strategic guideline*, plays an important role for us, both for the organizational process itself as for the strategic direction of our political practice (Thesis 3). The practice we deem relevant is fleshed out in the fourth thesis, *Changing the direction of radical left-wing politics*. At that point and in the fifth thesis, *Involving life*, we take a closer look at the question as to what extent building and expanding radical left-wing projects is a sensible strategy for social change. The critique of the mostly subcultural, self-centered and identitarian radical left-wing politics, and the question why this hasn't changed despite diverse decade-long criticism are what we explore in our sixth thesis, *Breaking out of subculture*.

This is followed by our thoughts on the question of revolutionary ways of life, respectively the development of a revolutionary culture in radical left-wing structures in the seventh thesis, *Revolutionary culture instead of neoliberal values*. With the decline of leftist movements in the 90ies came the disappearance of the debate over real alternatives to capitalism in large parts of the radical left. In our eighth thesis, *Knowing about alternatives*, we explain why we consider the discussion of and search for possible alternative

models of society as a cornerstone of radical left-wing politics. The examination of revolutionary theories plays a central role for us in the search for alternative social models and in defining our political practice and strategy. However, in doing so, there is a tendency (that is beginning to show up more strongly again these days) to deal solely with individual, closed-up theoretical doctrines which leads to reenacting turf wars from the past without any material necessity. Therefore, the ninth thesis explores *Dealing with theory and traditions of revolutionary theory*. Finally, in the tenth thesis, *Creating spaces for critical and collective education*, we come to the meaning of education as a permanent element of an organized radical left, and also as a long-term project of building an alternative educational system, in the sense of grassroots academies.

Despite of the fact, that the critique expressed in our theses and the necessity for a fundamental change in radical left-wing politics that we described is not new, precious little has changed in our way of politics as radical leftists. Therefore, in the eleventh and last thesis, *An intentional break with the habits of our practice is necessary*, we deal with the question of how to avoid the critiques, strategy papers and discussion results to remain mere paper tigers, and how to make sure that they find their application in real changes to our political practices.

Before we begin with the theses, we would like to make a short note on the relationship of different forms of oppression. This seemed necessary to us because in the theses, we often write about „the struggle against capitalism“ or „the dominant capitalist system“, without explicitly naming other forms of oppression. Even if we actually make (too) little mention of the specific questions concerning struggles against patriarchy or against racist structures, this does not mean that we do not see their necessity or consider them as problems of lower priority. On the contrary, we share the view that social totality is not wholly defined by capitalist relationships and that overcoming these relationships will not abolish all other forms of oppression. Needless to say, patriarchy and racism (as well as other forms of oppression) have existed long before capitalism developed. At the same time, we find ourselves in the historical phase of capitalism, which as the dominating organizational princi-

ple of society influences all other forms of oppression – it connects, superimposes, strengthens, reshapes, and sometimes even decreases them.

Correspondingly, the struggles against various forms of oppression within the capitalist system can only be thought of and fought for in conjunction. History shows us through numerous examples that the separation of these different struggles is doomed to fail. So, for example, the struggle against patriarchy is swallowed by the system if it does not contain an anticapitalist perspective. And on the other hand, many revolutionary movements of the past have shown us that despite of their involvement in the revolution, women were expelled back to the kitchen in the end.

Overcoming the patriarchal system, racist structures and other forms of oppression must be a central part of our struggle from the very start and these oppressive relationships need to be addressed within our own structures as well. Many leftist groups, and traditional leftist groups in particular, have a tendency to approach the question of revolution from a purely economic perspective. When we speak of capitalism, we mean not only the economic side, but rather all facets of exploitation and oppression in today's society. Therefore, we understand revolution as a continuous process to end all mechanisms of exploitation and oppression.

## Thesis 1      *Revolutionary politics means knowing about society's potential*

No matter where we look, be it the action oriented groups that determine the current practice, or the theoretical groups, that shape current opinions, there is one thing a large part of left-wing radicals in these parts do have in common in spite of their differences – they harbor feelings of deep rejection against society and consider themselves superior to it. And actually, at first glance, it is easy to find reasons that would cause such rejection.

These reasons include: the nationalist continuities; blind faith in authority; racist, nationalist, sexist and homophobic tendencies; the self-righteous and hypocritical ideology of living in a token democracy and stronghold of human rights, which whitewashes this countries inner political workings but serves mostly to ignore the responsibility of German geopolitics for worldwide suffering, exploitation and oppression; right up to the unswerving belief in the national myth of being a victim, disadvantaged and cheated compared to other nations. Accordingly, we consider ourselves not only in a struggle against state and commercial power structures, but in a struggle against society as a whole.

But to write off of society in this way (and thus detach from it<sup>3</sup>) means nothing else than to – consciously or unconsciously – relinquish any aspirations of radical and emancipatory change. Because the actual overcoming of capitalist, patriarchal and statist structures can neither be won *for* society, nor be forced through *without* or *against* it. Rather, revolution should be understood as a continuous process, that is supported and fought for by large parts of the population. Otherwise the revolution will deteriorate into an authoritarian and forced project from above, or left-wing radical politics turn elitist, because the struggle on behalf of society replaces the struggle within and with it.

Since revolution in an emancipatory sense can only be thought of as a social movement from below, many left-wing radicals have given up on the possi-

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<sup>3</sup> This rejection of society also leads many radical leftists to perceive themselves and their own structures and places as something that stands outside of (the allegedly homogeneous) society as a whole. This strengthens not only the self-isolation of radical left-wing politics, but also fails to recognize the many divisions and contradictions inside of society alongside with the potential for social change.



bility of revolutionary movements happening in today's society (even if they continue to demand the abolishment of state and capitalism rhetorically). Social struggles and revolutionary uprisings may arise in other places, but to most left-wing radicals the society of the FRG seems reactionary and riddled with fascist tendencies almost by definition. As a consequence, radical left-wing politics necessarily turn reformist and remain (at best) as a mere corrective for the worst deficiencies of the capitalist parliamentary system.

A more accurate look into the reasons for left-wing radicals' rejection of society shows that the reasons (along with individual motives, see Thesis 6) are based on a false understanding of the interactions between state, society and individuals, as well as on false historical consciousness. In fact, this attitude reflects several components of middle-class ideology, such as the equation of structures and individuals when trying to examine the causes for reactionary ideologies and repression. E.g. if we consider racism as an individual emotion and ignore the social structure that acts at its base, the only explanation we are left with is the presumption of individuals' moral deformation – individual inhumanity („humans, and Germans in particular, are bad“) - and any possibility to influence events – if any remain at all – are reduced to personal moral appeals.

Furthermore, the equation of structures and individuals (instead of understanding them within a dialectical framework) leads to an idea that is well established in leftist circles – and based on the specific historical conditions of the FRG – which is the equation of society and state.

Within the logic of this equation, the struggle against the capitalist state automatically turns into a struggle against society itself. This results in a self-imposed isolation of the radical left which in turn makes us feel alone and powerless in our struggle against the system and revolution appears impossible. In order for us to be able to recognize the elemental potential for emancipatory change that also exists in the FRG, it is important that we distinguish between structures and individuals and between state and society, and that we see ourselves as a part of this divided and contradictory society.

It is necessary to leave the condition of historical immediacy and widen our historical perspective. The experience of the defeats suffered at the absence of positive struggles and reference points in the last decades makes it seem as if it were a final, undefeatable reality.

At the same time, dealing with national socialism and its continuities remains an important starting point in the politicizing process of many radical leftists in the FRG. The (important and urgently needed) critical examination of fascism and its consequences often remains the only historical reference point, while the knowledge of the numerous past revolutionary movements and struggles in this society are largely forgotten. An expansion of our historical perspective and an examination of points of resistance within these latitudes shows that society can hold both authoritarian and fascist tendencies, as well as emancipative and revolutionary ones. Movements like 15M, the Gezi-Protests, the revolts in the „Arab spring“, as well as the occupations and the resistance against the new labor law reforms in France are the most current examples that social movements can suddenly arise even in societies, where the local left had no longer seen any potential for change.

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This tendency is potentially growing, because the aggressive development of neoliberalism worldwide leads to the fact that the destructive forces of capitalism and its immanent contradictions<sup>4</sup> are becoming ever more visible. At the same time, people find themselves in precarious life and working conditions increasingly often, sink into poverty, become marginalized. Even groups of society that until recently partially profited from capitalism, are losing their privileges at an increasing pace or they are finally getting to feel the consequences of the developing crisis on their own backs.

Thus, the number of people that have an existential interest in changing the circumstances is continually growing. This fact does not automatically or necessarily lead to the development of emancipatory social protests, or even revolutionary uprisings. Nevertheless, growing unhappiness with one's own

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<sup>4</sup> By that we don't mean only economic changes, but rather that there are numerous structural contradictions that contribute to the instability of the system as well as to discontent and unrest (growing environmental damage, alienation and loneliness, neoliberal restructuring of the social systems (care, healthcare, education) and their growing erosion, etc.)

situation and with the dominating conditions create the basis for people to develop the need and readiness to effect change. If the radical left does not take this potential seriously, does not develop a perspective of its own, and surrenders to the helplessness it feels, it will also be co-responsible for the fact that reactionary and right-wing movements become stronger, and that their programs will be considered as alleged solutions.

If the aim of our political activity is the actual overcoming of capitalist, patriarchal and state relationships, then we have to be the first ones to strengthen and spread the knowledge and the potential for this emancipatory change within society and within ourselves. This also means that we have to recognize the general human ability to develop, evolve and liberate - and take it seriously.

