

tja?!

Issue 4 - Winter Term 2023/24

SOCIAL INEQUALITY



& INJUSTICE

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Preface

Dear Readers,

Social inequality and injustice are topics that profoundly influence our society. They raise fundamental moral and ethical questions that compel us to reflect on our individual positions within society. But what do 'inequality' and 'injustice' actually mean? Does inequality always lead to injustice, or does injustice influence the standing of individuals or groups in society?

To provide you with the best possible answers to these questions before delving into exciting articles on these topics, we have summarized rough definitions and distinctions between the terms social inequality and injustice.

Inequality means that two things or individuals do not match in one or more aspects. The term 'inequality' is not evaluative. Social inequality refers to the uneven distribution of resources, opportunities, and power in a society, favoring some individuals or groups while disadvantaging others. This inequality can manifest in differences in income, education, employment opportunities, and access to social services. It shapes the social fabric of society and can lead to injustice.

Injustice means that the standard for societal or individual actions, which we, depending on cultural conventions, call justice, is not upheld. The term 'injustice' is negatively connotated. Social injustice pertains to situations where people are systematically disadvantaged based on social characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. It manifests in discrimination, prejudice, exploitation, and the absence of equal rights and opportunities for all members of society. Social injustice has a detrimental impact on the well-being of those affected and undermines the concepts of equality and fairness. Social injustice is, therefore, rooted in inequality.

These themes undoubtedly shape our perspective on society and how we engage with it and ourselves. This issue contains a multitude of perspectives in which our authors have explored what social injustices and inequalities mean and how they influence us.

tja, enjoy flipping through the pages and reading, and until next time,

Ella and Johanna for the tja?! Editorial Team



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& INJUSTICE

UNI & MAGDEBURG



Active for justice

Voices of student initiatives at OVGU

by Sarah Richard & Daniel Schüler

Here you can find the voices of eight student initiatives at OVGU on the issue of social inequality and injustice. We sent the same questions to different initiatives and now present a variety of answers in the context of each initiative. Find out where these initiatives can take action against social inequality and where they see the limits of their influence. Discover their perspectives on social inequality and injustice at our university. In addition, the initiatives share their wishes for change in order to actively work against these problems.

ENACTUS

In the association, we work on social and sustainable innovations that solve existing problems in the long term. We try to contribute to the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations by founding non-profit start-ups that organise and finance themselves independently. In doing so, we apply the professional knowledge we learned during our studies as well as our personal strengths to project work.

Message: If you want to improve the world on a small scale (here in our region), then come and join us!



Guericke FM

We are Guericke FM, the university radio at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg. Thanks to professional supervision, anyone interested can become a radio author and produce and publish their own radio programmes.



GUERICKE FM
DAS UNIRADIO DER OVGU MAGDEBURG

Protestant student community

The protestant student community has its premises at Neustädter Str. 6, near the Wallonerkirche. We meet for theme nights (Wednesdays), International Nights (Mondays, for English-speaking students), church services (Sunday evenings), hiking and much more. During each meeting, we cook and eat together.



Legatum

We are a non-profit association with the aim of supporting talented young people from the new federal states in their academic and professional careers. With the N5 Symposium, we have also created an event where young, committed people can network with each other and with decision-makers from business, science, politics, and culture.



Love Foundation

The Love Foundation is an open, global community and network of artists and cultural activists. Together, they organise cultural projects worldwide with the aim of spreading the idea of universal love, connecting people, and raising funds to support water development projects with their partners at Viva con Agua in the Global South.



hochschul_smd_magdeburg

SMD

We are an interdenominational, Christian university group at the University of Magdeburg. Everyone who enjoys lively fellowship and would like to exchange views on faith topics is welcome here.

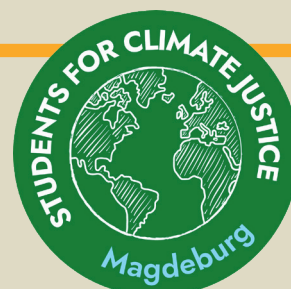
SIDUM

SIDUM e.V. is the student career guidance service of the University of Magdeburg. With about 40 members, we are a network that focuses on further education but also on networking in the field of consulting.



Students for Climate Justice

We are the Students for Climate Justice, founded in 2019 as Students for Future part of the Fridays for Future movement, which we still feel a part of. We are committed to more climate justice at OVGU and beyond!



Where can your initiative take action against social inequality and injustice?

Our projects deal with the SDGs and try to solve problems through them. In doing so, we focus on "Gender Equality" (SDG 5), "Reduce Inequalities" (SDG 10) and "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" (SDG 16).



At these evenings, we also address this topic and inform ourselves about current discussions on the subject. We regularly collect donations for those in need and we handle emergency fund applications from international students. In addition, everyone can eat with us for a very small contribution and families living in hardship can use our rooms for celebrations for a very small donation.

Guericke FM offers everyone the opportunity to have their voice heard through us and thus draw attention to inequality and injustice. We often receive advice and requests, which we incorporate and address directly in our programme. We consider ourselves the voice of the student body, which openly addresses problems, communicates them to the outside world and discusses them.



Through our diverse support for young people, we work to ensure that the representation of East Germans in leadership positions is increased, thus combating inequalities within Germany in the long term. We empower young people to pursue a successful career path despite their social background and to help shape a fair future for (East) Germany. To this end, we have a mentoring programme where experienced professionals pass on their knowledge and tips to students and support them in their studies and careers.

With our free cultural events, we collect donations for water projects in the global south in cooperation with Viva con Agua Sankt Pauli. We are also committed to a high level of diversity in terms of gender and origin - both in DJ & workshop booking and in Team Hub Magdeburg.



Everyone is welcome here, and that is not a hackneyed phrase, but a lived reality. As Jesus taught the people 2000 years ago, we are there for each other and help where it is needed. In practical terms, this means that for years we have had an intensive international work programme, where we celebrate fellowship with people from other cultures and talk about our faith.

SIDUM e.V. offers a further education platform for students in the Magdeburg area in order to give them the opportunity to gain a certain level of know-how in various subject areas. In our projects and further education offers, social injustice and inequality in relation to companies are addressed, among other things. The aim is to provide sustainable and solution-oriented advice to companies.



The climate crisis as such and the way it is dealt with is extremely inequitable, as those who contribute the least to climate change often have to bear the most severe impacts. It is important to draw attention to this injustice in order to raise awareness and mobilise people. Climate justice means social justice. At OVGU, we repeatedly call for this to be taken into account in decisions, for example through the #highpressure demands or achieving climate neutrality - in the spirit of intergenerational justice.

Where do you see the limits of your influence /actions as an initiative?

Our projects must meet a certain criterion, which means that our projects must be non-profit and able to finance themselves, as well as contributing to the turnover of the 17 SDGs.



We are a small community, without political influence and without large financial resources.

Currently, we can use our programme to raise awareness of inequalities and injustices and to make sure that none are created within our team. Our activity is limited to pointing out and discussing. We can only have an indirect influence.



Since our work is aimed at young people from the new federal states, many discussions continue to take place within their own bubble. Conducting the discourse also with people from the western part of Germany will be a central topic of our work in the coming years, as many questions of justice have to be answered nationwide.

Unfortunately, we can only create to the extent of our resources: Our volunteer members do not have unlimited time, the free spaces are limited, only available until 10pm and do not include the necessary infrastructure such as toilets, electricity, and roofing. In addition, the sustainability aspects we strive for, such as travel or waste disposal, are heavily dependent on our visitors.



We as SMD recognise that we cannot implement all the valuable goals for social justice. Therefore, our main goal is to love our fellow human beings and to help them. This does not mean that other issues are not important to us personally, but that the main focus within the group is to live out lived community with our fellow students as an aspect of the Christian faith and to share how Jesus had an effect in our lives.

The boundaries of SIDUM e.V. go beyond the university context. Basically, our focus remains on young students within the OVGU. However, since SIDUM e.V. is part of a nationwide network, the JC Network, and we are always in contact with many other student business consultancies within the umbrella organisation, we are able to convey our idea of further education to other universities in Germany.



We can exert pressure, generate attention, and mobilise more people to get those in decision-making positions to take purposeful action. Ultimately, however, it is up to them to implement them. At the same time, with our group and our actions, we also create a space for exchange, joint education, and engagement. This enables mutual empowerment that goes beyond the time of study.

As an initiative, where do you see social inequality and injustice at OVGU? (1)

We observe social injustice in access to higher education and during studies, especially with regard to the differences between children of academics and working-class children.



The wealth and background of the parents often have a decisive influence on the situation of students. While some must work part-time throughout their studies and live precariously, others have no financial worries. International students from the global south have a particularly hard time.

Pointing out inequalities and injustices is already a good approach. At the OVGU, problems are openly addressed and made visible. Sometimes the solution to the problem should be a little quicker and less bureaucratic.



Especially at the OVGU, there are many students with an East German background who repeatedly must struggle with inequality and injustice in the course of their study careers. They often lack financial support from their parents, or knowledge about funding opportunities around scholarships and semesters abroad, or easy access to internships in companies. As Legatum e.V., we help our mentees to take advantage of these opportunities.

Expenses too high and salary too low! For example, students of a second degree do not receive BAföG, have to pay the second degree fees of 500€/semester in addition to the semester fees, receive (and this applies to all students) no discount on the 49€ ticket despite having paid the semester ticket fees, and on top of that they earn only a few cents more than the minimum wage as student assistants despite having a degree - with fixed-term employment contracts of only six months. Fighting against this is pointless, because even if the staff and students in the senate agreed, they still wouldn't have a majority.



As an initiative, where do you see social inequality and injustice at OVGU? (2)

hochschul_smd_magdeburg

We see that various initiatives are supported to varying degrees by the student councils and the StuRa at OVGU. One example is that we wanted to invite students to our events with an SMD flyer in the "Erstitüten", but the student council decided against it. On the one hand, we think this is a shame because the "Erstitüten" are a cool opportunity to introduce ourselves as an initiative, and on the other hand because we have seen that we have been excluded as a group.

With a proportion of more than 26.3% of foreign students from more than 100 nations, the University of Magdeburg is above the national average and therefore sees itself as particularly responsible for bringing these issues to the fore and actively pursuing them. The underrepresentation of these students, but also of people from the LGBTQ+ community or people with disabilities, for example, and the resulting possibility of prejudice or even discrimination, is a problem at many universities. Not to forget financial injustice, which can make access to academic education difficult.



We see social injustice in many places - members of the OVGU who drive to the university in their own car must pay a one-off(!) 5-euro parking ticket, while students have to buy the 49-euro ticket in addition to the semester ticket. The layout of the campus could also be improved in terms of space allocation - fewer parking spaces, more secure bicycle parking facilities and green areas.

Volunteer work by students is not sufficiently valued; only students with a lot of free time can do it. People who, for various reasons, must study within the standard period of study or who work part-time are thus deprived of the opportunity to get actively involved.

We also support the demand for a collective agreement for student employees and better working conditions.

We are playing "Make a Wish": Your initiative is allowed to change one thing at OVGU to work against social inequality and injustice. What would you change as an initiative?

We would introduce basic financial support for students so that they must work less and thus have more time to volunteer.



More support for refrigerators for rescued food, participation in food sharing.

Creating more space for creative student projects and more trust in the student body to get them done. The university should give students more space to present themselves and their work at OVGU.



The support offered to people from disadvantaged social backgrounds must be communicated in a more transparent and understandable way. We at Legatum e.V. would like to take young people from eastern Germany by the hand and show them the way to a successful career.

We would change the "Baracke" into a socio-cultural student centre that offers free events, connects people, and creates awareness for the social inequality and injustice we are fighting against.



We think it would be great if we could give a flyer from SMD and a small Bible in all of the "Erstituten".

Certainly, an association that advocates for the issues of social injustice and inequality, creates awareness, and sensitises the general public and actively takes action against non-compliance would be a first step to promote and support students in this regard. In particular, we as SIDUM e.V. would also want to focus on the engagement of such projects by working closely with such an association. Another idea would be a comprehensive scholarship programme based on criteria such as family background, income level, ethnic diversity, and gender, so that students who may be disadvantaged get equal opportunities at OVGU to achieve their academic goals.



We would like to see a rapid social-ecological transformation of the OVGU - that's just one thing! Of course, this includes a lot of things: mandatory modules on climate action, credits for engagement, 100% renewable energy, a vibrant campus, affordable and sustainable housing, free public transport tickets and much more!

Frida Kahlo – and other than that?

How the project KunstKurve contributes to overcoming the underrepresentation of women in the art world

Sarah Richard in Conversation with Kirsten Mengewein

Can you tell me the names of artists, no matter from which country and from which time?

In the world of art, certain names are omnipresent: Vincent van Gogh, Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Renoir, or Monet are just a few of the most famous male artists that come to mind and the list could go on and on.

