

FAQ of „die plattform“

– Frequently asked questions about our initiative and our attempts to answer them

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Introduction

Although platformism (or its Latin American variant, Especifismo) plays an important role worldwide as an anarchist current, it has no significant tradition in the German-speaking region - neither theoretically nor organisationally¹. So there was no question of it being broadly based in the anarchist movement - on the contrary, we suspected that a larger part of the anarchists in our region had not yet dealt with platformism or had not dealt with it in depth. Others rejected the concept for various reasons.

When we launched „die plattform“ in early 2019, an organisation based on platformist or especificist organisational concepts, we had to deal with this lack of anchoring. In order to spread the idea and get into conversation with people who had reservations, online public relations, texts and interviews in anarchist media outlets and open meetings on site were not enough. Therefore, we wanted to introduce the concept of platformism and our organisation with a large-scale presentation tour in the German-speaking countries and thus also put it up for discussion.

In the end, we held more than 30 events where we presented our initiative between April 2019 and the beginning of 2020 and were able to reach almost 600 people. This enabled us to cover all regions in Germany (with a few exceptions). Unfortunately, we did not succeed in doing so in Switzerland (with only 2 events) and above all in Austria (no event so far). The events planned for spring 2020 in Vienna, Zurich, Mannheim and Kaiserslautern had to be postponed until further notice due to the risk of Covid-19 infection.

Thanks to the good to very well attended events in many cities, we were able to achieve our goal of making platformism better known in the German-speaking countries. We were able to network with many people, groups and venues, especially with local groups and chapters from the two already existing supra-regional anarchist federations, the synthesist „Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen“ (Federation of German-speaking anarchists, FdA) and the anarcho-syndicalist „Freie Arbeiter*innen Union“ (Free Workers' Union, FAU) - this was another important aspect for us. Besides the great encounters, the nice hours and the lived solidarity on site, the personal exchange during the events (and afterwards) was the most inspiring for us.

During the discussions, questions kept coming up which we could not answer in detail yet, as die plattform was still in the process of being founded. After more than 1.5 years of building up the organisation, we are now able to answer open questions in more detail. Here we want to take this opportunity.

In this brochure we have listed a large part of the questions that we have been asked at the events. We have already answered many of them at the events, but we would like to provide more detailed answers for some of them. But here too we would like to emphasise once again that we are still at the beginning of a learning process and therefore have some open questions ourselves.

If you have any follow-up questions, you are invited to contact us by e-mail. We will then answer you to the best of our knowledge and belief.

die plattform, June 2020

¹ The only platformist organisation known to us for decades is the Libertäre Aktion Winterthur - <https://law.arachnia.ch/>

Questions on the basic understanding of die plattform

How do you understand organisational dualism?

Organisational dualism means being present and active in the anarchist movement and also in social movements, because only a fraction of wage-earners see themselves as anarchists and will join anarchist organisations.

In contrast to this, significantly more people will be involved in social movements. This means that anarchist organisations of ideas (like die plattform) will not become mass movements (the history of anarchism has shown this. For example, the anarchist ideas organisation Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) had an estimated 5,000 - 30,000 members in the Spanish Revolution, while the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT had about 1.5 million members²). These are the broader grassroots social movements and trade unions, which bring together many people with very different interests or consciousness.

This must be taken into account. For a social revolution is only possible with the active participation and passive consent of a large proportion of people if it is not to take on the character of an authoritarian revolution. The social movements are therefore the main protagonist in the social transformation (and thus the wage-dependent class and not a revolutionary group or party). That is why our main work lies in the social movements, and to a lesser extent in the anarchist movement. How does our organisation implement the concept of organisational dualism? Firstly, we are active within the anarchist movement, for example through propaganda work, theory building, cultural work or strategy discussions. On the other hand, we (or rather it is our aim) as members of die plattform are active in social grassroots movements outside the anarchist or radical left-wing movement (for example Fridays for Future, Women's Strike movements, tenant initiatives, trade unions, citizens' initiatives)

No social revolution without mass organisation - how do you deal with that?

Die plattform is an organisation of ideas, which is directed (mainly) at ideologically convinced anarchists, who can identify with our political ideas, our organisational concept and our practical focus. So die plattform does not claim to be a mass organisation (i.e. an organisation of interests) and as we see it organisations of ideas cannot achieve this in the first place (see the question: "What do you understand by organisational dualism?").

Nevertheless, mass organisations are needed to overcome relationships of exploitation and domination. For us, these mass organisations are the social movements which are not limited by any particular ideology (anarchism). Thus they have the potential to bring together a great number of people (with different ideological understandings) who fight together for the implementation of concrete demands and mostly similar goals.

Our organisational concept is to get involved in grassroots social movements and fight for concrete improvements together with many other peoples of our class. These movements can grow, become more firmly structured with increasing commitment, connect with other movements and become organised mass movements. This means that the mass organisations are formed from the social movements. Die plattform is part of these social movements.

By getting involved in social movements (and at the same time having die plattform as an anarchist federation with its advantages and synergy effects behind us) we can, as a wage dependent class, step by step come closer to the social revolution.

² Source: <https://libcom.org/files/Anarchist%20Organisation%20-%20The%20History%20of%20the%20F.A.I..pdf>

How do you participate in struggles?

