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Program for Conference

7–9 April 2023, Hamburg University, Audimax

CHALLENGING CAPITALIST MODERNITY IV

We want our world back!

Resist, Reclaim and Rebuild

Do Autonomous Education and Organize

7 April 2023 – Friday

08:00–11:45 Opening and Welcoming Speeches

08:00–10:00 Registration

10:00–10:30 Opening Performance:

The Govend is a Kurdish folkdance group made up of groups from different regions in Germany.

Gael Feirste are a collective of Belfast-based Irish traditional musicians and dancers who seek to represent the thriving music and dancing traditions that have emerged from the island of Ireland. Their performances draw on both the traditional as well as the more contemporary aspects of their culture.

10:30–11:45 Welcoming Speeches and Messages



Moderator: Hatun Ayçık is a psychological psychotherapist and board member of Kurdish Academics (KURD-AKAD).



Leyla Kaya is a nurse and represents the Hamburg Women's Council as well as the People's Council. The Hamburg Women's Council was the first all-women's council founded in Germany in 2005.



Luise Dechow is a student at the University of Hamburg. She studies English, Spanish and teaching and is part of the General Students' Committee.



James Kelman was born in Scotland, finished school aged 15; moved around, working in various jobs, living in different places. He committed to writing at 21; ramblings, stories, essays: whatever. Life goes on, we batter in and do what we can. Photographer: Francesco Gattoni



Reimar Heider is a physician by training and human rights activist. He is one of the spokespersons of the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan" and has translated several books by Öcalan.

11:45–12:45 Lunch

Capitalist Modernity – The Multicide Regime

12:45–14:45 Session I: ECOCIDE



Moderator: Bengi Akbulut is an associate professor at Concordia University. Her work is at the intersection of political economy and feminist and ecological economics, focusing on alternatives to capitalism, including economic democracy, degrowth, and commons.

1.1. The Policy of Plunder in Kurdistan: Ecocide

When the consciousness of being a society based on the division of labor gave way to the domination of humans over humans, the harmony between nature and society was disrupted. This breaking point gave birth to the elements of domination; over time, it made spaces uninhabitable through institutional structures such as the state. Unlimited consumption in the name of national development and industrialization has driven the earth to extinction. The massacres of nature in the Kurdistan geography appear with a different face. With a concept intertwined with military, economic and socio-political approaches, a systematic ecocide policy is being carried out against the Kurdish people and their geography. Each of the ecocide policies being carried out appears as a special-war policy at the same time. Together with the hot war being waged in Northern Kurdistan, a presentation will be made on the attempt to destroy the historical, cultural and communal values of the Kurdish people together with the massacres of nature.



Derya Akyol graduated from Zonguldak Karalimas University Geomatics Engineering Department in 2013. For 10 years she has been practicing her profession in Mardin. In 2018, she met the Ecology Movement through Mardin Ecology Association. Between 2020 and 2021, she was the co-spokesperson of the Ecology Union, which includes about 80 ecology organizations in Turkey and northern Kurdistan, of which Mesopotamia Ecology Movement (MEH) is a component. She has been the co-spokesperson of the MEH for nearly 2 years.

1.2. Reversing Ecocide: Regenerating the Gardens of Gaia

Capitals, states, and social movements are realigning to “solve” the ecocide wrought by massive factories of confined livestock. This leads to surprising alliances that threaten to increase ultra-processed foods as the diets of the poor. The alternative is to shift focus to ecosystems centred on regenerative farming and to reshape governance on the model of the cycle of water flows within Gaia.



Harriet Friedman is a food system analyst, Professor Emerita at the University of Toronto. “I use a food as a lens to engage with social and natural sciences and different ways of knowing. The 500 year history of commodity frontiers has also inspired diasporic creativity, which points towards trajectories towards place-based renewal of biocultural landscapes and cuisines within Gaia.”

1.3. “Peasants and the Ecosystems Confronting Imperialism’s Reach.”

Imperialist countries, especially the US along with G7 countries, have used a range of institutions and policies to pave the way for agrochemical corporations capturing agriculture production, which includes scarce resources, labor and markets of colonial and neo-colonial regions. The result is of course soaring national debt, pauperization of the masses, and hunger. Thus ensues a class struggle between the peasantry and feudal and capitalist elite. In Pakistan, a country beleaguered by such a scenario, there is an added facet of climate imperialism faced by the people, and for half of the population there is also the burden of patriarchy. Building a united people’s front is now the critical duty of the masses, the workers and the peasantry.



