



Escola de Sociologia e Políticas Públicas

Departamento de Estudos Internacionais

ANTIFA: The Beauty or the Beast?
The clash between the Antifascist Strategy
& the Young German Citizens

Beatriz Fernandes da Silva

Dissertação submetida como requisito parcial para obtenção do grau de
Mestre em Estudos Internacionais

Orientador:
Doutor Riccardo Marchi,
Investigador de Pós-Doutoramento
ISCTE-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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Resumo

Os jovens alemães não se reveem no Movimento Antifa, alguns evitam o tema nas suas conversas no dia-a-dia. Na presente Dissertação eu proponho descobrir o porquê.

Através de uma pesquisa no terreno em que me integrei num grupo local do Movimento Antifa alemão, percebi que existe uma divergência entre a imagem pública e privada do mesmo. Os jovens não aprovam a abordagem mais extremista de alguns subgrupos do Movimento, seja pela sua abordagem ideológica ou pelas suas táticas para atingir os seus objetivos políticos.

Um dos grupos exemplificado é o ‘Revolutionäre Linke Mannheim’ e a sua herança comunista de uma ambição a uma sociedade sem classes, o outro grupo são os ‘Autonome’ e a sua posição anarquista que considera legítima a violência para fins políticos.

Considero que, não obstante ser um grupo que é teoricamente apelativo para gerações mais novas, os jovens alemães não se querem aliar a posições políticas extremas uma vez que almejam acima de tudo paz e estão apreensivos com o aumento de violência na sua sociedade. O movimento Antifa com o qual mantive contacto privilegiado está ciente de que a fim de atingirem o seu objetivo de apelar à sociedade convencional, tem de se destacar destas franjas mais radicais.

Concluo a presente Dissertação ao enumerar várias considerações que a literatura expõe em relação ao que pode ser feito para apaziguar a atual divisão política e, em particular, a extrema esquerda na Alemanha.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Alemanha; Extreme Esquerda; Jovens Alemães; Movimento Antifa;

Abstract

Young Germans do not see themselves represented in the Antifa Movement, some even avoid it in everyday conversations. In the present Dissertation I propose to discover why.

Through fieldwork research with a local Antifa Group in Germany, I understood that this divergency is towards Antifa's most extreme sub-groups, be it due to their ideological approach or to their tactics to pursue their political goals.

One of the groups exemplified are the Revolutionäre Linke Mannheim and their communist heritage towards a classless society, the other are the anarchic Autonome and their view of violence being legitimate to pursue political goals.

I argue that albeit being a group that is theoretically appealing to younger generations, young Germans do not want to associate themselves with extreme political positions and want above all peace and are concerned with the increase violence in their society. The Antifa Movement I had one-on-one contact with is aware that they need to single themselves out from these more radical fringes in order to achieve their goal of reaching the mainstream society.

I conclude the Dissertation by covering several considerations that the Literature advises can be done in order to appease the current political division and in particular, the extreme-left scene in Germany.

KEYWORDS: Antifa Movement; Extreme Left; Germany; Young Germans;

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Glossary of Acronyms

AfD - Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)

AKAM - Aktion Antifa Mannheim (Action Antifa Mannheim)

GDR - German Democratic Republic / East Germany

JUZ - Jugendzentrum in Selbstverwaltung (Self-Administrative Youth Centre)

MG - Marxistische Gruppe (Marxist Group)

KPD – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (The Communist Party of Germany)

OAT – Offenes Antifa Treffen (Open Antifa Meeting)

RLM – Revolutionäre Linke Mannheim (Revolutionary Left Mannheim)

SED - Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)

INTRODUCTION

The present Dissertation focuses on the dynamic between Young German Students and the Antifa Movement in Germany and how Antifa's public image is distancing possible participants away. I use the term 'young' following Martin's (2012:9) concept of every citizen between the ages of 18 and 29.

In order to study this phenomenon, I elaborated the research question "In what extent is Antifa's public image diverging from young German's approach to pursuing political goals?"

I commit myself to in a first stage, explain the theoretical perspectives of what type of political actors are today's young Germans. As a background layout, I will frame my study by outlining the macro-context in which the present young generation of Germans is living in and the idiosyncrasies of their political culture. I will support myself on Inglehart's theory (2008) on Value Change towards more post-materialist concerns, later connecting it to the rise of the New Social Movements, in particular the New Left Movement.

Afterwards, I will do a brief historical evolution of the Left-Wing Movement in Germany, exemplifying with two extreme-left groups and then, conclude the section analysing the Antifa Movement in Germany. I will be particularly focusing on the concept of Antifascism and how it has been, throughout History, a clay shaped according to political goals and agendas.

I believe Antifa is experiencing a similar past likewise the youth support in the awake of the 1968 Student Protest Movement that quickly faded away regarding the 'New Left', not becoming acceptable to the mainstream public due to their obsolete communist thinking and aspirations of a social revolution

I will further argue however, that it is in this conceptual abstractness and lack of limitation that Antifa finds both its biggest advantage and greatest demise since this characteristic is used by the extreme-left sub-groups within the movement in order to gather exposure to pursue their political goals in a revolutionary and sometimes even violent manner. Albeit having some common ideological ground, they pursue their goals differently since Autonomie, unlike Marxists, consider violence legitimate when fighting against the State.

Furthermore, I will write in the next section the reason why Literature believes that young people, especially male from 18 to 29, due to factors like social fitting in and sense of belonging, are more prone to join these types of left-wing extreme political groups.

In spite of young Germans nowadays may be more 'leftist' and prone to participate in social movements, I commit myself to show how that does not mean they will support left-wing extremist groups, nor do they aspire a revolution of the system legitimized by violence.

In a second stage, I will describe my field work experience with both subjects. Having in mind that Antifa is mainly structured at a regional level, I decided to study the Antifa Movement in Mannheim, city where I lived for six months.

Antifa Mannheim as I experienced it is a very calm group, very much into debating and gathering socially. Aware of the poor image the average citizen has of the Antifa Movement, they realize strategy must change. In their Strategy Plan they state their aspiration to reach the mainstream society.

While trying to understand young German's views on the Antifa Movement I came across some hardships. Young Germans don not want to talk or be asked about the Antifa. In that, I will present the data I gathered from a survey I conducted in order to measure Young German's position regarding Left-Wing Extremist statements and not particularly Antifa. I will conclude that the majority of young Germans do not desire a Revolution nor an anti-capitalist regime.

As to bridge both sides of the matter, the Antifa and the Young Germans, I conducted an interview with one of the subjects of my questionnaire that is both a student in Mannheim and attended several Antifa Manifestations before quitting half a year ago due to the violent demeanour of some of its members.

I conclude my Dissertation crossing the data I have as well as considerations that the Literature finds relevant in order to minimize the phenomenon of the 'new' extreme left in Germany.

Antifa's public image is not what I came across in their meetings. The revolutionary violent-prone state-haters are a minority that imprint on the Movement which leads to a left-leaning yet non-revolutionary young public to distance themselves from, what they call, *that* left.

CHAPTER I - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The hypothetical unity between young Germans and the left scene in Germany needs, however, to have a background of historical events preceding it in order to understand this dynamic more in depth.

In this first section, I present how the Literature considers that the change in the nature of the young generations' concerns may lead them towards more marginalized left-wing groups. A shift towards more post-materialist concerns can have an effect on younger generations identifying with the beliefs and hence, tactics of more radical or even extreme left-wing political groups.

I will first do a brief contextualization into the social and political changes that occurred and the reason why, consequently, young People tend to be more left leaning in their political positions.

Political Culture, as understood by Almond & Verba (1963, p. 12-13 *apud* Dalton, 2008, p. 78), concerns the “specifically political orientations – attitudes towards the political system (...) and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system”, shaping how actors behave and act politically.

A lack of understanding on both ends between young people and the political elites on matters of demand and supply dynamics, has young people feel distrustful and suspicion of the political system. An exacerbation of dissatisfaction with the top can go as far as increase political extremism. “Growing cynicism about government may (...) foster unconventional activism, support for anti-state extremist movements.” (Norris,1999:257).

However, in order to understand today's political climate, we first need to analyse today's younger Generations, their values, demands and how that can translate *de facto* into radical political action.

1.1 Germany: The exception or the rule?

The process of modernization in industrialised democracies led to a never-experienced before economic prosperity and material well-being, which consequently had younger generations start to prioritize more post-materialistic issues like “increasing emphasis on freedom of choice, equality of opportunities and the assertion of human dignity”. This “shift in value orientations will lead to new issue demands” (Thomassen, 2001:180).

Germany is both an example and an exception to this phenomenon, reason why it was chosen as my case study. In spite of being a classical example of the post-materialism phenomenon due to its classical path to modernization as a post-industrial country, its history regarding Left-Wing groups and the concept of Anti-fascism in particular is one of a kind and

explains particularities regarding the dynamic between the Left-Wing Movements and young people.

Germany is a *sui generis* case having in mind that 30 years ago it was divided, as one part was under a repressive socialist system while the other was in a democratic capitalist regime.

Focusing particularly on West Germany, both social movements on the political ends of the spectrum flourished during the 1960s. “Compared with other advanced industrial democracies, both leftist and rightist movements have been strong in Germany since the 1960s” (Karapın, 2007:6). What originally started as a protest and revindication based on materialist, working-class concerns transformed itself in post-materialistic issues. Germany had “one of the largest shifts in its social and political culture towards ‘self-expressive values’” and “is classified as the country with one of the most assertive political cultures in the world in which engaging in new forms of political participation should be a prevalent phenomenon” (Welzel C., 2013:99).

Germany’s two most prominent characteristics, the shift in values and consequently a shift in their political culture and their historical heritage of social movements is the layout to understand the current political situation.

1.2 Talking about my Generation

In order to understand the present political climate, we must look at the bigger picture, the society citizens are embedded in. Authors like Quaranta (2015:3) stress the importance not only of the individual characteristics but also the macro-context said individuals are a part of.

According to the Political Life Model as envisioned by Easton (1975), there is a continuous give and take relationship between citizens’ demands and the State’s political decisions. However, if there is a mismatch and expectations are not met on the subject’s behalf, support starts to decline. Discouraging political opportunities and a feeling of non-representation are two of the reasons why young people search more than ever non-conventional political venues such as petitioning or joining boycotts to express themselves politically.

At the process level, congruence between citizens and the state is disturbed when the state can no longer satisfy the demands of its citizens. Such disturbances lead to a crisis of the state (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1995:4). The system is seen as biased and discouraging, which can ultimately lead to a “disenchantment and disconnect with representative democracy” (Norris, 2004, p.16 *apud* Martin, 2012, p.2). “[E]lite-directed institutionalised conventional participation based on Party or Union Membership” (Grasso, 2016:30-31) are becoming less representative and new non-conventional ways emerging specially amongst the young people.

If young people would like to see issues being discussed in a Parliament, and they are not, if young people would like to feel represented by the elites and they are not, they will find other ways. Traditional avenues of political participation, being strongly structured on old cleavages structures, cannot respond to these new demands in that, new non-conventional channels of

political participation such as social movements and political action groups are sought, particularly young people that are disconnected from traditional politics and the overall political system (Dalton, 2008 *apud* Klingemann, 2014, p. 140). “Citizens are dissatisfied with the lack of impact of their actions (Bang and Sørensen, 1999 *apud* Klingemann, 2014, p.140).

The change in young people’s political behavior shifts from party participation to solidarity and society-oriented actions. “If they are politically engaged, they prefer to sign petitions or boycott (...) rather than be a member of a political party” (Kucharczyk, Łada, & Schöler, 2017:84).

Young people chose new and alternative political options, reflecting their “generational concerns, lifestyles and value orientations” (Chou, 2017:16). Young people want to participate but at their own terms, favouring “cause-oriented style politics” (Chou, 2017:17) and they choose to be active and engaged “through campaigns, social movements, online networks” (Chou, 2017:13).

Political participation and behaviour are changing because values are changing in particular in younger generations gravitate towards more left-leaning post-materialist concerns such as feminism or climate change. However, people are concerned that young people turning their back on institutionalized ways to express themselves politically, such as voting or being a member of a party, may be a symptom of an increased frustration with the system, increasing their anti-democratic feelings and translating it in political extremism and violence. “The sense of powerlessness experienced by many young people should not be disregarded in terms of how it motivates some young people to take extreme actions” (SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre, 2016:11).

In the next section, I will briefly write about the Left-Wing Extremist groups in Germany in order to understand the precedents of the Left Movement, its historical settings, emergence and fall in order to understand the concerns regarding a wave of violent political groups and the problems that the common young German may have with Left-Wing groups like Antifa.

