

Subjects of Emancipation

1. Changed Surrounding Conditions

The contemporary world is characterised by a multitude of globalisation tendencies, which manifest themselves in very different ways in various parts of the world and to which different actors react with different strategies of self-globalisation. One tendency marking the overall process is that of neo-liberal “commodification” under the conditions of a post-Fordist society. The world becomes a commodity, meaning that as a tendency all social sectors (education, culture and all other up to then non-paying or subsidised public offerings and services) up and including the human psyche are subjected to the value and capital relationship. The process of radical all-round capitalisation with its tendency of an ever more totalising socialisation relationship also seizes ever more people, who up to then were not directly integrated into this context. At the same time, there grows at its fringes the number of those, who are excluded from any type of integration. The number of those working dependently has almost doubled from 1970 to 2000; it includes about half of the whole earth’s population, a dynamics that takes place in particular in Asia (China!). The share of those working dependently rose from 33 to 40% during this time.¹

At the same time, there are taking place wide-ranging economic, socio-structural, political, socio-cultural upheavals, which are linked to deep-reaching revolutions of work processes and structures and the erosion of employment relationships to the benefit of de-regulation, flexibilisation, precarisation and a new class of working poor. The present world market processes are characterised by a selection mechanism, which necessarily reinforces the inequality of the potentials, advantages and chances.² Extreme spatial and social segregation can no longer be prevented by homogenisation of the wage-earner relationship in the context of the normal job situations of a Fordistically structured work-based society. They dissolve and with them dependent full employment respectful of a minimum wage insured by collective agreement, socially insured and with a stable framework of labour or rather social law. There occurs the dissolution of labour legislative and collectively agreed standards and the erosion of mechanisms of social insurance, whose prerequisite is life-long stable employment. Fragmented and differentiated social and individual developments become the rule and lead to political and social splits in

¹ Frank Deppe (2003) Arbeiterklasse und Arbeiterbewegung im 21. Jahrhundert (Working class and workers’ movement in the 21th century), *Z Zeitschrift für marxistische Erneuerung*, p. 54.

² Hannsgeorg Conert (Z) Kapitalistische Entwicklung und politisch-emanzipatives Handeln heute (Capitalist development and political-emancipative action today).

the work and life conditions. In parallel to all of this, there takes place the dissolution of the nuclear family, the development of global metropolises, heterogeneity and plurality of spaces.

In particular, one's belonging to the earnings system decided about possibilities of political, social, and economic participation, about integration, vulnerability, marginalisation or exclusion. Exclusion itself takes place by way of privately getting placed into an informal corner or by way of state support. There develops a new, even though politically not yet active block of subalterns, to which there belong four groups: at its head are fractions of wage-dependent middle class and aristocratic specialised workers' strata with high qualifications, secure jobs and high income. They work in the independent future-oriented branches, belong to the so-called information workers, they are members of the new social movements, are the winners of post-Fordism. The compulsion to extreme flexibility and mobility enhances not only their employability as work force, but at the same time their capability to political and social self-determination and autonomy.³ Under the dictate of self-valuation, however, self-organisation, self-control and autonomy become forms of self-incapacitation and self-exploitation. At the same time, growing individuality is reduced to functionality.⁴

A further group is the industrial core of the working class, whose lower strata are the losers of post-Fordism. The job relationships of this group, to be sure, present themselves as relatively stable, however, it is hit especially by the implementation of the flexibilisation of the readiness to work and perform, the deregulation of the work norms and conditions, losses in real wages and the permanent tendency to "liberate" labour. The social uncertainty among those still employed, which this causes, weakens their readiness to pose demands and to push them through in business or trade union conflicts – this is one of the roots of the deep crisis of the trade unions.

As a third group, there develops a service sector proletariat with underqualified, badly paid, often only part-time employees. Often women, minorities, especially migrants, who work in the service sector under precarious conditions.

Precarisation in the meanwhile is no longer only the problem of growing marginal groups, but a phenomenon that can hit anyone. Thus the share of unprotected or precarious employment relationships in the total social gainful employment meanwhile has become a mass phenomenon. Even in rich Germany almost 24% of all full-time unemployed receive a remuneration of between 50% and 75% of the average wage (precarious wages), 2.1 million unemployed, i.e.

³ Hirsch, J. (2001) Wo bleibt das Subjekt für einen radikalen Reformismus? (Where remains the subject for a radical reformism?) In: *Flexibler Kapitalismus* H.-J. Bieling/K. Dörrre/J. Steinhilber/H.-J. Urban, ed., VSA Publishers, Hamburg, p. 276.

⁴ Klein, D. (2003) Zukunftsbericht der Rosa Luxemburg-Stiftung (Future report of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung), Berlin, pp. 157-228.

ca. 12% of all full-time unemployed have to make do with a wage of less than 50% (poverty wages).⁵ 15% of the population of the European Union are threatened by poverty, 17 million children in Europe live at its borderline. Since the end of the 1970s, the failure of the developmental strategy banking on growth and on catch-up industrialisation, there is being executed the extension of informal labour markets, which are not only recognised as a permanent phenomenon, but are even declared in the developmental discourse as bearers of hope for economic dynamism, growth and employment. In the form of work by illegal migrants and especially of women a completely new sector has emerged: house work in the wider sense, they have to be constantly at disposal as household employees. The fourth group – the underclass is unemployed, under-occupied, informal and no longer *lumpen* proletariat, but product of the social state. Thus it is marginalisation of women, when they are remanded by social policy into the family sphere offering higher family allowances; one of the consequences is the high share of women living in poverty.

The working class thus no longer suffers universal standardisation by Fordism, but is characterised by extreme fragmentation. Its split-up leads to the dissolution of the unified nature of experiences as prerequisites of class consciousness and solidarity. These experiences are characterised by growing differentiation, exclusion, multi-dimensional inequality and polarisation.

