‘With one’s back to the wall?’
A Social Systems Theory Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutionary Terrorism

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Thesis Abstract

This PhD thesis develops a complex, multi-layered conceptual framework and analytical strategy for approaching ‘clandestine political violence’ (della Porta 2013) from a thoroughly communicative perspective. More precisely, the thesis sets out to conceptualise how revolutionary identities are (re)produced in radical ‘discourse communities’ (Apter 1997b) by interpreting socio-political realities, constructing counter-memories, and establishing a semantics of ‘armed struggle’ to legitimise the use of violent means in non-revolutionary situations and pacified, democratic societies. Its theoretical framework builds on Niklas Luhmann’s social systems theory (Luhmann 1995a, 1998, 2002a; Luhmann and Hellmann 1996) as well as on seminal work in social movement studies (Bosi and della Porta 2012; Caiani et al. 2012; della Porta 1995; Zwerman et al. 2000), social semiotics and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995c; Fairclough et al. 2011; Halliday 1978b, 1985; Wodak 1989, 1996; Wodak and Meyer 2009). The project’s empirical chapters comparatively analyse the writings of two left-wing armed formations in late 20th century Germany and the ways in which these were perceived in the contemporary radical counter-public. Case studies are the ‘2nd of June Movement’ and the ‘Revolutionary Cells’, two German groups ‘in the shadow of the RAF’ (Kraushaar 2006b). A range of leaflets, brochures and self-identified radical periodicals provide the source material for mapping out the counter-public. Common sense in terrorism studies literature often has it that texts produced by terrorist groups are jargon-ridden, semantically one-dimensional, and purely rhetorical pieces of inwards-directed ideological justification, more auto-propaganda than actual political communication (Cordes 1987a; della Porta 1995; Rapoport 1988). In contrast, the conceptual framework of this thesis argues that meanings, identities, and interpretations of socio-political realities are negotiated in more complex ways within the writings of armed formations. In different ways and to different degrees, even the closed, small-scale social systems of clandestine groups enter into (indirect) conversations with their wider social environment.
Acknowledgments

Writing these acknowledgments essentially means that a long journey has come to an end on which many people have left their mark. It is frankly impossible to do all of you justice and it is equally obvious that these remarks will be inconclusive and eclectic to say the least.

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I am grateful to Aberystwyth University for the funding granted by a generous Doctoral Career Development Scholarship (DCDS) and other material and immaterial support I received throughout my doctoral research. The unparalleled academic climate within the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University also was essential for finishing this thesis. The level of intellectual engagement and the fact that research students participate in the department’s scholarly life on an equal footing helped me to keep confidence in my work and the faith in academia.

Aberystwyth is blessed with many unique treasures; y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru or the National Library of Wales, where most of this thesis has been written, is one of the most important ones to me. I would like to thank all librarians, porters, support staff, researchers, technicians, and readers of this very precious institution. This is not only because of the amazing fact that a fully stocked copyright library is at every resident’s disposal and requests are processed by some of the most competent librarians I have ever met, but also because all of you made me feel welcome in Wales. Diolch yn fawr!

I am deeply indebted to my mother, Bärbel Edelmann, for always supporting me and believing in me. I know this has been difficult at times; I cannot say how much I admire you for that and I am sure I would not be here without it. I would also like to thank my late father, Erich Edelmann, who had the patience to discuss with a younger, more rebellious, and more annoying version of myself honestly and seriously about politics and society. Political discussions and kitchen tables will always be related for me and that is thanks to you. Furthermore, my big-hearted brother Martin Edelmann, his brilliant wife Ulrike Würz, and their incredible daughter Ella Würz have been great and very patient friends who provided much needed grounding even if they have not seen much of me in the last four years. I would also like to express my gratitude to my dear uncle Heinz, who has not only always been a political role model and a rock in the changing tides of leftist attitudes, but also an invaluable source of information on the undogmatic German left.

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class with seemingly easy questions and a most humble attitude towards the significance of social sciences. Furthermore, I would like to thank Prof Dr Stephan Bierling very much who was brave enough to offer me employment after graduation by mere word of mouth and supported my efforts to move on tremendously; I hope he did not regret it too much.

PD Dr Alexander Straßner accompanied me throughout my studies in politics at Regensburg University and encouraged me in more than one way. He also convinced me that what I considered a slightly pathological fascination with political violence actually was academically interesting. My heartfelt thanks for mentoring me into becoming the kind of researcher I am now – obviously the flaws are all mine. Finally, PD Dr Oliver Hidalgo fuelled not only my love for social and political theory, but also forced me to leave my comfort zone and explain theoretical flirts in comprehensible terms time and again for which I am grateful.

I am also deeply indebted to the staff at four great research institutes and movement archives that keeps the memory of the extra-parliamentarian left in all its complexities and contradictions alive. My sincere gratitude for opening the archives of the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History IISG), the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hamburg Institute for Social Research HIS), the APO-Archiv (Archive of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition), and the Papiertiger Archiv und Bibliothek der Sozialen Bewegungen (Paper Tiger Archive and Library of Social Movements). I hope my work does justice to the efforts of these institutions.

When funding ran finally out in fourth year, I was lucky enough to turn a long-term hobby into a job. I thank all staff in shop, restaurant, and kitchen at the Treehouse Wales in Aberystwyth for believing that I might become a chef at some point. Since you are too many to mention everyone, I would just like to express my gratitude to Matt Williams, Gill, Aisha Gwadabe, and Adam Wiliams in particular who taught me the treehouse ways. I will be less stressed and less fussy with the rota from now on, I promise.

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APO</td>
<td>Außerparlamentarische Opposition (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2J</td>
<td>Bewegung 2. Juni (2nd of June Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Cellules Communistes Combattantes (Communist Combatant Cells)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTS</td>
<td>Critical Terrorism Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA</td>
<td>Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAPO</td>
<td>Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre (First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDF</td>
<td>Israeli Defence Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIR</td>
<td>Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Movement of the Revolutionary Left)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>Nuclear Power Plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>New Social Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFLP</td>
<td>Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (al-Jabhab al-Sha`biyyah li-Taḥrīr Filastīn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Faction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RZ</td>
<td>Revolutionäre Zellen (Revolutionary Cells)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>‘Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund’ (Socialist Students Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMO</td>
<td>Social Movement Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Social Movement Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM</td>
<td>Tupamaros München (Tupamaros Munich)</td>
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<td>TW</td>
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1. Introduction: More about the Few

When the rapid decline in the fortunes of the New Left set in, a few of its members opted for terrorism. ... There has been an unending stream of publications on these various groups and by their members, on their views, moods, beliefs, motives and aims; seldom in history has so much been written about so few and so little. (Laqueur 1977, 250-251)

In the words of Walter Laqueur, one of the influential founding figures of ‘terrorism studies’ as an academic sub-discipline, the history of organised social-revolutionary, radical left, and anti-state political violence from below or ‘New Left terrorism’ was over before it really began. These largely small and marginalised factions were bound to disappear soon as they represented, according to Walter Laqueur, only by-products of the disintegration of a large wave of youth and student protest whose social and cultural implications were more relevant than its politics (Laqueur 1977, 249-259). In hindsight, this bold claim uttered in 1977 with the authority of a seasoned historian of terrorism was premature, to say the least. In the autumn of the very same year, the German ‘Rote Armee Fraktion’ (RAF) or Red Army Faction, a group of approximately 20 people at the time (Wunschik 2006a, 472), staged a high-profile kidnapping to free imprisoned members and caused, with the support of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a veritable crisis of domestic and international dimensions (Blumenau 2014, 74-83; Varon 2004, 196-199). Although the episode, dubbed in hindsight ‘German Autumn’, 1 ended in a political disaster for the RAF, as the group retrospectively admits in different words (RAF [1982] 1997, 303), it proves Laqueur’s judgement wrong that German New Left terrorism yielded ‘not an impressive balance sheet for eight years of activity’ (1977, 251).

Despite such spectacular incidents, political violence in post-war Germany also never became a widespread phenomenon as it was, for instance, for a short window towards the end of the 1970s in some of the centres of the 1977 youth movement in Italy (della Porta 1995, 31-33). While a political underground of organised radical left violence remained on the margins of a substantially larger non-institutionalised left and could draw only on a marginal support base, it also remained a permanent undercurrent of German politics throughout the 1980s and to some degree into the 1990s. Accordingly, some observers

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1 The spatio-temporal metaphor designates the stand-off between RAF and German authorities during the abduction of Hanns Martin Schleyer and subsequent skyjacking of a German airliner by a Palestinian commando in an attempt to free imprisoned members of the first generation of the RAF (Varon 2004, 196-198).
argue that ‘armed struggle’, the preferred term of practitioners of violence (RZ 1976e, 7), became for some time an institutionalised, permanent feature of political life of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) (Scheerer 1988a, 382-392; Varon 2004, 302). Furthermore, political violence did not only fail to disappear, but also established its own mythologies and reference structures. The names and logos of two of the largest groups, the already mentioned RAF and the ‘Revolutionäre Zellen’ (RZ) or ‘Revolutionary Cells’ (see below Chapter 6) were in use between the early 1970s and the 1990s as self-designations of violent actors (RAF 1970a, 1998; RZ 1973b; RZ 1993a). By contrast, the ‘Bewegung 2. Juni’ (B2J) or ‘2nd of June Movement’, the third major armed formation in late 20th century Germany, was active under this name only for a short period at the beginning of the 1970s before some of its remaining free members declared their merger with the RAF in 1980 after unsuccessful attempts at regrouping (B2J 1980).

These different levels of organisational continuity are not trivial if we take into consideration that, according to David C. Rapoport, life expectations of New Left terrorist organisations average two years (Rapoport 2002, 2) and a non-representative study by Audrey K. Cronin finds that about 35 percent of ‘durable groups’ disintegrate within less than five years (Cronin 2009, 207-222). In this context it is also remarkable that the ever-expanding literature on terrorism pays considerably less attention to exploring the conditions of continuity of terrorism than to explaining its causes (see below Chapter 2). Roughly speaking, there are two different perspectives for explaining the persistence of revolutionary terrorism despite failures to revolutionise the ‘masses’, each of which privileges a particular aspect. Firstly, two ways of conceptualising the conditions of continuity of political violence focus on the inside of terrorist groups. Namely, they highlight either the role of internally coherent, rigid ideologies that reduce socio-political realities to a Manichean duality (Orsini 2011) or group dynamics that develop into self-sustaining vicious cycles (Crenshaw 1988). Secondly, authors emphasising external factors of persistence also establish two different causal claims. In this reading, terrorism continues despite obvious strategic failures because of the existence of transnational terrorist networks (Daase 2006) or as a consequence of heavy-handed reactions to violent provocations, particularly the treatment of prisoners from terrorist groups (Scheerer 1988a, 375-382).
While these conceptualisations help to explain the long history of the RAF, they become less plausible in the cases of RZ and B2J. The RZ had neither a firmly established ideology (Fetscher et al. 1981, 178) nor did it consist of a close-knit group (Blumenau 2014, 26-28). Furthermore this network of autonomous cells cut off existing international contacts deliberately towards the end of the 1970s and mostly could avoid prosecution and the consequences of antiterrorist policing due to their concept of subsidiary clandestinity or ‘after work terrorism’ (Wörle 2008).  

By contrast, the B2J, whose ideological grounding is also not beyond doubt, represents the textbook example of an exclusionary, total in-group (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 170-174). The group also had considerable international contacts, and was already founded in reaction to perceived repressive tendencies (Wunschik 2006b). Consequently, this thesis argues that a complementary perspective is necessary to address the question of why and how social-revolutionary violence persists or disintegrates in non-revolutionary times. As it is highly unlikely that life spans correspond with a consistent membership base, symbolical and discursive elements of continuity and discontinuity come into focus.

According to David E. Apter, violent conflicts are also struggles over meaning between opponents and defenders of the socio-political status quo in which ‘discourse communities’ of political violence emerge: mythologies, perception realities, narratives, and symbolic references establish and maintain collective identities of legitimised fundamental opposition (Apter 1997b). In this perspective, the four aspects of continuity become meaningful in the ways they are communicated within and by groups, for instance when ideological reasoning allows for transforming perceived repression into a sense of belonging to an international revolutionary movement of the oppressed. In other words, the thesis argues that the main element for reconstructing a self-identified social-revolutionary discourse community is the negotiation of revolutionary identities in non-revolutionary times according to a complex set of interrelated aspects of meaning making (see Chapters 3 and 4).

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2 The vast majority of arrests and trials for membership in the RZ only took place after their active face ended in the early 1990s; the hitherto last trials came to a conclusion in 2013 with relatively minor sentences (Beucker 2016).

3 While the first generation of the RAF was mostly imprisoned by 1972 (Scheerer 1988a, 336-337), several papers from groups within the network of the RZ suggest generational turnover (RZ 1992a; RZ 1992b). Even the short history of the B2J is characterised by several regroupings (Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 15-20).
Unlike Apter who conceptualises the dynamics of anti-systemic, sub-state political violence on a continuum between material exchanges and discursive inversions of social reality (for details see below, point 2.2.4), this thesis argues for a strong constructivist perspective. It contends that the material aspects of conflict reality, including confrontational encounters during protest events, activist networks, but also the means of violent struggle or the ‘the discourse of arms’ (Manconi and Dini 1981), ultimately also represent social realities: meaning making not only plays a role in their mediation, but they only become socially meaningful by the ways in which they are discursively reconstructed. In so doing, the thesis’ argument develops communication approaches in terrorism studies further (see below point 2.1.2, p. 38) by reinterpreting communication as the essentially social operation according to Niklas Luhmann’s theory of social communication (Moeller 2012, 19-31). In approaching the wider problem of why some New Left armed groups disintegrated quickly while others continued activities under similar conditions, setbacks and failures notwithstanding, the thesis asks the following research question:

Which elements influence the potential continuity of social-revolutionary, clandestine, politically violent groups if these are approached from a Luhmannian perspective?

1.1 Location, contribution, and rationale of the thesis’ approach

This research question presupposes a number of theoretical and conceptual decisions which have to be discussed in more detail to locate the thesis within the ever growing terrorism studies literature and outline which potential new insights it can offer to a heterogeneous and highly contested field of knowledge production. In this context, the thesis owes first and foremost much to the critical turn in terrorism studies, spearheaded and advanced by the British International Studies Association’s (BISA) Critical Studies on Terrorism (CST) working group. Its ambitious project includes bringing Critical thought with a capital letter into the study of political violence, criticising the perceived orthodoxy within a subfield that is often more closely related to power than ideal-types of academic freedom would suggest, and addressing the social construction of knowledge claims on terrorism (Gunning 2007b; Jackson 2007). While CST hence opened a discursive space within studies on political violence and terrorism to which this thesis with its strong constructivist
epistemology is connected, its directions and limitations have been critically accompanied from within the project itself and from sympathetic observers (Gunning 2007a; Weinberg and Eubank 2008). Criticism focused on the dangers of misrepresenting a broad, multifaceted, and often conflicting field of study as a monolithic uncritical orthodoxy, but also on the perils of unintentionally reaffirming the very subject-object-differentiations CST set out to deconstruct. An earlier conceptual appraisal of CST approaches argues that their epistemological programme and understanding of critique still presupposes the possibility of an enlightened observer position outside of its socially constructed subject matter; in so doing they risk failing to fully realise their critical potential (Edelmann 2011a, b).