1.3 What is left of the German Left?

As History proves, the discrepancy between mainstream society and more radical forms of left-wing ideologies and groups has always been present in Germany’s History.

During the beginning of the 80’s the ‘New Left’ was regarded as obsolete, suffering from severe identity crisis. The fact that the Marxists “operate within the bourgeois society, which they aim to overthrow (Daprich, 2013:230), had them be accused of hypocrisy by the mainstream society.

The political concept of the ‘Left’ as its origin in the right-left distinction that emerged during the French Revolution in 1789, in which the ‘Left’ had an egalitarian approach and aimed at reducing inequality.

For the purposes of this Dissertation, I consider 'Left' as being associated to words such as "social change", "rejection of inequality" (Jost *et al.*, 2003b-c *apud* Jost, *et al.*, 2009, p. 310), "progressiveness", "radicalism", "socialism", "communism" and "system change" (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990, p. 213-214 *apud* Jost *et al.*, 2009, p.311).

In its more radical sense, I envision Radical Left as understood by Amini (2016:13), an ideology is "anti-capitalism, pro-democracy (...) and embrace[s] some aspects of the 'New Left' politics such as environmentalism, feminism, promoting a progressive social agenda" (Amini 2016:24).

Moreover, an important distinction needs to be made between what is radical or extreme. I understand left-wing extremism as written by Uwe Backes (2007), a "subject that considers its political opinion or analysis morally superior and consequently correct and is not hesitant to enforce them by any means possible". Left-wing extremism is usually a derogatory term for manifestations from which one distinguishes oneself, seeing it as a danger and warning others of it. Radical Left acts on the ground of the democratic constitutional state, whilst extremists see its elimination as the key solution.

The rise of the Left in the narrative of Germany as a country had its most prominent moment in the emergence of Communism, a form of left-wing ideology oriented towards equality, envisioned by Karl Marx as a scientific basis that came to life during the Bolsheviks' October Revolution in Russia in 1917.

During Nazi Germany, the 'Antifaschistische Aktion' (Antifascist Action) was established by the KPD in 1932. KPD was a far-left communist party that claiming itself to be *the* anti-fascist party (Moreau & Schorpp-Grabiak, 2002:166). Its members were, among others like them, pursued, imprisoned, killed and deemed enemies of the system.

Year later in the western side of Germany, Antifascists wanted to learn from the mistakes of 1933, only after 1945 could the Left breathe in Germany.

They considered Nazism had been a result of the instability and inequality of capitalism. "Fascism was considered the final stage of capitalism and 'anti-fascism' was therefore the synonymous of being anti-capitalism" (Moreau, P.; Schorpp-Grabiak, R., 2002:166).

Regarding mass movements or associations with the mainstream society, the historically marginalized Left saw in the Student Protest Movement of 1968 a crucial ally since "the wake of the West German student movement might also help to understand current protest movements" (Dapprich, 2013:239).

Alongside Student Protests, the 'New Left' was blossoming all across Europe. In the German case, the 'New Left' entails "the developments which led towards the formation of the West German student protest movement in 1967/8 and its subsequent continuation until the early 1980s" (Dapprich, 2013:23).

The most prominent 'New Left'-wing movement in West Germany, the 'Marxistische Gruppe', stranded from revolutionary Marxism that emerged in the early 1970s against the domination of the bourgeois capitalist state, pursuing ultimately an idea of democracy towards a classless society.

This quasi-alliance between the 'New Left' and the students derived from "a general adolescence crisis", "disorientation" and a "feeling of helplessness" and allowed those activists disappointed in their failure to have a significant political impact to reconnect their hopes for political change through the emerging enormous protests (Dapprich, 2013:169-170).

The particularities of German history came into play expressed in the unwillingness of the 'War Generation' to relieve with its past, which added an unique political dimension that enabled the majority of students to sympathize with the criticism formulated by the 'New Left', linking Fascism to the logic of the capitalist system and seeing only in communism and anarchism the solution to abolish any form of authority. The New Left incorporated concepts such as communism, anti-authoritarianism, feminism, anarchism and revolutionary dimensions.

However, post the events of 1968 and during the "crisis of Marxism", much of the 'New Left' realized that Marxism itself was deficient and therefore distanced itself from it (Dapprich, 2013:112).

In spite of having gained some social efficacy within the New Social Movements, the stability of the MG was due largely to their stance "on anti-nuclear energy movement and practice of grassroots democracy." (Dapprich, 2013:90). Matters of "Environmentalism now became the new meta-subject for 'progressive' and 'critical' citizens' instead of the 'antiquated' and practically 'disproved' Marxist ideas" (Dapprich, 2013:93).

It was difficult to expand the MG's popularity across the West German proletariat in regard to matters such as support for substantive political and economic change. "The *zeitgeist* had altered significantly in West Germany and further narrowed the room for radical left ideologies caused by the 'conservative turn'" (Dapprich, 2013:60, emphasis given by the author).

By willingly maintaining the capitalist system, the 'masses' disproved the validity of the communist state theory. In the end, "the majority of radical leftists joined forces with 'progressive elements' embodied by the new green-left-alternative movement - later on Green Party - which absorbed a considerable part of the New Left" (Dapprich, 2013:170).

The Marxistische Gruppe ultimately became disproportional to the realities of the early post-Cold War era, which led to its collapse. As before, the Left-Wing Groups were isolated from society and ever since then, Germany's radical left has not yet recovered from the 'crisis of Marxism'. Today, no specific strand of the radical left is expected to emerge as the new driving force of social change.

I argue that, once again, “the radical left (...) must find a way to appropriately deal with the problems it cannot solve because of the antithetic nature of its subject of criticism” (Daprich, 2013:230).

Nowadays, the term ‘left’ and their groups in particular, bear a pejorative connotation, connected to extremism and violence across the German society. One particular current of these fringes that gained mildly strength is the Antifa Movement.

1.4 No. YOU are the Fascist

Antifascism has been a modelling clay shaped at the will of political actors throughout Germany’s History. According to Grunenberg (1993), Antifascism “is one of the most controversial and abused terms in political discourse. Anti-fascism is a strange term, that expresses opposition to something, but no political concept”. The term was applied to any opponents of Communism and this usage has discredited the term (Richter, 2006:195-208).

The complex history of Antifa and Antifa-related political groups is due greatly to its lack of ideological clarity (Balhorn, 2019:19). However, the core of its problem began earlier, right from the moment Fascism’s adversary, Antifascism was born.

After the liberation of the German soil, the country was divided. The Nazi were defeated but the trauma stayed and “anti-fascist committees” were created by the communists to smear their opponents (Pfahl-Traughber, A., 2008). After Germany was divided, both sides of the Wall, the East and West, aimed their state ideology towards fighting anti-fascism.

East Germany and later its institutionalization as GDR, included the ‘Antifaschistische Aktion’ in the quads of the SED. Antifascism justified for example, the state repression during the 1953 uprising and the constant struggle against the western world (Eckhard, J., 2015:94/95; Agethen, M., *et al.* 2002). The government wanted to protect itself from the other side of what they called the “Anti-Fascist Protection Wall” (‘Antifaschistischer Schutzwall’).

Antifascism served the ideological purpose, state doctrine and existence of the GDR regime (Pfahl-Traughber, A.,2008; Eckhard, J., 2015:94/95; Agethen, M., *et al.* 2002). Antifascism was a bulwark originated with the intent to construct the Soviet Propaganda. It did not offer a coherent political ideology, “[i]t showed its adherents what to oppose, not what to believe in” (Davies, 2008:54).

More recently, “Antifascism” as exemplified by the Antifa movement, functions as if it were a cement for the heterogenous left-scene which opens, at the same time, possibilities for more marginalized groups of the Left to take over Antifa’s core purpose and twist it in order to achieve their political goals through violent tactics.

1.5 Antifa: The glue that sticks the German Left together

The modern Antifa movement has its roots in the West Germany's 'Außerparlamentarische Opposition' (Antiparliamentary Opposition) and in the left-wing student movement (Hoppe, B., 2011) with a touch of the 1930's heritage.

Since the 1980's, Antifa features a black flag representing anarchism and autonomism in addition to a red flag that represents communism and socialism (Bray, M., 2017:54), inspired by the two red flags in the 1930's symbol.

Antifa groups are regionally based movements, usually meet in informal organization structures and are against fascism, capitalism, war, sexism, racism, homophobia, corporate interests, the government, the police and military. Doyle (2019:15) describes the Antifa Movement as a "loosely organized network of liberal and Leftist protest groups that employ aggressive demonstration tactics to confront, challenge, intimidate, and silence perceived Fascist or Far Right ideologues."

However beneficial to attract any member that loosely engages in their fight against fascism and right-wing, Antifa's tendency to resist easy categorization and description causes confusion around the group and their motives which in the end, alienates moderates (Doyle, 2019:14-15).

1.6 You give Antifa a bad name

Left-wing extremists strive to instrumentalize social conflicts in order to achieve their revolutionary goals and Antifa is the right niche to do it in. The Left-Wing scene in Germany is not homogenous and Antifa covers a broad range of political positioning such as "generally leftists, factions: communists, socialist democrats, and anarchists" (Doyle, 2019:15).

Antifa has a decentralized structure with no headquarters or leaders, which contributes to the Movement's ideological diversity. The independence of Antifa-aligned group has allowed for different cultures and subcultures to develop alongside the various ideologies endorsed by these groups (McCreesh, 2019:35). Antifa's structure is unique among extremists' groups since its malleability can be used in favor of their reactionary posture (Doyle, 2019:53).

"Extremism" usually carries a particularly negative connotation generally identified with a propensity towards violence and terrorism (Dapprich, 2013:26). In spite of only a minority of the members of Antifa sub-groups being revolutionary and legitimize violent as a political act, during a manifestation, it is hard to distinguish between them (Siewert, 2018:5).

I will particularly be focusing on two of the main currents, the Autonomous ('Autonome') and the Communists ('Kommunisten'). Albeit sharing similar claims of being the holders of the truth and having a friend-foe mentality (Siewert, 2018:6), there is a difference in how they view using violence as a weapon to achieve their goals. Communists albeit their extreme

ideological thinking, consider themselves to be violent-free whereas, 'Autonome' understand violence as legitimate in the game of politics.

1.7 The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg

While I would consider the majority of Antifa members to be Radical-left, more ideologically extreme approaches - like Rosa Luxembourg's - seek a revolutionary overthrow of the liberal system.

One of the most prominent extreme left-wing groups I came across in Mannheim was RLM since they had their pamphlets being passed around during the Antifa meetings I attended. Their goal is towards a revolutionary Marxist overcome of the state and continuing the work of Rosa Luxemburg. "The Revolutionary Left Mannheim was founded in 2018 with the goal of building a revolutionary, anti-capitalist movement in Mannheim" (RLM, 2018).

They aspire a „Zukunft ohne Kapitalismus! In Mannheim und überall!" (A future without capitalism! In Mannheim and everywhere!). Moreover, they operate with a ‚Freund und Feind' (Friend-Foe) mentality, having a revolutionary claim against the ‚Barbarie' of Capitalism (‚Unser Anspruch? Revolutionär Kapitalistischen Barbarei ').

Capitalism is a barbaric, inhuman system (...) In our opinion, it is cynical not to talk about how many people suffer and are taken away by this system every day (...) Another society in which all people have their place on an equal footing is possible! And because it is possible, we ourselves cannot be a part of barbarism! (...) Therefore, the evil must be tackled at the root, capitalism must be eliminated. That is why we are striving for a radical, revolutionary break with the existing conditions (Revolutionäre Linke Mannheim, 2018).

In spite of extreme in their ideological position, communists only consider the use of violence as a last resource in a revolutionary situation, supporting rather a form of peaceful, non-violent demonstrations – which is called ‚Latschdemos' (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:21).

1.8 The co-dependent Autonomous

Antifa's umbrella has since the 1970's been held by the Autonomous (Balhorn, L., 2017). ‚Autonome' are a fringe of Marxism, an anti-authoritarian, left-wing and anti-state political current. Autonome are similar to RLM's aspirations to overcome the existing democratic state and social order, they differ, however, in how to achieve it and the role that violence plays in their tactics.

Distant from party links and the working-class, the early 1990s ‚Autonome' are independent, anti-authoritarian, libertarian Marxists and anarcho-communists (Bray, 2017:54). Their tactics are usually militant, including the construction of barricades or throwing stones or Molotov cocktails at the police. For ‚Autonome', counter-violence is seen as legitimate, they

practice violence either on street or mass militancy or by means of clandestine actions (ex: arson attacks, paint smears) (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:27).

