

TROUBLES IN DANNI

Critical reflections with the Danneröder forest occupation

INTRODUCTION

I lived in Dannenroder forest occupation for one year. When I arrived there were just two treehouses, few platforms and few people. I've seen the occupation growing to huge size and than slowly falling. The day when I left the last treehouse got cut down and the main cutting was finished.

I remember times when we've been sometimes just 5 of us in the forest and I remember times when we've been hundreds and on Sundays sometimes thousands of people in the forest. The occupation was my home and I loved that place. I loved the forest and even though life was not always easy I loved to live in the community we created there.

Same as many other people I can say that Danni changed my life. I've learned a lot. I experienced for the first time how it is to live in an actually functioning community. I got to know a lot of great people and found a lot of good friends. After the eviction I was thinking a lot about all what happened during the occupation and I talked with a lot of people about it. At some point I had a lot of these conversations with one person who lived in other part of forest so we had different experiences but what we could agree on was that even though we did many great things a lot of stuff went a bit crazy and that sometimes we reproduced in forest the same structures and patterns of thinking we are against. After these conversations I felt we should continue this reflection somehow and I was searching a way how to do that. In the end I've decided to write this text.

Troubles in Danni is my reflection on certain issues we were dealing with in the occupation. I did my best to not be just complaining and swearing about what went shit but to describe what was happening from my point of view and constructively criticise. In this text I don't claim any objectivity. It is very subjective. It is based just on my experiences, memories, feelings and opinions. Also I don't try to cover all problematic issues from the forest but just those I am able to describe and I have an opinion about. Often when I describe some problem I give an example to make it more understandable. If you've been part of the situation described and you think I described it wrong I am sorry. Also few times in the text I quote people. The quotes are not precise. It is about a year ago so I can't remember every word. Anyway I did my best to describe everything as it went and I am sorry if I remember something wrong or misinterpret something. In the case I've misgendered someone in the text it is not intentional and I am very sorry for that.

In the text I often use word fuck. I know the criticism on using fuck as a swear word and I agree on the critique. But in order to express myself I feel the need to use vulgar words and unfortunately it's not easy in English to replace fuck with other swear words.

With this text I don't wanna say that what I did in forest was good and what others did was shit. We all made a lot of good things but none of us is free of shitty patterns of thinking which society taught us. With this text I am trying to talk about some of these so that we can reflect on it better and next time maybe move a step forward and do some things a bit differently.

With this text I take my part in our collective reflection and I think if other people get inspired to write reflection from their point of view about topics which bothered them it would be great and I will be very happy to read it. I divided the text into chapters which each talks about a different topic. It was bit hard because many of this issues are intersectional.

When I talk about missing internationalism in the forest it brings me to media or to classism an so on but well I tried to divide it so that it is not just a big mess of my thoughts. I wrote the book in July 2021. Only the article on How our occupation turned into a consumerist festival I wrote in December 2020 while the end of the eviction.If you have critique or points you wanna discuss about this text feel free to talk to me if you meet me somewhere.

I hope I don't make anyone pissed by this text. This is not my intention. Please don't take things personally, I don't want to criticise people, only their behaviour.

Fuck that, fuck that, fuck that! So that's how it goes? Fucking privileged people in Germany who have everything they need and much more take the good stuff and the things German activists don't want we give to refugees? Fuck that! Fuck German "anarchist"! Fuck this camp! Fuck your unreflected "climate movement"! Fuck all this shits!

I want to scream and I want to rip down all the banners hanging around and talking about international solidarity, about anticapitalism, about environmental protection, about climate change. It is all just empty words. To be fair there was a little protest of few forest people hanging next to the huge pile of "presents" banner saying "This is what capitalism looks like." and shouting the same words. There are quite some people who find this whole thing to be wrong but it seems to me that we are still in minority. I am sad how this occupation end up. I loved this forest and I loved to be part of the community we've built. It was my home. Now I feel ashamed and I want to run far away from here.

The environmental or the climate movement in Germany is big and can mobilize lot of people but I think it needs to reflect a lot on its own behaviour otherwise it can't achieve anything else than maybe bit greener capitalism.

1. INTERNATIONALISM IN THE OCCUPATION

Over more than a year of occupation there were always people living in the forest who don't come from Germany and don't speak German. I am living with German people for a while now and it's often very frustrating. Even though anarchist movement claims to be internationalist I experienced in different places of German anarchist/ environmental movement a lot of ignorance and discrimination towards people from other countries.

One of the main problems in the way to an international movement is obviously the language barrier. We are lucky enough that most people in German movement can speak English quite well or at least understand English. The first winter in Danni I was often the only one, who could not speak German and it was sometimes very sad to sit in the kitchen bored because everyone was speaking German, even though all people would be able to speak English. I am used to being ignored on climate camps and all the other places but it was painful to see that happening also in the forest where at that time we were living all together and trying to create a nice anarchist community.

It got better in spring when more people from other countries joined the forest and speaking English became more normal but even in the time when maybe a quarter of people in the forest were foreigners it could happen that one sits in a communal space without the possibility to join a conversation just because of the language barrier. I don't demand from people to never use their native language but if a group conversation is for longer time just in German and people simply ignore you, you get quite pissed after a while. I believe it was partly this language unawareness which lead to the national division of Barrios later on. During the summer and autumn 2020 there was Nirgendwo, where people cared to speak English and Drüben which had internationalism and English-speaking as one of the main points of its Barrio identity. The rest of the forest was German. Of course during the time there were also foreigners in other barrios but my impression was that in the southern half of the forest I would barely meet some English speaking people and way most of the meetings would be held in German, same as most of the conversations. I don't want to blame people for speaking German when there were just German speakers in their Barrio. It makes sense. What I see as a problem is that we had this national division in the first place. I remember a big sign in entry of Morgen welcoming new people and explaining the organizational structure of the barrio. The sign was only in German. We can't be surprised that there weren't many non-german speakers around in places where already the welcoming board tells you by it's language who is actually welcome here and who isn't. I don't think that this one sign would make that much of a difference by itself but if we live in an international occupation it should be just normal to take care of people who don't speak the language of the country. It makes sense to write signs not only in German. It makes sense to switch the language when someone can't follow the conversation and if there is the need for translation we can rather translate from English to German to reduce the amount of conversations and meetings on which foreign people are handicapped.

Language is the most obvious reason for the national division in the forest but I believe it's not the only one. Other issue which I felt sometimes quite strong in Danni would be imposing German activist culture on everyone with leaving very little space for discussion and diversity. There is obviously a certain culture of how people behave, speak and deal with certain topics. And this culture is different in different countries, movements and subcultures. What I see as a problem is that often people refuse to acknowledge that and force their way of doing stuff on to people with different backgrounds. Often it felt to me in Danni that some people saw

only the German way and didn't realize that there are other ways which are not worse. If we do something differently it doesn't mean that we are unreflected but maybe that our reflection had a different outcome.

An example could be the nudity issue. German feminism concluded that because some people are privileged in getting topless or naked everyone should keep their clothes on. It's quite a German thing and in other countries anarchists deal with the topic often differently. A concrete example for this topic would be our garden. A person from another country came to the forest and created a little vegetable garden. He did a lot of work on it. He cleared the area from old wood, build up strong fences against deers and boars, organized the seeds and so on. When it was getting warmer in spring he wanted to garden naked there as he is used to, but well, German activists came and basically told him how unaware that is and that he can't do it. Or at least that was my perception of the issue. I don't want to talk about how we should deal with nudity or body liberation and such in this text but I wanted to show an example of imposing German activist culture in a place which claims to be internationalist. If we wanna live with people from different countries and backgrounds we need to accept that their approaches might be different. We should be tolerant to that and leave space for diversity and understanding.

