

Towards a left-wing counter-hegemony ?

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- 1. Aiming at a new hegemony**
- 2. Elements of a left-oriented counter-hegemony**
- 3. Building up a « social block »**

Aiming at a new hegemony

- Development of a strategy which does not only aim at acquiring, in the narrow sense of the word, power, but the fulfilment of a collective democratic-socialist and alternative and broad will, in order to exclude any return to the present situation.
- Building a counter-hegemony aimed at allowing subordinate groups to become prevalent, beyond the corporatist-economic stage, and towards a stage of political-ethical hegemony in the civil society.
- Leadership capacity does not mean presenting a full world vision, but means articulating the fundamental ideological elements in society around a new hegemony principle (hegemony does need pluralism)

Working with the concept of hegemony

- The concept of hegemony is dialectical and enables to understand the changes of consciousness.
- Subordinate groups and classes are able to act in an anti-systemic way, but it is often more difficult for them to think in such a way and to draw political conclusions from it.

Gramsci binds together:

- Intellectual and moral reform of upper culture and mass common sense ;
- Changes in the economic structure
- Political invention.

It is necessary to work to produce this link.

Common sense and consciousness

- Gramsci counterposed to common sense marxism or socialist consciousness.
- By 'common sense' he meant the contradictory accumulation of ideas, beliefs, and ways of viewing the world that most people carry around.
- 'Common sense' is not some consistent capitalist ideology. It is contradictory because it also embodies experiences that go against the grain of capitalist ideology.
- It is, nevertheless, capitalist 'common sense' in that it tends to embody an acceptance of the capitalist system as the natural background of life.
- It is within the hegemonic device that opposing ideas and alternatives take shape
- The dominating ideological device must then adapt itself, and even criminalize/marginalize any counter-hegemony or alternative vision

Twenty years after Berlin and right in the crisis

Has the ideological wall of liberalism fallen down ?

Along with the financial, then economic
and now tax/budgetary crisis

- The belief in “endless growth” is in a crisis
- The belief in “prosperity by growth” too
- The belief in market being the most effective regulator is challenged
- For the first time for a long time, the idea that “the order of things” is a “natural order of things” enters into a crisis.
- People are again becoming aware (identifying) that there exists a system, capitalism.
- The dominating discourse very quickly absorbs this awareness (Minc & Sarkozy) => capitalism is blaklisted, it should be moralized, be reinvented => there are “good” and «bad» capitalists.

Dominant ideology seeks to become again / to remain dominant :

- by identifying expiatory victims (Bernie Madoff, hedge funds, and others “spending too much”)
- by making people feel guilty (“we lived all beyond our means using cheap credit”)
- by anticipating criticism through partial adjustments proposals (a “better financial regulation”)
- by hiding the structural causes: i.e the systemic nature of the crisis caused by financial overaccumulation and devalorization of labour. With consequences : fictitious capital, and speculation, and collapse of the banks.

Consciousness and action

- Wage-earners are destabilized. There are multiple forms of real-life : workers, unemployment, precariousness, men and women, immigrants, young people, pensioners, etc
- Unawareness and partial consciousness make people swing between ineffectiveness and possibilities to act
- “they saved the banks but do nothing to save my job, my pension, my access to higher education, etc”
- This can lead to crystallization of a vague feeling of injustice within society...
- This feeling may solidify but will in the same time be eroded by a “relative defrustration” (others are much more badly off than me), by anguish, if not by a feeling of in-effectiveness
- Strategic issue: enabling people to interpret realities, in connection with the personal real-life is a crucial issue.

Why is reaction gaining ground in times of crisis ?

- **Lack of understanding and ignorance open space for discourses which neutralize anger and criticism or turn it onto scapegoats (foreigners, the Chinese, the German, the Greeks, etc.).**
- **A crisis is always a source of chaos, of social disorganization. The material foundations of social and symbolic stability (identity) of everyone are undermined. This is reinforced today by the audio-visual media, instantaneity, isolation.**
- **The feeling of chaos and uncertainty further a “political economy of fear”. At the macro-social level, the outcome is : “we must save”, “the house is on fire”, “our pensions will crash”, “the State will go bankrupt”...**
- **At the micro-social level = fears are directed against specific groups (dangerous groups, to be watched, to be disciplined) in order to produce divisions inside the subaltern classes**

Elements of a left-oriented counter-hegemony

Popularizing an explanation of the crisis as being specific to capitalism, i.e systemic by highlighting :

- the fact that financial accumulation and the extension of speculation are consequences of political decisions;
- that the States saved the banks with public money, and by this relaunched speculation and inflated the public debt, without any new power on the banks
- that the bankers benefit from the crisis (very low key rates) and from the national debts (high rates)
- that austerity policies as an “answer to the crisis” offers an opportunity of dismantling what is remaining of the European social model

Thinking and acting against the double crisis

We must oppose strong and credible ideas, which unify people, to «their» « way out of the crisis »

- The banks should pay for the crisis (by taxes, etc.) and if needed, by “nationalizing” the financial sector
- Wages, investments, social contributions must increase at the expense of shareholder dividends; for a new distribution of the added-value
- Increase in public income by boosting investments for a new type of development, for wages, for decent employment
- Changes in the role of the State: from “market state” towards economic democracy; from competition towards co-operation (EU, international...)