## Thesis 2 *The foundation of a social force is organization*

Within the radical left, among leftist academics and in general among young political activists in the FRG (but also in many other western states<sup>5</sup>), there is a widespread hostility towards organizing, or at least organizational attempts are not considered a necessity. Instead, there are numerous small, separated and partially opposed groups and struggles. One of the most important reasons for the hostility towards organization among leftwing radicals is, in our opinion, is the fact that the knowledge of radically democratic and anti-authoritarian forms of organization has mostly disappeared.

When speaking of building revolutionary organizations, most people associate with it the dogmatic cadre, leadership and centralist concepts, in which authority, hierarchy, instrumentalization, alienation of the members and bureaucracy are reproduced (which is why they are rightfully rejected especially in anti-authoritarian circles). But even radical leftist groups that have a positive attitude towards organization, often actually refer to the aforementioned concepts in debates and actually organizational attempts.

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A further important reason is the growing influence of theories that arose from a rejection of orthodox marxist theories or as a reaction of marxist traditions with the defeat of socialist movements (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postmarxism)<sup>6</sup>.

These theories reject the possibility and necessity of mass mobilizations, as well as organized struggles, and insist instead on micropolitics or the spontaneity of the masses. Today, these theories have established themselves as hegemonial discourses among left-wing radicals, which makes the creation of revolutionary organisations much more difficult. The necessity to create a revolutionary organization becomes clear to us both through the analysis of

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<sup>5</sup> Hostility of organization can also be found among young activists and academics in many countries of the global south. In dictatorships such as Iran, a further reason for this critical stance towards political organizations is the massive scale of state repression against them and the experience of threats to personal existence that come with organized political work under such circumstances.

<sup>6</sup> In many leftist currents in Europe, the demise of socialist movements and models became visible long before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the roots of poststructuralist and postmodern theories go back into the 60s.

the effects of capitalist relationships, as well as through the analysis of past and present revolutionary uprisings, the conditions of their creation, and the reasons for their failures.

*Organization as a necessity that results from the analysis of capitalist relationships*

The postfordist organization of production also imposed new conditions on society, from which the current neoliberal structures have emerged. The logic of capital, respectively the purely economic logic has conquered all areas of society. As a consequence, factors such as competition, compulsory work and performance, individualization and a precariousness, have been established and they have lead and continue to lead to a division and atomization of society. Under such conditions, not only are collective problems perceived as individual problems and dealt with individually. As a result of the destruction of collective social structures that stems from the victory of neoliberalism, everyone is actually exposed to the capitalist system individually and alone, be it in workplaces, in state institutions etc.<sup>7</sup>

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It is no wonder that under such precarious conditions competition takes the place of solidarity and individualization the place of communality. The tendency of racist and nationalist divisions is also strengthened by these conditions. By this, the social conditions for spontaneous emancipatory organizational processes have become much more difficult.

Because the hegemony of capitalist ideas is a structural hegemony, it is not possible to combat it effectively individually or in separated small groups. Precarity has also affected the material conditions for the political and social struggles of the radical left. Disorganized and isolated, there is a growing danger that we will internalize and reproduce the dominant modes of thought or that we will become absorbed in attempting to solve our everyday problems individually. In order for us to be able to develop, defend and spread emancipatory modes of thought against this background, an organ-

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<sup>7</sup> To be more precise, we have to add here that an important phase of the destruction of collective revolutionary structures had already taken place during the time of national socialism.

ised, collective form of struggle is needed. At the same time, organizing is the basis for political activity that is oriented towards analyzing social conditions and developments, and which derives from them strategy, tactics and goals. The numerous debates on strategy within our structures and the often-expressed criticism of our politics will not bring about any change if there is no sound organizational framework in which change can happen.

*Organizing as a necessity that results from the analysis of past and present revolutionary uprisings*

In addition to the analysis of capitalist relationships, the analysis of the origin and the course of revolutionary uprisings also shows the need for organized revolutionary structures. We do not assume that the date and time of a social or revolutionary upheaval can be defined or predicted by revolutionary organizations. This depends also on material and historical conditions. History shows, however, that revolutionary uprisings just as radical struggles are often preceded by decades-long, continuous, patient, organized work. This is very clear when we look e.g at the Russian revolution of 1905, the Spanish revolution of 1936, the local self government in Fatsa (Turkey) 1979<sup>8</sup>, in the Kurdish regions Sanandaj, Mahabad and Marivan in Iran after the Iranian revolution in 1979, in Chiapas since 1994 or the current developments in Rojava.

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This makes it clear that revolutionary organizations can contribute to the creation of a revolutionary movement. In non-revolutionary times we think the main tasks are: to spread ideas and methods for self-organizing from below, to spread radical revolutionary discourse and analyses within society, to actively contribute to building self-organized structures in every walk of life and to support current struggles, whose goals are concrete improvements, as well as to kick off conflicts and struggles and radicalize these (to that topic, see Chapter 4).

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<sup>8</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selbstverwaltung\\_in\\_Fatsa](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selbstverwaltung_in_Fatsa)

Moreover, it is important to build social and solidary structures in the sense of an infrastructure of resistance. These are not only indispensable for long-term struggles, but also prove to be decisive during revolutionary processes for the survival of uprisings despite of the attacks of the system.

Several uprisings have proven to be surprising to many in the last years, such as the green movement in Iran, the uprisings during the Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, the Gezi Protests in Turkey, the mass protests of the 15M in Spain, the anti-austerity protests in Greece. While these have shown that within such movements, methods and elements of self-organization were developed and applied spontaneously from below, and that similar self-organized structures as neighborhood committees were established, at the same time these spontaneous uprisings were massively assaulted by the old regimes, reformist or counterrevolutionary powers, which acted in an organized manner and attempted to divide the movements, to instrumentalize, annihilate them, etc.

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If people wait until the start of such spontaneous uprisings to develop the knowledge, structures and experience of self-organization, and to acquire political consciousness and a revolutionary analysis, if they wait till such a time when they suffer the hardest blows of counterrevolutionary forces, they will not be able to withstand them in the long term.

The movements in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, etc. have all shown how much people long for solidarity and communality and what potential for mutual support, creativity and solidarity unfolds in these movements. For such uprisings or movements to not just rise and wane in a wave-like manner, to be defeated or instrumentalized, organized revolutionary structures are needed. We see the role of such structures in strengthening revolutionary discourse, passing on knowledge and methods from the onset, making solidary social structures available and thus reducing the dangers of divisions and assaults. It is fatal to believe that unorganized or spontaneously organized movements could fight off the organized, powerful attacks of the system in the long term.

It is partly due to the lack of organization that left-wing radical politics nowadays have no visibility, accessibility and therefore no effectiveness. This continues the loss of social relevance of radical leftist groups, which in turn deepens the separation between society and radical leftists. A further aspect of lacking organization is that experience cannot be transferred between generations of activists and everyone always has to start from square one. Also missing is the possibility to carry out organized educational and youth work and thereby unfold a broad impact that expands beyond the (local-) microscopic. Last but not least, organized structures also enable individual local or (single-issue-) struggles to get in touch with one another and thereby to contribute to strengthening the consciousness for the underlying, collectively experienced social causes.

#### *What do we want?*

We think that the question of organizing needs to be approached from two intertwined levels: on the one hand, we think the creation of a non-hierarchical, transregional, revolutionary organization is necessary, comprised of people dedicated to the ideas and methods of social self-organization and emancipation.

On the other hand, we aim to create structures of communal self-organization in all parts and struggles of society, so that the ideas and methods of self-organization will become ever more natural and protest and resistance movements harder to eliminate (both through assaults from outside as by so-called leaders from within). We will elaborate on this second tier of organization in Thesis 4.

#### *Building a revolutionary organization*

We are not in a position to draft a concrete sketch of a revolutionary organization in this text. This must arise in the joint process of a common practice and discussion. However, we believe it is necessary for people that agree on fundamental questions to organize. In this sense, we do not seek to organize heterogeneous radical leftist groups based on a minimal common denomi-



nator. In the following theses, we will try to identify various aspects and components that we consider to be central to the creation and political outlook of such an organization.

When we speak of the structure of a political organization, it is first and foremost to emphasize that we consider hierarchical forms of organization and leadership concepts to be completely unsuitable for social emancipation and self-determination. Historically, it has been shown repeatedly that they served to suppress the self-organized and emancipatory moments of revolutionary movements by (re-)establishing new class domination. The task of the revolutionary political organization which we are focusing on is neither to take over the leadership in protest and resistance movements or even revolutions, nor to speak on behalf of people.

The rejection of hierarchical leadership concepts shows that we have to look back on strategies and organizational forms, or develop them anew, in which people can gain experience with self-determination, self-activity and free, independent thinking. The structures of this organization must protect the free initiative of the grassroots rather than handing it to a leadership. We consider some fundamental principles for the structure of such an organization, therefore, to be the autonomy of the grassroots bodies in all questions concerning just them, that the decision-making power remain at the base, delegation with an imperative mandate, accountability and the recallability of the delegates at all times.

However, the concrete form of organization will also depend on the necessities arising from the practice and the concrete material conditions.

We aim at organizing ourselves on the basis of commonly shared analyzes, strategies, attitudes and principles. Accordingly, despite our various backgrounds and social positioning, we are deliberately organizing ourselves in a common structure. We see the common organization as a necessity to overcome the political ghettoization of migrant and non-migrant radical leftists and to work against the social divisions (see also Thesis 3). In our opinion, our strength lies in the common organization. Nevertheless, we will support

certain groups if they are affected by individual relations of oppression to autonomously organize themselves within the organization<sup>9</sup>.