With the garden it was just one example but I felt more times like that German people come and tell me how stuff should be and if I have a different opinion I am just stupid or unreflected. I talked about this with other comrades from other countries who have been to Danni (and other places of environmental/anarchist resistance in Germany) and they felt often quite similar. In spring we have been 6 people who didn't speak German and stayed for longer in the forest. We all arrived to Oben and some of us lived there for months. All six of us were still in forest in autumn but only one of them was around Oben and that time. The rest of us was either in Drüben or Nirgendwo. Maybe it's a coincidence that the majority of people who lived in spring in Oben stayed in Oben but majority of foreigners moved away into international barrios which they also helped to create.

Another sphere in which international people were totally ignored was the whole media circus. One of the next chapters talk more detailed about media but I would maybe just point out how excluded we've been from that. We have been quite many international people in the forest but if you look on media outcomes you will barely find someone who doesn't speak German. I understand that if we are in Germany it often makes sense to write for example press releases in German but what happened in Danni was that everything was in German and international people were given no chance to be part of creating a media picture. The occupation twitter, which was one of the main communication channels, was exclusively in German. Would it be so hard to make it bilingual? Way most of interviews and such things were just in German. Would it be so hard to include other people from time to time and make for example subtitles? When there came interesting articles about the occupation would it be so hard to translate some of them into English from time to time so that everyone can read them?

All of this would create more work but it's just about our priorities. If internationalism and our non-German comrades are important to us we could do some of it. Well, it seems it wasn't important enough. We haven't been important enough for that. Until now I've seen three movies about the occupation. They were all in German and without subtitles. Drüben, one of the two international Barrios, was only in one of the movies and only for about 10 seconds. In two of these movies no foreigner was talking. In the third movie there was one person talking English for about half a minute. What the fuck people?

I was not verry happy about this changes but it was still haven't seemed to be so bad but it normalized the consumption to certain extend so that crazyer things were being more and more bought and consumed. One example was about a month ago when people from one barrio bought new planks from sawmill while there were always enough planks from pallets and other recycled sources so there was never really need for that and in my opinion if we are struggling against deforestation buying new planks from a sawmill should be the last option. Other example would be the many kilometres of plastics rope we used for building in trees. I mean I as well used lot of the bought rope because I consider it necessary for what we were doing but I tried always to measure how much I need and thought about if it is actually usefull to build certain traverse or whatever structure. Unfortunately these days I see people grabing roles of polypropylen rope to build and when I ask them what they are about to build they often say that they don't know but theat they wanna build something.

While eviction cops often destroy structures and cut down trees with treehouses without removing them same day so you can almost every evening go to fallen trees and save lot of the material we used. I would expect that with this amount of people around that couple of people would go each night and save the stuff before it gets trashed next day but often I find myself alone pulling out from the ruins of the houses sleeping bags, collecting the food, unknoting the climbing ropes, carrying away stupid gas cookers and other valuable stuff. I am going now everynight to recycle broken treehouses but there are still so many valuable things left because there are usually not enough people to do that and at some point I also have to go to sleep. I mean why to go to save the ropes if we can get new ones? Or why to carry the sleeping bags, clothes, isomats or climbing material in the night when we can just get new ones in freeshop and if something would be missing we can always ask our supporties to buy us all what we want and if not we have enough money to buy it by our own.

The peak of consumerist culture was the Saint Nicolaus day this year. Someone initiated that people who support the occupation should send presents for that holliday to activists. There were literally full post cars of packages regulary coming over couple of past days. I want to say that it's really nice gesture from everyone who send us gifts and it is nice to see how many people are thinking about us but the form of the action was bit unlucky. We live in abondonce. We have freeshop too full of clothes and sleeping bags. There is plenty of food everywhere and basicly evyrthing you might need is here and in big amounts. The whole present action was in my opinion a mistake but what I find really bad is how people here delt with this huge amount of unnecesary things. Some of us wanted that it get used in a sensefull way so people started to sort out some things like candies, warm sleeping bags, rainproof jackets and other usefull stuff to take it to Bosnia to distribute refugees who are surviving there in shit conditions even in the winter outside. Other things like phones or power banks we thought to sort out for next political actions, next occupations and so on. Some stuff could go directly to new forest occupation which is starting in other country in next weeks and some people from here are going there. Well unfortunately this were the thoughts of minority of people here and many people wanted to open the presents, eat all the chocolate and get new nice things into their private posession. It was so big amount of stuff so some of the things got saved for these projects but a lot got just looted and privatized. There were crazy situations like person with a litle bit wet sleeping bags coming to the pile of stuff sort out for refugees, throwing away their sleeping bags and taking one of the new ones from the pile. Yesterday I was watching this absurd situation of people standing around the pile of presents and opening one after another. I couldn't believe the situation so I ask if the people are really opening the packages for themselves or if they are opening them to sort out the things for other projects and someone from the crowd answered me that both. People open them take what they want and the things they don't want we will donate to people who need it.

12. HOW OUR OCCUPATION TURNED INTO A CONSUMERIST FESTIVAL

I wrote the following text in December 2020 while end of eviction. I was quite in rage when I was writing it. Today I would write it probably differently and surely bit more calm but well like this it is at least authentic with all the feelings I had at that point.

Last weeks in the times of cutting and destruction of our home I am often remembering how was the life here over one year I had spent here, how much it changed and how much we lost. From my perception there were two etaps of the occupation. In the first one we have been very few people and we were thinking a lot about how we live and what are impacts of our actions. Then the second period which started in summer with lot of people ariving in short time without enough time to discuss all parts of the daily forest life and get used to live diferent life than in city and critically think about impacts of our actions.

As one part of this change was that the occupation abondoned its anticonsumerist approach. When the occupation was smaller we used to dumpster dive most of our food and have been critical about food which was donated to us and tried to communicate to people to at least not buy for us colonial products and idealy to simply not buy things for us maybe with exception of oil which was usually missing in dumpsters. With exception of one or two treehouses with stupid gas cookers we cooked just with wood. As well we tried to recycle lot of building material we needed. For example instead of using new nails we usually rather used recycled unstraight rusty nails, straighten them and used them again. Oh I hated straightening these nails so much in beginning but after some built treehouses it just became normal and I wouldn't get an idea to take new nails when there were buckets of old ones standing around.

For some of us anticonsumerism was of a strong importance for others bit less but it was a present topic in our conversations and I think quite everyone was somehow reflecting on our consumption and understood that everything which was produced for us had certain impact on enviroment. Our occupation was never perfect and there would be always things to criticize but we were trying to use what we had and buying things rather rarely than as a normal rutine. Summer and especially end of summer was a challenging time with a lot of people ariving from diferent places and with different backgrounds and often with being used to different kind of life than we lived here. The eviction was about to start and the need to build and prepare structures to resist it felt to be more important than to talk about what are actually the changes we want to achieve in society and how would our utopias look like.

One of the changes which was easy to spot was change of food which was eaten in the forest. Before it used to be mostly fruits, vegetables and different kinds of freegan products found in the dumpsters behind supermarkets combined with organic potatoes which we were getting from a local farmer who was supporting us and in summer you could see more and more often rice or quinoa being cooked as well as fancy vegan products being around. Coffee was not anymore just in dirty packages found in trash behind Rewe or Edeka but nice looking "fairtrade" coffee and so on. What I found worrying was not only that people in the forest were consuming these things but that there was by most people no motivation to change something about it. One example of this was when we got offered from already mentioned friend farmer that we can go on their fields and collect potatoes for ourselves it was dificult to gather people who would be willing to go and make this work. I mean why to collect potatoes from field when we can eat rice or pasta from supermarket?

Imagine that there would be documentaries about the occupation where just men would talk. We would be angry about that and be asking how could that happen and how to change that next time so that also other people are represented. But when it's about foreigners no one gives a shit.

I know that with media it's difficult because we usually don't have full power over what they publish. But same as we try to have female read people in interviews, movies and so on, we could do so with foreigners. In the movies people were talking a lot about how is the life in forest and all that but none of them mentioned that it's an international community. In 3 fucking movies not even a word about that.