Due to their clothing and overall demeanour, they were dubbed ‘der schwarze Block’ (Black Block) by the German media, a group of masked people that present themselves in black clothing in order to show their power and to strengthen their sense of community. “[T]he black bloc is not an organization or a specific group. It is a tactic of anonymous, coordinated street militancy used predominantly, though not exclusively, by anarchists and other antiauthoritarians that originated in the 1980s among the German Autonome” (Bray, 2017:340-341).

They use projectiles, pyrotechnics or incendiary devices as form of protest since they are against material goods (ex: buildings), their goal is to hurt businesses, both physically and financially and, ultimately, hound the capitalist system. They crave media attention and resonance, looking for exposure and headlines.

Some of the Autonome’s most impactful actions happened in July 2013 when they threw incendiary devices towards German Armed Forces in the Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt, the G20 Meeting riots in the city of Hamburg in 2017 or the Anti-Globalization demonstration in the G7 summit in Bavaria in 2015. Moreover, Autonome did a “Blockupy”- a protest against austerity and reform measures during the financial crisis in the European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt back in 2012. Bank branches and retail stores were damaged with stones and paint. Police cars and emergency vehicles of the fire brigade were attacked and set on fire. (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:27).

Their protests against the global economic and financial crisis are a direct attack towards the capitalist state. According to them, the ‘capitalist’ state is placed alongside murdering right-wing extremists (“Nazis murder, push away the State, it is the same racist pack”) (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:37).

Any violence is legitimate when it is against the “structural violence of the ruling capitalist system” since “any form of statehood is repressive and corrupted” (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:37). “Nicht der ‘Kapitalismus’ ist in der Krise, der ‚Kapitalismus‘ selbst ist die Krise“ („It is not ‚capitalism‘ that is in crisis, ‚capitalism‘ itself is the crisis“). “Kriminell ist das System, nicht der Widerstand dagegen“ (Criminal is the system, not the resistance against it (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2016:7).

Today, the ‘Autonome’ scene in Germany is greatly reduced and concentrates mainly on anti-fascist actions, ecology, solidarity with refugees, and feminism. However, similar settings as those of the Schwarze Block still happen in today’s Germany.

We live in a culture of violence and the extent to which violence manifests itself daily and freely may lead young people to see it as a legitimate way of handling conflict or to show support for a particular cause.

1.9 The New Antifa & the New Generation

Antifascism is a central and traditional field of action of left-wing groups especially amongst young Germans. Anti-fascism is the first “stop in the process of political radicalization.” (Bray, M., 2017:157) and the Literature argues that young males are more prone to join these left-wing groups.

Antifascism’s appeal for predominantly 18 to 28-year-old men is due to its mixture of loose organisational structures and their action-related activities with undogmatic ideological foundation. The concern is, however, how being part of these groups can lead them to acts of violence with the belief that the use of violent means to promote a cause.

The type of violence written here is “left-wing violence, such as violent acts committed by anti-capitalist groups in order to transform political systems. This category can also include violence by animal rights extremists or environmentalist groups” (SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre, 2016:7).

Young people in particular, will be more prone to engage in this type of violent-led political strategy for several reasons. According to SALTO (2016:8), the causes of extremism among the younger generations include the “existence of a grievance or perceived injustice by a sub-group of the population”, “age and gender” as extremist acts are generally “committed by young males aged 15 to 25”, “a sense of identity, belonging and acceptance”, that someone or something is there to support them, a sense of “security or safety”, “status”, “honour and responsibility”, “a way out of poverty – particularly for those young people living in communities suffering deprivation”, “a sense of empowerment and purpose – the young person may feel that their contribution matters”, “an opportunity to resolve injustices”, “an opportunity to ‘fight back’”, “revenge”, an “utopian vision” and a “‘buzz’ – the sense of excitement that some young people experience as a result of their involvement in violence, such as street violence”

It is often the ‘troublemaker’ perspective of young people that dominates discussion of the rationale for youth recruitment from extreme political groups. Research has shown that young people can be viewed as ‘cheap, effective, and obedient fighters (Magnuson & Baizerman, 2007 *apud* SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre, 2016, p. 10).

Albeit being reported that young people, specially males, are more prone to join these extremist left-wing groups, in the next section I will counter-argue that the majority of young Germans do not approve of violence be it as a means towards political change or in their everyday life.

1.10 Is Violence a Value?

Young people’s biggest anxieties are related to what 2CV (2019) named in their report “new challenges” such as “high levels of immigration, rising house prices, and a perceived less stable and/or changing economy” (2CV, 2019:4).

Young people feel that violence is an increasing issue in Germany (2CV, 2019:34) and they would wish that the Government could tackle the increased political polarization and address the issues they care about. “A political agenda that more closely mirrors the things young people care about. More platforms for young people to speak about the issues that affect them” (2CV, 2019:54).

Spontaneously, without being one of the options of the questionnaire conducted by 2CV (2019), young people vocalized their concerns regarding the increased violence and their own safety (2CV, 2019:6). Forty percent of the young people interviewed are worried about violence (2CV, 2019:34). “Many young Germans also (...) felt violence in Germany has risen in recent years” (2CV, 2019:6).

Furthermore, the government’s instability and political polarization is named as two of the causes for this uneasiness. A “‘destabilising’ Germany, [is] causing uncertainty and leading to political polarization and widespread unrest” (2CV, 2019:6). A 19-year-old male argued that “German society is currently extremely politically divided. (...) Perhaps a stable government, which is not itself completely divided and ambivalent, could solve the problem. I even notice this political split in my circle of friends and family” (2CV, 2019:36).

As aforementioned, lack of political representation is for young people an issue that increases their feelings of uneasiness and anxiety. Young Germans report feeling that the “government has been slow and ineffective in responding to these challenges, taking a reactive rather than proactive approach” (2CV, 2019:4).

At the same time, Left-wing violence has become a domestic political challenge since the 2008 financial crisis. Thomas de Maizière, the Federal Minister of the Interior compared the extreme left-wing groups with the Neo-Nazis (Siewert. 2018:5),

Although has a moderate threat potential (Siewert. 2018:5), worrying trend. In spite of the inhibition threshold for the use of violence has fallen, its intensity has increased. Siewert (2018:6) considers that “a glance into the History of Germany illustrates just how narrow the gap between left-wing extremists and terrorism can be.” The potential for violence from the extreme left-wing political spectrum has increased. From 2004 to 2016, the Extreme Left had a higher violence rate than the right-wing (Siewert, 2018:3). Today it is estimated to exist 8500 violent left-wing extremists in Germany (Siewert, 2018:3), who are still willing to be violent regarding their political goals.

In the next section I will take into consideration these different arguments regarding the German Left-wing, the Antifa Movement and young Germans in order to understand if the theoretical approach I have exposed has any empirical verification in an actual real-life setting.

In order to do that, I moved for six months to the German city of Mannheim and lived up-close the city’s current political reality.

CHAPTER II - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Contextualization - between theory and reality

Marginalized from the mainstream society, Antifa seems to not even be able to reach their once allies during the 1970's – the students. Following the literature cited above, I did an exploratory study regarding this dynamic.

As stated by Burgess (1997:33) “the project and methodology are continuously being defined and redefined” and so was my research, that had a lot of nuances and obstacles to it.

At a first stage, I wanted to explore the dynamic between the extreme left and the extreme right in Germany. However, after taking part in meetings of the Antifa group in Mannheim while simultaneously living daily with German young students, I understood something. More than the fear fascists had of the antifascists, the question was why young Germans were, those supposedly more prone to support the left-leaning post-materialist concerns of Antifa, mistrustful of them.

“I was never sure of what was relevant for the formulation of hypothesis until I gained some familiarity with the situation” Burgess, 1997:37), reason why since upon my arrival in Germany what I encountered was different, so did my research have to be. In that, I changed my research approach in order to analyze two groups that can have much in common but seem to not see eye to eye.

In order to have an empirical verification of my arguments, I will firstly assess what is the Antifa Movement in Mannheim, how they act and what do they aspire.

Regarding young German students, my first consideration was to openly ask them about Antifa and the student's political views on them however, it was not as easy as I first foresaw.

I did realize beforehand that no matter how many years pass, Antifascism and its direct opposition to Fascism is a word Germans do not take lightly, nor do they discuss lightly. Political extremism and any type of revolutionary change through organized groups of people chanting for a new social and political order is not taken well by the majority of people, as well intended as those ideologies might be or not. I experienced a sort of unspoken taboo every time I talked about Antifa, which made me change my approach to the matter in a completely different way.

Having this in mind, I did an ethnographic research within a qualitative approach through participant observation by attending the open meetings of the Antifa group of Mannheim. Simultaneously, I developed an 9-item survey in order to assess the position young Germans students from Mannheim have regarding some Left-Wing Extremist Political Statements.

Moreover, I did a semi-structured interview, towards “a natural course of a ‘conversation with a goal’” (Mayhew, 1851 *apud* Burgess, 1997, p. 112) with an individual of my sample that approached me commenting on how she used to be part of Antifa Manifestations but had left because she did not agree with how they expressed themselves politically.

2.2 Antifascism in Mannheim

Mannheim is a southwestern German city located in the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg washed by the Rhine river. Its university, the University Mannheim, is one of the biggest reasons for not only its high level of foreigners but of students as well. Mannheim is a rejuvenating society thanks to the young students that come all over Germany and across borders.

Regarding its demographics, Mannheim has approximately 305,000 inhabitants from which, in 2015, 22,6% were foreigners (UrbiStatAdminStat, n.d.) and during the academic year 2017/2018 there were 12,001 students attending University of Mannheim (University of Mannheim, 2019).

The ‘Antifaschistische Aktion Antifa Mannheim’ is part of the self-administrated political education section in JUZ “Friedrich Dürr”. The JUZ was established in the 1970s as a youth centre movement and named after the Mannheim resistance fighter and communist Friedrich Dürr.

AKAM was founded in 2000 in order to counter-act the growing right-wing scene. They participated both in political and cultural events, regionally - in the Rhine-Neckar region - as well as nationally, aside from having published texts as well. Besides “fighting against Fascists”, AKAM’s struggle is against other forms of oppression such as racism, anti-Semitism, sexism as well as against the ruling capitalist social order (Redaktion, 2017). As previously mentioned, the acronym Antifaschistische Aktion, has a historical correlation to a group connected to the KPD, and their main purpose as an Antifascist Movement was to fight capitalism and promote the communist ideology of social as well as political order.

However, in 2018, after almost 18 years, AKAM was dissolved and no continuation of the project was foreseen by the its members. No specific reason was given for the group to be ceased nevertheless, they were open to discuss it personally with their “companions”. (Redaktion, 2017).

More recently, since January 2019, a newly formed Antifascist group started to meet. The Antifa Mannheim gathers around JUZ and debates about strategies, ways to try to define themselves as a regional association and their position within the Antifa regional, national and international scene.

This reborn of the Antifascist Movement in Mannheim was both beneficial and a hindrance. Their clean slate allowed me the opportunity to explore a left-wing group in its still early stages however, these early stages meant that no actual planning or structuring was established. The only meeting that was made known to the public was their monthly the ‘Offenes Antifa Treffen’ (Open Antifa Meetings). According to them, the meetings are for everyone who has problems with Nazis or racism and if Fascism, Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia “get on your nerves” (Redaktion, 2017).

2.3 Participant Observation: Getting Access

I spent my two first meetings just observing the Antifa group-dynamics, due to “being essential to observe people before a detailed conversation can take place” (Zweig, 1948 *apud* Burgess, 1997, p. 113). I aimed later to learn “how events are interpreted, perceptions and reactions” are made (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979 *apud* Weiss, 1994, p. 10).

I observed the meetings without drawing attention since it was an open setting, I observed freely from a “direct, anonymous and distanced” (Fernandes, 2002) view, as a member of the community. I did mental notes and jotting notes, what Lederman (1990 *apud* Sanjek, 1991, p. 96) called “abbreviated jottings”, the chronological timeline, their views, my understandings, how many people were on the meeting and their social-demographic characteristics.

I approached my fieldwork diary as a “construction of meaning”. (Fernandes, 2002:26). I wrote everything in a notebook in a “participating-to-write style” (Emerson *et al.*, 1995, p.18 *apud* Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p.108). Afterwards, I wrote all of it down in full fieldnotes.

2.4 Fieldwork: This is real. This is Antifa

As I arrived in Mannheim, back in January 2019, staying in a Students Residence gave me the singular opportunity to discuss and live up close with one of my subjects of interest. From day one, both excited and nonchalant about it, I told some friends I wanted to attend Antifa Meetings. Every single person I told my idea to, looked at me puzzled and concerned, advising me to not go alone, especially a girl, especially at night. One time I was even warned to “watch out with whom I was messing with”. Fearing for my safety, I asked a male friend to accompany me.