Faced with the precarisation of labour and the lines of cleavage growing from there, the question comes up, whether a “proletarian class unity” can still be a committal role model of progressive (socialist) policy. At the same time, the organisation, integration, and counter-power capability of the workers’ movement is subject to a progressive process of erosion.⁶ Instead of a workers’ movement, which uses the socialisation logic of the productive forces to push through its own, the revolution of productive forces is to a large extent decoupled from social progress. The still existing bastions of the Fordist labour movement are included as conditions of functioning into capitalist production. How can this “passive revolution”⁷ be influenced in the direction of those social groups and class fractions, whose life design is still tied to the carrying out of dependent labour? The normative corollary to dependency is the demand for emancipation, and there will be no emancipation without turning around the

⁵ WSI, August 4th, 2003.

⁶ Hans-Jürgen Bieling, Klaus Dörre, Jochen Steinhilber, Hans-Jürgen Urbahn, eds. (2001) *Flexibler Kapitalismus* (Flexibler Kapitalismus), p. 25.

⁷ Bernd Röttger (2004) *Arbeit – Emanzipation – passive Revolution* (Work – emancipation – passive revolution)

current labour relationships, which continue to be the comprehensive phenomenon, which concerns the majority of people.⁸

Marx distinguished between political and human emancipation. In this context, he looks upon political emancipation as the last stage of human emancipation within the world order up to now⁹, which leaves the autonomous constraints, which decide over life conditions and chances and limit them, untouched. He characterises this outside determination as alienation and analyses above all the forms of alienated labour without reducing them exclusively to work. According to Marx, it encompasses all spheres of bourgeois society: “Only when the real individual human being in his or her real life, in her or his individual work, in his or her individual relationships, has become species being, only if the human being has recognised and organised his or her ‘*forces propres*’ as social forces and thus no longer separates the social force in the shape of the political force from her- or himself, only then will human emancipation be complete.”¹⁰

What, however, are the prerequisites of emancipation? Marx sees them in the positive “lifting” of private property in its form of appropriation of human life and the positive lifting of all alienation which it makes possible. He sees them in the organisation and becoming conscious of the proletariat, which has become aware of its discrimination and instrumentalisation for alien goals in form of the wage-earner relationship and therefore pushes for the overthrow in the social relationships and in the capabilities to produce social wealth. Without high productivity of social labour, only shortage will be universalised and the struggle for the dire necessary would have to start all over again.¹¹

How about these three prerequisites, however: the positive lifting of private property as appropriation of human life, the organisation and becoming conscious of the wage-dependent and those who are already no longer integrated into these processes? What conditions are required such that not every productivity advance nurtures social problems with growing unemployment, but on the contrary, high productivity of social labour is linked to growing social wealth and justice of participation for a self-determined life in social security? Especially, these questions have to be pursued when analysing social actors.

Emancipation is a process, by which the individuals transform themselves into the starting and the goal point of all processes of socialisation and all material

⁸ Emir Sader (2004) *Subjekte der Emanzipation* (Subjects of emancipation).

⁹ Karl Marx (1974) *Zur Judenfrage* (The Jewish Question), in MEGA, vol. 2, p. 150

¹⁰ opus cit., pp. 162-63.

¹¹ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels (1969) *Die deutsche Ideologie* (The German Ideology), MEW, vol. 3, pp. 34-35

and cultural production and life conditions are transformed into conditions of free development of each and everyone. The idea of being institutionally transformed into the “entrepreneur of one’s own labour power and existential provision”, while at the same time the social state is being destroyed and inequality is growing, leads to the destruction of the most important forms of social integration, the social soil for real emancipation.

The growing reflection of these processes corresponds to the growing number of those, who think that the society has to change fundamentally. In Germany alone, 76% alone pronounce themselves for such fundamental changes.¹² That means that large sections see a need for action and expect from politics an essential contribution to the noticeable reduction of unemployment, social justice and especially the solution of future problems, to the creation of conditions for social security, especially in the sphere of work, education, health provision and pensions. These expectations are characterised, however, by pluralised, multi-dimensional inequality and differing perception of central social conflicts resulting from there. In this way, the rejection of certain relationships of rule and hierarchy, the striving for democratic participation and the desire for self-determined, often alternative ways of life or the acting in the spirit of fellow-human, humanitarian ideals articulate themselves in completely different ways. In which case the articulation of social injustice, the concern for women and children in trouble, the fears concerning future ecological dangers or the stepping in for asylum-seekers is often linked to action also if the actors themselves do not suffer from threats or are not immediately concerned. The struggle for the democratisation of political decision-making structures, for example, in many cases also can be traced back to the wish or will to enable other people to articulate and to realise their interests. It has to do with an understanding of justice. The participation in the march of the Zapatistas through Mexico up to and including the development of a broad movement of globalisation critics or the activity of numerous environmental activists stand for such an engagement.

Subjects of emancipation, however, can only be thought of by the individuals, who for themselves and others claim self-determination and liberty, including the consequence that the circle of actors as well as the ways and steps of action cannot be preset “in a planned manner” by concepts of any shape or form. In this context, self-organisation and “openness” of development are not attributes to be taken into account but constitutive part of this process being aspired to. The actors (potentially) mobilised and the forms of their acting together do therefore also not let themselves seized as firmly circumscribed objects, but only in their

¹² FOKUS (2004) *Politische Landschaften im Meinungsbild. PoliLand. Soziologisch-empirische Kurzstudie zu Problembewusstsein, Veränderungspotenzialen und Einstellungen zur Zukunft im Meinungsbild der Bevölkerung. Eine empirische Studie* (Political landscapes in the opinion picture. PoliLand. Brief sociological-empirical study concerning problem consciousness, potentials for change and attitudes toward the future in the opinion picture of the population. An empirical study)

movement and contradictoriness. Self-determined strivings of actors thus form a *fundamental goal, not only a prerequisite* for change in society.¹³

2. Traditional actors

If subjects of emancipation are to be thought as emanating from the individual, there poses itself the question for the relationship and the options, which individuals and organisations have as social actors. With their commitment in civil society, which encompasses those institutions and organisations between economy and state, the individuals to a degree arrange themselves within existing society, but also acquire means to struggle for its transformation.¹⁴ About what potentials do traditional social actors such as parties and trade unions dispose for scooping out the inherent possibilities for social change in the sense of a transformative projects? To what degree can they reform their self-understanding, their strategy and their political action in such a way as to act, under the conditions of neoliberal globalisation and flexibilisation, individualisation and pluralisation (with simultaneous polarisation) of the social structures, as defender of interests as the times demand?