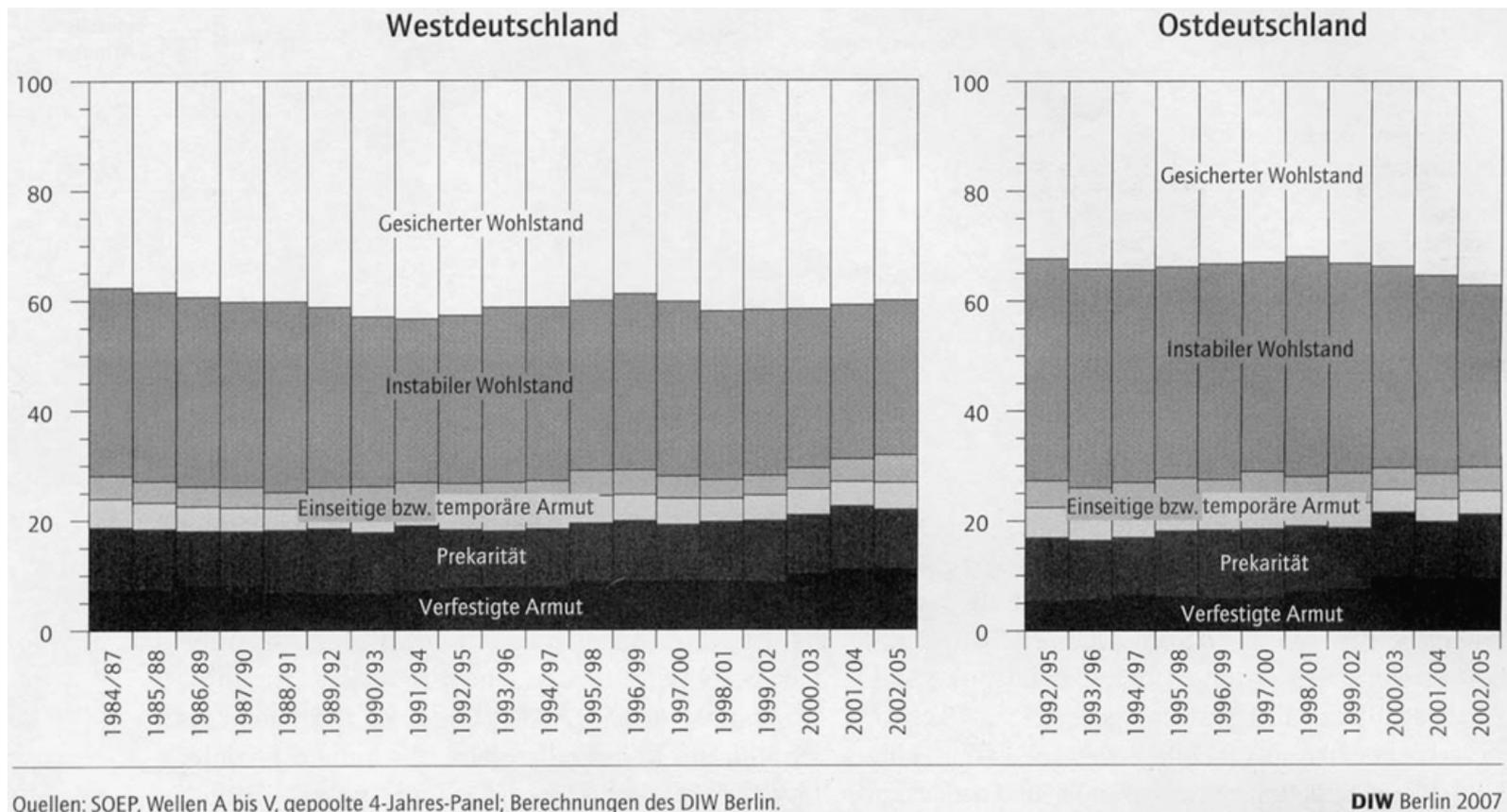
Building up a « social block »

Working out a social and political block
aiming at becoming the majority:

Unifying people around common demands :

- Middle class groups are being downgraded, slip downwards
- The blue collars are in competition with low wage countries and are losing their last social stabilizers (income and statute)
- The white collars are dropping more and more into subordinate positions
- The low wages (tertiary sector=women, young people + immigrant) are drawn towards the bottom - *working poors*
- The precarized wage-earners are being deprived of any prospect
- Employees of the public sector, in full destruction
- Intellectual professionals are no more able to fulfil their mission
- There are more and more poor people (craftsmen, shopkeepers, farmers....)