In this regard, the thesis understands itself as an attempt to take CST perspectives as a vantage point for going beyond their inherent limitations in at least two ways. Firstly and more explicitly, its discussion of ways of theorising within the terrorism studies literature (see below, Chapter 2) aims to unpack the notion of a traditional orthodoxy. By tracing different conceptual approaches to terrorist political violence in the debates of the sub-field, it asks to which degree this orthodoxy represents a coherent body of knowledge. Furthermore, it also enquires which aspects of the discursive reproduction of violence remain unaddressed in critical perspectives which emphasise talking to terrorists (Heath-Kelly 2013; Toros 2012) or problematizing the label (Jackson 2005) as a means for better understanding the realities of political violence. Here, the thesis argues that listening to how armed groups describe their political project according to their own writings is a critical source for assessing how discourses of violence evolve. Secondly and in more implicit terms, the thesis also explores the conditions of possibility of critique. In this context, it develops a radically constructivist approach to counter-hegemonic, clandestine political violence in accordance with the recently rediscovered ‘(not so hidden) radicalism’ of Luhmann’s social and political thought (Moeller 2012, 3-9). To this purpose, it adapts and translates grand theory design for the study of a limited and clearly delineated problem, that is, the question of why armed groups in remarkably similar socio-political contexts sometimes persist while a narrative of nearly inevitable disintegration dominates the research literature (Crenshaw 2011, 193-222; Cronin 2009, 197-206).

Accordingly, this research sets out to contribute in two different ways to academic discussions within terrorism studies and beyond. Firstly, the added value of the thesis’
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approach consists in developing a systematic conceptual and theoretical framework for addressing communicative aspects of political violence beyond a merely instrumental understanding of the term (see below, point 2.1.2). As its empirical chapters analyse two of the lesser studied cases of radical left political violence in late 20th Century Germany according to this framework, the combination of conceptual argument and case studies aims at deepening our understanding of interrelations between politics, violence, semantics, and dissident social realities. Moreover, it sets out to revisit and re-examine generalisations regarding the dynamics of counter-hegemonic political violence from below. In so doing, in-depth historical analysis on a strong conceptual foundation also explores the question of how past cycles of political violence can inform a better understanding of current developments without establishing strong causal claims and analogies. Secondly, the thesis’ conceptual argument and research design also intends to go beyond common differentiations between grand social theories and empirically oriented, subject-specific middle range theories (Merton 1957; Stinchcombe 1968). By relating its conceptual framework to central elements of Luhmann’s social systems theory, namely his theory of communication and its implications for thinking about conflict and protest in society (see below, point 3.2), this thesis choses a different path. It is neither just an exercise in theoretical enquiry, nor a purely empirical study, but aims at translating insights from grand theory design into methods for analysing concrete historical realities in their discursive contingency. In so doing, the thesis also understands itself as a contribution to the ongoing movement of rediscovering and reassessing the critical or even radical aspects of Niklas Luhmann’s thinking on the social reality of modernity (Amstutz 2013; Fischer-Lescano 2013; King and Thornhill 2005, 203-225; la Cour and Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013; Moeller 2012).

The Luhmannian take on systems theory has been chosen as a point of departure for conceptualising the discursive reproduction of self-identified revolutionary violence in non-revolutionary times for a range of interrelated reasons. First and foremost, Luhmann thinks the social from the vantage point of the basic operation communication as point 3.2 will elaborate in detail. Going beyond earlier, relatively simplistic and mostly metaphoric understandings of the term in systems theory (e.g. Deutsch 1966), he develops a complex, historic, evolutionary, and process-oriented concept of communication: communication is not just an instrumental function of social action, as for instance in the picture of
communicating vessels that mitigate differences, but an ontic quality of the social. Consequently, the Luhmannian conceptual apparatus allows for a thorough critique of communication theories of terrorism that are based on simple sender-recipient-models and evaluate the level of success of violent communicative strategies (see below, point 2.1.2). By contrast, Luhmann’s notion of communication in which misunderstandings and fundamental dissent can establish and maintain particular social relations seems more appropriate to conceptualise how a discourse of political violence (re)produces or in Apter’s words ‘establishes its own communicative fields within which political movements are defined’ (Apter 1997b, 17).

Secondly, Luhmann’s explicitly non-normative notion of communication is not related to teleology, consensual understanding, or a rational ideal of domination-free discourse. The interrelation of communicative events establishes social systematicity and different manifestations of the social on different societal levels (Luhmann 1998, 90-91). In so doing, he objects to the normative concept of discourse of ‘critical theory of the second generation’ (Amstutz 2013, 365), namely Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action (Luhmann 1998, 797). According to Habermas, discourse presupposes the possibility ‘that a rationally motivated agreement could in principle be achieved’, ‘participants come to a common definition of the situation’ (Habermas 1984, 42 and 119), and communicative action allows for socially integrating the lifeworld (idem 1987, 140-148). While an in-depth discussion of the classical Habermas-Luhmann-controversy on the merits of systems theory and the distinction between systemic rationality and lifeworld is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis (Habermas and Luhmann 1971), Luhmann’s non-normative approach to communication is considered more appropriate for conceptualising how discourses of fundamental dissent reproduce themselves. As Apter already points out, radical disagreement on the principles of social and political communality characterises discourse communities of political violence, which is why his understanding of discourse differs from the Habermasian perspective (Apter 1997b, 31). The thesis hence argues that a Luhmannian perspective on communication allows for avoiding the limitations of instrumental and

4 However, Habermas’ considerations on the limitations of social integration in times of ‘newly arising situations’ or fundamental social change (Habermas 1987, 140-141) resonate with some of the macrosociological conceptualisations on the origins of terrorism (see below, point 2.2.1).
normative approaches to communication both of which have to treat violent communications as dysfunctional or deviant for different reasons.

Beyond that, the third rationale for adopting this position is immediately related to the ways in which Luhmann formulates his epistemic programme in the seminal ‘Social Systems’ which addresses general theoretical principles for subsequent monographies on the different functional sub-systems of modern society (Luhmann 1998, 11-15). He argues that the aim of systems theory consists in problematizing the status quo of the social world by ‘explaining the normal as improbable’ (idem 1995a, 114). To this purpose he suggests, on the other hand, the method of functional comparison according to which very different manifestations of the social can and should be approached within a similar, but highly abstract theoretical framework that asks how communication(s) reproduces different social systems and their idiosyncrasies (idem 1998, 41-42). This dual methodological and theoretical premise is reinterpreted in the context of this thesis. Sebastian Scheerer states that scholarly writing treats the emergence of armed radical left formations in late 20th Century Europe in the context of pacified, democratic as an ‘impossible fact’: something which cannot be explained within the parameters of normal social science since it is too far removed from the ordinary (Scheerer 1988a, 155). By extension, CST convincingly argues that studies on political violence and terrorism often approach their very subject of study as a deviation from socio-politically normality and the norms of conflict, virtually by definition an anomaly in its social context. De-exceptio- nalising the study of terrorism by introducing different ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives is thus part and parcel of the critical project (Gunning 2009, 156-158; Jackson et al. 2011, 34-47). In this regard, the thesis contends that Luhmannian theory with its starting point in the improbability of the normal provides an adequate frame of reference for approaching the extraordinary as normal and thus contributes to a less exceptionalist perspective on political violence.5

This introduction already has located the thesis within different readings of Luhmannian thought as part of attempts at re-appropriating Luhmann’s critical potential. Additionally, the following remarks will discuss more closely which particular elements of his

5 On a related note, M.A.K. Halliday argues in an article on the mutual conditionality of anti-languages and dissident subcultures that social semiotics can learn as much about the semantic condition of society from a study of ‘pathological manifestations’ of sub-language as sociology learnt from its early interest in deviant behaviour (Halliday 1976, 570).
extensive work influence the thesis’ argument and which particular challenges working on a concrete research problem from a Luhmannian perspective represents. While only a small fraction of his texts has been translated into English, Luhmann was a prolific writer before and after his turn towards a comprehensive theory of social systems based on the notion of autopoiesis or the self-reproduction of society in communicative operations (Bednarz 1989; Hellmann 1996; Moeller 2012, 10-15). Roughly speaking, his work can be sub-divided into three main bodies.

Firstly, his self-identified main work of an all-encompassing social theory consists of ‘Social Systems’ or the general and very abstract outline of the autopoietic approach, a number of monographs on specific functional systems, such as the economy, law, science, politics, and art, and the ‘Theory of Society’ in the strict sense which develops a detailed evolutionary perspective on modernity (Luhmann 1998, 11-15). Secondly, there is a diverse body of longer and shorter contributions from a systems theory perspective on a variety of topics stretching from the social function of trust and romantic love over relations between social structure and semantics to the role of mass media, some of which have been collated into different series of edited volumes (Bednarz 1989, 7-9). Thirdly and maybe least well known, there are a couple of critical interventions on developments within modern society, most notably ‘Ecological Communication’ (Luhmann 1989), ‘Risk: A Sociological Theory’ (idem 1993b) and ‘Protest: Systems Theory and Social Movements’ (Luhmann and Hellmann 1996). While these latter and shorter books arguably leave to some degree the plane of purely abstract consideration, take a more engaged perspective on current social issues, and have a clearer articulated critical edge, they still argue strictly from a systems theory perspective (King and Thornhill 2005, 182-202). Consequently, they are not easily accessible without a good grasp of Luhmann’s idiosyncratic theoretical jargon, do not develop a rigorous methodological programme and are, as in the case of the collated outlines on protest and social movements, less systematic and even less linear than usual (Bednarz 1989, vii-ix; Hellmann 1996, 9-21; Moeller 2012, 10-15).

Developing a conceptual approach to the discursive reconstruction of fundamental dissent by armed formations within a Luhmannian vocabulary thus faces two particular challenges. Firstly, the most promising theoretical points of departure, namely the notions of conflict, protest, and social movements are scattered throughout Luhmann’s different
works, but also need a thorough grounding within its overarching architecture to become meaningful. In this regard, the thesis draws mainly on two sources. On the one hand, considerations on the social functions of contradiction and conflict in ‘Social Systems’ (Luhmann 1995a, 357-404) and on protest movements in ‘The Theory of Society’ (idem 1998, 847-865) and the posthumously published ‘The Politics of Society’ (idem 2002a, 315-318) help developing the evolution of these concepts within the main work. On the other hand, the more concrete and interventionist writings inform the argument, namely reflections on protest movements as spaces in which concerns about societal and ecological risks articulate themselves (idem 1989, 121-126; idem 1993b, 125-144) and the collected contributions on the transformations of social movements in the late 20th century (Luhmann and Hellmann 1996).

Consequently, there is no single point for theoretically anchoring the thesis. Rather, the thesis’ conceptual argument is situated in a close reading of different aspects of Luhmann’s work and aims to develop these aspects further. On a related note, the highly abstract character of his writings and their relative silence on concrete methodologies represent the second challenge for establishing programmes for empirical research within a Luhmannian framework (Andersen 2003). As even Luhmann’s issue-related critical interventions argue on a mostly conceptual level and develop a theoretical critique of current issues and debates, the thesis’ design requires not only to elaborate a Luhmannian perspective on political violence out of a reading of his work, but also to translate this perspective into concrete methods of enquiry or an analytical strategy. Therefore, the conceptual argument of the thesis contains an extended, stand-alone chapter on methodology. Nevertheless it is argued here that Luhmann’s unique take on communication helps addressing some of the central shortcomings of communication perspectives in terrorism studies and justifies the effort of developing a complex argument.

1.2 Continuity and textuality in research on political violence

As previous discussions of the precarious institutionalisation of armed struggle in Germany indicate, this thesis does not argue that continuity equals success. Nevertheless, its approach suggests a different perspective on the dynamics of durability of clandestine armed formations. Most commonly, analyses of extended terrorist campaigns establish a
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narrative of permanent decline according to which political violence not only emerges during the demobilisation of larger waves of protest and social movement, but also realises a trend towards increasing depoliticisation. It is argued that terrorist groups inevitably depart from their initial motivations and politics, distance themselves from their social basis, and descend from charismatic if controversial protest politicians into technocratic, specialised professionals of violence whose political credentials are doubtful (Crenshaw 1985; della Porta 1995, 83-135; Scheerer 1988b; Straßer 2004; Waldmann 1998, 163-182). While these perspectives describe important aspects of the reality of political violence, it is unlikely that groups fail to notice such tendencies or deliberately try to counteract them. Accordingly, it is argued here that ‘survival on a shoestring’, a term coined by Leena Malkki to describe stubborn efforts to keep the remnants of the already small American ‘Symbionese Liberation Army’ operational (Malkki 2010), represents a permanent element of armed struggle which produces and reproduces different coping mechanisms in attempts to ensure continuity with one’s back to the wall.

The description refers back to the thesis’ main title ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ which is quoted from the papers of one of the thesis’ two case studies, the heading of an elaborate conceptual text by the B2J. Formulating its comment on the particular positionality of radical politics in the mid-1970s as a query, the text suggests that structural crisis, far-reaching restructuration, and a disintegrating non-institutionalised left only leave one place of revolutionary identity: the organisation of ‘armed counter-power’ (B2J [1975] 2001). This glance at an instant of negotiating radical identity claims also illustrates a critical element of the thesis’ argument: the conceptual and empirical importance of reading the writings of practitioners of violence in depth and within a systematic analytical framework. According to Heinz Steinert and his associates, ‘currents of radical left-wing terrorism become accessible to the reader in more reliable forms through the study of authentic texts, authored by the respective groups’; in this regard, the authors describe the availability of texts as the largest obstacle (Steinert 1984, 579, n. 47).

However, few contributions actually engage systematically with ‘terrorist literature’ (Cordes 1987b) apart from quoting strategically to substantiate a larger argument. Alessandro Orsini’s analysis of the worldview of the Italian ‘Brigate Rosse’ (BR) or ‘Red Brigades’ argues that their focus on eschatology and purification resembles religious more
than political thought and draws heavily on the group’s writings (Orsini 2011). In its focus on an external critique of these texts, it resembles a study by Iring Fetscher et al. who point in a meticulous ideology critique of early RAF texts to the group’s eclectic reading of Marxist-Leninist classics which emphasises the importance of revolutionary practice instead of historical processes (Fetscher et al. 1981). Dennis A. Pluchinsky extrapolates common traits and potential threat scenarios from an overview of contemporary left terrorist organisations’ writings in a security studies perspective (Pluchinsky 1992). From a similar vantage point, Bonnie Cordes focuses on psychological readings and interprets ‘terrorist literature’ mostly as auto-propaganda that internally rationalises actions and maintains group cohesion (Cordes 1987a, b). As Donatella della Porta interprets ideology mostly as a semantic organisational resource, her analysis of ideological texts concludes in a similar vein that these increasingly depart from the language of the counterculture from which groups emerged and construct internally consumed alternative realities (della Porta 1992b, 129-133). In general, all authors emphasise the highly abstract, jargonistic, inwards-directed, and eclectic nature of texts which reconstruct socio-political realities in counterfactual, not immediately accessible ways. In Cordes’ words ‘terrorists are rather poor communicators’ (Cordes 1987b, 3).

Beyond that, the theoretical framework and analytical strategy developed in this thesis (see below Chapters 3 and 4) argue that the writings of armed formations and the ways in which these reconstruct social realities reveal more about internal realities, differences, and processes than the proposition of a clear trajectory towards increasing encapsulation and alienation suggests. For instance, the trope that left perspectives have to be ‘as radical as reality’ appears several times in the writings of the RZ and their environment. Nevertheless, the meaning of this ‘radical reality’ changes significantly over time. In the late 1970s it suggests that fascist tendencies in bourgeois democracies are tangible, material facts which require pre-emptive strategies of resistance (Berliner Basisgruppen 1977; RZ 1976e). In the early 1990s, the very same trope implies the radical questioning of militant articles of faith (RZ 1992c). Writings are accordingly understood as genuine ways of reinterpreting the social world by the actors involved in political violence in

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6 Wolf-Dieter Narr describes this particular form of engagement with the early RAF texts ironically ‘as if the authors had met with representatives of the RAF in a leftist, smoke-filled café, sharing deep thoughts’ and criticizes in more serious terms its theoretically prescriptive approach (Narr 1989, 11-12).
this thesis. Consequently, the titles of significant texts also structure its empirical chapters (see below Chapters 5 and 6).