The Antifa Mannheim, that gathers in an open meeting every first Wednesdays of the month, consider themselves to be fundamentally a Resistance Group against fascism with the purpose to sabotage the Right-Wing Campaigns, especially during the now already passed 26 May 2019 Baden-Württemberg, Europa and Regional elections. Their strategy to fight the Right is mostly through direct actions such as counter-manifestations and rallies. For them, “Politik ist mehr, als Kreuzchen auf Wahlzetteln” (Politics is more than a cross on ballot papers).

I went to my first meeting on February 6th, 2019 at around 19h and the settings, at first, seemed everything I was warned about. The walls were covered in political slogans and graffiti, the light was deemed, it looked as if it was an abandoned house (See Annex A, Figures A2.1, A2.2 & A2.3). It was nighttime and the area where the meetings happened was known among locals as a zone where you can never be too safe.

I sat down half-timidly. Around 25 people were present, they were mostly dressed in black and the majority of them were Caucasian young males apart from one African-descendent young man, two Caucasian women and two elder men. This demographic sample would repeat itself in a similar fashion in all the meetings I attended.

We all sat down in a quasi-circle, one at a time introducing ourselves, our names and where we were from. The German they spoke was colloquial and people were seated in chairs or drawers arbitrarily.

The once fearful environment I was told to watch out for, was actually more like a social gathering with people debating and casually drinking their brought-from-home alcohol, sharing food they bought themselves and occasionally smoking cannabis. Their demeanor was relaxed, and members present went in and out of the room as they pleased.

One person that was among many others seemed to be the coordinator of the meeting, giving permission for people to speak and carrying out the debate following the points someone had written in a board. Pamphlets regarding left-wing political views passed around, their past and future actions were debated alongside the local AfD group that they considered a ‘wichtige Problem’ (important problem). Several members expressed their concerns regarding the “value of democracy that seems to be losing importance” and how the central parties are moving more towards the Right in the political spectrum as the AfD is getting more “socially accepted”.

They debated on what measures to take and how would they sabotage AfD’s political demonstrations and when would they be performing counter-manifestations. One of the elder members expressed his concerns about the voting of the upcoming Regional Elections, while the younger participants focused more on how they could act on it through street activism in order to mobilize non-members to join them.

2.5 The Antifa Strategy - “Politik ist mehr, als Kreuzchen auf Wahlzetteln”¹

According to their Strategy Plan (See Annex B.), Antifa Mannheim aspires to reach mainstream society and improve their reputation through education and by letting people get to know them and their goals.

Two days after my first meeting, on the 9th of February, I attended another meeting where their strategy was discussed. The members talked about future courses of action. They aspire to create a gathering of masses – ‘Massenorganisationen’ - and build their internal structure in order to mobilize more people and establish their Antifa group in society as a ‘place to go to’, a ‘Keimzelle’ (germ cell) – a reference point.

One of the sentences written in the Strategy Plan was how “through the creation of political education and the conduct of substantive debate, it is possible to agree on the content of the anti-fascist movement” (“Durch die Schaffung von politischen Bildungsangeboten und dem Führen inhaltlicher Auseinandersetzung ist es möglich die antifaschistische Bewegung inhaltlich zu einigen”). They expect to achieve their goals through “education and resistance”, organizing workshops on what is Anarchism, Antifa, Critical Theory, Feminism or Fascism.

¹ “Politics is more than a cross on ballot papers” (Antifa Mannheim, 2019)

Their main goal is to establish a web of Networking, getting in touch with not only the mainstream society but other ‘gegen rechts’ (against the Right) organizations as well and ultimately, evolve from what it is now, a loose gathering aimed at debating, towards a movement with a stable membership and following. However, their own fragilities as a group were also discussed.

When compared to the overall population in Mannheim, the OAT is quite small in attendance. In that, they are committed to being more opened to society, getting to know them through a visible more proactive approach.

Aware of their isolation and the negative image some people have of Antifa due to “some idiots”, as a member stated, they understand there needs to be a re-self-definition, reach inner group unity and then expand to more mainstream fringes of society, stating that the “Die antifaschistische Bewegung in Deutschland ist gesellschaftlich isoliert“ (The anti-fascist movement in Germany is socially isolated).

Their ultimate goal is to improve their reputation, invest in being seen in society by letting people know their ideas by investing in Public Relations, spreading banners, stickers and growing their Facebook page. Antifa Mannheim wants to reach the population, set up information stands about themselves, their origin and motivations. Moreover, they are committed in providing cultural activities such as sports - through boxing training - and singing “working-class songs” (Arbeiterlied) as well as organize an ANTIFAkneipe (Antifa Bar).

Besides their self-awareness of being marginalized in the political scene, one obstacle I observed is troublesome for them to achieve efficiency as a group is their lack of direction and focus. In spite of having a sheet of paper with topics and improvements to debate about and appearing motivated to get closer to the mainstream society, their lack of organizational structure leads them to a dead-end standby strategy. While following their 10-point sheet, after almost three hours (from 15h to 18h), only three of the ten points of the meeting were addressed, and the conversation started to lose its sense. There were too many pauses, stagnation, confusion, hesitation, random blabbering and skipping questions. Finally, the meeting ended up abruptly due to the coordinator noticing that increasingly more people were leaving. The endings of the meetings being reached through a die down of the conversation due to its participants lacking interest or exiting, was a common way for them to conclude their sessions.

2.6 How left-wing are you? Survey building

From the moment I understood that Antifa was a “no-topic” amongst young German students, I knew that the response ratio of my survey could be an issue, which I verified as being true.

In order to tackle the issue of Antifa being a sensitive topic and wanting to know how the young Germans positioned themselves in relation to them, I had to do indirect questioning.

Indirect questioning has been proven to be more effective in regard to topics that the subjects do not feel comfortable to disclose about. Having in mind that the nature of the topic makes it hard to obtain citizen's accurate sensitive attitudes and it can lead to "a substantial amount of underreporting and nonresponse" (Rosenfeld et al. 2016:783), I had to restructure my approach.

In order to try to overcome this methodological challenge, I adapted the "list experiment" (Rosenfeld et al. 2016:785) technique. Following accordingly, I did not ask about Antifa nor did I name it throughout the survey. I asked the subjects to rate Left-Wing Extremist Statements as a way to get a proxy measure towards their agreement with Antifa's political ideology.

A set of aggregated items were shown rather than asking only and directly about the sensitive matter (Rosenfeld et al. 2016:785). In that, I kept the topic of their views on 'Revolution', 'Socialism' and 'Capitalism' however, I also added related questions regarding their idea of 'System Responsiveness' and 'Self-Efficacy'.

Regarding the data analysis that I will disclose more in depth about in the next sections, I did not take the items of 'System Responsiveness' and 'Self-Efficacy' into consideration. I focused solemnly on the statements regarding their support of a Socialist political system – 'Socialism', their belief in an anti-capitalist democracy – 'Capitalism' and that revolution is justified in order to achieve political as well as social change – 'Revolution'.

2.7 Questionnaire Template

The statements I asked young Germans to rate according to their personal level of agreement were: "Wenn die Lebensbedingungen durch Reformen nicht besser werden brauchen wir eine Revolution" (When the living conditions are not improved, we need a revolution), "Der Sozialismus ist eine gute Idee, die bisher nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde" (Socialism is a good idea that until now has been poorly executed) and "Eine wirkliche Demokratie ist nur ohne Kapitalismus möglich" (A real Democracy is only possible without Capitalism) (See Annex C.).

Having in mind that "[o]ne common recommendation is to use previously developed scales or modify these scales whenever possible" (Harpe, S. E., 2015:846), I based my statements on both the Extreme Left-Wing Attitudes Scale of Schroeder & Schroeder's (2015), and Jungkuntz's (2019).

The questionnaire was exclusively written in German and in order to avoid primacy effects, all questions were randomized. The structure as well as the coding of the questionnaire were considered having in mind the model of the 2013 World Values Survey Questionnaire German Model (WVS, 2013).

I developed an 9-item questionnaire which asked participants to rate their personal views according to a 7-point Likert-Type rating scale (7=strongly disagree, 1= strongly disagree).

I chose the Likert scale model since it is “based on the idea that some underlying phenomenon can be measured by aggregating an individual’s rating of his/her feelings, attitudes, or perceptions related to a series of individual statements or items” (Harpe, S. E., 2015:838). Besides, it is simple to construct, likely to produce a highly reliable scale and easy to read and complete for participants.

The decision to use a 7-point scale was due to evidence on it being easier for subjects to learn, to administer and interpret (Jaeschke, *et al.*, 1990) plus, the granularity it adds.

In spite of not having the nominal Strongly Disagree or Agree method, I found the numerical model more appropriate since when presented with numbers, in either numeric or nominal form or relative magnitude, humans have a mental representation of numbers that seems to resemble a mental number line” (Harpe, 2015:839-840).

2.8 Data Gathering

The recruitment of participants was conducted by posting the link of the Survey in a Facebook group post of the inhabitants, current and former, of The Curt-Sandig-Haus (CSH), a Student Residence in Mannheim, Germany. The questionnaire was available through an online link from the 12th to the 21st of August 2019.

In order to avoid responses outside the criteria of the sample I required, I wrote a disclaimer in the Post stating I was interested in participants with German-citizenry and under 29, knowing for a fact that if they are part of the group all of them were either a current student or had just recently graduated.

Furthermore, by opening the questionnaire, followed up by my introduction to the purpose of the survey, participants were once again reminded that by doing the survey and ticking the consent box, they were admitting to being part of the population targeted in the questionnaire.

Due to motivations extraneous to me, that I will be writing about in more detail further in this Dissertation, the subjects were in general unresponsive in that, my sample is not representative.

In spite of not having being answered when I asked the administrators of the group about the population demographics to assess if my sample size was meaningful, but knowing that the majority of them are German individuals under 29 years old, I do an educated guess that from 464 members having answers from 34 subjects, is not representative.

In the end, twenty-eight cases were considered valid (N=28). Thirty-four individuals answered to the Questionnaire however, four subjects did not complete the survey in its totality, one was not part of the age group taken into consideration for this study and another subject neither finish the survey nor was part of the age group targeted.

After the exclusion and eligibility sorting of subjects was over, I categorized each choice of answer in its numerical/nominal correspondence (1=1/Completely Disagree from 7=7/Completely Agree) using the statistical software SPSS V.25

2.9 Data Analysis

Regarding data analysis, I only took into account the items of the questionnaire that related specifically to their position regarding Extreme-Left statements. The items ‘Sozialismus’, ‘Demokratie Ohne Kapitalismus’ and ‘Revolution’ (See Annex D., Table D2.1) are the coding I attributed correspondingly to the statements “‘Der Sozialismus ist eine gute Idee, die bisher nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde’” (Socialism is a good idea that until now has been poorly executed), “‘,Eine wirkliche Demokratie ist nur ohne Kapitalismus möglich’” (A real Democracy is only possible without Capitalism) and “‘Wenn die Lebensbedingungen durch Reformen nicht besser werden brauchen wir eine Revolution’” (When the living conditions are not improved, we need a revolution) (See Annex C.).

Considering that I had both 7 categories and numerical rating about them, I followed Hsu and Feldt’s (1969 *apud* Harpe, 2015, p.843) approach and considered the items as interval rather than ordinal data, that is the common to be the most typical way to analyse Likert Scale data. “Data collected during a survey by means of a questionnaire are, in general, expressed with reference to a Likert type scale, giving rise to non-metric data (ordinal categorical). However, most of the statistical procedures used to analyse survey data (...) require at least interval scale measures” (Boari & Ruscone, 2015:344).

Overall, the median values of the items suggested, at first, that in general the average young German student of the Residence positions themselves in the centre mark of the scale. We may interpret these results as the average subject considering Socialism to be a somewhat idea, real democracy is possible with capitalism and revolution is not the way to pursue political goals.

However, if we take into consideration the high standard deviations of all the items, we conclude that the scenario is more complex than it seems at first glance. Young Germans are divided in their political positioning. The standard deviation values mean that the subjects’ discrepancy is too far apart in order to make sense of a linear or general overview of young German’s tendencies regarding Extreme Left-Wing Attitudes.

