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Utopias can be real. Organisational structures within eco-anarchist communities.

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Master in Sociology

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SOCIOLOGIA
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

Department of Sociology

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Resumo

A crise climática e da biodiversidade são alguns dos problemas mais prementes do mundo (Diaz et al., 2019), causados por ações antropogénicas e pelo sistema económico capitalista predominante (Li, 2016). Uma vez que os atuais sistema e organização societal contribuem adicionalmente para questões sociais como a crescente desigualdade, outras formas de estruturas organizacionais e formas alternativas de sociedade podem oferecer oportunidades de aprendizagem valiosas para a realização de utopias sociais. Muitas ideologias políticas oferecem uma alternativa ao capitalismo, sendo uma delas o anarquismo. O anarquismo pode ser entendido como uma resposta à hierarquia e à dominação na atual sociedade. As ocupações florestais são organizadas de forma anarquista e assentam na solidariedade e ação voluntária. Estas comunidades não só exercem pressão sobre o sistema dominante, como a sua estrutura também tem impacto nos indivíduos e nas suas interações sociais. Há falta de investigação sobre as experiências contemporâneas vividas do anarquismo (Williams, 2018), revelando a necessidade de uma maior exploração. Este trabalho analisa as estruturas organizacionais das comunidades eco-anarquistas, estudando as ocupações florestais predominantemente localizadas na Alemanha. Para isso, foi aplicada a observação participante nas diferentes ocupações das florestas, complementada com uma observação extensiva. Os principais resultados mostram que a estrutura organizacional das ocupações estudadas resulta numa maior felicidade e sentido de realização percebidos individualmente. A organização anarquista desconstrói continuamente a hierarquização e a mercantilização dos seres humanos, dos valores e objectos. A investigação realizada tem como base um quadro teórico assente na ecologia política e teoria das relações de poder.

Palavras-chave

Utopia, ambientalismo, anarquismo, comunidades eco-anarquistas, ocupação florestal

Abstract

The climate and biodiversity crisis are some of the most pressing problems (Diaz et al., 2019) caused by anthropogenic actions and the prevalent economic system of capitalism (Li, 2016). Since the current system and societal organisation are additionally contributing to social issues such as growing inequality, other forms of organisational structures and alternative forms of society can offer valuable learning opportunities for the realisation of social utopias. There are many political ideologies that would offer an alternative to capitalism with one of them being anarchism. Anarchism can be understood as a response to the hierarchy and domination in our current society. Forest occupations are organised in an anarchist manner and built on solidarity and voluntary action. These communities do not only exert pressure on the prevailing system, but their organisational structure also impacts individuals and their social interactions. There is lack of research on contemporary lived experiences of anarchism (Williams, 2018) which shows the need for further exploration. This work analyses the organisational structures of eco-anarchist communities by studying forest occupations predominantly located in Germany. To do so, foremost participant observation within the different occupations was applied, complimented by extensive interviews. The main findings show that the organisational structure of the studied occupations results in an individually perceived higher happiness and sense of fulfilment. The anarchist organisation continuously deconstructs the hierarchisation and commodification of humans, values, objects etc. that are usually naturally occurring. To analyse and contextualise these findings, a political ecology framework complemented with power relations theory is applied.

Keywords

Utopia, environmentalism, anarchism, eco-anarchist communities, forest occupation

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Introduction

Our current society does not meet our needs to sustain within the limits of our planet. The economic and political systems of capitalism are built on the thought of having endless resources and endless growth, of expansion through exploitation of these resources (Li, 2016). The climate and biodiversity crisis are some of the most pressing problems of humanity in our time and for future generations (Diaz et al., 2019). However, this is not simply an abstract natural phenomenon, but it is caused by anthropogenic actions and the prevalent economic system of capitalism (Li, 2016). Activism is one mean to combat this system and is widely practised in various forms. Many grassroots activist groups and movements in the socio-environmental context use ideas taken from an anarchist approach and employ self-organising systems. Especially in places where activists live together, e.g., communes, communities, and occupations such as forest occupations, alternative forms of societies arise (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010). Since the current system and societal organisation are contributing to the environmental problems but also to social issues such as growing inequality, other forms of organisational structures and alternative forms of society can offer valuable learning opportunities for the realisation of social utopias. There are many political ideologies that would offer another system to capitalism and its consequences with one of them being anarchism. Anarchism can be understood as a response to the hierarchy and domination in our current society. Generally, anarchism stems from Greek and means without hierarchy, and thus contemporary anarchist movements stand for the adoption of horizontalism, direct action, anti-authoritarianism, decentralisation, anti-capitalism, and mutual aid (Williams, 2018). These values are put into practice in eco-anarchist communities, e.g., forest occupations. Forest occupations are organised in an anarchist manner and built on solidarity and voluntary action. These communities do not only exert pressure on the prevailing system, but their structure also has impacts on the individual and the community constructed and their wellbeing. Atkinson et al. (2020) define wellbeing as resulting from the shared experiences of communal life and thus connect it to the relations between participants as well as between participants and goods. This connection of wellbeing to the different relationships calls for an analysis of power, oppression and liberation as individual and communal wellbeing do not necessarily always correlate (Atkinson et al, 2020). Communities can gather their own identity against opposing forces (Li, 1996) and even though they cannot be independent of the globalising world, they can decide on the state of interdependence (Robbins, 2011). Since anarchism attempts to diminish power inequalities, the question arises how the organisational structure within an eco-anarchist community such as forest occupations influences the wellbeing of participants as well as of the community itself. There is lack of research on contemporary lived experiences of anarchism (Williams, 2018), which shows the need for further exploration.

Additionally, it has been found that the continuous weakening of the welfare state through neoliberal policies is endangering the social support network provided through communities (Raphael et al., 2001) which shows another incentive to study the influences of eco-anarchist communities both

for their direct benefits as well as a response to the neoliberal policies threatening not only the environmental resources but also the human resources. This work analyses the organisational structures of eco-anarchist communities by studying forest occupations in Germany, Switzerland and France and their impact on the participants. In order to do so, participant observation within different occupations was applied, complimented with extensive interviews of selected occupants. The findings are analysed drawing upon political ecology and power relations theory.

Thus, the research question is:

How does an eco-anarchist organisational structure influence individual and community life?

This will be answered through the following questions:

- how are eco-anarchist communities organised?
- what are the influences of the organisational structure on the communities?
- how are individuals impacted by the life within eco-anarchist societies?

1. Theoretical framework

As seen in the problem statement, an alternative to the neoliberal system is needed. Albeit there are people that believe in ecological modernisation theory (Mol & Spaargaren, 2000) and comparable approaches as solutions to the climate crisis, these would not solve the social problems that go along with the environmental degradation. Thus, a holistic approach is needed. There are many ideologies, yet most are based on a hierarchical structure that signifies the control of an individual or a group over another group. These power-imbalances can lead to inequalities and injustices. In theory, anarchism's core principle of non-hierarchy tries to actively prevent these imbalances to arise, and/or tries to dismantle them where they are existent.

Forest occupations are started out of an environmental concern. This concern is usually caused by political decisions within the neoliberal, globalised system which is where political ecology links to. As the anarchist organisation is a response to the hierarchies present in our society, anarchist-inspired forest occupations develop in response to political decisions within a capitalist system which is built on power hierarchies that promote competitive attitudes instead of solidarity. To analyse the power relations present in human organising, Michel Foucault's theory of power is chosen. In the subsequent part, both theories, political ecology and power theory, will be introduced.

1.1. Political ecology

Political ecology is an interdisciplinary field that aims at describing and analysing broader (ecological) systems as politically power-laden. It represents an alternative to apolitical ecology, which views ecological and environmental changes as simply caused by proximate or local forces. Whereas political ecologists "accept the idea that costs and benefits associated with environmental change are for the most part distributed among actors unequally . . . [which inevitably] reinforces or reduces existing social and economic inequalities . . . [which holds] political implications in terms of the altered power of actors in relation to other actors" (Bryant and Bailey 1997, pp. 28–29). Thus, political ecology insists on the linkages between the power distribution and productive activity and its influences on the socio-ecological system. Political ecology tries to understand the network of influences which act on a certain outcome from local decisions being impacted by regional policies, which in turn are influenced by the global economic system and vice versa. (Robbins, 2011). Robbins (2011, p. 80-81) further defines it to "disclose the violent inequities of a wholly unnatural global political economy, which paved the way for the outrageous, unjust, and jarring devastation these events wrought amongst the world's most marginal communities".

However, political ecology not only explains these power relations but also aims at showing that there are alternative ways. Research in this field tries to find causes of the problem instead of simply solving the symptoms as e.g. ecological modernisation theory (Murphy & Gouldson, 2020; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000) does. This framework is built upon the holistic assumption that political and

economic decisions impact the entire socio-environmental system. The two main constituents are firstly the explanation of what is going amiss with the interpretations of environmental change so far and secondly, which alternatives exist. For political ecologists, conflicts are neither environmental nor social (think gendered, social classed and raced conflict) but always intersectional since political identities and social struggles are connected to the baseline of life which in turn is linked to the environment. Political ecology has many subheadings with one of them being the environmental conflict and exclusion thesis, which concerns the increasing scarcities of resources appropriated by a ruling elite integrated in various institutions, such as the state, private firms or other powerful social actors. This appropriation worsens already existing conflicts between groups. Vice versa, many long-term, social conflicts are “ecologised” by policy changes which have implications for the socio-environmental system (Robbins, 2011).

Power relations and their implications are being researched for a long time. Kropotkin (1911), a scholar who is well-known for his works on anarchism, collected evidence on people, plants and animals, that convinced him that survival and evolution of species were propelled by collective, mutual aid, cooperation and self-organisation, which are also core principles of anarchism (Williams, 2018). Following a political ecology approach, his research focused on the pervading elitism and classism in natural sciences whilst exploring alternatives such as the principles mentioned before. His findings showed that cooperation is central to survival and selection which gave evidence for the possibilities of a society free from hierarchies and other dominations (Kropotkin, 1911).

One big topic of discussion surrounds private property, because, conventionally, common property is viewed to be prone to failure (cf. Malthus, 1872; Hardin, 1968) whereas the empirical record shows the opposite (cf. National Research Council, 1986; Feeny et al., 1990; and Burger & Gochfeld, 1998). Common property’s success is not due to the fact that it is unowned but due to the fact that it is commonly owned and shared, including its responsibilities and abilities. Only the introduction of coercive states and markets followed by the appropriation of communal property by elites led to tragedy (Muldavin, 2002) and this privatisation of property is one of the fundamental features of capitalism. Muldavin (2002) concludes in his research that the features which make the economy vibrant are the ones leading to social and ecological crisis. Generally, the appropriation of resources is a large part of environmental conflicts within the theory of political ecology, especially through the analysis of resulting inequalities. As Meinzen-Dick et al. (1997, p.130) point out: “The widespread trend to privatize resources and to confer formal ownership to land, water, or trees, which has been promoted as improving economic efficiency and reducing transaction costs, too often cuts off more marginal users, and has particularly restricted women’s rights to resources. More flexible tenure arrangements are more likely to accommodate the needs of multiple users of resources”.

The stereotypical, capitalist state as Foucault (1991) described it, however, is at service to economic elites, which exercise their influence through culture, public media and ideology, over the

non-elites to spontaneous consent. This influence is self-enforcing in so much that people come to internalise these interests of the economic elites within themselves. Foucault (1991) described this as “governmentality” that transforms people’s initial interests into the interests of the state or other authorities. This creates a web of power relations that resembles hegemony and ideology (cf. Gramsci, 1973). Foucault (1991) concluded that this internalisation is a product of daily action, interaction activity and work, as people determine their actions out of compliance with their social and political interactions which come to govern themselves. Thus, even though people appear to act autonomously, they are subjected to political webs of power. More clearly, practices precede self, i.e., people’s actions precede who they are. The principle of self-enforced governmentality of norms is geared to match the needs of state power as social actors come to internalise the responsibilities and norms of state actors themselves and as such people’s (environmental) priorities are part of power-laden development outcomes (Robbins, 2011). Important within these theories is that these are simplified concepts which can be applied to specific cases, but do not apply to all of them equally as there are naturally differences and variations between different capitalist systems and states.

However, political ecology does have its limits when analysing the complex processes underlying the lives and thus also the decision-making mechanisms of people as subjects are often not evident to simple analysis. This is why participant observation is gaining more importance and influence to truly investigate these relationships, because, so far, political ecology has been relatively shallow regarding the idea of environmental subjects (Robbins, 2011). Due to this, the political ecology framework will be complimented with power relations theory based upon Michel Foucault as introduced in the preceding paragraph. Foucault takes a more constructivist approach within critical politics, i.e., ideas are not powerful because they are true, they are true because of power (Foucault, 1980).

1.2. Power relations theory

Power relation theory is based on the works of Michel Foucault, whereby it is important to mention that Foucault would describe himself more as an experimenter instead of a theorist. Foucault is known for being critical of the western-centric worldview as he stated it ensures the reproduction and systemising of faulty thinking. To come to this conclusion, he conducted an ontology of the present. With his work, he mainly aims at promoting change that works against the domination and oppression and brings forth the word of freedom. The main critique of this theory is that Foucault did not generate positive alternatives. In his view, the current system is based on the uncritical acceptance of statements presented as facts. This causes power relations to evolve into static states of domination which causes discrimination of everything outside the norm. In this context, power is defined as something that can only be exercised over free subjects (Foucault, 1982) and should not solemnly be seen as a negative force that causes negative states but rather as a feature that is existing in any unbalanced relationship between two subjects (Foucault, 1980). To understand power or force relations, one has first to analyse

the current conditions and then identify the norms and practices that keep this current state in place (Taylor, 2014). However, power relations are constantly changing and developing, so analysis has to be conducted continuously. One tool for analysis is the critical reflection, for instance, the questioning of the desire to have someone to tell us what is right and what is wrong and on which assumptions this is based and why. Power analysis is both theoretical and empirical. Michel Foucault identifies three different modes of power: sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower, whereby the latter two constitute the modern forms of power. Sovereign power is the power executed by one individual, i.e. an autocrat or dictator. Sovereign power will not be discussed as it does not apply to the studied cases. Disciplinary power concerns the individual and biopower is related to groups of people and populations (Taylor, 2014).

1.2.1. Theory of power

The theory of power is developed out of Foucault's analysis of psychiatry, the institution prison and sexuality during the 1970s. It describes the characteristics of power and how they work covering several time periods. As well as Foucault does not describe himself as a theorist, the theory of power should rather be understood as an analytic matrix of power as he was careful to pronounce rigid facts in a dynamic and variable environment such as the different realities of various capitalist states and systems globally. Yet, Foucault formulated some conclusions that also build the foundation of the power theory. Power is omnipresent and can be found in all social relations (Foucault, 1977; Taylor, 2014). With the theory of power, the author does not aim at explaining the world because power is only part of the construct that makes up our system. It aims to replace the juridico-discursive lens often present, i.e., instead of the western-centric lens dominant in a European context rather focusing on the lens of underlying power relations that are omnipresent. Thus, for establishing an analysis of power, it is necessary to develop an analytics of power that draws on the morals of this lens (Foucault, 1990a: 90). None of the identified forms of power are fundamental. Rather, they are terminal expressions of certain conditions. Power can be understood as the several things that constitute it: the omnipresence of force relations that reinforces itself; the processes that alter force relations; the interactions of the different force relations and the impacts of them; the strategies in which force relations surface within the current surroundings (Foucault, 1990a). Force relations are expressed through the reason that is the cause of actions. There are local relations which act on the individual and larger patterns that constitute dominant norms and regulations. "It (power) is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable" (Foucault, 1990, p. 79). So power is not a certain body but rather a composition of forces present in our society (Foucault, 1990) and, as such, there is a multiplicity of force relations which are immanent in social interactions.

Power can be seen as a strategy and not as a possession (Foucault, 1979) and develops first in specific, local individual behaviours and actions. However, this does not imply that it results from

specific individual decisions (Foucault 199a as cited in Taylor, 2014). Force relations do not result from any particular individual action. This proposes a systemic level of understanding of power relations which are enforced through singular force expressions. To connect that to the types of power, we have the local levels palpable on individuals under disciplinary power, and the macro-level targeting populations in biopower.

Foucault also views rationality critical and says that it is constituted by tactics and strategies. Tactics are local choices and strategies are systemic. Tactics are usually quite explicit and interconnected, forming a comprehensive strategy or system (Foucault, 1990). These systems constitute institutional crystallisations that become terminal forms like the nation state. The terminal forms are also analysed by many other scholars, yet Foucault states that these analyses miss the basis of power operation. Individuals are able to make decisions even within the network of force relations. One important aspect of this decision-making process is the awareness of the force relations. A connected Foucauldian statement is that where there is power, there is also resistance (Foucault, 1990a). Summarising, power is not possessed but exercised, it is omnipresent and accompanied by resistance on micro- as well as macro levels (Taylor, 2014).

1.2.2. Disciplinary power

Disciplinary power refers to employment of power to make the individual more obedient proportional to their usefulness (Foucault, 1979). This is done through the production of individuals and individuality by separation of the individuals from another (Arendt 1985). Through hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and the examination, disciplinary power is connected to the development of disciplinary knowledge. Disciplinary power judges according to the norm which is a measurement of normality of individuals (Foucault 1979 as cited in Taylor, 2014). Disciplinary power causes relationships of constraint between individuals as opposed to relationships of contractual obligation and looks at individuals hierarchically instead of universally. This is reproduced through self-reinforcing power-knowledge relations within disciplinary institutions (Foucault, 1979).

1.2.3. Biopower

Biopower in turn concerns the human life as regarded in groups and populations as a whole (Foucault, 1990). Instead of through laws and constraints, it functions more discrete through norms that reproduce themselves throughout society, thus it cannot be traced to singular institutions or individuals. A lot of tactics employed under disciplinary power are also used under biopower, but the focus shifts to the populations instead of the individual.