We want to become active in the social movements of our time. And we want to create social movements and permanent projects ourselves. This means grassroots initiatives such as tenant initiatives, Fridays for Future groups, women* strike movements and much more. It is important for us that these initiatives are not purely left-wing radical-anarchist projects, but that they bring together very different people of the wage-dependent class - far beyond the left-wing radical-anarchist movement (bubble).

At the same time we want to participate continuously and in the long term in these social movements.

Our task is to promote or (where they do not yet exist) to spread the anarchist principles and moments that are already (on a small scale) present in the social movements. This means that we, as an active minority, influence social movements, but do not direct or lead the movement in its course. Influencing for us means to bring about change in a person or a group of people through arguments (in discussions), advice, examples, insights and practices.

Apart from this incorporation of anarchist principles, our most important task is to build and grow real counter-power in the social movements together with all those involved.

How do we participate? Through permanent, reliable and effective cooperation (at eye level), listening and learning from each other, we can build relationships with others in the social movements, gain respect and trust, and talk about perspectives and positions. After a while, we can achieve a certain social insertion: influencing social movements to be more radical democratic, more militant, more class-conscious, less hierarchical, more guided by a long-term revolutionary consciousness, and so on.

It is also important that we make no secret of our convictions and intentions, thus preventing the (unintended) emergence of a vanguard role. So we are fighting "with our sights open". We develop our ideas with the fighting people, not over them. And the open approach to our convictions and views always opens up interesting discussions about self-management, mutual help and criticism of power.

What do you understand by anarchist moments and principles?

A non-exhaustive enumeration:

- Self-management, self-organisation
- Class consciousness, solidarity and mutual aid within the class. Class consciousness leads to a class-struggle (and thus collective) perspective on social change
- Horizontal organisational and decision-making structures
- Direct democracy or grassroots democracy: by involving all the parties concerned, this creates a collective framework for political participation
- Direct action: Standing as a form of political action as opposed to electoral and representative politics in representative democracy
- Equality in social processes: Expresses itself in the fact that every vote is equally important for decisions. By taking each individual position seriously, the self-confidence of the individual is also strengthened and participation in political processes is encouraged.
- Every person counts. Thus there are no more important people or movement leaders. This also includes taking responsibility for oneself and for others.
- Autonomy towards the organisation in order to be able to act independently
- Collective struggle for our own interests
- consistency of means with the objectives (as far as possible)
- A (social) revolutionary perspective of the struggles

How are you active in social struggles? How do you promote anarchist moments?

First of all, it is important that we continuously participate as reliable activists in a social movement. Or that we found social movements and projects that are oriented towards the material interests of the wage-dependent class (and thus also towards our own interests). We want to come into contact and exchange with other people of the wage-dependent class who are committed to improving their life situation, but who are not necessarily part of the radical left-wing movement. Through a permanent presence, through reliable cooperation, exchange, openness and authenticity, we can establish mutually trustful relationships. These trustful relations are a basis for our common commitment. And these relationships help to ensure that we are taken seriously in our views and our concerns.

We get involved in the social movements, give practical help, contribute ideas and our experiences or help with networking with other struggles. We promote and anchor anarchist moments and principles in discussions and in practice by advocating in social movements, for example, horizontal, self-organised structures instead of hierarchical, bureaucratic and representative structures. In concrete terms, for us this also means reducing and keeping small the influence of political parties or other authoritarian organisations on social movements. On the basis of practical experience (in social movements) we can communicate the advantages of, for example, solidarity or self-organisation. And in the same way we can make clear the disadvantages which arise when a movement relies only on the actions of political parties. The practical example is an important means of persuasion.

Questions about our practice in social struggles

Are you going into struggles openly under the label "die plattform"?

We do not hide the fact that we are anarchist-communists or members of die plattform, nor do we always and everywhere expose this. We don't want to make a secret of our convictions, but we do want to make this a subject of discussion when it is appropriate in order not to appear arrogant or complacent. Appropriate hinges are, for example, when we are asked or in content discussions, when it fits the theme.

How do you want to build up basic structures from which you can start in social struggles? What do you do when there are no social struggles locally?

Especially in big cities there are already local grassroots initiatives (e.g. tenant initiatives) in which we can participate. In more rural or small-town structures this can often be different. There it is then necessary to first launch and build up an initiative. This can be done, for example, by talking to people in our neighbourhood (i.e. from our neighbourhood or at work) to find out what is important to the people. If shared problem areas in the areas of our lives emerge during the discussions and also motivation to want to change something about them, our goal is to bring these people with common problems together, to enable exchange (What concrete improvements do we want to achieve? What can we do together?) and find out whether and how a social struggle can be started. Continuity in social struggles (the common exchange and practice over a longer period of time) creates a connection and trust with those who are fighting together. This is the basis for future struggles that will be fought together.

In the future, we want to build up our own infrastructure and, together with the struggling people around us, create self-governing projects that meet some of our needs as wage earners and activists.

What happens if certain struggles become more important in which you are not involved?

When this happens, it is important for us to remain active where we are currently active. In this way we maintain the relationships of trust we have built up and the constructive forms of cooperation. If our membership strength (in our local group) allows it, we could share the commitment of our members and become active in this new social movement.

Another possibility would be to combine the struggles, if it is practicable and both grassroots movements consider it useful.