The code ‘Sozialismus’, which represents how much the subject agrees that socialism is a good idea, had a mean score of 3.79 ($\bar{x} = 3.79$) and a standard deviation of 1.72 ($\sigma = 1.72$). ‘Demokratie Ohne Kapitalismus’, that measure how much the subject agrees that only without Capitalism can there be Democracy, had a mean score of 3.29 ($\bar{x} = 3.29$) and a standard deviation of 1.84 ($\sigma = 1.84$). Lastly, Revolution, which I used in order to measure to what extent subjects believe Revolution is a course of action to pursue when necessary, had the lowest mean score among all items at 2.86 ($\bar{x} = 2.86$) and a standard deviation of 1.73 ($\sigma = 1.73$).

Considering that the sample is not representative of the population I assess the conclusions I take from this survey with a degree of scepticism. As to minimize the statistical weakness of my findings, I will further support my arguments further in this Dissertation with other studies and questionnaires.

2.10 Putting the pieces together – “Oh...*that left*”

In this section I will present an interview (See Annex E) I did with one of the subjects that took part in my questionnaire. As a former attendee of Antifa Manifestations and a declared left-wing young German, I consider her to be the example of the young Germans that although agree with Antifa beliefs or political opinions, stop or do not even think of going to the events of Antifa Movement because they do not agree with how some members pursued their goals.

Considering Beaud and Weber's (2007:95) words, a researcher should “test his observations through interviews” as such, I came across the opportunity to do an Interview to a inhabitant of the Residence of Mannheim that commented with me that she was previously an attendant of the Antifa Protests but due to violent and vandalism-like actions of some members, she never returned.

I consider the Interview as complementary to the data gathering process since we judge guided by our “value laden interests” (Vidich & Lyman, 1994:25) and I needed my perception on the matter to be challenged in order to make a more insightful analysis. Those who only observe will never be contradicted and will, therefore, never know the subjects' truth, which, for me, is the heart of this research.

The interview I conducted touched on the important topics of political positioning, attending Manifestations and the disagreement between the young people's demands and what the Government has to offer.

The disagreement of violence and vandalism as a way to perpetuate political power towards authority, aging and male-dominant political elites that do not represent the younger citizens, fringes of the population who on their end do not feel they are being heard, were the main arguments presented. “I feel that in the government are just a lot of old people, which are more committed to the interests of old people and therefore I, as a young person and as a woman, do not feel represented often.”

In spite considering voting above all, a “duty”, non-conventional avenues of political behaviours are, and have been a reality for her. “I have always gone to Protests and sign Petitions and go out to the street for something that is important to me. For me, that is also part of what a democracy is - that I go out into the street and do something to make it better, or to show we're here.”

The Manifestations attended were largely counter manifestations, a typical political strategy for left-wing movements in general and, as mentioned in this Dissertation, for the Antifa Movement in particular. Prior to the first Protest, Antifa was a name loosely heard about for her.

It was a Protest from the Antifa and other left-wing organizations in general in Kaiserslautern, where I was born. The protests are almost always organized as counter-demonstrations (...) I actually did not know much about them, I knew they were against the right-wing, they are usually more likely to be leftist (...) I thought they are very open and that they represented my views as well.

For example, the interviewee told me how she noticed the political advertising in Mannheim, be it the stickers or graffiti with slogans, and although she agreed with some, others were considered more extreme. “Ever since I have lived in Mannheim, I have always noticed when there are any stickers from Antifa. I look at them, read them and think ‘ah, true’, sometimes I think ‘Humm...Difficult’, because some things are just a populist wakeup call and sometimes it makes me think, ‘This can’t be like this’”.

The interviewee chose to participate in the meetings since Antifa was a group she felt she could feel represented in however, as I have stated, there are sub-groups in the Antifa scene with which non-radical or non-extremist citizens do not identify with, considering their message and tactics “too much”. “They are anti-fascist and so am I. I agree with them because they are left and against the Right. If they are for democracy then I agree, but in Antifa there are different opinions. I agree with some opinions, but not all.”

Although it is expectable that political ideologies diverge even between members of the same group, more than what they believe in, for the interviewee, the bigger issue was how some members carried out those same beliefs.

Most of the demonstrations were peaceful, but once I was in a counterdemonstration against extreme right-wingers and one of the black blocks ran by me shouting, ‘Run, so we’re standing in front of the stupid policemen to beat up the right wing’. I was scared. Plus, people were running around and sprayed ACAB (All cops are bastards) on walls and stones and I thought that was stupid. It is not democratic to say that all policemen are bastards because they deliver democracy, which I think is good.

The episode she experienced made her wearier of Antifa as a group. “Those from the Antifa who spray, make a bad impression of the Antifa. And then I saw that there are also many violent people there. I wanted to isolate myself from burning cars, blowing things up, and hurting people. I do not think it’s good, at all.”

When asked about if those less pleasant moments changed her overall opinion on Antifa, the answer was short and quick, “Yes, absolutely”. The violent side of Antifa had her start to distance herself from those Protests, even reluctant to tell people where she was going. “Before that (the violent counter-manifestation), I thought that Antifa was only good and was committed

to good things. And because I did not like that, I did not want to say that I was going to Antifa demonstrations because I did not want to support spraying and vandalism.”

Moreover, regarding ideological positions such as communism or socialism, similarly to the Students and mainstream population of the 1970's, she considered those political organizations of the State to be outdated and that they do not represent the reality of today's Germany.

I would not change anything in the system because I find [it] good. (...) I do not agree with political ideologies such as communism or socialism. I like democracy”, adding that “[i]n the old communism it was about the revolution of the proletariat and I think there is no more proletariat, for me, that is not a system for a functioning State.

In spite of considering the current political system good, she would change its party-representation at government-level. “I would not change anything in the system because I find [it] good [however] (...) I do not feel really represented. I think it would be better if other parties, such as the Green, would have more power in the Bundestag.”

Not only for her, but for other young Germans as well, the solution lies in peaceful demonstrations and improvement of the democratic system, not the revolutionary desire of system change. “I would like to see another party in power, so I am going to vote and demonstrate, in order for something to change. I like democracy very much as it is, and it's the majority that decides.”

As the theory on ‘New Left’ previously mentioned, young people consider their political resources should be used for environmental protection and to show to the Bundestag their demands, this is their way to dialogue with the System.

(...) [W]ith demonstrations like "Fridays for Future," society is catching on what many young people want. They are now being seen in the government as well, but so far, no demands from the young demonstrators have yet been addressed. The Youth in Germany uses the demonstrations to show ‘Here we are, we want something to change!’

2.11 Ethical Assessment

This Dissertation as well as the research work from which it was based from, followed both the recommendations of The Standards Committee of the Experimental Research Section of the American Political Science Association to assess a valid Study and its Common-sense list of items for experimental methods as the recommended minimum reporting standards (Gerber, *et al.*, 2014:83/84). Matters regarding consent agreement, comprehension, information and voluntariness (Humphreys, 2015:100) were mentioned throughout this essay, for example, the consent process for the survey participants and the tacit consent of the interviewee by answering my questions.

Both the Antifa members as well as the Interviewee were aware of my field research purpose to which both gave verbal consent. In an initial stage, I did not tell the Antifa members that my attendance would be an empirical verification of my theoretical readings on Left-Wing groups in Germany like themselves. However, in the end of the second meeting when the idea of the present Dissertation started to be laid out, I publicly stood before them and informed them of my Academic pursue by attending their meetings, the photographs I took and the information I gathered about them and their inner-group dynamics which was gladly welcomed by them.

2.12 Hindrances & Shortcomings

I believe the hardest obstacle I had to overcome during this Dissertation was to reach the young people and have them talk about Antifa. As previously explained, everyone, even those who agreed politically with some Antifa positions, advised me to not do field research with them.

Antifa was a synonym of violence, vandals and extremism, a topic that made young Germans uncomfortable which made the methodological approaches that followed harder to accomplish.

From the moment I understood that Antifa was a ‘no-topic’ I knew that the response ratio of my survey could be an issue, which ended up being true. Not only did I have a somewhat weak response rate from the population I approached but the actual number of valid answers were poor as well. In that, I deem my study not statistically meaningful which tempered with any arguments or results I could state without the support of other statistical sources. Furthermore, the generalizability and scalability of this research were not able to be achieved since I had difficulties regarding the internal validity of my data due to a non-representative sample size of the population.

Moreover, I was faced with the already expected hindrances of the tendency of the individuals to seek “ideological consistency [that] may be a desirable goal in self-presentation, thus leading to a distortion in self-report measurements” (Clay et al., 2013 *apud* Marquart *et al.*, 2016, p.2579).

Similarly, the instrumental measure used, the Likert Scale, is prone towards central tendency bias “ - participants may avoid extreme response categories: acquiescence bias – portray themselves in a more socially favourable light rather than being honest; lack of reproducibility; validity may be difficult to demonstrate” (Bertram, n.d., p.7 & Boari & Ruscone, 2015).

Concluding that, in spite of my findings not having the strength it its inference due to the small representative sample, I realized the bigger issue at hand was the unwillingness of the German Youth to talk about or even discuss Antifa.

CHAPTER III - FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Young People = State-haters?

I draw four overall arguments regarding Antifa's dynamic with young Germans.

First, the youth is gravitating towards post-materialism, in particular towards environmentalism, and would like to have more representation in the system. Nevertheless, they still trust the Government and believe that revolutionary actions or even violence is not the answer, let alone as political behaviour.

There is a discrepancy between Antifa's private and public images, and this outwardly bad reputation hinders possible mobilization of future members or sympathizers.

When it comes to their political behaviour, young Germans are divided. Although some say they participate more in boycotts, the number of those who say they would never do it also increased. Besides, attending peaceful demonstrations is being regarded more favourably, only in a hypothetical way.

According to statistics from World Values Survey (2013), when asked about if they had already joined a boycott, in 2006, 6% of Germans under 29 answered affirmatively, this number increased to 8% in 2013. However, the 'would never' option rose from 40.1% to 51.9%, in 2006 and 2013 correspondently. Attending peaceful demonstrations, in spite of the 2.3% decrease (22.6% in 2006 to 24,9% in 2013) regarding the answer 'would never' and the actual decrease of the 'have done' percentage as well (from 21% in 2006 to 17,1% in 2013), saw an increase in the answer 'might' attend a peaceful demonstration which rose from 51,6% in 2006 to 57,1% in 2013. Young Germans are more prone to participate in peaceful demonstrations.

In spite of having mix views on non-conventional political behaviours, young Germans do not trust the Government any less than they did before. Regarding their confidence in Government, the majority of young Germans went from trusting it 'not very much' in 2006 (50.6%) to 'quite a lot' (48,4%) in 2013.

And in spite of since 2013, 94.4% of Young Germans not being active members of a political party, the number of young people having active memberships in environmental organizations has increased to 3,3% in 2013, when compared to 0,8% in 2006.

On average, young Germans are gravitating towards post-materialism and left-leaning views. According to WVS (2013), the percentage of young Germans that consider themselves to be on the furthest point towards post-materialism, increased from 3.1% in 2006 to 7% in 2013.

Regarding left-right self-positioning, young Germans in general position themselves more towards the left in the political spectrum (Kucharczyk *et al.*, 2017:25/26).

The large majority of young people in Germany see themselves in the middle of the right-left political spectrum (78%), with only three percent positioning themselves at its extremes. Among those who are in the middle, the biggest group is rather center-left oriented (46%), with 32% perceiving themselves as center-right. (Kucharczyk *et al.*, 2017:9/96).

The argument that a shift towards post-materialism is happening is true and in spite of young people wanting for politicians to see them and doing so through non-conventional avenues of political participation, that does not equal that they want to do so in a radical or even extreme way.

In particular the young Germans in the Residence in Mannheim seem, in general, neutral or unaffected by Socialism or Anti-Capitalism., However, a look into the dispersion of answers has me believe that they are divided in their political positioning. Due to the high standard deviation values of their answers no general overview of young German's tendencies regarding Extreme Left-Wing Attitudes can be done which translates into polarizing positions.

Today's Germans see in Peace their one priority and young Germans see terrorism as their biggest threat. If we are to consider these left-wing extreme groups 'terrorists' like Siewert (2018), we can affirm that German society does not support in general any type of violence, be it or not political. Peace is the number one priority in Germany (80%) followed by preventing climate change (70%) (Kucharczyk, Łada, & Schöler, 2017, p. 15) and for young Germans, terrorism is the biggest threat (64%), closely followed by environmental pollution, climate change and associated ecological disasters (63%) aside from the growing nationalism and Xenophobia (60%) (Kucharczyk *et al.* 2017:17).

In spite of today's youth feeling like spectators in a "culture of hopeless fatalism about politics" (Stoker 2006 in Chou, 2017, p.15), they are not revolutionary nor want to overthrow the state, as the interviewee stated, "I am also against crisis and war, but I think that you cannot do much against capitalist thinking." Their political approach is more towards improving the already existing political structures, aspirations of an anti-capitalist, socialist state is not under their political demands.

