

Why NON?

The non-movements

It may have started in Iran in 2009 with the "Green Movement", which was followed by the so-called Arab Spring, the uprisings in the banlieues, the yellow vests ... insurrectionary movements that were perhaps spontaneous, certainly eruptive and not led by the classic political actors, parties, trade unions or alliances, in order to achieve this or that political goal, to push through this or that percentage increase in wages, reduction in working hours, even if bread or petrol prices were their causes. It was the beginning of what Asef Bayet¹ called "non-movements".

Endnotes² have taken up this term and understood it as an expression of our times for the Western hemisphere as well: They see them as a "collective action of dispersed and unorganized actors". Their struggles are about "demanding practices", i.e. direct actions that are, in their radicalism, without corresponding real political demands. They are not about exerting pressure on authorities and not about forcing concessions. They are not revolutionary, but initially subjective expressions of objective disorder. Revolutionaries emerge from them without revolution.

Endnotes insists that it is not class composition but precisely class fragmentation that determines non-movements. "Thus it is rational today for proletarians, and increasingly also for members of the middle classes, to turn to other categories in order to define their own place in a shaky world order." It should be added that the world (dis)order not only causes a search for other categories, but also produces new categories in real terms. The poor cleaner in Chile – because of how she lives, thinks and acts -- is perhaps first and foremost the worried mother of a struggling schoolgirl.

"The category of class remains the primary source of our divisions, but class affiliation today is calibrated by a multitude of variables such as age, gender, geography, race or religion, which act as channels but also as real boundaries for social struggles, making identity politics a real expression of class struggle."³ Product of neoliberal subjectivation and at the same time a prerequisite for the struggle against it, the respective identity is essential and non-essential, empowering and weakening for the non-movements. In them, there is a confusion of identities, a suspension of the existing categories and a non-subjectivation beyond identities.

Thus, we are witnesses of a confusion in the world, in which resistance is currently flaring up all over the world, from corners and areas, from people, individuals and collectives from whom we do not expect it. Our old political, ideological and economic categories are no longer sufficient to understand the world, or indeed people. And as quickly and eruptively as these insurrections come, they also disappear or fail. The non-movements thus not only force us to undertake practical searches in strange places and among strange people, but also a theoretical search for new concepts and categories.

1 How Ordinary People Change the Middle East, 2013

2 <https://endnotes.org.uk/>

3 <https://sunzibingfa.noblogs.org/post/2021/01/11/vorwaerts-barbaren/>

Non-thinking

Based on the non-movements, we would like to suggest adopting the NON as a fundamental perspective of thinking. What we are proposing is not actually new. On the contrary: it is the foundation of all critical thought and action and yet the ability to negate seems to have been lost to us today. And so every negation today is always linked to an offer of compromise to those in power, always linked to an offer of cooperation to those who are supposedly like-minded, and thus degenerates into affirmative criticism. Not much more remains of negation than an empty phrase. Even theoretically, any supposedly negative thinking is always linked to submission to “Realpolitik” (political realism), the supposed lack of alternatives or the politically conceivable. In this respect, NON-thinking is an attempt to recover the tradition of negation, but in the same breath to withdraw from it and drive it beyond itself. Negation that takes itself seriously must also be able to criticize itself.

For us, this initially means questioning everything, asking ourselves whether we could not think everything in a completely different way. Saying “no” or “I would prefer not to...” means first of all relying on our own perception of the world in order to escape the totality of the present and the limits it imposes on our thinking. It means relying on the perception and judgment that this world is bad, that there is no right in wrong. An often-heard phrase and yet its meaning seems to have been lost. It can often even happen that the “No” is not even followed by an explanation, because we are not yet able to verbalize the rejection, because it is not yet more than a feeling or a notion; and that is a good thing. Because the ones always being “constructive” will ask for an explanation and invite you into the game of reality, which all too often only ends in (left-wing) “Realpolitik”. For us, this also means going in search of this negative thinking, both in our everyday lives with the people who surround us near and far, and in books.

Negation is radical realism

This is what the (radical) left is currently unable to bear, but is necessary in perspective of the global conditions: to question everything fundamentally, even from a historical perspective, and to reject any construction. With Hendrik Wallat, we refuse to accept the assertion that negation, the NON is nihilistic or defeatist. It does not believe that it has to play the game of power - like the progressives - because there is no way out. However, negation is also not utopian, not to mention verbal radicalism, as it is aware of “the mediation of every practice with what is”. And ultimately, it is also not a subjective moralism that takes refuge in the private sphere in the face of reality and indulges in its sublimity in living room-communes, with religiously internalized “soul-searching and perfection”, also known as the sensitization of domination, and other defeatist methods of neoliberalism. Negation, the NON, also rejects the other kind of subjective moralism, or “voluntarism”, of what the the autonomist movement used to be accused, which cannot tolerate the lack of adaptation of reality to its

principles and then, in its worst form, becomes terror (Jacobins, Stalin).