Various factors are opposed to the process of building a revolutionary organization. The most important factor is the already described anti-organizational attitude and the lack of interest in organization among radical leftists. The experience of the last 35 years of the radical left-wing movement in the Federal Republic Germany shows that the process of organizing must be deliberately pushed forward. The concept of networking, which is meant to gradually lead to the organic convergence of revolutionary connections, has not come true once in 35 years of practice and therefore seems unsuitable to us. We consider discussions on a countrywide scale only as a means of communication among similarly oriented activists, not as a substitute for the actual organization process.

In organizing processes, however, we also encounter internalized capitalistic and individualistic modes of thinking and behavior among many radical leftists, which contradict collective processes or make them more difficult. To organize is to develop the ability to compromise, to think collectively and also be able to restrain oneself. By this we do not mean to give up our own convictions and positions. Rather, it is necessary to distinguish between fundamental beliefs, which need to be discussed and, if necessary, argued about, and the fact that one does not always have to decide, determine or influence everything. Egoistic tendencies and the inclination to always emphasize differences are very common within the radical left. These are the product of internalized neoliberal norms as well as the result of centuries of authoritarian character imprints. These results in psychological factors, such as seeking recognition and appreciation through distinguishment and performance which can significantly hamper organizational processes.

Building an organization requires a willingness to return to search for common grounds time and time again, rather than predominantly look for what might divide us. We are aware that the establishment of an organization, even if it is based on nonhierarchical and democratic elements, entails risks.

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<sup>9</sup> There is a risk that through the autonomous organization of individual groups, divisions within the organization will be reproduced and the joint struggle will crumble into numerous individual autonomous organizations.

Here we see the development of bureaucracy and organizational egoism, which can only be countered by awareness and constant self-critical examination - which, however, must actually be done. In order to prevent a detached and self-contained organizational structure, the core of building a supra-regional organization must lie in the local and regional involvement of the participating groups, rooted in everyday life and in daily struggles.

Nonetheless, it can also be important and useful for individual groups to organize themselves autonomously. These contradictions and problems must be discussed and tested in the process of organization. Building a non-hierarchical organization does not mean for us that all members must be able to do everything equally well and have to do everything. Rather, the aim should be, keeping in mind existing differences in time, skills etc., to build structures that strike a balance between the possibility of self-development on the one hand and the efficiency of the group on the other. Therefore, not everyone must be able to do everything, but there must be a fundamental possibility to develop skills and to enable knowledge transfer. Here too, the basic needs to be that all members agree with the basic contents and results and that all fundamental decisions are made collectively.

### **Thesis 3**    *Internationalism as a strategic guideline*

Internationalism is often solely understood as solidarity with and support for struggles and movements in other parts of the world. The internationalist practice of groups mainly involves the dissemination of information, the implementation of publicly effective actions as well as the collection of donations. This form of internationalism is subject to certain cyclical phases - from the Palestinian groups to the Latin American solidarity up to the Solidarity Committee for Rojava.

Due the lack of own struggles and the stagnation of movements in the local society many of the activists project their collected hopes, longings and desires to the respective revolutionary movements. By the idealization and romanticization of the movements, however, many of the activists seem to be turning their back as soon as they notice first contradictions.

This romanticization of revolutionary movements by parts of the radical left triggers opposing tendencies within other parts of the radical left. Here, the negative aspects of the respective revolutionary movements are usually exaggerated and the concrete potential is ignored. Both tendencies lead sooner or later to the erosion of solidarity (one from the beginning, the other one after the disillusionment some time later) until a new revolutionary movement appears on the horizon.

Especially in the case of movements in which organized structures play an important role, which have their own developed content and strategies, it is often the case that the procedure is followed by an all-or-none principle. Solidarity takes place only if the theory and practice of the organization is in complete agreement with one's own. Solidarity is thus confused with "unconditional solidarity" and also with loyalty. Both attitudes prevent reciprocal impulses, joint (learning) processes and developments on the basis of genuine but critical solidarity. An example for this is the attitude of the radical left towards the developments in Rojava: while some are idealizing the Kurdish movement and the social upheavals in Rojava (Nordsyria), there are

other critiques scrutinizing them (and frequently in a Eurocentric way)<sup>10</sup>. A critical exchange on solidarity on an equal footing is rare on both sides.

In almost all parts of the radical left, international solidarity – if it is considered as part of political practice at all - is regarded as a sub-principle. Accordingly, in many groups, internationalism is an additional project that emerges from a moral obligation and not as a necessity arising from a strategic analysis. An analysis that links the global situation to the national level and which makes important decisions about the nature of the organization.

*What do we want?*

We see internationalism as a strategic necessity derived from the analysis of historical-material conditions. From this analysis, conclusions are drawn both for the political and strategic orientation as well as for the establishment of a revolutionary organization.

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*Internationalism as strategic necessity*

Since capitalism is a globally organized system, the struggle against the prevailing capitalist conditions must also be managed globally. This applies in particular to the present historical phase of capitalism, in which its global characteristics and the domination of capital are much more developed than before. Imperialism also no longer appears as a competition between the great powers, but above all in the form of global regulation of capital (EU, IMF, TTIP, etc.) and cross-border mechanisms of oppression (NATO, Frontex, etc.). As a result of the global organization of capital, conditions of living and conditions of the struggles are also dependent on one another. The situation in Greece is a clear example of this case.

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<sup>10</sup>Rojava's societal developments are depreciated by many critics (for example, the possibility that a major social process may develop). This criticism ignores the real significance of the revolutionary processes of Rojava in an environment of strong patriarchy, ethnic divisions and fundamentalist religious (political Islam) to religiously fascist (e.g. so-called Islamic state) tendencies. At the same time, it is often based on a general condemnation of the Kurdish movement and its political interest, without looking at the developments and different tendencies within them, nor seeking for direct exchange.

As a result of the almost complete absence of social struggles in the Federal Republic over the past decades, the federal government has been able to carry out extensive restructuring on the labor market (but also in other areas). This has not only strengthened competition within the EU but also strengthened the EU governance against the interests of the population as a whole. These developments have worsened the living conditions, especially in the European periphery. The failure of the isolated struggles of the Greek population against the austerity policy of 2015 has shown that the strength of social and political movements are also dependent on the extent to which a mutual reference of different world-wide struggles develops, and consequently an internationalist dynamism increasingly can give off.

The example of Greece displays that the absence of anticapitalist struggles in the capitalist centers like the FRG is an important factor influencing the conditions of revolutionary movements in other parts of the world. This is especially true for struggles in countries of the global South as the influence of the western industrialized countries is massive here<sup>11</sup>.

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For this reason, internationalism does not exhaust itself in "passive" solidarity with the struggles at other places in the world, but above all it includes the strengthening of internationalist struggles in the German society. In the example of Greece, we have seen that broad solidarity struggles have not developed.

On the contrary, the attempt by individual leftist and leftist groups to expand solidarity with the anti-austerity struggles of the Greek population remained largely unsuccessful. This raises the question of the factors that hinder the development of internationalist struggles in the Federal Republic.

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<sup>11</sup>We do not want to claim that revolutionary movements and struggles in individual places per se are impossible or meaningless. Rather, they form the basis from which an internationalist dynamic can and must develop. We see the revolutionary struggles in the neocolonialized countries of the global South as a central starting point for revolutionary upheavals.

### *Reasons for the lack of struggles in the German society*

At this point, some factors will be described briefly and roughly. However, the analysis is by no means complete. The situation in the Federal Republic differs from that in other Western European countries, in particular due to the fact that class consciousness does not really exist since a long time. Even though permanent massive attacks on the lowest strata of society and on previously won social achievements take place since the 1990s.

The ‚social partnership principle‘ has contributed significantly to these developments. In the class compromise negotiated by the large trade unions and the social democrats, the national location logic (Standortpolitik) was declared as a reversing argument of the class contradiction between capital and labor. At the same time, the voices and needs of many wage-earners were neglected and suppressed, divisions were pushed forward, a deepening and radicalization of class struggles was prevented, thereby securing the main interests and needs of the development of German capital<sup>12</sup>.

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The peculiarity of the federal situation is also characterized by the fact that the Federal Republic was economically able to maintain the principle of social partnerships despite the increasing enforcement of neoliberalism since the 1980s. This is primarily due to concessions from trade unions and their control over the organized wage-earners, while at the same time more and more aggressive corporate policies came into place. Social partnerships do not stand for the reduction of social contradictions. On the contrary, by the participation of parts of the wage-dependent in the profits of the capital, the division of the working class as a whole was expedited. Thus, the role of the trade unions in reorganization and deregulation was demonstrated, in particular, by the division of wage-earners by means of ‚grandfather policy‘ for some parts at the expense of others (permanent workers vs. temporary workers vs. unemployed, as well as within the individual groups).

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<sup>12</sup>For example, the IG BSE has tried to combat competition from cheaper workers by requiring workers to report to colleagues who works without a contract or work permit, and called for police raids (wildcat no.99 - winter 2015/16). The fact that workers without contract and residence permit are exploited for less than half the normal wage has consequences for the employed and indeed creates a real problem. Nevertheless, this policy of the trade union promoted racist and nationalist discourse rather than working together to improve the working conditions for all.

This was followed by the split of the wage-earners into (half-way) secured (mainly German or "well-integrated" migrants) wage dependents on the one hand and an ever-increasing share of precariously employed wage-earners (including numerous migrant women) in poor working conditions on the other<sup>13</sup>. With the deepening of neoliberalism, increasing flexibilization, measures such as Agenda 2010 and the expansion of temporary work have significantly expanded the low-wage sector and intensified the pressure on unemployed and employed workers<sup>14</sup>.