The continuity of our participation in the grassroots social movements is as important to us as the avoidance of overburdening. We do not do ourselves any favours by wanting to be "everywhere" if the consequence is that we or our commitment suffers as a result.

Are you leading struggles?

No, we reject the concept of a vanguard. We want to become active with many other people in the wage-dependent class and set goals together, discuss strategies and make decisions - not across them. In the social movements we are involved as affected people, as wage earners among wage earners who are interested in improving their living conditions. We see ourselves as part of the movement with strengths and weaknesses, experiences and blind spots. This also means that we also learn from others in the social movements and gain experience of collective struggles in the social movements.

The phrase "getting out of the reality of the isolated anarchist/leftist scene" is common to hear: How do you implement this?

In the first year since our organization was founded (i.e. 2019), we have been strongly involved in the anarchist and radical left-wing movement. The reason for this was that we first wanted to make the new organisation known (among anarchists and left-wing radicals) in order to achieve a certain strength in members. We also had to build up basic organisational structures and discuss ways how we wanted to act in practice. In 2019 we were able to implement these tasks, so that we have created a solid foundation for the organisation.

In 2020 we can now be as active in practice as we want to be. This means that we are involved in grassroots social movements outside the (pure) scene politics. Work in social movements is our main focus. However, many of us have been politicised within the scene ourselves and have helped to shape it, sometimes for years. That is why here, as in so many places, we are still at the beginning of a learning process. In this process we are looking for new forms of political debate with which we are able to wage social struggles. And to shape the struggles in such a way that they bring about changes that are driven by those affected themselves - and not just by some political activists or politicians.

Nevertheless, as a specific anarchist organisation, it remains our task to continue to carry out propaganda work, theory-building, education, cultural work, actions, etc. within the anarchist movement to a certain extent.

Do you want to do „campaign politics“?

If "campaign politics" means that we work on a certain topic for a few months and then turn to another topic to work on it for a few months, or if it means months of mobilisation to protest against a major political event, then we do not want to do campaign politics.

Instead, we want to work and fight in (locally anchored) social movements in the long term.

Our goal is for (local) social initiatives and movements to gain strength, i.e. to build up real (and not just symbolic) counter-power. We cannot achieve this if we are active for a limited period of time in one campaign and then get involved in a completely different issue. Or by moving in purely radical left-wing alliances.

So as not to create misunderstandings: Of course, there can also be campaigns within a grassroots social movement within a long organising process (a certain demand should be pushed through in order to achieve concrete improvements for those involved). We will take part in such a form of campaign politics and after such a campaign we will continue to actively promote the social movement together with the fighting people.

Do you work together with party politicians?

Basically, we do not pin our hopes on political parties and parliamentarianism in general. When (left-wing) party politicians say that they would change laws in favour of the wage-dependent class, we reply that the application of these laws on paper is only possible through a strong movement from below. And that laws in favour of the wage-dependent class will only last as long as our class can defend itself against the attacks of the ruling class.

However, the conditions in Germany are such that (left-wing) party politicians are active in many social movements (e.g. tenant initiatives, environmental or peace initiatives). If we don't want to stand aside from these social movements (and we don't), we have to work together with party politicians in the social movements. This means, however, that it is our task to push the existing belief in party politicians (from left to right) within the social movements into the background and to promote the advantages of direct action, self-organisation, grassroots democracy and real counter-power by means of practical examples.

How does die plattform intend to deal with discrimination in grassroots social movements, for example when racism occurs in a grassroots movement?

We will not turn a blind eye to such issues for the sake of dear "peace and harmony". Nevertheless, we must make a distinction here: If we are active in social movements which are located outside the radical left-wing / anarchist scene, we cannot necessarily assume a sensibility as it often occurs in the radical left-wing scene³.

In such situations we want (in consultation and agreement with those affected by discrimination themselves) to seek dialogue, create awareness and sensitivity, but with the knowledge that this may not be achieved so quickly. At the same time, we want to stay in contact with those affected, strengthen them and prevent social exclusion. And we want to get into conversation with other people to see how racism is received by them and how they position themselves in relation to it. If people in social movements are more likely to act racist and show no willingness to learn (or consciously use racism), it is our task, together with many other people, to exclude these people (if they cannot be persuaded through conversation) from the social movements.

If racism becomes hegemonic in a social movement and if we see no possibility to change this situation through discussions and thematisation, then we have to withdraw from this social movement in order not to further strengthen a hegemonically racist movement.

³ Which does not mean that we do not also exhibit discriminatory behaviour due to our socialisation in this society and therefore have to deal with it.

What distinguishes your practice from „Entryism“⁴ promoted by Trotskyist groups?

We will not hide our membership in die plattform, so we will appear openly in the social movements. But the most important point is that we do not want to lead or otherwise direct social movements. We are part of the movement, we try to exert influence, but we want to do so through arguments or by practical example. We see ourselves as a part of the social movements that neither wants to say "yes and amen" to everything that happens in the social movements nor wants to set the direction through the political organisation. Of course, we also differ from Trotskyism in some respects in our theoretical viewpoints or in the idea of what a liberated society can look like.

Questions on the organisational concept

Why do you organise yourselves as an organisation of ideas and not as an organisation of interest? Or to put it another way: Why don't you fight for your own interests, but instead pursue a policy of representation?

