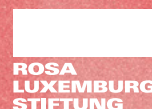


With Socialization Against Powerlessness

The potential of an emancipatory hegemony project for the social-ecological transformation of the energy sector



On behalf of



Imprint

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communia e. V., 2024 (translation 2026)
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Translation: Eric-John Russell with support by Jacob Blumenfeld
Copy-editing: Monika Elsler
Design: Ramin Aryaie

Print: Hinkelstein Druck

ISBN: 978-3-948250-90-4

A study by communia on behalf of Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.



Supported by  **HALEAKALA**
STIFTUNG

Supported in part by a grant from the Open Society Foundation gGmbH
in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations.

Stakeholder and strategy analysis

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**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
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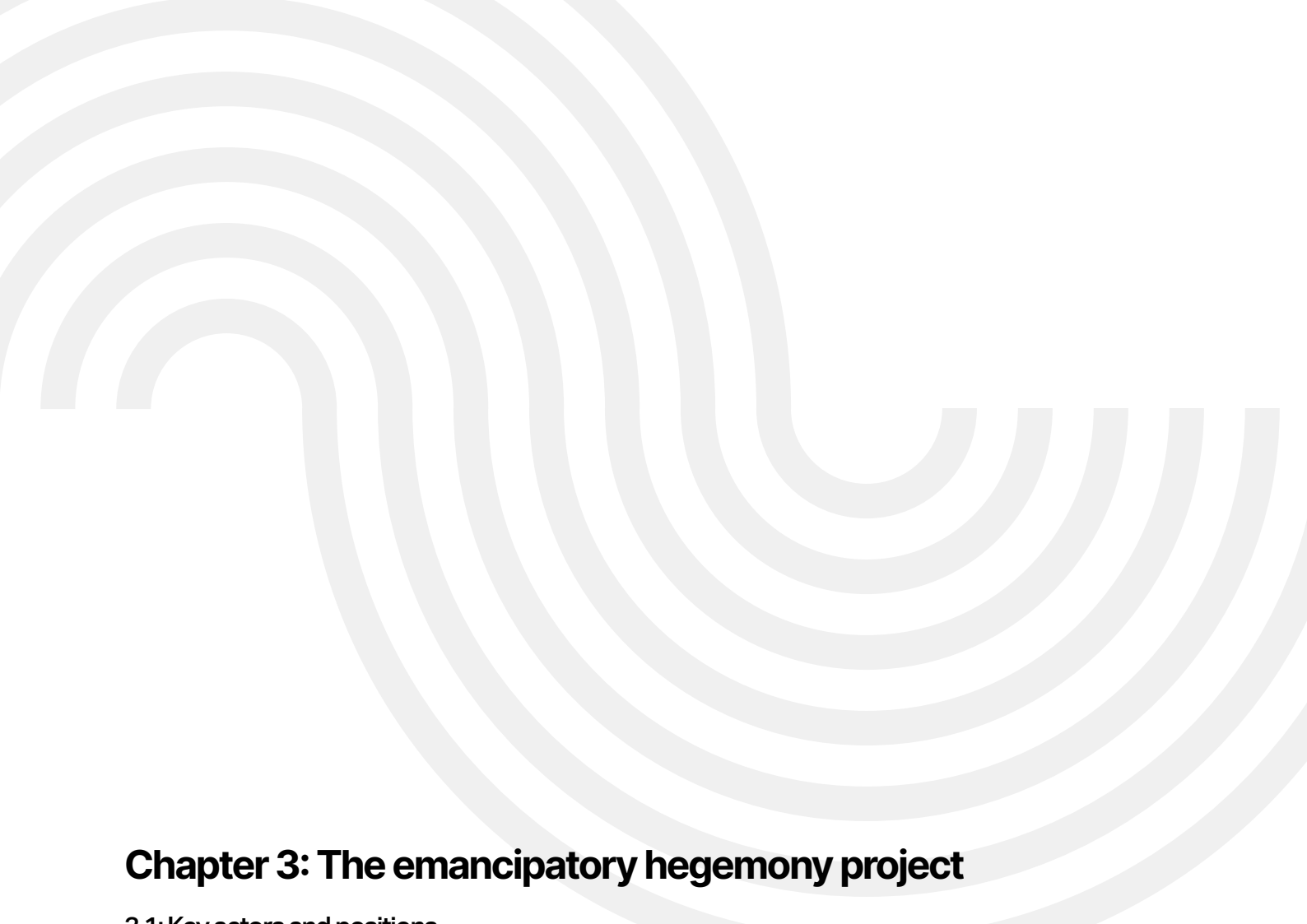
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Preface

Socio-ecological transformation is more contested than ever, with right-wing parties and attitudes gaining popularity. This has many reasons. One is certainly that the traffic light coalition government is failing to fairly redistribute the financial burdens arising from the transformation and to open up perspectives on how the transformation can enable a better life for the many. Instead, the future appears threatening to many people: because climate change is rapidly accelerating, but political decisions are lagging years behind; because the necessary transformations trigger fears; but also because financial burdens are growing—not only in the wake of the decarbonization of the economy—and at the same time, public social welfare systems are falling further into crisis. As a result, everyday life is becoming increasingly challenging for many people, and a positive vision for the future is nowhere in sight.

One thing is clear: such a positive vision for the future has many facets and building blocks. The question of what constitutes a more climate-friendly, but also more social and democratic energy system is an essential part of this. With this in mind, the authors of this study, all organized at communia, have dedicated themselves in close collaboration with actors in the climate movement to advancing the possibilities and potential of a democratic energy transition.

“Energy democracy,” also in the sense of decentralized, public, and cooperative energy production, which should be democratically organized and planned, but also the remunicipalization of public utilities, the socialization of network infrastructures, and much more, have long been guiding principles of DIE LINKE and the subject of numerous projects of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

This analysis of actors and strategies represents an important achievement and is a building block in a larger communia project. The first part (chapters 1 and 2), examines the political circumstances and power dynamics currently shaping the struggle for

socio-ecological transformation. On this basis, the second part of the analysis (chapters 3 and 4) explores the potential and conditions for an emancipatory counter-project that places the question of ownership and demands for socialization in the energy sector at its strategic and mobilizing center. Many things fail because of the question of ownership. Although the large energy companies have long been among the major players in the field of renewable energies, they continue to cling to the fossil-fuel business model. However, any pushback against the force of fossil-fuel inertia can only succeed if society’s control over key areas such as energy supply is democratically expanded and all investment and supply policies are actually aligned with ecological and social criteria; be it questions of a faster, but also resolutely socially responsible phase-out of fossil-fuels, or the premise that supplying something as essential as energy shouldn’t be about profit-driven private interests, but should serve the common good.

It is the merit of this study to classify the initial conditions for such political struggles and to formulate ideas for campaigns and projects in political practice and forms of organization. The study will hopefully help to guide and inspire actors who, as a result of the important socialization debate surrounding the Deutsche Wohnen & Co. expropriation initiative, have set out to promote a climate-friendly and democratic world, including the energy sector, and to shape a positive vision of the future that wins more people over to an emancipatory counter-project and counteracts powerlessness.

Eva Völpel

Economic and Social Policy Advisor
at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation

Introduction

Current structures of property and power are irreconcilably opposed to complying with the 1.5° limit and the necessary restructuring of the energy sector and the economy. Instead of resolving this contradiction, present policy in the government and parts of the opposition is determined by attempts to save capitalism by transforming it “green.” In the process, fossil “bridge technologies” such as gas and problematic approaches such as CCU/CCS,¹ as well as the undifferentiated conversion of gas infrastructure for hydrogen use, are now being consistently integrated as partial solutions, since a more comprehensive transformation would require questioning the very structure of ownership. This technology-fixated green-capitalist project is confronted by growing reactionary and nationalist forces that defend the fossil-fuel status quo much more resolutely.

The dominance of these two “solutions” to the multivalent socio-ecological crisis—green capitalist modernization on the one hand and ethnic-racist opposition to any ecologically motivated transformation on the other—is currently leading to a frightening polarization (“Greens” vs. “AfD”). The war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis, the conjured bloc confrontation between the West and China, and the increasing geopolitical focus by Germany, the EU, and others on the imperialist securing of resources are exacerbating this polarization. All of these factors are leading to an ever-stronger intertwining of energy policy and so-called security policy, that is, with armament and isolationism.

In contrast, a socially and globally just, democratic, and ecologically determined restructuring of the energy supply and the economy is not currently up for debate. What is missing is to break through the destructive polarization between the capitalist mainstream and the extreme right is a unifying and inspiring counter-project from the left. This would have to situate the question of ownership as an anchor and vanishing point: only a shift in the structure of property will enable a transformation guided by the common good rather than corporate interests.

The socialization and democratization of the

energy sector as the foundation of the economy has the potential to form an important reference point for an emancipatory project that is already underway. The socialization of the energy sector could ensure an unconditional and needs-based supply of renewable energy for all, thereby combining climate justice with social security.

Based on a historical-materialist political analysis of socio-ecological hegemony projects in Germany,² we examine current power relations within and between the dominant conflicting (and inherently contradictory) approaches to addressing socio-ecological crises. We also ask how key actors respond within or in relation to these crises. Our aim is to identify the obstacles and potential for an emancipatory hegemony project. We shed light on the current constellations and contradictions within and between the dominant green-capitalist project and its conservative and reactionary counterparts. Contradictions and ambivalences within current debates on energy policy offer starting points for a newly formulated emancipatory counter-project. Based on the current constellation of actors and state of affairs, we discuss strategic and organizational perspectives, potentials, and obstacles for the formation of a progressive counter-hegemony project that could center around the core issues of property ownership and socialization in the energy sector. Our analysis provides an outlook on a possible constellation of actors and concrete strategic perspectives for a strong project that can give new hope by offering a way out of the supposed only choice between green capitalism on the one hand and fascism on the other.

1 The abbreviations stand for “Carbon Capture & Utilization” and “Carbon Capture & Storage.”

2 Sander, Hendrik, “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, 2022.



Since 2020, the registered association communia has been developing strategies for a democratic economy, socialization, and public luxury as a movement-oriented think tank. To this end, we support social movements that advocate socialization and test alternative, public, and democratic models of ownership in order to overcome the climate crisis and inequality. We shape policy, conduct research, and develop new narratives for an economy that serves the many—because it belongs to the many.

In October 2022, we co-organized the first major conference on socialization in Berlin. A second conference followed in March 2024 under the motto “Let’s Socialize: Socialization as a Strategy for Climate Justice.” In autumn 2023, we published our book *Public Luxury* together with BUNDjugend. In it, we and numerous authors defined unconditional access to democratically organized basic services for all as a progressive project and a central lever for climate justice and against poverty and inequality. This study is a further building block in the development of scientific and movement strategy foundations for a democratic energy transition and the socialization of fossil fuel companies in accordance with Article 15 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany [Grundgesetz]. Our aim is to make scientifically sound analysis usable for practical political work.

www.communia.de

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Point of departure and methodology³

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- 3 This chapter is based in part on our article in the anthology *Vergesellschaftung und die sozialökologische Frage*: Banhierl, Lemon / Henze, Justus / Wilken, Maximilian: "Eine strategische Perspektive entwickeln," in: Pfaff, Tino (ed.): *Vergesellschaftung und die sozialökologische Frage*. Oekom, Munich, 2024, pp. 211–224.

The transfer of land, natural resources, and means of production into common ownership or other forms of communal economy for the purpose of socialization has been enshrined in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (GG) since 1949. However, the corresponding Article 15 GG has never been applied. As early as the 1980s, there were debates about the possibilities of socialization, particularly with regard to the steel industry.⁴ Since the beginning of the present decade, the debate has been reignited and has gained new momentum, primarily through the initiative *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen* [*Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co*]. Numerous studies, books, anthologies, and expert reports have been published in recent years in connection with, and primarily inspired by the Berlin tenants' movement.⁵ At the same time, further initiatives and campaigns have emerged; socialization is increasingly discussed both academi-

cally and in practice-oriented activism as a relevant or even central strategy for other policy areas, particularly in care, agriculture, mobility, energy, and, more broadly, climate justice.⁶

The present study is situated within the context of these debates. It aims to contribute to the discourse on movement strategy in particular, with a view to jointly move one step closer to the realization of a democratic economy.