In the same way, almost all sectors of the society were subordinated to economic considerations, so that people everywhere are increasingly under pressure, self-optimizing and in competition. The existential fears generated by precarious working and living conditions are one of the reasons why wage-earners from the lower segments are difficult to mobilize for fighting. Another special peculiarity of the situation in the Federal Republic is that, despite the massive attacks on working and living conditions, wage-earners still have access to the remaining remnants of social security systems, unlike in other countries. This makes them dependent on the state, and subject to its control and pressure which also makes it more difficult to take part in struggles of liberation.

The controlled and politically governed migration (in particular the EU labor migration) also plays an important role for the division of the labor market and the development of the interests of the German capital. The migration policy creates cheap labor reserves (and thus allows low-wage production) and meets specific labor market needs (through binational labor agreements). A central mechanism here is the linking of the residence permit to the existence of wage labor, through which many migrants are forced to work under the most precarious conditions and at all wages offered.

All these factors of the division so far are superimposed (and partly reproduced) by racist and nationalist discourses and the construct of a national

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<sup>13</sup>The labor market as a whole is further divided as described above through micro-pay adjustments and performance management, permanent employees with different contracts, fixed-term employees with different contracts, service contracts, interim staffing, etc.

<sup>14</sup>On the whole, however, capitalism also creates an ever-increasing number of "superfluous", which can no longer be integrated into the labor market at all.



community. Through media, politics, etc. the population is taught that certain groups such as refugees, certain EU citizens etc. are the cause of the problem. This prevents an understanding of the actual causes of the deterioration of the class situation as well as the causes of the division. This massive racist and nationalist propaganda leads not only to the split within the wage-dependents in the Federal Republic, but also to the division on the international level (see the example of Greece) and thereby counteract the development of internationalist struggles.

### *Conclusions for active internationalism*

The previous considerations make clear: the obstacles or preconditions for the emergence of international solidarity and participation in international struggles are the same as for the emergence of emancipatory class struggles in the local society. It is essential for both that the contradictions within society and the incompatibility of the interests of different classes are brought back into the social consciousness. It is also necessary to identify the commonality and connection of different struggles and to consider them together - both internationally and with regard to different oppressive conditions (fighting against racist, sexist, classistic, etc. oppression) and different means of livelihood (work, housing, reproduction, health, education, etc.).

At the same time, conclusions can also be drawn from the analysis of the situation where the Federal Republic is most likely to find potentials which have an existential interest in a social and political situation (see also thesis 4). We think it is important to discuss this issue in a detailed, common debate so that left-wing politics follow a political path and will not be arbitrary. We see the potential for change mainly among those who are affected by precarious working and living conditions (without denying that these are also permeated by racist, sexist, nationalist and religious fundamentalist tendencies and existential fears). In addition, the middle class is no longer stable, but is also threatened by increasing uncertainty and flexibility. As a result, the number of people who have an existential interest in change increases in principle. As a radical left, we must therefore discuss how people can bring their own precarious situation together with the structural causes and the

situation of others in order to counteract racist and nationalist divisions and to develop solidly united anti-capitalist struggles.

### *Internationalism and the formation process of a revolutionary organization*

The second aspect, which emerges from the above-mentioned considerations with regard to internationalism, refers to the nature and structure of a revolutionary organization. As a result of the military coup and the establishment of oppression regimes, many leftists from almost all continents of the world came into the Federal Republic, especially in the 1980s. But even today, political comrades from other countries are coming to the FRG<sup>15</sup>. The systematic pressure, as well as the effects of racist conditions, language barriers and social isolation, let the political activists become politically passive<sup>16</sup>. Those who remain active, however, focus almost exclusively on the support of comrades and fights in the country of origin, whether in organized exile groups or activities in social media (such as the predominantly non-organized activists of today's generation).

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Although e.g. groups of the Turkish left in the FRG had formulated a double strategy in the 1980s which included both solidarity for the fighting comrades in Turkey and Kurdistan as well as political activism in the Federal Republic, the second point was never seriously considered. The activities focused on solidarity work such as the financial support of the comrades through donation collections, support for detainees and public relations. Although the radical left in the FRG was regarded as a direct ally, due to the acute situation in Turkey and Kurdistan the cooperation concentrated mainly on the so-called indirect allies, such as social-democratic forces, in order to build political pressure. This development was reinforced by the absence of a revolutionary movement in the Federal Republic, to which migrant groups

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<sup>15</sup>This can be seen worldwide in the context of the development of neoliberalism which was implemented as a top-down project in many countries, often by means of a military coup and the implementation of violent dictatorships. Left movements were largely destroyed and the societies changed fundamentally (for example: Indonesia, South America, Turkey, Iran, etc.). In this context, we also see the rise of the political Islam.

<sup>16</sup>However, the situation of political migrants in the FRG must be further differentiated: political activists from the Middle East mostly fled from war or dictatorial systems. Further, many are traumatized and afraid of being active again. On the other hand, there are political activists from EU countries which have more in common with the white German left-wing scene, so it is usually easier for them to get involved and become politically active.

could have joined. Under these conditions exile-leftists simply did not and cannot develop a perspective for the local society.

This also means that many of the leftists of the first generation still deal with political issues, concepts and ideas from 30 years ago instead of developing strategies for today's society. As a result, they are not attractive for second and third generation migrant youths and the numerous experiences could not really be passed on. At the same time, the absence of a well-organized migrant left in the current social reality leaves many of the youth either apolitical or they join national associations or communities.

On the other hand, the tendency to self-ghettoization among migrant groups was promoted and reinforced by a majoritarian white-German radical left in the Federal Republic which showed little interest in the struggles and the political situation in other countries. In addition, migrant leftist groups and individuals often did not feel welcome in the local scene or were not viewed as equal political comrades - and accordingly not seriously criticized or dismissed as not radical enough. Many of the migrant leftists still make the experience of being viewed by their German comrades primarily as "refugees" or "migrants" and dismissed them with racist, fascist and religious fundamentalist migrants. By this homogenizing view of the radical left on the migrant left their political aims were not taken seriously, especially the struggle against racist, fascist, patriarchal and religious fundamentalist tendencies within migrant communities. Here, racism and Eurocentrism play just as much a role as internalized feelings of superiority within the white-German radical left.

By the above-mentioned factors the groups are ultimately separated from each other and the mutual ignorance and prejudices are maintained or strengthened by missing points of contact.

A revolutionary organization of radical leftists must seek and build contact with all left-wing groups in the FRG in order to organize cooperatively. The experiences from other struggles and the knowledge about the political and social conditions in different places are thus incorporated into the analysis of

the local conditions and thereby strengthen an internationalist perspective. The joint organization also provides direct access to as well as knowledge of the migrant part of the German population, which is an important potential for social change. In addition, this also can help to prevent that given forms of oppression in parts of the population are not taken seriously or they are even discarded. Especially since nationalist, racist and right tendencies in the Federal Republic – and not only within the white-German population, but also within migrant communities – are on the rise as well as islamist tendencies within the scope of the spread of the political Islam. Both tendencies are interwoven (e.g. fascists from the FRG and Turkey, which are consistent with many fundamental issues) and strengthen each other (experiences of racism and exclusion promote nationalist and islamist tendencies among migrants, and on the other hand islamist and nationalist tendencies among migrants strengthen right currents within the white-German population).

At the same time, internationalism is also traditionally meant to seek contact with revolutionary groups around the world, to support their struggles, to learn from their experiences, and to get on an equal level. International solidarity means for us to seek the actual debate, to express our own criticism, to ask questions and to discuss them. Comrades who speak different languages and who are involved in various debates play a major role. It is also upon them to translate texts and debates, thus facilitating the convergence and exchange of different movements and discussions. At the same time, the question of how cooperation among different revolutionary groups and organizations can function beyond national boundaries and over a mutual exchange is to be discussed.

#### **Thesis 4** *Change of direction of radical left-wing politics*

Since the decline of left-wing movements in the 90s, the more and more perceptible and evident nationalism as well as racism in the German Federal society, large parts of the radical left-wing turned their back to practices of real, radical societal changes from below. As a consequence, left-wing radicals have neglected their role in the process of supporting societal organizations from below. This neglect is reflected in the manner of left-wing radical organization as well as in the dominant political approaches. While we bring our rejection in radical and anti-capitalist words and in militant means on the streets we miss to think about the concrete political methods and strategies to overcome the capitalist and state structures as well as the essential question: who is the political subject, and who is the subject of politics? Those very questions have to be the yardstick for left-wing politics who considers to be revolutionary.

As a result of these developments radical left-wing politics are focusing on approaches which start at an abstract level and then get crushed in single, divided partial and defending struggles, they favor single point movements or summit mobilizations and use campaigning as a central method. While single groups flee into pure theory, the major part of the radical left-wing is diving from one action and campaign to the next, from one big event to another – without growing significantly or getting a notable basis in society. We are always to less, we are always overloaded, shortly before burnout. Thereby we do quite well in launching more and more professional campaigns and events dealing with various partial topics. To intervene in the societal and medial discourse it works sometimes better sometimes worse. However, the focus is on discourse battles which are fought medially or between intellectuals and neither come from a societal practice nor circulate<sup>17</sup>. Due to the missing contact between political practice and the basis of society this political approach cannot face the hegemony of the ruling ideology.

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<sup>17</sup> Discourse battles are necessary but the question is about the methods: via bourgeois media or through practices from below.