We are not an organisation of interest (like a trade union, for example). This means that we organise ourselves on the basis of common ideas and ideology (although of course we also share common interests and goals).

Nevertheless, we claim to fight for concrete improvements for ourselves as part of the wage-dependent class through our actions. Therefore, our collective practice aims to address those relations of dependence in which we ourselves are involved on a daily basis. On the basis of these considerations, we want to find out together with others how collective struggles for a better life can be fought. We will implement this in the social movements which fight for concrete own interests and improvements.

Of course, in individual cases, this can also include representative politics. This means that we will also take part in struggles in which we are not directly affected. It is important to us that we can also show solidarity here. It is important, in order to prevent those directly affected from being appropriated, that we agree with them on what form our support might take.

In addition, specific anarcha-communist organisations are needed to make anarchism present as an overarching doctrine of ideas and a path to liberation. To act completely without a concept that outlines our actions in the present day and our vision of a different society is gambling away great potential, since under the concept of anarchism there is an infinite wealth of more than a century of struggles, theories and experiences gathered. Smaller organisations of convinced revolutionaries also offer a number of advantages. For example, they make a unified approach to theory and practice possible in the first place. Because of the large overlap in ideology and practice in rather small platformist organisations, they can often act quickly and effectively.

In addition, they can store and transport experiences from social struggles. Since the social struggles themselves are in part very short-lived, the learning processes collected in them are often lost with the disappearance of the concrete struggle. On the one hand, this means that a rich history of struggles against domination is lost from which we can still learn; on the other hand, we fall behind already acquired knowledge and have the feeling of constantly having to reinvent the wheel.

⁴ Wikipedia defines Entrism as follows: Entrism is a tactic of targeted (sometimes clandestine) intrusion into organisations, especially parties of the labour movement, more rarely other social movements, used by various communist, especially Trotskyist organisations. The aim can be to influence political decisions from within, to spread one's own ideology, to win members, to change the course of the organisation or, even in times of marginalisation or the banning of revolutionary organisations, not to be completely isolated from political events ("hibernation entryism") or to have a legal political work opportunity. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entryism>

What internal methods of reflection on group dynamics and power structures do you have?

In principle, criticism or questioning of group dynamics can always be brought in (online or at personal meetings). At every group meeting there is (usually) a final round where there is also room for reflection on dynamics. At our federational meetings there is room for reflection and criticism. In addition, the internal awareness structures, which are still under construction, are also possible places to go or even places of reflection and criticism themselves.

But all these are structures that can also fail. We must be aware of this danger. Therefore we want to create spaces where our members can empower themselves as much as possible to stand up for their own concerns, needs and opinions in die plattform. But it is not only up to them to express themselves, we must also learn to be sensitive and empathic with each other.

In this sense, die plattform also sees itself as a space for learning from each other - both in listening and speaking.

What exactly does consensus or veto mean to you?

Decisions or proposals are only voted on by groups (all individuals form their own group, the supra-regional group). Individuals can express criticism and feedback through their group.

There are different levels of consensus (full agreement, slight reservations, serious reservations, veto, abstention). A veto should be preceded by a discussion in which the very serious concerns have been described. This gives the possibility to revise decisions/proposals. A veto does not mean the end of the process, but the attempt to work out a new solution that is agreed by all. If important (!) decisions are not taken by consensus after this discussion and solution process has ended, we will resort to the majority principle.

Honesty and commitment is created by the space to arrive, also emotionally. How far are decisions discussed? Is everyone taken along? Is everyone always informed?

Proposals for decisions are discussed at personal meetings (in the local group, at federational meetings) or online (in the supra-regional group or as individual contributions). Usually there is enough time for feedback and suggestions for changes before a decision period of several weeks is set. In the course of the decision-making process, we make sure that after a certain decision period, proposals for decisions are not simply accepted, but that (if possible) feedback is also received from each local group

Of course, this is currently (as of June 2020) easier to implement with 5 member groups than if decisions are made in a federation with 15 or 30 local groups.

In principle, all members can access all information and discussions through our online forums and online communication channels. However, we assume that this is not always done by everyone (and this is simply not possible in terms of time, as most members are involved through wage work, childcare, education, school, studies and other commitments) - but this is not so bad, as there are also local groups that gather and prepare all relevant information, discussions and decisions and make them available to all members of the local group (and thus also to those comrades who do not have the time to inform themselves continuously online).

Are the rules of the organisation questionable?

All structures of the organisation are fundamentally questionable and open to discussion. However, there are certain principles (such as federalism, unity of ideology, practice and strategy, rejection of the vanguard idea) which concern the core of the organisation and are therefore not negotiable.

Why was the process of building die plattform initiated from "top to bottom", i.e. by a federational structure for the whole German-speaking region and not by local groups?

As far as we know, in 2018 (when we were considering the idea of founding die plattform) only the „Libertäre Aktion Winterthur“ existed as a platformist organisation in the German-speaking region. Similarly, neither in the past decades nor currently within the German-speaking anarchist movement have there been any positive references to platformism that have developed a continuity: neither in anarchist discourse nor within the organisational landscape. So there was no basis in our region, neither organisationally as local groups, nor personal contacts to potential comrades that were accessible to us.