In so doing, writing more about the few, to paraphrase Laqueur’s above quoted remarks, aims beyond exploring particular aspects of the contemporary history of the FRG. Rather, this thesis understands itself as a contribution to the conceptual development of studies in political violence and terrorism. A particularity of this highly securitised academic subfield is the pressure to produce timely policy-relevant research which does not contribute to establishing a body of knowledge based on comparative, contextualised, historically aware, and conceptually grounded research (Ilardi 2004). Consequently, terrorism studies focuses too strongly on aspects of exceptionality and discontinuity in the structure and behavioural dynamics of violent politics; hence it tends to get re-invented every other decade without putting enough emphasis on drawing lessons from earlier cycles of clandestine political violence (Crenshaw 1998b).

While the typological distinction between ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism predates 9/11 (Tucker 2001), it gained traction in its aftermath as a plausible description for the perceived epochal shift and the emergence of a new ideal type (e.g. Kurtulus 2011). However, it is still contested whether supposedly new organisational structures, targeting patterns, and ideological leanings establish a novel configuration or rather continue previous trends (Crenshaw 2011, 64-66; Duyvesteyn 2004). In the context of this debate, Renate Mayntz argues that the difference between old hierarchical organisations and new networked structures does not capture the actual reality of terrorist organisations: typically, they realise elements of both ideal types while establishing generally formulated goals, latent vertical and horizontal relations, and strong ideational identifications. While ideal types hence never correspond with empirical realities, they provide useful heuristic devices (Mayntz 2004).

Accordingly, this thesis contributes to the conceptual and theoretical development of the larger subfield of terrorism studies through an in-depth, theoretically grounded comparative discourse analysis of two particular cases of radical left armed formations. The texts written and issued by armed groups, individual members, as well as a periphery of support groups and sympathisers, such as solidarity or legal aid committees, and the ways in which these writings are disseminated and discussed within the contemporary radical counter-public provide core empirical material for approaching the ways in which changing
social realities are reconstructed. The thesis understands discourse as ‘text in context’ (see below point 4.3), and argues that textual representations and context interact; observing the historical, political, and social contexts in which clandestine political violence emerges and reproduces itself represents the background for the discourse analysis, but cannot substitute it. In a similar vein, the thesis’ conceptual and empirical argument is interwoven: out of a review of relevant literatures, principles for theory building are developed, which guide the construction of a set of conceptual propositions and influence the methods of enquiry. Subsequently, these propositions guide the analyses of the case studies and are at the same time challenged with empirical realities which allows for assessing the theoretical framework.

1.3 Comparison as analytical decision

In order to provide a basis for generalising its findings on interrelations between the discursive reconstruction of reality within social-revolutionary terrorist groups and organisational continuity, the empirical component of the thesis’ argument employs a comparative design with two case studies. The objects of comparison are the B2J and the RZ, two clandestine armed formations which, as noted above, were active in 20th century Germany after the disintegration of the large protest wave of the late 1960s (Wörle 2008, 255). The main reason for comparing these two particular cases is the different lifespan of the two groups, which allows for identifying and assessing particular elements of potential continuity. While the B2J was visibly active under this label only between 1972 and 1975 and, if predecessors and aftereffects are taken into consideration, between late 1969 and 1978 (Wunschik 2006b, 541-555), the activism of the RZ stretches from 1973 until 1993 (Peters 2014, 70-80). Apart from this significant difference, the cases also show enough similarities to allow for a meaningful comparison for at least three reasons.

Firstly, both formations contributed in different forms, with different focus, and in different periods to the wave of clandestine political violence in Germany. Nevertheless, both remained in public perception and academic studies mainly ‘In the Shadow of the RAF’ as an eponymous article on the history of the emergence of the RZ argues (Kraushaar 2006b). The negotiation of revolutionary identities against the background of a non-institutionalised New Left in which the most radical space is already occupied by the RAF, it
is argued, poses complex problems for these formations. Therefore, it is likely that processes of identification, communality, and critical distinction take place which allow for a better understanding of the ways in which a discourse community of armed struggle is established and maintained over time. Secondly, both groups explicitly perceived themselves and were perceived as constituent parts of a German ‘armed left’ (RZ 1975j), for instance when the RZ issue a communiqué on behalf of ‘we urban guerrilla groups’ (RZ 1975b) or when a left-wing daily documents programmatic statements by all three formations on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the ‘German Autumn’ (Taz 1982). Accordingly, both groups criticised the actions and politics of the other armed formations frequently and sometimes harshly, but also within the context of a solidarity community of the ‘armed left’ which highlights relational aspects of the discourse communities (B2J [1975] 2001, 239-241; RZ 1975e, 213-215). Thirdly, both formations have occupied significant spaces within the iconography of the radical left until very recently as undogmatic alternatives to the RAF, which was early on perceived as an elitist project of ‘Leninists with guns’ (883 - Revolutionäre Aktion 1971). In contrast to the RAF, B2J and RZ are perceived to be less withdrawn from the realities of protest movements and socio-political struggles (Kongressgruppe 2005a; Solikomitee Frankfurt 2013), which promises insights into discursive relationships with the radical environment.

As the notion of an overarching terrain of an ‘armed left’ within specific dissident subcultures already suggests, distinctions and differentiations between and within groupings are not always entirely clear-cut. In this context, the concept of ‘radical subcultures’ refers to the limited networks of interrelations, solidarities, and collective identities within a wider movement sphere socially constructed by shared experiences of activism and repression (Malthaner and Waldmann 2014, 981-982; Waldmann et al. 2010). Radical left armed formations generally emerge out of such contexts and already presuppose a significant evolution of political experiences, action repertoires, and social networks; furthermore, individual affiliations switch over time and entire formations or breakaway factions sometimes change colours (Zwerman et al. 2000). Accordingly, autobiographical accounts of former participants mention contacts and attempts to reach agreements or collaborations between groups with conflicting politics and practices (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 66-67).
Nevertheless, it is argued here that comparing different groupings instead of treating the area of struggle as an inclusive context is analytically meaningful for two reasons. On the one hand, processes of differentiation, emergence, evolution, and adaptation take place on the group level even though ‘radical subcultures’ are nested phenomena. Regional differences, cross-border relations, and local conflict histories influence the development of particular contexts of activism and with it the contextual conditions of armed groups. The special federal status and particular socio-political cityscape of West Berlin in the old FRG and strong North-South divisions in Italy, both of which both reflected upon the development of protest histories, are paradigmatic in this regard (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 165-166; Lumley 1990, 11-12). On the other hand, only the analysis of formations according to their self-description as distinct entities allows focusing on significant similarities, dissimilarities, and structural drift. While groups do not form in isolation from contexts, it is also argued that different organisational, political, and practical concepts matter, for instance when successive armed formations try to learn from their predecessors’ failures (Steinhoff 1989). Furthermore, the concept of an ‘armed left’ as such is already part and parcel of attempts to construct an imagined community in and of armed struggle in which processes of learning and further differentiation take place.

To obtain the empirical material for mapping out the terrain of this imagined radical community and study both groups within this context, extensive archival research in the Netherlands and Germany has been undertaken in the course of this thesis. In this regard, the archives and journal collections of four institutions were consulted: the Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History IISG) at Amsterdam, Netherlands; the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hamburg Institute for Social Research HIS) at Hamburg, Germany; and the APO-Archiv (Archive of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition) at the Free University of Berlin and the Papiertiger Archiv und Bibliothek der Sozialen Bewegungen (Paper Tiger Archive and Library of Social Movements) both at Berlin, Germany. While the IISG is mainly dedicated to the history of the workers’ movement, it is also home to extensive collections on decolonisation movements and the new left, including large sections on militant currents in the FRG. The HIS is an independent research foundation dedicated to social science and contemporary history and hosts one of the most comprehensive compilations of documents on the armed struggle outside of federal archives, including the collected case records of activist solicitors’ collectives. APO-
Archive and Paper Tiger Archive, on the other hand, both trace back to activist collections of protest history in the making, respectively the late 1960s revolt, its offshoots in the 1970s, and the squatters’ movement of the 1980s. All four institutions house the papers of individual activists, the records of movement institutions, and collections of movement journals which were made available for consultation and digitisation during six weeks of archival research.

1.4 Key concepts and their historical background

While the central term terrorism will be problematized and discussed in depth in Chapter 2, a set of concepts related to the study of protest, social movements, and activism which will be used throughout the thesis also need further clarification. First and foremost, social movements are understood according to the broad conceptualisations of Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani which focusses on processual, conflictive, and relational aspects. Accordingly, social movements are processes of collective action characterised by ‘conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents’, ‘dense informal networks’ and a shared, distinctive collective identity (Della Porta and Diani 2006, 20). Movements are analytically synthesised into larger clusters according to particular conflict constellations and the core beliefs of collective identity claims related to these constellations, the so-called ‘movement families’. For the non-institutionalised, non-traditional left movements of the post-war era, of which the New Left and radical clandestine groups form part, Della Porta reports the term ‘left-libertarian movement family’: collective identities combine egalitarian, socialist values with a strong emphasis on individual autonomy, participative democracy, and scepticism towards established institutions (della Porta 1995, 24). In this context, New Social Movements (NSM) which ideal-typically represent the post-68 generation of social movements tend more into the libertarian direction. Accordingly NSM mostly draw on post-materialist values, emphasise individual fulfilment, and focus on the reproductive sector, but also on new issues such as ecology and global justice (Roth and Rucht 2008, 13-17).

As social processes, social movements and movement families are not static but emerge and change over the course of protest cycles, that is, periods of intense mobilisation and widespread collective activism (della Porta 1995, 3). To the extent that activists did not (re)integrate into Social Democratic organisations, the broader left-libertarian current
developed in Germany from late 1960s protest during the 1970s in two general directions. On the one hand, dogmatic ‘student parties’ of different radical left denominations established binding organisational concepts and tried to reach the working classes. On the other hand, undogmatic currents, loosely integrated around publication projects and an emerging alternative infrastructure, followed a politics of re-appropriating the mundane (Roth and Rucht 2008, 31-31; Scheerer 1988a, 280-286). Self-identified Spontaneists or ‘Spontis’, among the more regularly organised constituents of the undogmatic current, tried to integrate struggles in the productive and reproductive sector drawing politically on ideas and experiences of Italian operaist autonomist Marxism on the class-conscious self-organisation of exploited classes (della Porta 1995, 103-104; Mosler 1977, 78-81).

When both currents increasingly reached an impasse towards the end of the 1970s, the emerging ecological question, above all locally diverse movements against nuclear power plants, established new fields and forms of activism which resulted in slow, but steady organisational normalisation, but also in the emergence of a new residual current of radical, anti-systemic activism (Brand 2008, 238-241; Reichardt 2008, 90-91). The most important of these radical currents, the ‘autonomists’, develops from the early 1980s onwards and represents a conglomeration of loosely and informally connected radical urban collectives. In the first wave of ‘autonomist’ mobilisations, these collectives mobilised in campaigns on a broad range of issues such as squatting, anti-NPP-protests, and antiracism, represented a broad range of ideological leanings from anarchism to left communism and anti-imperialism, and their protest repertoires also included expressive violence or ‘militancy’ during disruptive marches and in clandestine acts of sabotage (Haunss 2008, 450-459; Katsiaficas 2010).  

1.5 Structure of the argument

Apart from this introduction, the thesis’ argument will proceed in six steps. After problematizing the concept and delimitations of terrorism, Chapter 2 will discuss different theories in studies on terrorism and political violence on the macro-, meso- and micro-
analytical level as well as approaches which integrate different levels of analysis. In so doing, the chapter will identify criteria for developing the thesis’ own theoretical framework. 

Chapter 3 will elaborate the relevant conceptual foundations of Luhmann’s social systems theory for a conceptual understanding of the communicative reproduction of clandestine armed formations. It focuses on the functions of communication in the differentiation of specific forms of sociability, the communication of protest, to establish a set of conceptual propositions on different dimensions of the reproduction of collective identities of fundamental opposition. Subsequently, Chapter 4 will discuss the interrelations between social systems theory and different strands of discourse analysis to develop an analytical strategy which translates the conceptual dimensions into a methodological programme. On the basis of this analytical strategy, Chapters 5 and 6 will focus on the empirical analysis of the thesis’ two case studies, the ‘2nd of June Movement’ and the ‘Revolutionary Cells’. Finally, the thesis’ conclusion will summarise theoretical argument and compare expected manifestations of the discursive reconstruction of revolutionary identities to the empirical findings. In so doing, the chapter will identify strengths and weaknesses of the proposed conceptual framework and highlight ways forward.
2. Literature Review: Theories in the Study of Terrorism

To a system whose very excess of power poses an insoluble challenge, the terrorists respond with a definitive act which is also not susceptible of exchange. Terrorism is the act that restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange. (Baudrillard 2003, 9)

Despite grossly diverging notions of terrorism, there still appears to be some – extremely basic – agreement on the term ‘terrorism’, or on what should be understood by ‘terrorism’ in academic discourse. (Schwenkenbecher 2012, 12)

The academic analysis of violent phenomena described by the elusive term terrorism dates at least back to the 1970s and has produced an almost unmanageable and diverse literature (Ranstorp 2007, 3-5). The question of whether terrorism studies constitutes a field of inquiry in its own right is not easily answered. On the one hand, Avishag Gordon interprets it as a sub-discipline-in-becoming, located somewhere in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Gordon 1999, 149-150; 2010, 453-454). On the other hand, Lisa Stampnitzky argues that expertise on terrorism cannot resemble ideal-typical notions of a clearly identifiable, institutionalized ‘intellectual field’ or (sub)discipline, but is better understood as an interstitial space of knowledge production between the discourses of ‘politics’ and ‘science’ (Stampnitzky 2011, 16). A number of authors have analysed the level of consensus on the core concept of terrorism among scholars – with mixed results to say the least (Schmid and Jongman 1988; Silke 2004; Weinberg et al. 2004). In light of these studies it remains doubtful whether a majority of specialists would even consider Jean Baudrillard’s interpretation that terrorism restores ‘an irreducible singularity’, let alone treat it as part of the ‘extremely basic agreement’ identified by Anne Schwenkenbacher.

This chapter does not attempt to review a body of literature comprehensively that is not only vast, but also too diverse for such a task. Furthermore, it has to avoid treating hugely different perspectives monolithically since the notion of a single body of literature is to some degree misleading. Even adherents of the recent critical turn in terrorism studies emphasise that a homogenous depiction of so-called traditional, ‘problem solving’ (Cox 1981) approaches misrepresents an ‘incredibly varied’ field (Toros 2012, 18-19). The chapter hence discusses a specific aspect, namely the relation between different strands of social science theories and ways of making sense of the heterogeneous phenomenon of political

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8 This has already been the case before the skyrocketing of terrorism literature in the aftermath of 9/11 was even imagined (Waldmann 1998, 24-25).
terrorism. Unsurprisingly, there is little consensus on the level of conceptual and theoretical depth within terrorism studies, commonly described as relatively low (Crenshaw 1981; Jackson et al. 2011, 15). While some commentators claim that the literature is altogether ‘atheoretical and methodologically underdeveloped’ (Boyns and Ballard 2004, 10), others contend that ‘theories abound’ in studies on political violence and terrorism which occasionally ‘have shown considerable theoretical ambition’ (Apter 1997b, 9). Mapping the tension between these contrasting positions is the focus for reviewing relations between theories and terrorism in the literature. The chapter aims at assessing this relationship as a basis for conceptually and theoretically anchoring the thesis.