2.1 Left parties

At present, left parties have to face world-wide developmental processes combined with historical changes. By way of cultural, political and economic upheavals in the 1980s, as well as by way of the final collapse of state socialism in Europe, the party system also has gotten into motion on its left side. Processes of de-Stalinisation of the Communist parties in Western Europe, the formation of green and alternative parties and/or the creation of new left parties have led to a further pluralisation of the party systems. Similarly, it came to the formation (and the dissolution) of governmental coalitions between social democratic parties and the mentioned parties as well as to the permanent establishment of parties, which do not consider themselves as Communist in the sense of the Third International and still see themselves (in contradistinction to many Green Parties) in the tradition of socialist politics. At the same time, positions are partially reactivated, reaching back into the times of split among the social democratic parties of the Second International. This also holds for a number of those parties, which emerged out of the transformation of the Communist state

¹³ These and the expositions that follow to a large extent are based on the future report of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, in Dieter Klein, ed. (2003) *Leben statt gelebt zu werden. Zukunftsbericht der Rosa Luxemburg Foundation* (Live instead of being lived. Future report of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation).

¹⁴ Dieter Klein (2002) Demokratischer Sozialismus als transformatorisches Projekt. Ein Beitrag zur Programmdiskussion der PDS (Democratic socialism as transformative project. A contribution to the programme discussion of the PDS), in: *Sozialismus als Tagesaufgabe* (Socialism as the order of the day), p. 85

parties in Central and Eastern Europe or rather were newly created when they fell apart.

Left parties at present have to act in the situation of dissolution of the Fordist pattern of accumulation and regulation on the national and international scale as well as under the conditions of neoliberal globalisation. This upheaval includes the class and social structure, the political as well as the legal forms and thus also the political system and the political parties acting therein, which also undergo a process of self-transformation.

The essence of new parties is decisively marked by the system of social lines of conflict that can be of class-specific, religious, ethnic-linguistic, geographical, generation-specific or yet other nature. This means that the basic assumption up to now, or rather the basics of former worlds of experience: the leading role of the industrial working class in the battle for the liberation from exploitation and oppression, the transformation of property as well as the new distribution of income by means of the extended power of the nation-state, and the role of the party as the only relevant political force in the conquest and transformation of state power do no longer correspond to contemporary social lines of conflict. In this connection, the traditional struggle of the working classes does not lose in importance, but on the contrary gains in significance; however, they are joined by the growing number of the up to now untypical strata of the working class, such as precariously employed without stable work relationship, the formally self-employed, but in essence dependent employees, as well as the struggle of movements, “in which no longer as much the initiative of the ‘producing individual’ as that of the ‘social individual’”¹⁵ is manifested.¹⁶

The left political party thereby stands before the task to renew its programmatic claim and has to break, if it wants to hold on to Marx’ emancipative-solidaristic claim, with the paradigm of history of philosophy of Marxism and dialectically resolve it in a new socialist paradigm.¹⁷ That means that the programmes of the Left have to be aimed at interventionist action and derive from the struggle of all social forces for emancipation and solidarity, the real relationships of modern capital-dominated societies. Its strategy of reforms up to and including to the formulation of a transformative project, it has to develop from the analytical assumption of present-day upheavals aimed at social justice and democracy and in this connection link freedom and equality. “One part of this task is to produce the basic goods of society, which guarantee freedom, in a comprehensive way and to redistribute them towards the bottom, so that they become available to

¹⁵ Karl Marx (1953) *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Basic Outline of a Critique of Political Economy), p. 76.

¹⁶ Mimmo Porcaro (2002) *The third Actor*, in this volume.

¹⁷ Michael Brie (2002) *Freiheit und Sozialismus* (Freedom and Socialism), In: *Sozialismus als Tagesaufgabe* (Socialism as the order of the day), p. 40.

each and everyone.”¹⁸ In the past, there belonged in this area the pushing through of universal suffrage, the eight-hour day, general school education and health provision as well as the protection against criminality, the elimination of poverty and the creation of a European and global order of peace. The idea of social justice has receded into the background world-wide, because socialist Utopias, models and programmes placed equality ahead of diversity of human beings, underrated human individuality and freedom as basic needs, on the other hand, however, by way of the overrating of the postulate of equality delivered the ideological justification both for the suppression of individual diversity and individuality as well as for the rule of bureaucratic élites, which supposedly were called upon to implement the equality postulate. Therefore, the combination of social question and emancipation today more than ever has to form the core of socialist visions capable of a future – precisely in the sense of Karl Marx or John Stuart Mill formulated the ideal of a libertarian socialism which called for an association, “in which the free development of each and every one would become the condition for the free development of all.”