This study is guided by the question of how an emancipatory, socially and ecologically just transformation of the economy in general, and the energy sector in particular, can be achieved. This requires a strong project of emancipatory hegemony, which does not currently exist. In our effort to examine current constellations of power, competing hegemony projects, and the potential of an emancipatory hegemony project, we are guided by the approach of

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- 4 Hoffrogge, Ralf: "Gemeineigentum als Krisenlösung – Die IG Metall und die Bewegung zur Vergesellschaftung der Stahlindustrie 1980–1987," in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft (ZfG)* 71, No. 9/2023, p. 738759.
- 5 Bernt, Mathias / Holm, Andrej: "Socializing Housing Cuts the Rent," Berlin, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 2023; *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen: Wie Vergesellschaftung gelingt. Zum Stand der Debatte*. Parthas Verlag, Berlin, 2022; *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen. Gemeingut Wohnen*. Berlin, 2023; Expertenkommission zum Volksentscheid "Vergesellschaftung großer Wohnungsunternehmen": Abschlussbericht. Berlin, 2023.
- 6 communia (ed.): *Neue Energie für Vergesellschaftung – Vergesellschaftung für neue Energie*. Schieder-Schwalenberg, 2023; *RWE & Co enteignen: Nehmen was uns zusteht. Klimagerechtigkeit heißt Vergesellschaftung*. 2023; Brunnemann, Eva / Rosswog, Tobias (eds.): *VW steht für Verkehrswende. Konversion & Vergesellschaftung zwischen Theorie und Praxis. Graswurzelrevolution*, Heidelberg, 2023; Langlotz, Gesine: "Wir müssen über die Vergesellschaftung unserer natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen sprechen," *Dissens Podcast*, 2023; Berfelde, Rabea / Blumenfeld, Jakob: "Von der Vergesellschaftung zur Planung und wieder zurück. Über alte und neue Debatten um Wirtschaftsplanung und Vergesellschaftung," in: *Demokratische Planwirtschaft in Zeiten von Digitalisierung und Klimakrise. PROKLA – Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft*, Vol. 54, No. 215, 2024, pp. 177–193; Stoll, Niklas: "Vergesellschaftung als Transformationsstrategie," in: *PROKLA – Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialwissenschaft*, Vol. 52, No. 209, 2022, pp. 631–648; Fried, Barbara / Wischniewski, Alex: "Socialize Care Work! In 'Caring Cities', the needs of residents would be the heart of urban policy," Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, 2022.

historical-materialist political analysis (HMPA), which follows the tradition of Antonio Gramsci and Nicos Poulantzas.

According to Gramsci, political domination is not solely based on the state's monopoly on violence, but is even more effective in civil society than in the state.⁷ Accordingly, power is not primarily exercised as coercion, but as moral, political, and intellectual leadership that secures (passive) consent to the status quo.⁸ Gramsci names such power as hegemony. For political struggles, this means that they are always (also) waged outside of state institutions, in civil society.

Gramsci assumed that political struggles are struggles between classes. He does not think of classes as "simply given political actors with fixed, predetermined interests," but as "a plural composition of different groups" that "only emerge as classes in the process of developing political goals, shared values, and collective practice."⁹ A class (or class fraction) can only become hegemonic if it succeeds in integrating other groups within a common perspective and through compromise, thus temporarily stabilizing a certain balance of power. Following Gramsci, critical political scientists further developed an understanding of the process of unifying and stabilizing power. Insight into the contested nature of hegemony has given rise, among other things, to the concept of hegemony projects. Within the state and civil society, varying projects are constantly struggling to become hegemonic. Projects of hegemony do not simply arise from shared interests, but require concrete, distinct political projects that offer solutions to social problems. In this way, they enable different constellations of actors to dynamically join forces. However, hegemony projects are not organized, clearly defined alliances. Rather, they should be understood as an analytical "aggregation of very differently motivated

and often parallel tactics and strategies"¹⁰ of various civil society and political-institutional actors whose strategies develop "against the backdrop of [their] respective analyses of the situation and problems."¹¹

The concept of hegemony projects provides a better understanding of the current situation of the left. Due to multiple crises—the global economic crisis since 2007, the euro crisis since 2010, the coronavirus crisis, the war in Ukraine, climate collapse, and extreme poverty and inequality—which can also be interpreted as crises of neoliberalism, the struggle for hegemony over the last decade has been widely regarded as open.¹² The neoliberal hegemony that had existed until then appeared to many to have come to an end, creating space for the development of new hegemony projects. In this phase of interregnum, in which no power wielded hegemony, both right-wing and left-wing alternative projects developed in Germany and globally that sought to become hegemonic. Due to the intensification of socio-ecological crises, they increasingly positioned themselves around the question of ecological transformation. It should be noted that the gray or neoliberal project remains relevant and powerful, and that established neoliberal institutions and policies, such as the debt brake, are now the arena of political struggles. To overcome these, a new hegemony project would have to become hegemonic. However, this has not yet been observed. Instead, several strong and rapidly changing hegemony projects have been struggling with each other for years, without any one being able to establish itself as hegemonic in the long-term. In the meantime, however, the dominance of a green-capitalist project is now emerging, which comes closest to a hegemonic position.

An overview of these projects (for Germany) was presented by Hendrik Sander in a study for the Rosa

7 See Gramsci, Antonio: *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 2, Columbia University Press, 2011.

8 See Buckel, Sonja et al.: "Theorie, Methoden und Analysen kritischer Europaforschung," in: Forschungsgruppe „Staatsprojekt Europa" (ed.): *Kämpfe um Migrationspolitik. Theorie, Methode und Analysen kritischer Europaforschung*. Transcript, Bielefeld, 2014, pp. 15–84, here: p. 31.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

10 Kannankulam, John / Georgi, Fabian: "Die Europäische Integration als materielle Verdichtung von Kräfteverhältnissen" (Working Paper No. 30). Fachbereich Gesellschaftswissenschaften und Philosophie der Phillips-Universität-Marburg, 2012, p. 35.

11 Buckel, Sonja et al.: "Theorie, Methoden und Analysen kritischer Europaforschung," in: Forschungsgruppe „Staatsprojekt Europa" (ed.): *Kämpfe um Migrationspolitik. Theorie, Methode und Analysen kritischer Europaforschung*. Transcript, Bielefeld, 2014, pp. 15–84, here: p. 46.

12 See, for example, Candeias, Mario: "Interregnum – molekulare Verdichtung und organische Krise," in: Demirović, Alex et al. (eds.): *VielfachKrise. Im finanzdominierten Kapitalismus*. VSA Verlag, Hamburg, 2011, pp. 45–61.

Luxemburg Foundation in 2022.¹³ The fossil-fuel-based neoliberal gray project, which had long been hegemonic, has been increasingly challenged since the 1970s by a growing, ecologically motivated green project. According to Sander's analysis, both have subsequently become more differentiated. In 2022, he heuristically identified the following five hegemony projects: the first, now dominant, is described by Sander as a green-capitalist hegemony project. It represents the core of the former green project and now unites "most of the liberal forces in society that are committed to change and modernization. The aim of the project is to address the ecological crisis and use it to renew society and capitalism in Germany. The focus is on tackling the climate crisis and establishing a climate-neutral mode of production and way of life, but on the basis of existing social structures."¹⁴ Despite these successes, we do not consider the green-capitalist hegemony project to be hegemonic, but merely dominant—the dynamics between social forces are too contested and unstable. Currently, the green-capitalist hegemony project is being challenged, particularly from the right. There, two strong, partly overlapping hegemony projects have emerged from the old gray. In addition to the old core of the gray project, the fossil-fuel-conservative hegemony project, which Sander lists as the second project and understands as "a manifestation of a still strong conservative and privileged current in the broad population and the bourgeoisie" that seeks to "defend traditional industries and (imperialist) ways of life threatened by socio-ecological transformation and to secure a fossil-fuel-based, resource-intensive, growth-oriented economic model in the long-term,"¹⁵ Sander sees the third, reactionary hegemony project as "an expression of the newly formed and strengthened right-wing pole in German society." This project

is about "defending white and patriarchal material privileges and preventing any kind of socio-ecological transformation."¹⁶ Sander considers the fourth, social-defensive project as politically difficult to pin down and the least clearly defined. Its goal is to "defend social security and precarious economic living conditions against the imposed demands of anti-social neoliberal, but also socio-ecological policies."¹⁷ In the fifth, emancipatory project, which emerged from the more radical wing of the former green project, "the social and ecological struggles, movements, and agents of recent years" are consolidating to the left of the green-capitalist project: "the goal of the emancipatory project is system change, that is, the fundamental transformation of existing society in order to eliminate the root causes of the socio-ecological crisis."¹⁸

According to Sander, the green-capitalist project has recently succeeded in rallying behind itself "significant sections of the bourgeoisie [...] including large corporations and leading industries"¹⁹ and has increasingly embedded itself in the "core strategies and programs of the dominant state apparatuses."²⁰ The dominance of this project has been challenged in recent years, particularly from the right, while left-wing protest movements and parties (not only in Germany) have repeatedly gained momentum since 2008 but have barely been able to stabilize. Sander thus attributes "little [...] hegemonic potential" to the emancipatory project "in the current social situation."²¹

In the following chapter 2, we will first update our analysis of the four prominent hegemony projects based on Sander's heuristics before discussing the emancipatory counter-project. Drawing on developments in recent years, we discuss whether Sander's proposed differentiation between the projects can still be maintained. We are particularly interested in

13 Sander, Hendrik: "An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland." Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, 2022.

14 Ibid., p. 7.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 8.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 24.

21 Ibid., p. 26.

the tensions and contradictions within and between these projects. For pragmatic research reasons, we focus on parties, trade unions, and their environment, without denying the relevance of other actors (NGOs, media, etc.). Based on the current tensions and dynamic developments, in the final section of the chapter we identify initial points of contact and alliance options that could arise for an emancipatory project.

We then present the current (crisis-ridden) situation of the emancipatory counter-project and its development in recent years (chapter 3). We state that a growing counter-hegemony project currently lacks, among other things, a unifying perspective and propose the question of property in general and socialization as a strategy and more concrete form as such a unifying element. Finally, we identify four challenges that socialization must overcome as a unifying perspective of an emancipatory project and outline requirements for forms of organization and practice (chapter 4).

2

Hegemony projects

In recent years, the content, goals, positions of power, and dynamics of the green-capitalist, fossil-fuel conservative, reactionary, and social-defensive projects have shifted and developed dynamically. In the following, we demonstrate that Sander's classification nevertheless continues to be meaningful—also and precisely because it provides insight into the tensions and contradictions between these projects and thus points of intervention for an emancipatory counter-project.

2.1 Current development of the projects

On the surface, the green-capitalist hegemony project has established itself as the dominant project and shapes the policies of the German federal government and the EU. In contrast, a reactionary project grows menacingly as the most important and by far the most clearly defined opponent, as demonstrated by the rise of the AfD, but also by trends across almost the entire EU. A central thesis of this study is that the centrifugal forces of this increasingly polarized situation are leading large parts of the social-defensive and fossil-conservative projects to form strategic alliances with one of the two poles. In so doing, they significantly shape and change the two power blocs and, above all, the green-capitalist project itself, but (temporarily) become less recognizable as separate projects. At the same time, it cannot be assumed that these projects will be fully absorbed into the two poles. It is therefore worth taking a look at the archetypal actors and positions of all projects before discussing the complex contradictions and recent developments in more detail. The emancipatory project, its status, and its potential are presented in detail in the following chapter 3.

The green-capitalist project

The green project, which for several decades was the most important opponent of gray hegemony, has now blossomed into the dominant hegemony project itself, without, however, becoming hegemonic. Many actors from its origins in (anti-capitalist) environmental movements are now firmly integrated into party, NGO, and government structures. They now stand for an ecological modernization of capitalism that leaves the status quo of property and production relations largely untouched. The (compromising) integration of formerly resistant forces into the state apparatus and the political mainstream, years of pressure from social movements and actors involved in the emancipatory project, and the increasing visibility of the climate crisis in the form of floods and droughts, even in Germany, have led to a green project of capitalist modernization that appears to be acceptable to large sections of society. For example, in its 2022 study on "Environmental Awareness," the German Environment Agency published that 91% of people in Germany supported a climate-friendly restructuring of the economy.²² In addition to the development of an ecologically oriented program (of whatever kind) as a

²² Grothmann, Torsten et al. (2023) "Environmental Awareness in Germany 2022: Results of a Representative Population Survey," BMUV/UBA, Dessau-Roßlau.

"practical necessity" for all actors striving for hegemony;²³ this is primarily due to the fact that the green-capitalist hegemony project is best placed to combine the tackling of socio-ecological crises with the development of new (green) markets, and is thus able to formulate a compromise between factions of capital and society.²⁴ Nevertheless, the project cannot be regarded as hegemonic. As the second section of this chapter will demonstrate, this project cannot be considered "common sense"; rather, it is subject to fierce and persistent attacks, which also cause it to constantly evolve and change.