Significant differences between observations on the theoretical sophistication of terrorism studies originate in different notions of theory and different approaches to its purposes and possibilities. David Boyns and James Ballard aim at developing a ‘unified theory of terrorism’ from a critique of fundamental omissions within an academic discussion that fails to deduce propositions from sociological ‘grand theories’ (Boyns and Ballard 2004, 12). By contrast, David E. Apter claims to represent a collaborative effort that is firmly rooted in empirical work on the use of violence in socio-political movements out of which unease with existing conceptual approaches emerged (Apter 1997a). He aims at complementing the field’s focus by stressing logo-centric aspects of violence (Apter 1997b, 11-15). In other words, how the theoretical grounding of terrorism studies is assessed depends on different authors’ concrete understandings of theory in the analytical process. What counts as a theoretical approach and how different approaches might be categorised, is not stipulated in fixed and self-explanatory ways, but has to be negotiated from case to case. While Paul Wilkinson, for instance, contends that one of the aims of his ‘Terrorism and the Liberal State’ is ‘debating theory’ (Wilkinson 1986, xiv), Apter considers the same work as mere ‘historical description’ (Apter 1997b, 6-7 and 28).

In the following subsections, the account of ways in which terrorism studies literature relates to theory will focus on a set of interrelated questions: How is the concept of terrorism defined and delimited? Which different theoretical approaches can be identified within the literature? On which different levels of analysis do theoretical claims operate? How can theoretical approaches to terrorism be ordered and categorised? Obviously, a preliminary answer to the last question has to precede the review if it is to be structured in
meaningful ways. In line with conventional analytical categories in sociology and political science, Donatella della Porta and Sebastian Scheerer each identify three levels of analysis in theoretical approaches to the study of protest, political violence, and terrorism which both aim to integrate. On the macro-level, considerations on the structural conditions and consequences of terrorist violence prevail. The focus of meso-level approaches shifts to understanding developments within and among actor configurations. Individual motivation structures for participation in terrorism are conceptualised and analysed on the micro-level (della Porta 1995, 10-13; Scheerer 1988b, 75-77). Whilst not without its drawbacks, a similar ordering principle is adopted here. The three analytical images are complemented by the multi-level-approaches of della Porta, Scheerer, and others. This way of categorising contributions highlights that similar theoretical approaches operate on different analytical levels and allows for comparison. System theories are, for example, not only employed to explain structural conditions, but also to explore group dynamics thereby bridging between macro and meso levels.

The chapter proceeds in six steps. Firstly, it discusses attempts to define and categorise terrorism to outline significant differences, tensions, and fault lines within the field. Subsequently, the chapter explores conceptual approaches for understanding and explaining the phenomenon on three levels of analysis, followed by a discussion of how multi-level models integrate these different analytical images. Finally, the chapter’s concluding remarks highlight key inferences for the thesis’ analytical framework, derived from the review of theories on terrorism.

2.1 Definitions and classifications

Even the most cursory examination of the many definitions of terrorism on offer should quickly persuade the critic how many of these rely for any sort of precision on the adjectives employed in their elaboration. ... Reduced to its simplest terms, terrorism is seen as extreme political coercion. (Cooper 2001, 885)

Despite its prevalence in academic and policy discussions, terrorism remains a highly contentious concept whose contents, boundaries, and notions resist a clear, consensual definition among scholars of political violence. Accordingly, there is no agreement as to

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9 With her classification of causes of terrorism into systemic settings, collectively shared reasons and individual motivations, Martha Crenshaw proposes a similar approach (Crenshaw 1981). She explains that this conceptual trichotomy is borrowed from Kenneth N. Waltz’s ‘three images’ (Waltz 1959, 16).
whether this observation points to deeper misconceptions in the study of political violence (Sluka 2008, 182), whether the definitional babel is a normal sign of vital academic debate (Weinberg and Eubank 2008, 188), or whether the search for a consensual definition is simply futile academic navel-gazing (Laqueur 1999, 46). Consequently any discussion of the term starts from asking what terrorism means in different contexts while potential answers risk ending in cliché, downright moral judgment or, most likely, in both (Chalk 1996, 9; Jenkins 1981, 3). For instance, Michael Walzer claims that the ‘peculiar evil of terrorism’ is ‘not only the killing of innocent people but also the intrusion of fear into everyday life’ (Walzer 1988, 238). In so doing, he assumes not only that this sweeping value judgment always defines terrorism, but also that fear can be induced in quasi-mechanical ways – a highly debatable claim, to say the least (Rapin 2009, 171-172). However, discussing the ‘definitional quagmire’ (Toros 2012, 20) and fault-lines between different ways of delimiting terrorism to identify core elements of its conceptual meaning is not just an obligatory exercise owed to the field’s ‘obsession with definition’ (Crenshaw 2011, 193). On the one hand, avoiding or merely deconstructing the concept when analysing sub-state political violence (della Porta 2013, 6) ultimately cedes the prerogative of interpretation to uncritical uses of the term (Toros 2012, 27). On the other hand, any attempt to employ the concept analytically has to reflect critically on its limitations (Schwenkenbecher 2012, 9-11).

In an effort to survey comprehensively how different academic experts define terrorist violence, Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman identify no less than 109 different definitions which they synthesise into 22 defining components (Schmid and Jongman 1988). Among the most frequently mentioned of these are the use of violence for political purposes, the importance of anticipated reactions within target audiences and an element of fear or genuine terror (Schmid and Jongman 1988, 5).\textsuperscript{10} Using the same criteria, a qualitative content analysis of articles published in core terrorism studies journals identifies over 70 different ways of defining the term (Weinberg et al. 2004). Its authors summarise their finding into a definition which supposedly reflects growing consensus: ‘Terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role’ (ibid., 786). As the authors concede, this generic

\textsuperscript{10} Originally published in 1984, the book went through several slightly updated editions (Schmid and Jongman 1984; Schmid and Jongman 1988; Schmid and Jongman 2005) and is still frequently cited as the starting point of any attempt to unpack the definitional problem (among others: Coady 2004, 4; Cronin 2009, 7; Townshend 2002, 3; Weinberg and Davis 1989, 3).
approach does not allow for clear-cut delimitations between different forms of political violence.

Terminology also carries strong normative overtones: labelling acts of political violence terrorism or their perpetrators terrorists denies that action or author could be motivated by any legitimate or even rational concern (Brannan et al. 2001, 19). Both denominations also point to a distinct configuration of the episteme of truth and power: terrorism is by definition a threat to security. Whoever defines violence authoritatively as terrorism also defines the true enemy of society, which is why the concept also has been dubbed the new episteme of security (Zulaika and Douglass 2008, 29). Accordingly, the term is analytically useful only with some reservations (della Porta 2008, 222).

2.1.1 Unpacking the definitional quagmire

A closer look at some definitions of terrorism highlights the wide range of conceptual problems involved with the term and help identifying the most important fault lines. In a widely cited paper, Brian M. Jenkins argues that:

Terrorism is a campaign of violence designed to inspire fear, to create an atmosphere of alarm which causes people to exaggerate the strength and importance of the terrorist movement. ... Even apparently indiscriminate violence is based on the terrible logic that indiscriminate violence gets the most attention and is the most alarming. Terrorism is violence for effect. (Jenkins 1975, 4)

While a political purpose is here only implied, later remarks explicitly address this element; furthermore, Jenkins specifies that his definition relates to the act, not its author and includes state actors (Jenkins 1981, 5). Terrorist violence is accordingly a tactical or strategic resource, which is systematically used in symbolic ways to promote political aims by indirect means. Leonard Weinberg and Paul Davies derive their definition from a discussion of a number of events which have been described as instances of terrorism and conclude:

In short, terrorism is politically motivated crime intended to modify the behaviour of a target audience. Terrorism is not an ideology but a strategy which may be used by individuals, groups, or states for different purposes. (Weinberg and Davis 1989, 6)

11 Like other concepts which are both political and analytical, the term underwent a profound semantic change. While Trotsky defends ‘terrorism’, where necessary, as a legitimate tool for revolutionary transformation (Trotsky 2007, 58) European armed groups in the late 20th mainly use it to describe the political antagonist (Kassimeris 2001, 130).
12 The intrinsic interconnectedness of knowledge claims and power structures is a centrepiece of Foucauldian theory. It refers to the observation that the precondition of any knowledge claim is a dispositional, but not accidental configuration of what legitimately can be regarded as ‘true’ in a certain context (Foucault 1980).
While there is a lot of common ground between both definitions, Weinberg and Davies do not directly refer to systematic properties and introduce a new element by stressing the illicit nature of a ‘politically motivated crime’ in relation to the hegemonic order (ibid., 6). Although the authors also abstain from an actor-based definition, they argue that insurrectionist and state terrorism are too different to be studied within the same analytical framework (ibid., 16). Christopher C. Harmon points to another set of problems when he states that ‘Terrorism is the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends’ (2000, 1). While indiscriminate attacks so far have been interpreted as part of the symbolic function of violence, targeting ‘the innocent’ becomes a defining criterion. Harmon subsumes terrorism under war crimes and contends that it represents a substitute tactical resource (ibid., 33).

In a study of the relations between political parties and violent movements, Leonard Weinberg and Ami Pedahzur stress another aspect:

Terrorism is a kind of violence intended to influence or modify the behaviour of one audience or various audiences by arousing fear, sowing confusion, promoting indiscriminate retaliation, stimulating admiration and arousing emulation. These responses arise because of the abnormal nature of the violence employed … (Weinberg and Pedahzur 2003, 3)

Here, the authors highlight the already familiar psychological element, but frame it in different ways: psychological effects rely on dialogical reactions of opponents and encompass not only negative reactions, but also a wider array of evaluative and cognitive ways of relating to events. Terrorism gains communicative power from a breach of socially accepted norms and causal attributions. In a similar vein, Audrey K. Cronin summarises that ‘at a minimum, the concept has the following four characteristics: a fundamentally political nature, the symbolic use of violence, purposeful targeting of noncombatants, carried out by nonstate actors’ (Cronin 2009, 7). While Cronin emphasises that states also engage in uses of force that constitute terror, she argues for an analytical distinction between state and non-state violence against civilians since both follow different logics and thus require a different vocabulary. Martha Crenshaw also makes a strong case for conceptually distinguishing between different forms of violence according to its authors and identifies four elements of a definition:

(1) Terrorism is part of a revolutionary strategy – a method used by insurgents to seize political power from an existing government. (2) Terrorism is manifested in acts of socially and politically unacceptable violence. (3) There is a consistent pattern of symbolic or representative selection of the victims or objects of terrorism. (4) The revolutionary
movement deliberately intends these actions to create a psychological effect on specific groups and thereby to change their political behavior and attitudes. (Crenshaw 2011, 23)

Campaigns of terror to maintain established but challenged orders, Crenshaw contends, follow different logics since revolutionary violence must always keep the balance between transgressing socially accepted norms and actively creating support for its cause which is why targeting is always selective.

From a perspective indebted to moral philosophy and just war discussions, Igor Primoratz defines terrorism as ‘the deliberate use of violence, or threat of its use, against innocent people, with the aim of intimidating some other people into a course of action they otherwise would not take’ (Primoratz 2013, 24). In contrast to other contributions from a similar background (Coady 2004, 5), he excludes the attribute ‘political’ from his definition and explicitly treats religious motivations as non-political.

Finally, Richard Jackson et al. argue in their textbook presentation of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) approaches:

The orthodox field has tended on the whole to treat terrorism as a free-standing, ontologically stable phenomenon which can be objectively identified and studied using traditional social scientific methods. ... A related problem is that a great many leading terrorism scholars have employed an actor-based definition of terrorism, describing it as illegitimate violence by non-state actors, rather than as a strategy of political violence which any type of actor can employ. (Jackson et al. 2011, 15, original emphasis)

Accordingly, the authors claim that all attempts to define the phenomenon largely ignore that terrorism is socially constructed and thus reify an understanding of the term according to the established episteme. Definitions represent part of the problem and not a first step to a deeper understanding. This perspective prevails within critical studies even if they concede the ‘minimalist foundation’ that the phenomenon terrorism might exist independently from its discursive construction (Toros 2012, 28).

Consequently, della Porta explicitly argues in her most recent contribution on organised politically violent dissent for an alternative terminology, proposing the concept of ‘clandestine political violence’ (2013, 7). The term refers to drastic forms of political violence, which are directed against non-combatants, predominantly comprise of symbolic and communicative elements, are conducted from positions of secrecy, and oppose the predominant order on political, territorial, ethnic, or religious terms (della Porta 2013, 9-10). According to della Porta, this terminology allows for avoiding the pitfalls of the concept of terrorism since the term is normatively less charged, politically less contested, and
analytically more selective and discrete (ibid., 6-14). However, ‘clandestine’ has an uneasy relationship to the lexicographically adjacent ‘covert’ or ‘concealed’ which serve sometimes as euphemisms for illicit or illegal state activities. In so doing the term describes quite different government organisations and their operational patterns, for instance in the definition of ‘clandestine’ in the US ‘Dictionary of Military Terms’ (JCS 2014, 37-38) or the mission statement of the CIA’s ‘National Clandestine Service’ (CIA 2009/2012). While this implies that della Porta’s terminological innovation cannot solve all conceptual issues, it is still used as a synonym for terrorism within this thesis, not least since it resonates with the self-understanding of the groups analysed below (RZ 1980c).

2.1.2 Fault lines and delimitations

Although the very act of defining terrorism is problematized within the literature, it is argued here that productive, interrelated fault lines organise definitional discussions. Apart from Primoratz’s distinction between political and non-political forms, all authors agree that terrorist violence represents tactical or strategic use of force for political ends. Beyond that, basic differences between the approaches are: the discrimination of targets, deliberately targeting innocents or symbolic selectivity; the scope of the term as a universal denominator or a signifier for particular revolutionary strategies; the related distinction between an all-encompassing and a limited concept of actors; and finally the question of whether violence is mainly used in instrumental or symbolic ways (Schwenkenbecher 2012, 15). Furthermore, analytical perspective tends to influence the criteria of definition. Authors who distinguish between different actors either by definition or as a qualification to the definition emphasise symbolic elements in terrorist violence and treat the breach of social norms as an element of its symbolic function, even if targeting innocents is included in the definition (Cronin 2009, 7). In a broader perspective, different actors are not distinguished, the more direct impacts of violence are emphasised, and terrorism as the politics of fear is conceptualised in an analogy to other forms of armed combat. The just war trope influences the perspective even if the deliberate targeting of innocents or non-combatants is explicitly excluded as a definitional criterion (Schwenkenbecher 2012, 37).

As the previous discussion indicates, empirical focus and analytical framework cannot be treated as independent factors, even on the basic level of definitions. Any attempt to
develop a medium-range conceptual approach reflects some elements of its concrete subject of analysis (della Porta and Keating 2008). Empirically, this study focuses on two self-declared revolutionary movements that employed political violence within distinct historical and socio-political contexts. More precisely, case studies are two radical left-wing groupings that aimed at inciting broader upheaval within the formally democratic order of post-war West Germany. A narrower understanding of terrorism will thus be employed, whose definitional elements have to be problematized further according to the discussed fault-lines.