Such visions, however, only assume material force, however, when the expectations, hopes and goals of millions of people bundle themselves. When and why does individual dissatisfaction give birth to political action, and how does political action constitute itself under the present conditions? The task of the political Left consists above all in making a contribution to the emergence of a broad social and political alliance for a radical change in politics, by way of developing concrete alternatives and proposals for a radical transformation of contemporary capitalist societies. Accordingly, the European Left Party sees its responsibility and possibility in addressing all those who are committed to a more just society as a prerequisite for a self-determined life of the individual. “We want to establish left politics durably as an independent, self-assured political project, which will contribute to the realisation of solidarity and democracy of social and ecological alternatives.”¹⁹

In the search for successful and sustainable answers, the plural Left in the individual countries still stands at the beginning. The Third Ways and the strategies of a New Centre have not revealed themselves as sustainable, and in their majority were not able to effectively withstand the tendencies of neoliberalism with its reinforcement of inequality and growing polarisation of society, the greater uncertainty in all areas of life. Their neoliberal strategy of national state competitiveness and the reconstruction of social systems was no longer compatible with holding on to social justice in whatever shape or form and therefore had to fail. Due to this disoriented wavering, the majority left has to a large extent lost its independent profile. Its failure goes along with the deep

¹⁸ Michael Brie (2004) Strategic Challenges for the European Left, in this volume.

¹⁹ Programme of the EL, <http://www.pds-online.de>, and in this volume.

crisis of the trade unions and the chronic weakness of the radical political left and many traditional social movements and is part of a crisis and the dissolution of the whole historical block of the Left.

A real renewal of the Left will become possible, only if it develops its independent profile, occupies strategic spaces and combines processes of self-transformation (party reform as well) with an opening into society and creates prerequisites for a Centre Left and a Centre Bottom alliance. It must, if it wants to win social majorities for a political change in direction, address the whole breath of the politically not yet effective block of the subalterns and defend here in particular the interests of the socially weak and those threatened by exclusion or already gripped by it. Only in this way, will it be in a position to muster relevant social forces for a policy direction and to drive ahead the development of a transformative project. A decisive part of this task is the generation of a new, alternative economic and social policy, which does justice to the expectations for high individual self-determination, the demands for social equality and participation as well as for the solidarity-based, ecological restructuring of society. In this connection, solutions which disregard the requirements of innovative and competitive economic development, are ineffective, and moreover, have remained without support among the population. “The productivity of social policy and the social sustainability of economic policy must be developed as two sides of a complementary emancipative project.”²⁰ In this context, it has to deal again with the following questions: questions of appropriation of property, the newly emerging contradictions of the work-world, distribution and regulation at the national and the transnational level, the maintenance and reform of the social security systems, the fundamental role of the state and of politics under conditions of globalised flexible capitalism and, for instance, the new developments at the EU level, such as the decisions of Maastricht and Lisbon, which aim at cementing the neoliberal economic development.

“The parties of the alternative Left today must be evaluated on the basis of their capability to enter into relations with numerous and different members of society, to directly link the national with the global struggle, ...to change together with... diverse actors the numerous and different sectors of social power..., the parties have to develop from mass-integrating to *connective mass* parties.”²¹ Thereby, there poses itself for left parties the question for their strategic alliance partners, in society as a whole, i.e. in relationship to civil society, as well as in the party spectrum. This means the strategy formation of

²⁰ These elaborations rely mainly on Michael Brie (2004) Strategic Challenges for the European Left (in this volume).

²¹ Mimmo Porcaro (2003) The Party of Communist Refoundation: Tradition, Innovation, Perspectives, in Michael Brie, ed. (2003), p. 9 ff. (expanded version in this volume).

left parties must be carried out both in dealing with the basic strategic positions of the new social movements as well as with those of the social democratic parties, who themselves suffer the most strongly from the post-Fordist transformation process of party reform and whose strategic option of a “Third Way” at the latest since the end of the last decade can be considered as failed. Therefore, there also developed a key difference with serious consequences in the appreciation of social democracy: does it no longer represent anything more than a socially and ideologically cushioned variant of the ruling neoliberalism and therefore can principally no longer be considered even for doing short ways of a transformation politics directed against neoliberalism (is it thus completely and, so to say, without internal contradictions integrated in the power block of neoliberalism, as it began to crystallise since the end of the 70s) or can it partially and temporarily be included in a left project? The first sentence is a basis for the upswing of radical, for example, Trotskyite, autonomous left party groups, for instance in England, France, Italy and partly also in Spain.

On the other hand, the relationship of the left parties in Europe to the social movements is difficult for many parties of the radical left among other things also because of their specific situation (lack of or relative weakness of the movements at the national level) or because of ideological barriers grounded in the notion that the party is still the main instrument of the struggle by the lower classes and that social movements can be comprehended as mere complements and correctives to the established political institutions. Even if the argument of weakness of the movements at the national level can be answered by referring to the global movement, the ideological barriers are much harder to overcome, precisely because many parties of the radical Left in the last years were founded or established their existence on the basis of two principles: on the one hand as instruments of social emancipation with respect to the state and on the other as guarantors of the political and ideological independence of the lower classes.²² The central reference to the state makes it partly difficult for these parties to understand the political role of other actors in civil society and to accept them as partners of equal rank in the articulation of demands for social change and in their autonomy. For the Rifondazione, a close relationship to the movements constituted a strategic element of basic importance and could do so, given the huge importance of these movements in Italy. By contrast, in the PDS, the question for strategic alliance partners is still under heavy dispute despite the programmatic formulation mandating a strategy of forming a broad social and political alliance for a fundamental change in direction.²³

²² Mimmo Porcaro (2003) Vorbedingungen für wirksame Aktion der Linksparteien in Europa (Preliminary conditions for efficient action of the Left in Europe), in the German edition of this volume.

²³ Programme of the PDS, 2003, p. 50: “In the coming years as well, our place will be with the social movements against the all-round capitalisation of society, demolition of democracy and war. We defend the achievement of the emancipative movements and want to help to overcome capitalist profit

Are the social democratic, the socialist parties strategic partners of the left parties? Is the formulated party policy of a Centre Left option still topical, in the light of the world-wide implementation of the neoliberal reforms of democracy and social demolition under the aegis of social democratic governmental policy? How then about the attempt to resist conservative politics in form of governmental participation at the local and regional level, to challenge the implementation and filtering down of cutback policies and social demolition in order to prevent even worse?