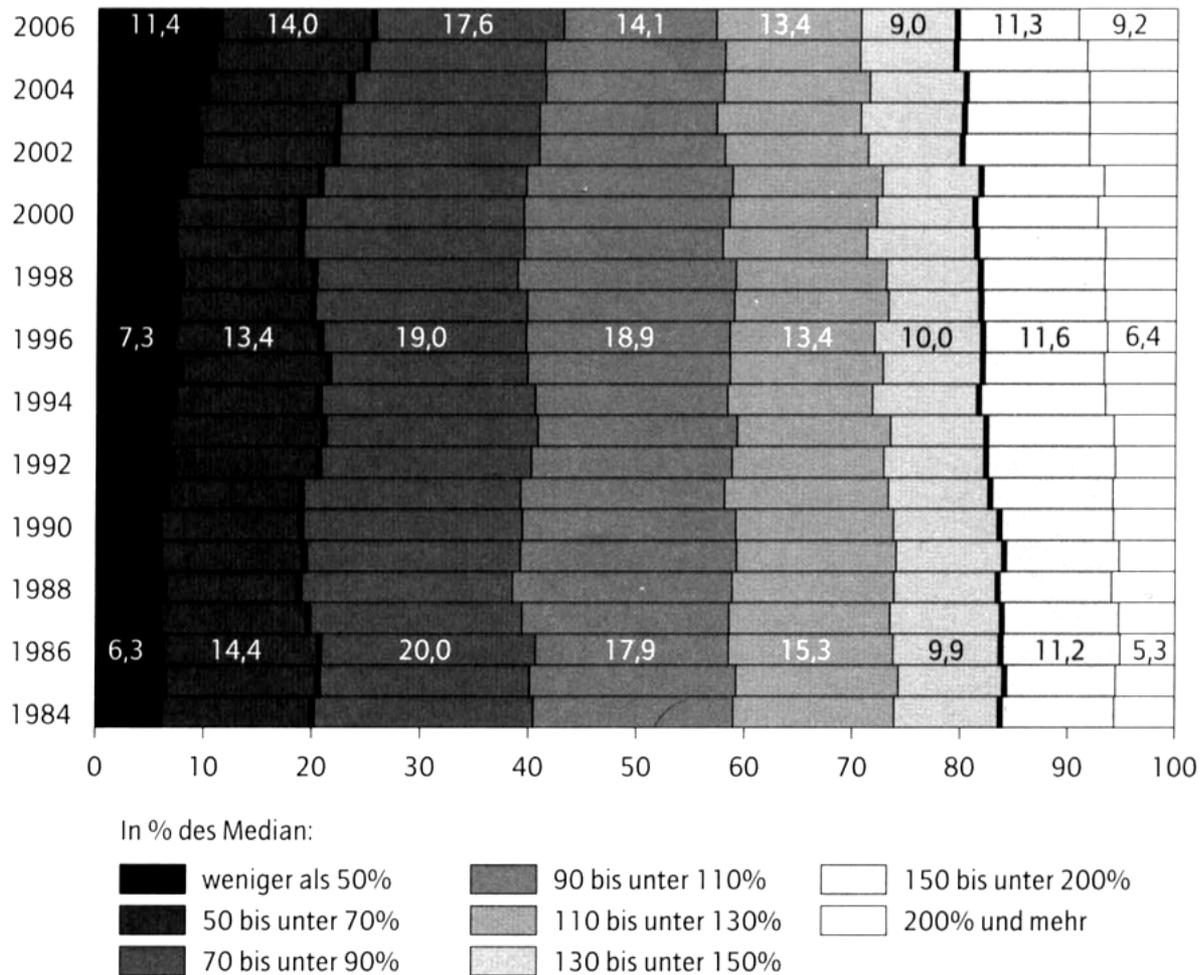
An example: A description of the German society



Einkommenschichtung in Deutschland¹ 1984 bis 2006

In Prozent, Einkommensposition auf Basis des jahresspezifischen Median

According
to income
Evolution
1984 – 2006
% below or
above
median
income



¹ Ab 1992 Deutschland insgesamt.

Quelle: SOEP, Personen in Privathaushalten, retrospektiv erfragte bedarfsgewichtete Haushaltsnettoeinkommen des Vorjahres.

Five steps for a change

global
stabilization
- transnational
cooperation

financial
regulation:
shut down the
casino

new industrial policy
- further steps to
economic democracy

redistribution:
wealth for the
people

economic
recovery
- social +
sustainable

**Which policy
favouring unity of
the subordinate
classes and a
society based on
solidarity ?**

**Which left-wing
political answer,
being credible in
the immediate
future and inspired
by an alternative
logic?**

Building popular, social and political dynamics based on potentialities within societies and on the available forces

- Large initiatives gathering people and combining popular mobilization and political initiative
- Towards majority coalitions, for a society based on solidarity

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A possibility of strategic options

- in France, a broad and fighting “popular” front
- in Europe a progressive front
- at world level, a front based on solidarity

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•Thank you for listening!