Moreover, the left-wing radical works itself off in doing actions and campaigns against the never-ending state attacks like TTIP, asylum legislation, climate policy or safety acts. New legislation proposals are responded by new actions and campaigns, so that radical left-wing politics remain nearly exclusively a reaction to state politics or even falls short. Whereas we think of fighting the state our struggles actually stay within the state made frame and, consequently, self-organized structures, strategies, perspectives and daily practices are not rising.

Radical left-wing groups and organizations who consider anchoring in society as important mostly count on political approaches used by social democrats. Alliances with societal representatives (labor units, church organizations, NGOs, parties, clubs and associations) are used to spread their own political content due to the presumed influences of those.

Furthermore, those alliances are seen as compensation to a genuine organization from below. The belief that societal change could be achieved by democratic participation within the state and civil society reaches far beyond radical left-wing political approaches. We assume - amongst other causes - that the mistrust in population and its potentiality of self-organization and autonomy, moreover, the assumed powerlessness and inability to act as central reasons. Accordingly, high is the number of radical left-wing activists who work in state or political institutions (as youth union secretary, research assistant of bourgeois parties, in camps of refugees, NGOs, state financed initiatives or even state authorities). From a historical perspective it can be seen that whole movements have been assimilated within institutions and so they vanished, e.g. big parts of the women's movement in the 1980s or the green movement that assimilated in the party Alliance 90/The Greens.

Reformist and left-liberal political approaches are in our opinion one of the biggest obstacles and risks for the development and the continued existence of revolutionary movements. Merely the analysis of the role of social democracy<sup>18</sup> in the Federal Republic since 1900s is enough to emphasize this esti-

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<sup>18</sup> We do not deny revolutionary tendencies within the former SPD represented by Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht etc.

mation. History has shown that social democracy helped both institutionally and ideologically to split the working class as well as the left. The history of reformist labor unions in the FRG until nowadays can be evaluated alike. It becomes apparent in numerous examples how these unions contributed to the (national and inner) splitting of wage-earners, prevented radicalization and expansion of labor disputes<sup>19</sup>, dissociated from radical left-wing forces afterwards (e.g. in anti-nazi alliances) and abandoned those people in this way. But also the analyses of failures of social uprisings at different places worldwide shows the dividing and counter-revolutionary role of reformist forces (within the anti-austerity movement in Greece, 15M in Spain, the uprisings in the “Arab Spring”, the green movement in Iran). Nevertheless, some radical left-wing groups consider cooperation with reformist unions etc. as strategically expedient and treat it preferentially than to work at the basis of society.

Also, the conviction that “left” parties could cause real changes within the frame of parliamentary democracy or that they will be part of an overall strategy is supported by some radical left-wing groups. Hope in the success of “left” parties proved to be false again and again (last seen in Greece and Spain) and further had fatal consequences onto the real movements from below. Those had worn themselves out by focusing on election campaigns and vanished with their established strenghts afterwards (e.g. activists of 15M movement in Podemos, the Turkish and Kurdish left in election campaigns for HDP, the protest of the Greek population in Syriza). Simultaneously, “left” parties incur hope within the population and lead to a lack of the basis in our own struggles. If this hope will be betrayed it is a defeat and will have sustainable consequences.

It is noticeable that all the different political approaches of the radical left-wing – militant actions, alliances with societal actors, campaigns etc. - have something in common: they mirror the fundamental lack of perspectives and

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<sup>19</sup> Some of the numerous examples are the strike at Atlas Maschinenbau in Delmenhorst, the terminations due to contract changes and the following labour dispute at GHB in Bremen and Bremerhaven, the strike at BSH Berlin, Neupack etc.

the experiences of defeat made by the left movement. Moreover, they miss a real revolutionary strategy and a perspective from below.

### *What do we want?*

Our opinion is that a fundamental, profound change and redirection of radical left-wing politics is needed. We do believe that the central task of radical left-wing politics is to create and strengthen self-organized structures at the basis of society which are anchored in the daily life of people, reach beyond single struggles and refer to a future we really aim at. Because an actual change of societal structures and thereby an overcome of the capitalist system and the state can only take place if people experience self-organization and by this self-efficacy and solidarity. Particularly in the Federal Republic the bourgeois state is deeply rooted. It penetrates nearly all fields of society and governs mostly all interpersonal relationships. While the uncritical acceptance of authority is strong there are hardly visions how a society without central state control and regulation can look like.

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Therefore, we have to strengthen and create structures which help us to learn how we can organize our life without mediation of the state and how to negotiate problems of our daily life between each other autonomously. Thus, we counteract the increasing depolarization of society as well as the deep-rooted faith in law and order.

Based on such structures efforts of solidarity in different parts of everyday life can be developed (against attacks at work, against discrimination in office, against forced evictions etc.). We have to create places where capitalist and nationalist values, norms, ways of thinking and ways of structuring processes can be questioned and changed. Places where new experiences are possible. Places where emancipative values and ways of thinking can arise. The development of self-organized structures will allow a real, immediate emancipative change and improvement of individual life and not solely a change on an abstract political level.



Self-organized structures of solidarity can help us at least partly to protect ourselves against the attack of capitalist circumstances. They create the conditions so that oppressed people are able to develop a critical thinking towards the dominant circumstances of capitalism. In times of mass protests, riots and phases of state upheaval already anchored self-organized structures are important for the revolutionary process.

By building self-organized structures we consider it to be useful and necessary where our everyday life takes place. Obvious fields are employment (business, offices), living (house, street, district), reproduction (especially children and care) as well as livelihood (supportive networks, food production, health) etc. Because of numerous wage-earners (esp. in low-wage sectors) who miss fixed workplaces and who change companies often are isolated so that self-organization and the evolvment of struggles gets difficult. Against this background the development of self-organized structures in the districts play a special role. They could be a starting point also for struggles in other areas of life.

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We speak about developing self-organized structures in all areas of daily life but we also have to ask ourselves: who is the subject of this political organization? We have the opinion that there is no revolutionary subject or a *class per se*. Nevertheless, we think that for a political strategy of social change we need analyses of societal circumstances and its contradictions. Thereof, we can derive potentials and forces who have autonomous material interest and essential motivation for social change.

This brings us to our main focus points where we see the best chances to intervene and to fight (see therefor Thesis 3). Yet, if there is no revolutionary subject per se, we need an individual understanding how our very own situation and fundamental structures are related to each other as well as the understanding that there are similarities between our own situation and the situation of others. This understanding has to be actively developed in joint struggles and processes.

“Only when the contradiction between one's own interests and needs and those of capital is referred to the social totality by the struggling people [...], that is to say that one's own position is located within it, potential carriers will evolve”<sup>20</sup> for a social and political revolution.

When building long-term structures we have to start from the very beginning and we hardly can rely on existing ones. To have an impact on society doesn't mean to form alliances with its representatives but to create structures in which people organize themselves as subjects. This stands for breaking with conventions, out of the ivory tower and above all to be there where our everyday life takes place. Simultaneously, we have to see ourselves, our own everyday life – our own working and living conditions – as political and integrate it into our struggles. We do not consider radical left-wing persons to strictly follow *'The personal is political'* but to intervene into fights and to push forward the building of structures. This work is exhausting, detailed, it needs patience and the results may be not visible directly. Incidents like in Rojava or Spain show us that societal upheavals are not granted but the result of decade-long work of revolutionary organizations at the basis of society.

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If we create self-organized structures for example in districts or at the working place and fight daily battles we will face a lot of difficulties. This includes esp. the risk that protests and self-organized structures get integrated into the state apparatus (e.g. processes of citizen participation, round tables, processes of mediation, advisory board of the district, participation in the company) or limit themselves to forms of social democratic protests or they get limited (e.g. by trade unions, NGOs, institutions of civil society). Caused by the above-named experiences and analyses we refuse the cooperation with reformist trade unions and “left” parties as a fundamental strategy of a radical left-wing politic. Rather we have to evaluate the historical and present experiences and discuss the question of how revolutionary ideas and collective approaches of self-organization can be developed and defended against social democratic ideas.

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<sup>20</sup> Der kommende Aufprall, Antifa Kritik & Klassenkampf, p. 7.

Here numerous questions follow: How do people develop the Consciousness to look at their everyday problems in a wider context, to relate to the problems of others, and to develop a societal analysis and perspective? How can one connect with people beyond local issues? What does real change even mean? How can we strengthen and radicalize social movements from below? How can a politicization of everyday problems (working conditions, Hartz IV, rents, education and care etc.) succeed? How can drifting away into the role of social workers be avoided but also the complete disappearance of radical leftist structures and forces into individual support (see refugee protests)? How can the development of a culture of self-organization in Germany look like? What are possible difficulties? How do we deal with state-related forms of social management in urban districts, the idea of civil society or depoliticized aid policies?

All these questions require continuous analysis and discussion. What has been said so far does not mean that we fundamentally reject the current political approaches such as campaign policy and selective interventions. Rather, we should use such funds as one of many tactics to deploy and implement the above strategy.

## Thesis 5 *To include life*

Some of the published texts speak about developing and connecting radical left-wing, self-organized collective structures as one of the main strategy for society's change. We have some doubts about this strategy. We share the (immanent) critique that a lot of activist of the radical left distinguish between political work and their own working and living conditions by doing so they do not see their own as political subjects. In accordance with that, we do agree with the claim to understand the private as political and to organize ourselves therein.