According to what was stated in the interview, "I would not change anything in the system because I find [it] good." However, since she does not feel represented by the current political elites, she seeks for peaceful demonstrations towards, for example, climate change. "(...) I do not feel really represented. I think it would be better if other parties, such as the Green, would have more power in the Bundestag." The interviewee considers that not only for her, but for other young Germans as well, the solution lies in peaceful demonstrations and improvement of the democratic system. "(...) [W]ith demonstrations like "Fridays for Future," society is catching on what many young people want. (...) The Youth in Germany uses the demonstrations to show 'Here we are, we want something to change!'".

Violence and environmental concerns are on the top anxieties of young Germans and they are ready to show to the Bundestag their demands, this is their way to dialogue with the System.

Young people are what Farthing (2010) considers radically unpolitical, expressing themselves politically in their everyday life. There has been "a flight from politics, or what the Germans call *Politikverdrossenheit*: a weariness about its debates, disbelief about its claims,

scepticism about its results, cynicism about its practitioners” (Maier, 1994, p.59 *apud* Norris, 1999, p.6, emphasis given by the author).

According to Beck (2001, p.159 *apud* Farthing, 2010, p.190) “[r]ejection is a powerful new form of action”. However, instead of legitimating their demands through violence, this rejection is more visible in their everyday life through, for example, ethical consumerism, (Gaiser *et al.*, 2010:24-25).

3.2 A matter of History

Like those left movements prior to them, Antifa has not been able to adapt themselves to this present time and generation.

Today, the radical left is as it was before the student movement of the 1960’s, an extreme minority position on the fringes of the political landscape, which is also the consequence of the integration of the artistic critique of capitalism into bourgeois society, a critique that is also a facet of social revolutionary approaches (Dapprich, 2013:232).

Antifa needs to change from within in order to establish a better reputation for themselves on the outside. “[S]uccessful tactics and strategies are those that best attract ‘bystanders and would-be participants’ to one’s cause while simultaneously reducing their sympathy to the opposition.” (Chenoweth, 2011 *apud* Bray, 2017, p. 322).

I believe that the two major issues in the Antifa’s approach to the German society, in particular young people, is their already bad reputation and the lack of adaptation in their ideological positions towards the current Right-Wing in Germany.

One of the obstacles Antifa faces is the already engrained association the average citizen has between the Antifa and the extreme sub-groups, viewing them as ‘all the same’.

Furthermore, unlike the Right-Wing that has adapted itself to the current social and political order, Antifa is still holding on to a mindset that is not compatible with today’s reality. If the ultimate fight is against fascists and the ‘New Right’, the Left needs to evolve in its strategy just like the Right did. “At some point, the evolution of the ‘Far Right’ might even mean transcending the framework of ‘fascism’ altogether, as we move further and further away from the twentieth century” (Bray, 2017:243). “The tendency of leftist theorists and politicians to excessively conceptualize fascism based on the paradigm of traditional counterrevolution hindered the ability of the Left to adjust to the new threat it faced (...)” (Bray, 2017:242).

I believe History is repeating itself. Likewise those before them, the young people of the 1970’s, today’s young Germans while supporting the blooming ‘New Left’ environmental as well as feminist concerns, reprehend Communists, especially Marxists, and their hypocrisy as a group that although is anti-system, corroborates and complies with the system it criticizes.

The rejection of the Communist's obsolete classless proletariat fight and it being deemed unrealistic and ultimately unwanted, seems to be a recurring and reemerging argument when it comes to Antifa and its most marginalized sub-groups.

Unlike 'The Marxistische Gruppe', that ultimately became disproportional to their society's reality, Antifa Mannheim, in particular, understands they would find more success if they focused themselves mainly on today's young people's most pressing concerns such as terrorism and the rise of xenophobic and nationalist groups, rather than keeping their target on system change and revolutionary actions. In spite of extreme thinking being only a minority on the great scene of the Antifa Movement, Antifa Mannheim is aware that they are the reason that young People do not want to be associated with them.

Despite the media portrayal of a deranged, bloodthirsty antifa (...), the vast majority of anti-fascist tactics involve no physical violence whatsoever. They organize educational events, reading groups, trainings, athletic tournaments, and fund-raisers; they write articles, leaflets, and newspapers, drop banners, and make videos; they support refugees and immigrants, defend reproductive rights, and stand up against police brutality. But it is also true that some of them punch Nazis in the face and don't apologize for it. (Bray, 2017:299/300).

The Left in general is aimless and in need of a new direction and a tangible vision (Winship, 2019:127). In order to remain relevant, Antifa itself needs to settle on a clear political goal since its lack of a specific political agenda could eventually lead to splintering among the various factions (Devulapalli 2019:57).

In spite of all being a matter of perspective and authors like Lennard (2019:85), believing that when Political Institutions fail to contain fascist and far right movements, aggressive opposition becomes a moral necessity, by attending the meetings of the Antifa Mannheim I believe they are starting to choose their path through non-violence or radicalism.

Like Zimmerman, (2019:110) I believe that with the evidence presented in this Dissertation, we can acknowledge that any violent or extreme group or activity undermines the efforts of peaceful activists on the Left. Antifa Mannheim is aware of their lack of social mobilization being due to their bad reputation and want to single themselves out from the sub-group minority that gives them a bad name.

Antifa's tactics could alienate moderates and centrist-minded conservatives and squander an opportunity to attract some of these voters (...) centrist-minded liberals have pointed out the hypocrisy of employing violent and repressive tactics to resist a movement that one is rejecting on the basis of its violent and repressive nature (Doyle, 2019:16).

3.3 The Good, the Bad and the Antifa

In their strategy meetings, Antifa acknowledged they are mainly regionally organized, with no significant connections with other movements nor with civil society. Antifa, first and foremost, need to get in touch with the citizens.

Antifa Movement in Mannheim has openly stated how they want to change the narrative of their public image. Bray (2017:161) argues that the mainstream shift towards issues like racism allying their antifascist fight with antiracism have been an example of a successful association. “The challenges of adapting anti-fascist strategy to face a more popular, mainstream foe have apparently brought the anti-fascist and antiracist movements—previously fairly separate—closer together for joint action in support of refugees.” (Bray, 2017:161).

Albeit aspiring to have mainstream societal recognition through their ‘Massenorganisationen’ (Mass Mobilization), “[s]omething that should never be forgotten in the antifascist struggle is that to reach the working class and gain their support. (...) You can’t gain the support of your neighborhood running around shouting ‘Kill the Nazis!’ (Karpa, 2017 *apud* Bray, 2017:374).

In spite of “[m]any anti-fascists aim[ing] to transcend the dichotomy between ‘official’ antifa and the rest of the population” (Bray, 2017:350), a member of the Antifa needs to be “(...) able to talk to your neighbors and establish a presence in your community.” (Bray, 2017:374).

Bray (2017:285) considers that “many Antifa groups organize not only against fascism but aim to combat all forms of oppression such as homophobia, capitalism, patriarchy, and so on” and that should be their main and current focus.

3.4 The State of it all

Left-Wing Extremism divides not only the Antifa Movement but the population as well. In this section I review three main approaches towards political extremism and what can be done to appease it.

Bray (2017) believes the difference of violence being legitimate is not on the ‘how’ but on the ‘who’, Siewert (2018), believes that political extremism all together should be ceased and Johnstone (2019) believes political extremism and polarization is only a symptom of a deeper systemic issue.

Bray (2017:359) considers that the issue that lies before us is not about how political goals are achieved but what the individual feels in regard to it. The author does not condemn violence itself - the ‘how’, only if it is done in favour of the “white supremacy”.

An anti-fascist outlook has no tolerance for ‘intolerance.’ It will not ‘agree to disagree.’ (..) we must point out that our critique is not against violence, incivility, discrimination, or disrupting speeches in the abstract, but against those who do so in the service of white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, class oppression, and genocide. The point here is not tactics; it is politics. (Bray, 2017:359).

On the other hand, authors like Siewert (2018) believe that just like with right-wing violence, left-wing violence has to be rejected as well. In that, political actors as well as the civil society have to outlaw them, denounce their extreme violence. On both levels, be it the state and

federal authorities or the average everyday citizens, all are responsible to monitor and pursue extreme left-wing activities. Prevention and education are two strategies singled out by Siewert (2018:7).

Johnstone (2019:103) argues that the ultimate struggle is systemic and that divisive extremist dynamics hinders the real issue, the structural problem in our political system. Following the approach of constant feedback of Easton (1975), the State cannot be a simple observer, it needs to change in order to match the new needs and demands of its citizens.

One of the ways to prevent the not yet alarming but worrying trend of the rise of the left-wing extremism and its violence, is through the younger generations and the systemic improvement towards more representation of their needs.

The gap between citizens and the state has widened and in spite of the average young German not aligning with more violent or extreme antics, it is not a fact that the minority will not. A “feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (Campbell, *et. al*, 1954, p.187 *apud* ESS, 2016, p.1) may appease their political behaviours.

Young Germans perceive Germany to be a polarized society and this division can be the symptom of a bigger issue at hand. (Johnstone, 2019:103) argues that the State needs to adapt to its citizens in order to be more representative and appease the current political scene. “It is unlikely that adequate support for the regulatory structures of a democracy can develop and persist if the values by which these structures are legitimated are not accepted by the citizens”. (Fuchs, 1999:17). If the state evolves and changes by attending to their younger citizen’s demands, there will be less need for more radicalized citizens to try to get attention in a more marginal way.

Some testimonies of young Germans in the 2CV (2019) Report name this very concern. “This current government does not care about young people or even the elderly in Germany, they are too focused on in-fighting”, a young male reported (2CV, 2019:42). A young woman considered that “[t]he German government is a man who wants to be respected and talks a lot about all sorts of plans, but he doesn’t practice what he preaches” (2CV, 2019:42).

The report concluded that there is a need to show young people that politics is will welcome them and be representative of their interests (2CV, 2019:6).

CONCLUSION

This Dissertation was, above all, a passion-project exploratory work that, in spite of its setbacks, I believe provided a valuable one-on-one real insight into a sub-culture that, as I have written throughout this essay, has two sides to it, how they see themselves and how others see them.

Antifa is not only relatively unknown to the Literature, but to the society as well. I attributed this to be both due to the ideological and practical demeanour of Antifa's sub-groups which are not in accordance with the views of young people which, ultimately, distance themselves. Two of the sub-groups I studied in particular detail due to their prominence in the Mannheim Antifa scene are the Autonome and the RLM.

This work was greatly about Antifa and the Young Germans and how they could be allies towards the common issues and concerns they share between such as feminism, racism or environmentalism. Instead, young people stray away from the Antifa and all things related to it due to a bad idea they have of them. Antifa and young Germans do not see common ground in two matters, the approach to state and the best way to pursue a political course of action.

I began my Dissertation giving an overall background into today's youth and how their values are changing from materialism to post-materialism. Similarly, I did a parallel with the 1970s Student Protests that wanted, above all, equal resources, better education and environmental protection. Today's Germans value above all peace and environmental sustainability.

Contrary to the marginalization of the left-wing movement throughout its History, the New Left Movement gained somewhat of support. Nonetheless, this moment of union of the Students supporting the New Left was ephemeral and largely due to New Left support of feminist and environmental anti-nuclear causes. In its core values such as their aspiration for a classless communist order, did not suit well into the mainstream society. Ever since then, the Left-Wing in Germany has been in crisis.

The question I intended to answer was why German students are so negatively affected of this 'New' New Left that shares the same concerns as them. In order to find out the reasons, I did some fieldwork research in which I attended several meetings of the Antifa Movement in Mannheim, the German city I lived in for six months.

All the young people I came into contact with and whom I told them my research, advised me to stay away from '*that left*'. However, and after the initial uncomfortableness typical of being in an unknown place, I realized they Antifa's intimidating public image did not match the actually very calm informal meetings I participated in.

In one of the meetings the OAT discussed who they were and what direction to give to the Movement. They were aware their public image was tainted by a small sub-group within their members, specially the Autonome – an anarchic group that is known to have more violent tactics.

These sub-groups are one of the reasons for the low mobilization of the Antifa Mannheim Movement and the individual I interviewed is an example of that, “I did not want to say that I was going to Antifa demonstrations because I did not want to support spraying and vandalism”.

In that, Antifa Mannheim wants to change their strategy. Their recent formation as a group allows them to write their own narrative however, Antifa is a name with History and, amongst the Mannheim Youth, it has a deprecating meaning.