On the contrary: negation, the NON is radical realism in the face of the shit and catastrophes in this world. “Negationism⁴ neither has power, nor does it want it, but rather seeks to subvert its logic. The shattering of the principles and means of negationist anti-power in the face of reality is, however, its recurring experience with reality, which, unlike its adaptation to it, does not destroy it itself, but is its only hope of subverting and sabotaging power, at least in the long term, in and through its powerlessness. No rewards are paid for such a practice; at best, it is recorded in the history books as an example of historical defeat. In its loyalty to these, negationism resonates with the longing, which is not guaranteed by anything, that these chronicles of victorious rule will one day be history themselves. Of course, negationism has no intention of betting on this, and even a victory of reason over domination can no longer save its victims or undo its history.”⁵

Non-Congress

Based on the uncompromising nature of our disagreement, our passion for negation, in the spirit of all that has been written, we would like to come together with you. Not in order to organize ourselves, nor to develop a common agenda, but rather to share our questions and experiences, engage in a joint discussion and see where the journey takes us. What has happened to us, what has happened to the world?

Everywhere we look, we are experiencing break-ins of finiteness into the infinity of capitalism. Be it the obvious break-ins such as the climate catastrophe, which is more a catastrophe of our way of life than a catastrophe of nature (nature just is), be it the wars that have broken out and are still to come, which herald a reorganization of the world, be it the non-movements, which are not simply further social movements in the cyclical continuity of the ups and downs of resistance and domination, but are carriers of disorder and hope in this world, or be it the small break-ins of finitude in our managed everyday life, in which long-standing friends become enemies, enemies become friends, lack suddenly becomes abundance, abundance suddenly becomes gluttony, interest leads to disinterest and disinterest leads to new knowledge. You probably have even more and different things to say about these break-ins...

They do not guarantee the necessary end of the world in which we live, nor do they guarantee that anything within this world will change for the better. On the contrary, history has shown that an even more total infinity can emerge from these break-ins. However, they can be guides and teachers for us to understand and ultimately attack the world. In this respect, we believe that once again we have to leave many things and many people behind. This is nothing new either. For as Hendrik Wallat writes, the history books are littered with our defeats and the victims of the past can no longer be saved.

4 The term negationism, as used in this quote from Hendrik Wallat, does not mean the denial of genocide, which is what is usually understood by this term in France and Great Britain, but is merely another way of expressing “negation”.

5 The quotations are all from “The Progressive Ticket. Thesen zum affirmativen Charakter der Kritischen Theorie und dem Konformismus der Linken” by Hendrik Wallat, taken from: (https://www.untergrund-blättele.ch/dokumente/hendrik_wallat_das_progressive_ticket.pdf)

Perhaps this is the point at which we will fail in the first place, because the burden of history weighs too heavily? We are aware of the problem and that is precisely why we are convinced that it has to come down to us: "Do it or die".

In the next bulletins up to the non-congress, we will share the status of our discussions on the topics of the congress.

Next One: **Die Zeitenwende (an epochal tectonic shift). Covid-19 - Criticism of science - Religion - State of emergency**

Then: **(No) Future. Ecological accumulation regime - financial market - new world (dis)order**

Fin: **What is politics? Of oases and territories. Ethics vs. politics vs. universalism - destitution, desertion, destruction**

Preliminary program for the NON-Congress

Friday (start 7 pm)

Welcome: On the NON-perspective - what is it? And how did we get there?

Evaluation and subsequent discussion on the status quo:

Are we living in pre-revolutionary times? What is currently happening in and with the insurrections and non-movements? How does the crisis of the (radical) left relate to this? Can or should we have any hope at all?

Saturday (start 10 am)

First Round: Contributions and subsequent discussion on the "Zeitenwende" (epochal tectonic shift).

Covid-19 - Criticism of science -- religion -- state of emergency

Was Covid just an exception to the exception or an expression of a normalizing state of emergency?

What modes of subjectivation can be observed in the face of the end of neoliberalism/the turn of an era? What role do digitalization and science play in the production of a new form of social totality?

Science as religion - who are its believers? Bio- and necropolitics

continue at 15.30h

Second Round: Contributions and subsequent discussion on (No) Future. Ecological Accumulation Regime -- Financial Market -- New World (Dis)Order

What does the governance of ecology mean? Where does the eternally progressive formal abstraction of capitalism lead: the dominance of financial speculation, break-in of the finite and green "fascism"?

Catastrophism as an ideology of renewal or of the end?

Sunday (start 10 am)

Closure: What is politics? Of oases and territories. Ethics vs. politics vs. universalism -- destitution, desertion, destruction

Are we witnessing the end of politics as it has been practiced in the Western world since the ancient times or are we experiencing a new beginning? How do we shape a new beginning, or even more

simply: how do we want to fight? If politics has failed, are we left with nothing but ethics? If the fight in direct confrontation seems futile, are we left with nothing but resignation? The “Entsetzung” (the drop) of power? Where are the places for its destruction? And with whom do we want to fight? And what does it mean to win, even if victory is still a long way off?

Date, place, registration

For planning purposes, please register for the congress at this email: non-kongress@systemli.org. We are only interested in getting an idea of how many people we need to plan with. So we don't need any political portfolio, proof of commitment or bourgeois information like your name.

The congress will take place in Berlin from June 21-23.2024, you will receive the exact location by e-mail.

Unfortunately we are not able to organize sleeping places. Therefore please take care of yourselves. But we would like to ask all people in Berlin to write in your email if you can offer sleeping places. Then we could organize a small sleeping place exchange on site during the congress.