Azra Talat Sayeed works with Roots for Equity, an organization that remains committed to being part of communities struggling for social and economic justice. Azra is an activist working for farmers’ rights and women’s rights. She is the chairperson for International Women’s Alliance (IWA), and the vice chair of the International League of People’s Struggles (ILPS).

1.4. “Perspectives of the climate justice movement (in Germany and beyond)”

While climate collapse takes its course, states prove to be incapable of finding appropriate answers. A look into the energy sector gives us a clear impression of how capitalism finds new ways to try to maintain current power structures. But democratic, ecological movements are rising and see the need for radical change.



Sina Reisch is part of Ende Gelände. The alliance organizes mass actions of civil disobedience against fossil infrastructure in Germany. While focussing on blocking coal at first, the group has shifted their focus to gas in 2020. The general goal has stayed the same though: To challenge the colonial, fossil, capitalist status quo and strive for global climate justice.

1.5. Call for papers: “Bookchin and Beyond”

Murray Bookchin’s writing on social ecology was a major inspiration for Abdullah Öcalan’s “Beyond State, Power, and Violence”. How do the two thinkers relate to each other in terms of ecology? What are their main differences?



Davide Grasso is Ph.D. in Moral, Theoretical Philosophy and Philosophical Hermeneutics at the University of Turin, where he holds a postdoctoral research fellowship in General Sociology. A founding member of the Italian Network for Kurdish Studies, he has conducted field research in Syria, Turkey and Iraq. As an active supporter of the Kurdish liberation movement, he has cooperated with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, analyzing the confederal revolution in its book *Il fiore del deserto*. His report of the liberation of Manbij by the SDF, *Hevalen*, is currently under translation in Kurmancî.

14:45–15:45 Discussions

15:45–16:15 Break

16:15–18:00 Session II:

The Multicide Regime



Moderator: Havin Gunese is an engineer, journalist and a women's rights activist. She is one of the spokespersons of the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan—Peace in Kurdistan" and translator of Öcalan's books.

2.1. "Societocide in the current Age"

We are living in a world of catastrophes, wars, epidemics and destruction that dismantle social relations. However, it is not only through such seemingly extraordinary events that the social is eroded. Regulation and control; forced dispossession and extraction economies, commodification of cultures and security measures all come together to undo the social and replace it with state relations. The talk will dwell in the ways in which the social and the state oppose each other and how it is only by the erosion of state that social relations can be reconstituted and repaired.



Nazan Üstündağ worked as an Assistant Professor at Boğaziçi University, Department of Sociology between 2005 and 2018. Currently, she is a fellowship in the Gerda Henkel Foundation Patrimonies program. Nazan Üstündağ's work concerns feminist political theory, political imaginaries, gendered subjectivities and state violence in Kurdistan.

2.2. Jin-Jiyan-Azadî against Femicide

Never before in history women have been exposed to such a deep and stratified exploitation as in capitalism. Together with the nation-state capitalism constitutes the most institutionalized expression of patriarchy. Moreover when becoming a system capitalism started by destroying societies based on mother-women culture, which can be seen as its antipode. If so, how shall we define the connection between the patriarchal system and capitalism? Why and how has the male dominant system reached its highest level in capitalist age? In that light what is happening in Rojhelat Kurdistan and Iran? And can a women's liberation struggle that has no anticapitalist character succeed?



Maryam Fathi is from Marivan, East Kurdistan, Iran. She has been involved in the struggle for women's and Kurdish rights since childhood. In 2010, she was forced to leave Iran and received political asylum in Spain. In 2014, she joined the Free Women's Society of Eastern Kurdistan (KJAR) in Europe. Since 2020, she has been appointed as the director of KJAR in Europe.

2.3. "Capital, Epistemicide, and Ecocide: Reflections on de-commodification, re-commoning, and building the free life"

Drawing upon World System theory and a 5000 year perspective, the presentation will first address an analysis of the role of capital in driving world - historical processes of commodification, epistemicide and ecocide, and their historical culmination in the acute crisis in Capitalist Modernity across the globe today. In conclusion the discussion will look to the role of the „de-commodification and (re) commoning of all spheres of life“ in the struggle to build the free life, outside capitalist value creation.



Barry Gills is Professor of Global Development Studies at the University of Helsinki, and Editor in Chief of Globalizations journal.

2.4. Call for Papers: "Capitalism since Sumerian Times"

Abdullah Öcalan dates capitalism back to the Sumerians arguing that it is not only an economic system but also a mode of governance. How can this thought be substantiated and how does it contribute to the discussions of the origin and spread of capitalism and its colonial nature?