Another issue in which we failed in my opinion to be internationalist enough is money. The occupation got and spent over the time so much money. We are fucking privileged in German environmental movement to have shit loads of money and in my opinion it is our duty to share these resources with comrades and projects in other countries where getting money is not that easy. Over the time we have sent some money to other countries, but in my opinion next time we should do that much more. Maybe with sharing the money to other countries we don't need to wait for situation when we have too much money and nothing to do with them. I imagine that it could be just a regular thing to send money abroad because even if we would send money away and then need it for something it is so easy for us to organise more. So same as we regularly paid for polyprop, climbing equipment, credit for phones and other things we could have been sending regularly part of the money away.

I wish that No borders No nations would not be just empty worlds but that we try to create a diverse movement where people of all origins can take part without facing discrimination. Some steps to that could be that people who don't speak German don't need to always ask for translation but that it is actively provided by others. When there are people not understanding German we simply switch to English and if there is a need for translation we rather translate from English to German for those who don't understand. The next time when you write an article or make a video about some place or action where non-German speakers are involved you can consider to make it directly in English.

We need to realize that German anarchists maybe don't know and don't do everything the best. When people from other countries come we can rather try to learn from them than trying to change them into good German activists.

While the occupation was running I haven't fully realized all of these things but now when I look back it seems to me that the occupation was often very discriminating to the foreigners. Not always and not everyone. There would be of course many people, places and structures which were supportive but all in all I feel we could do better and especially we need to talk and reflect on this more.

2. TROUBLES WITH PRIVATE PROPERTY

One of the biggest challenges for anarchist movement in my opinion is to overcome a concept of private property. We are good in not respecting private property of companies or rich people but we are often failing to be critical about private properties in our own structures and in replacing them with functioning communal infrastructure. In Danni we tried to do that a lot and we've been partly successful, partly not. This chapter talks about my point of view on that experience.

When I came to Danni I was confronted with for me sometimes new ideas and critics on private property and on necessity of replacing it with commons. Before I started living in Danni I've spent some time also in Hambi where at least at that time this wasn't really a topic so in that sense I see we made a step forward and I hope in next occupations and projects we can continue this trend and slowly replace all stupid private properties.

We all grew up in this fucked up society where already since our early childhood we learn that every item has it's owner. Everything belongs to someone and we need to take care just of things which belong to us. This makes it always challenging to establish longer lasting communal infrastructure. We aren't used to take care of communal goods. Especially if there is a constant flow of people coming and going as in forest occupation, creating structures which help to maintain our communal stuff might be necessary.

An example could be the harness system we made. For quite a long time we had no system in harnesses, but since we became more people it started to create problems of people not taking care of harnesses, equipment getting lost and so on. At that point having a private harness was a big advantage because people usually respect your private property on it and don't loot your harness and stuff, but unfortunately it was different with communal harnesses which were often very messed up.

At some point we collected all communal harnesses, looked through them, sorted out unsafe equipment, equipped all of them fully and all harnesses got marked with a number. We gathered all harnesses on one treehouse and on the door put a list with the harness numbers. The system was simple. You take a harness, you write your name on the list. You use the harness and take care of it and before you leave the forest you bring the harness back and cross your name on the list. It is a bit sad that we needed such a system but it improved the whole situation for some months until the occupation grew more and responsibility over climbing equipment got decentralized in Barrios. People took more care of harnesses and we could keep track where which harness is. This system was as well useful to keep track on harnesses that people haven't taken care of. For example when I've seen some harness hanging outside for multiple days on the same place I didn't need to ask anymore who's harness it is. I could just check the list and after finding that no one is using it anymore I could bring it back. Labelling all harnesses with Danni and a number showed to be useful as well after the occupation was evicted. Some harnesses survived the eviction and some of those then got privatized. But because we labeled all of them we can all now when we see someone having Danni harness go to them and confront them that this harness is communal and if they have privatized it they should communalize it again in some other occupation or project so that it remains as commons.

Another useful structure was Matilda. A treehouse which was build exclusively for storing communal tools and material. Matilda was big and accessible with ladder and inside full of tools and materials well sorted in the shelves so that everyone from the forest could have the same good access to the tools they needed. It was great to have one central place accessible to everyone but unfortunately it was very few people who actually took care of the place. Basically everyone in the forest was using tools and material from there but not all the people

11. ISRAEL

One of the things which I regret is that we sometimes haven't stop people from promoting state and other evil structures. Main issue would be for me spread of pro- Israel banners, stickers, tags and other shit around Unterwex. I don't care too much what people write on their banner but messages supporting state and especially Israeli state shouldn't be tolerated in anarchist spaces.

I know that there is still a lot of discrimination towards jewish people but supporting Israel means supporting other discrimination and oppressive structures. I also know that there is this weird thing in Germany that part of a left scene supports Israel but I don't care. People in Germany sometimes argue that their grandparents were killing jews so that they need to support jews nowadays. Nothing against that but if your support means support to a state which is imprisoning, raping and killing people I can't agree on that. I don't care about your historical German trauma. And if German people don't feel to be in position to say something against Israel then we should have done it together with other foreign people.

I know that there were people who tried to confront the whole Israeli thing in the forest but it wasn't enough. I believe that something like that should not be tolerated at all and that our whole forest community should have exclude that just when it started. It didn't happen and that I find bad. I took part in ignoring the problem. When I saw the banners I wanted to do something against that but I haven't found energy for it and rather focused on doing other things. I regret that now. In my opinion it should be one of our main priorities to confront and stop such behaviour in our own spaces. There should be no tolerance for support of oppressive structures. And Israel is surely an oppressive structure.

We should have gone to the person or people who stand behind it and make them stop or if they wouldn't want to stop we should have simply brought them out of the occupation. It is sad that it didn't happen.

person. I felt that this person could go much easier in discussions on sexism and some related topics than me without being judged as an asshole only because how people perceived their gender.

In this chapter I've described just certain points about some sexism we had in the occupation. There would be much more and I believe many other people could write a text about it and it would probably talk often about very different things than my text. I would be interested in reading such texts if they happen to exist.

To overcome sexism is a big challenge but it is great that we are taking the challenge and I feel that in the forest we created a much less sexist space than most of other spaces in this world. Why I wrote this chapter is to talk about some things which I felt were not reflected enough so that maybe next time we can think about those problems more as well. I don't say that those problems I described are more important than others and they probably aren't but in the end we should probably try to go against all oppressive social structures in our communities.

were sorting the tools back. Often people just brought the tools back all mixed up in a bag and dumped the bag on the floor. That's shit but what I see as a bigger problem is that then most of the people just passed by the bag and didn't bother to sort it out where it belongs. Why to bother? It's not mine. It is just communal. It was very little group of people doing this shit work of cleaning up and sorting things there. Most of the time three or four same people did that for months. It's shit if everyone benefits from the nice communal structure but just few people take care of it. At some point when me with two other people who were often taking care of it moved to Drüben, to the other side of the forest, Matilda turned into chaos. I remember myself saying something like "c'mon we won't be coming from Drüben to sort out your shit" but obviously not enough people had enough commitment for the communal infrastructure and the treehouse got just more and more messy and the structure stopped functioning. Sad story.

Another problem we faced was privatization of treehouses. In spring there was even a time when all nice high treehouses were somehow private. Some "owners" were willing to share them, others less. It is clear that everyone needs a place to sleep and most of us enjoy to sleep in a nice place which is not shared with too many people. But if we call ourselves anarchists, private property shouldn't be a way how to ensure that for ourselves. With some treehouses it worked in a way that when the "owner" left even for some months when they came back they got their treehouse back and moved in. People who stayed there in the meantime moved out. There were also situations like people leaving for few days and offering someone that they can stay there for these few days until they come back and take care of their treehouse. What the fuck? This is such a huge hierarchy when someone owns a luxury house and other people, who don't, can maybe hope that if the person likes them enough they will get a chance to stay there for few days when the owner is gone and then when the owner returns they will need to move back to some low treehouse shared with many people or into a tent or something.