But if I ask explicitly about female artists, many of you will probably pause after Frida Kahlo's name, or even stop altogether.

Women in the field of art are still perceived mainly as models and not as artists. In large galleries, works by men are more often represented, although there are many talented women in history and in the present who want to be seen and recognised.

A project in Magdeburg is dedicated to bringing more visibility to local female artists. The “KunstKurve”

is a weekend full of art at various locations in Magdeburg-Stadt-feld, accompanied by readings, concerts and participatory activities. The special concept of this exhibition is to present works exclusively by female artists and to make creation by women more visible. Through the exhibition, the “KunstKurve” aims to address the underrepresentation of women in the art world. The exhibition celebrated its premiere in 2021 and was very popular among visitors. Due to the positive feedback, the third edition will now take place from October 06 to October 08, 2023, where female creators will present their works in the fields

of painting, photography, print, mixed media, sculpture, graffiti, and embroidery art.



In this interview, Kirsten Mengewein, an artist focusing on photography and illustration, is answering questions about the “KunstKurve” and women in the arts. Kirsten has been active in the art scene for quite some time and already had several achievements in her career. Under her own label "KIRATON." she presented her art at various exhibitions. As part of "WESENsART Papieterie", she illustrated and published the queer-feminist colouring, doodling and participatory book "Ich kann sein, wer ich will I can be who I want" (I can be who I want) in 2019. Earlier this year, she opened the "Galerieladen" in Buckau, Magdeburg, a mixture of art gallery and art shop, where visitors can view and buy art from her own label "KIRATON."



as well as works from "Meinhood" and "WESENsART" on eight square metres. Kirsten has been involved in the “KunstKurve” since its beginning in 2021, both organisationally and as an exhibiting artist.

As an artist, you have already achieved considerable success, such as founding your own label, illustrating a queer feminist book, and opening your gallery shop in Buckau. What do you think is the meaning of being a woman in the art world and what challenges does it entail?

It is a big step for many artistic women to step into the public eye for the first time. They often feel that neither themselves nor their art are good enough, and that their art is only good for domestic use. Therefore, it is good to have people who encourage you to go out. It is also good to have networks where women can exchange ideas, give each other tips, and encourage each other in their work.

But from the first step into becoming visible to the point of being able to make a living from one's own art is a very long journey and a lot of work. It is often very challenging next to one's daily job and care work.

When and how did you personally notice that women are underrepresented in the arts?

I studied cultural studies and aesthetic practice. During art lectures and seminars, the focus was mainly on male artists. That's why I wanted to write about two East German women photographers as part of my diploma thesis. I also teach workshops called “kunst.kursionen” in the field of cultural education and art education. Here, together with my colleague,

I often address the imbalance in the representation of female art, starting in art classes, in the media and in museums.

You have been involved in this project since the first “KunstKurve” in 2021, both as an exhibiting artist and as part of the organising team. What was the idea behind the project and why do you personally see the relevance of the “KunstKurve”?



The idea of the “KunstKurve” is to bring together creative women and to find and create places together so that they can present their art. We are now approaching the 3rd “KunstKurve”, and a real, mutually supportive network has developed from the first association. Some friendships, even. By now, the women not only exhibit together at the “KunstKurve”, but also in other contexts.

Having participated in the two previous “KunstKurve”, what impact or changes did you observe or personally experience after the respective events?

A small network has emerged. A higher visibility for the work and art of the exhibiting women. There is mutual advice on how to display and present something and mutual celebration when one sells a painting or gets the opportunity for an exhibition or something similar.

The event is very well received by residents and interested parties, who are pleased that there was a second edition and now there will be a third.

Personally, it encourages me in my work. I can try things out and experience a direct response. I also come into direct contact with interested parties and buyers of my art.

Besides that, each of us also learns other skills that are part of organising such an event, such as calculating finances and writing applications, finding spaces, and contacting shop owners, public relations and marketing, project management and programme planning, and in the end also the accounting of such a project.

Has there been any resistance against the project itself or the exhibition format in the past years during the realisation of the “KunstKurve”, and if so, to what extent?

There was little resistance here, but rather challenges such as finding exhibition spaces, planning within the team, the artists and bands performing and the locations. And yes, there are some neighbours who complain on the day of the event that the music seems too loud.

In October this year, the “KunstKurve” will take



place for the third time, and you will once again be part of the team and present your own art. What are your hopes and goals for this year's “KunstKurve” as well as for the future of the project in general?

This year, for the first time, there was a public call for female artists who would like to participate in the exhibition. This allows us to give young women a stage. In addition, we would like to keep a free space for children's artworks.

My hope is that the project will become more permanent and that there will be even broader networking with initiatives and associations in the city. We also hope that this will lead to further opportunities for the female artists, such as exhibitions or commissions, etc.

You already managed to take the step of presenting your own art to the public. What advice would you give to other female artists who want to express themselves in a similar way?

Wagt den ersten Schritt. Geht raus und probiert Dare to take the first step. Get out there and try things out. Network with other artists in the city and beyond. Find ways to present your work to a wider public. Besides the “KunstKurve”, there are also other possibilities for an exhibition or something similar. You can always ask at the socio-cultural centres. There you will find regular opportunities to exhibit your art for the first time. The "Heinz Kunstmarkt im Engpass" (Heinz Art Market in the Bottle-neck) also offers the opportunity to present yourself and your work to a broad public.

POLITICS & SOCIETY



Childhood Poverty

by Francis Göbecke

It is a privilege to live in Germany, a country so wealthy and in possession of a strong social welfare system. We are fine here, that is at least what people might think. Many people have certainly noticed that not all that glitters is gold, and on closer inspection the problems within the Federal Republic of Germany become all the more obvious.

One of those problems that needs serious improvement is the rate at which children and young people in Germany grow up in poverty. Nobody should have to experience the struggle of looking into an empty fridge when the month is far from being over, still every fifth child in Germany grows up in poverty. This corresponds to 2.8 million people under 18, according to a 2017 study by the Bertelsmann Foundation. The figures remain alarming and relevant. This article is intended to provide a brief overview of the causes, figures and also measures to combat child poverty.

Childhood poverty always means family poverty, children are often born into difficult circumstances and bear the consequences. In Germany, being poor does not necessarily mean not having a roof over your head or no food on your plate. It means having to get by on much less than the average family income, it also means possibly having to receive basic security or other social benefits. In any case, it is impossible for the children and youths to free themselves from this precarious situation.

Two thirds of the 21% of children at risk of poverty live in long-term poverty, i.e. for periods longer than five years. These figures remain high despite good economic development within the observation period of the Bertelsmann study. Possible effects through combination with other characteristics such as family form or place of residence can only be insufficiently investigated. What is known, however, is that there are clear regional differences, especially when looking at the areas of the former GDR. There, the proportions of families at risk of or affected by poverty appear visibly higher than in the old federal states. Also, more frequently affected are children of single parents or from families with more than three children living at home.

But what does it mean for a child to grow up on the poverty line? What are the consequences of these living conditions?

It means interferences in all areas of living and affects every aspect of the affected person's life. Many lack an appropriate place of retreat, be it to experience a

little privacy or to be able to do homework undisturbed. Especially in families with many children, siblings often share a room, do not have their own desk or computer - things that other children of the same age take for granted. Children and young people also often lack a car, so their mobility is limited in comparison, because bus or train tickets are not always in the budget. Poverty thus limits the possibilities and prevents them from breaking out of their usual living conditions. Holidays, school trips or a few new clothes are rarely, if ever, possible. Another constant companion of a child growing up in poverty is shame.

What does your home look like when you invite friends over? Do you like to invite anyone at all? And how do you explain why you always wear the seemingly inferior option to a branded product?

Shame also sneaks in when there is another school day out or even a class trip and the costs are simply not affordable. Of course, there are applications for support in these cases, but they are overshadowed by the stigma that surrounds them. Some households even feel hurt in their pride and do not accept the possible aid - to the dismay of the child who cannot participate. This stigma is also the reason why children from low-income families experience more violence, psychological but also physical, because they do not have the same things as their peers.

in Germany

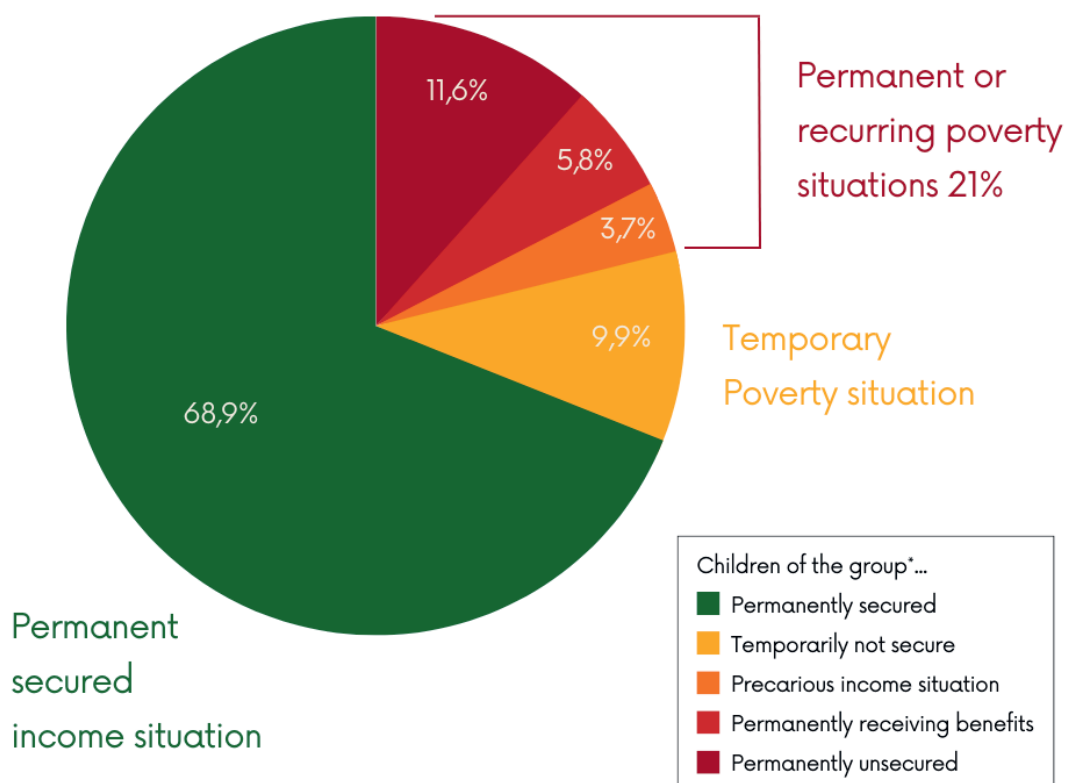
Another unpleasant companion besides shame is worry, which hovers like a dark cloud over the head of many young people when they experience financially vulnerable situations at home and listen to their parents worry. It's about an empty fridge, bills coming in, the rent or a new washing machine after the old one broke down. Worries about how to go on, whether one can manage it all, often also worries that directly concern the child. Saving money is often not an option, the psychological pressure causes illness, and the constant uncertainty keeps even primary school pupils awake.

All this leads to a downward spiral that can hardly be avoided and problems are pushed into adulthood, the exit from the vicious circle is difficult, the lack of opportunities and the hurdles of society rarely allow working-class children to change their fate.

Things cannot go on like this, what can be done?

Since 2017, the Participation Act has been in place, which is supposed to enable children to participate in school trips or to buy other things with the help of subsidies. However, it is once again the shame of applying for this support that ensures low utilization. Furthermore, many parents do not know where to apply for what and how much benefit it can have - the process is not transparent enough. In addition to these state measures, there are also some support networks such as the Arche, which provide support and a certain sense of security, but there are too few offers for the high number of children at risk of poverty. The attempt to fight child poverty seems to be a drop in the ocean, but the numbers are slowly decreasing. Only the future will show whether a renewed transparency of opportunities can help more children and young people to participate and have a carefree childhood.

21 percent of all children in Germany live permanently or recurrently in situations of poverty



*One group ("income cluster") includes children from families with similar income histories during the observation period (5 years).

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung 2017. Berechnung von S. Tophoven, T. Lietzmann, S. Reiter, C. Wenzig, Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung auf Grundlage der PASS-Daten.