This being the case, this sub-section will examine more closely approaches that focus on elements of symbolic communication within strategies of clandestine political violence. Emphasising the symbolic use of violence within academic studies of organised political violence can be traced at least to Thomas P. Thornton’s influential ‘Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation’ (1964). He argues that in internal conflicts a violent rupture of socially accepted conflict norms represents ‘a symbolic act designed to influence political behaviour’ (ibid., 73). Subsequent conceptualisations of symbolic political violence argue that inflicted atrocities transport messages to an audience as communicative acts, attempting to propagate political projects and to influence target audiences (Jenkins 1975; Karber 1971). Victims or primary targets are not the ultimate audience as communication can only be successful when it provokes a response (Moss 1983). Negative messaging or causing fear is an important element of communicative strategies, but the much more difficult dissemination of positive messages is at least equally important (Waldmann 1998, 12-13). According to this perspective, terrorism represents an extreme form of political communication within a distinct socio-political formation; it aims at structurally influencing expectations and anxieties in order to enforce social and political change by indirect means (Crelinsten 1987b; Richardson 2006, 21).

Specific conditions and inherent limitations on agenda-setting capabilities and bargaining power are both reducible to the indirect communicative structure of terrorism, which draw upon calculated transgressions of socially accepted norms and provoking reactions (Berry 1987; Gurr 1988, 51-52). Consequently, communication approaches argue

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13 The framing of individualised attacks as ‘propaganda by the deed’ was coined by 19th century insurgents and taken up in contemporary anarchist circles. It hence predates the conceptualisation of violent communication in academia (Elter 2008, 63-73).
that dysfunctional or adverse effects are a likely outcome of communicating by terrorist violence. Threat and perceived insecurity tend to reinforce processes of social inclusion against (self)declared enemies of the state and reassure the very hegemonic reality against which violent communication is directed; antiterrorist discourse and defence against terrorists as constitutive Other renew social cohesion (Crelinsten 1987a, 421-422; Karber 1971, 532-533). Positively targeted audiences, by contrast, rarely perceive predominantly violent activism as a collective clarion call. Rather, legal activists suffer the socio-political consequences of political violence and condemn it as premature and potentially dangerous petit-bourgeois adventurism (Waldmann 2005b; Zwerman et al. 2000, 95).

These conceptual discussions provide thought-provoking insights into the communicative structure of terrorist acts and their perception within societies. However, they fail to problematize their understanding of communication. The term is predominantly used in an instrumental sense to describe interaction patterns according to conventional or slightly modified sender-recipient models even in supposedly critical perspectives on interrelations between political communication and terrorism (Matusitz 2013, 48). In so doing, communication does not depart much from its commonplace (alltagsweltlichen) understanding. The explanatory power of communicative approaches is supposed to be limited to specific manifestations of terrorism, namely armed propaganda (McAllister and Schmid 2011, 247). Accordingly, this abridged understanding risks resulting in a relatively narrow and trivial ‘communication theory of terrorism’ that does not develop the concept’s explanatory potential. The next chapter contends that communication does not only describe an instrumental relation between the sender and recipient of a message, but also constitutes a quality of society. Societal phenomena, including revolutionary terrorists, distinguish themselves as societal actors and expressions of society by constantly interlinking communicative acts however these are performed (see below point 3.2.1).

2.2 Theoretical discussions and levels of analysis

After having explored different ways in which political violence is defined as terrorist, the purpose of the following subsections is to discuss approaches to conceptualise it. In the context of this study, terrorism is understood as the strategic use of extra-legal political violence by counter-hegemonic movements in potentially durable campaigns which employ...
violent means predominantly in symbolic or communicative ways. Consequently, it becomes possible to delimit it from adjacent types of irregular violence for political purposes. Clandestine political violence differs from the terror of state actors: its violent potential is limited (Wilkinson 1985, 69), the aim of violent messages is to activate resistance and not to coerce the populace into passivity (Rapin 2009, 175), and it relies on open publicity instead of the power of the grapevine (Arendt 1973, 353; Waldmann 1998, 17). Even though terrorist tactics have been frequently employed in guerrilla warfare (Freedman 2007, 326), terrorism also differs significantly from guerrilla strategies: terrorist violence predominantly aims at conquering public discourse and not at military victory (Richardson 2006, 23), its gains are defined in terms of political leverage rather than territorial advances (Hoffman 2006, 35), and it requires only a limited network of clandestine support (Wilkinson 2006, 18).

While typologies of terrorism are nearly as contentious as attempts to define the term (Marsden and Schmid 2011, 158) and authors even classify different forms of developing taxonomies (Flemming et al. 1988, 155), correlations between ideologies, violent repertoires, and targeting patterns imply that ideological differences do matter for conceptualising approaches to the phenomenon (Drake 1998, 78). In a terminology borrowed from Janny de Graaf and Alex P. Schmid, the radical left-wing movements, on which this study focuses, are labelled ‘social-revolutionary terrorist groups’ (1982, 59-60). The common traits implied in this denomination, namely eclectic ideologies, a strong inclination towards practice, decisionistic interpretations of politics, revolutionary zeal, and non-negotiable, transformative goals (Waldmann 2005b, 157-158), will also reflect on the discussion of theoretical approaches in terrorism studies in the following.

2.2.1 Macro-level approaches: Structures and systems

Approaches at the analytical macro-level explore socio-economic and socio-political root causes, structural preconditions, and systemic explanations of terrorism. They aim at explaining how specific societal and political conditions influence the occurrence, potential institutionalisation, and dissolution of clandestine, violent movements. Macro-level conceptualisations are often contentious for pursuing ambitious research agendas, making far-reaching claims and raising uneasy questions (McAllister and Schmid 2011, 248-249). In an influential and highly controversial essay (Orsini 2011, 37), Luigi Bonanate relates the
emergence of terrorism to the socio-structural syndrome of ‘blocked societies’, over-integrated and unable or unwilling to reform significantly (Bonanate 1979, 206). Terrorism is hence a sign of over-determined stability: if ordinary channels for promoting political change are unavailable or not promising, the likelihood of violent politics increases. However, he also argues that action-reaction-spirals, according to which violent acts aim at provoking overtly repressive responses to foster alienation and strengthen insurgents, rarely produce anticipated positive feedback loops; rather, terrorism reaffirms existing systemic blockages (ibid., 207-208).

In a similar vein, Harry R. Targ relates transitional phases in the development of productive forces to the likelihood of revolutionary terrorism and contends that the latter is a sign of weakness in potential revolutionary forces (1988, 127). His claim relies on the twofold hypothesis that ‘revolutionary terrorism is a product of historical conditions and forces for change’ and that it represents ‘social, not individual, pathological behaviour’ (ibid., 128). Drawing on Marxist-Leninist classics and theories of post-industrial societies, Targ argues that a distinct combination of structural features, typical of pre- and post-industrial conditions, prevents strong class consciousness, individualises labour, and mystifies domination. Class structure is hence the variable that determines whether revolutionary potentials translate into terrorist activities or not (ibid., 132-135 and 140-142). Both contributions highlight the reciprocal strengths and weaknesses of macro-level perspectives. By contextualising terrorism theoretically within its wider historical, economic and political environment, they over-determine structural conditions to a point at which cause and effect become virtually interchangeable.

Heinz Steinert also considers terrorism as a symptom of particular societal conditions, but within a constrained spatio-temporal frame of reference (1984, 388). He conceptualises the emergence of fully clandestine left-wing armed groups in Europe as a by-product of historical processes that are closely related to the circumstances under which broad protest movements spread and declined in the 1960s (ibid., 388). In so doing, the author criticises simplistic economic models of dissent and claims that only rapid qualitative changes of the economy that negatively affect middle class lifestyles and supposedly endanger the implicit social contract can be ‘moralised’ for protest mobilisation (ibid., 388). The emergence of ‘youth’ as a distinct social sphere and experiences with the structural and sometimes
manifest violence of social control during non-institutionalised protest events politicised the mostly student, middle-class movement participants (ibid., 388). In this perspective, differences between sectorial and general social mobilisation represent the structural condition of the protest wave of the late 1960s. Steinert tests this hypothesis in a comparative exploration of protest dynamics within different European countries (ibid., 388). The author concludes that interactions between structural conditions and protest policing on the meso-level influence whether terrorism occurs during the decline of protest mobilisation (ibid., 388). While this approach points beyond the weaknesses of macro-level theories and the strict distinction of analytical levels, it is not unproblematic in itself. While Bonanate’s and Targ’s reasoning remains highly abstract, Steinert relies too closely on discussing concrete cases to develop a theoretically deep argument. Furthermore, the contribution already highlights the difficulties of integrating different levels of analysis. Although it is highly likely that socio-structural conditions of terrorist actions and movement dynamics interact, the authors fail to conceptualise these interactions in detail.

A number of approaches drawing on Luhmann’s systems theory also argue mostly on the macro-level and highlight different structural aspects of terrorism. These contributions will be addressed in more detail below (see point 3.3.1) since their in-depth discussion presupposes unpacking central Luhmannian concepts which will only be introduced in the next chapter. Nevertheless, central tenets of these perspectives are also outlined to highlight the potential of a Luhmannian approach for complementing established conceptualisations. Peter Fuchs and Klaus P. Japp emphasise the potential stability of conflict as a social system if it is based on a socially accepted perception of conflict causes and relate this stability to interpretations of modernity in which a high degree of functional differentiation coincides with structural imbalances (Fuchs 2004; Japp 2007). Wolfgang Schneider and Ardalan Abraham-Kudelich, by contrast, aim at approximating concrete mechanisms by which terrorism differentiates itself from a systems theory perspective pointing to the opportunities and limitations of anti-systemic differentiations (Ibrahim-Kudelich 2007; Schneider 2008). All authors raise the pertinent question of how political a notion of politics can still be that narrows the political down to violent altercations in conflict environments. While highlighting the potential explanatory power of Luhmannian approaches for the study of political violence, macro-sociological systems theory approaches remain on a highly abstract level and employ an equally abstract or even hermetic
theoretical language. This observation already points to a major challenge for the thesis’ theory chapter: a framework inspired by Luhmann’s theory with its highly abstract, closed, complex, and sometimes convoluted theoretical architecture and jargon has to adapt and translate concepts into analytically concrete and applicable terms (Moeller 2012, 12-13).14

The two multi-level approaches introduced above (see p. 32) ground their theoretical argumentation on the macro-level, identifying specific structural conditions to explain how, when, and why protest turns into political violence. Discussing both conceptualisations in detail is crucial for this review of the role of theories in terrorism studies not only because its structure is borrowed from della Porta and Scheerer, but also because these contributions represent two of the most elaborate attempts at systematically introducing social movement perspectives into the analysis of political violence. Similarities and differences between the authors’ ways of conceptualising the dynamics of violent dissent help to identify strengths and limitations of Social Movement Theory (SMT) approaches. While della Porta references a case study based on Scheerer’s theoretical model (Scheerer 1988a), the theory itself is remarkably enough not quoted in her standard work ‘Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State’ (della Porta 1995, 188). Scheerer uses sociological conflict theories to interpret violence as a political resource which can be rational according to actors’ situational perceptions (1988b, 84). Structural strain, a mismatch between collectively articulated economic, social and political demands and socio-political capacities to fulfil these expectations, creates discontent that catalyses revolt. Unlike classical conflict theory, Scheerer contends that structural strain does not determine any outcome: it merely provides opportunities to act upon (ibid., 89). Accordingly, relative deprivation as a structural cause of conflict is conceptualised in similar terms to Steinert as a perceived breach of the ‘implicit social contract’; if further meso- and micro-developments co-occur, it becomes likely that conflict turns violent (ibid., 97).

Della Porta argues that SMTs are complementary to terrorism studies which over-emphasize structural explanations and discontinuities between normal and deviant behaviour (1995, 5). Consequently, the political opportunity structure of protest is the determining structural variable, conceptualised as the interrelation between state and

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14 In a series of lectures edited as an introduction to system theory, Luhmann also contends that his ‘abstract theoretical concepts ... still have to be tailored into an exploratory format for the mundane business of sociology’ (Luhmann 2004, 12). All quotes which do not refer to English translations of Luhmann’s work or to articles that were originally published in English are translated by the author.
movement strategies which delineate institutional, historical, and cultural contexts for collective action (ibid., 11). Protest and ways of policing it are mutually contingent: while no specific outcome is predetermined, strategies of control impact on protest events and evolve according to the level to which society permits open dissent (ibid., 56-58). Reducing repressiveness might signal political crisis and trigger a movement’s take-off, but harder repression can also fuel the radical fringes of a movement family and result in ritualized physical confrontations. Della Porta hence argues that interactions are mediated by organisational processes on the meso-level (ibid., 80-82). While Scheerer, similar to structural theories already discussed, attempts to construct a more general theory of conflict, della Porta is more interested in the structural situatedness of protest dynamics and the concrete ways in which existing grievances trigger conflictive dynamics. Her attempt to overcome problematic aspects of structurally determinist approaches, however, implicitly corroborates simplistic action-reaction-models.

Cronin’s ‘How Terrorism Ends’ represents an attempt at multi-level, medium-range theory building and contains macro-theoretical conceptualisations as four of her ideal types of ending terrorist campaigns focus on structural elements of ‘the dynamic intersection between government, group, and audience’ (2009, 8). She argues that a situation of stalemate between incumbent and challenger, interested third parties and the wider international context are structural elements that influence successful negotiation, the first ideal type of conclusion (ibid., 63-71). The likelihood of partial success, Cronin’s second scenario, is structurally influenced by two factors: the congruence of goals with major changes in the international system and the degree to which terrorism represents a resource in a wider portfolio of action repertoires (ibid., 91). One instance of marginalisation, the third ideal-typical option of ending, is also related to structural developments: groups become marginalised if historical developments render core ideologies irrelevant (ibid., 105-107). An end to terrorist campaigns through transformation into different forms of conflict, the last ideal type, is exactly the outcome that counter-terrorist policies should avoid at any cost, which depends again on structural conditions: the environment in which groups mobilise and their ability to provoke far-reaching state reactions (ibid., 166). Cronin inverts the inquiry for structural causes of terrorism by conceptualising systemic factors which influence its demise. Although this perspective shift aims at answering a different set of
questions, it also highlights structural explanations for the potential persistence of terrorist groups.

Nevertheless, Cronin’s conceptual perspective shows some of the common weaknesses of macro-level approaches to terrorism. While systemic conditions influence terrorist campaigns, they do so only in interaction with factors on other analytical levels. Taken as such, macro-level theories allow only for general propositions on the causes, conditions, and dynamics of clandestine political violence. With regard to the conceptualisation of the counterfactual ability of small, socially and politically marginalised groups to persist within hostile environments, these propositions provide crucial points of departure, but do not allow for developing a case- and context-sensitive analytical framework.

2.2.2 Meso-level approaches: Organisational and group dynamics

While there is substantial agreement that research should focus on the group as the actor in the process of terrorist violence, scholars are divided as to whether terrorism is strategic or inner-directed. (Crenshaw 2011, 8)

Approaches that argue mainly at the meso-level ask how organisational and group dynamics unfold within the usually relatively small, fully clandestine and highly closed terrorist movements. As Crenshaw’s above quoted remarks suggest, different meso-analysts disagree about how rationally terrorist groups act and which standards apply to terrorist rationality in general. Many contributions centre their conceptual argument on this question and explore whether strategic choice or bounded rationality determines the development of groups. Crenshaw develops her own take throughout a range of influential chapters and articles and draws attention to both aspects.\(^\text{15}\) Her concept of revolutionary terrorism already highlights meso-level dynamics: from a collective strategic choice perspective, groups may resort to terrorism when anticipated rewards outbalance anticipated risks (Crenshaw Hutchinson 1972; Crenshaw Hutchinson 1978, 23-39). The calculation of costs and benefits follows the logics of ideologically defined political struggle, but secondary goals

\(^{15}\) Several of her chapters and articles have been collected and re-edited in 2011 as ‘Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and Consequences’ (Crenshaw 2011). Three of the papers, in which her meso-level argument is most clearly brought forward (idem 1985, 1992, 1998a), are included in this volume and cited in the revised form after the 2011 edition; a fourth paper in which instrumental and organizational aspects are directly compared is not part of the collection (idem 1988).
Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Theories in the Study of Terrorism

such as the recognition of grievances or publicity are often as important (Crenshaw 1988, 15). The choice to opt for a distinct strategy is, accordingly, usually the result of a process of trial and error in which collective actors explore options for achieving primary goals from a position of relative weakness (idem 2011, 112-119).