These two forms of modern power are intersecting, and Foucault sometimes includes both of them under biopower. So, if disciplinary institutions target individuals deviating from norms, by exercising biopower people administer the norms and regulations of them. One could say that disciplinary power works through institutions and biopower through bodies like the state and the

organisational system behind it (Taylor, 2014). Disciplinary power sees the body as an apparatus and the functioning/disciplines of this apparatus. Biopower is centred around all the biological functions of the population and all the factors that cause variations. The control of this functions is covered by biopolitics, for instance incentives for increased birth rates (Foucault, 1990 as cited in Taylor, 2014). This is important as Foucault drew the conclusion that biopower is almost necessarily racist and gives the state the monopoly of violence (Foucault, 2003).

1.2.4. Power/knowledge

One other important concept is power/knowledge. It concerns the interplay of power and knowledge and how they produce each other. In the original, Foucault used the words *pouvoir/savoir*. *Pouvoir* can mean power, but it also means the capability to do something, which is only the case when you know how to do it (Foucault, 1993). Power/knowledge is the knowledge which is collectively viewed as true (“facts”). In Foucault’s view knowledge is only apparent with the backing of power relations. For instance, common sense is an example of the concept of power/knowledge, as it is unquestioned seen as a fact (Taylor, 2014). Taking the famous panopticon as an example, we see that power seems to be focused on the individual. However, it is rather redistributed through the structure. The prisoner feels like they are constantly being watched, however by internalising this process, they start to watch themselves. This leads to the individual being both subject and object of this power (Taylor, 2014). This process can be compared to normalisation, which is the institutionalisation of the norm, thus the process of something becoming normal which will then structure and define social meaning and standards to compare to. These are not necessarily obvious to discover but can be internalised to the extent that we assume that these are our own opinions (Taylor, 2014). Yet, for Foucault it is important to view these practices without giving them value. Rather through watching and comparisons of individuals, it is the enforcement of a norm at the same time as its establishment (comparing the individuals with each other) which re-enforces the norm itself (Foucault, 1979). Therefore, power does not repress, it produces. It constructs realities and the knowledge gained from this is produced by power (Foucault, 1979).

As such, the resistance to power is an expression of power itself. Foucault’s work is not focused on the normalisation by disciplinary practices but more on how they can be used to resist this normalisation by our own relationship to our subjectivity (Taylor, 2014).

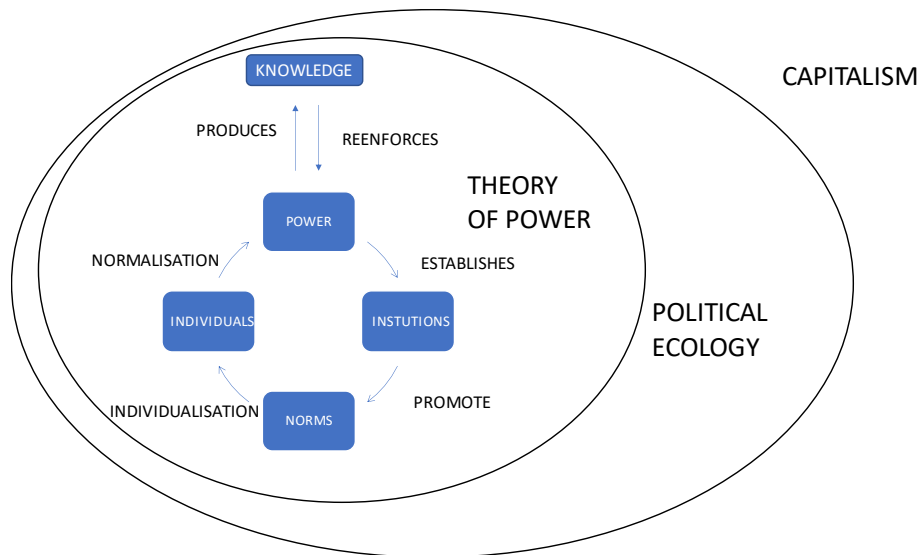


FIGURE 1 CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE INTERACTION OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND THE THEORY OF POWER

Figure 1 conceptualises how the political ecology framework and the theory of power are applied to a capitalist system within the context of this thesis. Capitalism represents the outer domain and thus the capitalist state and its organisational system. The political decisions taken by these then have environmental consequences, hence the political ecology frame. Power distribution and productivity activity impact the socio-ecological system resulting in intersectional issues. This is being narrowed down to the theory of power which takes part within the political ecology framework in this dissertation and adds to it with an approach enabling the analysis of individuals force relations as well as their interplay with groups and institutions. The theory of power shows the concepts of pouvoir/savoir and governmentality. Within the cycle, the production and establishment of norms is visible which constitutes and is constituted by the construction of knowledge and thus of realities by power.

2. Methodology

2.2. Study object: Forest occupations

Forest occupations are not a new phenomenon. Albeit regarding a German context they had a revival within the last four years and many new occupations appeared. In Germany in 1975 and during the 1980s, activists occupied a forest in Wyhl together with French activists, whilst the anti-nuclear protests were booming. This is also where a lot of tactics employed in the German forest occupations scene originate from (Taz, n.d., die Zeit, 2021).

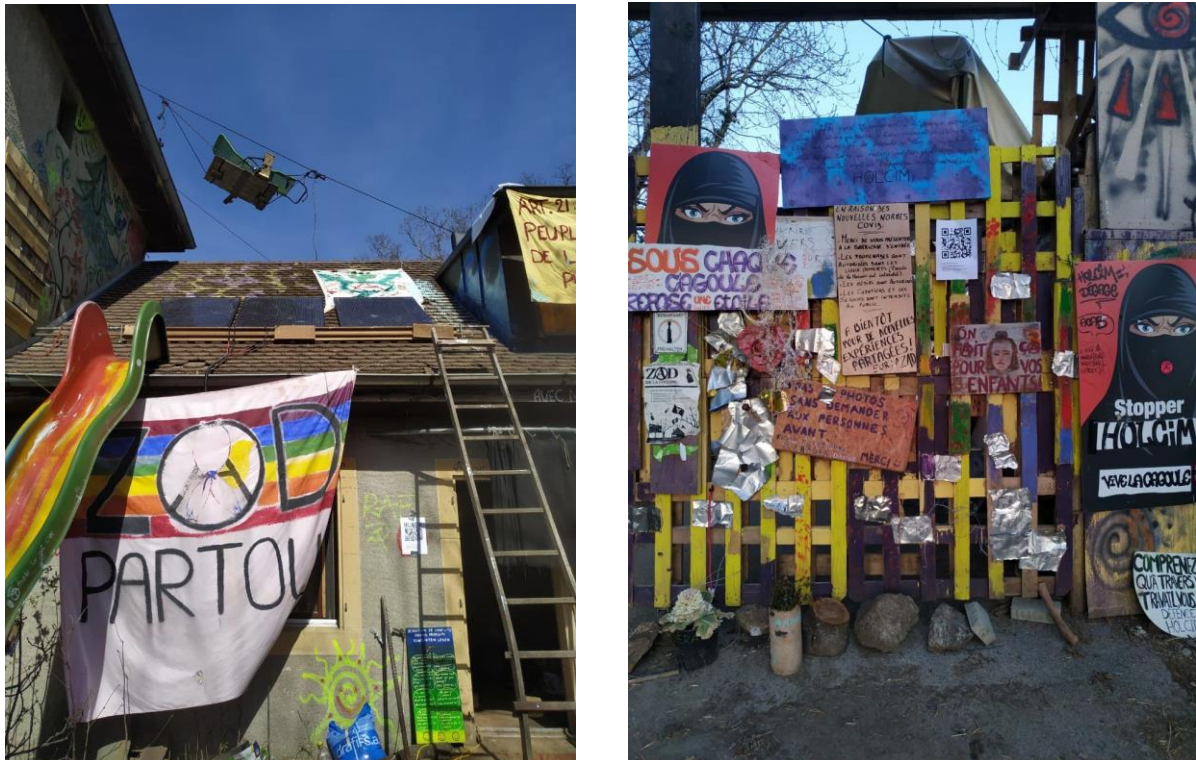


FIGURE 2 OCCUPIED HOUSE (LEFT) AND ENTRANCE (RIGHT) OF THE ZAD DE LA COLLINE, SWITZERLAND

However, the environmental fight, as a global fight, has had many local streaks and comparable developments. There were similar developments during the same time in New Zealand with the first documented tree sitting action leading to the creation of the Pureora forest park in 1978. Also in the US in 1985, tree sitting was used as an action form by an activist in Willamette national forest, which led to another group tree sitting which lasted one month. One of the most notable forest occupations or tree sitting events was arguably done by Julia Butterfly Hill, who lived for 738 days (1997-1999) on a 55m high platform in a 600-year-old Coast Redwood Tree named Luna, which raised 50,000 US\$ and saved the tree including a 61m circumference. Several similar actions were done in Australia and Canada (liquisearch, n.d.). In Europe, the first notable events were arguably the establishments of ZADs (abbreviation for *Zone d'aménagement différé* for administration but interpreted by activists as *Zone à Défendre*, see figure 2) in France, which became famous during the early 2010s and resisted several evictions. However, the ZADs are usually rather land occupations than forest occupations, albeit recent

developments and interchanges between activists active in the ZAD movement and forest occupation movement have led to an exchange of tactics. In the UK in May 2006, activists in West Sussex started tree sitting against a major urban extension that developed into various tree houses and tunnels. This forest occupation, which lasted almost four years, caused the rejection of the extension plans. In Germany, the forest occupation movement got especially well-established after the first big forest occupation of the Hambacher forest (called ‘Hambi’ by inhabitants and supporters) started. Here, activists learned from the activists of the UK how to set up an occupation and it led to the construction of ca. 60 treehouses which are organised in different barrios (quarters of the forest occupation, each with their own smaller community and vibe). This occupation got evicted various times but managed to eventually win their struggle and in 2023 there is still people living there. After Hambi, the movement in Germany started to grow with more than 10 different forest occupations at times. The peak coincided with the covid 19 pandemic and many people not having to go to work, university or school. After the pandemic many occupations ceased to exist as there were not enough long-term occupants. In 2023 in Germany, there are 7-10 more or less active forest occupations throughout the country.¹

This short history shows the connection between activism and forest occupations. Forest occupations in Germany are strongly influenced and driven by the left scene, especially the punk scene which explains ties with anarchism. The left scene, as used as a term in this dissertation comprises of mostly if not exclusively extraparlamentarian individuals that sympathise with a left ideology (e.g. individuals that consider themselves as part of the Antifa (antifascist movement consisting out of several far-left, autonomous, militant action groups and individuals), but also more moderate sympathisers). Punks fall into the same category but can be considered as more radical in their beliefs. The punk scene is very heterogenous, yet common denominators are to be against the consumer society, the bourgeoisie and the right wing and a strong rejection of any dominating circumstances.

Also, the forest occupation has roots and connections to movements such as Earth First which follow an anarchist organisational structure and there is a general link between environmentalism and anarchism (cf. Bookchin, 1980). One common theme about the occupations globally is that, with a few exceptions, these are not legal, which leads to threats of eviction and eventual eviction and legal repressions. Eviction in these heights is dangerous and there are several deaths reported (Liquisearch, n.d.; Taz, 2018). Legal repression caused a strong security culture of withholding names, nationality and any kind of background information, encrypted laptops and phones.

¹ [This](#) is a link to a map which includes some occupations predominantly in Germany. It is not always updated but gives an overview on past and current occupations.

2.3. Methods

Typically, political ecologists employ case studies and immersive practices to understand values and actions of people within their daily habits, e.g., participant observation which are further comparatively analysed within different political and economic realities (Robbins, 2011). Additionally, the power relation theory calls for continuous analyses which can only be given through these immersive practices.

“Political ecologies:

- track winners and losers to understand the persistent structures of winning and losing;
- are narrated using human–non-human dialectics;
- start from, or end in, a contradiction;
- simultaneously make claims about the state of nature and claims about the state of nature and stories of justice and injustice and dialectical relationship in which things come to explain one another” (Robbins, 2011, p. 87)

Important for researchers within political ecology is, that they must:

- elicit the conceptual vocabularies of the range of participants in ecological process and struggle;
- determine the relationships of rhetorical and deeply discursive formations to environmental and political practices;
- seek methods that assure the symmetry of inquiry between official knowledges, often in elite languages and formal texts, and local ones, which are often transmitted orally and in local vernacular;
- explore the way environmental narratives and cartographies unite and divide communities that might otherwise seem disparate or unified;
- establish the roots of the most obvious and taken-for-granted environmental conceptions that drive, direct, and dominate conflict;
- determine the degree to which ideas, discourses, and categorical imaginaries direct and regulate material environmental behaviours and practices (Robbins; 2011, p.140)

By adopting the framework proposed by political ecology, the main part of the research was conducted through participatory observation within forest occupations, using them as a case studies for eco-anarchist communities.

Participatory observation enables to describe in a detailed manner how and why things happen, and under which influences. Doing this from a participant viewpoint is especially fitting for analysing the continuous organisation of people and events and their relationships over time. Forest occupations are mostly isolated from the wider part of society as they have a different approach to life and live by

different values. This makes the methodological approach suiting as it makes the object of research observable over a long-term setting from an insider's perspective.

Participatory observation can be defined by seven features as described by Jorgensen (1989):

- 1) Insider perspective of the interaction in particular surroundings.
- 2) Research foundation in the everyday life of the subject of interest.
- 3) Theory stressing the importance of human existence.
- 4) Enables research that is open-ended and needs constant rethinking of the problem.
- 5) Case study approach.
- 6) Relationships with directly affected subjects.
- 7) Direct observation additionally to other methods.

The participatory observation was used to fully understand how these communities emerged and are organised in daily life. In practice, this involved spending time in the forest occupations and living there as part of the community. Since I had the chance to apply this methodology albeit the security culture, this gave valuable insights which are otherwise very difficult to gather. The findings of the participatory observation were recorded using hand-written fieldnotes as described by Sanjek (1990) as the security culture and environmental circumstances did not allow for a laptop to be used.

Within Germany, I spent six months (July 2020- December 2020) in the Dannenröder forest occupation and during its eviction, which lasted two months and needed 2000 police people to clear out 300 occupants from the forest. I spent three months in the occupation “Moni” during the initial establishment of the site (April-June 2021) and then again two weeks during its abandonment and downfall (July 2022). Moni was the first forest occupation in Eastern Germany, which has historically a more active and aggressive right-wing scene (Falk et al., 2011). As such, Moni was more than other occupations a political statement and location instead of simply protecting the forest. This occupation had strong ties to local initiatives such as “Antifa” (antifascist) groups and a local CSA (community supported agriculture) and some former occupants are now still living there. In between occupations, I spent some weeks in the Hambacher forest occupation (between January and March 2021) which is mentioned above. From February to March 2021, I also spent some weeks in the Zad de la Colline in Switzerland, which was a prime example of the exchange between the Zad movement and forest occupations, where people located in Switzerland reached out to the forest occupation network to receive support for the construction of high structures and its usages as defence against eviction. During August 2021, I spent two weeks within the Zad du Lien close to Montpellier, France. In August 2022, I was

three weeks in the occupation Unser Aller Wald and the occupied village of Lützerath in Germany. I visited the occupations in 2020-2021 to conduct participant observation about the niche-level developments of forest occupations and since I analysed the life in the forests, I drew upon these experiences for this research too.

The occupations in 2022 were chosen to have a wide variety of different occupations and different organisation styles (occupied village, forest occupations and different development stages of the occupations as Moni was getting abandoned during that time, Unser Aller Wald was safe and well-established, and the occupied village of Lützerath just started gaining a lot of numbers and preceded to prepare for mobilisation for eviction in Winter.

The participatory observation register resulted in a field diary, with notes and pictures², in order to organise the data, relate it with the research aims, daily identify missing information and adopt the necessary adjustments to the empirical research. Additionally, I conducted seven extensive interviews to investigate the impacts of living under these premises on the individual and to reduce the potential bias of my own positionality resulting from already having spent over a year living within these occupations. The interviews have been developed as additional source to further discuss the findings of the participant observation. They were aimed at investigating the effects of the organisational structure on the community and individuals as perceived by the participants, both long-term and short-term. Hence, they had three main dimensions: the organisation structure, the community life and the individual experience. Through the questions it will be investigated how Foucault's (1977) theory of power applies, as the organisational structure as well as the community life link to the concept of biopower and the individual perceptions to the concept of disciplinary power. The seven interviewees are part of different occupations and only partially know each other. They were chosen because of the accessibility, their willingness to contribute, their knowledge and experience within several communities and the diversity of background as they come from different countries, education standards, wealth and experiences. However, their name, age, gender and nationality will not be disclosed out of privacy and security reasons, since occupying spaces is most of the time not legal and the interviewees have history with the police system and do not want to share neither incriminating information nor information that relates to their persona. Generally, living in forest occupations means trespassing and during eviction additional charges such as not obeying to police orders etc. very often cause arrests which can end in criminal records. Each of the interviewees lived there between several months to five years. In the following thesis, the names (pseudonyms) Quinn, Robin, Drew, Murphy, Phoenix, Scout and Remi are adopted to ensure the reading flow and to not disclose their gender. Further the non-binary pronouns they/them are used for the same reason.

² See Annexes A and B

The script of the interview is based on the axis of the research questions. As the organisation of the communities can be assessed well from the participatory observation, the interviews have as main aim to gain potentially overlooked insights, different opinions about the effects and functionality of the organisational structure and the impact it has on the interviewed persons. The interview script can be found in the annex.

The position of the author regarding the field of study has an impact on the way data is collected and interpreted. By adopting a participant observation methodology to be an objective outsider poses important challenges to the researcher. It is important to be aware of the personal circumstances that influence the research and reflect transparently on this (Quin, 2016). In the case of this thesis, it means to acknowledge my pre-existing relationship to activism and anarchism as a potential source of bias. I have been part of activist groups and especially the environmental movement for years. In the context of the participant observation, the interviews, conversations and lived experiences enabled the detailed engagement with the different views of the participants and the discovering of potential differences. Yet, this special connection to the forest occupation network also enabled particularly relevant insights, as many people living in these sorts of communities are hesitant to open up to strangers. Additionally, the extensive literature review on anarchism previously discussed provided me a solid knowledge on these topics and especially on the intersections between environmentalism, anarchism, and its effects, which is a central research principle to sustain the discussion of the empirical results, dully based on the theoretical framework.