East Germany

The shattered dream of "flourishing landscapes"?

by Daniel Schüler

Hier gehts nicht nur um die AfD
Man es geht nicht immer um Nazis
Auch um stehen gelassene Menschen
Die seit 30 Jahren warten
Darauf, dass euer großes Versprechen sich erfüllt
Vom Erfolg und von dem Wohlstand und am Ende auch vom Glück

3. Oktober - HINTERLANDGANG

Wittenberg ist nicht Paris - KRAFTKLUB

Doch es bleiben Unterschiede
Die du mit der Zeit bemerkst
Hier wohnt keiner mehr zur Miete
Hier hat jeder was geerbt
Und sie lassen dich spür'n
Sie können dich gut leiden
Doch manche der Tür'n
Werden dein Leben lang zubleiben

Even more than 30 years after reunification, the differences between East and West Germany are still significant and people from the former East Germany still have a disadvantageous position compared to the population from West Germany. In addition to financial factors, there is also a lack of representation of East Germans in decision-making levels, and thus ultimately a lack of influence on shaping the future of (East) Germany. Added to this is the diminished voice in reporting on the East and the (perceived) lack of appreciation of East German transformation experiences and histories in the post-reunification period.

As a result, many people in eastern Germany in particular feel misunderstood and disconnected, and the ballot box serves as an outlet for their own dissatisfaction. The consequences of this are election records for the AfD and increasing social division - the enemy image of "the West" as the lowest common denominator. The inequality in the statistics strengthens the own self-perception as a marginalized fringe group and thus at the same time the breeding ground for right-wing political structures. Great social commitment and innovative projects take a back seat and are obscured by the big brown shadow. The image of the "right-wing East full of prefabricated concrete slabs" still shapes many people's perceptions of the new federal states, and the unsuccessful search for the "blooming landscapes" still characterizes everyday life in the East German provinces. In the meantime, however, the younger generation is coming to terms in an orderly manner with the time when their parents had to fight for jobs and recognition of their own life's work. Fair appointments to leadership positions in business, academia, the media and politics are key to opening the door to equal living conditions in East and West Germany in the long term.

A stylized map of Germany is shown in the background, with several orange callout boxes containing text. The boxes are connected to the map by thin lines. The text in the boxes discusses various aspects of inequality and representation in the eastern part of Germany compared to the western part.

Wage difference

22,5% people in the east earn less on average than in the west for the same work. The differences are even greater in the textile industry (69.5%), the automotive industry (41.4%) and other manufacturing sectors.

Heritage

43,48% people in the east inherit less on average than in the west. Inequality is also reflected in gifts (38.3%).

Management positions in federal agencies

13,5% of management positions in the upper and top federal authorities are held by East Germans. Excluding Berlin, the figure would be only 7.4%. The underrepresentation is particularly pronounced at the management levels (7.1%).

Management level of national media

5,77% of the management level in national media houses are occupied by East Germans. At the public broadcasters, it is Karola Wille (MDR); at the private institutions, they can be found at nd (Wolfgang Hübner) and FOCUS (Franziska Reich).

Scholarship Awards

8,6% of the sponsored students acquired their higher education entrance qualification in the east. However, the share of East German students is 11.2%.

Overview of the German parties with regard to social inequality

by Lena Zimmermann

Pretty much every German party wants to fight social inequality - at least if you believe the promises on their candidature posters for the 2021 Bundestag election. While the AfD aims at strengthening the middle class, the Left Party promotes social security, peace and climate justice. The future chancellor Olaf Scholz stands for affordable housing, while his opponent at the time, Armin Laschet, stands for a good life in old age. The questions arises what exactly stands behind these loose demands? To shed light on this question, in the following, there is an overview of the parties' more specific demands on the topic of social inequality and injustice, based on

their programmes for the 2021 Bundestag election. For reasons of clarity, the focus has been on the parties that were elected to parliament in the last Bundestag elections. The study has focused on the areas of education and science, social affairs and equality. With regard to transparency, it must be made clear that aspects were selected which are particularly representative of the views of the respective party. This inevitably leads to a narrow point of view. In case of further interest, it is worthwhile to take a separate and expanding look at the election programmes and policy statements of the parties.

Soziale
Politik für
Dich.
SPD

The SPD demands a non-contributory day-care centre including free meals. Furthermore, all-day schooling should be available for all children, as well as the provision of a mobile device. With regard to further education, the Social Democratic Party of Germany demands a guaranteed apprenticeship and the reform of the Federal Training Assistance Act. With regard to social security, this party is in favour of an "unemployment benefit Q", which should enable those affected to reorient themselves in a secure manner. Furthermore, the SPD supports the demand for the construction of 100,000 social housing units annually and the introduction of a new child benefit with a monthly basic amount of 250 € with a limit of 528 €. Finally, the SPD demands a law enforcing equal wages for men and women, parity laws for political institutions and adoption rights for homosexual couples.

CDU

The Christian Democratic Union is committed to the expansion of day-care centres for younger citizens. Furthermore, this party is committed to supporting schools in socially difficult situations through the federal-state initiative "Schule macht stark". The CDU also advocates that a career in vocational education and training should be equivalent to a university degree. The CDU is in favour of developing a concept for a "company pension scheme for all". By 2025, this party calls for the creation of over 1.5 million flats. The CDU would welcome more family time by strengthening parental allowance. In addition, the CDU calls for a review of gender equality in all policy areas.



Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen demand the expansion of day-care and nurseries for children and also no additional costs for parents of children with disabilities. They are in favour of reducing temporary positions at colleges and universities and at the same time they reject tuition fees. “Die Grünen“ want the right to housing and children’s rights included in the Constitution. Additionally, their aim is the promotion of sustainable building. “Die Grünen“ call for the support of diverse family models. On the issue of equality, they are in favour of equal rights in all areas of life and accordingly want to fight gender-based violence as well as homophobia and transphobia.



According to the FDP, schools and day-care centres should be financed through three pillars: A base amount according to the size of the institution, education vouchers as well as a subsidy for children with a low socio-economic status. The FDP advocates the introduction of a statutory equity pension and the introduction of a basic pension. In addition, this party would like to see better opportunities for additional earnings in unemployment benefit II. The Free Democratic Party is in favour of more housing construction and cheaper building, but against a rent cap. The FDP calls for the dismantling of bureaucratic hurdles of parental allowance and the extension of spousal splitting, also to registered partnerships. The FDP wants to strengthen LGBTQIA+ rights and equal pay for equal and equivalent performance by women and men. Companies with more than 500 employees should evaluate and publish their internal gender pay gap.



The Left Party demands free meals in day-care centres and schools, as well as free transport. In addition, this party advocates for the introduction repayment-free BAföG as well as the abolition of tuition fees. They demand that the pension level be raised from 48.3 percent to 53 percent. Another vision is that all people currently residing in Germany should be entitled to social benefits. They also aim to introduce a nationwide rent cap and that 15 billion euros per year be allocated for social housing. With regard to family policy, this party wants protection against dismissal for parents until the child reaches the age of 6. Finally, the demands of the Left include a women's quota in management positions of 50 per cent.



In the field of education, the Alternative for Germany in its programme advocates the abolition of equal opportunity commissioners as well as the preservation of public schools. With regard to pensions, this party calls for the creation of a fund for one-off payments in the case of severe injustices in the East German pension system. In their eyes, social benefits should only be paid into domestic accounts. Furthermore, the AfD is against the introduction of a rent cap. For the party, the family model consisting of mother, father and child is elementary, which should be promoted by a family representative. Accordingly, the AfD is against quotas for women and gender.

Social Inequality and Injustice in Education

Interview with former Federal Minister of Education and Research Edelgard Bulmahn

Emily Polzin & Lena Zimmermann in Conversation with Dr. h.c. Edelgard Bulmahn

You were Federal Minister of Education and Research in Gerhard Schröder's cabinet from 1998 to 2005. What were your central tasks of this position?

I will start with what was not my responsibility, namely the whole area of general education, especially school and pre-school education, but also adult education, despite what many people in our country believe.

There was, however, a small loophole in our constitution, which I also used as Federal Minister, namely the co-responsibility for education planning. I will elaborate on this later.

The development of large research programmes and the funding of the large research organizations were the focus of research policy, whereby the "BMBF" (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) only has its own competence in the area of project funding. In all other areas, the Federal Government must coordinate with the "Länder" (federal states).

At that time, all research areas fell within my portfolio: basic physical research, geosciences, research in the human and social sciences, health research, environmental research, materials sciences, information and communication technology, production technology and space research and space technology.

I have launched large program-

mes such as the competence networks in the most important disease areas or, to give another example, a large, social ecological research programme in which I have linked environmental issues with social issues. As further examples, I would like to mention the large nano-technology programme or the biotechnology programmes. In space research, I put an emphasis on earth observation satellites for environmental research. In addition, there were many technology-oriented programmes, for example in production technology, microsystems technology, chip development or battery research. Finally, I established the German Foundation for Peace Research.

In the field of education, I was primarily responsible for vocational training, modernized the Vocational Training Act, initiated and promoted the establishment of regional training associations, set up a programme to equip vocational schools with digital technology and considerably expanded vocational upgrading training. Together with the Minister of Economic Affairs and the collective bargaining partners, the trade unions and employers' associations, I also launched the Alliance for Training in order to make vocational training possible for as many young people as possible.

In the higher education sector, the first thing I did was to fundamentally reform "BAföG". This was

urgently needed because "BAföG" had repeatedly fallen victim to budget cuts under the Kohl governments, so that only few students received "BAföG" at all. In the process, I not only increased "BAföG" itself, raised the income limits and made it possible to take "BAföG" to other European countries, but also limited the amount they could repay. After all, it is absurd that the young people from the lowest-income families subsequently had the highest repayment obligation. As a result, almost twice as many students received "BAföG" after the reform than before. By the way, even back then I had created the so-called "BAföG calculator", with which you could have the amount calculated digitally before submitting your application. Unfortunately, my successor did not continue to promote it.

In 1998/99, I decided to introduce the BA and MA degree programmes together with my European colleagues and the ministers of the federal states. I also offered the "Länder" to launch a large funding package to support the introduction, but unfortunately, they refused. In addition, I amended the Higher Education Framework Act, but as is well known, I failed at the Federal Constitutional Court with the ban on tuition fees, the anchoring of student representation and the renunciation of compulsory habilitation.

Important initiatives in higher education included the introduction of the junior professorship, the young scientist programmes such as the "Emmy-Nöther programme" and several funding programmes for scientists. The Excellence Strategy was also launched by me in 2004. These programmes and the course they have set are still in place today. Even back then, the question of using digital technologies played a major role. Within the framework of the Virtual University Programme, which I launched in 2001, the development of hybrid courses, for example, was promoted. The development of corresponding software programmes for university teaching was also funded by the "BMBF". Looking back, I have to say that it took far too long for the good examples to be widely implemented.

Have you been interested in the topic of "educational inequality/(in)equality of opportunity in higher education" for a long time? How did you become interested? Have you yourself experienced social inequalities in your educational career?

Yes, I have been interested in the topic of inequality of opportunity since I was a schoolgirl. Personally, I am a child of the education reforms of the sixties and seventies and know from my own experience how important education is for shaping one's own life. My goal was and is that every child in our country should have good educational opportunities. No matter what family they come from, no matter what country they come from. My sister and I were the first in my family to attend a grammar school and university. Neither would have been financially possible without the "BAföG" for pupils and "BAföG" for students. By

the way, my parents had to put up with a lot of unkind comments back then. Girls should learn something decent, studying shouldn't be for them. Unfortunately, it is not only money that influences educational opportunities, but also the social environment. Fortunately, they were strong enough to endure this.

What problems or challenges did you face in the education system during your tenure? Especially with regard to inequality of opportunity?

Too many of the young people and students had only achieved an insufficient level of education or even no education at all. The PISA study, published in 2001, showed that about a quarter of young people could not understand simple texts and could not solve basic arithmetic problems. Furthermore, the results pointed to a very close correlation between educational background and educational opportunities. Other studies, such as the IGLU study, showed that the academic performance of children from academic families was generally better than that of children from educationally disadvantaged families. The same was true for school form recommendations. Poorer starting chances and framework conditions were obviously not compensated for very well in our education system, but on the contrary too often even reinforced. One can imagine what this does to pupils and young people. At the same time, we are running blindly into a shortage of skilled workers. Germany is a country that has no raw materials and natural resources worth mentioning. If we want to maintain the general standard of living and meet the challenges of climate change and environmental hazards, we depend on creative, well-educated people. We simply cannot afford young people

without a graduation certificate or vocational training.

Education is the social prerequisite for participation in cultural, social and societal life as well as in working and economic life. Education plays a key role for individual life chances as well as for social development. This importance of education for individuals and for securing societies future was not reflected in the esteem of which education was held in our country. And unfortunately, this is still true today. This is evident in the financing of education, but also in many social debates.

How did you address these problems? Could you give examples of what was implemented during this time to counteract social inequality in the education system?