Veronica Maio was born in Bologna in 1997. She lives in Turin where she studies Philosophy at the University.

18:00–18:40 Discussions

8 April 2023 – Saturday

Resist, Reclaim, and Rebuild

9:30–11:00 Session III:

Resistance and Change Begins in Art



Moderator: Targol Mesbah teaches critical thinking and media studies in the Anthropology and Social Change department at the California Institute of Integral Studies. She thinks about and researches how our collective bodies and hearts can survive the different wars of the capitalist hydra.

3.1. How can art today be of help to revolutionary movements and struggles?



Ayreen Anastas dreams of becoming one day a writer, a revolutionary, a painter, a herbalist, a thinker, a philosopher, an anthropologist, a baker, a filmmaker, a feminist, an artist and a poet. She was born in Palestine and studied in Berlin and lived in New York for two decades, there she accrued an auto certified post educational degree from 16 Beaver Group. In what? In understanding that common life needs to be attended for.

3.2. Art as a means of resistance and pathway to freedom

The right to self-defense means not only physical security but also an anti-colonial struggle, in Kurdish *xwebûn* (being yourself). In the context of Kurds and Kurdistan, security without identity only means slavery. For this reason, art has become an important tool of the anti-colonial struggle. Because art made in a banned language and culture not only preserves the collective memory as a people, but has also become a means of revitalizing communal identity. In this struggle for existence, the Kurds' only option has always been to resist. And now in the example of Rojava, arts is the pathway to building our lives and selves free.



Mizgin Taher is the world's first Kurdish opera singer. She completed her training in Damascus in 2005. Her first album, released in 2009, included six interpretations of classical opera songs by Bach, Mozart, and Verdi. She wrote and conducted original Kurdish language operas, including her lyrical magnum opus, *Amadisa and Shahmeran*. Now living in Qamishli, she is a founding member of the Rojava Children's Orchestra and also teaches there.

3.3. Art, a science of freedom?

If art is a science of freedom, then how to free art from its colonial, modern, racial, patriarchal, capitalist enclosures? How to search for a freedom that is not predicated on supremacy and separation?



On March 18th 2023, **Rene Gabri** writes: *he, a she, an it, an if, a when, a who, a where, a how, a feeling, a re-membering, a searching, a wandering, a with, a situation, a context, a desiring, a taking, a giving, a sharing, a learning, a loving, a way, a means, a yes, a no, a revoking, an artist, an unworking.*

3.4. Call for papers:

The role of arts/culture and media has been the most effective self-defense tool by exposing the lies of capitalist modernity and by inspiring people to dream of better worlds and building free life. How have the Kurdish freedom movement and others used this self-defense tool most effectively?



David Neurdenburg is a student of archaeology and activist from the Netherlands.

11:00–12:00 Discussions

12:00–13:00 Lunch

13:00–14:30 Session IV: Education



Moderator: Margara Millan is a sociologist and social anthropologist, full time professor at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM. She has written about zapatista movement, gender changes in that context, critique of capitalist modernity. She is part of the Decolonial Feminisms Network and of the Colective *Llegó la hora de los Pueblos*.

4.1. “The Academy of Freedom”

The Kurdish freedom movement's education experience and the methods of struggle against the colonial education methods of the four nation-states are noteworthy. I will expand on Rêber Apo's academy model and practices; what are the education methods of the Kurdistan Woman's Freedom Movement and Jineolojî. Can we create a global network of academies based on bringing together the anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, anti-orientalist educational experiences around the world and that of the Kurdish freedom movement based on Rêber Apo's academy model? Can academia break off from the monopoly of “power and

capital” by developing a common understanding and insight among the forces of democratic modernity around the world. Is a world confederation of academies possible?



Zozan Sîma is a member of the Academy of Jineolojî and an activist of the Kurdistan Women's Freedom Movement. She is an advisor and an educator at the Department of Jineolojî at the University of Rojava.

4.2. “In Praise of Agnotology: The Politics of Knowledge in Democratic Modernity”

This talk will focus on the social and political significance of Agnotology, or the science of (politically and socially constructed) ignorance in the history of capitalist modernity. Ignorance is not merely the absence of knowledge but an outcome of cultural and political struggle. Capitalist modernity is indeed founded on ignorance, or, better yet, on its organized production. The history of democratic modernity, however, is much more than the history of nameless victims of academic disinterest: it is a magnificent history of integral education, autonomous universities, libertarian pedagogies, model and Modern schools, worker universities, deschoolers and freeschoolers. Building on this vast and suppressed paideia of democratic modernity, Abdullah Öcalan proposes a Sociology of Freedom, a careful excavation of democratic and incendiary knowledge historically produced as non-existent, and attempt to locate such Sociology within the epistemology and philosophy of a free and just society.