I remember a discussion where some people were advocating for private treehouses. One of the arguments was that people who have their own treehouse have just a bigger need for their own space and others obviously don't have that need because otherwise they could build their own house. In that time I was sleeping in a tent and it made me a bit angry. Me and the person with who I was usually sleeping we had a need for more personal space as well but instead of egoistically following just our own needs and building a nice treehouse for ourselves, we've build a huge treehouse for many people to sleep, we have build two communal kitchens, we were taking care of communal tools, equipping communal harnesses and did other work for the whole community. And then as a result of working for the community some members of the community tell me basically that it is my own fault that I have to live in a tent when they have a nice treehouse. I found this logic very anti-communal and ego-centric.

It is also important to point out that later on when the forest divided more into barrios it was very different with privatization of treehouses in all Barrios. For example in Drüben such privatization never happened and all treehouses remained as our commons.

All in all we made a lot of bad experiences with people all the time stealing our communal headlights, privatizing climbing equipment, not taking care of tools and leaving a lot of this work just on few people but I think it was worth it that we made the effort and tried. A lot of things failed, some worked. It will be a long process to overcome private property logic but in my opinion it's necessary. Maybe we need to be more militant and if we for example find out that someone left with our communal pulleys or carabiners from the forest when they come back we should not just take those back but directly communalize the whole harness of the person. But probably the first step is that people who have been in the forest reflect if they by any chance haven't stolen one of our headlights or if they could not have put more effort in taking care of our common things.

3. CLASSISM IN THE OCCUPATION

There were a lot of shitty things in the occupation which I didn't fully realise while they were happening and I needed some months of reflection after eviction to figure things out. With classism it was different. I've seen and felt this problem in the forest all through the time of occupation. We don't talk about classism as much as about some other systems of oppression which is a bit unlucky. Our movement consists mostly by people from middle and upper class families so it's not a big thing for most of us. In the forest we create kind of our own society which functions in some aspects differently, but many structures remain even though sometimes a bit changed. One usually doesn't know what family background people have but we created kind of our own class system.

It is a bit funny that often the higher class people are in such position because they get social money from state but in the end the discriminatory structure remains the same. Some people have resources like money, private tools or climbing equipment, private treehouses and those people are often the ones who make important decisions, do rather cognitive work like press work or taking care of money. Then there are other people who often either don't have much money or who don't use it, use communal tools and climbing gear, don't possess a treehouse, do mostly manual work and simply aren't part of the elite.

This division into those groups was very visible by what people do what work. One of the shittiest but necessary works we had was dismantling planks in Hogwarts. Everyone needed the planks either directly for their own construction works or indirectly for treehouses in which they were sleeping. It was basically few same people over the year doing this job, usually together with few new people. There were other people who never or almost never joined this work and often these were the people who have money, private treehouse or their own harness. Getting material from Hogwarts is an easy example because one could clearly see the same people working there but it would apply to more manual works than just this one.

But let's stay with the Hogwarts planks for a bit. As I said it was a shit work. The planks were covered by toxic glass wool and most of us did it because it was necessary for building treehouses. At some point we gathered a big pile of planks and as always brought them to forest by tractor and distributed them to all places where people needed them. Shortly after this plank delivery a person in Oben built a stage out of these planks. The purpose of the stage was to hold press conferences and concerts there. As I said when we were sweating under the sun getting the planks we did it for building more treehouses and then someone who did not participate in that process used them for a stage for stupid press conferences. This thing made me and also other people angry. The person who has built the stage was not part of getting the material and not by coincidence had one of the most private and fanciest treehouses in the occupation, same as their own harness and power tools. Not a big surprise. Poor people breath glass wool and do dirty work. Rich people with their fancy power tools make stages to hold press conferences. There was a person who wanted to dismantle the stage and went into an argument about that. Unfortunately there wasn't broader support and the unnecessary stage remained.

When you read this you maybe don't understand why I am getting so mad about one stage. For me it is a symbol. Symbol of exploitation. Less important people had to work hard to get material and "rich" people then took it to create their bourgeois bullshit. No one needed the stage. If you want to talk to media or have a concert do you really need for it a stage build out of nice planks? The stage was of course build in Oben as that was at that time the capital of the forest where most of the "forest bourgeoisie" lived. It is not about the stage but about the social structures behind it.

way mostly on woman. Feminism is important but it usually doesn't try to confront all existing sexist structures and behaviors. It happens very fast that if you criticize some feminist approaches you get refused as a sexist asshole even if your intentions were purely anti-sexist. We could use here comparison of sexism and racism. Racism works in one direction. If you are white you have all the privileges and if you aren't white you get often discriminated. With sexism it doesn't work like that. People of all different body shapes experience it in a specific way. I can maybe give just one example of how are people who are read as male discriminated. If you are read as male you are much more likely to be a victim of police violence and state repression. There are so many more people in male prisons than in female ones same as way most of the victims of police murders are people who are read as male. There would be many more examples but I think everyone can figure out by themselves. I don't try to deny that female read people are often very discriminated but what I'm trying to say is that it's all of us who experience sexist discrimination even though each of us in a different way and different intensity.

Sexism is a complex structure and we for sure remained to have a lot of it also in the occupation. What I see as dangerous is that we talk a lot about sexist discrimination of people read as female but not about others. As an example could serve washing dishes. Washing dishes is traditionally seen as a female work. We reflect on it and we try to change that we all wash dishes whatever gender or assumed gender we have. On the other hand we could take some typical male work like carrying beams. From my experience it was way mostly people who I would read rather as male carrying beams but the problem is that we never talked about it in the forest and I wouldn't feel that I can start talking about it because we simply never talk about sexism against male read people and we keep reproducing it. To this point I have to add that this is my experience and I've heard that in some other parts of forest people actually talked about it and tried to unbuild such structures. Also there were female read people who carried many beams with us but when I would count we would be still mostly male read people on many of these works.

Another example from the forest would be about taking off a T-shirt. In a broader society it's more accepted if male read people go topless and female read people are forced by social pressure to keep their T-shirt on. In the forest it was often that if a male read person would take off their shirt it would be a problem and people would force them to dress up but if a female read person would do that it would be often much more accepted. So basically we took a shitty discrimination and changed it only other way around. Our goal shouldn't be to change who is in privilege position and who is not but to dismantle the structure in which some people are privileged and other discriminated because of their body shape.

Both of the example of carrying beams or taking of T-shirt are just minor issues but it shows us an ugly direction in which we sometimes went in Danni and generally we do often in German anarchist scene.

Other aspect I felt quite strong was different acceptance of let's say controversial opinions. I could see it the best on an example of me and one friend who lived also for longer in the forest. I am usually read as male, the friend is usually read as female, even though we both don't identify like that. With this person we have on many issues similar opinions and approaches but reaction of others would be often different. I knew that if I present some controversial idea or do something controversial (controversial in certain topics like antisexism or such) it will be probably much less accepted then if the friend brings up the same just because they have boobs and no beard. That's really shit if we don't think about an opinion itself but if we instead of that make a judgment based on (assumed) gender of the

10. TROUBLES WITH GENDER

While writing this book I was leaving this chapter as one of the last ones to write because it is hard for me to put my thoughts on this topic in a text which would make sense but it is important for me to write about this topic so I'll try and I hope people won't get angry from the text. I don't want to talk about all sexism or struggles around gender which were present in the forest. I can talk only about the struggles and things that I personally experienced and so I am able to describe them. There would be many other things to talk about but I think I am not the right person to talk about them. For example I don't talk about sexism towards women because I don't experience it directly on my own so I don't feel in position to talk about it. But it doesn't mean that I don't see this oppression. I do.

I've never felt so much gendered and judged for my assumed gender as in Danni. What I see as one of the sources of this problem is that instead of trying to get away from all categories we are sometimes just changing the categories a bit and demanding better position for certain categories. Instead of trying to abolish the binary system of people being either men or women I felt that we sometimes change it rather to other binary system of men or people who are assumed to be men and don't say anything against it and FLINTA people (FLINTA is a German shortcut for women, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, transgender, agender people). Even though people regularly each year add one more letter to the shortcut (I remember few years ago it was just FLIT) it doesn't change the structure of putting people into two categories. In my opinion we need to try to abolish all these categories and see people rather as unique individuals.