At the beginning of 1999, I set up the Education Forum in order to create a large, non-partisan platform with the broadest possible participation of all stakeholders, on which proposals for the further development and improvement of our education system could be discussed and developed. In particular, those directly affected, parents, teachers, pupils, business, trade unions and churches, supported the idea from the beginning, so that after initial hesitation, the "Länder" finally also agreed to the establishment of the forum within the framework of the Federal-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion. The work in the forum was very objective and goal-oriented. On the one hand, we did a good analysis of the problems, and, on the other hand, we developed concrete ideas on what needs to be done to advance our education system. The forum made 15 concrete proposals on how we can improve our education system.

The expansion and improvement of early childhood education, better individual support, networking of extracurricular children's and youth work with school education, longer joint learning for pupils, improvement of teacher training were central proposals.

Other recommendations included the development of competence standards instead of detailed curricula, the strengthening of empirical educational research, a regular evaluation of the quality and performance of the education system, the increased use of new media and the strengthening of the competence to apply what has been learned.

Furthermore, in response to the disastrous results of the 2001 Pisa study, I proposed an all-day school programme endowed with 4 billion euros, with the aim of creating time and space for better individual support in order to better take into account the different preconditions and learning conditions of the pupils. In addition, all-day schooling offered the opportunity to better link the different places of learning.

With this and an accompanying programme, I wanted to initiate the development of a new educational culture by financing and supporting the development of new teaching concepts and school programmes from federal funds with the help of the German Children and Youth Foundation in cooperation with schools and non-school experts.

A programme to promote reading and improve mathematics teaching, regular public education reporting on the quality of the education system and the establishment of a National Education Council were further proposals I made.

However, as a federal minister, I could not implement all this

without the consent of the "Länder" because of the constitutional responsibility of the "Länder" for general education.

Therefore, after the initial categorical rejection of the proposals by most of them, according to the motto that this is none of the Federal Minister's business, there was a lengthy negotiation process, so that at least the all-day school programme could start, and regular education reporting is now carried out.

How do you think these problems have developed since your time in office? Do you see more improvement or possibly regression and what are the reasons? Which problems do you think still exist and may not be solvable? In your opinion, are there still disadvantaged groups in the education system today?

As a result of the reforms, the PISA studies of the following years showed that the performance of all pupils improved significantly and the percentage of pupils in the lowest competence areas decreased. The schools themselves have also changed. All-day schools have become the norm, and many schools have also developed their own school programmes.

For some years now, however, there has been a frightening regression in the competences of the pupils. Today we are again in a situation comparable to 2001.

The still high dependence of educational success on social background is depressing and completely unacceptable. This is a sign of poverty for our society and it is no longer acceptable.

Pupils from low-income families and families with a low educa-

tional background, from families with a migration background and from family breakdowns in particular have significantly worse starting chances for their educational path, they are simply disadvantaged. That is why they need special support and help. A democracy thrives on the promise that no one should be disadvantaged on the basis of origin, but it is precisely this promise that is not being kept in our education system.

What I would do today:

I know very well that the reasons for this situation are manifold and that not all problems can be solved by political decisions and course-setting. Nevertheless, to conclude from this that nothing can be done would be completely wrong.

The introduction of an adequate basic child allowance is more than overdue.

Early childhood education institutions must be better staffed, and staff must be better trained and paid. Concepts and programmes such as the "Haus der Kleinen Forscher" ("House of Little Scientists") should be a regular part of the curricula.

And of course, comprehensive language education is a "must" in today's society where many pupils speak another language in the family. However, educators are still not sufficiently trained for this and there is also too little external support. The use of digital media can help a lot, but often it is precisely these pupils who do not have access to it. In this context, I plead for compulsory pre-schooling, because the pupils who would particularly benefit from early childhood education unfortunately often come to nursery too late, often not at all.

In Germany, we spend significantly more per pupil on grammar schools than on any other type of school. However, if we want to overcome social disadvantages in the education system, we have to focus especially on schools in hot spots. They need considerably more staff, teachers with appropriate additional qualifications, but also staff and external staff with a wide range of qualifications. Furthermore, schools in hot spots should be schools that people like to go to, that the pupils experience as a better place to live and that have excellent facilities.

Digitization is currently playing an important role in the public discussion about education.

Would you say that the progress of digitalization rather promotes or combats inequalities?

Digital media can significantly support educational processes by making exercise units more varied, by promoting personal learning control, by visualizing and making scientific phenomena or physical laws understandable, by enabling individual research and the develop-

ment of individual problem-solving strategies, and by facilitating communication among learners.

However, they can also have a negative effect if they are used as a bullying tool, if their use becomes addictive, if students need constant diversion and can no longer concentrate.

Digitization can significantly foster social inequalities if not everyone has the same access. In other words, education policy must ensure that students from low-income groups also have access to the necessary equipment and software and, if necessary, receive special instruction on its use.

What advice would you give to students and young people in education who feel unfairly treated by the education system? Where can young people in general get involved if they want to change something?

Retreating into a corner or reacting aggressively may help you for a few minutes, but not for longer. If you feel personally discriminated against, you should use the existing counselling and complaint possibi-

lities.

However, injustices of the system can only be abolished if the system is changed accordingly. And to do this, one should look for allies, in the educational institutions and in society. Students and teachers can launch initiatives in their respective institutions. Getting politically involved in political parties is another important way to solve problems in our education system, especially in the long term, because education politicians also need support. And of course, getting involved in citizens' initiatives is also a good thing, if they stand up for the right goals.

In conclusion, what would you like to say to the readers of our magazine?

Get involved, actively campaign for a better, fairer education system and preserve the optimism about education that I have encountered in other countries. People are not born stupid, they are capable of being educated and we should do everything we can to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to do so.

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Is policy a lever against social inequality?

Daniel Schüler in Conversation with Tim Teßmann

You yourself grew up in the rural area of Saxony-Anhalt, but at the same time you have many points of contact with Magdeburg. What differences do you perceive there between the city and the countryside in terms of social inequality?

Zuerst muss ich sagen, dass ich ein First of all, I have to say that I am a total supporter of rural areas. This is largely because I consider rural areas to be more social than big cities. Regardless of income, the contact between each other is even more friendly and supportive. In my opinion, social inequalities can be better absorbed in the countryside. The cost of living in the countryside is often lower, also building plots etc.! If you are mobile, rural areas are ideal for families. Rural areas are certainly dependent on the big cities. Many work there, enjoy the entertainment opportunities etc.! I think cities and rural areas need each other to eliminate social inequalities.

Were you confronted with social inequality yourself during your youth and school years?

Yes, I was. My schools until I chan-

ged to a grammar school were in a prefabricated housing estate with neighbouring single-family settlements. Therefore, the school class was very heterogeneous. There were children of doctors in the class as well as children of craftsmen, late repatriates, social welfare recipients, and so on. I found this composition good and right, as a child in primary school these differences were never an issue. It was only at grammar school that I noticed that a lot of attention was paid to appearance. Mobile phones slowly came into every teenager's room and there, too, attention was slowly paid to who had one and which one. I myself grew up with two siblings and parents. My parents are both teachers and I would say that they had a good income. Still, it has to be said that especially in the mid-1990s, money was not abundant. We were afforded a lot, but I worked since I was 14 years old in the holidays or later alongside school to fulfil certain dreams. For me, sport was a big social component. I spent my whole youth in gyms. Certainly, income distribution was always the most present social inequality. I only really noticed the differences between East and West when I was studying. At least from the life stories, wealth formation or even political attitudes or the questioning of things. I was able to judge and classify things better afterwards. As a teenager, I noticed that the East had less financial strength and unemployment was high. To some extent, I also noticed the different political attitudes as a teenager.

In my family, grandparents in particular were affected by the upheavals after 1989. Some of them had to reorientate themselves professionally and still have to get by with low pensions. I think that the eastern federal states can be proud of what they have achieved and of their development today. Unfortunately, we hide our skills under a bushel too much.

And I ask myself why?

Of course, it was "in" to leave the East for a long time and the new federal states lost generations of young people. In the meantime, this has flattened out and the East offers some opportunities.

Before your political career, you were active in the social welfare office of the Börde district. What experiences did you have there that still help you in your work today?

I worked as a social worker in the areas of basic security and asylum.

The first one in particular is very much affected by social inequalities, especially through financial aspects. The people who are visited there in their home environment reveal a lot through these home visits. Especially the fates behind them are to be viewed very sensitively. Therefore, I would say that I have a lot of understanding for fates, especially for individual fates. There I could meet many people who have slipped into this social inequality through illness. That affects you and should nevertheless be treated professionally in your work as a social worker. In my current work as a member of parliament, my professional experience is very useful. As a member of the social committee, I can apply this acquired knowledge very well. On the other hand, I wonder how people feel comfortable with the consequences of their own policies. In general, I have noticed during this time that people would like to see more communication between authorities and politics. I can certainly share this opinion. Politics in particular should engage more with people and communicate more openly with voters. I have decided for myself that I will not make any promises, but that I will at least take people's suggestions to the right places. It is important to explain certain decisions to the people. After all, they are directly affected. Social inequalities among migrants is a broad topic and a differentiation has to be made. Migrants can be asylum seekers, EU citizens or skilled workers with visas, etc. Asylum seekers are particularly at risk of social inequality as they are often dependent on social benefits. With them, however, it is not only the financial aspect, but often the educational opportunities. Many arrive in Germany and cannot have the same educational

level of our schools. Language is a contributor to this difficulty. EU citizens and other people who enter with visas often work in Germany immediately. This separates them financially from asylum seekers for the time being.

You have been active in party politics at the local and state level since 2016. What motivated you to take this path?

I got involved in party politics through the Junge Union (youth organisation of the CDU). I had little idea why I was doing it. I was simply interested in politics and came into contact with political structures through my work on the board of an association. I first learned what opportunities an individual has to get involved and was pleasantly surprised. Many people think that you can't have much influence. Fortunately, that's quite different, both at the local and the state level. I never planned to become a professional politician. Actually, I just wanted to get involved and enjoyed working in the city council.

What limits do you experience as a politician in your work against social inequality?

As a member of the Landtag, I cannot influence issues of the Bundestag or the EU Parliament. Unfortunately, political competitors are always campaigning on issues that are not within their political sphere. I have no understanding for this and find it frivolous. I have to admit that finances and their finite use are often a brake to offer more social services. Nevertheless, I think that people should not be made dependent on the state through ever higher social benefits. People in need must be supported. Work must be

worthwhile and should ensure a sufficient income. Sometimes there are longer voting processes in parliament.

I am very impatient in this respect, but I understand the necessity. Hearings of associations and other stakeholders are important, but do not shorten the process. Democracy costs energy and time, but for me it is the best form for a just state. I don't see any party-political constraints, because I am free in my mandate.

In a party like the CDU, the whole of society is reflected, especially in our parliamentary group. We have farmers, lawyers, craftsmen, teachers, social workers, etc., and different opinions are completely normal. I find that these democratic processes promote the quality of the resolutions that are passed.

At all political levels, the image of white men of advanced age is prevalent, how do you perceive the relationship between the sexes?

My party is often criticised for having too few women, a view I cannot share, because our parliamentary group in particular has many women and they are absolutely popular and excellent in their fields. I am relaxed about the issue of women's quotas. Even many female members reject it because they want to convince with professionalism. We have a quota in the CDU. Apart from the discussions about gender, I would like to see more young people in politics. Gender should not play a role, but professionalism and commitment. We need the modern and fresh views of young people as well as the experience of older colleagues. When it comes to filling ministerial posts, it is balanced between the two genders.

Following on from this, there is also the question of what voice the young generation really has at the political decision-making level?

In my opinion, the young generation has a certain voice in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, as I said before, there needs to be more young people in politics. I often experience that the young generation is not very interested in the work in parliament. Many are interested in politics, but do not get involved in the direct political arena. Nevertheless, I am always surprised by the high number of young people who follow my activities on Facebook and Instagram. Many approach me about it and simply find the transparency good.

In our democracy, elections at local, state and federal level take place in a certain rotation, so that as a politician you get a limited period of effectiveness. Especially in view of the long working process at the legislative level - do you see this as more of an opportunity or a problem to work out and implement long-term solutions against social inequality?

I must honestly say that you need a certain amount of training as a newcomer. After two years in parliament, I can say that I know the procedures and can make the connections to the previous legislatures. Nevertheless, I was able to set some topics and more will be added. As spokesperson for children and youth (within my parliamentary group), I am particularly concerned about extending their rights and putting protection first. The extension of the sibling rule was particu-

larly important in order to balance out social imbalances, especially in the low and middle income groups. In Saxony-Anhalt, only the oldest child pays for a day-care place; siblings are free.

Your daily appointments take you to both the young school class and the older population in the old people's home. What difference do you see in the definition of social inequality for the younger or older generation?

Due to generational differences and age, it is certainly reflected in material things. Young people are more likely to define social inequality in terms of things they can't afford, like brand-name clothes, travelling or maybe not going out. Older people have different needs. They are more likely to want to be able to afford care, help in the household or housing suitable for the elderly. Mobility is a big issue for older people, especially in rural areas. Not everyone can afford a car, but local transport is sometimes not well developed. As a result, some participation of the elderly could be lost, as they cannot get to the events.

