

## SUMMARIES PROKLA 175, Vol. 44 (2014), No. 2

**Hans-Günter Thien: Class Theories – The Last 50 Years.** When at the latest with the crises of the financial markets a new focus on class issues was set on Marxian theorists' agenda, there is the question, how to cope with it. The idea of class is central for Marxian theories, but enigmatic and controversial at the same time. Reason enough to review and to reconsider as well the dynamics of the discussions within the last 50 years and to focus the sets of problems and unanswered questions.

**Dorothea Schmidt: Myths and experiences: the unity of the working class around 1900.** In the last decades, farewell to the working class has been celebrated repeatedly. This perception normally goes hand in hand with the idea that in contrast to the socially fragmented present, a unified working class existed before 1914. I want to show that the German experience contradicts this. Two exemplary fields of ideological battles as well as concrete actions are presented: 1) the harsh rejection of specific demands of the proletarian women by the social democratic party, and 2) the struggles of the workers for higher wages and shorter working hours, where a coexistence of radically different strategies by workers in distinct branches, according especially to varying company sizes, could be observed. Even if the working class of this time was not unified in a way the left leaders wanted to see it, main parts of it achieved remarkable success. As a consequence, today's over and over noticed weakness of the working class is not to be explained principally by a lack of unity, but by other circumstances.

**Brigitte Aulenbacher, Maria Dammayr, Fabienne Décieux: Dominance, Division of Labour, Inequality – The Example of Care Work and Care Regimes in Contemporary Capitalism.** Concerning contemporary capitalism a „return of class“ is diagnosed. The paper argues that this is not sufficient to analyze and describe the societal development. Further social differentiations and inequalities have to be recognized to be effects as well as prepositions of finance capitalism. This is analyzed and exemplified in the case of care work by discussing different care regimes in the context of economic and social change and especially austerity. The „crisis of care“ has to be seen as a result of different, but amalgamated logics and relations of dominance combined with different models of the welfare state. The examination shows how the gendered and ethnic division of labor is shaping societal change.

**Christian Baron: Class and Classism. A Critical Appraisal.** So far, the concept of classism has not found much resonance in the German Scientific Community. Nevertheless, its relevance rises. The article explains and criticizes the previous conceptions of classism and tries to give some theoretical impulse for a new concept of classism which could reveal how capitalist structures produce class discrimination within the working class.

**Mathis Heinrich: Transnational Capital and the Management of (the) Crises in the European Union.** The article stresses the ideological and political dominance of productive capital fractions within the power bloc of the European Union (EU), by exemplifying their strategic influence in transnational struggles over the management of the current crises in Europe. Theoretically, it is shown, that the leadership of a fraction within the ruling class does neither result from its economic dominance in accumulation nor its hegemony in society alone, but rather depends on concrete struggles over power and meaning within the power bloc itself. In this regard, the economic and financial crisis management approach of the EU reveals that especially transnational actors from the European industry are able to use the crisis between 2008 and 2013 to further lock-in their global competitiveness strategy into EU political structures. While the lobby groups of finance capital, although still economically important, are

rather losing political ground and get lost in technocratic disputes among each, productive capital associations are holding the ruling class in Brussels together by using their privileged access to EU institutions and subordinating the interests of others capital fractions under the dominant discourse of a global and export-oriented growth regime of the EU.

**Peter Bescherer: „Where filth and blood commingle“ – Problem areas of a leftist class approach.** Over the past few years socialist intellectuals and political activists have stressed the need for an alliance between middle-class groups, wage-workers, and the marginalised underclass. The article seeks to unfold the theoretical background of this rather difficult approach by checking out the lower limits of the claimed alliance. Starting with Marx and Engels' downgrading of the *lumpenproletariat*, it examines two controversial lines in critical theory: on the one hand analyses of supposed shortcomings that regard marginalised groups as unable to become subject of social transformation, and on the other hand (e.g. anarchist or operaist and post-operaist) approaches that bring into focus the particular but coequal ways of the poor and excluded in struggling for change. The article argues for an integrated approach.

**Steffen Liebig: Civil Unrest as Non-Normative Conflicts. The Example of the English Riots of 2011.** In August 2011, England experienced the most serious rioting since 30 years. The unrest started two days after the fatal police shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham and quickly spread to other cities. This article opens with a brief sketch of the recent history of rioting in England from 1980-2010 and a comparison of previous riots with the ones in 2011. Subsequently, a more extensive overview of the current state of research focusing on triggers and structural roots of the 2011 riots and a local case study of Greater Manchester are presented. It is argued that broader social reasons (e.g. deprivation), consumerism, policing, male behavior and racialised conflicts constitute the overall causes for the latest riots. Moreover, the article looks at the riots in the context of class. Unlike the well-known 'underclass' discourse, the article applies a non-pejorative understanding of class: From this perspective, the 2011 riots are interpreted as a symptom of an ongoing fragmentation of social conflicts. Wide ranges of people are no longer represented by organizations like unions nor do they trust in welfare or state institutions or organise in conventional ways. This results in non-normative collective action beyond established institutions as well as new forms of how class struggles and social conflicts articulate themselves.

**Ulrich Brand Capitalist Growth and Societal Domination. Motives, Arguments and Weaknesses of the Current Critique of Growth.** Currently, the discussion about degrowth is one of the most important debates in the context of the multiple crises of capitalism. Economic growth as a political orientation and a socio-economic practice has been transformed from a stabilizing factor in society to a de-stabilizer. This article gives a short and necessarily selective overview of the main currents in this debate, and highlights important points of consensus. However, it is argued, degrowth approaches could benefit from a more systematic theorization and consideration of the structures and processes of domination within capitalist societies, and of the manifold forms of domination over nature. Neo-Marxist and feminist perspectives provide good approaches for addressing these shortcomings, and also open the possibility for addressing the as yet not really well developed question of democracy within the degrowth debate in a more sophisticated and realistic manner.

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