With the adoption of the EU's "Fit for 55" package of measures to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030, a binding framework for reducing emissions has been established, which most German parties support. With a focus on a European emissions trading system, CO2 border adjustments, and alternative energy and fuel production, European climate protection measures cement an ecological approach to the climate crisis under capitalist conditions, symbolically represented in Germany by the traffic light coalition government and programmatically reflected in its goal of a "social-ecological market economy."²⁵ Economic restructuring should not jeopardize prosperity and growth and should ensure the competitiveness of the EU and its member states. In this regard, the socio-ecological transformation or restructuring of the economy is understood as an ecological modernization of the existing economic model, in which previous practices are now continued on a "green" basis. This so-called green industrial policy envisages an accelerated expansion of renewable energy sources in order to electrify large parts of the fossil fuel industry and, where this is not possible, to gradually switch to green hydrogen or so-called e-fuels. The aim is to make Germany a high-tech "future industry" location (examples: a global center for the semiconductor industry, a leading market for green hydrogen). In view of regulatory and ecological changes in conditions

of production and geopolitical challenges, this sector must remain globally competitive and assume a leading role. These challenges also shape the broad consensus on diversifying energy supplies (in terms of raw materials and trading partners) and increasing energy sovereignty. The state has a more interventionist and protectionist role to play in this process. In addition to creating investment incentives for ecological modernization, this includes the establishment of certain "future industries" (e.g. Intel in Magdeburg, Tesla in Grünheide), the possible subsidizing of industrial electricity (transformation electricity price), securing sales markets for renewable energies and climate-friendly products,²⁶ expanding the grid infrastructure, and investing heavily in a German hydrogen network.²⁷ In terms of social policy, the role of the state in the green-capitalist compromise is accompanied, at least on paper, by the creation of a (moderate) social compensation/equalization mechanism (e.g. the EU Social Climate Fund, the climate money proposed in the coalition agreement, which, however, lacks implementation prospects).²⁸

For a long time, the trade union debate focused primarily on the contradiction (very real under conditions of private ownership) between environmental policy and the preservation of jobs in well-organized, but energy-intensive industries. Accordingly, the large (industrial) trade unions (IG Metall and IG BCE), despite their programmatic commitments to green transformation, often tended to act as a break. At the same time, parts of IG Metall and ver.di had already been advocating paths for socio-ecological transformation and cooperation with environmental policy actors even before the traffic light coalition government took office. For example, IG Metall called for regional transformation councils and funds in the 2021 federal elections.²⁹ However, the social and environmental demands of the unions often remained at the level of discourse intervention under the grand coalition. With the advent of the traffic light coalition

23 Cf. Candeias, Mario (2022) "Der Übergang," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

24 Cf. Candeias, Mario (2023) "Wir leben in keiner offenen Situation mehr," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

25 Cf. SPD/Greens/FDP (2021) "Dare to Make More Progress: Alliance for Freedom, Justice, and Sustainability," Berlin, p. 25.

26 Cf. *ibid.*

27 Cf. BMWK (2023) "Industriepolitik in der Zeitenwende," Berlin, p. 29f.

28 Cf. SPD/Greens/FDP (2021) "Dare to Make More Progress: Alliance for Freedom, Justice, and Sustainability," Berlin, p. 63.

29 Cf. BUND/IG Metall (2021) "Energie- und Mobilitätswende: Die kommende Bundesregierung muss zügig handeln!"

government and the increasing discussion of active industrial policy in the context of global competition, IG Metall and, to a lesser extent, IG BCE have (further) opened up to the green-capitalist project. Exemplary here include calls for transformation funds,³⁰ industrial electricity prices,³¹ and the associated criticism of the debt brake as a limit on investment. Position papers by industrial unions recognize the electrification of the powertrain in the automotive industry (and the expansion of alternatives to private motorized transport),³² the development of the hydrogen economy,³³ and the development of renewable energies³⁴ as key transformation goals. At the same time, these papers generally point to the need for "realism" in the context of the existing power relations and a pace of transformation that is compatible with job preservation.³⁵

At least in terms of their programs, the unions are increasingly aligning themselves with the green-capitalist project, which aims to achieve a transformation financed by the state but implemented under conditions of private ownership. In exchange for massive state support, they are primarily demanding the preservation of plants and jobs. There are promising points of departure, such as in the statutes of the IG Metall union, which call for the socialization of key industries, in individual delegate motions at trade union conferences, in the debate on economic democracy that has been burgeoning since 2010, and in individual positions, such as the demand by IG Metall executive board member Hans-Jürgen Urban: "Where public money flows, public ownership must arise."³⁶ Nevertheless, demands for socialization or public ownership remain rather marginal. The major unions are thus, at least in their political programs, largely part of the green-capitalist hegemony project and absorbed into the status quo.

The fossil-conservative project

The fossil-fuel-conservative project is the core of the former hegemony gray project. It embodies "the essential force that relies on a business-as-usual path and thus on a continuation of conventional domination of nature."³⁷ Despite the current dominance of the green-capitalist project, the persistence and power of this deeply rooted bloc, which has grown over decades, in some cases even centuries, and is equipped with considerable power resources, can hardly be overestimated. This project represents the interests of traditional German capital factions and is therefore committed to the fossil-fuel-based economy. Historically, this project has been supported not only by the FDP but also by the CDU/CSU, which have been the strongest forces in sixteen of the twenty federal elections since the founding of the Federal Republic, thus shaping energy policy like no other party.

The fossil-conservative hegemony project has been forced onto the defensive by the green-capitalist project, but has so far been able to continue to exert its influence over the fossil-fuel capital factions. Against the backdrop of the dominance of the green-capitalist project and thus progressive ecological modernization, it has adapted its strategy in recent years. It has increasingly shifted away from defending old technologies towards forming strategic alliances with the green-capitalist project to help shape the phase-out of these technologies and, often under the label of "technological openness," to delay this phase-out and enable the continued use of fossil-fuels in parallel with the expansion of renewable energies. This is achieved, for example, by continuing CO₂-intensive (fossil) energy production through CCS/CCU as "green" or legitimizing it in view of (supposed) supply bottlenecks. Another strategy of the fossil-conservative project is to implicitly link the scope for energy

30 See, for example, Tagesschau, "IG-Metall fordert 600-Milliarden-Sondervermögen," tagesschau.de, January 13, 2024.

31 Cf. Eder, Stefan, "Gewerkschaft IG BCE fordert Staatshilfen für Energiewende," VDI Nachrichten, January 15, 2024.

32 Cf. IG Metall, "Deshalb ist die Förderung für Elektroautos richtig," April 27, 2016.

33 Cf. IG Metall, "Wasserstoff treibt an."

34 Cf. IG BCE, "Energiewende aber richtig," Hannover, 2017.

35 Cf. DPA, "DGB-Chefin warnt vor Überforderung durch Klimapolitik," faz.net, June 1, 2024.

36 Urban, Hans-Jürgen (2022) "Wo öffentliches Geld fließt, muss öffentliches Eigentum entstehen," Interviewed by Eva Völpele and Moritz Warnke, Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

37 Sander, Hendrik (2022) "An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland," Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 7.

transition to security policy. Climate protection is thus played off against rearmament.³⁸ At the same time, however, the expansion of renewable energies is also demanded against the backdrop of security policy, in this case dependence on foreign resources.

The existing and emerging alliances between (fossil-fuel) conservative forces and the now dominant green-capitalist hegemony project have largely been formed out of strategic necessity and are therefore not irreversible should the situation change. Merkel's governance coincides with the interregnum (the tendency toward a balance of power between the old gray and new green-capitalist projects) and illustrates this point. The ecological restructuring projects of the previous red-green government (promotion of decentralized expansion of renewable energies, nuclear phase-out) were initially in part reversed or significantly slowed down under Merkel's classic fossil-conservative coalition. Due to external shocks such as the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the growing climate movement, and the changing interests of segments of capital, which increasingly saw future prospects in ecological restructuring thanks to the EU's market-oriented and business-friendly green-capitalist climate policy, Merkel repeatedly made U-turns and was ultimately even dubbed the "climate chancellor." However, the fact that a more consistent and uncompromising fossil-fuel policy has by no means disappeared is evident, for example, in the aggressively transformation-preventing policies of the Union's agriculture ministers and the CSU and FDP transportation ministers, who are now even being criticized by the automotive industry itself, whose interests they claim to represent.³⁹

Insofar as the neoliberal fossil-conservative project emphasizes compliance with the debt brake and a rejection of vertical industrial policy, it is no longer compatible with preserving jobs in the core sectors of the industrial unions, which is why they are critical of it. The fossil-conservative project and the industrial unions have long shared a rejection of (non-socially cushioned) environmental policies, and union representatives worked, for example, in the Coal Commis-

sion to extend the operating times of lignite. However, it has now become clear that, in order to remain competitive, particularly in the context of competition from China and the US, massive restructuring processes are necessary to electrify and decarbonize industry in order to maintain industrial production and associated jobs in Germany.

Overall, the fossil-conservative hegemony project represents the forces of inertia preventing comprehensive and rapid green modernization. At the same time, however, it faces a strategic decision: whether to continue integrating the interests of traditional capital factions into green modernization through closer cooperation with the green-capitalist project, or to block it together with the reactionary project. Both options pose the risk for the fossil-conservative hegemony project that it will sooner or later integrate itself into one of the other two projects mentioned, or disintegrate between them.

The reactionary project

Like the fossil-fuel-capitalist project, the reactionary project is a "branch of the former gray project [...] that has now developed its own right-wing agenda in regards to nature."⁴⁰ The shared roots with the fossil-conservative hegemony project and the new dominance of the green-capitalist project are increasingly leading to new and renewed alliances and convergences. Nevertheless, the reactionary project can also be described as independent, as it stems from a different motivation and is less consistent in representing the interests of capital.

In recent years, the AfD has positioned itself as the most important political actor in the reactionary hegemony project and as an explicit antithesis to the government's green-capitalist project. In so doing, it has sometimes acted in a reflectively strategic manner in building a counter-hegemony project.⁴¹ However, in addition to its fundamental opposition to any transformation, to the status quo, and to the

38 Cf. Mendgen, Alisha (2024) "Aufrüstung, Abwehr, weniger Klimaschutz. Frankfurter Rundschau," 11. March 11.

39 Cf. Blume, Oliver (2023) "Ich wünsche mir in der Verbrenner-Diskussion weniger Emotionen," Interviewed by Max Hägler and Lisa Nienhaus, Süddeutsche Zeitung, March 25.

40 Sander, Hendrik (2022) "An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland," Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 7.

41 Cf. Beutin, Lorenz Gösta (2023) "Rechter Kulturkampf ums Heizungsgesetz," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

so-called old parties, it also seeks to connect with the “still strong conservative and privileged current in the broader population and the bourgeoisie,”⁴² which forms the core of the fossil-conservative project. For example, it positions itself on its website as the “liberal and conservative”⁴³ voice of reason in energy policy.

In its manifesto, the AfD states in the chapter on energy policy: “The climate has been changing for as long as the Earth has existed. The federal government’s climate protection policy is based on hypothetical climate models that have not yet been proven.”⁴⁴ Insofar as global warming actually exists at all, it is necessary to adapt to it, which primarily translates into racist isolationism and migration policies. The European election program states: “The ‘energy transition’ pushed by the EU has failed. It has made electricity and heating costs enormously more expensive and is jeopardizing Germany as a business center.”⁴⁵ The AfD is avowedly opposed to a “great transformation,” the Climate Protection Plan 2050, the Renewable Energies Heat Act, and the expansion of renewable energies.⁴⁶ Instead, it wants to extend the use of nuclear power and considers gas and coal indispensable for the foreseeable future. It calls for an end to sanctions against Russia and the repair and commissioning of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline so that fossil fuels can be imported from Russia. The AfD also claims that electricity prices, especially for lower incomes, will inevitably rise due to the construction of new wind and solar power plants, and that heating systems using renewable energies are expensive, unreliable, and harmful to the environment.⁴⁷

Such extreme and counterfactual climate and energy policies characterize the reactionary hegemony project and are less common in the fossil-conservative camp. However, the fact that there are overlaps here is clearly demonstrated by the Values

Union, which emerged from the CDU/CSU, with its collaboration with the climate denial institute EIKE,⁴⁸ and in the work of the influential neoliberal think tank Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (INSM), which essentially belongs to the fossil-conservative project. The latter, for example, aggressively attacks the expansion of renewable energies, in some cases using misinformation.⁴⁹

Trade unions and works councils are one of the most important bulwarks against reactionary tendencies. Transformation conflicts are immediately visible in the workplace. So far, unions have largely succeeded in fending off attempts to co-opt the workforce, both within companies and at the political level. At the same time, it is clear that transformation conflicts will intensify and that right-wing mobilization will take place primarily in those regions and workplaces where the few democratic options for participation in the economy (works councils and co-determination, or worker representation on corporate boards) are limited and union membership is low. The declining coverage of collective bargaining and the de-democratization of companies, especially in regions particularly affected by transformation, pose a challenge for trade union struggles, which have retreated to their core sectors and companies in the wake of neoliberal attacks.

The social-defensive project

The social-defensive project emerged “as a result of neoliberal attacks and widespread precariousness in recent decades, as well as the articulation of a rather defensive resistance against it,” and pursues the goal of “defending social security and precarious economic living conditions against the impositions

42 Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 7.

43 AfD (2016) “Grundsatzprogramm,” Preamble.

44 AfD (2016) “Grundsatzprogramm,” Section 12 “Energiepolitik.”

45 AfD (2024) “Europa neu denken.”

46 Cf. AfD (2017) “Energie | Umwelt | Klima”; AfD (2016) “Grundsatzprogramm,” Section 12 “Energiepolitik”; Alternative für Deutschland (2024) “Europa neu denken.”