And what connections exist between the two generations?

It would be desirable if my generation and the younger generations recognised the life achievements of the older people more. The upheavals that our parents and grandparents made are huge and we only know them from history. Especially the reconstruction after the Second World War and the political upheaval in 1989/90 were times of great uncertainty. That our

generations can live in such stable political conditions after 1989 is not a matter of course. The younger generation can count itself lucky to live in such peaceful decades, at least in Germany. That's why I would be happy if the younger and older generations accepted more of each other and approached each other more. I don't think intergenerational conflict is beneficial and already has a very negative connotation.

Our system is designed in such a way that the working generations generate the pensions. I think that's good and right. Nevertheless, we should work on our pension system, precisely because it is only fair if the younger generation can still claim this protection.

You have a Bachelor's degree in "Social Work" and are studying for a Master's degree in "Digitalisation and Social Structural Change" while working. How does the scientific and theoretical insight into this topic help you in your daily work?

My current studies deal a lot with rural areas, their preservation and further development. This is very helpful, especially in my work in the social committee. The combination of the discussions in the constituency and the theoretical influence of the studies is a very good combination. I think it's important not only to approach things theoretically, but to share these ideas/concepts with people from practice. In addition, well-founded knowledge already helps in the debate in the Landtag and of course makes you more confident in the various subject areas.

In addition to your mandate as a member of parliament, you also hold numerous honorary positions. Why are you committed to equality and justice in addition to your political career?

Especially in rural areas, I think it is important that people get involved locally. Sport has given me a lot and I wanted to give that back to my association somehow. Especially my FSJ in sport has brought me a lot.

Working with different characters is simply fun and when you see how the children and young people develop, it's great. An honorary office is seldom alone, and after I was an exercise leader/board member, other volunteer activities came along. Just last year, I founded an association to promote children's and youth work. Of course, you also need creative and committed comrades-in-arms. I have them and that's why it's so much fun.

Many young people now seek their influence on social problems through independent groups rather than at the political level. How do you perceive this development?

Als Parteimitglied ist es spürbar, dass viele von den Parteien abgelehnt werden. Die Gründe sind unterschiedlich. Dennoch finde ich es gut, dass wir eine breite Parteienlandschaft haben. Jede Partei hat Jugendorganisationen. Ich fand die Einführung der "Junge Union" super und es war ein erster Einblick. Dennoch müssen die Parteien sich öffnen und mehr für junge Leute tun. Das geht über Events, Talks oder Advertising. Ich denke, viele Leute werden durch das Image der Parteien abgelehnt, und man muss seinen eigenen Weg gehen, um für eine

long time before you can take part in the decision-making process. I think you can see from my example that this image is outdated and that young people are involved. Honestly, I have to say that a certain life experience is not bad for politics. I don't think much of the motto delivery room - lecture hall - plenary hall. For me, the actions of the "last generation" are not conducive to efforts for more climate protection. They annoy society more with their actions than they participate in the political process and change things.

You have been active in the local handball club HSV Haldensleben e.V. for many years. What opportunities do you see specifically in sport to counteract social inequality?

In sport, social background doesn't count, or counts for very little. As a club, this can be supported and I see clubs as important components of our social structures. Especially in rural areas, they are often the driving force behind activities that strengthen local cohesion. As an active member of the club, it has always been important to me that we are socially committed. With youth camps, fundraising campaigns and charity tournaments, we contribute a lot to social balance. For me, sport combines social and health components. I am convinced that sport in general contributes a lot to balancing out social inequality. Furthermore, sport brings several generations together and creates understanding for the other generations. The older members of the club may no longer take part in sporting activities, but the club still offers them a lot of social contacts and participation.

Finally, what would you tell young people who want to get involved against social inequality and injustice?

There are several ways to get involved. I would like to mention associations, local politics or initiatives. It takes a lot of persistence.

Certainly, it also requires a certain amount of idealism and interest in social issues.

Life in the old bus*: Between the wagon collective and the car wash

by Hanna Westermann

hey greta:) it's hanna here, törti said that you had thought about living in an alternative way and that you informed yourself about it. I'm looking for a place to sleep in June and had half a mind to steal my parents' van and put it somewhere. I thought I'd ask you if you had any ideas about what might be a good spot? :D

May 24 ✓

I decided to move to another city for three months for my mandatory internship. That's how I ended up in Würzburg. During the semester break, I had already been searching intensively on "wg-gesucht.de" and had talked to all the people around me who had already lived in and around Würzburg to find a furnished flat-share room for the time. I had rented out my own room within three days. The start of the internship was getting closer and closer, but I had still received either no response or only rejections to my enquiries. Only three months for interim rent between the semester break and the start of the semester, and then only half the semester, was understandably not ideal for most people who would have preferred to rent out their room for 6 months, especi-

ally for their semester abroad. In addition, my conditions were also limited. Furnished would have been nice and I didn't want to pay more than 400 € rent, which would have been almost my entire Bafög payment - the internship unpaid, of course.

I started to think about what I would do if I really couldn't find a room in a shared flat. The hostel option would have been the cheapest, at €26.40/day in a mixed shared room for 10 people. Apart from the fact that that doesn't sound very tempting, I wouldn't have been able to get there on my budget. So Bulli: My parents have a T4 Volkswagen bus that is a few years older than me and has accompanied me all my life.



Whether on holiday or in everyday life, it has been through a lot. Now it's definitely getting a bit long in the tooth, it's no longer tight all over, it only plods along the motorway at a maximum of 85 km/h and the clutch is also in urgent need of repair. But this idea at least gave me some security: even if I still couldn't find anything within the next two weeks, at least I still had a plan B, which wouldn't really have been ideal either, living in the bus in the rainy 10 °C Würzburg April.

But I was lucky. Barely 10 days before the start of the internship (I had been looking for 3 weeks and had real self-doubts in between - do I really come across as so unappealing?), I got an acceptance letter: a temporary flat for April and May in a really great 3-person flat - just under budget at 392 € per month. It should be a piece of cake to find something for June...

The alarm clock is ringing. First of all, switch it off. I turn over to Greta, "Coffee?" " Why, of course!". I scramble out from under the mountain of blankets, quickly put on a jumper and then open the sliding door: The birds are chirping, the sun is shining, the rowers on the Main are whizzing by with high motivation and the first pensioners are washing their cars next to us - after all, we're standing in the car wash too. Around the bus and the hatch open, get a folding chair out first, and then like every morning in the past weeks: Open the espresso pot, take out the coffee grounds, "Say, do we have any water left?", fill it with coffee powder and water, turn on the gas cooker and then sit back for a while. Greta offers chocolate bread from inside. She quickly pours the coffee and checks the oat milk, "Do you want to smell it? I think it's still good...". Max, from the car park next door, shuffles by with his dog Zora "Morning! How are you?". The pensioner who regularly washes his car here also stops by and explains to us in the deepest Franconian that the water quality of the Main is first class if we want to take a bath. And then we brush our teeth and get on our bikes: Greta to university and I to work.

Greta, a friend I met at a FLINTA*night in my interim flat-share, is not only immediately keen to look for suitable van locations with me, but would also love to move in with me. Why not? So we roll off with the bikes, the first campsite is pretty unenthusiastic, "A month? - We don't want long-term campers!", the second reproachful statement rather suggests something else: "You must be students!". So the search continues, along the Main we pass a caravan park. Greta has been here before, when she was thinking about trying out alternative ways of living. We stand a little lost in front of the square. Various cars are parked here: old Mercedes buses, converted construction vehicles, wooden-clad tiny houses and an old savings bank bus. We don't really feel comfortable just walking into the square, into the living room of this community, so to speak. Fortunately, a resident of the square walks by: Max, he has been living here since almost the beginning, that is 8 (?) years by now. When we tell him our idea, he says, "Sure, you can stand in our visitors' car park. Of course, I have to check with the others, but that should be fine."



When I tell people that I moved into the old bus, I get all kinds of reactions. From enthusiasm to extreme dismay, everything is there. "But then you'll be homeless!" the trainee looks at me in bewilderment. "I just couldn't find a room in a shared flat for one month, but actually I'm really enjoying living in nature right now." After all, my decision to move into the bus didn't come from an extreme emergency situation and the situation I'm in is still very comfortable. If necessary, I could have moved in with a new friend in a shared room that month.

* The car is called "old bus", alternative names "van" or "Bulli". I only gave this explanation because many people I told about my life on/in the bus were confused for a moment and then asked "So you mean you live in a van?"

It's a bit impractical without a fridge and bathroom, and of course it's a bit cramped if you can't be outside in bad weather. I can always drop by two friends' flatshares to take a shower, there's also a toilet at work and a public toilet is only five minutes away by bike. So my life in the van is more of a temporary adventure, and at a relaxed 25 °C in June. But that's not the case for everyone.

In addition to the desire for an alternative form of housing, the financial aspect is also a decisive factor for many of the wagon place residents in deciding to live on the wagon place. At the moment, the Wagon Yard is not allowed to take in any new residents: The capacities are exhausted. But that doesn't mean that there aren't people who are urgently looking for housing, for example on wagon space. Many students in particular are asking. But the city and the Wagon Yard have come to an agreement: they are tolerated, but are not allowed to expand. Würzburg is by far not the most expensive student city in Germany.

According to a study by the Moses Mendelssohn Institute (MMI), an average room in a shared



flat in Germany will cost a whole €458/month at the beginning of the 2023 summer semester. While the Bafög reform ensured that the flat-rate housing allowance rose from €325 to €360 in mid-2022, the money is nowhere near enough to pay the rent in most cities. In addition, just 11% of students receive Bafög, and by no means all those who are not entitled to Bafög are or can be financed by their parents. For many, that means: Work. And that's not wrong per se, but if you work a mini-job for 12 €/h in addition to your studies (theoretically, with 30 credit points (CP) per semester, i.e. 1 CP= 30h, 900h/semester also corresponds to a 40h/week), then it's definitely going to be a bit difficult to study. In many cities, the full salary of €520 from a mini-job barely covers the rent for a room in a shared flat. Food, drink, semester fees, mobility and everything else you need to live, well, it's difficult... In Magdeburg, prices are still below the national average at an average of €328, but compared to the prices of a year ago, the rent has risen by a whole 20.1% from €290. If you then want or have to do a (compulsory) internship, which in many sectors is unpaid despite a 40-hour week, it is a privilege that not everyone can afford.

Pictures by Oana Balan
Instagram: @oanasphoto

ARBEITERKIND.DE

The disadvantage of social origin - in search of the fortune forger

Daniel Schüler in Conversation with Jasmin Friese

For many years, it has been one of the major goals in social policy - ensuring equal opportunities. Even today, many people still have problems achieving a successful career, contrary to their social background. The hurdles already start at a young school age, and run like a thread through the whole life. The initiative "Arbeiterkind.de" has been working since 2008 to encourage and support students from non-academic families to study. This happens in more than 80 voluntary organized local groups, among others also in Magdeburg. We spoke with Jasmin Friese, the state coordinator for the northeast, about the disadvantages for people from non-academic households, the importance of social background and ways to get involved.

Compared to the rest of the world, Germany is considered a very privileged country with many opportunities for young people. How do you perceive the social situation in our country?

As far as the higher educational opportunities for young people from families without university experience in Germany are concerned, we experience that these are still very closely linked to social origin. This is shown, among other things, by the 22nd Social Survey of the German "Studierendenwerk" and the National Education Report 2020. This is one of the biggest problems we see at the moment.

Education is often described as the key to success. What influence does social background have on educational opportunities?

The surveys clearly show how educational advancement is in Germany: out of 100 children from families in which at least one parent has studied, 79 children study. But out of 100 children from non-academic families, only 27 children go on to study. This shows that the potential

of these young people is not being sufficiently exploited. Of these 27 children, on average only 20 currently attain a Bachelor's degree, 11 a Master's degree and only 2 complete a doctorate. Here it can already be read well that young people from families without higher education experience face many hurdles and challenges on their educational path. One challenge for non-academic children, for example, is the lack of academic role models and encouragers in their own families. A family's financial resources also play a big role: My parents, for example, could not support me sufficiently with their financial means, nor did they know that there were scholarships I could have applied for. These are some important reasons why the chances of studying are significantly lower for working-class children.

The economic position of people influences which positions they occupy in the social structure. What consequences do unequal starting conditions have on later participation in society?