Under the conditions of neoliberal hegemony and small real space for design of policies, left politics in governmental office, especially in the perception of those hit by the demolition of the social state and democracy and whose life conditions are only being cushioned for the time being, are suspected of renouncing the implementation of own positions or turning the smaller evil into the standard of one's own actions. Under these conditions, the application of radical standards to left governmental politics must lead to a lack of credibility. The publicly noticeable alleviation of neoliberal policies in single questions, negotiated in parliaments under the pressure of public opinion, before the whole background of radical neoliberal reforms, must appear inadequate. That means that despite important achievements in specific questions, the overall governmental action of left parties appears inadequate. This is the strategic dilemma of the left.²⁴

The escape from this dilemma can only be looked for in the productive dealing with fundamental contradictions and in the gaining of a historical perspective. Which tasks does the left political party have to solve?

Firstly, the Left can act for the development of independent strategies and formulate projects for the democratisation of society and the effective protection of peace by way of prevention and peaceful conflict resolution. Its task is to contribute to the elaboration of an independent reform agenda, which does justice to the realities and at the same time strives for a compensation of interests to the benefit of the wage-dependent and opens perspectives, which manifest themselves in entry projects. The restructuring of social systems relying on the inclusion of everyone, which would stipulate equal basic claims and be co-financed by a contribution system of businesses based on value added. Up to now, the formulation of an alternative economic policy has hardly advanced beyond the variants of a new Keynesianism.

dominance and to break through their being secured by patriarchy, authoritarianism and militarism. As socialists, women and men, we intend to become a respected part of social resistance against neoliberalism and to act with our own ideas and projects for the strengthening of strong social reform forces. We are striving for political alliances, which do justice to this task.”

²⁴ Michael Brie (2003) Strategic Challenges for the European Left, in this volume.

Second, its task consists in contributing to building up a socially and culturally anchored Left and to bring in its specific possibilities for parliamentary work. In this context, this refers not only to the arm extended into parliament, but to the influencing of state decisions by the widest possible alliances, making use of the parliamentary possibilities of left parties at the same time. The parties can and must as part of the political system by way of their “interface function” secure the synergy effects between the actions of the parties and those of the movements. They also can do that by expanding the privileges of parliament and redefining the conditions of a social democracy broadly conceived and adequate to the times, which is no longer exclusively restricted to representative democracy. However, this demands of the parties themselves an understanding of politics, in which the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary space are at least of equal importance and a new understanding of the party: a rejection of the traditional party, which gulps up the masses, in favour of a “connective mass party”.²⁵ At the same time, the parties, in contradistinction to social movements, trade unions etc., in the social struggles must reflect these linkages and the relationship of forces and can thereby in a greater measure than the movements create possibilities for parliamentary influence and its translation.

A third task of the political left could be to struggle for a new culture of social justice, this means to do battle resolutely for the value of the public, also of public ownership, to put its stakes on overcoming social disintegration and marginalisation. This is impossible, however, without a new definition of the role of the state and a changed reference of left parties to the state. Instead of a renewed nationalisation, we would have to fight for the democratic and emancipative appropriation of the public space, for a democratisation and socialisation of public tasks, if possible including the administrations of an otherwise democratic state.

2.2 Trade Unions

In the framework of the defence of the interests of those dependently employed, it belongs to the fundamental functions of trade unions to insure protection, distribution and participation. Protection and distribution means socio-economic insurance of the wage-dependent, protection against unbridled competition, protection against undignified, inhuman work conditions. Their core competence is to influence the conditions of sale (that means the price) of labour as a good and the conditions of its employment and to thereby reach the furthest possible de-commodification of labour force. What has now been happening for half a century under neoliberal sign, is the re-commodification of the labour force, a restoration of its character as commodity, which manifests itself in the new

²⁵ Mimmo Porcaro (2003) Prerequisites for effective Action of the Left Parties, in the German edition of this volume.

immediacy of the market, which breaks the work force out of the institutional and normative regulations, banks upon the flexibilisation of employment and work-time and in this way promotes greater uncertainty of work and life conditions. The employment of labour without restrictions on time, location (country) etc. and demands for greater self-organisation and responsibility are the two central changes in the area of work. Also affected by these changes are the political instruments by way of which the trade unions operate. Traditionally, there also belongs in this area the negotiation of collective agreements, by way of which classical class conflicts are transformed into conflicts of interests. The more heavily, however, “economic material constraints” are operating, the more economic steering on nation state playing fields is constrained by the highly integrated world economy, the stronger also becomes the pressure on national collective agreements – especially territorial and branch agreements which are put into question more and more fundamentally and undermined by the tendency to remand collective agreement processes to the level of the business.

Collective interests constitute themselves over wage-worker existences and risks. Existential uncertainties resulting from dependency on the capitalist accumulation process are oriented towards realising the sale of one’s own labour power under the best possible or rather the most favourable conditions. Thereby, the capability for experiencing this interest is countered by splits and fragmentation, which are inherent to the accumulation process of capital.²⁶ In the process of tertialisation of the production sector by the development of new information and communication technologies as well as the introduction of production technologies with high elasticity, there takes place a new quality of splitting up and fragmenting of the production process itself by way of outsourcing and new structuring of production chains and creation of smaller production units with numerous different social groups and strata with different education, qualification and income – a new quality of the “normal situation”, as Frank Deppe describes it.²⁷

The development of new technologies also has as a consequence that unified conditions of production are no longer tied to strict work-time regulations by way of collective agreements and to spatial concentration. The flexibilisation of work now possible leads to new forms of work organisation and flexible work-time regulation within the (male) “normal work relationship”, that is the employment relationship up to now protected by law and collective

²⁶ H.-J. Bieling/K. Dörre/ J. Steinhilber/H.-J. Urban (eds.) (2001) *Flexibler Kapitalismus* (Flexible Capitalism), opus cit., p. 25.