Aware of this obstacle. Antifa’s sole purpose for future actions is to reach society, letting people get to know them and understand that the majority of the Antifa are not extreme in their approach. They debated on how better connectivity with society in general could increase their influence and at the same time decrease the organizational distance between the two sides, creating more acceptance and hence, more allies among the mainstream society.

Another point I reiterated across this Dissertation was that some the ideological extremism of some Antifa sub-group members is not compatible with the general approach that young Germans have of their current political system. Today’s young Germans want to improve the current political system they live in and not overthrow it in favor of communism or a social revolution.

I believe Antifa above all realizes they need to adapt. Youth are “Everyday Makers “with a “new civic imperative” (Chou, 2017:19), “they live their politics – they do not vote for change; they do change” (Chou, 2017:19) but in order for Antifa to be a reference point in that change, they are aware they need to redefine themselves away from more extreme fringes of the Left.

Extra-parliamentary action can “allow citizens to be protagonist of the civil and political life ... the feeling of being “part of” that has been missing (Tilly and Tarrow 2006 *apud* Quaranta, 2015,p.2), both Antifa and young Germans, two groups feeling outside of the decision-making process can work together towards their common end, to be heard and change politics.

Some authors defend that exacerbated political polarization and extremism can steam from a systemic issue and that not only the more moderate left-wing groups and the citizens should be an active part of this problem. The state should improve itself, be alert and invest in prevention, adapt itself to demands of its citizens, give them a voice in the political central stage and actually listen.

Antifa has always been a topic at the margins of the Literature and I consider more research should be done about it as part of a bigger quest for knowledge on the sub-culture and of the Left-Wing groups.

I believe that further research on this phenomenon of the modern Antifa Movement, the dynamic with extreme-left sub-groups and the role of young people is needed and I hope this Dissertation helped as a starting point.

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ANNEXES

Annex A: Photographic Documentation of the Antifa Mannheim Meeting Site

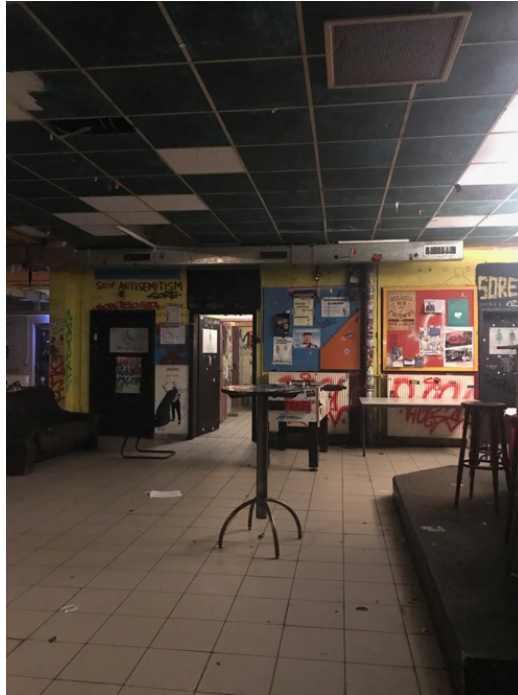


Figure A2.1. Antifa Mannheim Meeting Site
Source: original photograph by the author, 2019

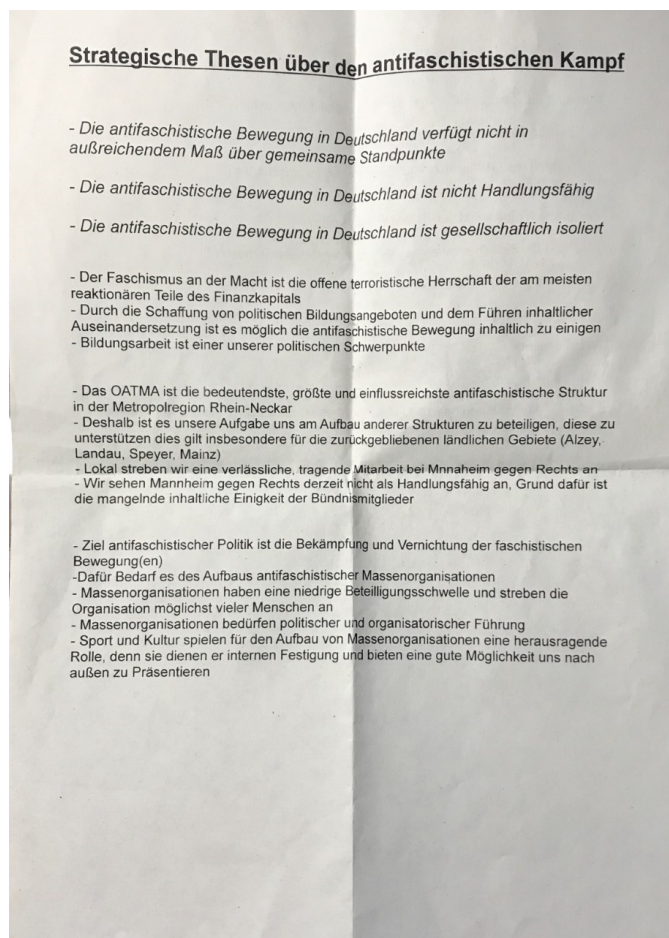


Figure A2.2. Antifa Mannheim Meeting Site
Source: original photograph by the author, 2019



*Figure A2.3. “Communists against War and Fascism”, graffiti display on a wall at the Antifa Mannheim site of their anti-fascist, pro-communism political positions.
Source: original photograph by the author, 2019*

Annex B: Model of the Antifa Strategy Plan



*Copy of the Strategy Plan it was provided in an Antifa meeting
Source : Antifa Mannheim, 2019*

Annex C : Questionnaire Template & Likert-Type Rating Scale

Willkommen! Diese Umfrage ist Teil einer Studie über politische Meinungen. Die Umfrage wird etwa zwei Minuten in Anspruch nehmen. Bitte lesen Sie die Anweisungen aufmerksam durch. Mit dem Fortsetzen der Umfrage bestätigen Sie, dass sie Teil der Zielgruppe dieser Umfrage sind.

Ich stimme zu

Die Teilnahme an dieser Umfrage ist freiwillig und Ihre Antworten werden streng vertraulich behandelt und sind völlig anonym. Sollten Sie weitere Fragen haben wenden Sie sich bitte an Beatriz Fernandes da Silva bferande@mail.uni-mannheim.de Vielen Dank für Ihre Zeit!

1. Altersgruppe:

18-29

+30

Auf einer Skala, auf der 1 für "Stimme überhaupt nicht zu" steht und 7 für "Stimme voll und ganz zu" steht, bitte bewerten sie Ihr Einverständnis mit den folgenden Aussagen:

1. Unsere Demokratie ist keine echte Demokratie, da die Wirtschaft und nicht die Wähler das Sagen haben
2. Das politische System in Deutschland gibt Menschen wie mir eine Mitsprachemöglichkeit bei dem, was die Regierung tut
3. Das politische System in Deutschland gibt Menschen wie mir die Möglichkeit, Einfluss auf die Politik zu nehmen
4. Der Staat sollte Verantwortung dafür übernehmen, dass jeder Bürger abgesichert ist
5. Wenn die Lebensbedingungen durch Reformen nicht besser werden brauchen wir eine Revolution
6. Der Sozialismus ist eine gute Idee, die bisher nur schlecht ausgeführt wurde
7. Eine wirkliche Demokratie ist nur ohne Kapitalismus möglich
8. Die soziale Gleichheit aller Menschen ist wichtiger als die Freiheit des Einzelnen
9. Wie demokratisch, meinen Sie, wird Deutschland heute alles in allem regiert?

Likert-Type Rating Scale

1 --- Stimme gar nicht zu

2 --- Stimme nicht zu

3 --- Stimme eher nicht zu

4 --- Weder noch

5 --- Stimme eher zu

6 --- Stimme zu

7 --- Stimme voll und ganz zu

Source: Qualtrics, original survey by the author, 2019

Annex D: Statistical Analysis of the Items

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Wie_Demo	4.82	1.156	28
Einfluss	4.64	1.446	28
Staat Verantwortung	5.71	1.462	28
Demokratie ohne Kapitalismus	3.29	1.843	28
Sozialismus	3.79	1.729	28
Gleichheit vs Freiheit	4.14	1.840	28
Tut	4.29	1.384	28
Revolution	2.86	1.737	28
Echte	3.86	1.715	28

Table D2.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the items measured in the Survey.
Source: SPSS V.25, original table by the author, 2019

Annex E: Interview Transcription

1. Welche Wörter fallen dir ein, wenn du an Demokratie denkst?

Which words come to mind when you think of Democracy?

GER: Solidarität, Gerechtigkeit, Gleichheit. Vor allem Solidarität, weil ich denke in einer Demokratie müssen Menschen, die mehr haben, den Leuten, die es schwieriger haben, helfen und unterstützen. Außerdem macht es für mich Demokratie aus, dass das Volk halt Mitbestimmungsrecht hat.

ENG: Solidarity, justice, equality. Above all solidarity, because I think in a democracy, people who have more should help and support those who have it more difficult. Moreover, for me in a Democracy, people must have the right of co-determination.

2. Ist Wählen eine Pflicht oder ein Recht für dich?

Is Voting a duty or a right for you?

GER: Auf jeden Fall eine Pflicht. Ohne Wahlen würde Demokratie gar nicht funktionieren und dass ist für mich kein Recht. Es ist eben so, dass viele nicht wählen gehen, weil es eben nur ein Recht ist, deswegen finde ich, dass es eine Pflicht sein müsste.

ENG: Definitely a duty. Without elections, democracy does not work and that is not a right for me. It's just that many do not vote because it's just a right, so that's why I think it has to be a duty.

3. Denkst du, dass die Regierung sich für deine Bedürfnisse interessiert?

Do you think that the Government is interest about your needs?

GER: Ich habe immer, dass Gefühl, dass es so sein müsste, weil wir in einer Demokratie leben. Aber wenn ich darüber nachdenke, habe ich das Gefühl, dass in der Regierung nur sehr viele alte Menschen im Bundestag sitzen, die sich eher für die Interessen von älteren Menschen einsetzen und deswegen fühle ich mich als junger Mensch und als Frau oft nicht repräsentiert.

ENG: I always feel that it has to be that way because we live in a democracy. But when I think about it, I feel that in the government are just a lot of old people, which are more committed to the interests of older people and therefore I, as a young person and as a woman, do not feel represented often.

4. Welchen Einfluss haben deine Eltern auf deine politische Einstellung?

What influence did your parents have on your political opinions?

GER: Früher hatten Sie einen großen Einfluss, aber in meinem Teenager-Alter habe ich mich selbst informiert und habe mich von ihnen abgegrenzt, sodass ich jetzt eher gegensätzlicher Meinung bin. Also einen großen Einfluss haben sie eigentlich nicht, keinen mehr.

ENG: They used to have a lot of influence, but during my Teenager-years I informed myself and since then I have separated myself from them, so now I tend to disagree with them. So, they do not really have much influence anymore.

5. Würdest du an einer Demonstration, einem Boykott, oder einer Petition teilnehmen? Wenn Ja, warum? Wenn Nein, warum nicht?

Would you participate in a Protest, Boycott or Petition? If yes, why? If no, why not?

GER: Ja, würde ich, habe ich auch schon, ich würde auch immer wieder zu einer Demonstration gehen und auch für eine Petition unterschreiben und für etwas was mir wichtig ist auf die Straße gehen, weil für mich gehört das auch zu einer Demokratie dazu, dass ich auf die Straße gehe und etwas dafür tue, dass es besser wird, beziehungsweise um zu zeigen wir sind da, ich will hier protestieren und demonstrieren und darf es auch. Boykott ist schwierig, das habe ich schon gesehen, das kann schnell zu Vandalismus ausarten gegen die deutschen Rechte verstoßen. Demonstrationen und Petitionen sind super wichtig.

ENG: Yes, I have, I have always gone to Protests and sign Petitions and go out to the street for something that is important to me. For me, that is also part of a democracy is - that I go out into the street and do something to make it better, or to show we're here, I want to protest and demonstrate here, and I'm allowed to. Boycott is difficult. I have already seen it, and it quickly turned into vandalism against the German Right. Demonstrations and petitions, however, are super important.

6. Wann warst du das letzte Mal auf einer Demonstration?

When was the last time you were in a Protest?

GER: Vor einem halben Jahr.

ENG: Half a year ago.

7. Kannst du mir mehr über die Demonstration erzählen? Über was waren sie und wie waren sie?

Can you tell me a little bit more about the Protest? About what it was and how was it?