Unequal financial starting condi-

tions of young people can also create significant social disadvantages in adulthood. It is often difficult for first-time students from lower-income families to build up financial capital - and an inheritance is unlikely to be forthcoming. We see that economic capital is directly related to educational-cultural capital, which is not always easy for people from non-academic families to acquire. This can start with the academic habitus at university, which feels foreign, and continue later - for example in conversations when it comes to canonical literature, one's favourite opera, the last art exhibition one has been to or the instrument one plays. The lack of experience of first-time academics requires greater compensation, but at the same time they acquire knowledge about two worlds in which they live. They are able to acquire a great deal and have an eye for several social milieus, precisely because they have had certain experiences in their life and educational history.

What are the differences in this respect between people from academic and non-academic households?



The differences are mainly rooted in access to education and the disadvantages that arise from it. A young person who did not have the opportunity to learn an instrument, to play his or her favourite sport in a club or who could not go on school trips because his or her parents' income was too low has completely different prerequisites and a different self-image. And if there is no personal role model in one's own environment and there is no stable network to encourage one to pursue one's own educational path, this has a detrimental effect.

Your organisation focuses on encouraging and supporting young

people to study. What are the reasons why these impulses do not come from the family environment?

ArbeiterKind.de provides information about studying, financing studies and scholarships and offers low-threshold, personal and free support with all questions. If there are no academic role models in the family, no one can tell you that studying can be worthwhile for you and encourage you to pursue a degree. There is a lack of information about studying and how to organise your studies - especially about how to finance them. Before you start your studies, you have to pay the first semester fees, and you

may have to pay for the move to the place of your studies and for a room in a shared flat. But what happens if the family cannot afford this large sum? The socio-psychological obstacles should not be underestimated either, because advancing in education can also bring the fear of becoming estranged from one's family of origin.

Germany has one of the highest migration rates in Europe. What role does geographical origin play in later education and career paths?

The recently published Chancemonitor 2023 of the Ifo Institute describes that the educational level of the parents plays an immense role in the educational path of a young person. In comparison, the migration background is much less significant. The probability of attending a Gymnasium is greatly increased if one parent or both parents have Abitur; in the latter case it is over 75 percent. Accordingly, the following also applies to families with a migration history: the educational background is the decisive factor in educational advancement, which can also be seen in many family histories.



In Germany there is also the peculiarity that this country was divided into East and West Germany until 1990. After that, the education system in the East also changed abruptly and many degrees acquired in the GDR were not recognised. What role does geographical origin from the new federal states still play in equal opportunities for young people today?

I was born in 1990 as a working-class child in Halle an der Saale and have been confronted with major prejudices regarding my East German origins at several points in my biography. In terms of equal opportunities, I naturally did not feel that this was conducive or justified. So my assessment is that one of the effects of the GDR's educational conditions today is that there are fewer academic families in East Germany. This would mean that parents, the immediate social environment and the older generation of teachers can influence a child's educational path. Moreover, in the GDR, studying was less prestigious and access was severely restricted. At the moment, we can also observe a lack of East Germans in decisive positions in the market economy and politics.

Now, besides you, there are many institutions that deal with the

question of social equality and justice. What opportunities do you offer young people from disadvantaged families for their path to university?

Our non-profit organisation ArbeiterKind.de supports pupils from families without university experience to get off to a good start in their studies and to be able to inform themselves in advance about all the relevant topics concerning studying. The volunteer mentors at ArbeiterKind.de accompany them at a very low level and are close contact persons. During their studies, they also support them with all questions related to their studies, for example with their first term paper, the BAföG application or the scholarship application. And when first-year students are about to graduate, our career entry programme offers them a good opportunity to get in touch with experienced mentors and get off to a good start in their first job.

How can people get involved and network with you?

We are very happy about new volunteers, because this way we can reach and support pupils and students from families without university experience even better. The volunteers of ArbeiterKind.de

are organised in 80 groups throughout Germany and are also active in almost all social networks. The Magdeburg group can easily be contacted via their email address magdeburg@arbeiterkind.de. They also offer monthly open meetings where people seeking advice can bring all their questions about studying. On their Instagram account [arbeiterkind_magdeburg](https://www.instagram.com/arbeiterkind_magdeburg) they regularly post when they meet.

Thank you very much for your commitment and your time for the interview! What would you like to tell the readers in conclusion?

With pleasure, thank you very much! I would like to point out that the people involved in ArbeiterKind.de with their educational history are a role model for those who still have a similar path ahead of them. During school visits, first days or trade fair stands, they tell about the educational path they took and the hurdles they had to overcome along the way. Telling and hearing these stories is so important because it encourages young people, gives them encouragement and makes them realise that they can do it.



INTERNATIONAL



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Rich CO2 hits poor countries first

by Johanna Loy

The climate crisis should not be a new concept for all of us. It's a part of our lives, whether it's at school, university, in the news or at a family dinner, action on the climate crisis and consequences are constantly on our minds. What exactly does it mean that we have a climate crisis, what is causing it, what in turn is causing it, and what can we do?

Climate crisis describes the long-term changes in various factors, such as weather, precipitation or ocean currents. In our case, it means that the earth is getting warmer, the polar ice caps are melting and extreme weather events are occurring. The changes have already been proven and documented for decades by a wide variety of studies and observations. Even we in privileged Europe are already feeling the effects: whether it is minor inconveniences like hot summers and mild winters, where we are happy if it snows at all, or major catastrophes like floods and fires. Due to a lack of precipitation and a hot summer, about 750,000 hectares of land in Europe were on fire by early September 2022, not only destroying century-old forests but also releasing tons of CO₂. But who is to blame for these changes?

It all began in 1690 when Denis Papin presented the first prototype of a steam engine, thus setting the industrial revolution in Europe and North America in motion.

We burn coal, oil and natural gas to produce energy, and use these fuels as fuel and for heating. They are relatively easy for us humans to extract and use, and therefore account for much of the energy we use worldwide. Consequently they are

essential to sustain the lives we lead and our economy. However, the problem is not only that these resources are slowly being depleted, but that there is carbon in each of them. When burned, this comes into contact with oxygen and becomes CO₂ (carbon dioxide). These CO₂ emissions are the main drivers of climate change and thus our climate crisis.

According to the German Federal Statistical Office, the G20 countries are responsible for 81% of CO₂ emissions worldwide in 2021. The top 3 are China, the United States and the EU. In terms of CO₂ emissions per capita, however, other countries are leading the race: in first place is Saudi Arabia with 16.6 metric tons, in second place is Canada with 14.9 metric tons, and in third place is Australia with 14.3 metric tons. Germany is in ninth place with 8.1 metric tons per capita in 2021. What stands out? That's right, these are all countries where, among other things, rich and very rich people live, where the majority of the population

has good access to education, and where there is running water and electricity. They are countries that have achieved all of that through their industry. Countries where the majority of people grow their own food, have poor infrastructure and insecure politics are barely represented if at all. Thus the answer to who is largely to blame for the climate crisis is easy to answer: us.

We, the privileged people who live in the industrialized countries. We, who drive even short distances by car and fly on vacation at least once a year.

We, who eat meat. We, who consume vast amounts of electricity, water and other resources.



Right now, at this moment I am consuming electricity while sitting at my laptop writing this article. Another example is the resources consumed to get the schnitzel on the table for Sunday dinner. Meat consumption does not only mean the unnecessary death of an animal, but also a big waste of resources. Soy is often used as feed for many animals. This must first be cultivated, for which trees are felled to create space. These trees can then of course no longer absorb CO₂ and convert it into oxygen and also emit CO₂ when they are cut down. The now planted soy has to grow and needs a lot of water to do so. Energy and fuel are also consumed for processing and transport. The animals are fed with it and emit methane on the side. On average, each pig produces between 8.8g and 15.2g of the climate-changing gas per day. Transporting the meat and storing it in cool conditions again consumes fuel and energy. We will leave aside the amount of water used in the entire process.

The data which was mentioned above on the amount of CO₂ emissions correspond only to the average per capita or the total amount. What is not taken into account, however, is that there are people who produce substantially less CO₂ despite their privileged position, e.g. by adopting a vegetarian diet, but above all vegan diet, foregoing certain means of transport such as cars or airplanes, and to use renewable energies. Unfortunately, there are also exactly the opposite: people who do not pay attention to their consumption, even take the private jet for short distances and go on vacation on their own yacht. An Oxfam study says that the richest 1% are responsible for one-sixth of the CO₂ emissions worldwide. A concrete example of an enterprise without added value, consuming quite a lot of energy and fuel, was probably the private space flight of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

The immense emission of CO₂ and other climate-affecting gases is therefore the problem, because they intensify the so-called greenhouse effect. This is a natural process that determines the temperature on earth. Easily explained, gases let the heat of the sun partially through the atmosphere to our earth. This heat is radiated again by the earth, however, not again completely by the gases into space let, but again thrown back. A higher concentration of the gases ensures that less and less heat gets back into space and thus more and

more stays with us on earth. So our climate is getting warmer and warmer. I have already mentioned some of the consequences, such as warmer and drier summers, milder winters, and natural disasters like forest fires. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) describes in its reports that more frequent and intense extreme events such as floods, droughts, heat waves and heavy rainfall are happening more frequently, which means losses and damage to nature and people. In its 2022 World Climate Report, the IPCC says that up to 3.6 billion people could be affected by the negative consequences,

which corresponds to almost half of the world's population. East, Central, and West Africa, South Asia, Central and South America, small island states, and the Arctic - the very countries least likely to promote climate change - were particularly affected, it said. According to the International Rescue Committee, in 2018, the very 20 countries that represent 90% of humanitarian needs were the ones responsible for only about 5% of carbon emissions. A frightening example is the East African nation of Somalia.

This has been repeatedly plagued by extreme droughts, especially in recent years, leading primarily to food shortages due to loss of livestock and crop failures. It was particularly bad in 2011, but also in the last 3 years, the number of hungry people there continued to rise. About 90% of the country is affected by this drought. According to World Hunger Relief, food insecurity in Somalia has deteriorated rapidly since early 2022.



Between January and March 2023, approximately 100,000 were affected by famine. "Famine" is the worst level of hunger according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) - the official classification. Despite the fact that this classification is from 2023, the government of Somalia declared a state of emergency as early as 2021 because drought prevented farmers from planting crops, 50% to 90% of livestock died, and clean drinking water was not available - some rivers have dried up completely.

Some parts of the country are experiencing the worst drought in over 40 years, with no end in sight despite the rainy season. Because when it does rain there, it rains so hard that many are affected by flooding, which also leads to food and water shortages and ensures that diseases spread more quickly. As a result, some 5 million people have now fled the country in search of a new, safe home - especially women and children.

Another country that is severely affected by the consequences of the climate crisis is Pa-

kistan. Despite the high population rate (estimates from the year 2020: 220.9 million inhabitants), the country contributes only 0.6% to global CO₂ emissions. At the same time, it is one of the countries that is most severely affected by climate change, as at times $\frac{1}{3}$ of the country, corresponding to about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the area of Germany, was under water. The fact that it rains a lot there during the monsoon season is nothing new. In 2022, however, it rained so heavily that the amount of rainfall was 2.83 times, and in some places even 5 times, higher than in the previous 30 years, leading to the worst flood disaster since

weather records began. Judging only by the death toll (about 1700 deaths), this was the worst flood disaster in 12 years - the last flood disaster with such death toll was also in Pakistan in 2010.