I have a penis, balls and beard so people usually assume me being a man and sometimes in Danni I could really feel their judgment about me being man because men are someone worse or at least that's how it felt to me. Sometimes I even happen to hear people talking such things.

I don't feel like a man. I also don't feel non-binary or FLINTA or anything like that. I don't see myself as part of any of these things because it's simply not a part of my identity. I get that for other people it can be important and I respect it but for me it isn't. But it doesn't matter, even if I would consider myself as a man it doesn't change that I shouldn't be judged for that because that would be pure sexism.

Some other times I felt that people were dividing others into another binary system of queer and straight people while the queer people are more valued. It is a same shit like when it's other way around. States are trying to sort all of us into many different categories because it's necessary for ruling over people. People are categorized by their nationality, age, sex, sexual orientation, political opinion, their income and many others. As anarchist we should go against it. We should try to put ourselves out of the categories and especially not categorize others. Dismantling all those categories in our heads and in our interactions with others is undermining the state.

In the forest we often talked about sexism but way most of the times only about sexism against woman or people who are read by others as woman. We almost never talked about sexism against people who were raised as men. I felt like talking about discrimination of people assumed as male was a taboo and me as a male read person I would be afraid to bring it up. The main reason for this is in my opinion that the main present philosophy or movement which systematically works against sexism is feminism which is since it's beginning focused

Same as in the outer world also in the forest there were certain aspects which influence to which class you belong. Especially two of them. Nationality and if you live in centre or in periphery. But that's also connected because as I've described in another chapter before most of the foreigners moved out of the capital anyway.

It was crazy for me to sometimes count how many foreigners, or maybe better to say people who don't speak German, were doing certain harder manual works in comparison to how many we have been in forest. Often it would be that while for example getting building material half of the people would be foreigners even though in total the occupation was consisting maybe 90% by German speaking people. These numbers are just an estimation of situation at some point. It would be hard to count that precisely as the number of people in forest was always changing, but the trend that as a foreigner you would be probably doing rather this kind of work was a long term thing.

Even though in forest occupation I don't get paid I am still just a cheap worker from eastern Europe. In this our little forest society functions same as the one out of forest. Sometimes we've met paid workers in Hogwarts who worked for the owner of the building. Some of us could understand their language. They were also from eastern Europe. Some people might say that it was our own decision to dismantle planks but that's for me ignoring or not understanding the social structure of classism.

Same as outside of the forest it's not about personal preferences that immigrants usually do the low paid manual jobs, it's not only about our personal preferences in the forest either. If there would be enough other people doing these works I would be very happy not do it but if other people feel too good or important for that, well than it's left to us. To the lower class which not by coincidence consists of a lot of foreigners.

Another aspect for the class division would have been at least in some periods of time in which part of the forest you lived. Oben was the capital and the further you went the further on the periphery you got.

I can stay with our example of organising building material. Once in Drüben we got a phone call from Oben in which a person asked us if we know where they have the nearest stash of certain building materials. We knew it and we told them but it shows us how weird it was, that they had to call the other side of forest for that because obviously people from their barrio didn't really participate in such dirty work, at least in that period of time.

If we really want to live an anarchist community we should think about how to erase this division. I guess it's a lot about self reflection but there are many material steps people can do. First step could be to not create more private things to this world (like private treehouses), communalise some of the private things we have (like tools or climbing equipment) or for example if you're getting money from state you could think about sharing it with people who don't have that privilege. To me the idea that people would give a part of their money the government gives them to foreign people like me sounds weird and I don't know if I would want to accept the money but actually it should be normal. If we wanna live as an egalitarian community it's hard to achieve that if one person gets few hundreds of euros every month and others don't get any or maybe even need to pay for their health insurance. There can never be full equality in group like this. Money and resources create hierarchy.

I remember once talking with a friend, a punk from another country, who told me that in two months of living in the forest he never slept in a nice high treehouse. I knew that this person was doing a lot of work for the community and is a valuable part of it so it made me a bit angry, but he told me calmly something like “If you’re hobo outside of the forest, you are hobo inside of the forest too”. It was true but I wish it wouldn’t be argument about that. Unfortunately there wasn’t broader support and the unnecessary stage remained.

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9. FUCK POLITICIANS. FUCK NGOs

I hate listening to Barbara, active member of Green party, having speeches and talking to media using the occupation for building up her name and carrier. She was talking just what she wanted and often manipulating facts. I remember primary Barbara as the most visible politician but there were more of them and I am asking why did we tolerate it? If we call ourselves anarchists, shouldn’t it be normal to go against politicians and their structures? I can tolerate individuals who take part in the election circus but just when they stay as individuals and not as politicians. If Barbara or other politicians come to build a treehouse or to throw stones on cops I have nothing against it, but when such people get to media and take part in creating a public picture of the occupation I think we should take a stand against it. It went that far that few months after eviction Die Linke (german political party) had on their election posters the slogan “wald statt asphalt”, which used to be kind of a slogan of our anarchist occupation. I know that there was not much time and energy for such things while eviction but maybe we can try next time to communicate clearly to such people already long time before eviction that we don’t want to be used for their stupid political carrier. Maybe just a banner saying something like “We hate all politicians” placed on a visible place in an occupation can be a good beginning.

A similar thing would apply to NGOs. Their role in the system is to get in touch with people who want to change how certain things function in society and by their non-violent approach take care that their protest or activity doesn’t become dangerous for the existing social order. The work of such organisations is usually to demand from government and state minor reforms without questioning the concept of state and power. If we consider ourselves as revolutionaries our goals are simply different.

In our case we created an anarchist forest occupation with radical goals and ideas behind it. When it became bigger and therefor more relevant and threatening for the status quo, the NGOs and big organizations (I don’t know if for example Extinction rebellion would count as NGO but it often does the same) came with their big budgets and started to do their shit as always. They come to help and I believe they have usually good intentions of supporting the protest. But what often happens is that they bring a lot of money, media and resources and with those work to deradicalize and pacify the protest or movement and take over the public picture of a certain protest or movement. When you search on the internet for “Danni bleibt”, the first page you find is not our blog but the website of Campact.

In my opinion we need to think about longer term strategy and not just about short term goals. For me some points in such longer term strategy would be confronting the state and trying to build a strong radical and militant movement. For that NGOs are definitely not helpful because they will always stay in the way of confrontations, militancy and uprisings. They want to have peaceful protest and keep playing the game of democracy. Fuck Campact, fuck state, fuck peaceful protest, fuck reformists!

The question for me is, do we need to work with NGOs at all? Sure, money from them can be useful but do we really need it and is it worth of the price? Big stages can be useful maybe, or is it useful just for politicians, professional activist and other people following their own agenda to spread their propaganda? I hope we will become more critical about NGOs, think always about pros and cons and then decide if and how we wanna cooperate with them.

In the end, the work of NGOs and police result both in protecting the system from uprisings and revolutions. NGOs do it by “helping“ the protest, taking control over it and pacifying it. Cops come later to repress those who didn’t get pacified by previous attempts. We don’t talk to cops. Why do we talk to NGOs?

but our logo still remained there and it was only edited that some people from the occupation are part of the alliance. For me that means that they just made little some cosmetic changes that it can't be criticized. But it looked the same that as an occupation we are in pact with those organizations and groups. We never discussed about it and I was never in any alliance with any of those groups. Fuck that. This was just pure manipulation and I find it very authoritarian when just a small group of people decide such things for the whole occupation. After about half an hour of discussion/argument I had with one press team member about the alliance he said something like "Yes maybe we can do it this time differently than in Hambi. There we just decided about the press stuff from top down and haven't really talked to other people in forest but yes maybe we can do it this time differently." What the fuck? Maybe? That's so fucking arrogant and authoritarian!

In general I felt that some of the press people often felt like the most important ones and as the ones who know the best what to say and how to represent the occupation. Once I was told by a person who was at that time part of the press team that I shouldn't talk to media because I say what I think. What else should I fucking say? I am obviously good enough for building platforms or cooking dinner, but for talking to media not, because that's obviously nothing for common forest people because for that we have a higher cast of nice German climate activist who know better what to say. Fuck off!