47 Cf. *ibid.*; AfD, “Ampel aufhalten – Heizhammer stoppen!”

48 Cf. Götze, Susanne and Jeroes, Annika (2020) “Koalition der Klimawandelleugner,” *spiegel.de*, January 25.

49 Cf. Beutin, Lorenz Gösta (2023) “Rechter Kulturkampf ums Heizungsgesetz,” *Zeitschrift Luxemburg*.

of anti-social neoliberal, but also socio-ecological policies.”⁵⁰ Social-defensive strategies can be found in welfare associations, parts of the SPD, parts of the trade unions, and the newly founded Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW). The social-defensive project is, in comparison, less clearly defined and, due to the defensive nature of its strategies, has so far had few constructive political projects that could have brought the various groups of actors together.

Some actors in the SPD and trade unions and around them who have pursued and continue to pursue social-defensive policies have strategically integrated themselves into the government and cooperate with the green-capitalist project. Others, however, have just as strategically aligned themselves with the reactionary project surrounding the AfD. In view of the latest election results, it seems conceivable that the BSW will succeed in breathing life into this hegemony project as an independent (new) entity.

Some parts of the trade unions, and in particular the IG BCE, continue to be associated with the social-defensive project due to their focus on preserving jobs in industrial and well-organized sectors. Although there is broad consensus on green-capitalist restructuring projects, such as the shift to electric mobility, union leaders are de facto emphasizing a slowdown in restructuring by demanding a “socially acceptable pace of transformation”⁵¹ and underline the need for social cushioning and slowing down transformation through bridges, such as politically through industrial electricity prices, but also technologically through the preservation and new construction of gas power plants and the gradual dismantling of coal power. Even if the union’s program is partly compatible with social-defensive constellations, its close historical ties to the SPD seem to make a shift toward the newly formed BSW unlikely.

50 Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 7.

51 DPA (2024) “DGB-Chefin warnt vor Überforderung durch Klimapolitik,” faz.net, June 1.

2.2 Reconfiguration of hegemony projects amid intensifying polarization

In the struggle for hegemony, a decisive situation is currently coming to a head. In recent years, the green-capitalist project has increasingly established itself as the dominant project within state apparatuses and has been incorporated into current policies. Meanwhile, the fossil-conservative project has lost strength and influence. However, the reactionary hegemony project has increasingly emerged as a serious challenge to the green-capitalist project; fascist governments have already established themselves in other European countries. Green capitalism is not a foregone conclusion, but is increasingly challenged by the right. The polarization between “the Greens” and “the AfD” is increasingly pushing other hegemony projects out of the center of social debate. The emancipatory hegemony project (which we will discuss in detail below) is already marginalized. The other two projects tend to be crushed (social-defensive project) or torn apart (fossil-conservative project) by this polarization. At the same time, within this constellation, they could tip the scales.

Against this backdrop, the hegemony projects themselves are also changing. On the one hand, the green-capitalist project is being shaped by the efforts of fossil-conservative actors to connect and exert influence, thereby aligning themselves with the green-capitalist project. On the other hand, cross-project connections are forming between the fossil-conservative and reactionary projects. This tendency toward a more concentrated counterweight on the conservative-reactionary side has not yet led to a more progressive agenda on the part of the green-capitalist project, but rather to attempts at containment and stabilization through the further integration of fossil-fuel (and nationalist) actors and policies. In particular, the frustrations arising from these developments for progressive actors in the green-capitalist project (members of parliament, trade union actors, NGOs, etc.) offer potential points of reference for the eman-

cipatory project, which we will examine in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

Convergence of the green-capitalist and fossil-conservative projects

Given the dominance of the green-capitalist project, which is also supported by global competition for future technologies and therefore now enjoys the backing of broad fractions of capital, parts of the fossil-conservative hegemony project have resigned themselves to participating in green modernization. They are now attempting to help shape it within the framework of a strategic alliance with the green-capitalist project. This is illustrated, for example, by the change of course of the FDP and CDU/CSU towards renewable energies.⁵² They are now committed to climate goals and, citing the preservation of creation and the safeguarding of prosperity and growth, are now even attempting to position themselves as leaders in achieving climate targets and expanding renewable energies. For example, the CSU wants Bavaria to become climate-neutral before the federal government,⁵³ the CDU parliamentary group in Rhineland-Palatinate wants to push ahead with wind power expansion faster than the SPD state government there,⁵⁴ and the FDP wants to expand renewable energies (especially the German hydrogen industry) at “breakneck speed.”⁵⁵

While the shared consensus between green-capitalist and fossil-conservative projects is that growth and the broad continuity of the imperialist way of life are not called into question in an ecological-social market economy, the design of green modernization remains contested. Different forms of green capitalism (e.g. green-liberal or post-neoliberal) could prevail. However, there is not yet a sufficiently strong

52 Cf. Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 16; CDU Präsidium (2021) “Unser Ziel: Klimaneutralität deutlich vor Mitte des Jahrhunderts,” Berlin, p. 3. CDU Präsidium (2021) “Unser Ziel: Klimaneutralität deutlich vor Mitte des Jahrhunderts,” Berlin, p. 3.

53 Cf. CSU (2023) “Für ein neues Miteinander. Das Grundsatzprogramm der CSU,” Munich.

54 Cf. DPA (2024) “CDU drückt beim Windkraftausbau aufs Tempo,” zeit.de, March 6.

55 FDP (2022) “Deutschland zündet den Turbo für Freiheitsenergien”; FDP: Deutschland zur Wasserstoffrepublik machen.

power bloc whose interests would be consolidated in one of these versions.⁵⁶ As a result, it can be observed that a “pure” green modernization of capitalism—most clearly pursued by the Greens, but also frequently by EU policy in recent years—is being moderated and altered by the social-defensive and fossil-fuel forces involved. Following the shift to the right in the European Parliament in the summer of 2024, it is to be expected that EU climate policy and the Green Deal will be further questioned or weakened.

One example is the struggle over the speed and scope of the energy transition. While the Greens are clearly committed to phasing out fossil energy supplies,⁵⁷ the FDP has shifted toward renewable energies,⁵⁸ but under the banner of “technological openness,” advocates a parallel extension of fossil energy sources, which it wants to have enshrined in law.⁵⁹ The “energy freedom” propagated by the FDP is also fed, for example, by domestic natural gas fracking and hydrogen, not only from renewable energy sources, but also from fossil, nuclear, or other “gray” energy sources. The FDP aims to achieve “climate neutrality” through, among other things, the storage or reuse of CO₂ (CCU/CCS) or CO₂ compensation; thus, it serves to prolong the established fossil-fuel business practices of its elitist-conservative voters, for example, in the form of e-fuels for combustion engines.⁶⁰ As a result, the consensus on expanding renewable energies is repeatedly overshadowed by disputes over its pace and consistency (in relation to fossil-fuels).

In turn, the green-capitalist project is also moving closer to fossil-conservative actors. The Greens in particular are pursuing the goal of expanding their claim to leadership through policies capable of win-

ning majority support.⁶¹ As a result, fossil-conservative (but also selectively social-defensive) positions are being integrated into the project itself, and far-reaching concessions are being made to its hegemony project, particularly with regard to fossil-fuel “bridge technologies,” the consolidation of fossil-fuel infrastructure (LNG terminals), or “technological openness” in the mobility sector, for example.

This alliance constellation is also shaped by a new looming bloc confrontation between the West and China and by the war in Ukraine. In view of the intensifying competition for “global leadership in the new period of development towards a high-tech and upgraded green capitalism,”⁶² the project of ecological modernization of the capitalist mode of production remains an important element. However, it is taking on strong imperialist characteristics and is increasingly subordinated to the struggle for scarce resources and the associated military buildup, and thus partially blocked.⁶³ This strengthens the fossil-conservative project in alliance with the green-capitalist one. The picture is thus shifting noticeably toward an “imperialist-neoliberal modernization of the German export model.”⁶⁴ Instead of state intervention in the form of social policy measures, the focus is shifting to securing the international competitiveness of the German export economy. This is expressed, for example, through the subsidization of industrial electricity, through rearmament, and through the ever-present threat of social cuts. Renewable energies and an ecological restructuring of the economy can continue to be important in this imperialist-neoliberal modernization. However, they fall behind increased imperialist constraints or are sacrificed to them in necessary. For

56 Cf. Becker, Lia (2023) “Blockierte Transformation und rechte Offensive,” Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

57 Cf. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Bundestagsfraktion (2023) “Transformation gestalten – Rahmenbedingungen schaffen, vorausschauend und verantwortungsvoll,” p. 2.

58 Cf. Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 16.

59 FDP Bundesparteitag: Beschluss des 74. Ordentl. Bundesparteitages (2023) “Strategischer Rahmen für die Energieversorgung in Deutschland,” p. 4.

60 Cf. FDP Bundesparteitag (2023) “Beschluss des 74. Ordentl. Bundesparteitages: Strategischer Rahmen für die Energieversorgung in Deutschland,” p. 6; FDP Bundesgeschäftsstelle (2022) “Argumente. Stärkung von Freiheitsenergien – eine marktwirtschaftliche Energiewende,”; Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 16.

61 Cf. GRÜNE (2020) “... zu achten und zu schützen ...” Veränderung schafft Halt,” Grundsatzprogramm. Berlin, p. 4.

62 Candeias, Mario (2023) “Wir leben in keiner offenen Situation mehr,” Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

63 Cf. Becker, Lia (2023) “Blockierte Transformation und rechte Offensive,” Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

64 Ibid.

example, rising military spending stands in the way of investment in ecological modernization. State support for renewable energies is being counteracted by a simultaneous extension of fossil-fuels (in view of the energy crisis in the wake of Russia's war of aggression, but also independently of it). A case in point are the LNG terminals, which continue to be built or commissioned despite sufficient gas supplies. These developments demonstrate that the green-capitalist hegemony project must make extensive concessions to the fossil-conservatives and that green modernization is developing towards an intensification of imperialist-neoliberal tendencies on a changed, green basis.⁶⁵ This is not least due to the fact that the fossil-conservative project is simultaneously pursuing other alliance options.

Fossil-reactionary alliances

Parallel to the collaboration with the green-capitalist project, there are increasing tendencies in the fossil-conservative camp to join forces with the reactionary project of ecological modernization to set up obstacles.⁶⁶ In the background, preparations are being made for a possible shift in political direction, which the conservative forces themselves want to bring about and lead. The growing reactionary hegemony project, which is increasingly developing as a counterpole to the green-capitalist project, opens up other alliance options for actors in the fossil-conservative project. This is demonstrated by recurring debates within the CDU/CSU union about possible cooperation with the AfD, which has actually taken place at the municipal level, as well as the spin-off of the Values Union as a separate party, which embodies this tendency toward a conservative-fossil dual strategy.

While parts of the fossil-conservative bloc are in-

creasingly and willingly asserting their interests in alliances with the green-capitalist hegemony project, as shown, relevant parts of the fossil-conservative hegemony project see the possibility of completely defending their established fossil-based economic and lifestyle models against ecological modernization. There are new alliances between parts of the dominant fossil-conservative project that are (once again) forming alliances with the reactionary hegemony project. Thus, precisely through the partial integration of conservative and neoliberal forces into the green-capitalist renewal project, a broader right-wing, fossil-based, authoritarian alliance is currently forming as the most powerful counterweight to the current green project, even extending into parts of the governing parties.⁶⁷ Examples include the joint blockade by the FDP, CDU/CSU, and AfD in the expansion of renewable energies,⁶⁸ the spin-off of the Values Union as an independent party that explicitly does not rule out a coalition with the AfD,⁶⁹ and the participation of representatives of the CDU, Values Union, and AfD in the "Potsdam Meeting" with leading figures from the German and Austrian right-wing extremist scene.⁷⁰

As one of the central areas of conflict in the ecological restructuring, energy supply plays an important role in the formation of a potential unifying fossil-reactionary project. This was most recently observed in the right-wing culture war surrounding the Building Energy Act, the so-called "Heating Act." Here, the AfD, parts of the FDP, and the CDU/CSU Union, in conjunction with Springer Press and the CDU-affiliated neoliberal lobby Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft (INSM), deliberately stoked fears around the energy supply (among other things by spreading misinformation)⁷¹ and further built up the image of the Greens as the enemy. In so doing, they evoke the narrative of a free market economy as an alternative to the "prohibition policy" of the Greens (or, depending

65 Cf. Ibid.

66 See, for example, Gensel, Loréne (2023) "CDU, FDP und AfD erschweren Bau von Windrädern in Thüringer Wäldern," MDR Thüringen, December 8.

67 Cf. Becker, Lia (2024) "Blockierte Transformation und rechte Offensive," Zeitschrift Luxemburg; Candeias, Mario (2023) "Wir leben in keiner offenen Situation mehr," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

68 Cf. Fleckenstein, Hanno (2023) "Zusammenarbeit von FDP, CDU und AfD. Nächster Dammbruch in Thüringen," taz.berlin; Gensel, Loréne (2023) "CDU, FDP und AfD erschweren Bau von Windrädern in Thüringer Wäldern," MDR Thüringen, December 8.