At this point, Crenshaw introduces a second logic, that of the organisation: just like any other political organisation, terrorist groups have a fundamental interest in self-preservation for which internal rewards, group solidarity, and secondary incentives are as important as political aims (Crenshaw 1988, 19-21). Acts of terrorist violence are hence not always best understood in instrumental or functional terms, but also fulfil important internal functions. High-risk activities create powerful incentives, a strong sense of distinction, closely knit in-group ties, and a sense of belonging. Primary goals increasingly transcend into tools for providing a common language in which secondary incentives are expressed as terrorism becomes self-sustaining (idem 2011, 75-82). Crenshaw emphasises that both logics are complementary: the longer groups survive, the more collective identities, internal motivations and habitual behaviour prevail. Language and semantic shifts play an important role in this process (ibid., 130-134). Although terrorist movements are potentially self-sustaining, Crenshaw contends that the shift of attention to self-maintenance often results in a loss of political trajectory and potential justification. Terrorism is hence potentially ‘self-defeating’ for the very same reasons that make it self-sustaining (ibid., 204).

Although Crenshaw’s attempts at normalising the study of terrorism by borrowing from meso-level sociological theories of bureaucratic organisation re-adjusted the field substantially, her theoretical approach in hindsight also avoids crucial questions. First of all, it is problematic to distinguish clearly between two different logics which influence different stages within the development of terrorist groups. Activists and movements have organisational histories before they even turn to political violence. Strategic choice is therefore never free from the restraints of collectively bound rationalities. Secondly, it is not fully consistent to imply that the same reasons are responsible for self-sustainability and for self-defeat without further qualifications. If and when, as indicated, the self-referential logic of organisations already influences original strategic choice, it is more convincing to assume that groups develop mechanisms to cope with potential problematic externalities.
Following Crenshaw’s seminal work, organisation and management perspectives allow for approaching terrorist organisational dynamics as manifestations of process rationality. Kent Oots argues that terrorist movements are, like political interest groups, basically rational actors as they seek to maximise outputs in relation to inputs and political opportunities (1989, 139-140). Accordingly, the opportunity structure of strategic choice is defined by recruitment and support patterns, in-group incentive structures, a competitive environment, and forms of leadership and entrepreneurship. (ibid., 149-150). Similarly, Patricia G. Steinhoff examines, in a case study of strategic learning within violent Japanese radical left-wing groups, how culturally prefigured problem solving strategies were re-invented in processes of trial and error (1989). Faced with persistent external pressures in a conflictual environment, groups gradually adopted standard operational procedures (SOPs) which closely resemble Japanese managerial styles and allowed them to learn from failures (ibid., 730-736). Steinhoff infers preliminary conceptual generalisations from these case studies. Accordingly, prefigured patterns are not just re-introduced but transformed and adapted within learning processes that increasingly privilege practical abilities over ideological discursive consciousness (ibid., 738-739).

On a related but different note, Sherzod Abdukadirov outlines a model of terrorism which focuses on patterns of leadership and public goods provided by groups on the basis of social entrepreneurship theories (2010). Accordingly, he conceptualises terrorist enterprises either as alternative, state-entangled or independent providers of public goods such as the recognition of minority identities, which influences possibilities to persist by outbidding the state (ibid., 612-615). While varying significantly, all authors relying on organisational and management perspectives emphasise that internal logics are never purely instrumental or merely self-referential and thus potentially supplement Crenshaw’s conceptualisations. Insofar as all three contributions fail to elaborate how instrumentality and self-referentiality concretely interact, theoretically consistent ways of reconciling both logics are still lacking.

By contrast, Friedhelm Neidhardt draws on a sociological interpretation of the RAF and focuses on group dynamics to claim that these provide strong secondary motivations for terrorist behaviour (1982a, 320). These dynamics are characterised by moments of auto-motivation which constitute an almost circular causal structure and depend on the construction of a binary antagonism. Complex socio-political realities are reduced to its manifestations when acts are described as reactions to an opponent’s actions (idem 1981,
The distinction between friend and enemy establishes a highly consistent interpretative pattern upon which further rationalisations of conflict causes rely. Retroactive rationalisation and describing the adversary in terms of absolute hostility increasingly substitute for original motivations (idem 1982a, 348-351; 2006, 128-129). Neidhardt aims at re-constructing the process dynamics by which terrorism differentiates itself as a self-referential action system from protest movements (idem 1982a, 340 and 372). He argues that processes are influenced by a high degree of internal seclusion which exceeds moments of operational closure common to all social systems. The influence of internal dynamics grows over time as groups establish different identities and mechanisms of social control. Nevertheless, small, clandestine groups may not only survive, but also remain operational over time if they manage to uphold counterfactual interpretations of reality permanently and consequently (idem 1982b, 460-469; 2006, 129-130).

Wanda von Baeyer-Katte infers a similar model of group dynamics from an analysis of ‘anti-therapeutic’ self-help collectives which provided a recruitment base for the RAfs second generation (1982). She identifies the collective as a ‘contradictory social system’ based on the active negation of its social environment: since capitalist society defines the emotional issues it causes as sickness, the system itself is sick and has to be overcome (ibid., 184-190). Seclusion is not an unintended consequence of process dynamics, but a conscious decision which initiates processes of self-referential differentiation. Semantically, this process is reflected in active discourse negation, ideologically mediated revaluation of meanings and rigid dichotomies (ibid., 256-261). Mechanisms of thought control, internal agitation, and ritualised forms of critique and auto-critique construct a collective revolutionary identity closely resembling militant sects (ibid., 203-207). Von Baeyer-Katte claims that contradictory systems consist of concentric circles with increasing degrees of initiation, are self-contained, but also deeply autistic and describe the organisational reality of all German social-revolutionary groups (ibid., 284-285).

Drawing on Talcott Parsons’ AGIL paradigm as a heuristic device, Alexander Straßner aims at developing ideal-typical patterns of the life circles of terrorist groups (2004). He argues that clandestine formations represent imperfect social systems fraught with deficiencies regarding all four Parsonian functions, namely adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency (idem 2005, 62 and 72). During different phases of action and
latency, initial functional deformations are reinforced in positive feedback loops; groups inevitably fail sooner rather than later (idem 2004, 364 and 378-379). For instance, rigid ideologies impede adaptation which is why goal attainment is predominantly defined in negative terms (idem 2005, 67-71). While Straßner hence characterises terrorism as a self-reproducing system, it reproduces above all its failures and increasingly autistic legitimisations (idem 2004, 365-368). On the one hand, terrorist groups communicatively isolate themselves as they insist on unyielding interpretations of socio-political realities. On the other hand, they exclude society in a literal sense because of their clandestine structure (idem 2005, 62-66).

Other than organisation and management theories that aim at integrating strategic choice and organisational logics, Neidhardt (2006), von Baeyer-Katte (1982) and Straßner (2004) put more emphasis on internal dynamics. Political goals and ideological trajectories are rather elements that shape group dynamics than prerequisites of strategic choice. Accordingly, all three authors depict terrorist movements as dysfunctional, pathologic forms of collective action. If and when organisations survive over time then they do so only through active negation of their socio-political environment. While this is a welcome contrast to theories that over-emphasise strategic choice, this perspective is also problematic for two reasons. Firstly, dysfunctionally structured collective actors are not likely to pass the threshold of organisational institutionalisation, which is why pathologically conceptualised meso-level dynamics cannot explain significant life-expectation without introducing further explanatory factors. Secondly, all three authors deliberately or implicitly de-politicise the authors of political violence. If ideologies disguise internal process dynamics and blatantly rationalise irrational behaviour rather than represent central motivations to commit oneself fully to unconventional politics, terrorism might not be regarded as political violence.

On the meso-level, not only della Porta but also Scheerer draw explicitly and heavily on SMTs; namely resource mobilisation and framing theories influence their respective conceptual argument. Scheerer regards protest frames as ‘interpretative offers’ which fulfil cognitive, emotional, and pragmatic functions and can only mobilise successfully if the organisational nuclei of movements already exist (1988b). Furthermore, protest is also dyadic interaction characterised by a strategy of calculated, limited violations of socially
established conflict norms which aim at provoking reactions: the more repressive the establishment’s reaction, the more likely it becomes that radical, non-negotiable protest frames spread (ibid., 112-116). When action-reaction-sequences escalate tensions, protest environments subsequently change. While moderates are increasingly in defensive positions or opt out, remaining protest strata radicalise and adapt to repression (ibid., 119). Conflicts reach a critical threshold if the monopoly on the use of force is de-tabooed during protest events: Scheerer argues that urban guerrilla strategies become viable options once the interrelated issues of power and violence have been raised during protest events (ibid., 128-133). Even though intrinsically precarious, further conditions might facilitate a temporary institutionalisation of violent action networks. If violence constantly provokes over-reactions that fail to crush the guerrilla but can be scandalised, groups can sustain a minimal level of support (ibid., 143).

Della Porta contends that two interrelated mechanisms influence developments towards violent escalation on the meso-level: organisational dynamics and resource mobilisation. When differentiated, polycephalic, and reticular Social Movement Organisations (SMO) compete with each other for scarce resources, above all support and participation, during cycles of collective struggle, the ideological steadfastness and activist determination of ‘violent entrepreneurs’ provide means for doing so (della Porta 1995, 12-13). Additionally, environmental conditions, including mobilisation potentials and resistant traditions outside original constituencies as well as international role models and support, might favour the emergence of organised violence as a functional equivalent for fading widespread activism if some SMO deliberately capitalise on these conditions (ibid., 108-110). In so doing, organisational innovation relies on ideological mediation, leadership, coordination, and centralisation. The more radicalised movement strata can provide these resources when general mobilisation declines (ibid., 106-107). While the militarisation of conflict inevitably yields immediate, far-reaching, and self-perpetuating consequences, organisational processes are not determined towards a specific outcome. Della Porta contends that the emergence of fully developed underground structures is a gradual development that results from the unintended consequences of organisational experiments (ibid., 110-112). Accordingly, differences matter but there is also a particular limitation: while groups might still be able to relate to their immediate environments, political
motivations ultimately take the backseat in a self-referential, internally oriented strategy of political violence (ibid., 129-135).

Both sociologically informed multi-level approaches use a similar theoretical language, but implement it very differently. While Scheerer discusses relations between challengers, incumbents, and institutions of social control on the meso-level, these dynamics represent, according to della Porta, the structural conditions of protest. Consequently, her account of the emergence of fully clandestine groups is more detailed and complex. By contrast, Scheerer is able to address the role of established control interests in processes of paradox institutionalisation of terrorism in the context of meso-level dynamics (Scheerer 1988b, 153 and 177). However, both authors do not conceptualise whether and how these processes influence the potential of groups to persist in phases of declining politicisation and increasing marginalisation. While della Porta locates these aspects on the micro-analytical level, Scheerer externalises moments of persistence and institutionalisation.

Two of Cronin’s conceptual scenarios of closure to terrorism also employ meso-level arguments: decapitation and failure (2009, 8). The arrest or targeted killing of leadership figures may end cycles of terrorist violence by decapitation if groups are relatively small and lack significant popular support, but can also provide secondary motivations that protract campaigns (ibid., 31-34). Failure manifests itself either as implosion or marginalisation when groups are unable to manage generational transition, experience division, and lose core members by exit or contact to potential constituencies by committing grave targeting errors (ibid., 95-103). Both failure scenarios are contingent upon the degree to which groups plan rationally or are driven by inwardly directed logics; internal dynamics accordingly influence life spans (ibid., 104-110). However, Cronin fails to elaborate how these factors concretely affect potential persistence or demise and regularly bases her conceptual inferences on anecdotal evidence. These particular shortcomings again highlight a general problem of meso-level conceptualisations.

Negotiating between the different logics of strategic choice and organisationally bound rationality, these approaches either overemphasise the self-referential stability of violent action systems or conceptualise dysfunctional, autistic self-referentiality as a condition for the inherent instability of these very contexts. Temporalizing the two contradictory logics onto different periods in the life-cycle of groups or attributing counter-
factual permanence to external factors and mechanisms of ideological control of reality constructions only provide intermediate, less than perfect solutions to this conceptual dilemma.

### 2.2.3 Micro-level approaches: Psychology, careers, socialisation and motivation

The rifle or gun fetish is, of course, a widespread phenomenon in many cultures including our own. ... For militant, man-hating female terrorists, the gun, or in multiplication, the submachine gun may be the ultimate joke on Freudian theories of ‘penis envy.’

(Merkl 1986b, 353)

No one is born a terrorist and before taking part in terrorist actions many armed actors have engaged in other forms of political action.

(Toros 2012, 30)

The above quotes aptly outline the dilemma of micro-level conceptualisations of terrorism. On the one hand, there is a strong inclination to identify patterns which might not only describe, but even explain why certain personalities are drawn to armed struggle. Even though psychopathological theorizations of participation in terrorist violence have been proved largely at odds with empirical realities (Silke 2004, 20; 2011, 8), biased or at least reductionist psychologizations, like Merkl’s musing on the militant ‘gun fetish’ as gendered compensation for supposedly dysfunctional sexual identities, are still not uncommon (Horgan 2005, 48). On the other hand, it is very unlikely that individuals cross the boundary between non-violent and violent political commitment without going through processes that transform behavioural inhibitors on the use of violence to a certain degree (Merkl 1986a, 29). Precisely because no one is ‘born a terrorist’, as Toros reminds us, and because terrorism usually is the choice of a minority, individuals involved in it are likely to have experienced critical turning points during primary or secondary socialisation. Therefore, a primary concern of conceptual approaches on the micro-level is to identify patterns within processes of political socialisation that might draw individuals to terrorism (Bell 1998, 101-102).

A collaborative, broad based study of biographical and socio-demographic data of suspect and convicted terrorists in Germany mostly employs inductive approaches for discerning ‘individual circumstances and experiences which might have fostered terrorist careers’ (Jäger et al. 1981, 5). Although this analysis might appear dated and overly context-specific, it is frequently cited (among others: Crenshaw 1986; 2011, 101; Post 1998, 28-29;
2005, 2007) and referred to as ‘by far the largest-ever study conducted on terrorists to date’ (Horgan 2005, 52). In this context, Gerhard Schmidtchen bases a micro-sociological account of terrorist careers on the hypothesis that participants in political violence organise their biographies according to anomalous ‘life-themes’ or rationalised perceptions of existential stress: later terrorists blame a supposedly unjust, illegitimate society for existential traumata and frame solutions to these in ideological terms (Schmidtchen 1981, 15-17). These assumptions provide a ‘reading aid’ for analysing socio-biographical data of suspects, culprits and convicts of ‘terrorist’ offences in which he argues that relevant socio-economic, socio-demographic educational and socialisation differences exist between terrorists and the general German populace (ibid., 21-48). Lieselotte Süllwold, another member of the research group, interprets Schmidtchen’s descriptive statistics from a psychological perspective. Triangulating his findings with qualitative data, she contends that it is very unlikely that distinct life histories or personality traits characterise individual participation in terrorism (Süllwold 1981, 81). Rather, a configuration of features, which are unspecific in themselves, influences the making of a terrorist: a shift from primary socialisation commonly perceived as deeply alienating to experiences of emancipation during protest cycles in closely knit peer-groups and conflicts between individual status aspirations and actual achievements (ibid., 84-93). Dogmatic, decisionistic and dichotomous ideologies enable alienated individuals to articulate shared frustrations politically while ideologized language helps overcoming habitual inhibitors to violent behaviour and avoiding cognitive dissonance (ibid., 96-101). Furthermore, Süllwold argues that the personality traits of central figures within terrorist organisations border clinical symptoms, namely extreme extraversion and neurotic paranoia (ibid., 105-106).