3. Analytical framework

The first chapter ‘eco-anarchist communities’ aims at introducing the organisational structure of eco-anarchist communities using the forest occupations as case studies, thus concerning the first research question. The reasoning of their existence will be linked to the political ecology framework as it is based on the political decisions of government and/or company. This also justifies the application of participant observation as a methodology for this chapter specifically. The participants as well as their reasons for joining will be introduced, followed by the explanation of the implementation of the anarchist principles in the communities and the individual lives, coupling these principles to underlying force relations as described in Foucault’s (1977) theory of power.

The second chapter focuses on the community structure within eco-anarchist communities, including the organisational structure, relationships, and the question of the importance of a common goal within an anarchist community. This chapter attempts to answer the second research question. The community structure will be analysed using the concept of biopower, which was also applied in sight of the interview questions.

The third chapter comprises of the individual experiences and impacts felt by living in eco-anarchist communities, hence it is tackling the third research question. As Foucault’s (1977) theory of power described disciplinary power as the concept how force relations exist on an individual level, this will be used as a lens comparing the findings with the force relations interactions within a capitalist society like Germany, Switzerland or France, where the case studies and as such also the data acquirement are located. The short-term effects are representing initial reactions to the differences experienced within the communities whereas the long-term effects mean the incorporation of them into the lives of the individuals.

These three chapters and their subdimensions shall enable the answering of the main research question by shedding light on the different parts surrounding the life within eco-anarchist communities and how these communities attempt to diminish hierarchies and inequalities. Thus, there will be special focus on how the force relations between participants present themselves.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Eco-anarchist communities

In the subsequent chapter, the organisational structure of eco-anarchist communities and the reasons behind it will be discussed using forest occupations as case studies and analysing the implementation of the anarchist principles of decentralisation, direct action, horizontalism and anti-authoritarianism, anti-capitalism and mutual aid in them. Generally, many of these principles overlap and are inter-connected as they all work towards a non-hierarchical society to establish equality for everyone. This will be done especially with regard to the underlying force relations as defined by Michel Foucault (1991). Most of the research is focused on forest occupations mainly existing in Germany. However, the research has shown that occupations of this sort - may they be forest-related or other occupied spaces - are comparable in their organisational structure within a central-western European context. They are built on the anarchist principles such as solidarity, mutual aid, decentralisation, direct action and non-hierarchy. These principles, especially their contribution towards a more equal way of living and the fight against, is what appeals most to the occupants.

“For me, the core word in this is freedom. A lot of other ideologies, for example capitalism, only offer freedom to very, very few - like the ones with extreme privilege. The ones on top of the chain with the power. And what draws me into anarchism is that this power is then distributed equally, which in my opinion would be way more fair than it is now. So, freedom on a personal level, but also on a species level and also on a societal level” (Phoenix)

Phoenix brings in freedom as another important term, as they link freedom to power and privilege, thus meaning in a hierarchical society, where power is accumulated in some privileged position, there is no freedom for other positions. This links to Murray Bookchin's (1980) analysis of power, who stated that power is accumulated and then corrupts the power holder which leads to inequality. Phoenix goes further with connecting this personal freedom also to antispeciesism³ to call for equality for all beings. Another addition is the societal freedom which relates to the prevailing discrimination of different parts of society and different groups of people being marginalised. In this quote, it is observable that there should be no hierarchy between the individual and the communal freedom. By not establishing a hierarchy between individual and communal needs, thus acknowledging all are important, solidarity and a mutual understanding is resulting amongst its participants. Another interviewee said: “The power of an anarchist group comes from how caring this group is about every single member within the group.” (Scout), which shows that the application of the anarchist principles within a specific group and not only as an overarching ideology gives benefit to its community by spreading solidarity amongst it. This

³ Antispeciesism is the concept or idea that there should not be any discrimination between species and calls the exploitation based on this out as immoral.

perception of anarchism as a mutual solidarity concept with an emphasis on the shared care for each other within the community is a common denominator of the answers when asked about anarchism's appeal, as also Remi mentions:

“I think that's somehow anarchism is the ideology of the good people. I think that if you are, if you just want something good for the rest of the people, you have to somehow end up logically in some anarchist ideologies or falling into like some anarchist principles like I think that that's what I find or what I feel that I find like so attractive or like what really catches me. [...]"

Forest occupations are constructed due to environmental concerns, e.g. highway construction or coal mining, which threaten the ecosystem of the forest which supports the theoretical lens of political ecology. They likely developed from Earth First! tactics in the United States. In Germany one can access construction plans (Bebauungspläne) published by the government online and then scout the environmental area, connecting to existing local struggles and then establish the occupation with a trusted group of people. So, where squats (occupied buildings) are attempting to protect the city from gentrification, forest occupations side on the environmental protection front. Both, forest and building occupations usually have communal structures such as free shops which can be seen as a communal



FIGURE 3 TREEHOUSE "PFUSCHBAU" IN THE DANNENRÖDER FOREST OCCUPATION

wardrobe, where things are donated to and can be taken from (including clothes, shoes but also sleeping material, towels etc.). Also, cooking and toilet facilities (compost toilets) are shared as well as reading and information corners. Additionally, there are communal sleeping spaces, tools, material platforms, fireplaces and sometimes bikes. This list is not exhaustible as there are many occupations that also have facilities for arts, meetings and other purposes (see Annex B “communal structures”).

Occupants, who stay longer within one occupation, usually live in one treehouse more or less continuously (See figure 3 and Annex B “houses”). These treehouses are built high up in the trees (ranging from ca. 6m-30m height) and require climbing gear to be accessed. Not only does this height give you reason to exercise by climbing up and down or an idyllic view into the crowns of neighbouring trees, but the main cause is that the higher the structure is in the tree, the more complicated it gets for police to evict it as they need special forces and vehicles to do so. This interplay of active (high structures) and passive resistance (community living) can be seen as a display of power following the theory of power (Foucault, 1990) as opposed to the internalised interests of capitalism and its tendency to individualism and productivity (Robins, 2011).

4.1.1. Forest occupation participants

Participants are very diverse, however mostly white and between 20-40 years. They agree on certain principles as employed by anarchism yet even when asked if they consider themselves as activists their answers vary greatly, ranging from the disapproval of identifying with the label of activist to a clear yes, albeit also depending on the definition of activism thought of. Some of them chose to rather live in the forest without necessarily getting into pro-active actions or demonstrations and others chose to do 'eviction-hopping' and are visiting threatened occupations over the eviction seasons constantly. Yet, some would describe both forms as activism, others only the pro-active form. Even though all of them believe and share anarchist principles, one of them would not describe themselves as an anarchist however relating this to negative experiences with self-identifying anarchists in the past. Their introduction to anarchism and their support for it, can be mainly connected to the first experiences with lived anarchism in different occupations which were predominantly positive. One of the questions arising during this research was what unites the participants and if there is a certain kind of people that are attracted to this form of living which would indicate that there is a form of biopower of norms throughout this certain part of society that causes the attraction. "When having conversations with people, I kind of notice that a lot of people have been through stuff that made them more critical of the system. And I think it takes critical thinking, but also a sense of empathy to kind of be aware of the problems in society. So, I noticed quite some people have been through some intense stuff such as police violence or other types of violence that are caused by societal structures, and I think these kinds of things make people a bit more aware and also make them think of like, oh, how could it be different? And other characteristics, I think it's quite often very passionate people, people who care a lot and not just about their own, but also about people in their community or other types of animals or the earth as a whole or the environment. Yeah, it's a very caring people." (Phoenix). Here again, the motive of solidarity between each other is a key element next to the wish for a more equal society which agrees with the statements about the reason for anarchism as a chosen ideology. Interesting to see is that the majority of interviewees did not mention anarchism or political mindsets as a common characteristic. "Us all unites the will to participate in some sort of change and the curiosity to experiment with a different way of organizing a society. But despite that, we all have different personal reasons to participate in political places." (Scout). Also here, the common denominator expressed is the will to change society or to establish one's own through a system of mutual caring. The will to change society is based on the awareness of the current state and its systemic force relations which is the first step to analyse the matrix of power. "How would I characterise these people? Very passionate people, very empowering people. They [...] take control over their lives to create that utopia that they're dreaming of.[...] I think it's very fun." (Drew). Generally, anarchism strives to be an inclusive, diverse ideology which offers space for everyone. Even in the shape of forest occupations which arguably display a niche category, there is quite some diversity which participants want to stress: "[...] forest occupations (or other kinds of zad or autonomous zones) are not all the same. Even in my short three years I've been to many and I didn't

meet the same environment once. I've met people who want to defend a cause with whatever means they have – their body, their life – people who just want to “see how it's like”, people who want to document and bring the topic to the world through documentaries, pictures etc, people who simply don't have a house or a place to be, people who just want to be part of a community. Young people, people who come during the weekend when they are not at school or at work, people who have nothing left, outcasts of society. Old people who haven't lost their flame and still refuse 'to bend to the system' (Murphy).

4.1.2. Individual reasons to join

Characteristics tend to interlink with experiences and thus it seems likely that the characteristics mentioned in the previous paragraph connect to experiences in the past which made the participants into the people they are now. The interviewees share that they heard about forest occupations firstly through friends and early activism experiences mainly related to environmental struggles. This environmental component to the forest occupations plays a big role as it makes the occupations a protected niche within the wider system. As they are usually located rurally, they are sheltered from outside influences which makes it easier to establish a different organisational structure without the pressures of the dominant economic and social system. Scout expressed it as a “[..] different kind of living when you are surrounded by nature all the time and you have to take care of it. Why some characteristics accumulate here might be that it is supposed to be a safer space and political playground for people who want to experiment with their political ideology. Outside those places it is hard to live in an anarchist way or to find like-minded people.”

The participants were intrigued by the shared visions of an equal utopia and the realisation of the possibility of the utopias. Also, being part of something, the introduction to new perspectives, the feeling of being accepted and at home are strong arguments for staying in these communities. The activism attitude of having resistance due to the existence and building a community as a response to the “system that is broken” (Drew) are important. Yet, regarding the activism solemnly through being in an occupation, there is controversy amongst the participants. Some occupants ended up in occupations simply because of fate and not having another space and got attracted by the “space [offered] for people to be together and to take care of each other as a community while fighting for common ideals.” (Murphy) and simply seeing the “advantages of living with people and in nature” (Robin).

The reasons mentioned show a common urge for community instead of individualism. The feeling of solidarity and belonging are a cause to want to be part of forest occupations. How these and other anarchist principles are expressed and applied within eco-anarchist communities is being discussed in the subsequent sections.

4.1.2.1. Decentralisation

One of the pillars of anarchism is the principle of autonomous self-organised systems, thus the specific daily organisations might differ widely depending on the group of people. The decentralisation of tasks goes hand in hand with the self-organisation as there is no central organ or authority that fulfils a coordinating structure. Within forest occupations, most of the resources such as food and materials are shared, and the daily life is experienced very communally. This is expressed through, e.g., communal meals where one person or a group of persons decides to cook and would cook enough for everyone to eat together. However, for full autonomy, the resources should be independent of the wider system. Often, occupations get donations albeit some of them reject donations. In almost all occupations, the community was exclusively dependent on the system for food and materials (except wood). Fairly, the food and material were generally not bought or new but “[...] the fact that somehow that requires external supplier of things which [...] doesn't make the things really autonomous. And for me, that's I don't think that is a problem. I think Danni (editor's note: Dannenröder forest occupation) in this case was something that is how it worked. I mean, for me as well, I have this tiny point that I like that the whole system is supporting the anti-system movements. But that's pretty cool, but somehow, it depends a little bit on this. Sometimes, like I think that can be a little bit problematic if we look for a full autonomy of things. But still you can go and do containering (dumpster-diving) and things.” (Remi). In the occupied village of Lützerath, a community supported agriculture (CSA) was started, which made up a large part of the food for the inhabitants, hence here more autonomy was given. Even though one has to regard the temporality of occupations and that most of them do not exist for a long enough amount of time to establish an autonomous food source. In some occupations this occasion of eating together is not only used to check up on each other but also as a softer form of plenaries which are the normal form of communal discussions and decision-making processes. Other occupations however, especially when there is a lot of people being new to the struggle or the eco-anarchist life have a more structured approach. This can also be happening simply in another part of the forest. As already stated above, forest occupations of a certain size consist of different barrios (See Figure 4).



FIGURE 4 BARRIO OAKTOWN IN THE HAMBACHER FOREST

So, one barrio could have a different organisational structure than another. This applies to several of the researched forest occupations (Dannenröder Forest occupation and Hambacher forest occupation). For instance, one barrio especially attracted new arrivals. Within this barrio, they offered barrio tours where they would explain how everything runs and additionally daily plenaries were

held in which the daily and general tasks were distributed. Albeit this system worked, it was viewed negatively by most long-term occupants living there, because they felt like there were too many hierarchies kept in place which were difficult to dismantle. Most long-term occupants indeed moved away from this barrio into other parts of the forest, which put additional responsibility to the ones that stayed to welcome and introduce the newcomers. And since there was a lot of fluctuation because this barrio also welcomed many visitors, the knowledge mainly stayed with the few long-term occupants who decided to take on this role. Knowledge-hierarchies are hierarchies that develop out of specific knowledge being kept to specific people instead of being distributed and shared. This can happen involuntary as well as voluntary, depending on the topic. An example for involuntary knowledge-hierarchies is e.g. the skillset surrounding the construction of treehouses. One activist might be very confident and capable of building treehouses, because of having lived in this sort of communities for a long time and start to be known for being competent in construction. This leads to less-knowledgeable people always asking the same knowledgeable person when doubts arise instead of asking others. When these people share with others who they asked for help, the knowledge-hierarchies are being re-enforced albeit the person might not want to keep the authority on construction. Voluntary knowledge-hierarchies can exist however in cases regarding security issues e.g., knowledge about the establishment of new occupations which should be shared carefully as to not endanger the planning process (leakage of information to the public authorities which could stop the occupation formation). Yet, these forms of voluntary hierarchies can also influence the culture of the communities as new arrivals might not understand the threat of repression yet and as such feel degraded in comparison to long-term occupants. Knowledge-hierarchies link to the Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge as people with knowledge within forest occupations have more power which calls for a decentralisation of immaterial resources.

4.1.2.2. Horizontalism and anti-authoritarianism

Connecting from the last topic, horizontalism and anti-authoritarianism are the principles directly targeting the issues surrounding hierarchies. Hierarchies are, in turn, connected to the power or force relations within social interactions. Against the accumulation of knowledge as well as power and material goods, decentralisation acts as a tool to establish horizontalism. To decentralise knowledge and thus disassemble knowledge-hierarchies, skill-shares are used which vary widely content-wise. Interesting is also that skill-shares exist on a macro-level between communities too. As such entire communities learn from each other, through the organisation of skill-share weeks, exchange of people, and foremost the interactions between each other groups and not as individuals. There are also more avoidable hierarchies present in forest occupations. For instance, many self-identifying anarchists (as met in the occupations) view themselves as more knowledgeable concerning to how the world works compared to the general public or generally people with a non-anarchist approach to life. To a newcomer such occupants might seem on a moral pedestal especially regarding the differences within the organisation of living (e.g. anarchists that do not consume so-called colonial products might judge arrivals that do

consume them). Another example is that many anarchists are having their roots within the punk scene which is very anti-establishment and look accordingly (dressed in black, piercings, tattoos) and it can be difficult to not feel judged at first sight. This again agrees with the theory of power from Foucault (1990) and the concept of governmentality, as it seems like there is an establishment of a norm amongst forest occupants that they strive to adhere to, too. Also within anarchist activists, it can sometimes seem like there is a hierarchy regarding the radicality. All of these judgements and hierarchical thinking are expressed through stereotypical comments of people being too 'conformist' to the ruling regime. When approached concerning the establishment of these sorts of hierarchies, the common answer is that it is not meant seriously. Though, even when not intended, this can enforce a higher threshold for new people to enter life within an eco-anarchist community. Still, there is an active fight against hierarchies and, compared to the wider society where there are hierarchies in institutions like companies or the state or even within families, the daily life within a forest occupation is considerably more horizontal. One occupant phrased it: "we made here something like [a] community which is very free. There is no police in the forest, no authority. [...]", which implies that the absence of authorities leads to a greater perceived freedom. "Of course, the concepts don't always work out in practise, but the goal of these communities is to be as open as possible and to be welcoming because we're trying to fight also our own bias and some judgement so. [...] to me it's also a place where people can experiment and get to know things. And I think it would be amazing if all these spaces were that open. And sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't." (Phoenix). This quote can be linked to internalised interests of capitalism as mentioned by Robbins (2011) which connect to the Foucauldian principle of governmentality. So, even when the awareness of force relations within the 'capitalist' society is there, people have been subject of growing up with these norms and sometimes fail to critically and rationally view and treat them. Most of the time, the present hierarchies within the general society which unfold themselves in the three dimensions of maldistribution (inequality of access due to resources), misrecognition (inequality of access due to immaterial reasons) and misrepresentation (Fraser, 2007), are not questioned or even noticed as such but are simply reproduced e.g., through living in a system rooted in patriarchy. This relates to Foucault's principle of power/knowledge (1979), as the existence of hierarchies has become the norm for people. The people within forest occupations try to identify patterns of hierarchical thinking and unlearn these: "While everyone is in an ongoing path of learning and becoming a better person and you have to accept that you can still have racist, sexist, transphobic, etc behaviours, these are not usually tolerated so if you don't want to work towards these issues then you probably wouldn't be welcome." (Murphy). This is for example done through critical whiteness rounds, critical masculinity rounds and other sharing circles which attempt to fight the expressions of governmentality.