²⁷ T. Schulten (2001) Barrieren und Perspektiven eines „neuen Internationalismus“ der Gewerkschaften (Barriers to and perspectives of a new internationalism of the trade unions), in : *Flexibler Kapitalismus* (Flexible capitalism), opus cit., p. 193 ff.

agreements.²⁸ The pressure for performance and flexibilisation in turn leads to reinforced segmentation of the labour force into core and marginal components of the workforces. In parallel to that, there rises the share of unprotected and precarious employment relationships in the whole social gainful employment quota, which in the meanwhile has become a mass phenomenon even among the normal work relationships. Since the end of the 70s, beyond that, there develops the tendency of the “new self-employment” especially in the Southern countries of the European Union. A fifth of those employed in Spain, for example, and up to one third in Greece work as self-employed. The expansion of the informal labour markets takes place especially in the clothing industry, in gastronomy, the construction and in the rural sectors.

The trade unions must confront all these challenges and at the same time respect the individualisation of life styles and chances as well as the dissolution of traditional milieu structures, which are linked to emergence of a new collective identity. That means that under the pressure of precarisation of work and permanent locational competition, collective action has a much harder time to develop. Collective identity has to make do with these conditions and new forms of fragmentation, flexibilisation, and mobility. How will trade union defence of interest take shape, however, if the employees increasingly become the entrepreneurs of their own lives, when success bonuses instead of payment by tariff scale is the norm, when individual prevention steps in place of socially agreed upon duties, “I-Ltds” and patched identities become the general norm and entrepreneurial models like that of the “new economy” wage upon individual self-accountability. Trade unions are dependent on a socio-cultural environment that creates solidaristic/collective values, yet which at this time is dissolving with the implementation of new forms of economy. That means, their social basis changes simultaneously with their capability for action in the national framework. The necessary internationalisation of trade-union work and its development in the direction of a globally active actor is counteracted by the opposite tendency – the world-wide competition for locational advantage - so that the emergence and effectiveness of the trade unions as a European and at times global actor takes place as a contradictory process. On the one hand, it is spurred on by the international development, by the progressive intertwining of European capital, on the other hand, it is marked by the understanding of the trade unions as interest representatives within the nation states. Therefore, they are stuck in a dilemma, which puts them on the defensive both nationally as well as internationally. At the national level, they have to serve the most diverse political, economic and social systems, all operating under the pressure of locational competition. At the same time, important trade union interests such as co-determination or rights, which can guarantee the influence of employee

²⁸ J. Bischoff (2003) Worüber streiten die Gewerkschaften? Kommentar vom 11.8.03, Redaktion *Sozialismus* (What are the trade unions disputing about? Comment of August 11, 2003, editorial committee *Sozialismus*)

representatives on national labour law or rather collective agreements, are thus anchored completely differently at each national level. The aggravating differences between the trade unions with respect to their self-understanding, their legal framework, their respective systems of co-determination, tradition and political culture at present make a collective agreement policy beyond the national borders impossible; thus also the formulation of a European tariff agreement, which could also summarise social minimal standards, EU-wide norm setting, the stipulations of a European labour law, is disputed in the ranks of the trade unions themselves²⁹ and gets no support. On the contrary, the raising of the competitive edge of the own businesses and the guaranteeing of one's own location is the generally recognised priority goal even among the trade unions.³⁰

A further problem decisively weakening the trade unions is the continuing mass unemployment and the increase of part-time and precarious unemployment. 8.9% of people in Europe are unemployed, 13.4% only have a limited contract. The share of women with limited work contracts, in part-time or occasional situations lies 30% above that of men. In the whole of Europe, there spreads the compulsion to take up work because of the lowering of social benefits for the unemployed and their linking to the readiness to take up even lowly-qualified work and the pressure for dismantling protections against dismissal.

In the light of this background, the emergence of a new internationalism of the social movements, which in place of traditional solidarity-based action can become an option also for trade union action, is of special interest. The cooperative room underlying this internationalism inclusive of the contradictions between the participating groups is dependent on a political culture of tolerance and pluralism, "which allows it to organise cooperation beyond political differences of opinion in a democratic way."³¹ This means for the trade unions "to lay ad acta the remaining rests of a theoretical monopoly and political claim to leadership stemming from the historical workers' movement, to enter into an

²⁹ The director of the European trade union institute Reiner Hoffmann therefore no longer talks of the goal of a European collective agreement, but of a "coordination of tariff policy", which should be striven for, which refers to the sectoral level as well as the multitude of regional and European and social structures and the traditions, which should be productively linked "instead of standardising them according to old catalogues of demand". Hoffmann, R. (2002), *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, 4-5, p. 4.

³⁰ Hürtgen, S. (2003) Gestaltung des Anpassungsdrucks, Rückkehr zu bewährter Gewerkschaftspolitik oder „Kampf um soziale Transformation“? Gewerkschaftliche Positionen zur Globalisierung in Deutschland und Frankreich (Shaping the pressure to conform, Return to traditional labour union policy or „fight for social transformation“? Trade union positions concerning globalisation in Germany and France), *Prokla* 131, p. 6.