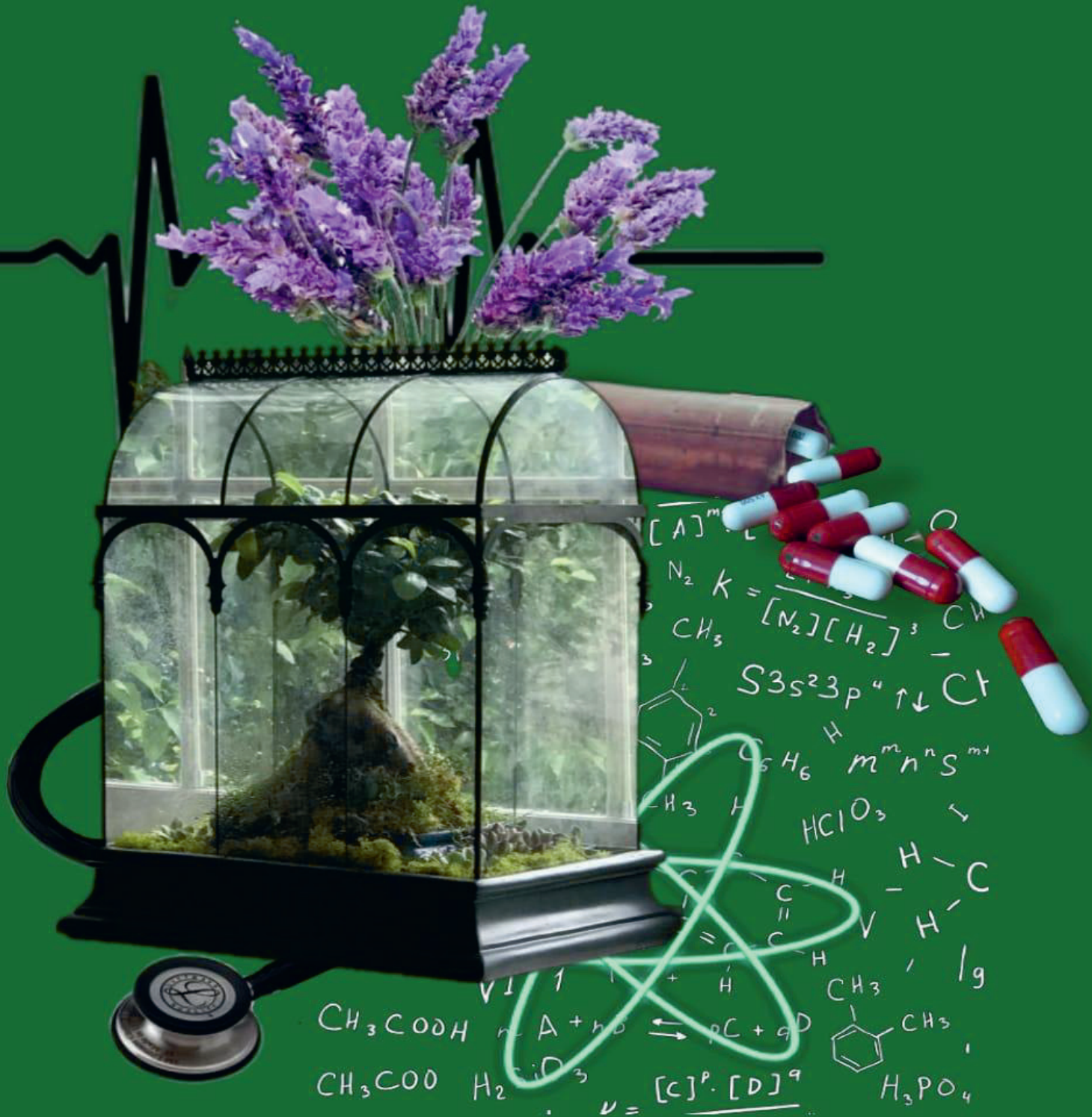
But the flood of 2022 did not only kill people. Residential buildings and infrastructure were massively damaged. The flood also destroyed about 3.6 million hectares of crops, affecting the economy as well as food. Lack of food, no clean water and poor medical care (about 10% of the stores' medical facilities were damaged or completely destroyed), made for disastrous living conditions. In addition, there was a heat wave with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius. Further deaths resulted from diseases such as malaria or cholera, which could spread very well in the stagnant, polluted water.

So what can we do to prevent extreme weather events from becoming even more frequent in the years to come? How can we ensure that we emit fewer gases that affect the climate?

For individuals, the following applies: eat less meat, use more bicycles or public transportation, avoid short-haul flights, and generally reduce consumption by buying secondhand, for example. Unfortunately, individuals alone cannot change the world, but everyone can make a contribution. However, it is important that politics and business also pay attention to our environment. The EU has therefore enacted the European Climate Change Act. The goal is for the EU to be climate neutral by 2050. The EU countries must therefore find a solution to reduce CO₂ emissions as drastically as possible and offset unavoidable emissions. By 2030, emissions are to be reduced by 55%. Quite well-known is also the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015, the most important and well-known point of which is that the global average temperature should not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. However, it is now proven that without drastic reduction of emissions, this limit can no longer be met. It remains questionable to what extent agreements and implementation overlap.



SCIENCE



Is our lifespan predetermined?

Health Inequality

by Felix Seecker

Health inequality is like the Titanic: in the end, it comes down to your class: When the world's most famous ship ran aground on an iceberg, not all the people could be saved because there were too few lifeboats. The luxury liner had three classes. The cabins of the first class were located at deck level and thus the distance to the boats was the shortest. The third class, on the other hand, was located in the belly of the ship and the distance to the rescue boats was the longest. This fact is also reflected in the number of those rescued. 62 percent of the passengers from the

highest class survived, whereas only 25 percent of the passengers from the last class survived the accident.

Similar to the classes in the shipwreck, the position in society has an effect on indi-

vidual health. In the past, health was seen as an external good that one either had or did not have. The responsibility did not lie with oneself. In modern times, however, people are increasingly responsible for their own health. The risk of illness or premature death is not only a question of one's own behavior, but is also determined by one's position in society. Education, professional position and income are the main factors that determine the "cubicle" in which one finds oneself.

Education provides the individual with knowledge and thus with opportunities to determine his or her own life and to master challenges. In the context of health behavior, for example, it would mean preventing illness through appropriate lifestyles, i.e. balanced nutrition and preventive behavior.

In Germany, people spend almost half of their lives at work. The general conditions can vary greatly. Those who are exposed to smoke, noise or time pressure have

a potentially higher risk of falling ill.

Income forms the basis for a healthy lifestyle. If we look at the data of current studies, we can see that people affected by poverty tend to die younger. In figures, this means that women from the lowest income group have an eight-year lower life expectancy at birth than the group of top earners. This effect is even more pronounced among men, where the difference is eleven years. According to the researchers, these effects are partly attributed to the increased mental and physical challenges

in the working lives of the poverty-stricken income group.

According to the researchers, these effects are partly attributed to the increased mental and physical challenges in the working lives of the poverty-stricken income group.

Nevertheless, no person will leave this world earlier simply because he or she

earns less money than others as a worker with a secondary school diploma. Rather, the mentalities of the various milieus also play a significant role. As the saying goes, "prevention is better than cure" and this also applies here. Attitudes toward a balanced, healthy diet, the importance of exercise, and awareness of preventive checkups, among other things, set the course. Cardiovascular diseases in particular are promoted by certain behaviors of lower income groups. These include lack of exercise and a high-fat diet.

Health inequality is not only a social phenomenon in Germany, but can also be observed worldwide. It can be seen everywhere on the globe where health data is collected. Although measures such as improving educational levels or working more on health literacy could help combat this inequality, implementing them is difficult. However, since the structures of this problem are created by people, they can therefore be changed.

Mean life expectancy at birth by income 1992-2016

Income	Men	Woman
< 60% of the median income	71,0	78,4
60% to < 80% of the median income	73,3	79,9
80% to < 100% of the median income	75,2	80,7
100% to < 150% of the median income	76,0	82,1
≤ 150% of the median income	79,6	82,8
Total	75,0	80,8

CULTURE

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M Media on the topic

by Daniel Schüler

“Soziale Ungleichheit” (2023/01) - bpb: Information on Political Education, Issue 354

In its 354th issue, the Federal Agency for Civic Education looks at social inequality within Germany. This is substantiated in readable articles with numerous statistics and literature references, so that a purely scientific appraisal is achieved. The basis is laid at the beginning with the various definitions and dimensions of inequality and their distinction from injustice, followed by the consequences in gainful employment, education and everyday life. The charts and excerpts from books give a comprehensive impression of social inequality and its multi-layered consequences for our society. The journal is available free of charge via the website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education and can be ordered both as a digital PDF and as a print version.



The inequality between East and West is still perceptible for all generations 30 years after the Wende. Dirk Oschmann, a literary scholar at the University of Leipzig, takes the position that East German identity is externally determined and that the numerous political, economic and social decisions are also shaped by West German perspectives. However, (self-) criticism of the East German population also finds its place in the book and the feared "West-bashing" does not occur. The book was a Spiegel bestseller and was the subject of heated debate in both West and East Germany. The book is available either at common bookshops or also as a loan copy at the public library.

"Der Osten: eine westdeutsche Erfindung"
(2023/02/23) - Dirk Oschmann



“Die Stipendienberaterinnen - Der Chancen-Podcast” - Applicaaid (Host Nicole Heßberg)

The non-profit organisation "ApplicAid e.V." encourages and supports people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds in applying for scholarships. Especially young people from non-academic and migrant households often do not know about the various financial support options. ApplicAid therefore organises virtual scholarship counselling, workshops and a mentoring programme for people with educational advancement. The podcast regularly presents other organisations working to combat (social) inequality, as well as success stories from the network. It can be listened to free of charge via the link "<https://die-stipendienberaterinnen.podigee.io/>".

L I S T E N

T O A

P O D C A S T

“Warum nicht jede*r Haftbefehl werden kann” - Keynote Mareice Kaiser auf der re:publica 2023

A YouTube video as a media recommendation? There are certainly countless documentaries and reports on "social inequality and injustice" on the platform, but the 20-minute keynote by Mareice Kaiser represents a special perspective. In the programme, alongside personalities such as Christian Lindner and Dr Robert Habeck, she openly admits in her intro that she is currently receiving unemployment benefit 1 and is therefore "probably the only speaker on stage" - wow, that's a good one. The mother, journalist and author pleads for more openness and honesty on the subject, and concludes: "Not everyone wants to be a warrant, but everyone should be able to become one. The video is 20 minutes long and can be found via the link <https://youtu.be/BbAfFO44o0Q>."



Wallflower and

I sat anxiously in my seat by the window and tried to listen to the teacher as they introduced the plan for the half-year. There was a lot of excitement around me, after all, there was still a class trip coming up.

Who didn't like school trips?

I did. I didn't like school trips or excursions, and even the student exchange next year gave me more pain than butterflies in my stomach. How was I supposed to explain to my father that there would be costs for school again? I scratched nervously at the palms of my hands while my thoughts circled, and the teacher's voice faded further and further into the background. I got lost in my imagination, in countless scenarios that all ended the same: bad for me.

Only when the bell rang and the lesson ended was, I transported back to the here and now, but only because I was flicked quite vehemently on the shoulder. I should hurry up; I should dream less. How strange, until now I was sure daydreams could not mutate into nightmares, but who am I if not the person to consolidate the exception to the rule. Still slightly absent-minded, I followed my friends into the break, nodding when they spoke to me, always hoping that the response was appropriate. Between my own trains of thought, I picked up scraps of words from time to time. Fragments of the conversation I was only physically present at. It was about a new games console. So, I couldn't join in anyway. As so often.

Once again, my shoulder was flicked, and I looked up, no longer aware of how long we had been standing here. My seat neighbor from the previous lesson held a piece of paper in front of my nose. I squinted, then it dawned on me, and I reached for the piece of paper. The parents' note for the school trip. He joked that I only didn't take the paper with me to repress the fact that you have to have fun on an excursion, and that I was allergic to fun.

He was right about one part; I would only like to re-

press what was written on the parents' letter.

My eyes skimmed the text, got stuck on a number. I looked again; the number remained the same.

I felt sick.

The others had stopped paying attention to me, the wallflower was submerged again, and I could fold up the note in peace without breaking out in a cold sweat or having to justify myself. I was so tired of justifications. While my friends were talking about the next class test and the summer holiday, I tried to come up with a good speech by the start of the last double lesson so that I could pass on the bad news gently. I could already imagine the reaction. It was never anger; it was always compassion. That look that would show me that it wouldn't work this time either, or the fear that I would hate him because he couldn't make it happen for me.

But there was never any hatred. Disappointment, maybe, but how could I hate someone who slept on the sofa to give his child its own room in the small flat?

The conversation turned into a heated discussion about the plans for the weekend, many voices called for another film night, and all was well until my name came up. It was my turn to invite the others, I was the only person who had never hosted before. And why? Because the flat was hardly big enough for two people - a small flat in a prefabricated building was no comparison to the owner-occupied houses or old flats that my friends called home. For a moment it was quiet, and I felt eyes on me, burning stares and my friends waiting. Tears slowly welled up in my eyes, disappointing my friends was the last thing I wanted, but being a host was impossible.

Most of them knew that money was tight with me, but only my best friend knew how tight. I shook my head. I stammered something about how I was busy at the weekend anyway and couldn't come. A collective eye roll followed and stung me.

church mouse

a short story by Francis Göbecke

Will I ever belong? Am I even part of the group or just a filler? Do I have to have the things that the others have in order to have a say? At this school, it had gone well so far, the comments were harmless or at least easy to ignore. At the school before, it had been a gauntlet of prejudice and insults. The fear that this would happen again was huge. I always carried it around with me, together with worry and shame it formed the basis of

I was still packing up my things. I had successfully pushed the note to the back of my mind at this point. At least until my teacher's face came into my view and I almost dropped my textbook in shock. I hadn't heard him coming, his expression almost seemed appealing. Was I in trouble?

"I realize what a challenge the upcoming school trip is for your family," he began, and I stifled an eye roll.



my thoughts.

One day. One day this will end, one day I will give my father the retirement he deserves, and I won't have to worry about the fridge being empty. Everything will be fine.

If I keep going. If I don't give up.