The few people interested in the project die plattform were scattered over several cities and at the time assessed the situation in such a way that the establishment of local groups without a basis was not promising.

That is why we decided to take a different path (which, compared to others, has its difficulties and risks, but also its advantages): To bring together comrades who are interested in our organisational concept, to discuss and develop ideas with them - to accept these comrades as members, if they share the organisation's approach to ideology and structure. When enough members have found each other in one place to build up group structures and promote these groups within the organisation. After one year there are now 4 local groups + one supra-regional group of people who are not yet able to form a local group.

What are the advantages of a federation of local groups?

This question can be answered in great detail, as a federation generates a wealth of advantages. We can observe many of the following aspects in our organisation, among others:

- Through a certain division of labour and mutual assistance we have more resources and possibilities, i.e. a greater capacity to act beyond the local group. We can thus produce analyses and texts together, or draw on discussions and knowledge from other groups within the federation. We can let the individual skills flow within the federation to create videos together (so that not in every local group someone has to know how to create a video animation) - but of course we can also teach each other these skills. With our shared public channels (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) we as a federation reach more people than the individual local groups. This means that we get rich synergies from the federation of local groups. This also applies to social struggles: at certain points in struggles, capacities from several local groups can be coordinated through a federation to achieve a greater effect.
- Joint exchange and assessments of current developments in different regions of the German-speaking region help to create a more differentiated picture. Certain developments can be anticipated at an earlier stage if we can gather assessments in several places.
- Anarchism in German-speaking countries suffers from a lack of continuity, which is also an aspect of our weakness and the fact that anarchism is still largely a youth movement rather than a cross-generational social force. Federations acting over long periods of time unite many things, so that the disappearance of a single group does not necessarily mean the end of an experience, a struggle or even a whole generation of activists.
- A federation enables an active person who moves to another city to continue to be active seamlessly, regardless of whether or not a local group exists in the new city.
- A federation has the perspective of becoming a generally visible political force in a country as its size, relevance and struggles grow... It is much more difficult for a single group to become perceptible beyond its own city or regional borders.
- A federation is able to bring together scattered individuals, especially in areas where anarchist groups do not yet exist, and to enable individuals to join the movement.

- We can gain experience of how a federated structure based on anarchist principles can work in practice.

How do individual members organise themselves without a local group?

All individual members form their own group - the supra-regional group. It is the organisational basis for members of the platform who cannot yet form a local group. Because we are more than a mere collection of individuals, we see ourselves as a collective and therefore as a supra-regional group analogous to the local groups of the platform. This means that we have regular online plenary sessions to advise each other on our local situation or to distribute tasks and mandates. Together we develop a form of collective practice that supports us in our respective regional contexts. In other words, the comrades in the supra-regional group help each other in particular to set up new initiatives and groups, as well as in concrete direct actions.

How do you avoid a rigid concept?

By constantly reviewing our content and analysis and comparing them with practice and current conditions, and adapting them where necessary. And by discussing suggestions for improvement or additions from members (especially new members, but also feedback from non-members) and incorporating them where appropriate.

How do you create a unity between theory and practice within the organisation?

We want to start from an analysis of the existing conditions. In addition, we will discuss how a society on an anarchy-communist basis can look like and what factors (self-governing structures, collective capabilities etc.) must be present to achieve this. If we know where we stand (current analysis) and know where we want to go (what is needed for a self-organised, liberated society), we can define (short, medium and long-term) partial goals in different areas of life. How we can achieve these partial goals is something we try to determine through strategies and tactics. In the end we will bring these considerations within the social movements (outside the organisation the platform) and argue for them. This is where we will decide what can be implemented in interaction with many other wage earners. Because (lasting) social change is only possible with large social movements.

What does collective responsibility mean to you?

As members of the organisation we have a common responsibility for all our activities. This means that every member stands behind all activities of the organisation. And that all members of the organisation take responsibility for the success and implementation of the tasks of each individual member. How can we put this into practice?

On the one hand, in the organisational structure (formal structure and procedures of the organisation): by defining responsibilities and tasks for each member in a transparent and clear way; by providing guidance and minimum standards for regular tasks; by setting deadlines for tasks.

On the other hand in internal cooperation: We want to develop a feedback culture in the organisation that encourages members to ask each other when tasks take longer to complete. Asking can be a reminder, but it can also offer support in completing tasks. In a mutual exchange, we want to encourage collective and individual self-reflection and self-assessment about which tasks can be completed (individually and as an organisation) and what is currently too much.

Collective responsibility also means ensuring the success of organisational processes: If regular tasks are not fulfilled, a mandated person can be withdrawn from the organisation.

Can non commitment be overcome with such a concept or in general? Isn't non-binding action simply due to insufficient capacities as a group or to the demands of capitalism?

There is a difference between little available capacity or little social impact on the one hand and non-binding, negligent action by activists on the other. On the one hand, we need to assess and acknowledge what we are able to do (and what we are not) and set ourselves tasks and goals that take into account our capacities and possibilities. On the other hand, we want to create an organisational culture within our organisation that enables us to act collectively in a binding and reliable way.