69 Cf. Litschko, Konrad (2024) "Maaßens Werteunion wird Partei: Zu Diensten der AfD," taz.de, January 21.

70 Cf. Bensmann, Marcus et al. (2024) "Geheimplan gegen Deutschland," Correctiv – Recherchen für die Gesellschaft, January 10.

71 Cf. Beutin, Lorenz Gösta (2023) "Rechter Kulturkampf ums Heizungsgesetz," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

on the actor, even the entire traffic light coalition government), which they describe as ideologically blinded. The desired return to nuclear power also has a unifying effect on the program. While the rejection of “state paternalism” is exploited from all sides within the fossil-reactionary pole in its antagonistic opposition to the green-capitalist project represented by the traffic light coalition government, there are clear divisions that make a complete merger of conservative and reactionary actors unlikely. The reintroduction of compulsory military service demanded by the CDU, Values Union, and AfD must therefore be understood not only in terms of a supposed identity-building nationalism, but also against the backdrop of imperialist interests (securing access to resources; bloc confrontation). The FDP, on the other hand, rejects conscription as an excessive state encroachment on civil liberties. Similarly, the position on the EU is a dividing line, on which the AfD stands alone with its demand for withdrawal.

The future of the fossil-conservative project, which currently oscillates between the two dominant poles and stands on the sidelines in alliance-building processes, is uncertain. At the same time, the direction in which the balance of power shifts depends largely on it. The fact that capital itself is currently pursuing contradictory interests is reflected in the fossil-conservative project, which, on the one hand, promotes green restructuring with the aim of stabilizing existing power and property relations, but, on the other hand, also represents the interests of old fossil capital and torpedoes a social design of the ecological restructuring for which it shares responsibility.

2.3 Emancipatory points of reference in the dynamics of struggles for hegemony

Many actors of the fossil-conservative project have temporarily or permanently joined the green-capitalist project for strategic reasons, while others have joined the reactionary bloc of fundamental opposition to any socio-ecological transformation. On the one hand, preserving the (at least partially fossil-based) status quo has become part of the (government) project of ecological modernization of capitalism. On the other hand – and thus reinforced – the only strong fundamental opposition is the reactionary right. This development has been exacerbated, among other things, by the cross-project government constellation, the intensifying, oversimplified polarization between “the Greens” and “the AfD,” and the effects of the war against Ukraine and the increasingly imperialist state policy on raw materials and blocs. We do not see the five hegemony projects from Sanders’ heuristics as dissolved, but they could continue to change by the alliance constellations described above. The contradictions and tensions that necessarily arise within these alliances, but also within the individual hegemony projects or even within individual actors, are the moments that could provide points of intervention for an emancipatory counter-project.

The greatest opportunity for common ground and new alliances is likely to reside in the recent development of the green-capitalist project. The collaboration with fossil-conservative actors described above is leading to a shift to the right, particularly within the Green Party, while integration into state apparatuses and the increasing involvement of capital interests (including fossil-based) are creating a growing distance between movement and institutional actors in the green-capitalist project. As demonstrated, the green-capitalist project has grown in part out of movements critical of the system in the old green project. In addition to the “old left” remaining from this tradition, numerous individuals and organizations from the newer emancipatory social movements have in recent years integrated themselves into the organizations of the green-capitalist project, hoping to better achieve their goals in this way. Due to the largely pragmatic approach of collaboration pursued by the Green leadership, there are many people in the Green milieu—for example, in the federal and

state parliaments, at the grassroots level, and in environmental associations—who are increasingly disillusioned with the possibility of achieving sufficiently profound change through integration. These actors could be won over, at least in part, by a convincing and unifying socio-ecological emancipatory project, or at least integrated into constructive alliances as a bridgehead. It is particularly important that a convincing ecological program be presented credibly, especially in the area of climate protection, as this is often the most important driving force behind these critical progressive forces within the green-capitalist project. Since the implementation of ecological goals through green government participation and within capitalism has now been exposed as unrealistic for some, the main focus should be on providing this consistent climate program with a convincing and, as far as possible, concrete alternative implementation perspective. If an emancipatory project can present tangible steps toward realization by building on the old ideals of the early Alliance 90/The Greens or the Ende Gelände generation, significant potential can be tapped, not least because these people and organizations have extensive networks and experience in navigating Realpolitik power structures.

While a strong climate program with prospects for implementation must be presented to the “Greens,” who are potentially open to an emancipatory project, there are also points of contact with actors in the social-defensive camp, such as those in the SPD and parts of the trade unions. An emancipatory project must offer these forces a focus on social justice and a concrete and achievable perspective on real material improvements for the many. Like the “left-wing Greens,” social-defensive actors repeatedly find that their goals are lost in the conflicts between green-capitalist and reactionary-fossil forces—even though they have often formed alliances with these forces.

An emancipatory project must therefore resolve the contradiction between social justice and climate protection from the outset, which is not eliminated in the green-capitalist project but integrated as a permanent conflict, in order to find common ground with both left-wing green and social-defensive actors. To this end, the emancipatory project must go beyond

capitalism and define climate justice as a horizon. In addition, concrete, identifiable, and feasible steps toward building power and implementation are necessary in order to be convincing. Since the majority of the population also considers ecological goals, social justice, or both to be very important aims,⁷² meaning that—beyond the reactionary project—there is thus a relatively broad consensus without political representation, it is important to create a project that can harness such potential. Against the supposed either/or of green modernization and social security, an emancipatory project must position a climate-just good life for all.⁷³

Excursus: Trade unions in an uncomfortable (re)positioning

In the context of the Federal Republic of Germany, trade unions have always been both central opponents of capital and the ruling hegemony. At the same time, they are structurally and deeply embedded in the ruling and state apparatus through class compromise and social partnership, with close ties to the SPD, which often participates in government, and the legalization and restriction of labor disputes. In so doing, they coordinate within the capitalist status quo between the market, the state, capital, and workers. However, it should be noted that trade unions are not monolithic blocs and that the structural tensions described above are reflected internally and are often subject to controversial and ongoing negotiation.

The current dominance of the (fossil-fuel-influenced) green-capitalist project, but also the continuing openness and uncertainty regarding future transformation paths and possible hegemonic shifts, are reflected in the agenda of the trade unions. Employees in the energy sector are represented specifically by the IG BCE (approx. 600,000 members), IG Metall (approx. 2,100,000 members), and ver.di (approx. 1,900,000 members), which together make up

the lion's share of the German Trade Union Confederation membership.⁷⁴ The constellations of interests regarding ecological transformations diverge significantly. In addition to employees in the energy sector, ver.di represents a very heterogeneous group of employees (primarily in the public sector). IG Metall represents industrial workers, particularly in the metal industry, which includes both energy-intensive, fossil-fuel industries, and green sectors of the future. IG BCE represents the more homogeneous interests of employees in the energy-intensive chemical industry and employees in the mining and coal industries, and has been able to develop strong influence as a result. It is known for compromise-oriented negotiations with politicians and employers and is characterized by excellent networks in political circles, particularly in the SPD.⁷⁵ While the major unions, and IG BCE in particular, have historically taken a moderate and social-defensive position toward environmental efforts, but also toward the effects of neoliberal capitalism, for example, in the form of a decline in co-determination and collective bargaining coverage, union policy has clearly shifted toward the green-capitalist project. IG Metall and ver.di called for Fridays for Future demonstrations early on, and all three major unions explicitly acknowledge the need for ecological restructuring. There is now broad consensus on the need both for massive government support for industry in order to preserve jobs in energy-intensive industries, as well as on the need for a shift toward electrification, a hydrogen economy, and a transition to new drive systems in the automotive industry, and on the associated criticism of the debt brake.

At least on paper, this provides starting points for emancipatory movements. At the same time, it is clear that pressure on industry and the risk of job losses will continue to increase in the coming years and that transformation conflicts are likely to intensify, partly due to intensifying competition with the technologically advanced Chinese industry and partly due to the US market, which is supported by industrial policy.

72 In a representative survey conducted by Infratest dimap on the European elections, 66% of respondents said they were "very concerned that climate change is destroying our livelihoods." 50% feared that they would no longer be able to "maintain their standard of living." However, the threatening nature of the current situation is also evident in the fact that all give other most frequently selected statements can be clearly or tentatively attributed to a right-wing to extreme right-wing worldview. Tagesschau (2024) "Ich mache mir große Sorgen, dass...", tagesschau.de, June 9.

73 Cf. I. L. A. Kollektiv (ed.) (2019) *Das Gute Leben für Alle. Wege in die solidarische Lebensweise*, Oekom, Munich.

74 Janson, Matthias (2024) "Gewerkschaften verzeichnen teils steigende Mitgliederzahlen," Statista, February 26.

75 Cf. Pegels, Anna and Prinz, Anna (2018) "The role of labour power in sustainability transitions: Insights from comparative political economy on Germany's electricity transition," *Energy Research & Social Science*, Vol. 41.

Climate policy decisions made at the EU and German levels also play role here, but these could always be rolled back by a fossil-fuel backlash. In the long term, the question will be as to whether the unions maintain their programmatic commitments to green transformation within the capitalist framework or whether union actors will shift toward fossil-fuel or emancipatory trends.

The ability of trade unions to directly influence company and parliamentary policy decisions is limited. The highly regulated and institutionalized form of industrial relations in Germany allows unions and works councils to play a strong role in relation to working conditions and wages, thereby enabling many important achievements in these areas. At the same time, this involvement always carries the risk of co-optation and prevents political and ecological demands from being made at the level of labor disputes and collective bargaining, as well as, crucially, the question of ownership. German unions are also obliged to remain ideologically neutral as so-called unified trade unions and therefore do not adopt any concrete political positions. This makes any cooperation between emancipatory movements and unions that goes beyond mutual expressions of solidarity difficult and means that it rarely takes place. Despite programmatic convergence, no concrete joint practice has yet been found. One exception is the successful collaboration between ver.di and Fridays for Future in the campaign *Wir fahren zusammen*. It succeeded because the collective bargaining demands largely coincided with ecological demands and both sides were able to take significant steps towards each other at the corporate and political level. Since there are hardly any opportunities for convergent demands in industrial collective bargaining disputes, there is no such convergence of interests here. In collective bargaining disputes, common ground can usually be found only in the area of reducing working hours, which at least contains an environmental component.

The limited scope for trade union action due to legal restrictions on industrial relations has become apparent in the context of *Wir fahren zusammen* in the debate on “political strikes.” Even the relatively moderate joint demand for the expansion of public transport was interpreted as a possible violation of the ban on political strikes. The restriction of the right to strike

in Germany was already criticized as inadmissible by the Council of Europe in 2022, but is historically part of the class compromise in the Federal Republic of Germany.⁷⁶ The harsh reactions of conservative and liberal forces to the actions of *Wir fahren zusammen* express, on the one hand, the fear of political strikes among existing forces and thus also reveal their potential power. On the other hand, it demonstrates that political strikes are not established as a trade union practice.

76 Council of Europe / European Committee of Social Rights: Conclusions XXII-3. 2022; Tschénker, Theresa (2024) “*Wir fahren zusammen, aber streiken müssen wir allein*,” *verfassungsblog.de*, April 8.

3

The emancipatory hegemony project

The emancipatory hegemony project finds itself in a position of weakness, while the polarization between a green-capitalist and fossil-reactionary bloc appears to be becoming increasingly pronounced. However, as demonstrated above, this polarization and the tensions described also give rise to points of intervention for a newly aligned and strengthening emancipatory counter-project. In the following, we first describe current constellations of actors and strategic movements in terms of forms of practice and unifying horizons of content, before formulating socialization as a starting point for a growing emancipatory hegemony project in chapter four.

3.1 Key actors and positions

The emancipatory hegemony project is formed from a rather loose constellation of actors, consisting, on the one hand, of rapidly changing emancipatory and, above all, ecological movements, initiatives, and campaigns, and, on the other hand, of more stable but also more sluggish organizations such as NGOs, associations, and (small) parties. It brings together the actors of the “social and ecological struggles [...] of recent years” and older members of the “opposition wing of the former green project.”⁷⁷ The actors of the emancipatory project were long considered the left-wing fringe of the green project, particularly with regard to climate and energy policy issues. The differentiation of the “old” green project took place on the basis of its increasing strength and growing influence within the social balance of power. In the 2000s, green forces were increasingly able to establish themselves in the state apparatus, and the first green capital factions developed from the eco-pioneers of the energy tran-

sition. While the pragmatic part of the environmental movement and the green project generally embarked on a Realpolitik course toward energy transition, a counter-movement emerged in the form of an activist climate movement, which led to a differentiation of hegemony projects.⁷⁸

The emancipatory project is strongly influenced by movement actors and is therefore organized on a relatively small scale. Movement cycles, such as those of alliances like Ende Gelände, make it clear that cycles and activities tend to be wave-like in nature, due to the lack of stability and permanence that established actors such as (large) parties bring with them. Somewhat more stable actors are smaller associations, clubs, and NGOs, which often work closely with the movements. Unlike the dominant hegemony projects, the emancipatory project is hardly represented by mass organizations and parties; only the party DIE LINKE (after the split of the Wagenknecht wing) can

77 Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 8. (emphasis in original)

78 Cf. Sander, Hendrik (2016) “Die Klimagerechtigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland – Entwicklung und Perspektiven,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin; Decker, Frank (2023) “Etappen der Parteigeschichte der Grünen,” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, February 6.

be largely associated with the emancipatory project. In addition, microparties or electoral groups, such as the so-called Klimaliste, have repeatedly emerged in recent years, but have remained marginal thus far. Due to their dependence on other cycles, which are determined by factors such as (federal) elections or funding periods, strategic divergences and conflicts repeatedly arise between the more formally structured organizations and social movements.

