

INVITATION

April 28–30, 2025, Frankfurt a. M.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Struggles for solidarity and emancipation

Research conference of the PhD students
of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation



CALL FOR PAPERS

‘Jin, Jiyan, Azadî’, ‘For freedom, for life...’, ‘Solidarity forever!’, ‘Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners’. These and similar slogans are based on the concepts of emancipation and solidarity that have served for centuries as normative reference points for progressive movements around the world.

But what are these normative principles and how can they be explained? In this context, emancipation is understood as the overcoming of domination and oppression through a fundamental change of social structures. Solidarity, in turn, can be understood as a mode of joint action and desired relationships between social groups and individuals which guides political practice.

These basic definitions already indicate that the two terms are related to each other: emancipation can be understood not only as subjective liberation from oppressive conditions but also as the overcoming of the social conditions that necessitate emancipation in the first place. Accordingly, if emancipation is understood as a collective task, then it necessarily builds on solidaristic relationships and even aims to expand them. Solidarity is both a necessary condition for emancipation and the practice of a liberated society – it is more than a means to an end.

However, do emancipation and solidarity necessarily refer to each other? Where are they mutually exclusive? When do they flip into their opposite? Emancipatory movements can lead to new forms of oppression; the ideal of freedom can give rise to authoritarian ideologies and de-solidarising processes. Since solidarity does not usually refer to an abstract public sphere as a whole, but rather to concrete social groups, it is sometimes based on exclusion. Solidarity comes into open contradiction with the fundamental ideal of the liberation of all people where, as in nationalist movements, it serves to create homogeneity and to devalue the ‘other’.

A different constellation, in which emancipation and solidarity become disentangled from one another, can be observed in liberal forms of progressive movements. These are limited to demands for representation or a reduction in discrimination while leaving the deeper contexts of domination untouched. This can be observed in certain versions of feminist or anti-racist thinking. Both, authoritarian solidarism and an emancipation that conforms to and stabilises power are opposed to an integrated, mediated understanding of solidarity and emancipation.

Due to such limitations, it is sometimes called into question whether the concepts of emancipation and solidarity can still function as critical criteria within progressive political practice. Emancipation and solidarity thus appear empirically in paradoxical relation.

In light of the challenges that are arising for emancipatory movements and solidaristic relationships in the current liberal-capitalist conditions, as well as the unfulfilled promises that are attached to this conceptual pair, it is essential to analyse them more closely. In the present day, not only are the conditions that make them possible jeopardised by authoritarian formations, but the ideal of their realisation as a point of reference for social movements is also fading more and more.

At this conference organised by the doctoral researchers of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, the following questions on the relationship between emancipation and solidarity will be discussed on an interdisciplinary basis:

- What is the relationship between emancipation and solidarity?
To what extent do the two concepts refer to each other?
- What are the limits and contradictions of these concepts?
- Are solidaristic emancipation and emancipatory solidarity two modes of the same thinking; the same expressions of these concepts?

- Is there such a thing as non-solidary emancipation or non-emancipatory solidarity? And if so, what does this mean for the concepts, for theorising and for a political praxis that is interested in combining the two?
- What do forms of emancipation and solidarity look like under the current conditions?
- What can the historical experiences of emancipation and solidarity teach us for today's struggles?
- Can emancipation become a reality at all or can it serve only as a utopian reference point?
- What is the relationship between utopian and dystopian ideas in the present?
- How can we understand the appropriation of the concept of solidarity by (right-wing) populist groups? How does solidarity relate to the concept of emancipation in this setting?

INFORMATION ON PARTICIPATION

We cordially invite doctoral candidates of Germany's scholarship foundations as well as all interested young researchers from Germany and abroad who, in the context of their empirical studies or theoretical works, are engaged with the conference topic. We look forward to discussion-opening contributions from all academic disciplines. Each presentation will be given 20 minutes plus 10 minutes for discussion. Proposals for contributions are to be submitted in the form of abstracts (length: max. 500 words) with a short CV no later than **7 January 2025**.

Proposals should include the following elements:

- Title of the contribution
- Research question, research interest and discipline
- Relevance to the subject area of the conference
- CV

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

The conference will take place at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Campus Bockenheim, from 28 to 30 April 2025 in cooperation with the Institute for Social Research of Frankfurt. Notification of acceptance of papers will be sent by the beginning of February 2025.

A conference fee will not be charged. Accommodation and catering costs will be covered by the Hans-Böckler-Foundation. Travelling expenses will also be covered for those who are doctoral scholarship holders of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation. The conference language is German. Please send abstracts and enquiries – also in English – to the following email address:

WT2025@boeckler.de