4.1.2.3. Direct action

This principle is specifically applicable to forest occupations, as they have a strong activist component. This research is focused on the anarchist component of forest occupations and their social impacts;



FIGURE 5 ACTIVIST ON A DEFENCE STRUCTURE CA. 50M HIGH IN THE DANNENRÖDER FOREST

however, forest occupations also have a strong activist background surrounding the environmental struggle. Especially for outsiders who get their information from mainstream media, the struggle is portrayed as simply being about the protection of the forest and even when occupants clearly state in interviews with media outlets that the larger struggle is the fight for anarchist revolution, it is usually not printed (See Figure 5). This is related to the

misconception of anarchism within the general public. One occupant said about this (during eviction of the occupation) that “[...] they say it’s not possible to be in anarchy or anarchism, but this place is like anarchy in practice. And it is not functioning only because there are outside 30 cop cars to destroy this thing and the freedom and this anarchism in practice and then they say it is not functioning because it fails. [...]”

4.1.2.4. Anti-capitalism



FIGURE 6 COMMUNAL STRUCTURES IN THE DANNENRÖDER FOREST OCCUPATION ALSO LOVINGLY CALLED 'SHELF FOR HUMANS'

There are many approaches for explaining environmental changes, which are often favoured by our dominant organisational system instead of looking at the capitalist systems as a source. Political ecology acts as a critique upon this state of affairs and shows the flaws of policies and market conditions, especially taking into account the marginalised parts of the population and connecting the act of marginalisation to the outcomes of power (Robbins, 2011). When capitalism leads to exploitation of humans and their environment,

the response to govern nature together can connect communities and lead to collective action and awareness. This is the case for forest occupations, which are a prime example of the intersectionality of environmentalism and anarchism. As mentioned in the section above, there is direct action targeting both environmental and social concerns and connecting both as chants and banners during demonstrations such as “No Environmental Justice without Social Justice” show. The direct action approach incorporates a diversity of tactics which not only include general activism tactics such as occupations but also the choice of an anarchist approach to life and the establishing of communal values and principles, thus a less confrontational approach to activism. As such, there are many conversations

about how to manage to break free of the capitalist system. Another feature in eco-anarchist communities is that consumerism is viewed very critically. It is tried to limit engagement with the monetary market and the economic idea behind it as much as possible by adopting dumpster-diving (collecting food from trashcans of supermarkets or production sites), starting own agricultural projects or gardens, and engaging with local farmers. Also, when visitors come by and want to donate food it is tried to put attention on the origin of the food and to promote the awareness regarding this topic (as in avoid the consumption of colonial products when part of the capitalist cycle (buying)). Generally, money is not an important topic in the forest occupations since it is simply not present. More attention is given to property, may it be private property or communal property. Private property is a fundamental trait of capitalism (Wright, 2010), whereas within eco-anarchist communities, and also the wider left scene, private property is in theory regarded as theft, albeit in practice the willingness to adhere to this idea differs. Private property can also lead to the establishment of hierarchies when it comes to gear and generally, when private property is existent, people tend to take more care of their own property than of the communal property, which gives rise to inequalities when some people have less resources than others. Additionally, a well-functioning communal structure is very important for a well-functioning community and contributes to a fulfilled life within the communities as shared in communal structures such as seen in figure 6.

This sort of resistance contradicts the hegemony which is a condition of the societally defined normalcy where the interests of powerful actors and agents decide how the resources are distributed (Gramsci, 1973).

4.1.2.5. Mutual aid

The principle of mutual aid connects to the values established within a community. Mutual aid is expressed in the solidarity between individuals but also in between struggles such as different environmental concerns or autonomy struggles. E.g., the oldest forest occupation in Germany is promoting the struggle in Rojava and vice versa and there are many solidarity photos which are being shared through social media etc. to show the solidarity between the struggles. Within the daily life in eco-anarchist communities, mutual aid is felt through the strong solidarity and caring for one another. Where in the wider society a lot of aspects of life are commodified, people within eco-anarchist communities do things out of solidarity for another which can also relate to the non-existence of money. People do work out of their personal beliefs and because they want to, which makes them more free than the normal worker. This is also related to time as the wider society is restricted by working hours, holidays or simply the feeling of the need to be productive. Forest occupations are enabling autonomy of time by not being tied to wages and thus giving different values to work than the vast majority of the capitalist societies. Strengthening community structures is viewed as equally important as cooking or constructing or at least it is aimed that these activities have the same value. This does not always work well, because humans are shaped by their experiences and environment. As such, growing up in e.g.

industrialised, highly-developed, capitalist state eaves patterns of thinking e.g. guilt when not being productive. Yet, in forest occupations, it seems like people do care for one another and have the time to do so. This is not due to the obligation to do so but because it is the pure choice of wanting everyone to be happy as it contributes to a fulfilled community. This extends to services, which in eco-anarchist communities are being done out of everyone's free choice, which means that there is no expectation of receiving something in return but there is a mutual trust that everyone is doing whatever they can do at that moment. This is the optimal case, which is not always coming into place as there can still arise feelings of perceived injustice in workload etc. but it is tried to believe in the solidarity between one another.

4.1.2.6. Adoption of principles

The principles introduced and discussed in the previous section establish the form of community the participants value. The applicability of them to the wider society is one point of discussion for the fulfilment of the objective of this research. "It would be a big task to implement it. I think there are so many things wrong with the current system" (Drew). As seen, the interviewed participants stated that they also question the applicability of the principles, if seen as an entirety, with Remi being the exception as their interpretation of the anarchist principles is strongly linked to the basic needs and emotions of humans ("I think yes for sure, because I really think they're human. I think they're like, really natural feelings"). The interview responses confirmed the shared wish for more solidarity within the wider society. Phoenix elaborated further on this by defining mutual aid as the unconditional helping each other and dealing with equal resource distribution as a community instead of an individual. Also, the call for more communal property instead of private property and thus losing attachment also to money would support this call for solidarity. Some easy applications named were dumpster-diving also as a response to the consumerist society, and free shops, but also the adoption of a shared economy. Drew and Scout see veganism as an important part of anarchism and an easy solution for more equality and less domination in the world. Both of them also call for a rethinking of the justice system by mentioning transformative justice and abolishing the repression tool of the state, the police (Drew: "For some, at least for me, an important part of anarchism is veganism. I think this would do really well to get them implemented in a normal society. It's a very easy solution. It will even fix a lot of the other crises we have. And so, this is like a win-win situation and. Yeah, I think another solution is the taking away the tool of repression from the state, which would be the police in at least in many, many situations, and I think there are many better alternatives"). Other ways to adopt the principles mentioned were the change of mindset, thus meaning establishing the belief that things indeed can be different and fighting oppressive structures like internalised patriarchy.

On an individual level, the participants mostly say they are trying to adopt anarchist principles, however expressing the difficulty when not being in the forest. "When you're not in this space it's more difficult because now, for example, I'm living in a city, and in a city you get confronted daily with

influences, for example, neoliberal capitalism, especially in the advertisements. I mean, you see advertisement everywhere. And then I just noticed that in the forest I'm super fine with only dumpster diving and cooking for everybody. And then now I'm in the city and someone is like "gosh, we get a coffee" and I'm just like "Yeah, sure." And then I just skip this kind of step of critical thinking. So I try not to get tempted too much, but I also try not to be too strict with myself because I don't like the idea of the perfect activist but there's always ways in which you're still influenced by society and the environment which you're in. Living in the neoliberal system and being subject to advertisements and simply being tempted to opt for the easier choice instead of critically questioning the given circumstances." (Phoenix). This quote shows the additional struggle to find a balance between staying true to one's values and being too dogmatic in this struggle against the force relations administered through institutions such as advertisement corporations. Though, anarchism can also be spread through unlearning clichés and internalised hierarchies, and giving unconditional support in a world which is normally based on the exchange of services and goods. Remi states that it is anarchist to believe that the human being is not bad, however also says that society rewards any kind of individualistic and selfish behaviour.

4.2. Community structure within eco-anarchist communities

In the previous chapter, forest occupations have been introduced and defined and the participating individuals have been characterised regarding to what they find as important and valuable whilst living in an anarchist community, as well as how the principles can be applied under other circumstances too. In this section, the community structure within forest occupations is being discussed and analysed in terms of what is needed to cause fulfilled lives of the occupants in their own opinions.

The functioning of forest occupations in terms of a working community structure depends on their composition, whereby the functioning should be clarified as the functioning of the intended organisational structure. Phoenix stated that mental health issues and neurodiversity can accumulate in the occupations as there is the space to be yourself, yet this also can make “organisation a bit more difficult” especially when being in a group of people that follow strong values and beliefs and do not want to compromise on these which can lead to discussions. As seen in the earlier analysis, solidarity and the feeling of being part of an inclusive, accepting, equal community are the factors that attract the participants the most. Though, there are some basic rules to being inclusive: “The impact on not tolerating these kinds of behaviour (racist, sexist etc.) is that people who are part of minorities and discriminated groups can feel like they live in a safer place and that the community has their back and they will be supported and heard, instead of being dismissed as it happens in normal society.” (Murphy). Generally, the organisational structure works because “participants can agree on the usefulness. Of course, there are always exceptions” (Drew) as a strong community and community identity can put pressure on individuals to conform to this community, thus establishing their own kind of biopower, no matter how inclusive it presents itself and therefore instead of a totally “safe space” that these communities aim to be, they can rather be considered as “safer spaces”.

Firstly, the organisation of the community will be analysed and compared with various experiences from different occupations to see if the same issues arise across the movement, thus meaning to see if the issues are connected to the organisational structure or if they differ and are independent of an anarchist ideology. After that, the relationship within the community is investigated also concerning strains on them such as evictions. Lastly, it will be discussed if escapism is present and if a common goal is needed for communities to function.

4.2.1. Organisation

In the previous chapter, the organisational structure of eco-anarchist communities was described. Now, the practical advantages and disadvantages across occupations as perceived by the participants are being thematised. One of the problems, occurring in several occupations is the form of informal leadership. As Phoenix put: “because people are like ‘we organise non-hierarchically’, sometimes people assume that there is no power accumulation, but I think there still is and some people still take up more space and have more influence in decision making than others. And I think because this is not acknowledged

and talked about and there's no structure to deal with the accountability. See that this becomes quite a big problem, and that some voices still get suppressed because of certain group dynamics." This issue relates in part to the knowledge-hierarchies also present but is connected to influence based on interpersonal relations such as subjective popularity. There are mechanisms such as facilitating techniques that attempt to tackle this problem but, especially in some occupations, plenaries are negatively connotated which shifts decision making processes from the rather formal plenaries to more day-to-day conversations where facilitation is usually disregarded. Plenaries are critically viewed by the vast majority of participants as they "tend to take quite long, because of course everybody's listened to, and you want to make decisions together. But sometimes there are just difficult decisions and then it can take hours before you come to a point, especially if the facilitation is not done or not well done. [...]" (Phoenix). Other words to describe the decision-making process are "slow" or "not reactive enough" albeit it is still considered as better than majority voting processes as the main advantage of including everyone outweighs this disadvantage. Additionally, the group size makes a difference for the duration of the plenaries. This general organisational problem of exceedingly long plenaries shows in occupations across Europe; however, the excess differs with the cultural context. Even though many of the occupations are international, in occupations in southern Europe time tends to be taken less seriously than in northern Europe. In squats however, thus meaning occupied houses, the composition of inhabitants is usually more stable, which makes organisation easier and plenaries more efficient.

The rejection of private property within the anarchist organisation of forest occupations brings difficulty by putting it into practise too. "The whole idea of having like free stuff and [having like] non property. I think that it's cool because everybody has access to everything and you can have exactly what you need without really needing to buy in it and that's pretty, pretty cool. I see one problem there. That is like if nothing is from anybody, that nobody feels responsible to take care of it, and that for me is especially annoying. Because it hurts a little bit with the idea of it. Instead of, like, everybody feels responsible because it's for everybody, it's from everybody or everybody's is having it. Instead of like, everybody feels that that these things are theirs and that way, they could take care all together and it's like it's not something that you know you can take care of it. Everybody feels that it's not theirs. Look up then if something gets rusty or forgotten there is. It's not mine, so anything that's especially problematic when there's like a lot of tools or when there's like more utilitarian things that they are collectively. I don't really know how to deal with it." (Remi). One possible improvement to this would be to abolish all private property since then there would not be the incentive to take better care of one's own property. This was tried in one occupation and seemed to work well; however, it was difficult to find people that were willing to reject all private property. This unwillingness is likely to result from growing up in a neoliberal society because "The hierarchical mentality that arranges experience itself – in all its forms – along hierarchically pyramidal lines is a mode of perception and conceptualization into which we have been socialized by hierarchical society." (Bookchin, 1980, p.32, see also Foucault, 1990;

Robbins, 2011). This mentality is not existent in truly non-hierarchical communities, also so-called “truly organic communities” (Bookchin, 1980, p. 32), which neither have a word for inequality as equality represents the very nature of things. Even in linguistic terms, the form of non-hierarchical organising can be found by not employing possessive words but rather using cooperative behaviour. As such, for instance the verb ‘to have’ is substituted by ‘to live with’ (Bookchin, 1980).

Another problem with the organisational structure for the communities surrounds the temporality of the spaces. This temporality concerns both the temporality of the space itself but also the temporality of its constitution. Many forest occupations only sustain for a year or two before they are getting evicted, causing its inhabitants to become homeless. However, also the inhabitants fluctuate a lot. There might be a core occupant group, but especially during eviction season or for specific actions and events, the places get flooded with new arrivals. “When people are not really there for a long time, it can be very difficult to build up structures that function and that are taken care of. So that can be a problematic or it can be more difficult to organise and as well as sometimes when there’s a lack of motivation and project and then the self-organising can also fall behind. And especially with reproductive work, we deprioritize.” (Drew). Again, these issues are likely less related to the organisational structure but rather to the temporality inherent to forest occupations as in stable squats with an anarchist organisation the problems are less pronounced. Murphy agrees with that saying “that in the beginning everything works out pretty nice because usually the people who start a project already have common ideas of what they want to achieve and how but when the place starts to get bigger and more and more people arrive it’s in my opinion impossible pretending to keep things the same and especially trying to make everyone happy. Not everyone is involved in the same way, some people by choice and some not. It’s of course hard having a saying in decisions when you are not there in the moment they are taken. Some people don’t really care and trust in the group, some others might be more involved or touched by decisions and so have more to say about it. Some people invest more time therefore ending with accumulating more responsibilities and having more skills than others and this is of course creating hierarchies – which is a thing we don’t really want.”

Despite the fact that some people describe the forest occupation as a ‘real utopia’, it is important to accept that “it’s pretty common that even though in theory we are all on the same page, in practice it’s hard to always say the right words and have a spotless behaviour. When things work out it is beautiful because everyone feels heard. People are not afraid of saying what makes them uncomfortable and are also not afraid of hearing that some of their behaviour hurt someone because they know that it can happen and it’s not a problem as long as it is recognised and there’s willingness to work out a solution. I don’t really see any downside when things work. Maybe the downside is expecting that they work all the time and not being flexible with solutions and always wanting to follow rules by the book instead of trying a more individualistic approach. But this is also not always possible” (Murphy). When living in an eco-anarchist community one is subject to a lot of criticism by the outside society. Public perception

of anarchism is tainted by mainstream media with polarised headlines during eviction like “Activists fire at police officers with pyrotechnics once again” (original: Aktivisten beschießen Polizisten abermals mit Pyrotechnik”) (Frankfurter Allgemeine, 2020) in one of Germany’s biggest newspapers. Also, violence has been linked to anarchists because of their aim for revolutionary system change. This goal and the violent image make states want to control anarchist movements (Williams, 2018) with some European Union members declaring a variety of European anarchist and leftist militant groups as terrorist organisations (Beck et al., 2013). Additionally, many people do not know anarchism as an ideology or philosophy; the term is used interchangeably with anarchy or simply chaos without any rules. This results to lots of criticism towards forest occupations and the calling out of any imperfection which puts pressure on the participants, thus it is important to remember that utopias do not necessarily align with perfection. Another question is what perfection really is and to whom, as also Drew described that many problems arising might not even be resulting from the organisational structure but are rather symptoms from the outside society. Eco-anarchist communities can be seen as a constant learning process as anarchism is not static but adapts to whatever the consensus is.

Exactly this adaptability to its community gives rise to the advantages for the community structure. It is important that the participants want to participate, as another problem can be the voluntary withdrawal from the decision-making process when people do not want to take part in plenaries. Yet, it is important to take part in the plenaries to access the advantages of an anarchist organisation. “The thing is working well because a lot of people are taking care of being an active part of it, which actually just improves the common engagement let’s say. Engagement like that everybody feels part of it, which actually is really cool when something is annoying or something needs to be done. You know, everybody feels responsible on their own because they were actually responsible of their on their decision, which actually I think is perfect for these kinds of situations.” (Remi). Thus, there is a trade-off between the freedom to do whatever one wants and the part-taking in the community life. The life in a forest occupation depends on the will of the participants to actively participate and take responsibilities. “You literally do everything together. So that means that everybody has ownership, everybody – well in the ideal case – would take up responsibilities, but shared and it’s not on one or a couple of people that feel more responsible” (Drew). Otherwise, the responsibility lies on few people, which creates not only pressure on them but also involuntary knowledge hierarchies. “No one is forced to do anything and it makes a space where you can feel safe and comfortable. Also setting your own boundaries. You’re not forced to do things you do not like or cannot do, but if you’re comfortable with and when you have something, when you have an idea, when you feel inspired to do something, no one can tell you not to do it. And most likely people will just join you and help out.” (Drew). To alleviate outside pressure, a working community structure is essential, so that no one is left alone. For this to work, the participants need to know what is needed to be done and how to do this. In order to achieve this the “whole idea of like if you know something transmit it. Because yeah, the things only can go up. When everybody knows

how to do the things, there's less pressure for the people who know the things and the people just can actually get creative. And the best things can happen. So that's something I really like. So, I think that, uh, not trying to not create hierarchies, it already makes you really aware of the hierarchy." (Remi). The knowledge sharing approach is something many people that visited forest occupations or are still living there also adopt in their life to make the wider society a bit more equal. Phoenix described it as "living in, I think a society that I would see as ideal, where there's not one person above the other. And so, even though it's super tiring and inefficient sometimes I still think it's really worth it."