³¹ Schulten, T. (2001) Barriers and Perspectives of a „new Internationalism“ of the trade unions, *opus cit.*, p. 193 ff.

open dialogue with other social movements and organisations and to transcend the concept of “business unionism” fixated directly on the economic interests of their members in favour of a more comprehensive political self-understanding in the sense of a “social movements’ unionism.” Since the mid-1990s, US and other trade unions use this concept, following its high tide in the 1960s and 70s, to again build up a basis-determined alternative to the corporate apparatuses. By way of anchoring in local daily life, by way of a “social movement trade unionism”, designed to fight the pervasive practice of “outsourcing”, a growing net of sub-contractors and the huge gap, very pronounced in the United States, between “union cities” like Boston, Chicago, New York or Seattle with long traditions of trade union organisations and a largely “trade union-free” South, it is being tried to win back trade union designing power in society. Linked to that are new “paradigms” of cooperation, mobilisation and organisation, which should no longer remain restricted to the interest representation of the (core) workforces, but be formulated as an independent “social project”. That means that they should continue to be centred on those employed as the core of their membership. Beyond that, however, they have to struggle together with other social movements for the interests of the “weaker” in the whole society to be thus able to extend their political mandate. Overarching solidarity becomes the central yardstick for judging social and trade union movements. To accomplish that, there is need for a close cooperation on an equal footing with the other social movements up to and including common decision process about collective actions including strikes. The question is open to what extent this approach is really radically different from the traditional variants, or whether it is only the left-social democratic version of a new regulation of work? The necessity to maintain “US American jobs” if need be by protectionism, is not being questioned and also not the strict shutting up of the labour market. Nevertheless, the incredible diversity of initiatives, controversies and projects alone is worth the curiosity about a movement, which already now deals with central topics such as migration, multi-culturalism and transnationality much more broadly than their maybe numerically more impressive pendants in Europe.³²

2.3 New social movements

Social movements, as network combination of persons, groups and organisations are products of modern society, which autonomously and in a need-centred way in the last consequence aim at the basics of society. Their action takes place in the context of the opening of the social space achieved by social and political struggles and is linked to processes of individualisation, with political and cultural expansions of attitudes, which reach deep into the daily cultures of societies. They can be grasped as results of enlarged competencies as a result of

³² Söhnke Zehle (2004) What’s to be done? Social movement unionism
<http://wastun.org/tapestry?article=21>.

processed educational reforms and extended cultural horizons of experience, as participative revolution in the context of growing readiness to participate at the work place, in citizens' initiatives and in direct politics with at the same time growing distrust face to institutional politics, and they can also be understood as self-realisation or rather emancipative development of the person.³³ In contrast to parties and trade unions they organise themselves in the spheres of the life world, make social conflicts experienceable by the senses, and therefore offer to individuals and social groups a specific place for formulating life strategies and strategies for the solution of concrete social conflicts, such as they manifest themselves for example in the demands of the women's, ecological, black civil rights and other social movements. Especially, the concretely articulated demand makes possible a measure of radicalism and realism, which new social movements that to start with placed more general themes into centre stage, can never reach. This holds just as well for the narrower circle of carriers as well as, and even more so, for the mass actions.

The develop mainly in phases of social upheaval: while in the 1960s, it was the conflicts over individual and social emancipation, in the 1970s, it was the ecological crisis and alternative modernisation policies, and in the 1980s pacifist movements. They could develop their spaces for action mainly in the third sector of social work. With the institutionalisation of social movements since the 70s and the falling apart of social stateliness and formal economy, human rights and development NGOs, non-profit-organisations, communal, political, religious or care institution of social labour but also grassroots self-organisations have assumed quasi-state functions. Open is in this context, to what extent NGOs play the role of "extended state apparatuses" (Gramsci) or of knot points of organised social counterforce. At present, both are the case, and this not seldom in the practice field of one and the same NGO. Which option imposes itself, results on the one hand, from the power relationships in and between the NGOs and on the other from their relationship to statehood and capital. They are in this field of tension an "ever moving, changing sea of phenomena."³⁴

Where cleavages and conflicts become the root of a politicisation with emancipative tendency, there can develop seeds of new social movements, whose articulations are supported by the fragile connection between "real-life economics", the social Left of the third sector, and social mass protests. Expressions of that are the peasant movements of the Indian sub-continent, the movement of the landless in Brazil, the grassroots organisations of South African townships or the NGO associations, for example of post-Sandinist

³³ Heiko Geiling (1995) Politische Kultur und soziale Bewegungen (Political culture and social movements), <http://www.agis.uni-hannover.de/agisinfo/info3/pokulbe.htm>.

³⁴ Rosa Luxemburg: Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften (Mass strike, party and trade unions), in: Werke, vol. 2, p. 124.

Nicaragua, not accidentally dominated by feminists. In the fragile association with individual trade unions, these movements incorporate the kind of new type of a locally organised and at the same time globally interlinked social resistance.

The strategy of the Zapatistas of a “permanent rebellion” is the logical consequence of renouncing to the conquest of state power and a strategy aimed at parliamentary-representative participation in state power. It should link the real-life economics, the local socially autonomous groups with the trade unions and the institutions of the trade unions in country-wide and international mobilisation. These also do not aim at taking part in state power, even if they try to influence the state and push for laws, treaties, administrative measures or institutional transformations. The achievements of the Zapatistas show how the achieved subjective and local autonomies can be kept open and be freely associated to one another and can thereby lead to the democratisation and overcoming of the relationships of power and exploitation, in which they are included, and open up new forms of resistance beyond national borders. Their rebellion in 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico, against the free trade agreement NAFTA between the USA, Canada and Mexico is considered the birth hour of the new social – globalisation-critical movements. Then there followed the intercontinental meeting for humanism and against neoliberalism in Chiapas 1996 and 1997 in Spain, the battle against the Multilateral Agreement for the Protection of Investments (MAI), 1996 the Euromarches against unemployment and precarious unemployment, the Network People’s Global Action founded in 1998, the creation of ATTAC in France, the protest against the WTO meeting 1999 in Seattle and the cycle of militant protests begun since then. They were more than mere expressions of protest. The neoliberal project is being questioned in its foundations, and its proclaimed absence of alternatives is countered by the simple clear sentence: “Another world is possible”.