Andrej Grubačić is the Chair of Anthropology and Social Change department at CIIS-San Francisco. He is the editor of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, affiliated faculty at UC Berkeley, and collaborating researcher at the University of Coimbra. He is the author and co-author of a number of books, including *Living at the Edges of Capitalism: Adventures in Exile and Mutual Aid* (UC Press 2016), *Don't Mourn Balkanize* (PM Press 2011) and *Wobblies and Zapatistas* (PM Press 2009).

4.3. “Life against Money”

The challenge launched by the Zapatistas on their recent trip to Europe. In this war there is no neutrality: we are with money, or with life. Money binds us in, constricts our daily activity, destroys. The richness of life overflows all bonds, breaks all definitions and identities, creates. Education that takes the side of life against money sings the poetry of overflowing. Education is the movement of hope against hopelessness: a conflict that is nowhere sharper than in Kurdistan at this moment, but fills all the earth.



John Holloway teaches sociology in Puebla, Mexico. His books, *Change the World without taking Power* (2002) and *Crack Capitalism* (2010) have each been translated into a dozen languages and have stirred international controversy. The third book of the trilogy, *Hope in Hopeless Times* was published in September 2022.

14:30–15:30 Discussions

16:00–18:00 Building freedom as a way of living (The Workshops)

18:30–20:00 Concert by Mizgîn Taher

9 April 2023 – Sunday

We want our world back—and here is how!

9:30–11:00 Session V:

Organize to resist, reclaim and rebuild

Moderator: TBA

5.1. Building the community of communities to put an end to patriarchy

What they call modernity has served to dominate peoples and nature. We speak of the community, constituted by the land, the territory, the pachamama, the people, rivers, mountains, constituted by all beings that nourish life in the face of the system of death. The community of communities is a political project for the world, which calls us to break with individualism and capitalist accumulation, with patriarchal domination, with colonialism and racism, which requires us to recover our capacity for self-organization to stop delegating our dreams to the States and governments that administer the system, because only organizations make revolutions, only the people build a dignified life.



Adriana Guzmán Arroyo, daughter of Amparo and granddaughter of Teresa and Elena. She is Aymara, lesbian, feminist, popular educator, part of the organization *Feminismo Comunitario Antipatriarcal and Feministas de Abya Yala*. She participated in the process of Indigenous Autonomies in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, was a delegate of the social movements in the summit of refoundation of justice.

5.2. Freedom requires Resistance and Organization

Organized society is the capitalist system's nightmare. What is the role of organization in the resistance of the organized individual, organized society against capitalist attacks and in the construction of freedom. The society that gets stronger as it organizes will take back what is ours. The resistance and organization that maintains its existence despite oppression and force gives hope for freedom.



Ebru Günay is a lawyer. She was arrested in 2009 while defending her client Abdullah Öcalan. After 5 years in prison, she was released. She has an article published in the book "discussions on jineoloji" prepared by a group of women in prison. She completed her master's degree in human rights law at Istanbul Bilgi University. In 2018, she was elected as HDP member of parliament from Mardin. She is currently HDP Party spokesperson.

11:00–12:00 Discussions

12:00–13:00 Lunch

13:00–15:30 Session VI:

Bottom-up World Democratic Confederatism

How will we jointly implement what we are saying: The upheavals of our times not only result in much pain, violence and the removal of millions of people from their land but also give us a chance to weave our own way of live. What are the parameters of what we are proposing? We know so much more than we ever did of our past, present and future. How possible is it to network within each of these parameters? The understanding of solidarity must change but how can we achieve the unity of efforts, of struggles, of doings, of creating, and of weaving them together.



Moderator: Nik Matheou is an activist, researcher and lecturer in *Global Medieval History* at the University of Edinburgh. His work focuses on building internationalist solidarity with the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, and long histories of capitalist modernity. In both areas he draws lessons from and spreads the ideas of Abdullah Öcalan.

6.1. Why Democratic Confederatism? A compilation from his works on the topic



Abdullah Öcalan is one of the founders of the PKK and actively led the Kurdish freedom movement as the head of the PKK from its foundation in 1978 until his abduction on February 15, 1999. He is still regarded as a leading strategist and the most important political representative of the Kurdish freedom movement. In isolation conditions at İmralı Island Prison, Öcalan authored more than ten books that revolutionized Kurdish politics. Several times he initiated unilateral cease-fires of the guerrilla and presented constructive proposals for a political solution to the Kurdish question. For several years, Turkish state authorities led a "dialogue" with Öcalan. Ever since the government broke off the talks in April 2015, he has been held in total isolation at İmralı Island Prison, with no contact whatsoever with the outside world.