Through competition of all against all, through processes of social isolation and division, through wage labour and other factors, up to its invasion of almost all areas of life, capitalism promotes counterforces which make its opponents, i.e. us, appear powerless and unable to act. And every time it makes us (supposedly) attractive offers to spend our time with, for example, the latest series, which (should) distract us from our actions as organised anarchists. Even though we of course have to secure our livelihood, for example through wage labour, reproductive work is pending and we also need leisure time and amenities, we have to realise and act according to the fact that we can only achieve (small as well as big) improvements if we work together in a binding, reliable and goal-oriented way.

Why do you, as an anarchist organisation that rejects capitalism, use social media channels like "Facebook", "Twitter" or "YouTube"? There are alternatives like "Mastodon", "Diaspora" or "Peer Tube".

We see social media channels as tools which are not neutral under capitalism, but which are supposed to fulfil a certain function for us; in this case, a way to be publicly perceived, for as many people of the wage-earning class as possible. That is why we currently use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube alongside our homepage.

If we want to reach a large public with our content, alternatives such as Mastodon, Diaspora etc. (alone) are not suitable for this purpose, as the majority of people are currently on the commercial social media platforms. Nevertheless, we want to offer our contents as barrier-free as possible. So users do not have to register to read or view/listen to our content on these social media channels. In addition, all important information of the platform is also published on our homepage and all other social media platforms refer to it as much as possible, e.g. links to complete texts that are only touched upon in videos.

Questions on ideology

What criticisms do you have of the "Organisational Platform of the General Anarchist Union" of 1926?

This draft (the authors emphasised the draft character and the unfinished nature of the document) represented an attempt within the anarchist movement in Europe in the 1920s to learn lessons from the lost revolutions in Russia and the Ukraine, but also from the general weakness of the anarchist movement at the time.

From today's point of view, many aspects of the document are outdated and of course no longer reflect social conditions; forms of exploitation and oppression have changed and refined. But even back then there were "blind spots" within the analysis which was strongly oriented towards capitalism: there was a lack of a view of patriarchy and the role of women* in capitalism, for example. Also the role of the imperialist states, their colonialism, was not included. Whereby it

must be emphasised again that the Organisational Platform was a first draft, an impulse for discussion and not a comprehensive programme.

In contrast to the Organisational Platform of 1926, we reject the idea of uniting all anarchists in one organisation with a unified theory, practice and strategy (whereas the authors of the Organisational Platform wrote in their subsequent articles in the magazine "dielo truda" that they too do not want to unite all anarchists in one organisation, but those anarchists who share the programme of the Organisational Platform, i.e. large parts of the class-struggle anarchists).

How do you see or use the term "cadre"? What is your understanding of it?

A cadre is for us (as Gabriel Kuhn describes in his "23 Theses on Anarchism"⁵) "a person who prioritises political work and there is a difference between activists who do (or can do) this and those who don't." Consequently, "cadres do not deserve privileges, but their experience and commitment must be recognised - not for their sake, but for the sake of the movement." (Kuhn) We assume that there are cadres within the anarchist movement as well as leaders. Not openly discussing this in groups prevents us from finding a collective approach to possible authoritarian dynamics. If people have great abilities in certain areas (e.g. making speeches), we should often fall back on this ability. However, this does not exclude the possibility of enabling other people to become good speakers - this should even be actively promoted in the sense of skills sharing.

Dangerous developments and pitfalls of the approach

Doesn't the historical concept of platformism represent a form of „Bolshevisation“ and thus a turning away from anarchism?

If one looks at the accusations of „Bolshevisation“ from the perspective of anarchist contexts which reject fixed and binding organisational structures, then platformism superficially shares some aspects with Bolshevik organisations - and thus moves closer to these Bolshevik organisations from the perspective of unorganised or loosely organised anarchists. We would like to illustrate this by means of a few characteristics and at the same time list the differences between die plattform and Bolshevism in brackets: A clearly structured organisation; clearly distributed posts for the execution of certain tasks (die plattform: posts are always chosen by the basis of the organisation); accountability of the posts (who are chosen by the basis); firm and binding agreements and decisions (die plattform: but always taken jointly); minority subordination to the majority in majority decisions (die plattform: consensus is always sought); a long-term strategic concept. However, this list of similar characteristics and modes of operation also highlights important differences in detail. The fundamentals of platformism (ideological and strategic unity, collective action in joint responsibility and federalism) contradict decisive criteria of an authoritarian mode of organisation (such as the "democratic centralism" of the Bolsheviks). Examples of fundamentals in platformism that contradict democratic centralism and the Bolsheviks' way of organising are horizontal organisational structure; federalist decision-making from the local basis to the federal level; collective responsibility as a self chosen form of self-discipline in the implementation of the decisions taken jointly; bodies/committees which are not authorised to give instructions but only implement the decisions and agreements of the basis; imperative mandates; no suppression of debates, i.e. a basic openness in discussion; desired consensus in decision-making and veto possibilities for the member groups.

Last but not least, platformism clearly and unequivocally rejects the role of political (party) organisation as a vanguard and party rule in general. (All the principles and foundations of platformism listed here are shared by die plattform in its organisational concept).

5 <http://endofroad.blogspot.de/2016/10/16/23-thesen-zum-anarchismus/>

These clear differences between Bolshevism and platformism make the thesis of „Bolshevisation“ collapse. Rather, it becomes clear that platformism is in harmony with the foundations of anarchism. We therefore clearly contradict the accusation that platformism represents a rejection of anarchist principles.