GER: Es war von der Antifa und generell eher linken Organisationen in Kaiserslautern, wo ich geboren bin. Es waren fast immer organisierte Gegendemonstrationen, immer wenn die PEGIDA oder die junge NPD oder andere rechte Gruppen protestierten, einfach nur aufzuzeigen, dass wir nicht damit einverstanden sind, wenn die Rechten ihre Parolen herauschreien.

ENG: It was a Protest from the Antifa and other left-wing organizations in general in Kaiserslautern, where I was born. The protests are almost always organized as counter-demonstrations, whenever the PEGIDA or the NPD or other right-wing groups are protesting, in order to show that we disagree with the right-wing and them shouting their slogans.

8. Was wusstest du über die Antifa bevor du an Protesten teilgenommen hast?

What did you know about Antifa before you joined the Protest?

GER: Ich habe eigentlich nicht so viel über sie gewusst, ich wusste die sind gegen rechts, sie sind eher Links eingestellt, für Gleichberechtigung von Frauen und Männern, für Homosexuelle, für Migranten, für Geflüchtete. Ich habe gedacht sie sind sehr offen und dass die decken mich auch abdecken.

ENG: I actually did not know much about them, I knew they were against the right-wing, that they are more likely to be leftist, for equality between women and men, for homosexuals, for migrants, for refugees. I thought they are very open and that they represented my views as well.

9. Ist dir die Propaganda in der Stadt, in der du geboren bist, oder in Mannheim, wo du wohnst, aufgefallen?

Had you noticed the Advertising they had across the city where you're from or the city of Mannheim, where you live?

GER: Also seit ich in Mannheim wohne fällt mir das immer auf, wenn da irgendwelche Aufkleber von der Antifa sind, dann sehe ich die, lese die, und denke "ah, stimmt", manchmal denke ich so "Um.

Schwierig", denn manche Sachen sind halt populistisch, um aufzuwecken und manchmal denke ich mir "das muss nicht sein".

ENG: Ever since I have lived in Mannheim; I have always noticed when there are any stickers from the ANTIFA. I look at them, read them and think "ah, true", sometimes I think "Uhm. Difficult", because some things are just a populist wakeup call and sometimes makes me think, "This can't be like this".

10. Teilst du gleiche Meinungen wie die Antifa?

Do you share Political Opinions with Antifa?

GER: Ja, auf jeden Fall. Sie sind Antifaschistisch und dass bin ich auch. Ich stimme mit ihnen überein, da sie Links und gegen rechts sind und sich für die Dinge, die ich schon vorher genannt habe, einsetzen. Wenn sie für die Demokratie sind, dann stimme ich zu, aber in der Antifa gibt es verschiedene Meinungen. Ich stimme einigen Meinungen zu, aber nicht allen.

ENG: Yes, definitely. They are anti-fascist and so am I. I agree with them because they are left and against right and are committed to the things that have been mentioned before. If they are for democracy then I agree, but in Antifa there are different opinions. I agree with some opinions, but not all.

11. Also auch wenn du Ideologien mit der Antifa teilst, hast du mir erzählt, dass du Situationen gesehen hast, die deine Sicht auf die Antifa geändert haben. Kannst du mir mehr davon erzählen?

So, even though there are ideologies you share, you told me you saw situations that made you change your view on ANTIFA. Can you tell me a bit more about them?

GER: Die meisten Demonstrationen waren friedlich, aber ich war auf einer Gegendemonstration gegen extreme Rechte, da war einer aus dem Schwarzen Block, der an mir wobei gerannt ist und gerufen hat "Los rennt! Sodass wir vor den blöden Polizisten da sind, um die Rechten zusammenzuschlagen. Da war ich erschrocken und dachte "Oh je".

Außerdem sind auch Leute rumgerannt und haben ACAB (All cops are bastards) an Wände und Steine gesprüht und das finde ich nicht und das ist blöd. Es ist nicht demokratisch, wenn man sagt, dass alle Polizisten Bastarde sind, denn sie erhalten die Demokratie, die ich ja gut finde. Die aus der Antifa, die spraysen, machen ein schlechtes Bild von der Antifa. Und weil ich das nicht gut fand, wollte ich nicht mehr sagen, dass ich auf Demonstrationen der Antifa gehe, weil ich das Spraysen nicht unterstützen wollte.

ENG: Most of the demonstrations were peaceful, but once I was in a counterdemonstration against extreme right-wingers and one of the black blocks ran by me shouting, "Run, so we're standing in front of the stupid policemen to beat up the right wing". I was scared and thought "oh dear".

In addition, people were running around and have sprayed ACAB (All cops are bastards) on walls and stones and I do not think so and that is stupid. It is not democratic to say that all policemen are bastards because they receive democracy, which I think is good. Those from the Antifa who spray, make a bad impression of the Antifa. And because I did not like that, I did not want to say that I was going to Antifa demonstrations because I did not want to support spraying and vandalism.

12. Hat es deine Meinung über die Antifa geändert?

Did it change your opinion on Antifa?

GER: Ja, auf jeden Fall. Davor habe ich gedacht die Antifa ist nur gut und setzen sich nur für gute Sachen ein. Und dann habe ich gesehen, dass es auch sehr viele gewaltbereite Menschen dort gibt. Ich wollte mich

davon dann abgrenzen, wenn sie zum Beispiel Autos anbrennen, Sachen in die Luft jagen und Menschen verletzen. Finde es nicht gut, überhaupt nicht gut.

ENG: Yes, absolutely. Before that, I thought that Antifa was only good and was committed to good things. And then I saw that there are also many violent people there. I wanted to isolate myself from burning cars, blowing things up, and hurting people. I do not think it's good, at all.

13. Zurück zu deiner Meinung zur Reaktionsfreudigkeit des Systems und wie es mit dem idealen Staat der Antifa und deiner Idee von Demokratie zusammenhängt.

Ich frage dich das, weil ich gesprayed Statements der Antifa, wie "F*ck Merkel" und "F*ck CDU", überall in Deutschland gesehen habe.

Going back to your opinion on System Responsiveness, and how it connects to ANTIFA's ideal State and your idea of Democracy?

I ask you this because I saw statements from Antifa like "F*ck Merkel" and "F*ck CDU" sprayed all across Germany.

GER: Ich stimme nicht mit "F*ck Merkel" überein, wobei ich mit "F*ck CDU" schon mehr anfangen kann, da ich die CDU nicht gut finde, aber Spraying finde ich auch überhaupt nicht gut. Genauso bin ich nicht mit politischen Ideologien, wie dem Kommunismus oder Sozialismus einverstanden. Ich mag die Demokratie. Wie gesagt, fühle ich mich nicht wirklich repräsentiert. Ich fände es besser, wenn andere Parteien, wie bspw. die Grünen mehr Macht im Bundestag hätten.

ENG: I don't agree with "F*ck Merkel", whereby I agree with "F *ck CDU", because I do not like the CDU, but I also do not like spraying at all. Likewise, I do not agree with political ideologies such as communism or socialism. I like democracy. As I said, I do not feel really represented. I think it would be better if other parties, such as the Green, would have more power in the Bundestag.

14. Wie wir schon festgestellt haben, hat die Antifa eine pro-kommunistische Einstellung, setzt sich für eine Veränderung des Systems ein und ist gegen Kapitalismus. Ich würde dir gerne einen Aufkleber zeigen, den ich gefunden habe als ich in Deutschland gelebt habe, und würde gerne deine Meinung dazu wissen.

As we have been discussing, Antifa has a pro-Communism approach and are for system change and against Capitalism. I would like to show you one of the stickers I came across while living in Germany and I would like to know your opinion on it.

GER: Also den Sticker finde ich zu offensiv kommunistisch. Ich sehe den Kommunismus in Deutschland nicht. Der Sticker sagt, dass Kommunismus Kapitalismus ausschließt, aber ich denke das nicht. Es kann im kommunistischen Staat trotzdem Krisen und Krieg geben. Deswegen mag ich den Sticker nicht. Ich bin auch gegen Krise und Krieg, aber ich denke, dass man nicht viel gegen kapitalistisches Denken tun kann.

ENG: I find the sticker is too communist offensive. I do not see communism in Germany. The sticker says that communism rules out capitalism, but I do not think so. There can still be crises and war in a communist state. That's why I do not like the sticker. I am also against crisis and war, but I think that you cannot do much against capitalist thinking.

15. Ist dein Ideal der Demokratie mit dem System in Deutschland kompatibel? Wenn nicht, wie würdest du es gerne verändern?

Is your ideal of Democracy compatible with the way the system works in Germany? If not, how would you change it?

GER: Ich würde nichts am System ändern, weil ich den Föderalismus und wie es ist mit den sechzehn Bundesländern und den Wahlen für Landtag und Bundestag gut finde. Dafür würde ich gerne, wie schon

gesagt, eine andere Partei an der Macht sehen, daher gehe ich ja auch wählen und demonstrieren, sodass sich etwas verändert. Ich mag die Demokratie sehr so wie sie ist und es ist nun einmal so, dass die Mehrheit entscheidet.

In dem alten Kommunismus ging es um die Revolution des Proletariats und ich denke mir es gibt kein Proletariat mehr, das ist keine Form für einen funktionierenden Staat.

ENG: I would not change anything in the system because I find the Federalism and how it is with the sixteen federal states and the elections for parliament and Bundestag, good. As I said, I would like to see another party in power, so I am going to vote and demonstrate, in order for something to change. I like democracy very much as it is, and it's the majority that decides.

In the old communism it was about the revolution of the proletariat and I think there is no more proletariat, for me, that is not a system for a functioning State.

16. Als jemand, der sich selbst als Links bezeichnet und an radikalen Linken Protesten teilgenommen hat, denkst du, dass eine Veränderung des proportionalen Systems dazu führen könnte, dass du dich mehr repräsentiert fühlst?

As someone who considers themselves Left-Wing and has been to Radical Left Protests, do you think changing the System - proportional - would make you feel more represented?

GER: Ich meine damit nicht, dass es zu wenige Parteien im Bundestag gibt, sondern nur dass ich gerne eine andere Machtverteilung der Parteien im Bundestag hätte. Es ist ein großer Unterschied was die Mehrheit den jungen Menschen wählt im Gegensatz zu den älteren Menschen in Deutschland. Viele junge Menschen wollen, dass eine andere Partei, die ihnen zuhört im Vordergrund steht und mehr entscheidet und mehr regiert.

ENG: I do not mean that there are too few parties in the Bundestag, I would just like to have a different distribution of power of the parties in it. It makes a big difference what the majority of young people choose, unlike the elderly in Germany. Many young people want another party that listens to them, that are in the foreground and decide more and govern more.

17. Also in der Theorie ist das System für dich repräsentativ genug, aber die Parteien, welche die Mehrheit der jungen Menschen wollen, haben nicht genug Macht. Du findest, dass dein Ideal der Demokratie so ist, wie sie gerade ist, aber für dich passen die Parteien nicht, die gerade regieren.

In theory, the system is representative enough, but it has not the Parties that the majority of young people want in power. You think your idea of Democracy is as it is now but not the parties that are there.

GER: Sie vertreten die Mehrheit der Bevölkerung, aber nicht die Meinung der Jugendlichen.

ENG: They may represent the majority but not the Young People.

18. Als ein Teil der jungen deutschen Bevölkerung, denkst du, dass ihr gehört werdet und dass ihr eine Stimme in der Regierung habt?

As someone that is part of the Young German population, do you think that you are being heard and have a voice in Government?

GER: In der Regierung nicht wirklich, aber durch die Demonstrationen wie "Fridays for Future" wird die Gesellschaft darauf aufmerksam was viele jungen Menschen wollen. Sie sind dadurch, dass ihnen wichtig ist wie ihre Zukunft ausieht, mehr als den je in der Gesellschaft repräsentiert. In der Regierung werden sie jetzt auch gesehen, aber bis jetzt wurden leider noch keine Forderungen der jungen Demonstranten angegangen.

ENG: Not really in government, but with demonstrations like "Fridays for Future," society is catching on what many young people want. Since it is important for their future, they are more than ever represented

in society. They are now being seen in the government as well, but so far, no demands from the young demonstrators have yet been addressed.

19. Denkst du, dass die jungen Menschen allgemein auf die Straße gehen, um ihre Meinung zu vertreten?

Do you think in general the Young People go to the street to show the government what they want?

GER: Ja. Sie nutzen die Demonstrationen, um zu zeigen "Hier sind wir. Wir wollen, dass sich etwas ändert!".

ENG: Yes. They use the demonstrations to show "Here we are, we want something to change!".

Danke.

Thank you.

Bitte.

You're welcome.

Source: Original interview by the author on September 6th, 2019