A big part of the radical left-wing scene interprets this idea sole as invitation to found and expand "own" self-governed rooms, projects, collectives. Accordingly, a lot of them are active in housing or project groups. When talking about developing self-organized structures we do not mean developing self-governed left scene places and projects in first place. We consider collective self-governed forms of living and working as a legitimate form of joint lifestyle in capitalism, which on the one hand allows more autonomy and independence in everyday life and on the other hand it enables important experiences in self-governance. So, existing self-governing radical left-wing projects belong to a tradition that we must support and defend and from whose experiences we can have a great deal to learn. Yet, we don't share the opinion that organization and expansion of existing left self-governed places can stand for society as a whole.

However, many of the left self-governing projects are very much in line with the lifestyles and needs of a relatively small group of the left-radical socialized people and are ineligible for access to a broader public. They automatically run the risk of remaining isolated islands in capitalism, in the worst case de-politicized as islands of "beautiful living" or as an expression of a radical left-wing lifestyle. At the same time, setting up and operating your own, more scene-focused centers, housing projects etc. often requires a lot of time and work capacity. As a result, forces are being removed from social and political struggles and the focus of an overall social strategy is being lost. Rather, we see a socially-changing potential of self-organized structures where - among tenants of a block of flats, residents of a street or the work-

force of a company - solidarity structures of mutual help and self-organized struggles arise. Structures that are open to the population, such as political-cultural / social centers, etc. These structures must not be an expression of subcultural identity, but must be based on the existential needs of those affected. Therefore, we agree with the necessity stated in the text by the 'lower class magazine' that we must constantly check self-organized structures and locations we have in mind for their "pettiness"<sup>21</sup>. We need to work out which factors make self-organized structures resistant to dependency on the one hand and depoliticize them on the other.

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<sup>21</sup> In "How to change the world?" by lower class magazine (01/2015) <http://lowerclassmag.com/2015/01/wie-die-welt-veraendern/>

## Thesis 6 *Break out of subculture*

In the last theses we have stated that in the center of radical left politics the strengthening of social organizing processes and struggles must be from below. An essential prerequisite for this is to lift the existing split between radical left-wing movement and society.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, this split is essentially caused by radical left-wing politics characterized by subcultural affiliation, political self-centeredness on one's own "scene" and (conscious or unconscious) demarcation from the majority society. Even for politically interested people, it is not easy to get in touch with "the scene" and it takes some effort to be accepted by it. Many of us made this experience in the past. For wider circles, the scene policy remains intangible, irrelevant and unattractive. One of the reasons for this is that affiliation is not primarily based on common political positions and goals, but often on the typical criteria of a subculture, such as cultural and linguistic codes, dress styles, norms of behavior, etc. Political and subcultural alignment is one of the factors why radical left politics largely stay marginal and socially irrelevant.

Although individual groups have repeatedly called for a confrontation with the closed-mindedness and self-focus of the scene, nothing has changed fundamentally until today. Even within the scene, the exclusionary and elitist mechanisms are regularly lamented (see thesis 7). The separation between society and radical left-wing scene does not seem to be entirely desirable. If, for decades, this paradox seems so fixed and unchangeable, the question arises, which factors contribute to the fact that the division between society and radical leftists is maintained.

### *The value of radical left-wing subculture in itself*

As before, it is mainly young people who are looking to connect with the radical left-wing scene. An important motivation for them is not only the rejection of social repressive mechanisms but above all the rejection of prevalent cultural thinking and behavior. The development and design of left-radical subculture plays an important role against this background. Identification

with the political "scene" creates the feeling of belonging and reduces one's own powerlessness and loneliness. In addition, left-radical spaces, despite the narrow conventions that apply to them, provide a comparatively secure framework for developing and exercising certain personality aspects that are socially stigmatized (dealing with one's gender role, sexual orientation, etc.).

These factors mean that the left-wing radical "scene" has a social and emotional meaning for those who feel that they belong to it. The mentioned subjective advantage of the scene life exists first of all independently of its sociopolitical relevance. As a result, the need for a social debate is not immediately apparent, because the scene life can be seen as a retreat into a social niche existence, as a kind of opting out. Thus, the preservation of the subculture becomes a value in itself.

The socialization within radical left-wing structures also creates the illusion that left-wing places are outside of social influences or their conditions of origin (for example: increasing capitalist, sexist, racist, nationalist, fascist tendencies, etc.). This self-awareness promotes the separation between the radical left-wing scene and society and produces an elitist consciousness. The own scene is stylized as a haven of enlightenment and emancipation while society "out there" appears as the epitome of reactionary decline.

The lack of openness of radical leftist structures is certainly linked to the fear of surveillance and spies, which has not been completely unfounded after the numerous disclosures by spies in recent times. Nevertheless, there is often a degree of conspiracy and secrecy that in no way matches the militancy of political practices. We think it is important to adapt the level of conspiracy to the type of political practice. If we want to build self-organized structures in the neighborhood or intervene in broader social struggles, it is fatal if every and every unknown person in our structures is critically eyed, ignored or asked to leave without being asked. At the same time dealing with concrete suspicions in organized structures is easier because there are concrete methods and responsibilities, how the corresponding persons can be checked.

Psychosocial factors also play a role in the reproduction of the radical left-wing scene as an isolated subculture separated from society. The inability and awkwardness of many left-wing radicals to get in contact with the wider population are also an expression of fears, insecurities, loneliness, shame, shyness, awkwardness, lack of experience and avoidance. The ability to communicate with dissenters at eye level and to deal with contradictions is often lacking. In addition to individual, biographical experiences, this also reflects the general social conditions in which the development of a respectful and constructive culture of debate between equals as well as the ability to meet people at eye level are rarely taught and strengthened.

While elsewhere radical left-wing contexts try to counteract such weaknesses through collective reflection, education and confrontation, in the local scene this is completely neglected or left to the individual. This, too, seems to reflect the low significance attached to social change within radical left-wing politics here. The psycho-social reasons that prevent or make it difficult to step out of the cozy scene are often not recognized or named as a problem and cannot be overcome.

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### *What do we want?*

Revolutionary struggles and upheavals cannot be imposed on society by individual political groups or leaders. These can only be successful if they are the expression of a broad social movement. Accordingly, revolutionary politics can mean nothing other than moving within society, seeking contact with the population and engaging in the contradictions that we find there. For this it is necessary to leave behind the self-isolation and subcultural orientation of radical left-wing politics, to position oneself as part of society and to constantly enter into a "patient dialogue"<sup>22</sup> with people.

We believe that a conscious learning process is needed in order to acquire or develop the ability to meet other people on an equal footing and to convey their own analyzes and opinions in a comprehensible way. This requires pro-

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<sup>22</sup> This dialogue differs from a pure enlightenment mission in that 1) the encounter takes place on an equal footing, 2) existential conditions are used as a means of dialogue, and 3) left-wing radicals themselves learn to see unregarded aspects of reality from the point of view of others ("teachers are also learners").



cesses on two levels: on the one hand the confrontation with one's own fears and uncertainties and on the other hand the discussion of how revolutionary contents can be conveyed in such a way that they are considered and felt to be relevant. The emergence from the usual circles and the security of a culture that constantly confirms us is in some cases associated with uncertainties and fears.

The political process must accordingly create a space for dealing with ourselves and the development of our own personality, so that we learn to move more freely in society. Like all self-transformation, this works best when we are not on our own but we can share and evaluate experiences together, try out different proposals together, etc. At the same time, one of the prerequisites is to create an atmosphere in which we live in these common circles openly and honestly, without fear of loss of status, mockery etc., can express insecurities, fears and (self-) criticism (see also thesis 7).

The second aspect involves the question of how critical analysis and revolutionary ideas can be expressed in a way that is understandable, relevant and understandable to others. This does not mean to acquire methods in order to catch the attention of others and to appear attractive (in the sense of psychological manipulation).

Rather, it requires encounters that do not politically instrumentalize the other person but seek the discussion at eye level and involve honest interest in the other person. This includes willingness to change oneself as well as the recognition that there can be enriching experiences in different ways of life. At the same time, this also means learning to endure and counter contradictions in conversations and not to end the conversation with the other person's first non-enlightening thought.

When we speak of becoming capable of communicating we do not mean giving up one's own position for no reason, nor developing "more tolerance" for reactionary positions. Likewise, we are not concerned with hiding a radical analysis for strategic reasons.

### **Thesis 7    *Revolutionary culture instead of neo liberal values***

Although we like to distance ourselves from the prevailing values and manners in the majority society, the reality in our own structures does not look very different. A revolutionary culture that refers to what we politically represent and demand is also absent from our structures. Coolness, detachment, defense, mutual demarcation, performance orientation and competitiveness, the inability to have conflicts as well as to compete with the most radical ideas and the most militant behavior are widespread. These behaviors reflect neo-liberal values within the scene.

On the one hand, life in the neoliberal world leads to precariousness in an atomized society which is characterized by constant compulsion to perform and, on the other hand, to the commodification of human relationships. As a result, people see themselves and others as goods. As a consequence, people feel increasingly empty, exchangeable and disposable.

Many people - even radical leftists - try to fulfill the inner need for recognition individually through performance, self-expression and profiling. But the human need for recognition and the sense of value must be fulfilled by creating an emancipatory culture in the collective life and struggle against the causes mentioned earlier. A culture in which nobody is treated as a disposable commodity but people can mutually support each other against the attacks of capitalist precariousness and where empathy serves as a means of mutual recognition.