The rest of the day went relatively normally, I continued to feel the resentment of my friends, but did my best to ignore it. The others had already left while

The next five minutes were another lecture on how easy it is to get support in this country. Lessoned by someone who has only read about it on the internet, it always feels like a bad joke. But I nodded. Smiled. Thanked them...and left.

Maybe someone would be able to lend us money... maybe I just don't talk about any of this.

Maybe.

From the street to the fashion boutique - the social rise of German Rap?!

by Daniel Schüler

Haftbefehl probably couldn't have given a better answer to the question of what he thought of the article about his music and person: "Feuilleton? What is that again?" (DIE ZEIT No. 34/2016). There he was downright celebrated as "Ghetto Goethe" and analyzed in detail why songs like "069" or "Lass die Affen aus'm Zoo" suddenly conquered German schoolyards. Media coverage often revolves around the glorification of luxury goods around watches, cars and yes, even drugs, in the lyrics of the hip-hop scene. The fact that the materialism portrayed serves as a symbol of success in the successful fight against classism is not mentioned there. But especially in hip-hop, social background plays a major role and is repeatedly addressed in the lyrics. Even far from the music, the culture tends to take place in the lower milieus - graffiti and worn-out clothing long reflected one's own identification with one's history of origin before they found their way into the old apartments of gentrified scene neighborhoods. Some artists use the music to come to terms with their own migrant past, while others use it to criticize capitalism and sexism. But in all cases, inequality and injustice form the central theme - rap as an affordable therapy lesson for the lower classes. Many young people with similar social backgrounds find themselves in the lyrics and see hope and motivation in them. "Because it speaks our language." is how Miriam Davoudvandi, herself the daughter of an immigrant guest worker family, summed it up in Spiegel (2020). The paradox here? In the meantime, even the upper classes are using this language and means, and cultural appropriation is becoming a matter of course - clothing from the hip-hop scene as a form of protest against neoliberalism. I wonder what Haftbefehl has to say about this. "Neoliberalism? What is that again?" would probably also be very meaningful here.

Banks scratching the clouds up there
See the skyscrapers?
While I hand out euros to junkies
At "Bahnhof Streu"

Haftbefehl feat. Paula Hartmann – „Geruch von Koks“ (2022)

I am not against Ferrari, I am for Ferrari for all
Medicine, education, food and roof over your head, bar on the claw

Disarstar – „Rolex für alle“ (2022)

I can tell you, there is a lot going wrong here
Sell weapons, but don't want war
Think feminism is funny because you don't see it that way
But if my name was Max, I'd make more money

Nura- „Fair“ (2021)

Disclaimer: The next page will present some expressive citations from German rap songs. We did our best to transport the original meaning of the word, but of course it will be distorted by the translation anyway. Whatsoever, we hope that you still can comprehend the lines and its background.

No perspective, holes in the Nikes
Between prefabricated buildings look, where one remains
Running from 110, lungs whistling
And in the park drunks bash their heads in

LUVRE47 – „Ausblick Trist“ (2023)

Do you think you only need the money?
Then you can buy freedom?
Do you think you only need to go up in the cage
Then you can't get lost?

FFM, fast money in the free market economy
Capitalista, smoking weed while counting cash
Criminal Mind, with one leg in the jail cell
Monthly wages to lawyers, fines, installment payments
Electricity and apartment, what remains then to breathe

Juju – „Freisein“ (2019))

Celo und Abdi – „Über Wasser halten“ (2012)

The capitalist dogs
Basically make -
people into customers
The system - works only for the rich
Modern slavery - because the wages are just' enough

I've got visions for the future, I'm getting closer to my goal
About black women and Porsches being a normal picture
Must be because it's all about the Dollar Bills

Hanybal – „Tagesschau“ (2017)

Ansu – „Vision“ (2022)

Perspectives invisible, what about equal opportunities?
For your bigwig high-life we work down here part-time
Six notes, two jobs, one two
Seven notes rent, what's left? 500 euros!
Let's go, are you hungry?
It'll cost you 200 euros

No, look in Emma's eyes, think to myself "Shit, kid"
When you're big and smarter, you'll know too
That the odds are not a bit equal for most here

Six euros a day, don't think of anything healthy (ah ah)
They had new baguettes in the advertisements
So quick some fast food
You're still planning to meet up with your friends
What are you going to do? Let's go bowling
And because you want there to be a Coke in front of everyone
Get rid of some money (safe)
There's still 250 and we've just had the first one
Don't forget, the month is still long

LUVRE47 – „Hamsterrad“ (2020)

Disarstar und Hanybal – „Glücksschmied“ (2020)



Feminism in the Spotlight: Pop Culture as a Catalyst for Change?

by Ella Keim

The feminist movement has been an integral part of our society and social activism aimed at combating inequalities and injustices for several centuries. The destruction of patriarchy on all levels remains a central goal of feminism, shaping discussions on gender equality. However, not everyone has the opportunity or capacity to engage with this topic actively, politically, or even academically. How can we create points of contact then? If only a small part of the population is informed about feminism or similar social activism, achieving change seems almost impossible. This is where artifacts of pop culture, such as movies, TV shows, books, or music, come into play, influencing the perspectives of a wide audience. They achieve this primarily through one

thing: representation. Whether it is the representation of specific groups of people through fictional characters or the representation of specific themes through certain storylines or lyrics, they create reality for the audience. Particularly, pop culture media that reaches a broad audience has the power to shape and change perspectives and discourses, even if only subtly or subconsciously. This article illustrates how three elements of modern pop culture engage with feminism and its ideals, often without actively mentioning or discussing the topic. It highlights that the fight against social injustice can also happen outside of major political discussions and even provide a bit of fun and entertainment.

Disclaimer: It is important to note that this article inevitably focuses on pop culture artifacts from a Western society, presenting a strongly Western-centric view of the feminist movement. However, a focus on the importance of intersectionality in areas of ethnicity, gender identity & sexuality, and social class should not be let slide when engaging with feminism.

"We are bad feminists!": Fleabag (2017)

The comedy/drama series created by Phoebe Waller-Bridge deals with a protagonist who is, in many ways, "imperfect." While the topic of feminism is not actively addressed in the series, it can still be said that Waller-Bridge creates an inherently feminist work with Flea-

bag. A complex protagonist with many flaws, who often makes decisions that appear morally reprehensible or simply wrong to the audience, is at the center of the story. These decisions, however, make the character of the protagonist seem so real and human. She is not a

typical heroine. This humanity is also reflected in the fact that she self-proclaimedly is not a 'good' feminist—she is shaped by the patriarchy and carries internalised misogyny with her, yet she still wants to embody feminist values. This, too, contributes to her being a complex, realistic character, as for individuals it is simply impossible to avoid certain influences of patriarchy and other societal norms, such as capitalism. Fleabag shows that you can acknowledge these influences and still fight against them, and that you cannot always be perfect in doing so. A further aspect that Fleabag addresses is the exploration of female sexuality and bodily autonomy. These themes are directly and openly addressed within the storyline, giving female characters the space to express their personal needs, rather than simply existing

passively in this aspect, as is often the case in media and fiction. This is particularly evident in intimate scenes that are narrated distinctly through a 'female lens,' where female experiences, perspectives, and needs are in the foreground. This counters the long-standing tradition of these scenes being shaped primarily by the 'male gaze,' where male experiences, views, and needs are focused on, often reducing female characters to mere props. Fleabag challenges this tradition both within and outside the narrative framework. All in all, Phoebe Waller-Bridge creates a work that succinctly portrays the conflict between patriarchal influences and the embodiment of feminist values and the desire to simply be a 'good person'.

"I'm just being myself": Heartstopper (2022)

Based on the graphic novel series of the same name by Alice Oseman, the series was a sensation on Netflix in the spring of 2022. It revolves around the lives of two boys who must navigate high school, coming of age, and their feelings for each other. With a large group of friends who explore questions of identity and their place in the world, this work offers a heartwarming variety of characters. While the series is intended for a younger audience, we can still glean some feminist ideals from it. The series portrays a rather diverse group of protagonists—especially in terms of ethnicity, gender identity, and sexuality—reflecting a current focus of feminism on intersectionality. Intersectionality in relation to feminism refers to the understanding that different forms of oppression and discrimination are always in-

tertwined and mutually influential. It acknowledges that individuals have different experiences and challenges, shaped by their various social identities and contexts, and aims to recognize and address these multifaceted experiences and resulting inequalities, even within the group of non-male individuals. In Heartstopper, while feminism is not actively addressed as a topic, we can see how pop culture works to combat social inequalities and injustices through representation. A key aspect of feminism addressed in Heartstopper is how male characters deal with their emotions. These characters are allowed to freely express and talk about their feelings, without being labeled as 'weak' or 'unmanly.' The idea that men must always fit into a stereotypically masculine role and that society views traits associated

with femininity as taboo is a direct result of a patriarchal society. Heartstopper challenges this notion, aiming to break down traditional gender expectations. Other Netflix productions, especially those also created by female directors/creators like *Sex Education* (2019) or *Bridgerton* (2020), follow a similar trend: While the

castings within these series are increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender identity, and sexuality, the narratives themselves provide space for female, non-binary, queer, non-white, and non-able-bodied characters to address (feminist) themes such as autonomy and self-realization.

"Pink = Female Agency?!": Barbie (2023)

Certainly, in 2023, one cannot discuss feminism in pop culture without mentioning Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*. The summer blockbuster was a phenomenon, breaking all visitor records and becoming the most financially successful film of the year. People of all ages, genders, and backgrounds worldwide flocked to theaters, often dressed in the iconic Barbie pink. New discussions about feminism and patriarchy and their relevance in 2023 are erupting both on and off the internet. Some feel seen and heard by Gerwig's Barbie world, while others wonder what is so objectionable about wanting to live in a Mojo Dojo Casa House like Ken. But how does a film that so actively engages with feminist themes become such a seemingly mass-market hit? And how exactly does Greta Gerwig address feminism in her blockbuster? The central theme of the film is the patriarchy. At the beginning, viewers find themselves in a seemingly inverted world: The Barbies form a self-sustaining and self-determining society, excelling as physicists, politicians, Nobel Prize winners. They respect and support each other, simply enjoying their time in the Barbie world. The Kens, on the other hand, well, they're just there. But then the setting changes drastically: The self-proclaimed 'stereotypical' Barbie and Ken travel to the 'real' world, where Barbie, for the first time in her life, is treated disrespectfully and condescendingly, mainly because of her gender (at this point, it should be noted that Barbie is also a doll in the film and therefore

has no "gender" per se—so her existence as a perceived female person comes into play). Meanwhile, Ken feels right at home in the real world and discovers why: The patriarchy rules there. In the course of the film, he wants to bring what he believes is the great idea of patriarchy back to his home, the Barbie world, and turns it into a realm saturated with stereotypical and toxic masculinity. In the end, he realizes that the patriarchy also harms him and the other Kens and reconciles with the Barbies (after they apologize to him... but oh well). Meanwhile, Barbie embarks on a journey of self-discovery, learning much about her (partially negative) influence on the world. The film addresses feminist themes such as female solidarity, autonomy, and self-realization in a patriarchal society. The film, therefore, looks at itself and its characters from a sort of meta-perspective. Nevertheless, criticism from a feminist perspective can definitely be voiced, for example, due to the fact that the film, through collaboration with Barbie toy manufacturer Mattel, seeks to profit deliberately, benefiting the capitalist system that exploits certain groups of people within this patriarchal society that is supposedly criticized. Despite the fact that Gerwig's *Barbie* does not present a 'revolutionary' manifesto with profound or nuanced feminism, as some may have hoped, the film brings the topic close to a very broad audience that may never have engaged with it otherwise, making a small mark in cinematic history.

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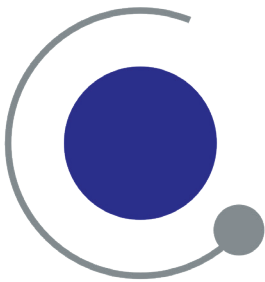


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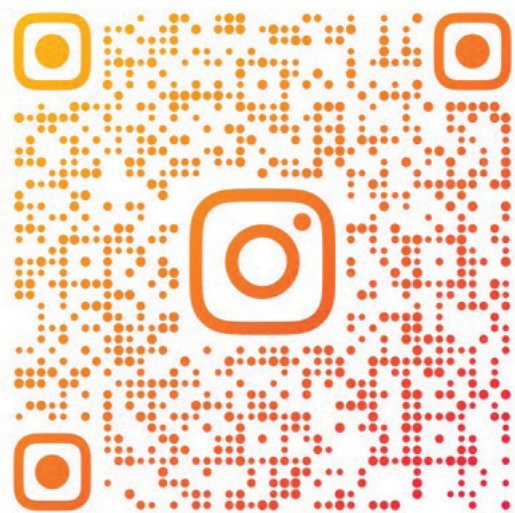
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