In addition to these groups of actors, who can clearly be associated with the emancipatory project, there are individual factions or groups within the mass organizations of the historical workers' movement, such as trade unions, but also in parties such as the Greens, as well as within larger associations and NGOs such as BUND, that, contrary to the general positioning of the organization, tend to orient themselves toward the emancipatory project. This provides resources and creates channels of communication as well as options for alliances and intervention for the emancipatory project.

In light of the climate crisis, the emancipatory project aims to fundamentally transform the economy and society, that is, a "system change": "It aims at a profound democratization of the economy and the state; at degrowth and an abolition of the imperialist way of life; at social security and an economy of reproduction—and thus at a post-capitalist society."⁷⁹ Sander identifies the following as key political projects of the emancipatory hegemony project: "coal and gas phase-out, as well as energy democracy and justice; a mobility transition (switch to a solidarity-based environmental transportation system and conversion of the automotive industry); socialization of central infrastructures, as well as a just restructuring and democratization of industries."⁸⁰

We understand the emancipatory project in this sense and, in contrast to the green-capitalist project, as explicitly anti-capitalist. Accordingly, the question of whether the overcoming capitalism is a horizon of transformation allows us to differentiate between and within actors as to which project they belong. Among other things, this makes the internal tensions within Fridays for Future or the Greens more tangible.

In the field of energy policy (long central to the

emancipatory project), the emancipatory project, in contrast to the green-capitalist project, does not aim to involve the current profiteers of the fossil-fuel energy regime, such as energy or automotive companies. Rather, it strives for an accelerated phase-out of fossil-fuels and a dismantling of climate-damaging industries. At the same time, the expansion of renewable energies is to be massively accelerated. While the central demand has historically been limited to "getting rid of coal," actors in the emancipatory project are increasingly calling for the dismantling, conversion, and construction of infrastructure which takes place within the framework of public service organizations that, beyond profit orientation, should enable socially and globally equitable energy production and distribution. In contrast to the green-capitalist project, the energy transition should not be market-driven, but rather politically and democratically coordinated. This is brought together under the banner of a socio-ecological transformation.

Strategically, the actors of the emancipatory project primarily relied on means of extra-parliamentary opposition due to their distance from state apparatuses and the means of production: acts of civil disobedience, demonstrations, press and public relations work. This enabled them to repeatedly achieve discursive successes. However, these could only be consolidated within the state in a selective and fragmented manner. From this position, it was only possible to directly shape transformation processes in isolated cases and at the local level, and in alliances with actors from the green-capitalist project, such as in Hamburg through the re-municipalization of energy supply via referendum.⁸¹

79 Sander, Hendrik (2022) "An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland," Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 8.

80 Ibid., p. 25.

81 Hamburger Energietisch (2023) "Zehn Jahre nach dem Energienetze-Volksentscheid in Hamburg," September 16.

3.2 Current developments: forms of practice and content orientation

The emancipatory project currently finds itself in a chaotic and rapidly changing situation. Over the past decade, it has succeeded in making its presence felt through discourse and its own demands, and in achieving large-scale mobilization.⁸² On the one hand, the mass movement Fridays for Future emerged, which, although not clearly and completely aligned with the emancipatory—as anti-capitalist—project, did produce a society-wide offensive on the issue of climate change and climate policy. On the other hand, the more radical part of the climate movement, with actors such as the Ende Gelände alliance, set in motion a dynamic in the debate on phasing out coal, which ultimately contributed to the planned phase-out of coal-fired power generation. In the short period between the 2015 Paris Agreement and the coronavirus crisis, this led to a kind of climate offensive, that is, a situation in which the need for ecological transformation became at least discursively dominant, and climate protection policies could be aggressively pursued—by both actors of the green-capitalist and emancipatory projects, and in some cases in strategic alliance between the two.

However, even in this phase, the mass mobilizations and territorial gains (both literally, as in the case of Ende Gelände, and metaphorically, in state apparatuses and parliaments) could only materialize in concrete political successes in a fragmented manner—as can be seen, for example, in climate change mitigation or the completely inadequate coal compromise. This makes clear that although the climate offensive was based on discursive and symbolic strength and a great (even spontaneous) capacity for mobilization, the emancipatory project has not yet built up any lasting resources of power and, above all, is hardly represented within the state apparatus.⁸³ As is evident here, mobilization capacity and discursive presence

are far from hegemony. The disappointing results of this discursive-symbolic strength, exacerbated by pandemic-related restrictions, have significantly destabilized the strongly activist-oriented structures supported by volunteer work in recent years and has triggered internal strategic reorganization and paths that continue to shape the emancipatory landscape of actors up to the present.⁸⁴

Both the coronavirus crisis and the energy price shock resulting from the Russian war of aggression have further shifted the coordinates of the energy policy debate to the detriment of the emancipatory project. The sudden, massive rise in energy prices seemed to briefly boost acceptance of renewable energies, but was then quickly used—especially with regard to the question of supply in view of the move away from Russian gas—for a fossil-fuel rollback, which led to massive investments in liquified natural gas infrastructures and new political gains for fossil-fuel interest groups. Despite numerous opportunities for intervention and several attempts, in retrospect it has not been possible to establish new narratives and policies for the emancipatory project.⁸⁵ Emancipatory hegemony is currently not only marginalized away from the main political conflicts due to its limited spread and organizational anchoring, as well as its distance from the means of power in the state and processes of production, but has also lost discursive power, reach, and interventionist potential since 2020. The disastrous results of the European elections in June 2024 for DIE LINKE can be interpreted as a further expression of this situation.

Key actors in the climate movement are at the end of a cycle and in the midst of a strategic reorientation (Ende Gelände) or attempts at discovering new paths (Fridays for Future). The DIE LINKE party is undergoing a process of renewal aligned with and decisively drive

82 Staude, Jörg (2019) "300.000 bei 'Fridays for Future' in Deutschland," klimareporter.de, March 15.

83 Cf. Wermeier, Lucas / Bosse, Johannes (2023) "Was die Klimagerechtigkeitsbewegung aus Lützerath lernen sollte," jacobin.de, January 11.

84 Cf. Müller, Tazio (2023) "Bewegung Jenseits des Scheiterns, oder: Die Klimabewegung ist tot. Es lebe die Klimabewegung!," Friedliche Sabotage, September 21; Grebenjak, Manuel (2024) Kipppunkte. Strategien im Ökosystem der Klimabewegung, Unrast Verlag, Münster; Grebenjak, Manuel (2023) "Streiken, kleben, und dann: Wohin geht die Klimabewegung?," derstandard.de, May 2; Rackete, Carola and Momo (2023) "Wir brauchen die Vergesellschaftung der Klimagerechtigkeitsbewegung," Lower Class Magazine, February 24; Thiele, Lass (2023) "Klimabewegung: Alltag statt Abstraktionen," nd.de, December 28; Eckstein, Lara and Heinisch, Franziska (2022) "Wirksam werden," Zeitschrift Luxemburg.

85 Cf. Kühn, Timm (2022) "Kein linker heißer Herbst," taz.de, December 30.

by social movements, but which also appears to be a struggle for survival. This situation, in which the “old” strategies no longer have the same impact or mobilizing power, is, on the one hand, an expression of weakness and (necessary) internal reorientation, but, on the other hand, also the foundation upon which new strategic impulses and projects are emerging. The situation is currently neither coordinated nor strategically specific. As a result, new approaches, some complementary and some conflicting, are developing in parallel.

Fundamentally, at the level of forms of practice and strategies for action, three broad areas of focus can be identified that are currently being tested and discussed in response to the failure to translate discursive strength into real political success. These new, reorientation approaches are not mutually exclusive, but can be observed as partly parallel, partly opposing strands of debate and organizational approaches. These are: 1.) the continuation of tried and tested forms of action in partly new thematic areas; 2.) attempts at reform in and through established organizations and parties; and 3.) a focus on project-based grassroots and power-building through organizing, explicitly climate-social struggles, and closer collaboration with trade unions (“labor turn”).

1. Continuity of disruptive forms of action

The strategy of mass civil disobedience at sites of climate destruction, which was particularly characterized by the Ende Gelände alliance in the last movement cycle, is being continued in a familiar and partly modified form by subsequent actors such as the Disrupt coalition. Examples include the actions against the LNG terminals on Rügen,⁸⁶ or against Tesla in Grünheide.⁸⁷ What is new here is that disruptive strategies are already combined at a very early stage with the mobilization of local actors and organizing approaches (see 3. strategic approach), as well as with the development of future perspectives (expropriation, conversion). Despite similarities in the form of action, Letzte Generation only partially fits within this strand.

Although the strategy of mass civil disobedience, the “success” in arousing public interest (and annoyance), and the elaborately choreographed and stylized radicalization of the form of action, may seem familiar at first glance, the analysis, program, and demands (for example, 9-euro ticket and speed limit) of the Letzte Generation represent a pragmatic reform agenda without an anti-capitalist perspective.

2. Institutional integration and transformation

The second strategic approach that can be observed is characterized by the desire to translate the demands and discursive gains from the climate offensive phase into concrete political successes by anchoring them more firmly in existing institutions. This strategy may involve aligning with the Greens in order to influence parliamentary debates and ultimately government policy from within the party itself. This strategy continues to be pursued by progressive individuals who have moved from social movements into parliament. Nevertheless, given the power politics involved in participating in government and the ideological orientation of the Green leadership, it must be considered a failure. Other goals that pursue integration into the green-capitalist project, such as providing resources for progressive actors, influencing discourse, or preventing the worst excesses, may be legitimate. However, they represent an irresolvable tension between internal opposition and integration within the dominant hegemony project and thus do not constitute an emancipatory strategy as such.

Related to the strategic approach, but different in nature, is the debate and practice surrounding the movement-oriented renewal of Die Linke, as well as smaller party projects such as the Klimaliste. In the openness caused by the deep crisis of Die Linke, age-old left internal debates about revitalizing and redefining the part as a central instrument for social change are, in some cases, being filled with new life in unexpectedly constructive ways.⁸⁸ Through the current reorientation of Die Linke, it could reestablish itself as a more relevant party-based actor within the emanci-

86 Cf. Braun, Louisa Theresa (2023) “Ende Gelände und Lebenswertes Rügen: Alle zusammen gegen LNG,” Nd-aktuell.de, September 26.

87 Cf. Freitag, Max (2024) “Proteste gegen Werk in Grünheide: Tesla in Bedrängnis,” nd.de, May 12.

88 Cf. Treblin, Johanna (2023) “Rettungsaktion: Bitte eintreten,” taz.de, November 20.

patory project, one that at least has the potential to form a point of reference and anchor for the emancipatory project in terms of its broad base, but also in terms of resources and the continuity of its work.

3. Organizing and the labor turn

A third approach focuses on collaboration with trade unions and the organization of socially precarious groups in specific struggles. On the one hand, this is expressed as a “labor turn,” which is particularly evident in the alliance project *Wir fahren zusammen* by *ver.di* and *Fridays for Future*. On the other hand, lively debates and initial experiences with organizing approaches are taking place here.⁸⁹ The “labor turn” of the climate movement describes a focus on strikes and workplace struggles. In recent years, cooperation between the climate movement and organized labor has been identified as a core element of emancipatory strategies. Behind the “labor turn” is the realization that the emancipatory project has so far lacked real means of power, such as the ability to interrupt processes of production, partly due to its distance from trade union actors. These should now be established. It is clear that a serious ecological and publicly owned industrial transition can only be achieved with the power resources and knowledge of workers and those directly affected. However, cooperation between climate activists and unions has so far been limited to areas where labor disputes can be clearly linked to climate policy (so far, reduced working hours and good wages for the expansion of public transport). Even in the best case scenario, they can only implement moderate demands that can be won through strikes in collective bargaining. Trade unions are now taking a more positive position towards ecological restructuring and the need for alternative technologies in other areas as well. However, the necessary broader development of a climate workers’ movement has not yet materialized.

The increasingly observable focus on explicitly climate-related social struggles, particularly through

organizing, is inspired by organizing approaches in the US or by the work of *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen* and the trade union initiative *Organizi.ng*. Currently, projects and initiatives are emerging in this area, for example on the topic of energy or heating transition, which directly link the material interests of tenants or energy consumers to climate goals with the aim of building a grassroots movement.⁹⁰ However, they so far lack a perspective for medium to long-term—and, above all, cross-thematic—organizational development (more on this in chapter 4.2).