What mechanisms do you have to prevent die plattform from slipping into authoritarian communism?

We can distinguish different levels of mechanisms: formal organisational structures, an organisational culture (how do the members fill the organisation with life?) and the exchange with other organisations.

Which formal organisational structures prevent die plattform from slipping into authoritarian communism? Horizontal and federalist organisational structures, a federalist decision-making process from the grassroots to the federal level; a basic programme for the organisation (and thus all members), which establishes these anarchist organisational structures; a clearly defined admission process for new members, which conveys substantive and organisational structural principles; an ideological basis for all members, which builds on anarchist communism as well as anarcha-feminism. All these structures are in contrast to authoritarian communist principles. Furthermore, we want to introduce internal training courses for our members, which, in addition to general political education and empowerment, will also include a critical examination of authoritarian-communist currents.

With regard to the organisational culture, important elements for us are the openness of discussions, an equal culture of discussion at eye level and a critical view of informal/hidden hierarchies. Finally, we want to learn from the experiences of other platformist or especifist organisations. To this end, we exchange ideas with our contact persons in these organisations. In addition, we read reports and evaluations of past organisations on this topic in order to critically exchange views. For example, a member of the Workers Solidarity Movement⁶ describes the following critical development process of two former platformist federations in the UK⁷: "If too many people are admitted to the organisation who do not share a basic anarchist ideology (but who want to participate in social struggles and therefore come to the organisation) and at the same time the anarchist members leave the organisation (for example because of internal conflicts which then occur), then it is not surprising if the remaining members then drive the organisation in a Marxist or party political direction."

If we take such experiences into account for our organisation, we reduce the risks of a development into authoritarian communism.

How do you avoid a vanguard role in the social movements?

We reject a vanguard role in the social movements. That means we reject a claim to leadership. We do not want to lead or dominate social movements. At the same time, however, we should be aware that we must actively exert influence in social movements in order to achieve the spread of anarchist principles (and thus always relegate authoritarian values to the background). Anarchist principles, as we have named them in the section "What do you understand by anarchist moments and principles?", are for example self-organisation, mutual help, grassroots democracy, horizontal organisational structures, criticism/rejection of domination, solidarity. If we refuse to anchor these principles in the social movements, we give up the claim to prepare a social revolution which, if successful, will not sink into authoritarian social structures and thus die out.

To return to the question of our role in social movements: We see ourselves and die plattform as a small motor within the social movements, which sets impulses and promotes or reinforces

6 A platformist federation from Ireland

7 In the article: "Platformist groups today":

<https://anarchistplatform.wordpress.com/2010/04/29/platformist-groups-today/>

developments - but without taking the lead or a vanguard role. An vanguard role would be (to stick to that example) a locomotive that pulls the social movement behind it.

Like all political groups, we must of course regularly reflect on our role within the social movements - including the question of the vanguard role - and draw appropriate conclusions and implement them in the event of critical developments.

In order to prevent any vanguard role (of whatever organisation), the following aspects are important: transparency in the flow of information; decision-making structures are determined by the grassroots of the social movement; accountability for executive bodies; imperative mandates for delegates; in principle, all structures created by the social movements must be transparent, open to criticism and changeable. We want to help to ensure that these aspects are implemented in the social movements.

Does platformism carry the danger that you only do theory and that practice is neglected?

Even if the concept of platformism puts a lot of emphasis on the elaboration of a theoretical unity, this is not an obstacle not to become active in the acting practice as well. To do only theory would not only not be in the sense of platformism, but would be the opposite of what the platformist concept says: "Anarchism is not a beautiful fantasy, not an abstract philosophical idea, it is a social movement of the working masses. It must join its forces in a permanently operating organisation, according to the requirements of the strategy in social struggle" (Organizational Platform of the General Anarchist Union, 1926).

When setting up the organisation, the development of the ideological basis and analysis currently takes up more space, of course. After more than a year of organisational development work (during which we were already active in practice to a lesser extent), we now have the opportunity to put the focus more on the practical side.

Other aspects that we appreciate about the organisational concept: With a sound basis in terms of content, we hope that the practice that develops from it will also be more targeted and stronger, as we can better understand developments and mechanisms in practice and find collective answers. Moreover, once a basic orientation has been established, many discussions do not have to be repeated over and over again (although this does not exclude the possibility of checking the topicality of the content).

How do you intend to maintain the openness of theory and practice? How do you want to prevent dogmatism within die plattform?

Apart from the anarchist basic principles, all aspects of the ideology, strategies and the forms of our practice must be questionable, criticizable and changeable. An open and inviting culture of discussion at eye level should further promote these processes.

Based on continuous analysis of the present, we want to regularly question (and if necessary adapt) our contents, tactics and strategies. This has a preventive effect against dogmatism.

In addition, our involvement and exchange in social movements outside the anarchist scene bubble offers the opportunity to come into contact with very different people, opinions and approaches - and thus to constantly gather new impulses and experiences and discuss them in die plattform.

How do you want to prevent informal hierarchies in your organisation?

There is certainly not one solution to this question. We think this makes sense: clearly defined decision-making structures; clearly defined processes, how information is shared; clearly defined areas of responsibility that are distributed over many shoulders; the sharing of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts to enable us to learn new things from each other.