I believe that in case we decide to talk to media we can at least do it under our conditions to keep some control over it. We can demand for example that we can read or listen over the media outcomes before they publish them with the possibility of refusing it to be published if it's shit. If they refuse then why to work with them? I think if, and there is always this big if, we cooperate with mainstream media we should take care that we really work together and not that we work for them. By demanding certain conditions of cooperation we can ensure that the media outcomes can be less shit and that we have an influence on it. They will sometimes surely refuse our conditions so we would have probably less media outcomes but do we really need to be in every stupid TV and in every stupid newspapers?

There is plenty of anarchist media and communication channels existing and we could rather try to use those. Yes they don't have big reach but if we keep always focusing on mainstream media our media will never become stronger. If we want to have communication channels which don't serve the interests of state and capital we need to put our work in it and maybe in some years they can develop to actually having bigger reach and influence. If we don't do it and keep focusing on spreading our message in national TV we will never get to this point.

Another issue we should realize is that media have a big influence to the inside of the movement. For example they influence which actions are seen as legit and which not. Basically by media the system regulates which kind of actions are being done and which not and by this control that the resistance doesn't become threatening for it. The German protest movement is super pacified and I think it has a lot to do with the fact that a lot of actions are focused a lot on media coverage and creating a nice picture. We often censor ourselves to not do more radical or militant actions because we fear that the media will say bad things about it and if someone else does it, then usually people either distance themselves from it or at least try not to talk about it. Here we are! Super harmless movement which does usually just what the ruling class allows them and so does never become really threatening for the status quo.

Danni became a big thing and we could have used it to spread our anarchist propaganda and make our movement more understood and respected, but instead of that when I look on the media outcomes I see mostly people talking about climate change or about how highways or logging is not good. I think we could have made more out of it.

If we really want to live an anarchist community we should think about how to erase this division. I guess it's a lot about self reflection but there are many material steps people can do. First step could be to not create more private things to this world (like private treehouses), communalise some of the private things we have (like tools or climbing equipment) or for example if you're getting money from state you could think about sharing it with people who don't have that privilege. To me the idea that people would give a part of their money the government gives them to foreign people like me sounds weird and I don't know if I would want to accept the money but actually it should be normal. If we wanna live as an egalitarian community it's hard to achieve that if one person gets few hundreds of euros every month and others don't get any or maybe even need to pay for their health insurance. There can never be full equality in group like this. Money and resources create hierarchy.

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4. DRÜBEN

To have at least one positive chapter I've decided to write something about Drüben. Drüben was a barrio in the north end of the Dannenroder forest and was in few aspects quite cool. I believe people from other barrios could write an article about how great their barrio was and I would really love to read that. For me personally Drüben was fitting the most so I will talk about that but it's very subjective view and other people would have perceived some things probably differently.

First half a year I was living around Oben and Unterwex, same as (almost) everyone at that time, and moved to Drüben in beginning of July. In the spring we had quite a lot of conflicts and problems around Oben about veganism, nudity, organisational structure and others. It was a hard time and in the end a lot of this conflicts kind of ended when we divided more into different barrios which each had certain characteristics. Drüben was the punky barrio where people don't clean dishes but not only that. Drüben was much more. One of the things I did not like before moving to Drüben was kind of a class society and together with that privatization of treehouses. In Drüben we never had private treehouses. In end of summer Drüben rapidly grew and became one of the biggest barrios with plenty of treehouses but it still kept its egalitarian character. To be honest all treehouses in Drüben were kind of shitty so one wouldn't gain much by privatising some but I will rather live with only shitty treehouses which we share than with few nice treehouses where privileged people live and shitty treehouses where other people live.

The first 2 months I've spent in Drüben we haven't been many people so there was no need for any organisational structure and later on when we became more people someone simply made a list with all the treehouses on it and then people made marks on the list which treehouse they wanna sleep in. With this simple system people could know what is free, could make marks for the next days so they don't need to move their shit too often and the whole sleeping list made it bit more transparent and open. One could argue that it is bit annoying if you need to move often but how I perceived it it was voluntary and most people thought that once in few days taking your shit down and pulling it somewhere else up is in that situation just normal and worth it for preventing hierarchy of some people having better housing than others. I think the fact that we didn't try to build luxury treehouses for ourselves was as well one of the reasons why Drüben grew up that rapidly. During the summer when we've been just few people living there we could have spent our time by building fancy treehouses for ourselves. We had the skills, we had huge trees, we would have material for that but we simply didn't have the wish. Instead of that we rather focused on creating good infrastructure which allowed the barrio to grow fast later on. We've built a nice kitchen/living room, we've build a platform for water and bikes, there was a treehouse for tools and material storage, we've build a platform above the road to throw things on passing cars and so on. It made a good base and when more people came we could just go forward with building on all the high oaks because we had basic infrastructure in place already.

If there was a class division in the forest between the barrios we've been the lowest class barrio. The people who do the manual work which others don't want to do. Often foreigners. The furthest place in the forest where a lot of people never bothered to come. But I believe it helped to create a nice culture and unity we had in Drüben. We were just the end of the forest, the bottom of the forest society and that I think partly made that people felt more united and no one put themselves in a higher position over others. I remember a person from another barrio saying that Drüben is the unaware barrio. Was it? For what reasons? I

After the occupation I've heard from some people that they didn't want to go to Danni because it seemed to them that it's just a reformist project campaigning against the highway and car industry. It wasn't like that, and I find it very sad that because of people with this agenda taking over most of the public outcomes, the outside image of the occupation was like this.

Another point in which the media work was very exclusive was that it was almost only German speaking people who had a chance to give interviews and take part. It is clear that when German TV comes they want someone who speaks German, but we could have just simply told them that it is an international movement and that today a person who doesn't speak German will talk with them and if they don't like it they can leave. I know about at least one person who lived in the forest for long and would be up to talk to media but didn't get a chance because there would be always some German speaking press team member who would take the chance to talk to press.

The press team was a weird thing in general. Many of the people arrived just shortly before eviction and some of them I saw literally for the first time when they said that they are our press team. There are couple of reasons why I find this problematic. One of them is that it's simply not cool if people who were not part of the occupation before come just when the media attention comes and talk for the occupation which they actually don't know. Also it feels to me like that these people were kind of taking over our project. Another issue is that I simply can't trust someone who I've never seen holding a hammer but I see them just communicating to press and doing such stuff. There were some people doing media work who actually lived in the forest and who I saw often holding a hammer before, but the amount of this professional press team activists was surprisingly big for me.

It was a strange time before eviction seeing all the NGOs, celebrities and press spokes people arriving. The occupation was there almost for a year but a lot of these people started to come just at that point when media started to be interested in the whole thing. Sometimes I felt that the people from "our" press team were putting themselves in a higher position and acting in an authoritarian way. One example could be our twitter account. The twitter account was made long time ago and many people had access to it. Basically if you lived for a while in forest and you wanted to get access to it you could get the password and use the twitter. That was at some point apparently a problem for the press team people because like this they didn't have full control about what is being posted so they changed the password and shared it just to people they wanted. After critique from some forest people the password got eventually changed back, but what the fuck? If the press team wants to control communication channels they create and use, ok, but if they come, take over our structures open to people from the occupation and deny us access I find that a bit problematic.

Another thing which made me especially angry was in summer when people created an alliance with a couple of organizations and groups like Ende Gelände and others. About this alliance I've heard the first time after the press conference where they publicly announced it. I was very unhappy with this, because I think no one can decide for the whole occupation such thing as becoming part of an alliance with other groups. At least not without bigger discussion with people from the occupation. I went to talk to some people who stand behind this alliance thing and criticized it. Some of the people admitted my critique being valid and with some others I needed to argue quite a lot. Because of me being enough stubborn on that they took the occupation out of the alliance then. In the end it didn't change much. The alliance was called Wald statt Asphalt which was kind of the name of our occupation until that. Our website was for example called like that since the beginning of the occupation. And on the next flyers and things there wasn't written anymore that the occupation is part of it,

8. TROUBLES WITH MEDIA

In the beginning of this chapter I want to point out that this text is not aimed at people doing media work in Danni but it is criticizing how it was done. I have nothing against the individual people. I know that a lot of them put a big effort in it and did their best to support the occupation by this kind of work. Some of them are also my friends.