Socialization as an emerging reference point of content

The three movement paths or strategic approaches, with regard to forms of practice and strategic orientation, share a great deal of openness and uncertainty regarding a unifying and strengthening substantive horizon and medium-term strategic perspective. On the one hand, this openness can be understood as an opportunity to establish new links between social and ecological struggles and between different strategies. On the other hand, the uncertainty is also an expression of the movement’s weakness and lack of direction. In the years since the pandemic, however, there has been increasing discussion of a possible overarching substantive and strategic perspective that could bring together various struggles. The demand for socialization is appearing more and more frequently in various contexts and slogans, and new initiatives such as *RWE & Co enteignen* are emerging, as are discursive and programmatic impulses such as the socialization conferences in Berlin in 2022⁹¹ and at *Wertbellinsee* in Brandenburg in 2024.⁹² Here, perspectives and strategies have been and continue to be developed for building on the political successes of *Wohnen & Co enteignen* in Berlin and, equally, on earlier socialization movements. The background to this development is the analysis that the climate movement has so far lacked target concepts and its own creative capacity. A growing debate has emerged

89 Cf. Müller-Vahl, Rika (2024) “Streiken für’s Gemeinwohl: #WirFahrenZusammen weiter,” *Luxemburg Zeitschrift*.

90 For example, the initiatives *Soziale Wärmewende jetzt* (<http://soziale-waermewende-jetzt.de/>) or *RWE & Co enteignen* (<http://rwe-ent-eigen.de/>); see also auch Peter, Erik (2023) “Aufruf zum Strompreis-Boycott,” *taz.de*, January 10.

91 Latocha, Tabea (2022) “Better Believe the Hype!,” *nd.de*, October 14.

92 vergesellschaftungskonferenz.de

around the strategic focal point of socialization—but so far there has been no consensus on practical forms and starting points in concrete political debates, nor on conceptual and strategic formulations of what socialization would mean in sectors such as energy.

In the current state of upheaval surrounding the emancipatory project, old instruments (such as climate strikes, but also acts of civil disobedience) are losing their mobilizing power and presence. However, newer approaches have not yet gained widespread acceptance. Only when both the content and conceptual focus, as well as practical forms and mutual references, have been further clarified will the emancipatory project be able to harness the escalating capitalist crises, to which neither the green-capitalist nor the reactionary-fossil bloc has any answers, for a resurgence.

Socialization

The Basic Law of Germany allows for the transfer of land, natural resources, and means of production to public ownership “for the purposes of socialization.” But what exactly does that mean? Obviously, the (formal) transfer to public ownership alone does not constitute socialization. When we talk about socialization in this study, we mean a fundamental change in the property structure and economic system in the sense of a consensus, democratic, and solidarity-based design of common resources, infrastructure, and means of (re)production.

Socialization involves at least three elements:⁹³

- A change in the ownership structures of private property to forms of common ownership (expropriation).
- A change in decision-making structures from market mechanisms or state authority to democratic structures (democratization).
- A change in economic objectives from profit and capital market orientation to needs-oriented economic activity (orientation toward the common good).

93 Cf. Stupka, Jenny (2023) “Die politisch-strategischen und theoretischen Potenziale von Vergesellschaftung,” *communia* (ed.): “Neue Energie für Vergesellschaftung – Vergesellschaftung für neue Energie. Schieder-Schwalenberg,” pp. 12–17, here: p. 13.

4

Socialization as a unifying perspective

In the overall picture of the social balance of power, the emancipatory project stands apart from the central debates surrounding energy transition. It is losing visibility in the face of the polarization between the Greens and the AfD. At present, it is forced to watch as the green-capitalist transformation of the energy sector, on the one hand, sluggishly progresses and, on the other hand, is increasingly attacked from the right. In this constellation, there is little space for the prospects of an emancipatory transformation. The emancipatory project must therefore aim to position itself as a visible and growing force against both tendencies, without “effectively acting merely as an oppositional pioneer of green capitalism.”⁹⁴ Given the current balance of power, there are no quick solutions for an emancipatory transformation. Neither integration into existing institutions nor the continuation of the strategies of the last decade are sufficient to strengthen the emancipatory hegemony project and achieve a socio-ecological transformation.

4.1 Challenges for an emancipatory hegemony project

In order to go on the offensive in the medium term, the emancipatory hegemony project faces at least four challenges: firstly, social and ecological struggles must be structurally linked from the outset within the framework of an “ecological class politics.”⁹⁵ Secondly, a comprehensive, unifying, tangible, and inspiring narrative of social and ecological transformation is needed, in which a post-capitalist order becomes conceivable and desirable. Thirdly, concrete, visible, and forward-looking political entry-level projects are needed that address and resolve existing contradictions and problems of green-capitalist modernization. With realistic prospects for implementation, they can represent a real alternative to the status quo and right-wing policies. Fourthly, and finally, based on current strategy debates, an internal realignment in practice and organizational forms is needed, which includes the medium-term development of power resources and visible, assertive organizational structures. Only if all four challenges are met can a unified and strong emancipatory project emerge.

To address these challenges, it is worth returning to the debate on socialization as a shared horizon. By placing the question of ownership at the shared center of a wide variety of struggles, socialization has the greatest potential to overcome the four challenges facing an emancipatory hegemony project. Socialization resolves the contradiction between social

94 Sander, Hendrik (2022) “An der Schwelle zum grünen Kapitalismus? Sozial-ökologische Hegemonieprojekte in Deutschland,” Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, p. 26.

95 Ibid.

and ecological concerns, allowing a diverse range of actors to relate positively to the project. Socialization offers a comprehensive narrative of a democratic economy into which pioneering entry-level projects, developed from defensive struggles, can be integrated. And socialization also offers groundbreaking answers at the level of practical and organizational forms.

Ecological class politics

Socialization perspectives can resolve the conflict between social and ecological goals that exists under conditions of private property, thereby integrating broader interest groups. In particular, actors and groups that currently belong to the green-capitalist or social-defensive projects, or that have formed strategic alliances with them, can be offered attractive options with prospects for implementation (see chapter 2.3). By cutting the Gordian knot of private property, socialization can combine ecological and social goals. Both strongly socially and ecologically motivated (progressive) actors thus gain the opportunity to engage in struggles for socialization and to develop joint effectiveness beyond the regular experiences of frustration and defensive struggles. In the coming years, there will be increasing opportunities to combine ambitious demands for socialization with hegemonic aspirations with concrete workplace disputes. Joint struggles are particularly conceivable in areas of public services, that is, for example, around democratization, climate and public welfare orientation, and adequate financing of municipal utilities or Deutsche Bahn. At the same time, it is urgently necessary to engage in disputes in industrial companies and prepare the ground for industrial climate struggles. Without these, no serious socio-ecological transformation can take place. Upcoming struggles for jobs in companies and sectors undergoing transformation offer starting points for joint struggles, as the green-capitalist project cannot provide convincing answers within the prevailing property regime. Socialization and public ownership are the correct long-term perspective. However, the initial focus must be on building relationships, finding common ground, and politicizing the climate issue against the side of capital.⁹⁶

96 Exemplary: www.labourgnd.uk/worker-climate.

Ecological class politics at automotive supplier

GKN

A rare but impressive example of the formulation of project of ecological class politics that addresses the question of property ownership is the struggle at the auto parts supplier GKN, near Florence. The factory, which manufactured drive shafts for the automotive industry, was occupied by workers after threatened with closure. The occupation has now lasted for almost three years. During this time, the workers have collaborated with environmental activists, universities in the region, and the local population to develop conversion plans; they now intend to build cargo bikes and solar panels as a cooperative.⁹⁷ Central to this venture, known as Collettivo di Fabbrica GKN or ex-GKN, was the prior relationship-building between the left-wing workers' collective and actors in the region, so that powerful alliances were already in place at the time of the closure. In Germany, there were similar attempts within the Klimaschutz und Klassenkampf initiative around a Bosch factory in Munich.

However, a problem with local labor disputes over ownership is now also emerging at GKN in Florence. Despite grueling struggles and overwhelming local and international solidarity, the takeover by the workers is now in danger of failing due to financing issues. This is because the regional government has so far refused to provide funding (similar to the Labour government in the case of the conversion plans at Lucas Aerospace in the 1970s). One thing is clear: workplace struggles and organizing are important and form the nucleus for long-term power building. At the same time, without the broader perspective of socializing social investments and democratic industrial policy from below, individual industrial disputes often remain ultimately at the mercy of the logic of capital.

97 Cf. Büchling, Cedric (2024) "Eine (nicht) besetzte Fabrik. Zu Besuch bei ex:GKN in Florenz," *express*, No. 2.

A comprehensive narrative with a perspective for implementation

The perspective of socialization goes beyond a mere demand or an isolated individual project by enabling concrete and overarching narratives of emancipatory transformation. In the form of democratic and public-interest common goods, socialization offers a reliable and attractive framework that both allows and requires context-specific design. It describes an economy and society that is no longer commodity-based and profit-oriented, but rather needs-oriented, climate-friendly, and democratically organized.⁹⁸ By anchoring socialization and public ownership in the Basic Law, there are, although no easy options, at least realistic possibilities for implementing socialization as a shared strategic perspective. At the same time, the focus on the question of ownership prevents compromised integration, since the property regime, as a central pillar of capitalism, is sacrosanct for right-wing and capitalist hegemony projects. In this field of tension, the inspiring potential of socialization as a concept and horizon shines through: building on the existing order itself, a post-capitalist economy and society becomes conceivable and potentially achievable.

Linked by the reference to socialization, a multitude of different actors and interest groups with different strategies and goals can relate to each other. Based on the cross-thematic project of democratic, public ownership in stable alliances, they can also cooperate in the longer term.

Entry-level projects

At the same time, diverse, concrete, and winnable projects of a manageable scope are of central importance. Initiatives can use the question of ownership to sharpen concrete, winnable struggles and thereby inscribe themselves into an overarching project with a common core. In this way, socialization can be experienced and perhaps achieved within everyday life—without becoming isolated locally or thematically.

As the foundation of the economy, the energy sector is, among others, particularly well-suited for socialization projects. In clear opposition to globally active private corporations such as RWE or E.ON, whose interests currently prevent climate justice and a secure energy supply for all, the socialization of the energy sector and the democratization of the energy transition are directly linked to concrete everyday concerns and the most important social challenges. Entry-level projects in the fight for a public, democratized energy system could include the establishment of energy cooperatives as well as struggles for the democratization of municipal utilities or municipal heating planning. The global nature of the exploitative structures of fossil-fuel corporations and the climate impacts they cause also open up opportunities for alliances across national borders and for connecting with and building on decades of resistance in the Global South.

Entry-level projects for socialization are also attractive because (as in the case of *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen*) they appear to be politically feasible at the state level via referendums, whereas many other regulatory options, for example in the energy sector, are only possible at the federal or even EU level. These levels are currently closed to the emancipatory hegemony project due to its own weakness and primarily movement-based forms of organization. This is because there are no plebiscitary procedures here. As the example of *Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen* in Berlin has demonstrated, referendums in particular have the potential to establish broad local alliances, to concretize demands for socialization conceptually, and to provide them with a realistic prospect of implementation.

98 Cf. communia & BUNDjugend (eds.) (2023) *Öffentlicher Luxus*, Karl-Dietz-Verlag, Berlin.

Public services in the energy sector

While initial concepts for public service organization exist for the housing sector,⁹⁹ ideas for the energy sector are still in development. It is clear that a transition to the private sphere will further delay the energy transition, reduce acceptance of environmental policies, and privatize profits. Therefore, in accordance with the principles of socialization, the energy transition must disempower private property (expropriation), be oriented towards needs and climate justice (towards the common good), and democratically designed.

The phasing out of fossil-fuel infrastructures, the expansion of renewable energies, distribution through grid infrastructures, and the organization of energy supply require different models at different levels.

Phasing out fossil-fuels: The remaining fossil-fuel industry must be dismantled as quick as possible. Instead of relieving large energy companies of the costs of the consequential damages caused by coal production and at the same time allowing state co-financed profits in renewable energies, fossil-fuel companies must be expropriated. Socialized, that is, democratized, successor institutions committed to the common good would have to, on the one hand, create fair transitions for workers and regions and, on the other hand, organize the management of the consequential costs in the public interest.

Expansion of renewables: Democratically controlled investment companies with strong workers' rights could build the necessary capacity for renewable energies, especially for larger projects such as offshore wind farms. Such institutions would not need to generate profits and, as state actors, would have access to much cheaper loans. At the local level, democratized and public interest municipal services could drive the energy transition forward. Cooperatives and energy communities can also contribute to the energy transition at the local level and support acceptance of the ecological transformation through the fair distribution of profits.