Relationship to other organisations

*Why are you founding a new organisation alongside the already existing „Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen“ (Federation of German-speaking anarchists, FdA) and the „Freie Arbeiter*innen Union“ (Free Workers' Union, FAU)? Why is die plattform not possible within the FdA or the FAU?*

In our series of events this was the classic. Because one of these questions came up at virtually every event.

The organisational concepts of these two federations differ significantly from the concept of die plattform.

The FdA as an synthesist anarchist federation unites different anarchist currents, social analyses, strategies and understandings of revolution. The experience of some plattform members within the FdA was that due to these differences in analysis, ideology and strategy between the FdA local groups, effective action and deeper analysis at federational level was not satisfactory. This meant that many synergy effects⁸ which a well-positioned anarchist federation can create, were not possible. A unity of analysis, ideology and strategy, as die plattform as an organisation strives for, would not be possible within the FdA (and not desired by us: we do not want to unite all anarchists under a general organisation with ideological and strategic unity).

What distinguishes the concept of die plattform from that of the FAU? Even if the FAU with its anarcho-syndicalist orientation is not organised across currents, there are no uniform ideas of goals and strategies among its member syndicates⁹. For example, there is no unity in our perception of what an anarchist-communist society might look like. Nor is the way to get there (leaving aside the general strike) clear enough either.

Moreover, we see the FAU primarily as an organisation of interest. That means, according to its claim it strives to organise workers in their wage dependency. We would like to support this focus because we consider a militant grassroots union to be indispensable. According to our concept, however, we want to unite along common ideas and analyses.

One objection that was raised several times in the discussions on these issues was: It would be possible to act together within the FdA as a union of platformist groups alongside other FdA groups or to organise as a supra-regional cultural organisation within the FAU. Here too, we would like to emphasise the above arguments once again: We think that an own common strategy on a common theoretical and ideological basis is only possible in an independent organisation. Furthermore, our external impact would not be conclusive if we were part of another federation which (in certain areas) has different points of view. And this idea raises further ambiguities on many detailed issues: Starting with membership fees to the federation, through international cooperation (which has so far been very separate between platformist/especifist-oriented federations and synthesist or syndicalist federations).

In conclusion, however, it must be emphasised that we see ourselves in a relationship of solidarity with these two federations and that we will seek to cooperate where appropriate.

How do you position yourself as die plattform within the platformist movement worldwide? How distinct or dogmatic is your platformism?

In the first year of our existence we were able to establish first contacts with other platformist and especifist organisations, or studied papers of some of these organisations. Since spring 2020, exchanges between other federations (mainly from Latin America and Western Europe) have been

⁸ Positive effects that result from cooperation, so that often more can be achieved/worked on than each group can achieve on its own

⁹ This means the federated trade unions in the individual cities and regions

taking on more concrete forms. However, we still lack a deeper look at the whole international platformist movement. So far we have the impression that our organisational concept does not contradict other platformist organisations worldwide. Overall, we have discussed (especially as far as practice is concerned) many elements of *especificismo*, the Latin American version of platformism. However, in principle we can say that we do not share some central positions of platformism (similar to other platformist federations today). For example, we reject the claim to gather all anarchists in one organisation with ideological and strategic unity. We therefore do not represent with our organisation a claim to sole representation within the anarchist movement. We also do not claim that we as a platformist organisation are the only ones who take the only right way and that other anarchist strategies or organisational concepts have no justification whatsoever. We do not elevate our views to a generally valid truth. An orthodox interpretation of the original document of platformism¹⁰ would confirm all this. For these reasons, we see our concept of organisation as more adapted and modified. Thus we share this attitude with many other platformist organisations today.

Who are your allies?

We want to get involved in social movements that bring together wage-earning people from very different backgrounds. Classical left-wing alliance politics, which merely gathers left-wing to radical left-wing groups around a table, is not a priority for us. Nevertheless, it will always happen that we in social movements will also fight together with other anarchist or radical left-wing organisations (but also with representatives of political parties) if we pursue similar goals and cooperation seems to make sense to us.

And of course we want to establish a close exchange with other platformist-inspired federations.

How do you see the „Interventionistische Linke“ (interventionist left, iL)?¹¹

We are following the project of iL with curiosity and see some similarities to our approach. Intervention and social insertion seem to us to be two different terms for related approaches. What we lack in iL, however, is an elaborated and jointly shared theoretical basis and a viable analysis of the current situation. And what probably distinguishes us most from it is our claim to build grassroots organisations. In our view, iL's strategy is to influence political debates on a selective basis and in this way influence decisions. This is reflected in the fact that iL is increasingly focusing on campaigns designed to mobilise people for specific political events (e.g. the G20 summits, but also the various state elections in 2019). As a result of this focus, iL seems to be getting into an instrumental relationship with grass-roots struggles and only considers them useful to the extent that they can be escalated to a broad conflict. It is thus less concerned with strengthening grassroots organisations that can fight for their interests and needs in the long term. But this is precisely what is important to create rebellious collectives that are capable of action in the long term and can stand up for themselves - without party or state.

10 The Organisational Platform of the General Anarchist Union (1926)

11 iL is an undogmatic, nationwide project of the broad radical-left in Germany
<https://interventionistische-linke.org/>