3. The “new” subjects of emancipation

3.1 New alliances – the WSF process

The first World Social Forum was conceived at first as counterforum to the meeting of economic leaders in Davos. A new global force should be opposed to the emergence of new global institutions of power, the neoliberal commodification also of women, de-industrialisation and unemployment, competitive ideology, ecological crisis and the militarism ever again imposing itself in the whole world. This force, in contrast to past social movements understands itself as a horizontal, plural, heterogeneous, non-confessional network of movements, which organises itself in an egalitarian, decentralised, open manner based on mutual trust and takes necessary decisions on the basis of the consent principle. Diversity is no longer a weakness but is considered a sign

of strength, which allows it to be counterpart in various areas of life,³⁵ and contributes to a new quality of common action of old and new actors: The movement of movements can create a position of hegemony here, even over the unions. “The trade unions defend partial interests, whereas the movement can represent the general interests of all who work; the union represents the interests of a limited class, whereas the movement can represent the general issues of all who work; the unions represent the interests of a limited class, whereas the movement can express the action of the entire multitude. Perhaps this is the moment of the end of the historical cycle of social democracy and the beginning of the democracy of the multitude.”³⁶

In accordance with the principles of the WSF, this forum understands itself as “a room for organisations and social movements of civil society, which turn against neoliberalism and against world dominance of capital as well as against any form of imperialism. Excluded are those, who apply force or operate militarily. Moreover, the forum positions itself against all totalitarian or reductionist views of the economy, development and of history as well as against force as means of social control by the state. In this sense, there has developed since 2001 – codified in the Charta of the WSF – a commonly defined plurality against neoliberal globalisation, which remains in itself contradictory:, so that “this movement is in danger to be locked in the same traps as movements of emancipation in the past.” Thomas Ponniah, identifying “six key divergences” inside the World Social Forum, put the contradiction of “*revolution versus reform*” on top of the list.³⁷ Beyond that, the central contradictions environment versus economy, human rights versus protectionism are articulated and the various levels and forms of the political are being appraised in a different way.

One of the central questions and problems is the formulation of two contradictory goals within the forum “one is the desire of some civil society groups to be part of the global governance; the other is the determination of many groups to protest and resist.” It will be decisive for the development of the forums whether it can hold the balance between the two poles and is able to compensate the field of tension within this question with an overarching and

³⁵ The now following elaborations refer to the contribution of Achim Wahl: Die Sozialforen – eine politische Innovation oder eine Bewegung ohne Zukunft (Betrachtungen zur Entwicklung des Weltsozialforums) (The social forums – a political innovation or a movement without a future [Reflections about the development of the World Social Forum]), Sao Paulo, 2004.

³⁶ Thomas Ponniah and William F. Fisher (2003) Another world is possible (Introduction)

³⁷ Under a tree in Porto Alegre: Democracy in its most radical sense. Thomas Ponniah and William Fisher interviewed by Solana Larsen for *Open Democracy*, in: Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Peter Waterman: Challenging Empires. The World Social Forum, New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation 2003, p. 178.

self-inclusive demand for the “reinvention of democracy”. Such an alliance supposed to be as wide as possible is the prerequisite for “the reinvention of society such that the mode of economic production, the structures of political governance, the dissemination of scientific innovation, the organisation of the media, social relations and the relationships between society and nature, are subjected to a radical, participatory and living democratic process.” This also requires “the radical transformation of the existing class, gender and racialised relations of power that prohibit the full functioning of democracy.”³⁸

In this connection, there also ever again poses itself the question for the relationship between social movements, NGOs, trade unions and parties and for their differing approaches and their political practice. The strength of social movements consists in their capability to seize on new ideas and to develop them. For that, however, their autonomy is vital. At the same time, their weakness consists in that they themselves directly can guarantee no rights, especially not to weaker sections of the population such as Indios and landless, but in this context are dependent on the state and the role of the parties in mediating interests. In times of globalisation as well, it shows itself that the national state contexts do not lose in significance but on the contrary to an important extent determine the relationship between parties, NGOs and social movements. Where the state is not in a position to fulfil central responsibilities, the NGOs take over this role and thereby can also become an instrument of democracy.

3.2 The open space of the social forums

The significance of the open space of the social forums results from an intermediate station of the dissolution of Fordist social structures and actor constellations, yet without a new space having been found as of yet. At the same time, it is the answer to the reduction of public spaces as a result of neoliberal developments.

It is not a hierarchy-free space, but in it there exists no pyramid of power. There exists no owner apart from all others, yet all are responsible. It is not simply only a room for events, but a space which enables processes, a forum for movement. Movement, which by the movements in part is seen as a threat to the forum itself, because movement should mean to link actors among one another with the goal of realising common goals, to develop strategies to this end, to formulate steps and to distribute roles for action in an organisation, among them that of leadership. A space by contrast has no leader, it makes no sense apart from itself. It is nevertheless not a neutral step, but an incubator for movements and their linking with one another and for their political action. Political actions

³⁸ Thomas Ponniah and William Fisher (2003), opus cit., introduction.

beyond this purpose are not a goal of the forum. Also not when it is a question of taking decisions or deciding on actions against the War on Iraq. It is a space, whose autonomy for example the Feminist movement conceptualised as a political process, out of which the capability and force for counter-hegemony can come. The space itself moves in the field of power, in relation to power and can thus be space for movements. It is not only a room for politics, but a space which is politically constructed and already because of that constitutes a political space. It exists in the name of an organised social movement, a global movement, and in its panels, conferences and in its workshops brings together different local, regional, or world-wide organisations, groups, initiatives, basis groups, associations and groups, which congregate in this space for an identity-founding politics of symbols and in order to look for concrete alternatives, for projects in local, regional and global relationships.

The process of formation of forces against neoliberal globalisation is not yet completed. It is still unclear, whether the resources of traditional actors will suffice to overcome the crisis of the historical block and whether the potentials of new social movements can continue to be developed in a dynamical process. Whether the movements can maintain their dynamic to unfold and bundle their forces against a neoliberal world, or whether their internal contradictions lead to the slowing down of movement. It is also an open question, whether and how a new historical block of old and new actors can constitute itself and whether this one will really push for the upheaval of social relationships and can develop alternative ways and projects and can link a positive elimination of private property as appropriation of human life with the possibility to produce social wealth.