In conclusion, the practical advantages and disadvantages of an anarchist organisation as perceived by its participants show patterns across different occupations with the main disadvantages being long decision-making processes and withdrawal from them, and the effects of the temporality of the spaces. The main advantages mentioned were the shared involvement and active responsibility of a non-hierarchical structure as well as knowledge transmitting and the community. Advantages and disadvantages are interconnected as e.g. the involvement and responsibility is only given if everyone takes part in consensual decision-making processes.

4.2.2. Assessment of the implementation of Anarchism

After introducing the anarchist principles and how they are implemented within the organisational structure of forest occupations, it will be discussed how much anarchism as an ideology is expressed through these practicalities.

Phoenix said regarding this that in the occupation of the Dannenröder Forst it was very well done. Particularly, because of the size and the smaller places that it consisted of. "These smaller places, [which] had kind of different ways of living, different characteristics. And as an individual, you could kind of choose your place like which organisational structure fits with me, so somewhere more structured and organised and somewhere more free and more like [ohh] you do whatever you want instead of like we have a system for doing dishes. So, I think that fit really well within the diversity of anarchism. [...] And it was also very self-organised. I do see also in other places I've been that it clashes in a way that there's too much structure, that it becomes too hierarchical. So, when you come to a place and there's already all the structures in place and it becomes really difficult to be flexible and to, for example, step into a cleaning schedule because people already determined that a month ago these and these people were and that's where I think it becomes limiting and that few people decide for too many people. And so, I prefer the decentralised way of organising information instead of the central. Everything for every one situation. Yeah, it's not the most practical". It is conspicuous, that now it is being said that there are problems related to not having enough fluctuation or a non-changing occupation as in Phoenix' view it disturbs the self-organisation principle of anarchism. However, several people have said that exactly this fluctuation is what causes many problems for the practical organisation within the forest occupations. Thus, again there is a trade-off between the theoretical idea of an anarchist

organisation and the practical implementation which also Phoenix indicates with their last replenishment.

In conclusion, we can see that again, there is a dichotomy between theory and applicability of the anarchist principles. Subjects that are practically seen as advantages are theoretically a disadvantage and vice versa. But it is also important to acknowledge that anarchism is a flexible ideology, adapting to its practitioners. When this flexibility is pronounced, the participants felt like anarchism is well-implemented, in turn when it was too rigid, it felt like it is not so well implemented. However, it is questionable if this is also applicable to squats with a more stable environment which was seen as an advantage before.

4.2.3. Relationships

In the past chapter, there was much stress on the importance of solidarity felt within the community. “from an emotional point of view, [that] people lack a lot of things in the in the Mainstream society [...]. The people feel at an individual, social, collective level they are left behind. [...], I think that anarchism has basic, basic principles. They are based on making people feel part of something. But I just see technical problems to expand it to bigger solutions.” (Remi).

This feeling of solidarity is reasoned with the inclusivity and equality of the occupants. However, this inclusivity is not always given as seen earlier. There are many inhibitions by security culture to getting to know each other in the beginning, thus the next point of concern are the relationships between the participants on an individual and communal level. If the people within the forest occupation opt to stay longer, the living together creates a community mindset as everything is shared it turns strangers into a chosen family. This does not imply that everyone gets along with each other and albeit there is a strong feeling of belonging and usually shared values, people can dislike each other. Drew described it as a “huge feeling of togetherness” and that there is a connection even though you do not know if you have anything in common due to the security culture, but the struggle connects. Murphy however states that despite the feeling of community, the relationships are the same as everywhere. Yet, this feeling of community is probably reasoned by the active will to participate in a community and the active will to share the life with each other. The same accounts for the decision to live in and with nature, thus there are already many common grounds.

Another curious descriptive about the relationships within forest occupations is related to the fact that forest occupations can be seen as niches, sheltered from the mainstream society. As such, they offer spaces not only for the experimentation of organisational structures such as facilitated by anarchism but also on the inter-personal relations. In the book corners you can find many books concerning the topics of love, relationships and friendships such as Erich Fromm’s “The Art of Loving” (2000) or “Radical Tenderness – Why Love is Political” by Şeyda Kurt (originally published as “Radikale Zärtlichkeit- Warum Liebe politisch ist” (2021). These books deal with the love in modern times, especially the

symptoms of capitalism on it. For instance, Fromm targets the commodification of love which can be applied to more recent developments such as dating apps. Kurt on the other hand attempts to end the hierarchy of relationships with romantic ones being more valued than platonic ones. Especially, Kurt's book (2021) relates to the discomfort with the stereotypical and through society reproduced image of love which is shaped by unequal power relations. Both of these approaches are very much felt by the participants as communication plays a large role in the anarchist organisation to implement a horizontal structure since it is important to know and communicate one's needs. Occupants are also found to be more prone to alternative relationship models such as polyamory and be more accepting to gender and sexuality diversity than the mainstream society. It can be said that within forest occupations there is a lot of trust within the community since without obligations people have to trust in each other and in the community that the work will be done and that the participants have their reasons to do whatever they are doing at this moment. This trust in turn stems from the communication which is trained in daily life and plenaries but also in shared experiences such as evictions or simply the community lifestyle. Once this trust is given, it causes many insecurities (e.g., related to jealousy) to become obsolete.

Naturally, there are also strains on the relationships between participants which can result from miscommunication, stress (e.g., through eviction), traumatising experiences etc. This can lead to people leaving the forest and the community, either completely or to take a break. Sometimes, the occupants also just go to another occupation to get out of their own community for a while but not to leave the "social bubble". Murphy says: "When I leave is usually because I need a break from activism and police activity and from living in a place I know can be obliterated any day. It's not easy to work so hard knowing that probably it won't make a difference enough to change something globally because we don't count as much as people who own the world." This again links to the concept of the temporality which is subject to power relations as politicians decide to end the potential utopias as they are threat to government projects and government itself. What Murphy says mirrors the opinion of many people who stayed in occupations for several years, as they see their homes coming and going. Thus, where the community gives the feeling of belonging discussed above, the belonging to a certain place is temporary which puts a strain on the relationships within and to the community.

Evictions are a common and constant threat to occupations, as these are normally illegal. Evictions are emotionally very intense and can last over a long time. Additionally, there is the possibility of injured people and police violence. How the community deals with this strain is "[...] depending on how strong the coming community is or how long they've been together before the eviction, how they go through it. Because I've been in a situation where it was there, like for a long time and then you notice you're really have this high feeling of trust with other people and you notice that you go through eviction relatively smoothly because you trust each other and you know each other, but if there's people that are newer this level of trust isn't there and then it can be a bit more of an individual experience instead of communal and then also afterwards the care levels are different. And yeah, most of the evictions, usually

afterwards, community needs a lot of care and space for dealing with the emotions.” (Phoenix). After eviction, the pressure on the interpersonal relationships is alleviated if the bond between the participants is strong enough to give each other long-term support which is given by sufficient time spent together, thus speaking for a rather stable community. Dealing with emotions such as frustration, sadness but also simply tiredness takes a toll from the participants. Despite these negative impacts, seen through an activist lens, may it be anarchism or environmentalism related, there is the positive side of gaining attention for the struggle. Also, the trust that Phoenix described as necessary can be built up during the evictions, they “can really strengthen the bonds between people when you go through these experiences together. You can create friendships for life.” (Drew). The experience for the community also depends on the composition of people taking part in the eviction. As already mentioned in the description of forest occupation participants, there are different approaches to this activism form and also different causes why to partake in it. The outreach evictions are getting leading to an increased amount of people within the occupation and its surroundings which can put additional strain on the community and its resources but also help the struggle. There is no deep



FIGURE 7 TRIPOD SAYING "WE ARE THE WEED THAT ALWAYS RETURNS"

connection to the community being built there, rather a sort of solidarity felt towards the occupants. The increase of people is already starting some weeks earlier as there is usually a mobilisation campaign for day X, thus the group of people is steadily growing and since people who know how the life within the community works feel forced to take care of new arrivals, there is less time to spend with the people who are actively living there. After eviction, this estrangement during the weeks prior in addition to the disappearance of the place, can make it difficult to keep the sense of community alive. Some communities or barrios within forest occupations have structures to help go through evictions but even these care processes are rather targeted on the individuals instead of the community. Friendships can sustain, but the feeling of belonging to a specific community suffers. Rather it turns into a feeling of solidarity and identification towards the entire movement (see figure 7).

Once a forest occupation is evicted, it might feel to some participants like their goal has vanished. Remi described the subsequent feeling as “lost” because to many, eviction equals the end. “It’s basically done. I don’t want to say the word failed, but sometimes they feel it is whatever you created, whatever

you defended is taken from you, it's actually can be a hugely emotional hit somehow. And I think that I saw it. There are different reactions to these feelings, like from happiness and maybe not happiness, but relief like, 'OK, forget it's done. Now I can relax and I can actually see.' So I think that the how it affects the Community, it really, really depends on how the people deal with this and if there's people who actually already had like these bonds with other people, like from people living together[...]. So, I think the community gets severely damaged. I think that for me, I could associate it with the goal. Somehow, once the goal is over then maybe the reason why you were with people or with some specific people that maybe you didn't connect at other levels it's not there anymore."

4.2.4. Common goal

Eco-anarchist communities, such as forest occupations, have the common goal to protect the forest and their communities get "severely damaged" during eviction which could be related to the disappearance of that goal (see quote above). It seems like in a community where nothing is obligatory and decisions are taken without majority control, there is the need to work towards something which makes everyone participate in disliked daily chores. Hence, it seems that applied anarchism needs a common goal as an incentive for it to work. In the course of this research, the longing for a fulfilled living together in equality seemed to be of higher importance for the functioning of the community life than the preparation for eviction. The advantages of an anarchist organisational structure mentioned circled around the topic of community, solidarity, equality, being heard and the sense of belonging whereas the efficiency of building barricades or generally protecting the space was not of concern. When analysing the potential need of a common goal, it becomes apparent that in almost any kind of social interaction, there is an underlying goal. Albeit in the mainstream society this goal might be more individualistic. "I think people need goals. The problem is that those goals, if they have no communities that are communitary and collective, then leads to individualism." (Remi). In their opinion, individualist values are one of the problems of the capitalist society. Wright (2010) said that capitalism corrodes community and "community as a moral ideal refers to the value of such solidarity, reciprocity, mutual concern and mutual caring" (p.53). However, "cooperation can be built on a foundation of pure self-interest, but such cooperation is more fragile and requires more sanctions and monitoring than cooperation that grows out of a sense of reciprocity, obligation and solidarity" (Wright, 2010, p.53) So, individual goals can cause cooperation and as such there is cooperation within a capitalist society but this cooperation is not as resilient as one that is built upon communal goals and interest (Wright, 2010). Foucault (1979) mentions individualism and individuality as a tool of disciplinary power to separate and control based on normalising judgement and comparing to the norm which causes so-called relationships of constraint which are reproduced in the mainstream society through the power-knowledge relations within institutions. Eco-anarchist communities are hence more resilient also in their interpersonal connection as their goals and the will to live together in that way align. In the course of this research the question arose, if living in eco-anarchist communities is a form of escapism when there is no threat of eviction

and thus maybe a missing activism component. Nowadays, escapism became a term for all kinds of ignorant behaviour. Again, the definition of activism is arbitrary. The participants agree with each other that it is a sort of escape from society, but they say they are aware of this and that most people need to recover from the mainstream society. “it becomes kind of risky when you lose touch with society and you see this forest bubble as the only world and people all think like you. And that’s where I think the escapism becomes a bit ... Yeah, it gets you out of touch with world societies and also can really isolate you. Yeah, I do think a little bit of escapism is soon as OK and healthy, as long as it’s not too far gone.” (Phoenix). Remi states that one of the main reasons why to be careful with isolating yourself is that it goes against anarchism itself because anarchism is about equality for everyone and not just for oneself. Coming from the previous discussion, also the participants were careful to mention that it is problematic if “there’s no further goals as project [after eviction]. So, I think that’s a big critic to some other occupations of like when you lose that goal and you don’t find a new goal then. The things can turn quite sideways and just have a really shitty thing. [...] Eviction is not what makes the project valid. Because there’s like what you do there, what actually can be exported. People can come. People can show it. The fact that it exists is like the living proof that there’s a utopia. And I think that that, yeah, I think that thinking that only because there’s an eviction, the whole movement works or is validated, I think that it’s not necessarily. How I see it, but it can be escapism.” (Remi). Generally, it is found important to interact with society and across struggles. Thus, seeing oneself and the anarchist movement as a part of society but also being compassionate towards each other and understanding the need to escape society once in a while.

Concluding, there is the need of a goal for eco-anarchist communities but also for any other form of social cooperation. A common goal surpasses the individual goal in terms of resilience of the cooperation. It is important to distinguish between the end of the common goal and the eviction process. Both are strongly related but differ as the end of the common goal of protecting the forest does not mean the end of the goal of a just and equal society for all. Evictions however do destroy both the space and the community. “I do also think you see the empathy and the care and kind of prioritising the what-do-you-do-it-for in the end and looking after each other in the community” (Phoenix). This quote shows that the intentions of why the community is wanted to be functional might differ on an individual level but the wish for a functioning community is communally shared.

4.3. Individual impacts of living within eco-anarchist communities

After discussing the organisational structure based on the anarchist principles, its implementation and the community structure, the focus of the following section lies on the impacts on the individuals of living in eco-anarchist communities has and had on them. This will be discussed both with regards to short- and long-term impacts. Power relations between social beings are imminent to the existence of human interaction. However, eco-anarchist communities as studied show the active effort of diminishing them which leads to certain effects discussed below. Especially, since forest occupations provide a protected niche from society, many progressive ideas and takes on life are thriving and being normalised there.

One of the mentioned motivations to adhere to anarchism was freedom. When asked about their emotions about being in the so-called mainstream society, the interviewees stated that this freedom is missing. This sort of freedom concerns mainly the judgement felt in the mainstream society, especially if one is not conformist to the norms. This sort of pressure also relates to Foucault's (1977; Taylor, 2014) theory of power, since the pressure felt of not conforming to the norms and the re-enforcing and re-producing through society connects to disciplinary power and governmentality. Whilst living in a forest occupation, one is subject to a social bubble that is perceived as an utopia to its participants due to its niche character and shared values. Therefore, leaving this space and seeing everyday



FIGURE 8 ENTRANCE TO ONE FOREST OCCUPATION: "PLANET B?"

consumerism, state oppression, etc. can be confronting. The introduction to anarchism, implicated in, e.g., ecological causes (See Figure 8) made many forest occupants aware of the fact that society could be different and started a critical thinking and questioning process of societal organisation that are seen as given facts: "There's lots of examples like this in society that [...] make me uncomfortable and frustrated. So that also makes me think of the forest. And then at this moment I quite miss the forest. And like, oh, I wish I could go back to this place where things are more the way I think society should be like" (Phoenix).

Others feel fine when being out of the forest occupation communities. This is linked to how much time they are spending within eco-anarchist communities and if they have a place called home outside of the forest. The possibility to build autonomous structures within the wider society and, thus, the feeling of doing something useful for the people also supports the anarchist idea. If this home outside of the forest occupation is not given, then the main feeling connected to not being within the community is sadness and the fear of missing out, similar to home sickness. Nevertheless, sometimes it feels

necessary to take breaks from the forest due to mental and body health. as it was already mentioned before. The divide between forest and mainstream society can become problematic as it can make feel people torn. “For a while I had the feeling that I had two lives, one the occupation life and another life. And the normal life seems very unimportant and somehow unsatisfying, and I somehow lacked a clear motivation”. (Quinn). This is an issue that applies to many people when first being introduced to the world of eco-anarchist communities. The fact that other people experience this feeling too and that communication plays a large role within anarchist organising helps for this. Participants described learning processes “that there is not only one clear thing that is somehow effective, but that very many different things are needed and that I need very many different things that also don't necessarily have to do with activism always. I had to learn many things in my whole life and also that I have to rest sometimes. And that's exactly what I felt in between at the beginning, it was still a very torn feeling of there is the normal life and the other life. Now I've learned that I can somehow take responsibility in my normal life and ask people for help. And I can try to share responsibility. And not to feel bad either when I ask for it.” (Quinn). This quote draws the same picture as the discussion around escapism, learning to be compassionate towards oneself and others. It also links to the diversity of tactics favoured within anarchism, i.e., there is no one right way but different approaches that can help each other.



FIGURE 9 PLATFORM IN A FOREST OCCUPATION DURING WINTER IN SOUTHERN GERMANY

From an emotional perspective, it can be said that people who affiliate with eco-anarchist community life feel better in forest occupations. However, there are also the environmental conditions which have an impact on the livelihood. One example is living in the forest over the winter months (See Figure 9): “It was minus 10 and water was frozen and I mean life in the forest is a lot more simple in a way. So you spend a lot of time just (I don't know), making a fire, cooking, this takes hours and I really like this on the one hand, because it means you're more kind of in touch with your life instead of I don't know, just putting on the stove in your heated house but it also meant there's the uncomfortable, uncomfortable thingies of like having snow and being cold and sometimes a lack of fresh fruit and vegetables and I don't know, the toilet situation. But I still think the kind of impracticalities make it really worth it because I feel very connected more to nature, more to people and more to myself. So in general, my mental health is also way better in forest occupations than in other places.” (Phoenix). This willingness to accept the practical downsides differs from person to person, as some people might have more difficulties with adapting to a rather rudimentary life. Many participants are also willing to endure the physical strains because they feel home there and because of

the feeling of empowerment due to the perceived ability of doing something. The vast majority of the participants of forest occupations are at least partially there due to the activist component or it was the initial reason for them to join the occupations, i.e., the use of one's own body as a protection for nature which causes a feeling of purpose to their lives which fulfils them. Drew explained: "And of course I feel very happy in these places. I think it's really, it's really inspiring and it's always nice to be around and these people who know the struggles and who are part of it and who also share a lot of solidarity and understanding for the one thing the problems that you or your friends are also dealing with." Murphy expanded this by showing the advantages the rudimentary life gives too. Again, the shared solidarity seems to be a common theme for what is valued in the communities. "I feel like I'm part of something and that I'm not alone. Seeing other people caring as much as I do makes me stronger. I had so many chances of learning new skills, from physical labour like building to social and emotional care. I get inspired just by talking to people, hearing their stories and how they got there. I am amazed at their ability to change and adapt, at their readiness and willingness to share and to be available for the community and not just doing something out of their own interest. It feels so nice to also live in a way that makes you appreciate everything you have. When you work the whole day and you go home and someone took care of chopping wood, making a fire under the rain and cooking super nice food everything feels just right where it needs to be". Another hypothesis that came up during the data collection, was that the physical part of living in a forest occupation also plays a role in the general wellbeing of people. Simply the physical work and moving causes serotonin production in the body (Chaoulouff, 2013). Together with the self-efficacy of constructing a space to live and the circumstances that there is constantly work to do, it gives the feeling of using days well. Being outside in a forest is nowadays even advertised as forest bathing as it improves mental and physical well-being which the interviewees confirm by stressing the role of nature in this context. The collective well-being is being linked by them with the taking care of the environment. Murray Bookchin (1980) stated that the domination of nature by humans just leads to further domination instead of collaboration, thus the anarchist principles imply a living with and in nature which is executed in the forest occupations through several mechanisms such as building paths to protect the forest soil instead of walking wherever.