The first big problem about the occupation and media I see is that there was never a broad discussion in the forest if we actually want to cooperate with mainstream media. At some point people just said we are making a press team and we want to get big reach with mainstream media. I know for many people it's just clear that it's important to talk to press but for other comrades it's clear that it is useless and contra productive. We need to talk about it.

I think before we (or rather some of us) have started to focus on getting into media we should have asked what is the role of the media in the system and who do they work for. Pretty much all big media are owned either by states or by some rich bastards and therefor have no interest to go against these structures and people. Media is a tool of the ruling class to preserve the present social order and form the public opinion by their interest. Capitalists and state media will never support a fight for total liberation. Cooperating with them can be helpful in achieving short term goals as protecting one forest but in terms of bigger goals they are inherently on the other side of the barricade than we are.

Since the first state societies appeared, the ruling classes worked on creating a complex structure to keep their power position. It is not just cops or military who keep the system of exploitation running, but it is as well school teachers, priests, train conductors, debt collectors or media. So if we consider ourselves revolutionaries why do we cooperate with an enemy? People might argue that everyone can act autonomously and do what they think is the best but I think there should be some limits. If you autonomously decide to talk for others it is not cool and that's exactly what happened. For about half a year we had press teams in the forest which were talking to the media for the occupation and therefor talking for everyone who was part of the occupation without us ever getting the opportunity to say if we want that.

Media work in Danni was very exclusive and only some people and ideas got represented. If you look on the media outcomes, a lot of it is about Verkehrswende (German word for mobility change- something like less cars, more trains and such stuff). To be honest, I really don't care much about your Verkehrswende. There were many different people in the forest with many different motivations and achieving Verkehrswende was only one of them, but unfortunately the one which got way mostly into the media, which was creating a false picture of the occupation.

It seemed to me that some people were probably quite represented by the media outcomes from Danni. For example German people who want Verkehrswende, like to talk about climate and don't want to talk about militant actions or more radical ideas. Other people whose main motivations are for example rather fighting against the state and industry and don't want just green reforms had no voice.

There was a wide spectrum of people involved in the resistance. From militant anarchists with maybe some anti-civilization stands to nice Fridays For Future activists who want the government to protect the climate. It is nice to have such a diverse movement, but if basically all communication to the outside is just about goals and opinions of one part of it that's shit.

don't think it was more unaware than other barrios, but it gave me the impression that some people felt in a higher position over us. Judging us and not giving reasons for it, especially if they never came to Drüben to see what we actually do.

One good thing we made in Drüben was that we defined some basic points on how we live there. We put a sign to the entry to the barrio saying: We eat freegan, people might be naked here, people sometimes take drugs, it's an English speaking barrio and we don't wash dishes. These basic points helped us to prevent many misunderstandings or false expectations. I think it is great if people define their barrio in a certain way and clearly communicate it so that everyone knows what to expect and can decide if they want to stay there. A nice thing about our basic points was that it was all anti-rules, no obligations. We don't forbid you to wash your plate, but don't expect us to wash ours. We don't say you have to be naked or you have to eat freegan but we say that people might do that. And if you want to live here you either accept it or you can go to another barrio where they live differently.

One of the main aspects of life in Drüben was the lack of institutionalised structures of organisation. We didn't have plenaries or set up working groups and such. We tried to rather organise informally and learn how to take responsibility to act autonomously. If you create a structure for everything it can be convenient because you can shift the responsibility to those structures but if we keep shifting responsibilities can we really call ourselves autonomous people? In some other barrios they had for example welcoming structures for new people. What can be more impersonal than that? In Drüben we didn't have any fixed welcoming structures so if you saw new people you just talked with them and tried to include them into the group which worked I think usually quite naturally. At some point there were some "eviction is coming tomorrow meetings" but otherwise if I remember well we never had other structured meetings because we simply didn't need them and in the end I think that should be our goal.

Other great thing about Drüben was it's international character. Maybe except few weeks in October speaking English was just normal and often even more than half of the people were from other countries.

We could probably learn a lesson from each barrio but those were some of the things I've personally learned in Drüben.

5. TROUBLES WITH VEGANS

One of the main conflicts in the occupation was between vegans and freegans or rather between some of them. This vegan war lasted in different intensity over few months until we split into different barrios each with more clear vegan or not vegan position.

The first winter most of us in the forest were eating all different stuff we found in dumpsters including animal products. There were always some people who have eaten only vegan but at that time they weren't many so the whole occupation appeared as quite freegan place. It is important to mention that we were always refusing non vegan stuff which was not dumpster dived.

We always cooked vegan dinner but other meals often consisted dumpstered animal products. We were having only one kitchen in use at that time so everything was happening there and the freegan animal products were as well stored there.

Time to time some people came and told us how stupid we are for our choice of what we eat and left but in spring more people who wanted to veganalize the space were coming. I understand why people eat only vegan and that they might want to have a vegan kitchen or vegan barrio, but what I perceived as a problem was that those people came to an established place which was obviously freegan and directly tried to change it. There were often little fights about where can we eat what and from my point of view it was always us freegans who were trying to find some compromise or solution how can we live together but we've been usually turned back with dogmatic answers of that eating meat is bad and we should not do that. All 3 our kitchens at that time were mostly (or in case of unterwex ground kitchen only) build by people who eat all kinds of trash and therefor I find problematic if someone comes to our home and tell us what we can eat in our own kitchen. If you want to have a vegan kitchen you should build one rather than trying to take over other spaces. I remember the time when a person who has built all three existing kitchens was thinking to build a fourth one. Not that he would enjoy that much building kitchens but because he wanted to have a kitchen where we could eat what we want and what we find ethical without anyone yelling on us.

In the end there was a meeting which decided that our ground kitchen in Oben will be veganalized but first we need to get a freegan kitchen which should be build by vegans. New kitchen was build and we've been moved there but it definitely wasn't the end of the problem. Some people were very dogmatic about keeping the vegan kitchen purely vegan which led to many stupid exclusive situations. One example would be of a friend. She made her morning coffee and when she found out that there is just tiny leftover of plant milk she decided to leave that for strictly vegan people and rather put dumpster dived cow milk in her coffee. She asked if it is ok for people if she drinks it there. She was refused and sent out of the kitchen. It was the main social space so she had to drink the coffee alone somewhere in the forest or in empty freegan kitchen. I remember as well many times sitting alone in the freegan kitchen, excluded from the main social space.

Why I describe all this is to share my experience of many vegan people behaving super dogmatic and authoritarian. They basically gentrified us from our own kitchens where we used to hang out. They forced their wish and manage to change the space against the will of many people who lived in the place. I understand that people might not like to see for example meat being cooked but I can not believe that it's so triggering for these people if someone drinks coffee with bit of milk few meters from them. And if so, then pushing people away from their home is not a right solution.

I remembered the forest as a radical community and now it often felt like being on Ende Gelaende or a festival. Just a lot of random people I don't know doing a lot of random things often without even thinking if it actually makes sense or not.

With this fast growth the occupation lost a lot of its values. One example could be anti-consumerism. Before anti-consumerism was a very present approach but at some point it got almost entirely lost. Half a year before we would first try to straighten even the most banded rusty nails before buying new ones and now people were just buying and consuming so much crazy shit.

I think I don't need to give more examples. Other chapters of the text are full of them and probably a lot of people who spent some time in forest around eviction time remembers by themselves the feeling of watching people doing something and just thinking what the fuck is going on?