6.2. “From local struggles for territorial defense to community networks of anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal autonomies”



María de Jesús Patricio Martínez (Marichuy) is a Nabua traditional medicine healer and human rights activist in Mexico. She was chosen as “representative indigenous spokeswoman” by National Indigenous Congress (CNI) for the 2018 general election. (Mexico)

6.3. “Weaving resistance and freedom with Mother Earth:

The challenge of reciprocity for Abya Yala and Democratic Confederalism”—Our history of resistance and oblivion, hatred and contempt against territories and cultures for greed forces us to learn from defeat and dignity. Our challenge: Recognize our strengths and shortcomings and organize or face destruction. Popular uprisings resurge to face repression and cooptation, within a global power war to consolidate control of the planet for profit. We will continue to lose this war unless we listen critically, plan strategically and act consequently. Reciprocal comprehensive exchanges between Abya Yala processes and the Kurdish Peoples’ struggle under the Democratic Confederalism Paradigm, from below, is vital to organized action for freedom with Mother Earth.



Manuel Rozenal is physician and surgeon. Activist and popular educator with movements in the Americas. Co-founder of the Nasa people’s communication network, *Pueblos en Camino*, *Nosotros los Indios* and *Soledades en Plural-Abya Yala and Kurdistan*. Coordinated both the *Jorge Alonso Chair on Popular Uprisings* and the published book, *Mexico*, 2022.

6.4. Munduruku Wakoborun Women in Struggle

The invasions of our lands threaten to kill us. The dams, waterways, railroads, ports, mining, forest concessions that are planned for our territory, and also the invasion of loggers and miners, which is increasing, impacting the lives of women, men, elders, youth and children. We don’t want this development that the pariwat [non-indigenous] want to impose on us. We don’t want contaminated water, food with agrotoxins, we don’t want to have to work like slaves to buy our food. Development, for the Munduruku, is clean water, is the health of our children, is the living forest and the freedom to find everything we need in our territory. So our struggle is in defense of our own territory and rights with our Karodaybi and Wakoborun government.



Maria Leusa Kaba and Ediene Kirixi are of the Munduruku people of the Tapajós Basin, Brazilian Amazon. We are coordinator and political advisor of the Munduruku Women’s Association Wakoborun and part of the resistance movement *Ipereğ Ayū*.

6.5. India



Ajay Kumar is an advocate and activist based in Chandigarh, India. He has handled cases involving anti-terror laws along with other criminal and civil law matters. Since 2007 he has worked as all India co-convenor of the *Visthapan Virodhi Jan Vikas Andolan* (anti-displacement people’s development movement) which deals with cases of state repression and extrajudicial killings in Jharkhand. He has also been active in various fact-finding teams highlighting issues of state violence, repression, and attack on human rights defenders.

6.6. Democratic Confederalism—Manifesto of the 21st Century

Our world is in a crisis caused by capitalism, nation-state and industrialism. These three horsemen of the apocalypse are dragging our world into a catastrophe. Every day we face a new war, a new way of killing, a new disaster. Economic crisis, biological warfare, ecological crisis grow exponentially with each day and millions of people become its victims. To rid ourselves of this situation, we need a new perspective, a new system and new action. In this regard, Mr Öcalan offers a very strong perspective. To build an alternative we find it essential to discuss this perspective. As social movements, it is of great importance that we put world democratic confederalism—as an alternative to capitalist modernity—on our agenda as one of the key methods.



Fawza Youssef is from the Jazira region of Rojava Kurdistan and studied law at the University of Aleppo. She was previously member of the TEV-DEM executive committee and co-chair of the Northern Syria Self-Administration and is currently co-chair of the Democratic Union Party PYD. Youssef is one of the founders of the Women’s Movement *Kongra Star* and the author of the book “*Why Jineology*”.

15:30–16:30 Discussions

16:30–16:45 Closing statement

AStA der Universität Hamburg, RiS and Network for an Alternative Quest: International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan – Peace in Kurdistan” • Cenî – Kurdish Women’s Office for Peace • YXK – Association of Students from Kurdistan • Kurdistan Report • ISKU – Informationsstelle Kurdistan e.V. • Civaka Azad – Kurdish Center for Public Relations • KURD-AKAD Network of Kurdish Academics • Jineoloji Center • Academy of Democratic Modernity

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