4.3.1. Short-term effects

Short-term effects are discussed as the immediately felt differences to the conventional life. Hence, they affect also people who simply visit the occupations instead of living there for a prolonged time. On a first impression, many visitors are impressed by this form of life simply speaking about practical terms such as living in treehouses, using compost toilets and (almost) living without money. The values discussed in the previous chapters can incite a feeling of belonging and acceptance. Yet, also the opposite can be the case, e.g. when there is judgement based on looks or knowledge about political issues etc. In a short-term frame, there are many emotional responses as there is much conversation about inequalities and how to tackle them, considering domination trends within the world regarding

human interactions but also environmental change. This can give rise to a feeling of self-efficacy as well as negative emotions such as climate depressions or the feeling of being powerless facing global injustices. Depending on the time of visiting and the actions conducted, police repression might be a short-term effect too. One of the first felt impacts is the possibility to invent yourself or rather to present yourself without any pre-defining facts. This is related to the security culture, i.e., not giving information about your origin, your background, your name and age, etc. One of the interviewees described this as a chance to “discover things about yourself that you were actually not paying attention to.” (Remi). Many people in the so-called mainstream society are used to define themselves with their jobs or main activity. Once this falls away, it gives space to accept yourself for who you are. This relates to the political ecology framework as in the central European society, people’s actions precede who they are and in forest occupations people can decide who they are first. The feeling of empowerment is widespread within occupations, however, there is also consensus that this feeling does not last as the usual evolution of a forest occupation ends in eviction and environmental destruction. And even though the objective of these occupations is also the reproduction of anarchism, the environmental defeat inhibits the feeling of empowerment strongly. Eviction and police presence are causing another effect, which is the radicalisation of the participants. “The first occupation is definitely just you know, Alice in Wonderland and then you have police greeting you with a baton.” (Remi). It is noteworthy however, that the radicalisation is not necessarily caused by the occupation but rather by the oppression from the state. Radicalisation can also be linked to the decrease of the empowerment feeling which might call for new tactics. Radicalisation starts in the mind with the process of more critical thinking which makes the mainstream society appear in a different light and also conforms with Foucault’s (1990) approach how to unveil force relations. The display of an anarchist society makes visiting people aware of the fact that society does not have to be this way and can be subject to changes. Thus, the recognising of society as a social construct is one of the effects of living within an eco-anarchist society. This is also a long-term effect, however short-term, linking to increased motivation which do not always lead to positive outcomes. One of the interviewees explained that they “got a bit too much into it, so I also went into a burnout and traumatic experience because of activism.” (Phoenix). Feeling seen by the community and taken seriously are other short-term effects mentioned. These lead to increased trust into the group which causes a feeling of relaxation which in turn enables better connection to the rest of the community. The niche character of the occupations and the shared knowledge between participants introduces new arrivals also to other realities and struggles which is a source of inspiration especially in the beginning. “You become more aware of who you are and your privileges and your role in the Community and therefore, also your responsibility. Short term as well. It’s really, really incredible to feel this, to kind of feel this connected to nature and that you don’t feel in your normal life then it can be a really beautiful experience” (Drew). For people with an environmental background which might have been suffering from climate depression or anxiety before, the first experiences lead to more hope and strength because they are surrounded by people understanding the struggle.

4.3.2. Long-term effects

Long-term effects in context of this study are the effects that are adopted by living within eco-anarchist communities and then sustained. For forest occupations, only living there for a longer period of time opens the opportunities to experience the radical difference in life under anarchist principles, such as deep interpersonal connections. Yet also the acquirement of skills is a long-term effect. As seen in the previous analyses, to sustain a decentralised organisation and to diminish knowledge hierarchies, a lot of skill-shares are important. These can be about almost anything ranging from knot-making, treehouse construction, fireplace building and climbing skills to phone encryption, solar-panel set-ups, legal knowledge and inter alia plenary facilitation. This easy acquirement of new skills and knowledge can lead to a new mindset on what might be important in life and widen the horizon on how to reach certain goals. The adoption of anarchist principles, as practised in forest occupations into the wider society life, can be another long-term effect. As such, shared flats might establish weekly plenaries or try new forms of living together. One example is from frequent forest occupants who share a flat but do not have assigned rooms and started 'functional living' where there are only communal rooms like the kitchen, the living room, communal working spaces and communal sleeping places. The fact that they are living together shows also the strength of the bond they created. In the issue about the anarchist principles as well as the one about the relationships between participants, human interactions are being discussed. This is another difference to the wider society, where people tend to commodify even romantic interactions. As a long-term effect, the rethinking of relationships and its labels is expressed. Relationships include platonic, sexual and romantic ones and demand clear communication of needs and boundaries which is constantly practised within an anarchist organisational structure. Long-term, people improve their ability to articulate these.

Nevertheless, there are also negative long-term effects especially when the participants experienced several evictions and related to this also several losses of their homes. Many people living in forest occupations have traumatic experiences with police repression or simply feel like they do not fit into the wider society and were cast out of it. This can lead to drug abuse and opposing to other effects mentioned earlier also to a feeling of hopelessness or the questioning of the sense in life. To prevent this, longer duration inhabitants try to find a balance between living in the forest and out of it "because in the end it is also quite a lot of sacrifice. Sometimes of comfort, sometimes of being in contact with people that see the world differently that's different." (Phoenix). This commitment is represented by the effect that "living in these places also kind of further manifest my own beliefs in anarchism and seeing it work out in practise." (Drew). In summary, the emotional wellbeing is improved in the forest despite the physical discomforts. This can be supported with a quote by Drew on why they are continuously returning to the forest occupations albeit they are having another home. "It's like an addiction. It's nice people and it's an empowering purpose. It's amazing people and it's very addictive."

Conclusion and future research

This dissertation aimed to analyse the organisational structure within eco-anarchist communities as an alternative to the predominant system and its effects and threats to environmental resources but also the human resources. This was done by investigating how an eco-anarchist organisational structure influences individual and community life using forest occupations as case studies.

Forest occupations and the adoption of anarchist principles give an alternative view on the life lived under the capitalist regime. Anarchism cannot abolish hierarchies but the constant struggle to diminish them can lead to a more open community structure with equity between individuals, albeit embracing their differences. Partially, the principles seem to be able to be applied to the wider society as the analyses of short- and long-term effects have shown. The effects are predominantly positive, but they are niche-dependent since the forest occupations researched are spaces sheltered from the wider society. Additionally, the people within the occupations normally share a set of values and perspectives for a satisfactory communal life which contributes to the positive evaluation. Hence, the organisational structure within eco-anarchist communities influences the wellbeing of both community and individuals considerably. Especially, the principle of horizontalism (non-hierarchy) and mutual aid within the organisational structure cause a feeling of empowerment for the participants which aligns with the theoretical framework as this form of solidarity-based living together contrary to the so-called mainstream society can be seen as resistance, which is a form of power, too (Foucault, 1990). This resistance concerns environmental destruction as well as social injustices and is consequently an intersectional solution approach following the lines of political ecology (Robbins, 2011). The feeling of belonging and contributing to this sort of community causes a sense of fulfilment. One of the main learnings found during the interviews are about the characteristics of the participants themselves and their values, how they want to spend their lives and how they picture a better living together on this world which ties back to the individual wellbeing. How to deal with different situations like group settings, privileges and group dynamics is another development that links the community wellbeing and the organisational structure. This can be expressed by being more patient and open-minded and taking people for who they are instead of commodifying social relations. As it has been discussed in this study, one characteristic found in participants of forest occupations was that they sometimes do not feel like they fit in into their previous surroundings. Thus, one knowledge acquirement for them was that they are not alone specifically when it comes to the will of reconstructing society. This in turn relates to the achievement of technical knowledge as both together enable the reproduction of spaces like forest occupations, which gives rise to empowerment as it widens individual and communal scope of actions. The anarchist principle of autonomy and decentralisation and their implementation gives “the idea of taking power in realisation of possible utopias” (Remi). So, one take-away for the participants is that utopias can not only be real but they themselves can and are making them real: “Definitely there is something really beautiful in realising that utopias exist. And that they can be built up, could exist and

I think that's something that we really need to remind ourselves. Because I think that it's really easy to just fall into the thinking that they don't exist, that they are just something unreal. That they were like this is just an idea? [...] ... but actually, no, it's not. It's not about idealism. It's about several things like having a common goal, fighting for something you believe in. I think that the realisation that a better world is not only possible, that it's like existent. Because we have it inside ourselves, we only have to remember it and just work together and into something. [...].” (Remi). This realisation process and active working towards a solution can be interpreted as directly applied political ecology by the communities as well as the individuals, because it looks beyond the symptoms and aims for a systemic solution (Robbins, 2011). Instead of purely focussing on environmental protection, eco-anarchist communities try to establish a socially just and sustainable system to fight both social and environmental problems.

Atkinson et al. (2020) concluded that two sets of needs have to be covered to ensure individual and communal wellbeing, which is the respect for diversity and the engagement in communal life and decisions. Both of them are given in many forms of community life, however the set of anarchist principles as implemented in functioning forest occupations make certain both are given and add the physical wellbeing of living in nature too. The awareness of underlying force relations and the intrinsic wish to diminish hierarchies and inequalities in general hinders the reproduction of individualistic norms and the tendency to compare and compete. However, analysing the network of influences within the communities through a political ecology lens (Robbins, 2011) showed that self-identifying anarchists might be subject to a self-generated form of biopower (Foucault, 1990) too, which attracts them to these spaces and makes them ‘normalise’ their looks and values to conform to each other. As power and force relations are immanent and omnipresent, their reproduction in this context seems like a likely hypothesis. Yet, many unbalanced force relations conventionally given through the power/knowledge cycle as analysed by Foucault (1993) are being reclaimed and turned into empowerment through knowledge sharing and solidarity amongst one another.

The disadvantage is the temporality of these utopias as neither individual nor communal wellbeing are given under the threat of eviction or police oppression. Hence, it can be concluded that utopias in the form of eco-anarchist communities, as expressed in forest occupations, can be real as long as they are keeping their sheltered niche status. Additionally, participants also experience impacts of their life within the eco-anarchist community once they are not in this place anymore. As such, these impacts are pronounced through the sharing of the communal organisational structure with people that did not share the same experiences or through the adoption of anarchist principles such as the decentralisation of knowledge.

This research has shown that there can be and that there are paths to discuss alternative systems to capitalism, which allows another understanding of the prevalent economic and social structure. It

enables the behaviour of not having to accept perceived social facts but can be seen as an empowerment to change them, since it shows the possibility. One can formulate it in Foucauldian terms (1993) as the power/knowledge cycle as re-enforced through biopower is being broken through the critical questioning of apparent force relations and the norms and practices holding them in space. Living and sharing life within eco-anarchist communities enable to see and envision alternatives for the so-called mainstream society, but also to introduce some changes in the life of individuals outside the forests. However, the likely existence of the generation of biopower within this subculture shows the risks rigid ideological frames are bearing, as people tend to aim at conforming to each other which can lead to an exclusionary mindset albeit it contradicts the core principles.

Future research opportunities lie within the question how much community life and communal welfare contribute to individual welfare in comparison to how much an eco-anarchist or anarchist organisational structure contributes to individual welfare. Additionally, it would be beneficial to widen the scope to different cultures, i.e., instead of focusing on a central European context as this dissertation has done, also considering communities in, e.g., the Global South, etc. Another interesting research opportunity lies within the field of contemporary anarchism and its impacts, which should be extended to a non-European/non-western context too.

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Annexes

Annex A

Field notes - synthesis

Organisation within the Dannenröder Forest occupation (August 2020 -January 2021)

Forest communities

The size of the communities depends on the specific barrio (neighbourhoods within forest occupations based on the Spanish word à anarchism used to be big in Spain during the 30s). In the Dannenröder Forest the number of barrios changed over time, depending on the number of activists but also due to outside influences such as eviction. One of the main observations about living in Drüben and in a forest occupation in general is that there is very little judgement and a liberal, very open-minded mentality which causes activists to describe it as their “Rückzugsort” (English: place of refuge, sanctuary, safe place).

Activist A: “Special about this place is that when you come here it really doesn’t matter where you come from or what’s your title, what’s your label, it just matters who you are here and what you do, and I feel like this is a really big freedom in a society especially around us which is really much about trying to define you and put you into labels and this is really special”

As the activist above is describing there are also more benefits in protecting your identity than just avoiding repression. Most of the activists also do not say where they are from or what their occupation is. This enables them to be seen as who they are and not as what society causes them to be.

Activist B: “we are trying to have an English-speaking barrio because most of the people are able to understand or at least try to communicate with it”

Activist C: “It also makes it like skills could be shared more and it also makes the space more open for people from other places”

Activist A: “it is also reflecting that this is an international revolution. Like It is not just here for this local place for sure it is every time like very depending on this situation and the place where it’s at, but this is happening worldwide and were connected and were all fighting for the same things and this is bigger”

The conversation above is mainly concerning the international barrio Drüben but it also shows that the community tries to be as inclusive as possible by facing language barriers and knowledge hierarchies. Activist A is also explaining that this kind of political actions are not only concerning local environmental issues but that the intention is to change the bigger system.

Daily life

The next section provides a short introduction on how the daily life in the barrios Morgen and Drüben (two barrios within the Dannenröder forest occupation) is functioning. As in every household there are some tasks which should be done during the day e.g., dish washing, cooking (in barrios closer to the big MaWa food will be picked up from Küfa), getting water, taking care of the barrio phones, getting firewood, scouting, inter-barrio meetings and technically also cleaning and additionally in Morgen a barrio tour for new arrivals. In Morgen, there is a board with all the different tasks and laundry pecks to mark if a task is taken up. So, during the day you can put a peck next to the task you want to do. Later in the daily plenary, the left-over tasks will be distributed, no one will be forced but it can be pushy. The advantage is that Morgen usually distributes all the tasks and is always well-prepared for eviction and raids. Sleeping places are also covered in the daily plenary, so everyone will find space. In Drüben, it is more liberal and less structured as there is a board where tasks are written on it but normally no one pays attention to it. For the sleeping places, there is a table where you can put a mark behind a treehouse and then other activists know that one sleeping place in that specific treehouse is taken. Since many Drüben activists are already rather experienced most of them know what really needs to be done. Hence, the organisation is more based on self-organising systems with more autonomy and more responsibility to the individuals for the tasks to be covered. This bears some disadvantages such as being a messier place and sometimes being less prepared for eviction.

Activist D: “[...] We managed things only with speaking to other people and looking for some consensus and make decisions together. Like [a] different kind of society than a capitalist society”

If there are important decisions to be taken or just for daily structuring, there are plenaries. Plenaries are held with the entire barrio and are moderated by one volunteer. There are hand signals for language barriers, clarification, time-outs, volume, agreeing and disagreeing and to keep the order of hand raising. For decision making a consensus is necessary like the activist described in the quote above. Consensus means that the agreement is shared by all plenary participants. In contrast to that, in a democracy such as the German political system, there is the majority vote which is not seen as just and inclusive by many activists of the forest. Communication between activists and barrios is usually done by visiting the treehouse or barrio of the concerned person and asking around for them until they are found. Most activists do not have a phone in the forest out of security reasons. Yet, the barrios usually have at least one phone and walkie-talkies for rapid communication between the barrios and social media, which again shows that some communication outside of this sub-society is seen as necessary.

- Songs and music in general

Hierarchy

Political spaces such as the Dannenröder forest occupation are often inspired by anarchism. Anarchism is defined as the absence of hierarchy and has many subsections such as eco-anarchism,

anarcho-feminism, or anarcho-syndicalism. Main aspects of anarchism are the ideas of mutual aid, equality and horizontalism. Many activists identify themselves as anarchists and see it as a possible sustainable future approach of society as the following quote demonstrates.

Activist D: “they say it’s not possible to be in anarchy or anarchism, but this place is like anarchy in practice. And it is not functioning only because there are outside 30 cop cars to destroy this thing and the freedom and this anarchism in practice and then they say it is not functioning because it fails. [...]” One of the comments the general public mentions most often when it comes to anarchism is that it failed. In the quote above, this comment is addressed. The activists of the forest state it is working and that it is only the oppression which makes it fail.