Two weeks before cutting started people have established a camp in Dannenrod. The camp was a very useful structure but sometimes it got so far from the values our occupation used to have. The camp and the occupation were always two different structures which obviously function differently but there are some things which went in my opinion wrong. One example of that could be the stage with huge speakers which was built. Especially on weekends the camp was reminding rather capitalist festival then a place of ecological resistance. Every Saturday they were playing super loud music just next to the forest which we could hear even on the very opposite side of forest in Drüben, few kilometres far away. That's so crazy. We came to protect the forest and then we sometimes behaved so destructive and ignorant to all other creatures living in the woods.

Recently I've heard that at some point the sound system got sabotaged. If it actually happened then thanks a lot to those who did it.

7. CAPITALISM IN OUR HEADS

The first winter I've spent in the forest I felt like that we were creating and living a nice and radical anarchist project. Unfortunately over the time I was losing this feeling and while eviction it reached the point that I knew that if the eviction would stop today I would not want to live in this place anymore. There were simply too many things going wrong.

One of the main reasons for this change was the thinking that we need more and more. We need more people, more treehouses, more media outcomes, more barricades, more of everything. It is such a capitalistic concept.

I remember taking a bike ride through the forest and seeing so many new tripods, treehouses and other things which simply haven't been there two or three days ago when I passed by last time. I have to say that in beginning it felt quite cool and it was great to see all the energy people had. It was giving us a hope that we will resist the eviction and forest will remain. But soon I started to realise how much we are losing with this crazy growth.

I don't want to blame any groups or individuals for this. Probably we all at some point thought like that. If you would've asked me in summer before eviction what we need I would've probably answered that we need to start new barrios there and there or build more lock ons or something like that. We grew up in a society which has expansion as one of its main values and principles and it's hard to overcome this way of thinking. During the summer people made a campaign which had as a main goal to get as big as possible. All come to Dann! Now! At that point it surely made sense to lot of people but now when I look back I see it as source of many problems. The campaign worked out and more and more people were coming. There were times when maybe 8 people were in the forest for more than half a year, another 20 for more than one month and then other 80 people who arrived just a few days ago. It was not possible to keep the culture we've tried to build in the forest for almost a year. There was no time for new people to get to know the place and how it functions. No time for discussions, no time for nothing. Only time for building and expanding.

From the point of view I have now it might have been better if we would not go this crazy way of uncontrolled growth. It was clear that if we wanna resist coming eviction the occupation needs to grow but maybe we could have chosen rather slower growth with taking more time for everything else. With this amount of new people and expansion our structures got totally overwhelmed. There could have been less effort put in getting more and more people to forest and if we would have rather focused on keeping our values, taking care of each other and of our community and of making new people really involved and understanding our struggle with all its characteristics. Maybe like this less of us would have burnt out or got depressions and such and we would have all maybe felt afterwards bit better about everything. Like this the occupation would probably not become same big but it would possibly keep more of its strengths and radicality.

It was crazy to see people who I've never met before doing a lot of random stuff which often didn't make any sense. Well, not a big surprise when so many new people come, most people who they meet are as well new and all the people who are in the forest longer have so much shit to do.

I remember once in some argument I asked "Do we really all have to move to Drüben?" as Drüben was known as the most free space. At that moment I had no idea that in few months I will really move to Drüben and never come back to live around Oben. I feel I was pushed out of a place which I took active part in building up and which was my home. It was not only because of the vegan war but it definitely was one of the reasons why I didn't want to live in the place I used to like so much anymore.

I write this chapter not to just complain but to share my point of view on the whole experience. I hope that people who tend to be dogmatic about veganism would show more tolerance and respect to people with different opinions and habits. There are good reasons to eat only vegan. There are good reasons for eating freegan. We should respect individual choices on that.

One conclusion from my experiences is that for freegan communities in open spaces like forest occupation it might help to define their space like their kitchen as freegan and communicate it clearly from beginning to avoid conflicts about that and when vegans try to take over, stop that process in beginning.

Another related issue was the sabotage of hunting towers. There are good reasons to break down hunting towers but there are also good reasons to not break down hunting towers. In our specific situation we found the best to not do it. It was important for us to connect with local people and if you come to countryside where every second person is a hunter or a farmer or both and you start with breaking down hunting towers you will probably not find much of understanding.

Unfortunately there were often people coming for short time to forest who as part of their visit wanted to break down a hunting tower. At some point nearly all people who were actually living in the forest were against breaking down hunting towers but they still kept falling. Unfortunately those visitors didn't want to accept our opinions and longer term strategies and wanted to do their action. Often those people came from a different occupation so why should they listen how people here do stuff. They are the cool radical Mikes so they wanna break down something and it is up to other people to then talk with upset locals who don't like that. I wish when people come to a place like forest occupation they first check out what people do and think about certain destructive actions and then decide if they do them with respect to people who actually live in a place and try to do longer term work. Autonomy doesn't mean for me only that one can do things without asking for permission, but that people can do things without asking for permission because they can make a responsible decision and consider the consequences of the action for them and for other people.

6. OBEN

The occupation started in the end of September 2019 in Oben. Shortly after that people pulled up one platform in Drüben and one treehouse was build in Unterwex. Except these two platforms everything inside of the forest was centralized in Oben in the first months. There weren't many people so it simply made sense to occupy just one place. I even remember one night when we were only three people sleeping in forest.

During the winter and early spring we have built more structures in Unterwex, but Oben stayed the place where we spent our days. In early spring 2 people started to live in Drüben but except those two we've been all living around Oben. Spring in Oben was sometimes very exhausting with different people having different expectations and needs but we still tried to figure out somehow how to live together and didn't want to split into barrios. With my memories on Hambi, where the occupation was at some point very divided into barrios with little communication and exchange in between I also didn't want to divide ourselves and thought that we should try to stick together and learn how to live as a community even with all our differences. Now I would see it differently. There are different needs and wishes how to organize and sometimes it is maybe unnecessary to compromise a way for everyone and it's better to leave each other space.

Our split into Barrios happened in July and August. With some people we moved to our friends in Drüben. A group of people started Nirgendwo as a vegan barrio. During summer Morgen grew and even though it took time it was slowly getting more independent from Oben. The first platform in Woanders and future Zwischendurch were built. From my point of view this foundation of new barrios (or in case of Drüben growth of an old little barrio) was a nice step which calmed down old conflicts and gave different groups an opportunity to organize in their own way.

What was becoming more and more problem was that even though there were now all these barrios a lot of structures stayed in Oben. The forest phone was always in Oben, decisions about finances were usually taken in Oben, most of media stuff was done in Oben, most donations went to Oben and so on. It wouldn't be that big problem to go to Oben to for example pick up food when we run out of it in our place but it felt like that Oben was the capital city where the decisions are being made, all important stuff is happening and important people live. The rest was the periphery. For long time there was no structure for communicating important stuff through the forest and people barely ever made the effort to go to other barrios to share information. To get important information you would need to go everyday to Oben and ideally know who are the right people to talk to.

Sometimes it happened to me that I came to Oben and found out that there is a finance plenary happening at that moment or stuff like that. Probably about many of such meetings and things I didn't know, just because I didn't come in the right moment to Oben. Once someone told us in Drüben that there was apparently a big press conference in Oben where people announced that the occupation is in an alliance with couple of groups and organizations. It wasn't a nice feeling to hear about all this stuff afterwards without having any chance to be part of a discussion simply because it's too far and not enough important to go to talk with people in Drüben or other places.

It was a difficult time in Oben with often too many new people and too many things going on, so I don't want to blame people who stayed in Oben at that time. But I wanted to share this experience with the hope that next times we try to prevent such hierarchies to build up. Otherwise I have a lot of respect to Oben people that they managed to include so many new people during the summer without burning all out.

As a result of this whole unlucky situation we organized the first interbarrio meeting were people from all over the forest finally met and talked about important stuff. Some people were bit grumpy about going all the way to Drüben but they came anyway and interbarrio meetings became regular. When the camp in Dannenrod started some of the central structures like media moved out of forest and Oben slowly stopped to be the centre of the world, maybe with the little exception of communication headquarters on tree number five.