A third study dedicated to biographical analysis draws on a similar data-set complemented by in-depth interviews with suspected and convicted terrorists from criminological and socio-psychological perspectives. Herbert Jäger and Lorenz Böllinger meticulously reflect on methodological and theoretical problems, namely access restrictions and limitations of interviewing suspects, difficulties with authorities, and the shortcomings of inferring general conclusions from individual accounts (Böllinger 1981, 175-179; Jäger 1981, 121-141). Accordingly, they characterise their findings as preliminary hypotheses which might guide further research. Both authors argue that micro-social dynamics shape the way in which structural conditions are reflected within individual political biographies;
however, correlations remain contingent and do not constitute a theory of causal conditionality. Furthermore, Jäger and Böllinger highlight that normal social behaviour within a radically changed frame of reference dominates terrorist contexts. Accordingly, the conditions of possibility for individual commitment to political violence are shaped by previous participation in unconventional politics rather than influenced by psychopathological deviance (Jäger and Böllinger 1981, 232-235). Owing to different disciplinary backgrounds and epistemological interests, both authors freely admit to drawing different conclusions from their data (Jäger 1981, 118). These include disagreement on whether individual attraction to violence is a significant or even observable factor amongst the interviewed terrorists (Crenshaw 1986, 387).

Contrary to Horgan’s critique (2005, 54), this ambivalence represents one of the central strengths of the study. Especially in comparison to the methodologically inconsistent and reified scholarship discussed in this sub-section, Jäger and Böllinger aptly point to the limitations of individualistic approaches. While Schmidtchen is particularly careful regarding the conceptual status of his results, methodological doubts concerning his findings are indicated. He uses an extremely elusive and undifferentiated definition of the terrorist population and employs a potentially invalid control group. Although Süllwold briefly mentions the potential shortcomings of her database, she does not reflect how these shortcomings might influence the validity of her claims and bases her account of the potentially ‘abnormal’ personalities of leading terrorists on weak evidence (Süllwold 1981, 104). Whereas Schmidtchen and Süllwold’s attempt to explain participation by socio-demographic differences, problematic socialisation, or dysfunctional personalities depoliticises individual commitments to political violence, Jäger and Böllinger negotiate more carefully between structural, political, personal, and group-related factors without jumping to conclusions.

16 He fails to differentiate between suspected, indicted or convicted of terrorist offences and even goes beyond these wide criteria by including those who ‘would have been sentenced if § 129a StGB [the particularly broad definition of terrorist offences in the German Criminal Code] would have been already in force’ at the time of their trials (Schmidtchen 1981, 19).
17 The majority of Schmidtchen’s research subjects, a solid 90.8 per cent, are associated with left-wing groups of the 1970s which emerged out of the highly politicised climate of a wider protest movement (Waldmann 1992, 238). A comparison to movement participants that did not turn to organised political violence might actually result in different findings. While Schmidtchen mentions these potential shortcomings incidentally, his attempt to control for the bias by introducing the general student population as an alternative control group is also not convincing (Schmidtchen 1981, 21).
Jäger and Böllinger’s reluctance to subscribe to a causal theory of individual involvement is echoed in current contributions to the conceptual debate on terrorism from psychological perspectives. These are particularly critical towards explanations of terrorist behaviour which over-privilege the micro-level. Emphasising the importance of psychology for understanding the phenomenon, the ways in which psychological frameworks are commonly employed are problematized (Silke 2011, 16). John Horgan identifies three ways in which terrorist personalities are still conceptually framed as deviant even if the ‘psychopathology proposition’ is widely dismissed: the frustration-aggression hypothesis states that violence is a result of real or perceived deprivation; the narcissism-aggression hypothesis according to which terrorists are frequently emotionally disengaged as a result of excessive self-interest; and psychodynamic or psychoanalytical accounts, which explain participation by the failed resolution of developmental conflicts (Horgan 2005, 57-62). A more sophisticated take on the latter proposition is for instance Jerrold Post’s argument that social-revolutionary terrorism represents rebellion against perceived failures of the parental generation while nationalist-separatist groups uphold rebellious traditions passed on through the generations (2007, 7-8). All theoretical assumptions on terrorist psychologies fail, according to Horgan, when confronted with empirical realities. For instance, the narcissism hypothesis rests on problematic and poorly referenced accounts that over-rely on secondary sources and methodologically inconsistent studies (Horgan 2003, 10-16).18

Consequently, more recent psychological contributions emphasise theoretical pluralism instead of an integrated theory of individual pathways to terrorism (Rogers 2011, 39). Since individual participants and terrorist groups have complex and heterogeneous histories, analysts could only approximate a set of generic factors that influence individual trajectories including individual identification with collective perceptions of betrayal, ingroup reward structures, opportunities for joining, and the biological factors age and gender (Silke 2003, 35-48). As authors argue that terrorism is a context- and path-dependent, heterogeneous subject of study they also claim that attempts at theorising interrelations between these factors would require more, better, methodologically sound, and context

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18 Again providing an instructive example, Post refers Böllinger’s study when reporting findings of ‘developmental histories characterized by narcissistic wounds and a predominant reliance on the psychological mechanisms of splitting and externalization’ among German terrorists (Post 1998, 29). However, he substantiates this claim by an unspecified reference to a volume of the ‘Analyses on Terrorism’ in which the cited analysis is simply not published.
sensitive in-depth case studies (Horgan 2005, 74-77). Although a critique of conceptual approaches that de-contextualise and de-historicise terrorist violence is widely echoed (Breen Smyth 2009; Gunning 2009; Sluka 2009), it is doubtful whether the very authors that articulate these claims from psychological perspectives contextualise according to their own standards. Silke and Horgan, for instance, account for group affiliations and group configurations within the German left-wing underground, arguably among the most important context variables, at least in imprecise terms. Psychology and cognate disciplinary perspectives are hence only with major reservations suitable points of departure for theorising individual commitments on the micro-level.

In contrast, Gilda Zwerman et al. (2000) as well as Lorenzo Bosi and Donatella della Porta (2012) elaborate on the second element of the puzzle outlined at the beginning of this sub-section from micro-sociological perspectives. Both contributions focus on conceptualising individual motivations to turn to violent, clandestine politics after having passed through other forms of political struggle. They infer ideal-types, respectively conceptual models from an analysis of political biographies and socialisations of activists (Bosi and della Porta 2012, 361; Zwerman et al. 2000, 85). Zwerman et al. locate individual political biographies within communal, historical and regional contexts. Specific conflict histories, movements and protest dynamics provide narratives within which individual motivations to use political violence are shaped and enacted (2000, 86-90). These narratives are influenced by direct personal experiences with repression, high levels of individual politicisation in periods of declining collective mobilisation, strong affective ties within radical movement organisations and opportunities to frame individual decisions in ideological terms (ibid., 93-94). Staying underground depends on the adoption of a new identity which focuses on the clandestine collective as a heroic, fighting avant-garde whose isolation and condemnation emphasise political consistency. Participants establish new and relatively stable individual role definitions centred on the ‘armed struggle’ (ibid., 95-97).

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19 Silke calls Michael ‘Bommi’ Baumann a ‘key figure in the Red Army Faction’ (Silke 2003, 38), whilst he was a documented member of the B2J whose status within this group is rather doubtful (Wunschik 2006b, 556-557). Similarly, Horgan labels the B2J ‘a Red Army Faction offshoot’ and counts Hans Joachim Klein amongst its members (Horgan 2005, 35). In this account, the complex and shifting web of interrelations between RAF and B2J (Wunschik 2006b, 541-555) is represented at least very superficially; furthermore, Klein was simply not affiliated with the B2J but with the RZ (Kraushaar 2006b, 598). It is hard to regard these inconsistencies as minor lapses since both, Baumann and Klein, have published translated autobiographical accounts which are standard sources on militant life histories in terrorism studies (among others: Rapoport 1988).

20 Similar dynamics have also been described as labelling processes by one of the authors (Steinhoff 1984).
Bosi and della Porta distinguish three ideal-types of different ‘central paths of micro-mobilization’ (2012, 380). For individuals motivated according to the ideological path, the decision to enter the underground is perceived as an evolutionary process in which local or familial political traditions of counter-hegemonic resistance are carried on by other means. Consequently, this ideal-type is particularly frequent among the foundational generation of armed formations (ibid., 371-372). Instrumental motivations mainly result from processes of individual political development within movement cycles in which participants experience the failure of other forms of unconventional politics (ibid., 375). Finally, solidarity gains currency as a central stimulus when political violence is already normalised during escalating conflict dynamics in which narratives of defence and revenge are validated (ibid., 379). The discussed micro-sociological approaches establish conceptual frames which re-politicise and de-psychologise the analytical micro-level. They provide useful correctives to the tendency to write the actual political element out of accounts of individual motivations. While both models do not ignore elements of perception, evaluation and affection, the authors understand these elements in terms of political experiences and biographies. However, both contributions rely heavily on specific case histories. It is open to debate whether the more general conclusions really yield explanatory power beyond their respective contexts (Bosi and della Porta 2012, 381; Zwerman et al. 2000, 102).

Scheerer and della Porta conceptualise tools for micro-analytical perspectives on individual motivations which reflect some of the arguments already discussed, drawing on micro-sociological concepts of individual political careers. Scheerer distinguishes two antithetical ways of approaching individual commitments according to causal theories or theories of the social construction of reality. Ultimately, he argues, both perspectives reduce individual choice to mere expressions of stimulus-response-models and ignore intentional action (Scheerer 1988b, 121-122). Rather, he understands political careers as consequences of individually perceived discrepancies between ends and means which lead stronger motivated participants to unconventional forms of political action. These trajectories consist of small decisions which are reversible but eventually establish a chain of interlinked events which are socially reconstructed as establishing consequently and irreversibly new, deviant identities (ibid., 123-127). According to della Porta, individuals turn to political violence as a result of intentional decision and escalating protest dynamics. The motivational structure of movement participants changes according to emerging norms within close counter-cultural
social networks; individual motivations are hence socially embedded (della Porta 1995, 13-14). These reflect participants’ careers within and through different SMO which shape individual perceptions of external realities in terms of a socially accepted, intra-organisational language (ibid., 136). Individual commitment to underground activities further changes motivational structure as processes of goal displacement occur (ibid., 165-169). Once recruited, underground identities are constructed according to a ‘politics of re-naming’ in which ideologies fulfil a double function: they legitimise activities externally and provide frames for the internal re-interpretation of external realities (ibid., 170-176). These processes resemble patterns of religious conversion and ultimately distance the individual-within-the-group from empirical political realities as perceived within the dominant culture and the counter-hegemonic sub-culture (ibid., 182-186).

While both accounts re-introduce intentionality and politics to micro-level analysis, they have similar limitations. On the one hand, the micro- and the meso-level are not clearly distinguished. Both authors conceptualise individual choice as socially embedded and constrained by networks on the meso-level. While this is worth considering, it immediately raises the question why a micro-level of analysis has to be distinguished if it does not facilitate free-standing analysis. On the other hand, both micro-level arguments are slightly tautological. The authors contribute to our understanding of why and how individuals who are radically politicised are further drawn into radical armed politics as a consequence of little steps and decisions. In other words, being a radical is a root cause for further radicalisation which results under certain circumstances in commitment to armed struggle. While these circumstances are conceptually re-constructed in more (della Porta) or less (Scheerer) detailed and convincing ways, the question of why certain individuals subscribe to radical political frames in the first place has to be left unaddressed. Consequently, theorising on the analytical micro-level encounters a double-bind. Perspectives focusing on the aggregation of individual data on the psycho-social underpinnings for joining the underground fail to deliver sustainable theoretical models. Micro-sociological analyses of motivational structures for committing to clandestine political violence, by contrast, remain dependent on meso-level arguments.
2.2.4 Between and beyond levels of analysis: Multi-level approaches

The discussion of theoretical and conceptual approaches to the understanding of terrorism as a political and social phenomenon on different levels of analysis in preceding sub-sections has highlighted a tension. On the one hand, distinguishing different analytical levels helps categorising and ordering contributions to different literatures on terrorism or violent social movements. On the other hand, it is not always easy to distinguish levels of analysis as clear-cut as desired. While often privileging one perspective, many of the conceptual arguments implicitly and sometimes explicitly operate on different analytical levels. As already discussed in this chapter’s introduction, this is neither a very unusual nor a very original finding and has been addressed in a number of multi-level conceptualisations on terrorism. Since the substantial argument of two of the most outspoken and thoroughly developed among these approaches on different analytical levels has already been examined, the aim of this subsection is twofold. Firstly, it reflects how and according to which logic the different levels are integrated by Scheerer and della Porta and, in so doing, the degree to which this still privileges a certain perspective. Secondly, further ways of developing multi-level approaches to terrorism are discussed to establish parameters for the thesis’ own efforts at theorising political violence.

In his own terms, Scheerer aims at establishing a theoretical model to explain social-revolutionary violence within the specific context of the highly differentiated, politically relatively inclusive capitalist societies of late 20th century Europe. When outlining the state of research on this issue, he criticises individualist as well as macro-theoretical approaches fiercely since both rely on overtly deterministic, moralising and myopic arguments. Rather, any serious attempt to explain the phenomenon should analyse how structural conditions are perceived and, in so doing, translated into incentives for social action by individual and collective actors (Scheerer 1988b, 75-82). Scheerer situates the crucial mechanisms facilitating these transformations in social institutions on the meso-level. More specifically, social movements mediate between the structural conditions for and the individual participation in political violence (ibid., 97, 120 and 156). Meso-sociological arguments are conceptualised very broadly and encompass not only the emergence and temporal institutionalisation of counter-hegemonic social movements, but also reactions of the political and social establishment controlling protest and finally the ways in which protest and its control are addressed and used within discourses of the political system (ibid., 127-
128). This broad concept of the meso-level, it is argued here, is not trivial, but highly relevant to assessing whether the model complies with its own claims.

Scherer dedicates the major part of his contribution to the meso-level argument, yet this argumentation is not unidirectional or privileges just one perspective. The relative importance of influence factors shifts while protest unfolds during the progress of a movement cycle. Internal resources initially determine whether credible and compatible mobilising frames can be established. The reactions of established institutions, in other words external resources, influence whether and how the movement reaches its climax in escalating sequences (ibid., 128-129). A strategy of social-revolutionary violence, which attempts to pursue some of the movement’s original aims by different means, only becomes a plausible option if movements do not fizzle out incrementally, but disintegrate relatively abruptly on a high level of militancy as a result of control reactions. As discussed above, fundamentally oppositional political violence may continue or even become institutionalised in fully clandestine forms given further meso-level conditions which remain beyond the control of social-revolutionary groups but take place on the institutional level (ibid., 137-154).