Activist D: “we made here something like [a] community which is very free. There is no police in the forest, no authority. [...]” Any kind of authority and hierarchy is objected by residents which is also expressed by the general aversion towards police and the state. As shown in the quote that results in a “free community” for many activists. This aversion towards authorities is openly communicated by eviction chants such as: “Hass, Hass, Hass wie noch nie! All cops are targets – ACAT!” (English: Hate, hate, hate as never before! All cops are targets - ACAT!) However, this does not necessarily imply violence as can be seen in the majority of occupations and other anarchist movements where non-violence was the norm and only little incidents happened from the activist side, as opposed to experienced police violence. Unwanted so-called knowledge-hierarchies easily emerge when it comes to skilled and confidential actions and activities. Responsibility and therefore connected power often lie within the hands of experienced activists who lived in the forest for a longer time. One of the approaches to tackle this is by offering many skill-shares to bring everyone to the same level and to enable further skill-shares. The fear of civil police officers intruding the barrios makes activists mistrust newly arrived people which can seem exclusive. Additionally, the constant fluctuation of weekend visitors in some of the south end barrios makes it hard to build a trusting relationship which is necessary for actions to feel safe. Thus, here some sort of hierarchy between long-time forest occupants and short-term visitors can be seen. Another form of hierarchy exists between the “forest people” and the “camp people”. Forest people are the activists living in the barrios and camp people are the ones living in the camps at the MaWas (registered station for protest actions which supply a legal address of approach for lay people as well as activists). Generally, the anarchist idea and the punk influence is stronger within the barrios. The camp is usually more structured with more rules. This is also connected to the fact that these camps are legally registered and are being checked by the authorities. The camps themselves are valued very highly by the occupants as they know that they make their lives easier with supply of food and material etc. However, when it comes to the kind of persons being in the camp there are some stereotypes which are shared especially in the “punky” barrios such as that camp people are too “conformist” to the ruling regime. Similar stereotypical comments exist about other organisations which are in the eyes of forest people often not radical enough or putting too much faith into the existing institutions etc. which are

creating another layer of hierarchy. There is a lot of discussion going on about these sorts of hierarchies. Most of the activists are aware that by making these comments they are forming hierarchies and agreeing to a classist system once this is pointed out. This is in conflict with the anarchist ideology most occupants favour. When asked about this contradiction most people answer it is not meant very seriously but it is obvious how difficult it is to fulfil the anarchist principles that were laid upon themselves.

Concluding, to live by anarchist values which results in a very open-minded and tolerant community. Forest occupations have not one identity but rather each barrio is conceptualizing and practising anarchism in different ways. It is obvious that implementing an anarchist ideology is not easy as unintentional hierarchies develop. However, the self-organising system, becomes apparent when viewing the development of this occupation and the constructed infrastructure. And even within the forest occupations daily resources are as needed as in every other community which already shows that this community is not as autonomous as it is aiming for.

Organisation in the occupied village of Lützerath (August 2022)

Lütz: known as being very organised, less anarchist, too academic, bipoc representatipon a thing

Osnabrück: only five people, new not so welcoming

- Lots of working groups
- Vegan
- Lots of media communication
- Lots of networking
- Less punk
- Within punks sometimes made fun of
- Tons of plenaries
- Tin, flinta and bipoc safe spaces
- Awareness team
- Self-organised cooking
- Book corner, free shop
- Diverse in age, gender, ethnicity
- Summer 22 many people ~100, noro virus, shit brigade
- Conflicts if big solved with help of awareness team and openly discussed in plenaries

Lots of reflection

Sociocracy, consensus-based decision making, skillshares demolish hierarchies, no money no worries no differences link to money essay

Least environmental impact as possible: paths, toilets, trash, water filtration, cooking structure, smoking platforms, everything second hand but also because of money

Organisation in the former forest occupation Moni (April-July 2021; July 2022)

Start anticapitalist, anticonsumerist → no colonial products, focus more on autonomy, self organisation without shifts etc → needed more planning, initial group broke apart, occupation got the hambi vibe, ended after one year

Plenaries hard to implement as initiating group didn't like plenaries

Connected to the organisation in the Dannenröder barrio drüben which worked without plenaries (cf above)

- However different organisation needed also because of nazi threat → eastern Germany there were a lot of attacks on the forest and the train station which is being used as infopoint until it got burnt down
- Freegan friendly
- In the beginning bullshit committee → own means of communication, satire, Instagram account and twitter pinesagainstthemasines
- Monoculture with wildfire threat → construction of smoking platform to protect forest
- Started of as the new thing (compare taz: hambi, dann, moni?)
- Wanted to focus on own means of communication instead of mass media, if general media then with conditions → proof-reading
- Tried to be very self-sufficient with vegetable garden, solawi connection and connections to local organic farms
- International
- Book corner
- Tried to be not materialistic
- We even tried not having any private property except climbing gear (no private sleeping places/ treehouses, clothes etc), idea was that communal infrastructure is going to be better when there is no private property because otherwise communal infrastructure is often looted (climbing gear, materials etc) → private property enables more inequality
- Good connection to locals except nazis even though also sometimes communication with them → they feel left behind, in need of highway, they think activists like green party however graffiti on communal platform: "we hate all politicians" → anarchism without rulers
- However, people did not want to live there anymore, vibe changed, very dirty
- Attempt to not have a distinction between forest people and village people but hard to achieve

Solawi

Solawi: anarchism works with self-organising system but also project existing

- Open
- Safe space for a lot of former forest occupants
- Csa – community supported agriculture
- Helped a lot during the construction of the occupation and during the destruction
- Plenaries
- Free shop
- However, there are responsables

Organisation in the Zad de la Colline (Switzerland Lausanne) (February-March 2021)

- Flash info every morning at 8 in French with English whisper translation
- Communication with forest occupation network
- Occupied house, big kitchen, huts, treehouses, tripods
- Emo rounds
- Plenaries
- Working groups: but more targeted at eviction with arts, field team, high team
- Parties
- Almost daily corona tests
- Connection to local bakery
- People organise themselves for chores and food is being eaten together
- High team aka my team did fun Sundays where we only built things for fun and not necessarily for a higher purpose e.g. longboard bathtub, chill pod
- Crazy police repression for people who stayed anonymous, not perfect organisation of the legal team

Organisation in the forest occupation Unser aller Wald (August 2022)

Unser aller wald: lacks political initiative

- Very organised
- Initial group left
- Educational activities
- Good connection with the village of Keyenberg
- Very small, one barrio, in 2022 only 3-5 people continually living there
- Connection to Lützerath (3k distance)
- Emo-rounds, plenaries, self-organisation
- Sometimes less of a community and more that people stay on ‘their’ treehouse

- Sex positive
- Book corner
- People cook enough for everyone and autonomously go dumpsterdiving
- Communal bikes
- Relatively strong division between initiating group and newbies
- Vegan m(tiny freegan box sometimes being attacked by vegans)

Organisation in the Zad du Lien (France) (August 2021)

- Located close to montpellier
- Lots of alcohol and drugs in connection with squats in Montpellier
- Flinta space
- Less organised
- Less inclusive to internationals
- Water from cemetery, food mainly dumpster-dived
- Dirty
- omnivorous

Involvement and network analysed using the Dannenröder forest occupation

Occupations in general are often perceived as radical. Most of the occupants are already part of the forest occupation scene for longer and know each other from places such as the occupation in the Hambacher forest in Germany. Others come from the leftist and anarchist scene or have done actions with the Antifa (antifascist movement consisting out of several far-left, autonomous, militant action groups and individuals). These activists then bring their housemates and friends along. For the Dannenröder forest occupation also many organisations such as Ende Gelände and Extinctions Rebellion play a role in attracting new activists. These two and others started a coalition (<https://wald-statt-asphalt.net/de/>) against the logging of the forest and started organising camps. Also, actions were organised by them and it was mobilised widely for Day X (when the eviction started) in social media. Most activists coming from these and similar groups do not have a connection inside of the forest (the barrios) yet and start off with living in the camps and doing actions from there. Once personal connection is developed some of them move into the forest. When part of the forest occupation community, the activists usually meet each other in other occupations and demonstrations again. Many activists in the Dannenröder forest occupation stated that they knew each other from the Hambacher forest occupation or explain how they randomly met each other again in other occupations as for example in Flensburg. Activists in general live in one social circle, so that normally they have friends or acquaintances in common which often leads to exclamations such as “the world is a village”. Additionally, many activists and especially forest activists have the same ideals and ways of living. For instance, it happens that when they go dumpster-

diving in a different area e.g., during holidays, that they meet other people looking for food too and then recognise each other from the forests. This network is also international since big actions such as the G20 demonstrations are organised across borders and climate camps are visited all over Europe. Besides, most activists aim for a world without borders where “nationalism is finally out of our minds” and no distinction would be made wherever people were coming from.

Exclusivity

Commonly, political occupations are open spaces which are very accessible to new people visiting. However, described by many now-occupants, it is usually the first step which takes the longest because most people who are not yet involved with activism often have a high inhibition threshold to get into close contact with activists and perceive them as from another world. Once this is overcome it appears to be quite easy to get into the forest life. Several discussions showed that in the experience of many activists, it takes some time to gain full acceptance and trust. One of the reasons is that occupants are hesitant to fully include new people is the possibility of infiltration from undercover police or that information might leak out of the occupation. This threat is especially existent during eviction times. However, observation gives the impression that this pattern is repetitive and once the new activists are fully included, they feel the same way about new arrivals. Next to this understandable exclusivity, there is also exclusivity which is partly based on looks. As anarchist identifying people, they do not want to be exclusive or judgemental. Yet, when new visitors come by and seem to appear very civilian, pro-establishment looking instead of wearing punky clothes the chances are higher that it takes longer to fully feel assimilated. This is connected to the different vibes in different barrios. For example, Nirgendwo is mostly influenced by punk-identifying persons and thus also other punks feel most comfortable there. Contrasting, in Morgen the general vibe is more into the hippie direction. I noticed during the first part of my participant observation (2020) when not a lot of people knew me that it can be for example suspicious to be female associated with long blonde hair without dreadlocks. Questions like: “Are you an undercover cop?”, which are partially joke and serious question alike, can be heard quite often. Especially having this conventional hairstyle is quite a rarity within the forest and leads to other activists advising to cover the hair since it could also be seen as a distinguishing mark, making it easier for the police to identify someone, yet this is only the case for approaching eviction. Concluding, it is easier to join these set groups if you fit in also in terms of looks even if their values promote open-mindedness.

Means of communication between activists

Since many activists do not use or do not share social media with each other out of privacy reasons, most of the times email addresses are shared with each other. In the barrios Drüben, Nirgendwo and Morgen so-called rise-up pads exist, which is a secure e-mail server used by many activists and for closer friends also Telegram or Signal (secure messenger apps) contact information is exchanged. Many occupants use encrypted phones with e.g. Lineage as a server and also actively give skillshares on how

to encrypt your phone. However, another approach taken by some activists is also to hope to meet each other again in a different occupation since the network and group of especially forest occupations is relatively small and chances are quite high to see each other again in the same context.

Infrastructure of new occupations

New occupations are started mostly by experienced activists which already visited another forest occupation before. These occupations arise when there is a threat like for instance the construction of a large infrastructure project and thus logging of the forest. Conversations with non-German and German activists showed that most forest occupations (not including land occupations) are in Germany and started by Germans which is likely to be connected to the flourishing activist culture there. This activist culture is said to be enabled by the state as well, since in Germany it is possible to keep your identity secret quite easily and there is considerably little repression in comparison to other countries. Additionally, Germany has many plans for infrastructure projects which are threatening ecosystems and other places worthy of protection. Once the forest (or any other area worthy of protection) is threatened, (usually) local people, are planning a first meeting to think about action and protection possibilities. This is usually done in a plenary. The communication about these projects is secretive and usually just happens in person. Then, the initiator goes to a place with a lot of experienced activists like the Hambacher Forst or is reaching out to their own network and is announcing a date and a place to be at for the first planning meeting and from there on everything will be organised which can take weeks till months depending on the research that is needed and the existing structures (local support, material support, knowledge about the site, police presence etc.) to check the feasibility of the project. In the normal case, once the first platforms or treehouses are up, the new occupation is being widely shared and communicated. Sometimes, first a citizen's initiative starts to protect the surroundings mostly by legal means and then this gets attention from the forest occupation community and then an occupation starts. The network of forest occupations consists out of a mostly coherent group of people which is loosely organised in a very autonomous way. These people have a strong connection and trust towards each other as it can be enough to name a date and a place to start something new and people will be there simply out of their mutual support for each other and respectively, their confidence in each other. This connection also becomes apparent when forests become threatened for eviction and activists start reaching out to their own networks and each other to e.g., via their rise-up lists (email server) to mobilise.

Common organisational structures within occupations:

- plenaries with consensus-driven decision making
- free shops
- book corners
- info points
- safe spaces (flinta, tin, bipoc etc)
- communal kitchen

- material storage
- communication tools/teams (sometimes not designated)
- if occupation big enough (cf. hambro, dann) several barrios with different vibes
- occupations in general have different vibes depending on the people who started it and living there for longer time
- no “real” names, no backgrounds shared, no age shared → enables fresh start without past, free to portray yourself as you want
- people usually ask for pronouns when they introduce each other
- legal team
- daily tasks that need to be done: food, cleaning, organisation, toilets, communication

General notes

General notes: Happy people, overworked, occupation scene broke apart, lots of people missing after the first two years, corona? All occupations lack people, what happened to the old ones? New projects? --> uaw people

Individual activists: life changing, knowledge from the occupations also taken back to normal life, many people do go back to normal life (feel like failure?)

General: helpers syndrome? Goal unites people and clears conscience, if that's gone does anarchism still work? Does it matter? Still better than representational democracy, life and values, utopia, love is political, rojava revolution,

Moral superior, people are proud to be out of system and sometimes seems like looking down on people within the system “you are going to be lost to the system” → internalised hierarchies

Consensus very important not only for plenaries but also inter human relationships platonic and romantic, lots of polyamorous relationships, what are your needs/ is this okay for you very often asked questions

People take care of each other not out of responsibility but because they want to but sometimes designated people for buddy system to welcome newbies but that makes it feel more like a job

There is some pressure though to comply to this kind of society, to be vegan/freegan maybe even polyamorous, there is judgement on this levels or sometimes on people not contributing for too long whereby the duration is subjective

People look down on wage labour

Anarchism strongly rooted in the eco-leftist scene as nature dominated by humans stems from domination of humans by humans → domination bad → bookchin

Nice learning climate in all the occupations, people want to share their knowledge

Less luxury than normal life, usually no running water, often cooking on fire, dumpster diving tedious, sometimes you eat nettles and potatoes for a week straight, organisation of water can be hard, share sleeping places, very cold

Protect nature, structures bound onto trees not nailed or screwed, pathways through forests so that people don't trample nature, people don't use phones usually or way less than in wider society, you hang out more with people without the necessity to do things, more movement, physical work, against *Leistungsgesellschaft* meaning against the society where you always have to be efficient etc à its okay to be lazy, everyone has different capacities, its being tried not to judge on that however reflection is important as we all have internalised behaviours but also usually people feel compelled to do "their" part as being part of the community

- without phones, jobs etc the necessity to earn money, less commodification of everything as no money is there and most things are communal also more times to have fun e.g. build tin can phones, play games etc
- sometimes feel like people can be more kids with doing useless things à choice of useless already shows my inner values likely to be transmitted from our societal organisation
- lots of fire places (except *moni*) where you sit with the entire group, physical contact, cuddles
- plenaries take forever especially without moderation or with bad moderation, not compulsory but feels compulsory most of the time (there is a plenum song)

feels like this places are there only for a certain time and that's why they are so great, even if its for a couple of years many activists only come for a certain amount of time to break out of system, rest super close

- usually not so age diverse ~18-30, exception *lützi* has also proper grown-ups, *danni* (*drüben*) had also grandparents being actively in the forest, *hambi* also has a working teacher living there, but usually older people have a job and help more from the outside
- legal team within germany and also often Switzerland the same person (I don't know if that's already incriminating them though)

These occupations are very different from one another, even within the different barrios. Same is the anarchist orientation but it depends on the size how it is being implemented using sociocracy and several plenaries or a more family-bound organisational structure. It also depends on the phase of the occupation, if it is prone to eviction it will have much more resources and much more activists who are not necessarily identifying as anarchists and the daily life tasks are less important as they are taken care

off from other structures like environmental coalitions etc and there are much more donations for food and material etc.

Danni July 2020-january 2021: see organisational structures doc

Moni April-july 2021, July 2022: Start anticapitalist, anticonsumerist à no colonial products, focus more on autonomy, self organisation without shifts etc à needed more planning, initial group broke apart, occupation got the hambi vibe, ended after one year, tried to be more focused on the anarchist side and strengthening own media (cf zines), rechecking interviews if they would be for conventional media

Lütz July/august 2022: known as being very organised, less anarchist, too academic, bipoc representatipon a thing

Unser aller wald July/august 2022: lacks political initiative

Solawi April-july 2021, July 2022: anarchism works with self-organising system but also project existing

Hambi winter 2020, march 2021: still lots of conflicts

Osnabrück July 2022: only five people, new not so welcoming

Happy people, poverworked, occupation scene broke apart, lots of people missing after the first two years, corona? All occupations lack people, what happened to the old ones? New procets?--> uaw people

Individual activists: life changing à knowledge from the occupations also taken back to normal life, many people do go back to normal life (failure?)

General: helpers syndrome? Goal unites people and clears conscience, if that's gone does anarchism still work? Does it matter? Still better than represential democracy, life and values, utopia, love is political, rojava revolution,

Lots of reflection

Theory: political ecology, global power theory

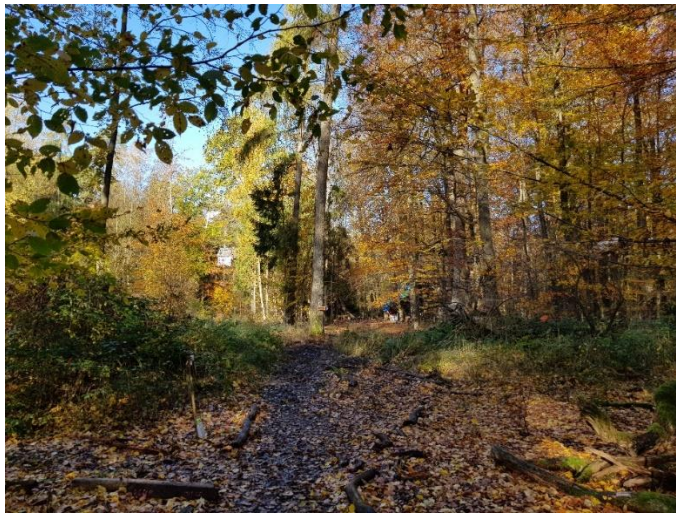
Sociocracy, consensus based decision making, skillshares demolish hierarchies, no money no worries no differences link to money essay

Least environmental impact as possible: paths, toilets, trash, water filtration, cooking structure, smoking platforms, everything second hand but also because of money

Annex B

Gallery

General impressions



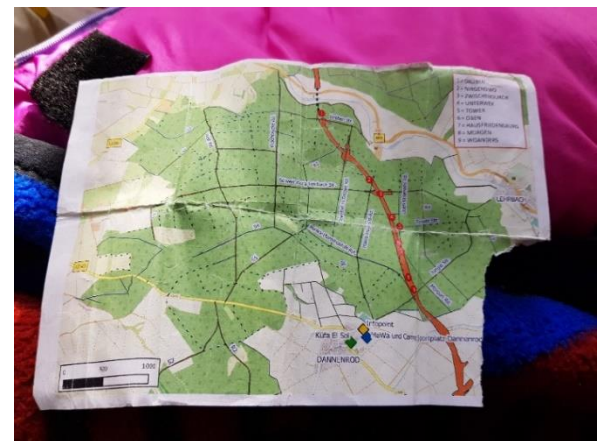
Dannenröder forest. Path structures to protect the ecosystem and artwork. Treehouse in the crown.