As the radical left, we tend to overlook the influences of the prevailing norms of the capitalist system on our ways of thinking, behavior and feelings. Accordingly, work on ourselves and the development of an emancipatory culture in our political struggles is not an issue.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In some approaches, such as Critical Whiteness or feminist practices, an examination of internalized norms takes place. However, most of them are neither involved in a revolutionary strategy or struggle, nor are they used for collective empowerment and liberation. Rather, these anti-racist and anti-sexist criteria are sometimes used as dogmas for self-expression, reevaluation of one's own person as well as criticism and devaluation of others. Through this one-sided use, these approaches tend to divide movements and organizations and reinforce identity politics.

This neglect also has consequences for building a revolutionary movement. If we do not develop, criticize and change ourselves then the system's internalized behaviors and ways of thinking emerge as obstacles in building up a revolutionary process. Thus, e.g. individualistic and egotistical behaviors complicate an organizing process as well as those in radical leftist circles and subcultures typical forms of behavior such as strengthening one's own position, status thinking, profiling and self-expression, competition, elitism inside and outside, etc.

### *What do we want?*

Not only do we seek a change in economic and political structures, but we also see revolution as a radical change in individual and social being and thus in the way we shape our relationships, communicate with each other and relate to each other. Emancipation at the societal level means creating the social prerequisites and structures that enable all human beings to develop free of exploitation and oppression, to determine their own lives and, accordingly, to take part in shaping society as a whole. A revolutionary culture is characterized by openness, respectfulness, empathy, interest, genuine freedom, solidarity, community (collectivity), the ability to listen, cordiality and humor. It arises through behaviors that enable self-determination and self-development of all individuals in the community. According to us, the yardstick for a left-radical identity is neither the radicalness of the represented theory nor the revolutionary past, but above all the actual behavior in our political, family or social environment.

A revolutionary culture does not come from the sheer absence of wrong ways of thinking and behaving ("we are anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, etc."). Rather, the corresponding alternatives must be actively created and brought to life. In other words, the transformation and development of our own personality as well as the concrete realization of emancipatory and solidary ways of dealing with our structures must become an integral part of our political work. Since doing revolutionary politics starts first and foremost with ourselves.

As an organization and movement we have to look for collective methods of self-transformation. Landmarks and experiences, we can, for example, learn from the platforms of the Kurdish movement, the self-aid groups of the autonomous women's movement and collective therapeutic approaches. Whether we become a social force depends, in our opinion, on the extent to which we succeed in creating a different culture of everyday life in the here and now, and to what extent people feel welcome and involved in the structures. Experiencing such a different culture is the most effective way to counter the belief in the immutability of things and to give people the knowledge of the possibility of effective, self-determined and collaborative action. This is shown, e.g. in the experiences of struggles - even if they were not successful - from which people emerge strengthened in relation to the experience of solidarity, communal self-empowerment, etc.

## Thesis 8 *Knowing about the alternatives*

We believe that society is not lacking in dissatisfaction or displeasure over the prevailing conditions. The belief in the promises of capitalism, such as prosperity and progress have become fragile - the destructive power of this system is becoming more and more apparent. Whether it is the growing misery and the increasing impoverishment of more and more people, the worsening working conditions (precarity, increasing performance constraints, etc.) or the massive environmental destruction as well as the constant warmongering.

However, the progressive de-politicization and division of society (for example, by racism and nationalism) prevents people from putting their dissatisfaction in the context of sociopolitical structures. As central emotions within today's society, we perceive uncertainty and anxiety as well as impotence and ineffectiveness.<sup>24</sup>

This is partly due to the fact that collective struggles as well as perspectives on society beyond the capitalist system appear to be futile, no later than the collapse of the *actually existing socialism*. 'There is no alternative' as an ideological approach is deeply in our heads and hearts. The lack of utopian perspectives has also spread among the left and left radicals. The work with and the search for social perspectives plays almost no more role in left-radical politics. But, how do we want to pursue a revolutionary policy and move people to organize, defend and fight if we have no prospects for our very own aspirations?

Historical-material conditions as well as ideological tendencies are responsible for the lack of perspectives within the radical left. On the one hand, the

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<sup>24</sup> This situation is the result of an ongoing process: The new phase of the global development of the capital has led to a transformation of all social sectors in regards of market-logic and profitability. As a result, we are exposed to competitive pressure, performance and optimization constraints in all areas of life. Due to the progress of individualization and the dissolution of independent forms of organization and collectivity, people feel weak and powerless in dealing with everyday problems and attacks of the capital. In addition, the privatization and commodification of the education system, the media and science has led to vast difficulties for growing resistance to the prevailing mindset. In order to survive in these invincible circumstances, most people choose individual solutions by trying to assimilate themselves through self-optimization and efforts to competitive performance.

decline of the leftist movements, (socialist) models and ideas since the 1980s that led to the end of the bloc confrontation can be identified as a cause. On the other hand, the emergence and the hegemony of new theories such as poststructuralism / postmodernism / postmarxism play a role which are paradoxically (like neoliberalism) positioning themselves as anti-ideologically against holistic analyses, integrated ways of thinking and general solutions.

Through the deconstruction of all concepts, the overall picture of the system and revolutionary struggles of most leftist radicals in Western Europe was replaced by disoriented activism. Interestingly, the capitalist logic of division of labor, specialization and professionalization was also internalized and adopted in the left-radical political scene. As a result, not only common battle forms and the need for organization have been delegitimized, but the joint search for social alternatives and perspectives have also been neglected.

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*What do we want?*

The analysis of theory and practice of social alternatives, perspectives and utopias must - again - occupy a central place in our political practice. There are no recipes about how an alternative society must look in detail but we assume that it needs a specific *search movement* in every place and in every society. Nevertheless, structures are similar in different places and similar developments are emerging, so that the exchange between different movements and struggles around the world is of utmost importance for the development of local perspectives and struggles. When developing a social perspective we do not have to start from scratch. There are many important and instructive points of reference in past and present movements, as well as in theories which deal with the question of a free organization of society.

We can deal with these events on the basis of various questions, both with regard to the indications given to us by alternative forms of organization of society, as well as by the potential and dangers of the emergence and development of revolutionary movements. It is not only important to analyze the

course of the revolutionary events themselves but also the long-term factors that have contributed to the emergence of revolutionary movements. However, when looking at and analyzing past movements or events the danger is given that we will again engage in (unnecessary) ideological trench battles of interpretation. We have experienced the splitting potential and the pitfall of these discussions several times in our own context. While we think very much alike in discussions about concrete questions and analysis, and even draw our strength from them (with regard to concrete analysis of current social developments, discussions about how we imagine an organization of society in principle and which concrete political methods and steps we consider as appropriate and important), our various ideological (Marxist-Leninist, Marxist, Anarchist, Libertarian, Communist) and geographical (capitalist centers, countries of periphery) backgrounds appeared in the past as a dividing moment. There were often certain terms which have aroused different associations or have been defined differently.

After lengthy discussions, it was usually shown that we were talking about the same thing but using different vocabulary and terms. These disputes have cost us a lot of energy, but at the same time they were also instructive. They have shown us how important it is to talk about what is concrete: not to change into dogmatic attacks or defense in the case of a supposed dissent but to actually try to understand the positions of the opposite.

It is not meant to ignore all basic ideological differences, but rather to open up the discussions and also to look at one's own position with a necessary distance. We think these experiences are important for a left-wing movement that is split into a multitude of directions whose representatives - with an astonishing vehemence - represent their own ideological direction and demonize all other directions in the same breath. A second aspect which seems important to us here is the question of revolutionary life-style and culture which we have already been discussed in Thesis 7. Frequently, we experience the most severe trench battles between the representatives of individual ideological directions on the abstract theoretical level, while both sides show the same unemancipated behavior in concrete political practice or individual lifestyle.

## **Thesis 9** *Dealing with theory and revolutionary theory traditions*

In dealing with theory, there are different tendencies within the radical left: on the one hand the more practice-oriented or actionist groups and individuals who show a certain hostility towards theory, whether as a reaction to a theoretical discourse (especially in past socialist traditions), as a symptom of a general depoliticization, or as a result of the widespread discourse of postmodern "theories" against theories in general. On the other hand, the numerous theory groups as well as the left academics who practice a fetish of theory and whose theoretical discussions or publications are often even more self-referential than part of a political practice.

Theoretical work thus becomes a comfortable refuge in times of lows and allows for a pleasant radicalness in the abstract. And thirdly, in these times we have intensified (again) an exclusive attention as well as a dogmatic nostalgic orientation towards individual theories of tradition, which are completely taken over and defended as if history had stopped. Like a torn film strip that is glued with the hope that the story would simply go on. This tends to result in trench fights (up to mudslinging) of representatives of the individual groups and political traditions which carry on to a repetition of history without a historical-material imperative. By limiting our own knowledge frame from the outset to a particular "school of thought", the opportunity to scoop the wealth of our past experiences, insights and analysis and thus always renew and enrich theory will be lost.

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### *What do we want?*

The analysis of critical theories, the analysis of the dominant conditions and the derivation of strategies to change society is a fundamental necessity for the reflection of our practice. Revolutionary theory is continually developing in revolutionary struggles under certain historical conditions from a synthesis of previous theories, and, in turn, helps to develop the struggles further. In this sense, the relationship between theory and practice is always a dialectical one. This implies that we cannot simply "adopt" any closed revolutionary theory and practice. On the contrary, it is important to continue de-



veloping them, according to the Zapatista motto: "as we walk, we ask questions" (Caminamos preguntando?).