Networks and supply: At the network level, central coordination is needed to enable a needs-based restructuring, to quickly implement the necessary infrastructure, and to end the enormous social losses caused by paying guaranteed returns to network operators. At the same time, the energy supply must be organized towards needs and in an economically viable manner. Energy could be free to a certain extent as part of an unconditional basic supply, with costs rising when a base amount is exceeded.¹⁰⁰ Targeted pricing policies could also promote the socio-ecological restructuring of other economic sectors.

99 Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen (2023) "Gemeingut Wohnen," Berlin.

100 Cf. Thiele, Lasse (2022) "Energietarife: Transformative Wege aus der Krise," Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie (ed.), Bausteine für Klimagerechtigkeit. Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie.

Political practice and forms of organization for socialization

Socialization can be seen as a strategic perspective for building an emancipatory hegemony project in the sense of ecological class politics, providing a unifying narrative from which concrete, achievable entry-level projects can emerge. However, at the level of political practice and organizational forms, socialization also has the potential to provide strategic orientation for the emancipatory hegemony project in the medium and long term.

The socialization perspective requires new forms of political practice that connect with current debates and tendencies (chapter 3) and, at the same time, lead to long-term, strong organizational structures capable of asserting themselves (including within the state). In addition, these forms of practice and organization must have a preparatory effect in order to breathe life into the concrete design of socialized enterprises and sectors and ultimately be able to defend them against attacks.

In the short term, demands for socialization anchored in the Basic Law offer the attractive opportunity to pursue and conduct campaign-style referendums. In the medium and long term, however, it is clear that the establishment of stable and cross-thematic forms of organization is essential for building implementation power beyond individual projects. Only in this way can the basis of transformative democratic structures and practices be developed and established, which, once socialization has been achieved, will form the foundation of the social economy.

Referendums as a form of practice for socialization

Hegemony projects require concrete political projects and strategies around which actors can rally and through which political goals can be implemented. Struggles over the transformation of the energy sector and broader socio-ecological transformation, like all struggles, are always embedded in existing institutional forms and arenas, which can also be changed as a result of the struggles themselves, but which, in particular, provide them with a formative framework. The demands and goals of various actors are someti-

mes more and sometimes less compatible with existing legal arrangements or institutional processes. This differential permeability of legal regulations and institutional procedures for different demands and strategies is referred to as strategic selectivity in the tradition of historical-materialist state theory. In addition to the current balance of power, it is precisely this strategic selectivity of the state that is an important contextual condition for the development of the emancipatory hegemony project. As a fundamental goal, socialization must always be adapted and employed in accordance with the strategic selectivity of the state for concrete struggles. This means that both the concrete content of the goal and the form of organization and struggles are shaped by it.

So what institutional channels can currently be used to implement socialization? And what implications do the corresponding institutional settings have for form and content? The most prominent lever for socialization is Article 15 of the Basic Law, which consolidates an earlier balance of power that has even survived the phase of neoliberal hegemony in the Basic Law itself: Article 15 provides for the possibility of socializing land, natural resources, and means of production in return for compensation. However, this article has never been applied. This has both an advantage and disadvantage for the emancipatory hegemony project: on the one hand, this article can only be invoked in the context of a referendum, which may only refer to the state legislation of individual federal states, since it has never been applied by the federal government and therefore, according to Article 72 of the Basic Law, legislative competence is also open to the states. While other regulatory interventions in the energy sector, for example, are beyond the reach of the actors of the emancipatory hegemony project because they would require greater (parliamentary) capacity to act at the federal level, this specific constellation offers the opportunity to fundamentally challenge property relations, for example, in the energy sector, at the state level. On the other hand, the hurdles to accessing the constitutionally enshrined possibility of socialization are enormous because the possibilities for its application are barely clarified. There are no laws or court rulings that could serve as a basis

for further plans or even draft legislation on socialization. The strategic selectivity of the state does, in principle, provide for the possibility of socialization in the Basic Law. However, there is no implementing legislation or even state apparatus that would be responsible for socialization and thus accessible to the demands of movement actors. Furthermore, the legal discourse on the subject is limited and—despite the important clarifications in the final report of the expert commission on the socialization of large real estate companies¹⁰¹—continues to lack a prevailing opinion in many respects, especially in relation to other sectors. It therefore provides only a very limited, albeit reliable basis for the formulation of draft legislation as a basis for referendums. Thus, seventy-five years after the creation of the Basic Law, the possibility of socialization represents merely the remnant of a past balance of power, but not a strategic selectivity of the state that is materially supported in practice by state apparatuses or legal discourse.

The concrete formulation of demands for socialization, which must be implemented in the form of a draft law within the framework of binding referendums, is in this situation exceptionally complex and uncertain. It requires considerable financial resources and legal, economic, and, in some cases, technical expertise, as well as a great deal of time. These are all requirements that tend to contradict movement-based, fluctuating forms of organization and conflict with the temporality of campaigns and public relations work. It is therefore a particularly important challenge for the emancipatory hegemony project to develop and maintain structures that can provide the necessary resources for such work and thus enable concrete initiatives for socialization campaigns.

Parallel to the establishment of these structures, concrete initiatives must develop creative workarounds that enable successful campaigns even without detailed drafts for socialization laws. In the case of Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen, for example, the choice fell on a referendum (although not possible in all federal states). While this is not binding, it opened up the possibility of developing a broad campaign around the referendum, which did not have to wait for a draft to be drawn up. Another possibility is to focus on the re-municipalization of private infrastructure and the democratization and decommodification of public infrastructure instead of socialization

in the sense of Article 15 of the Basic Law. The legal hurdles are in this case lower. Within the framework of concrete, local campaigns, alliances with actors close to the green-capitalist and social-defensive projects can also be initiated and expanded. In addition, social groups that do not belong to the core milieu of the emancipatory hegemony project can be reached. This can increase the visibility and appeal of the perspective of emancipatory transformation.

Campaigns built around referendums have the potential to combine various forms of practice that are currently being tested in the emancipatory project or have already been practiced for a long time (chapter 3) in a forward-looking project. Disruptive acts of civil disobedience and demonstrations can draw public attention to large corporations and their business practices and delegitimize them. By orienting themselves toward the shared horizon of socialization and through concrete campaign-style expropriation projects, these actions can overcome a purely defensive attitude and combine it with a constructive perspective of transformation.

Organizing approaches and collaboration with trade unions are central to successful referendums on socialization in the energy sector (but also in industry). At the same time, they themselves benefit from linking organizing with a concrete, future-oriented project. Organizing needs concrete causes around which people can and want to start organizing. In addition to defensive struggles, these can also include referendums. At the same time, it is crucial for socialization to organize and empower those who will eventually assume decision-making power over socialized enterprises or sectors. The more self-organized structures have developed “before” socialization, the more successful self-organization will be “after” socialization. However, the development of such long-term (grassroots) structures in particular reaches the limits of campaign-based organizations, which typically support referendums (see below).

In order to achieve and implement socialization in the medium and long term, it is not enough to limit oneself to referendums and accompanying actions and (short-term) organizing practices. In addition to these unsustainable options, which arise from the limited power resources and weak organizational forms of the emancipatory hegemony project, the perspective of socialization also demonstrates that in

101 Expertenkommission zum Volksentscheid (2023) “Vergesellschaftung großer Wohnungsunternehmen”: Abschlussbericht. Berlin.

the medium term, the establishment of powerful and stable organizations is inevitable for achieving and implementing an emancipatory transformation.

Forms of organization for building power and social self-management

In the growing landscape of struggles for socialization, the campaign character predominates as a form of association. This can be interpreted as an expression of current political conditions (loss of trust in "old political mass organizations" such as parties, unions, etc.). The campaign character has several advantages. Campaigns or initiatives are often characterized by a low-threshold, flexible, and open nature, thereby attracting not only experienced activists but also people who are becoming politically active for the first time.¹⁰² In addition, a concrete thematic focus (in contrast to traditional grassroots organizations), less hierarchical cooperation, and the possibility of spontaneous action can be cited as strengths of the form of the initiative.

At the same time, the form of the initiative is not immune to the formation of hierarchies and access restrictions. The example of Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen illustrates how these develop on the basis of "material practices of social movements" embedded within prevailing conditions.¹⁰³ For example, high linguistic, social, and media skills, as well as time capacities (and thus also financial, health, family, etc.), implicitly form prerequisites for regular active participation. Since membership in initiatives is based on active participation, these prerequisites severely limit the accessibility of initiatives. This makes them unsuitable for organizing larger social groups. Due to their thematic focus, they are also relatively short-lived, locally bound, and find it difficult to develop, communicate, and embody an overarching political perspective. In this respect, the campaign format can also be interpreted as a phenomenon of disorganization of emancipatory forces due to their orientation toward state selectivity. The orientation toward the division of politics into different thematic areas within the framework of state apparatuses (for example, ministries)

and processes (for example, the prohibition on linking different issues in referendums) leads to a fragmentation of emancipatory forces into loosely connected, issue-focused, and fluctuating initiatives. A general political perspective and medium-term strategies require more stable and cross-issue organizations. In this way, the dominance of campaign-based forms of organization is also an expression of the weakness and challenge for the development of the emancipatory hegemony project.

For the medium term development of power resources, knowledge, and the ability to take action across different issues and at the federal level, more stable and broader forms of organization are needed, at least as a complement to campaigns and initiatives. The central challenge here is, on the one hand, to become effective on the terrain of the state, while, on the other, to maintain a grassroots democratic character and momentum. The party form is the obvious choice for asserting influence within the state. At the same time, the bitter defeats of left-wing populist parties (such as Corbyn's Labour Party, Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, or the coalition of the radical left, Syriza, in Greece) have shown that the short route to state power via party politics is doomed to failure without broad, socially anchored movements. This is all the more true given that even if left-wing governments come to power, the danger of cooptation into the status quo and resistance from forces of inertia within the party and state apparatuses persists. In this respect, the current (outsider) position of the emancipatory project can also be seen as an advantage: free from the constraints that arise from participation in power and which reduce what is possible to what is politically feasible, it could, in a sense, work more freely on a substantively radical program and stronger organizational structures than it could within the framework of (possible) government participation.

At the same time, it is always necessary to build power in civil society, associations, companies, and organized labor as a necessary counterweight to the anti-democratic tendencies of parliamentary politics. This fundamental problem can be found within the history of the Greens, which despite its roots in social movements and initially also in democratizing princip-

102 Cf. Becker, Jonas (2021) "Nur gemeinsam gewinnt man," *Der Freitag*, October 8; Kunkel, Kalle (2022) "Was hat „Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen“ zu dem gemacht, was es ist?," *sub|urban – zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 10, No. 1, pp. 221–236.

103 Kunkel, Kalle (2022) "Was hat „Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen“ zu dem gemacht, was es ist?," *sub|urban – zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 10, No. 1, pp. 221–236, here: p. 222.

les such as the separation of office and mandate and the postulate of dual leadership, was successfully co-opted into the ruling order. Most recently, the increasing decoupling of the Left Faction in the Bundestag from its grassroots base has also demonstrated that parliamentary logic needs counterbalances. At the same time, left-wing politics must, at least in principle, claim universality; it must represent general rather than particular interests against capital, and develop realistic prospects for implementation. Despite all adversaries, here the party form remains central in the long term.

The current forms of practice for the internal transformation of institutions such as Die Linke described in chapter 3 are important starting points for the development of political practice oriented toward the strategic perspective of socialization in the medium and long term, building power and organization, rather than immediately and without power entering into the territory of the state. The “labor turn” and organizing can also form the basis for a socialization perspective if it is possible to organize not only for individual campaigns, but also into more permanent forms of organization. This requires a unifying perspective.

Left-wing forms of organization (whether within, outside, or independent of political parties) that seek to address the question of property ownership must succeed in building expertise and experience, retaining activists in the long term, and simultaneously engage those who are open to left-wing politics but lack the opportunity to organize themselves continuously in activist structures. Small but long-term organized and experienced groups can build power in workplaces and in civil society on a selective and local basis. At the same time, however, they must be able to see themselves as part of a coherent whole. Left-wing organizing must also prefigure the takeover of state and economic functions and therefore maintain a radically democratic claim and an orientation toward self-government.

The goal of socialization is democratic self-management of the economy, since state or private sector administration (re)produces discrimination, exclusion, and environmental destruction. The demand for the transfer to common ownership, to be implemented in accordance with Article 15 of the Basic

Law, is also to overcome precisely these dynamics of a capitalist economic and social order with the help of a radically democratic alternative.¹⁰⁴ To this end, in addition to formal structures for common ownership, democratic self-management structures must be established. Grassroots organizing approaches within the framework of socialization projects must, on the one hand, build power. On the other hand, they must be pursued with the aim of leading to the development of such self-governing structures themselves. The basis of political mass organizations, which are also necessary for the implementation of socialization, must at the same time form the kernel of the socialized economy itself.

104 Cf. Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen (2023) “Gemeingut Wohnen,” Berlin, p. 15; RWE & Co enteignen (2023) “Nehmen was uns zusteht. Klimagerechtigkeit heißt Vergesellschaftung.”

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