Dannenröder forest. Banner “one platform a day keeps chainsaws away”. Another banner “thanks for the kind gesture but this is how capitalism looks like! Lets check our privileges and share” (after supporter collected and bought many present for activists for dec 6th. View from the treehouse copcatcher.



Different banners in the forest: “we are not defending nature. We are nature defending itself.”; “they want to bury us, but they don’t know we are seeds.”; “may the forest be with you”, “ab hier beginnt die zukunft” (eng: from here on the future is starting, future was also the name of one barrio); “total liberation” (linking to antispecicism).



Maps of the dannröder forest occupation, once hand-painted in detail and once printed. Exit of the forest towards the village of Dannenrod and the legal camp. Left: a gigantic anarchy A in front of the barrio 'nirgendwo' (nowhere).

Houses



Treehouse 'ABC' (ca. 20m) in the Hambacher forest occupation.



Treehouse 'copcatcher' in the Dannenröder forest occupation from below, from inside and whilst climbing down with view on the treehouses 'ararat' (left below), barambolak and Bundestag.



Treehouse 'cora totoheim' accessible for people who cannot climb and dogs. View on the treehouses 'barambolak' and 'Bundestag'. Treehouse (bottom left) 'hausfriedensburg' (linked to the term hausfriedensbruch, eng: trasspassing). Tripod 'Qualle' (eng: jellyfish).



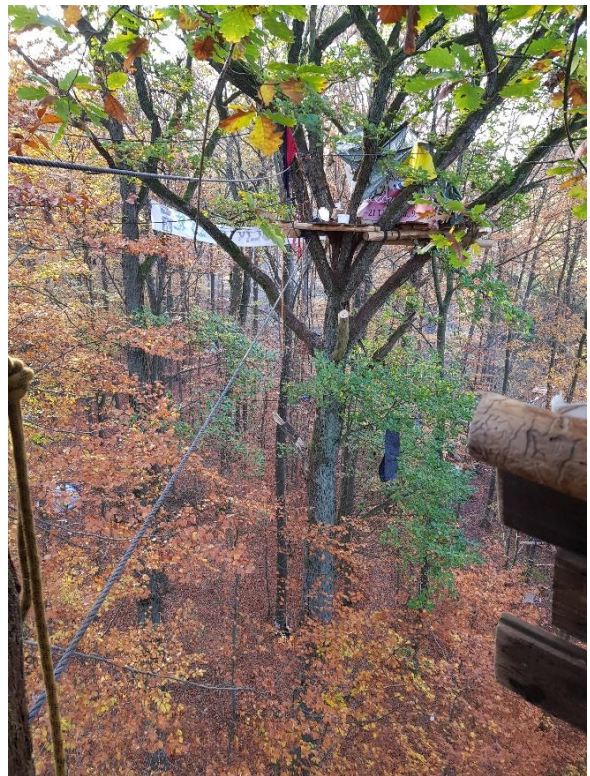
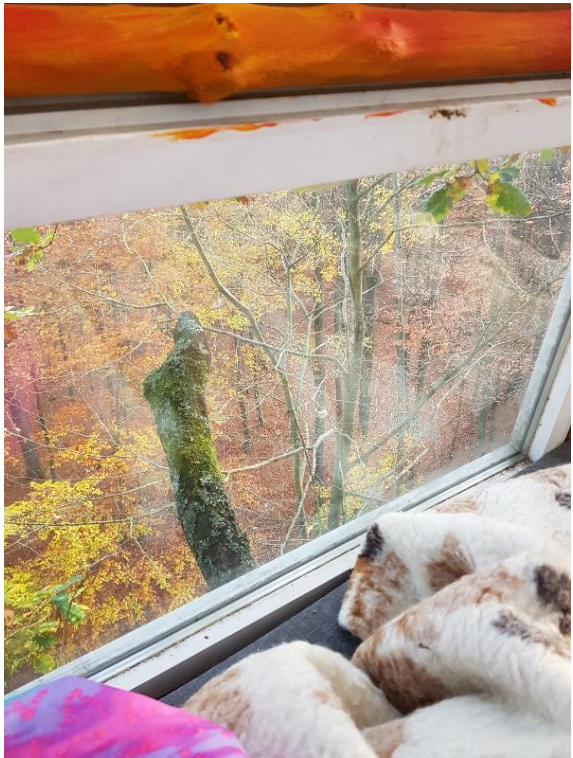
Up left: treehouses in the forest occupation Moni. Up right and bottom: barrio Oaktown in the Hambacher forest occupation.



Up left: treehouse 'Pfuschbau'. Up right and centre right: treehouse 'sonne'. Bottom left and right: barrio 'nirgendwo'. Dannenröder forest occupation.

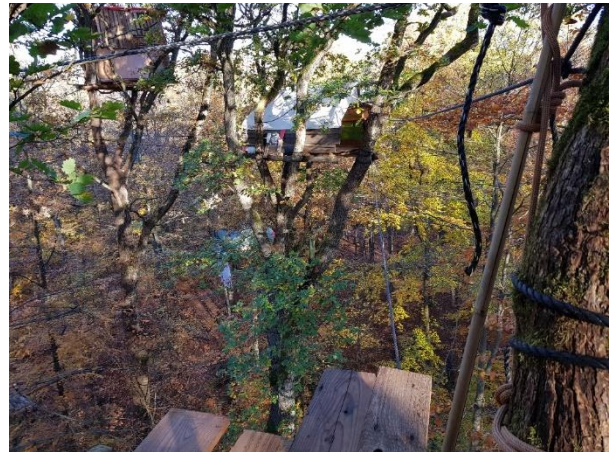


Upper three pictures: treehouse 'copcatcher'.
Left: treehouse 'marmeladenglas'.



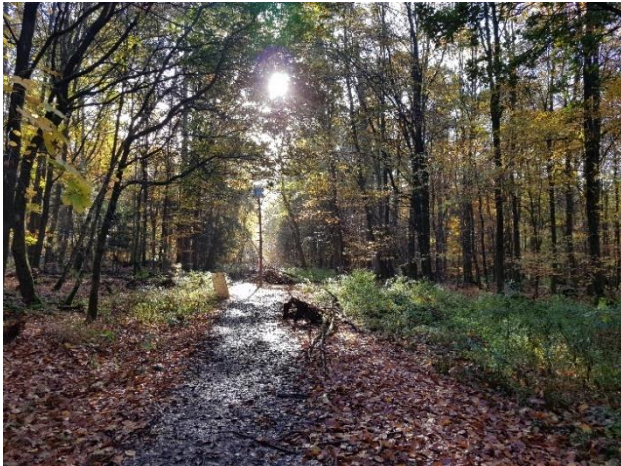
Treehouses in the barrio 'morgen' in the Dannenröder forest occupation.





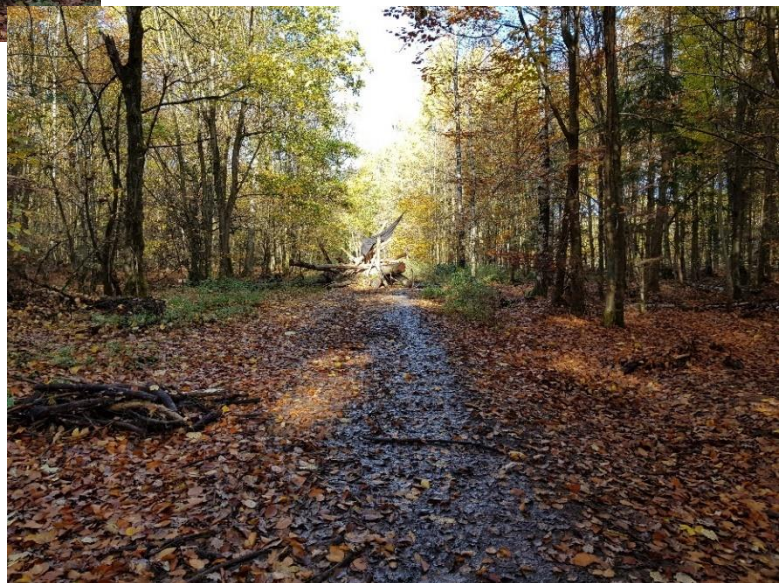
Living structures within the Dannenröder forest occupation and Moni. Tripod inscription: “wir sind das Unkraut, das immer wiederkommt.” (Eng: we are the weed that always returns).

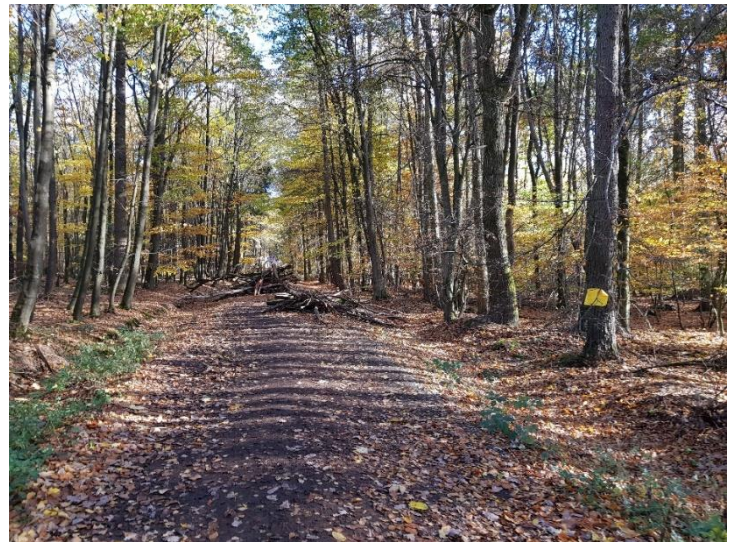
Defence structures





Ditches, barricades, monopods as defence structures within the Dannenröder forest occupation.





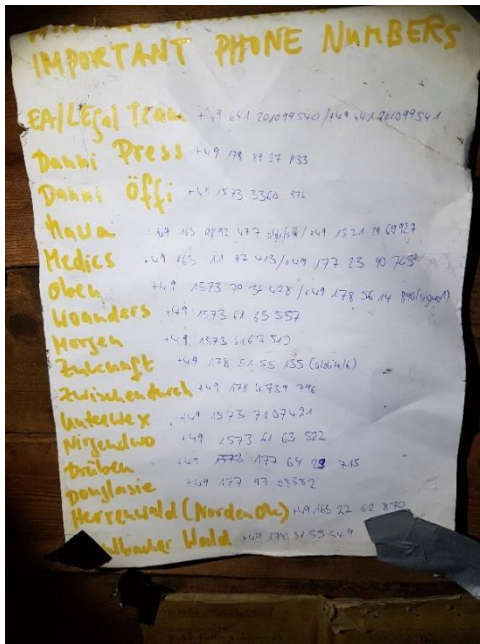
Barricades. Highest defence structure known in a forest occupation context (up right) ca. 47m. Bottom right: water canon usage in the Dannenröder forest occupation against snowman and activists in winter.



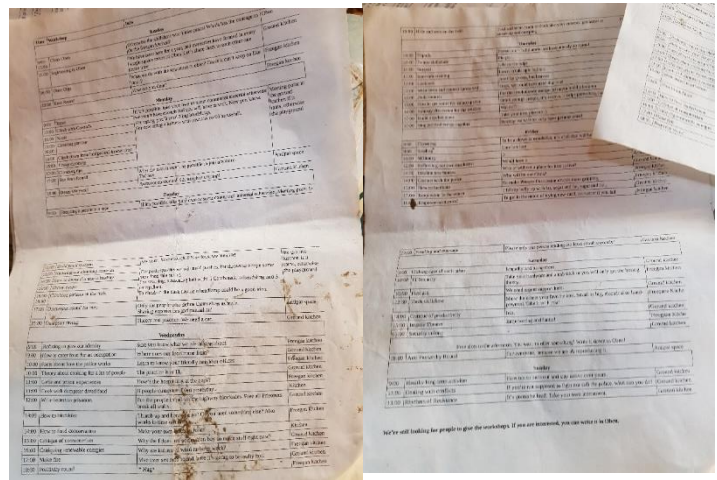
Communal structures

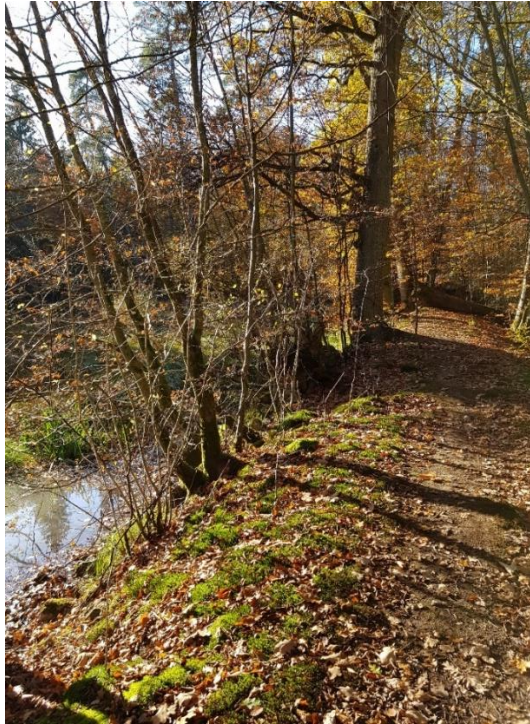


Up left: view on ground kitchen in barrio 'drüben'. Up right: 'coffeeshop' awareness treehouse in 'morgen'. Bottom left: communal sleeping platform in 'mprgen', lovingly called 'menschenregal' (eng: human shelf). Bottom right: groundkitchen in 'morgen'.



Up left and centre right: important numbers within the Dannenröder forest occupation. Up right and bottom right: legal camp and communal structures for It, media, information, first aid, awareness. Bottom left: communal bikes.





Up Left: water collection point. Up right: FLINTA platform (female, lesbian, intersex, nonbinary, trans, agender). Left: askaban/unevictable. Bottom left: material platform 'Matilda'. Bottom right: view from the guesthouse in Dannenrod, used for coworking.





Up left: barrio 'nirgendwo'. Up right: welcome sign to the international barrio 'drüben'. Up: communal structures in Moni. Centre right: communal structures in 'morgen'. Bottom right: kitchen platform in 'nirgendwo'.

Annex C

Interview script

Informed consent

The present study arises in the context of a master's dissertation underway at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. This study concerns contemporary lived anarchism and aims to analyse the organisational structure and its impacts on individuals. The study is carried out by Anni Schlüter asrin@iscte-iul.pt who can be contacted in case of any questions or should you wish to share comments. Your participation, which is highly valued, consists of an interview and could take around 1.5-2 hours. There are no expected significant risks associated to participation in the study. Although you may not benefit directly from your participation in the study, your answers will contribute to the research of alternatives to capitalism and the spreading of knowledge surrounding lived contemporary anarchism. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary: you can choose to participate or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can stop your participation at any time without having to provide any justification. In addition to being voluntary, your participation is also anonymous and confidential. The data are intended merely for statistical processing and no answer will be analysed or reported individually. You will never be asked to identify yourself at any time during the study. In view of this information, please indicate if you accept participating in the study:

Oral consent

Interview guideline

Introduction to the topic, why are we having this interview, privacy reassurances, permittance to record the interview.

Intro

What are you doing right now? Why?

Reasons for organisation

Why did you initially choose to live in these spaces?

For how long have you lived there?

Do you consider yourself as an activist?

- If so, for what?

Do you consider yourself as an anarchist?

- If yes, did you do so already before joining these communities or did you get introduced to it there?

What does anarchism offer that other ideologies do not in your opinion? What makes you drawn towards it?

Community

How would you characterise the persons that participate in forest occupations?

- Why do you think this is?
- Can also other people join the communities even if they do not fit into these characteristics?
- Do you think that has an impact on the functioning of the organisational structure?

How would you describe your relation with the other occupants?

What are the downsides and what are the advantages of the sort of organisation applied in your opinion?

What kind of problems arise in forest occupations regarding their organisation?

Are they always the same or are they different?

Why do you think they are coming up?

What happens to the community in case of eviction?

Do you prefer the organisational structure within forest occupations?

Which principles can or should be adopted by the wider society?

Do you adopt them in your life?

Individual

What is the influence (if any) that your participation in anarchist communities has on you?

- Can you characterise them into short-term and long-term?

Why did you choose to stay?

Why did you leave?

How are you feeling when being there?

- Can you explain why?

How are you feeling when not being there?

- Can you explain why?

What do you take with you from your experiences with lived anarchism?

Where do you see your future? (Regarding your living/occupation situation)

To finish:

Do you have anything to add?

Debriefing/ explanation of the research

Thank you for having participated in this study. As indicated at the onset of your participation, the study is about contemporary lived anarchism and aims to analyse the organisational structure and its impact on individuals. In the context of your participation, your identity will stay anonymous by using arbitrary names and not disclosing or asking any personal information. We remind that the following contact details can be used for any questions that you may have, comments that you wish to share, or to indicate your interest in receiving information about the main outcomes and conclusions of the study: Anni Schlüter, asrin@iscte-iul.pt. Once again, thank you for your participation.

Transcribed interviews

The transcribed interviews can be found using this link: [interviews sorted.xlsx](#)