This means for us to break with any monopolistic claim to the revolutionary initiative and to theoretical and practical leadership of one kind, and not to repeat the historical trench fights one by one. Rather, we must re-read theories against the background of today's necessities and needs, as well as with the present possibilities of knowledge. Past conflicts were also often superimposed by internal power struggles. It is therefore necessary today to differentiate methodological ways of thinking, empirical findings, conclusive assumptions and material analysis of rhetorical, propagandistic and metaphysical statements. If we outline that no revolutionary theory tradition can claim a monopoly on the determination of theory and practice today, we do not mean to simply place indeterminate, partial contradictions, and contradictory theory fragments just side by side. Rather, it is necessary to develop new, coherent systems of theories with the aid of past experiences. This raises the question by which criteria we choose the theories that are helpful for us? In principle, all those theories are important for a revolutionary struggle which shed more light on the origins, the reproduction and development of mechanisms of oppression and help to analyze social contradictions and potentials for building a radical struggle against capitalism.

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Theories must give us indications for our practice and, in the end, strengthen us in our struggle. This is followed by further questions as points of reference through the jungle of theory: Are the respective theories and experiences relevant to our goal of self-organized and free society from below, which insights and models do correspond? How much does the particular theory strengthen people's self-determination and considers the structures from this perspective? And how much theory is actually needed for our struggle?

By revolutionary theory we understand a theory that is continually undergoing change and steadily developed further from the historical necessities of the radical struggle against the numerous forms of oppression.

### **Thesis 10 *Create spaces for critical and collective education***

The production of knowledge and its dissemination is an important component of the implementation of dominant interests in every society. In society knowledge production and distribution is strongly structured by state and capitalist interests. Accordingly, one of the functions of the state education system is to convey and disseminate the prevailing norms, ways of thinking and ideologies. Science, too, is increasingly losing its independence and functions more and more as a part of the power apparatus<sup>25</sup>. The mainstream media, whose representatives work closely together with political and economic institutions, are also playing a central role in spreading and maintaining prevailing ideas and ways of thinking within and about society.

In the current capitalist society, there is also the tendency that, in the context of individualization, specialization and a complicated partition of labor, the production and dissemination of knowledge is divided into numerous areas. Thus, research on society has become e.g. in the various academic institutions - as the central spaces for research and teaching social sciences – a solely individual and separated research area.

In the 1980s this tendency was discussed and criticized in the left circles by the term "one-track specialists". Under these conditions, it is difficult to acquire knowledge about the totality of the system, the interaction of oppressive mechanisms and principles of functioning of society, or to link individual social sciences with social impact factors. Similarly, we also find that the distribution of knowledge in the various sub-fields are more and more struggling since the respective experiences and perspectives are often analyzed and disseminated as partial knowledge.

In our opinion, there are hardly any places in the radical left where education is structured and takes place regularly - correspondingly as a result of disorganization, division and isolation. Although, there are many events that provide information on current political events and in irregular intervals

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<sup>25</sup> Economic interests increasingly determine the direction of research and the leeway for critical science is becoming ever closer. Thus, research is dependent on the criteria of the granting of third-party funds or the guidelines of the 'research agency' (DFG) while universities ever more cooperate with business associations and companies.

workshops and seminars on specific theoretical approaches or methods. However, these events are not used strategically. The discussion with theory takes place either isolated or in small groups. Frequently, as already mentioned above, pure theory groups established which deal with theory on a high level (often without linking them to their own practice) and, on the other hand, groups which are predominantly in practice see their engagement with critical theory as secondary.

If "practice groups" deal with theory, it often only takes place with the knowledge and the theories of their own part-field struggle. Therefore, the educational offerings of the radical left cannot provide an overall picture of a strategy for the anti-capitalist struggle. By isolating the individual educational offers a transfer of transgenerational experience of knowledge will only be restricted.

Most of the critical theory production continues to take place at universities. Critical theories are read and developed here but they are often remote from their practice. At the same time, research at the universities often follows no political but rather individual interest, such as the desire for further employment, publication requirements, profiling, attention-seeking or theory production for the sake of theory.

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*What do we want?*

We believe that the construction of an alternative, critical education process is a central component in the struggle against the capitalist system. In our opinion, this educational process has two dimensions: on the one hand, education must be an integral part of a revolutionary organization, and on the other, the radical left must strive for the establishment of alternative educational and research spaces, in the sense of 'academies from below'.

*The role of education within a revolutionary organization*

Within a revolutionary organization of the radical left, the analysis of regime- and oppression-critical theories as well as the analysis of society must occur

py a central place. This debate should be oriented towards the search for a strategy for the anti-capitalist struggle. In order to formulate and develop political strategies, methods and goals for a revolutionary practice a profound historical, structural and psychosocial analysis<sup>26</sup> of society is needed, as well as an examination of basic social theories and practice of resistance. This is necessary since e.g. new forms of organization of the capital bring new consequences which themselves require new means and forms of struggle. In addition, an examination of social myths and false "truths" must take place, and possibilities must be sought which we can recognize, analyze and debilitate.

In this continuous educational process, the following questions have to be discussed and researched jointly: How has society developed historically? What forces and opposing forces did they shape? What factors prevent people / masses from pursuing revolutionary policies? What are the potentials and subjects of such processes? What kind of resistance was there and what could be learned from them? How can alternative societies look like and what can we learn from other movements?

We need not only respond to the stated questions but also give answers to current social questions that affect people's everyday life. There are no ready-prepared answers to these questions but we see them as a mission for a common and continuous process, which at the same time involves research and education. We cannot exactly state how this education process can be organized. Rather, during the organizing process, time must be spent on discussing how such an integration can look.

#### *Building a self-organized, critical education system from below*

On the other hand, we believe that the establishment of a self-organized, critical educational system in the sense of *academies from below* is extremely important. In particular, the following aspects seem to be important to us: the places of education should be permanent and steady places where criti-

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<sup>26</sup> The analysis of psychosocial factors and their development within society in the context of capitalist development is often neglected by an analysis of the development of political and economic structures.

cism, theoretical work and education are possible and relevant publications, discussion results, etc. can be archived. In addition, the aim should be to bring the different areas of knowledge together and to convey an overall picture of the social reality. At the same time, the places of education should be open to the public and, as far as possible, accessible to all not just to an intellectual audience. This requires regular introductions to basic theories and critical analyzes of social developments as well as solid support for learners of different levels.

There should also be regular space for exchange and joint discussion where questions from everyday practice as well as from battles can be discussed together, theory and practice can be combined and strategies for a revolutionary struggle developed.

### **Thesis 11 *It requires intentional breaks with the habits of our practice***

*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.*

The criticism of left-wing politics formulated by us in these theses is not new. It has been repeatedly discussed since the mid-1980s by various groups and partially published. The criticism (at least in part) is by no means a rudimentary phenomenon but has also shown discomfort and dissatisfaction with our own policies throughout discussions at different events and congresses. If, however, this basic criticism has been formulated repeatedly for years and many left-wing radicals agree with it, the question arises as to why, despite such debates, nothing has changed significantly in practice.

In the last few theses we have already described factors at various points which, in our view, prevent a real change in the practice of left-wing radicals. Nevertheless, it was important to us, with the formulation of this eleventh thesis to explicitly emphasize the contradiction between debate and practice and to carry out some of the already mentioned, besides another reason.

For the already mentioned reasons, the still existing social and psychosocial factors contribute to a reproduction of left-radical politics primarily as a sub-culture (Thesis 6). The lack of organization and the lack of awareness of the necessity of organizing respectively. It contributes to a change in the practice of individuals or small groups, but also attempts to organize due to the small number of groups and individuals who wish to organize (Thesis 2). Identity politics and sectarianism within the left-radical scene which predominantly emphasize the divisive and complicate joint changes (Theses 6 and 9). The habit of political approaches that have not adapted to the changed conditions for battles and social conditions in modern times (Thesis 4).

An important reason which we have not mentioned yet, is, in our point of view, that the implementation of criticism is quasi declared as an additional project which takes place parallel and complementary to the "business as

usual" of the existing political practice. As a result, the necessity of the practice change rapidly eclipses due to struggles and defense in partial-areas.

*What do we want?*

The change from a subculture-oriented scene to an emancipatory movement with a changing society will not be a mere addition to our practice so far. We have to formulate objectives from the jointly discussed criticism and to examine our entire own practice in detail, whether it corresponds to it and, if necessary, transform it consistently. This requires different and new priorities for which we must be prepared to break with our previous habits, even if it is uncomfortable - or in other areas even startling. It is by no means the case that it would be superfluous to engage in subdivisions or to engage in defensive discourses. We ourselves make the experience of how difficult it is - considering the ever-worsening circumstances - to break out of habitual modes of behavior and actionism. Also, because the establishment of long-term structures does not show directly visible success.

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The fundamental reorientation of left-wing politics also requires individual willingness for change, since revolutionary policies include the transformation of one's own personality, and setting priorities can also mean abandoning the cozy environment and the given familiar social structures. In addition, organizing and actual change also includes seriousness, commitment and discipline. However, how much time and capacity each and every individual can contribute to such a project depends very much on the different social and existential requirements as well as the respective life situations.

## *Epilogue*

We are not naive and do not deny the current constitution of the German society. We do not think the outbreak of revolutionary mass movements depends solely on our way of making policies. But the existing potentials on the one hand and the actual combat forms of the radical left on the other do not match. As a result, many potentials remain unused or are not sufficiently taken seriously.

The proposals for the fundamental realignment of our practices formulated in the eleven theses will not give us any guarantee of success. But joint intensive discussions, joint organization and development of strategies create the basic prerequisites for a policy that can lead to a real change in society, while in the other case we remain what we already are: a (favorable) progressive corrective for abuses of the capitalist-bourgeois system.

*We therefore look forward to a joint exchange.*

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