While interactions take place within structural conditions, Scheerer contends that outcomes are first and foremost influenced by the ways in which structures are interpreted within social institutions. Consequently, the individual micro-unit also represents a necessary precondition of social institutions, within which it can act, rather than a subject that creates and shapes them by intentional actions (ibid., 159-1161). It is argued here that Scheerer’s approach does not accomplish his stated aim to develop an integrated multi-level analytical frame for social-revolutionary violence. His wide understanding of the meso-sociological level draws on structural and individual elements but the focus of his analytical argument largely remains on this very level. Ironically, this finding highlights Scheerer’s point of departure: while quite a few social scientists state the multi-level character of terrorism as social phenomenon and object of study, he claims that this insight is rarely theoretically implemented (ibid., 80).

Della Porta’s analytical framework differs significantly. Rather than proposing an explanatory model for clandestine social-revolutionary violence as such, she aims at developing a conceptual framework to understand why and with which consequences
political violence occurred within a specific cycle of protest. In her own terms, the approach is ‘borrowing from different fields of research’ (della Porta 1995, 2). Della Porta’s conceptualisation of different analytical levels is influenced by this perspective as she distinguishes analytically between societal structures, social institutions and individuals in relation to protest dynamics. On different levels of analysis, different theories guide the analysis. Theories of conflict highlight the opportunity structure for protest on the macro-level, theories of resource mobilisation shed light on meso-level dynamics within and among movement organisations, and theories of activism or motivation explain patterns of individual commitment to political violence on the micro-level (ibid., 187). Each of these levels and related theoretical approaches are, according to della Porta, key to understanding a different phase in the dynamics of escalating and deescalating protest cycles. While the social and political conditions of protest predominate during its beginning (ibid., 189-194), organisational dynamics prevail once violence is introduced as a tactical resource (ibid., 195-200). Finally, when numbers of militants dwindle towards the end of protest cycles, the importance of dynamics on the micro-level significantly increases (ibid., 201-206). Della Porta concludes that political violence is always a multi-level phenomenon. Out of protest cycles, political violence may evolve into a temporally institutionalised feature of politics if the political opportunity structure is less receptive or outright closed, if social entrepreneurs propagandise the use of terrorist violence, and if activists are gradually socialised into a ‘militarised’ understanding of politics (ibid., 216).

While della Porta implements her conceptual aims to a larger degree than Scheerer, her multi-level perspective still has shortcomings. First of all, the meso-level argument is overrepresented despite her insistence on the proportional importance of all three analytical images. As already discussed in detail in the last sub-section, the separation of micro- and meso-analysis is not always entirely convincing. Group dynamics, counter-cultures, the development of collective identities within groups, and encounters with opponents constitute necessary elements of the micro-level argument. The question arises whether it is fully consistent to include moments of commonality and collective interaction into an analysis of individual motivations and commitments. Since della Porta never claims that these exist independently and indeed treats both moments as interwoven, it is reasonable to ask how meaningful and feasible analytical differentiation is in the first place. That individual life-histories are told in terms of the participation in strongly inclusive, collectively
constructed movement identities is an important finding and seriously challenges some of the psychological conceptualisations discussed above; yet it might also challenge della Porta’s level-of-analysis-argument. Similarly, she argues that it is less the structural conditions of protest, but rather their perception within actor networks which determines whether protest dynamics escalate.

Two further conceptual interventions implicitly aim at integrating different analytical levels. Apter develops a discursive model of terrorism and political violence from an assessment of analytical approaches to the subject drawing on literature that emphasises reconstruction of socio-political realities through language, discourse, and speech acts (Apter 1997b, 7-12). Different uses of violence for political purposes, he argues, can be interpreted in different analytical modes. These constitute a continuum between a logo-centric ‘Inversionary Discourse Model’ that requires the establishment and permanent reconstruction of symbolic capital within a discourse community and a materialist, economically centred ‘Violent Exchange Model’ that relies on tangible, material resources (ibid., 15). As an ‘extreme form of interpretive action’ (ibid., 17), political violence may establish its own communicative field within which the political project of the discursive community is defined and around which its boundaries are organised. Violence becomes self-perpetuating and testifies to its own necessity by virtue of the symbolic capital it reproduces (ibid., 17-20).

Nevertheless, movements that employ political violence as surrogates to unavailable political resources are not free-floating. They rely on the validation of their claims within a manifest community which shares at least some of the basic political convictions and on the recognition of their actions as essentially political within the political system. A discourse of political violence only becomes self-sustaining if it is able to relate itself to its social and political environment (ibid., 23). Meaning is written into violence not only by its perpetrators and victims, but also by the opponent’s responses. Legislative debates, courtroom proceedings, and anti-terrorist laws are important communicative acts which determine if and how discourses of violence are recognised and institutionalised, for instance by highlighting criminal aspects of violent behaviour instead of turning it into a matter of state security (Moss 1997, 109-119). This conceptual perspective offers promising insights for reformulating a communication theory of terrorism whose state has been characterised as
abridged and under-developed above (see point 2.1.2, p. 39). Owing to its very broad take on the problem and its tentative epistemological claims, Apter’s approach, however, remains sketchy: it provides thought-provoking ideas and opens the debate on communicative aspects of political violence significantly, but it does not aim at an integrated communication theory of terrorism.

Boyns and Ballard, whose particularly critical assessment of the theoretical state of ‘terrorism studies’ introduced this chapter’s discussion of conceptual contributions, in contrast develop their particular attempt at theorising terrorism from a definition of the phenomenon as ‘violent response to hegemonic dominance ... by the creation of an alternative, counterhegemonic movement’ (Boyns and Ballard 2004, 10). Terrorist violence represents accordingly a reaction to perceived power imbalance; its likelihood increases with the perceived degree of hegemonic supremacy. Since terrorism is only one among various tactical options for counter-hegemonic movements, involves significant political costs, and poses high risks, Boyns and Ballard identify further conditions under which resorting to violence becomes more likely. Firstly, violent movement rely on the mobilisation of specific resources. How accessible and widely disseminated insurgency-related techniques and technical knowledge are, influences the prospects for terrorism (ibid., 12-15). Secondly, some of the more radical movement organisations might be drawn to increasingly disruptive tactics as a response to moments of institutionalising counter-hegemonic protest. Original momentum and goals are defended against perceived tendencies of co-optation and routinization (ibid., 16-17). While the conceptual propositions discussed so far address the likelihood of terrorism, two additional propositions examine the characteristics and consequences of attacks. ‘Successful’, that is, severe and highly visible attacks against prestigious targets strengthen the ‘power-prestige’ of terrorist groups; at the same time, such attacks impact the symbolic structure of victimised societies (ibid., 18-20). Lastly, ‘successful’ attacks verify scripts of social cohesion and ritualised solidarity within both the counter-hegemonic attacker and the attacked hegemon. While entrenched polarisation in both social entities increases, the clout of counter-hegemonic positions towards the dominant order are not strengthened substantially (ibid., 21).

Boyns and Ballard synthesize these propositions into a functional equation: terrorism is a function of counter-hegemony, resource mobilisation, counter-institutionalisation,
power prestige, ritualization, and solidarity. However, the equation does not reflect gradual differences discussed in the individual propositions. The result is a largely generic and formal unified theory which is more than slightly tautological and self-fulfilling. The authors’ propositions on translating their theory into concrete hypotheses or its operationalization remain vague (ibid., 22-23). Boyns and Ballard’s reflections on theory testing are equally generic and demonstrate a general weakness of their approach: theoretical propositions are not developed out of a serious discussion of the scholarly discourse within terrorism studies, but against the field. Consequently, some of the new insights are not as innovative as the authors claim. For instance, symbolic elements and the ritualised nature of terrorist violence have featured prominently in discussions on the topic for some decades as this chapter’s previous discussion has highlighted.

In conclusion, conceptualising between and beyond different levels of analysis broadens the analytical perspective and allows for interrelating the various elements of conceptual explanations for terrorist violence developed in the other three analytical images. Most if not all of the multi-level approaches emphasise the significance of material and immaterial meso-social institutions, including movements, communities, discourses, and counter-hegemonic resistance, in the emergence and development of oppositional political violence. Integrating a logocentric analytical framework for understanding the discursive reproduction of revolutionary identities therefore has to start from the ways in which these institutions can be conceptualised.

2.3 Conclusions

If we look at the theories that have been discussed in this chapter, one cannot fail to see (and deplore) the lack of common ground. ... Despite much theorizing, there is no general theory of terrorism. (McAllister and Schmid 2011, 261)

The point of departure for this chapter was less the search for a ‘general theory of terrorism’, but a far more modest goal. It has been introduced as mapping the relationship between terrorism and theory, or more precisely between a specific form of political violence and theoretically grounded ways to make sense of it. The chapter started from the comparatively generic and obvious observation that this relationship is tense, uneasy, and highly contested within the academic discourse in which it is established, or rather socially
constructed according to the practices and conventions of a specific discursive field. McAllister and Schmid (2011) relate this tension in the above quoted article to the vague boundaries of terrorism studies and contend that efforts at theorising ultimately fail to deliver because of a lack of consensus and conceptual consistency. This reasoning contradicts both of the propositions on theories of terrorism which introduced this chapter. While Boyns and Ballard (2004) deny that terrorism studies theorize at all, Apter (1997a) and his collaborators argue that theoretical approaches underrate the narrative construction of social realities and are thus, theoretically speaking, still not diverse enough. These contrasting positions have already been related to different understandings of theory and its scopes.

In McAllister and Schmid’s (2011) take on theories in the research process, different ways of theorising can also be evaluated according to definitions of what represents ‘good theory’ on collective violence (Conteh-Morgan 2004, 8). In so doing, the authors adhere to a positivist notion of theorising, stressing elements like parsimony, consistency, and falsifiability that ideal-typically qualify all theoretical approaches in the social sciences. Although McAllister and Schmid concede that actual contributions rarely meet these criteria, progresses in theory formation are measured accordingly (McAllister and Schmid 2011, 201). Boyns and Ballard’s formulation of a ‘unified theory of terrorism’ follows a similar logic of theoretical progress and unintentionally points to its inherent limitations: social realities are to quite some degree resilient to parsimonious interpretations. In contrast, Rule (1989) emphasises in a thorough enquiry on the possibilities and limits of theorising about political violence the tentative, restricted, and evaluative nature of all theoretical designs in the social sciences. While he also contends that theoretical evolution is contingent upon some form of potential falsification, this does not entail falsifiability in a strict Popperian sense (ibid., 7). Rule argues that theories or ‘ways of looking at a subject’ inevitably employ selective criteria and categorical systems that partly resist falsification and relate back to a conscious or unconscious decision to focus attention onto a distinct and limited section of reality and ascribe meaning to it. Empirical facts become meaningful in ways that are
immanently contingent upon the theoretical perspective according to which these realities are analysed (ibid., 280-282).\(^{21}\)

Consequently, he is less optimistic about the possibility of theoretical progress than McAllister and Schmid or Boyns and Ballard when concluding that ‘empirically grounded theories that oblige us to change our minds about one highly charged aspect of social reality or another are the greatest achievement that social science has to offer’ (ibid., 308). Apter’s method of stirring up some of the common, but still heavily charged assumptions surrounding political violence and terrorism can be read in similar ways. By introducing a set of widely defined discourse theories, he encourages analysts of terrorism to consider a change of perspective. Political violence might not always and not only serve as an instrument to impose or challenge power relations in a functional sense. It might also intend to transport and exchange meanings, interpretations, and socially re-constructed realities, however far removed from what is agreed as normal these perceptions are and however horrific the symbolic exchanges that take place might be. These considerations on ways of making sense of social facts and of terrorist political violence itself help conciliating the different aspects of the terrorism studies literature and its relation to theory discussed in this chapter.

First of all, questions of definition and typology are neither an idle obsession of the field nor is it possible to define the term definitively and independently from the phenomena described by it. If the designation is meant to be distinctive in any sense of the word, it has to make a meaningful difference and the rationale behind this decision has to be made explicit. It has been argued that different forms of extra-normal, irregular and exceptional political violence employ different logics of action and that it therefore makes sense to distinguish revolutionary terrorism from the tactical use of symbolic violence by guerrilla movements and the coercive enforcement of state terror. Secondly, the modal distinction, which has been proposed, relates to the discrete communicative structure of

\(^{21}\) This resembles some of Luhmann’s thoughts on the mutually contingent preconditions and limitations of ‘knowledge’ in scientific systems. He argues that conventional subject-object-distinctions neglect that all theorising is reflexive. Theories or methods, the conditional programmes of scientific knowledge, cannot fall back on any external objectivity, but entail a moment of arbitrariness. Decision is hence a precondition of knowledge and the criteria by which ‘science’ draws a distinction between relevant and irrelevant facts are applied to science itself. Ultimately, the relation between knowledge and its object, that is the empirical ‘reality’, depends on the self-referential act of producing knowledge about an object by which the ‘real’ is constructed. This tautology is conditioned if the reasons for choosing an object of knowledge are made explicit and kept open to critique (Luhmann 1995a, 479-484).
revolutionary terrorism with its unique opportunities and repercussions. While this thought is not uncommon in the study of political violence, it has been contended that the notion of communication within the field is abbreviated and overly constrained to a purely instrumental understanding of the term. Approaches focusing on discourses of violence and the structure of their symbolic interaction are the exception. In order to fully develop their heuristic potential, such ways of approaching revolutionary terrorism have to be further deepened and systematised.

Thirdly, theories on the structural conditions and ramifications of terrorism either over-determine systemic causes or highlight that these causes affect the emergence and development of revolutionary terrorism only when mediated by the perception of collective actors. The crucial question is less whether societies are substantially blocked, the economic order is unjust and produces relative deprivation, or social control is over-repressive and effectively curbs dissent, but rather whether these conditions are perceived as incentives to act upon in distinct ways. Shifting the perspective to the social reconstruction of realities in discourse and symbolic exchange allows for conceptualising the missing link between structural conditions and their perception. A communication theory of counterhegemonic political violence might also help to rethink its systemic consequences. Fourthly, theoretical approaches to terrorism on the meso-level also negotiate between two positions and emphasise either strategic choice or intra-group dynamics if not attempting to link both perspectives. On the one hand, strategy- and goal-oriented models put a lot of effort into explaining that terrorist rationality is always only rational in a very distinct and restricted sense. On the other hand, accounts of group-dynamics and concepts of meso-systems argue that terrorist groups are so dysfunctional that any temporal stabilisation or even institutionalisation is exceptional and depends on external conditions. While strategic choice perspectives risk overemphasising stability, rationality, and integration, group dynamic perspectives oscillate in the opposite direction. An approach, that conceptualises the discursive construction of ‘radical subcultures’ in differentiation to mainstream society, offers an opportunity to avoid these reciprocal dangers and think both aspects together.

Fifthly, conceptual models on the micro-level also face a dual problem. Purely individualistic approaches fail to develop models that withstand empirical falsification; individual life histories are too diverse to allow for generalisation and psychological theories
of a terrorist personality are fiercely rejected, above all by many psychologists. Micro-
sociological accounts, in contrast, infer group-related propositions from an analysis of
participants’ life histories or elaborate how individual political careers and collective
movement histories are intertwined, rather than developing theories of individual
motivation. In this context, any meaningful concept of individual participation depends on
meso-level dynamics; motives for individually participating in revolutionary terrorism are
mediated by social institutions, not unlike its structural conditions. Finally, multi-level
approaches widen the analytical scope and focus on the emergence of terrorist forms of
political violence out of broader frames of conflict and protest. While they also draw
attention to the development of groups involved in terrorism, the question which precise
factors influence a violent, counter-hegemonic group’s ability to persist in a non-
revolutionary situation is not conceptualised exhaustively. Nevertheless, most of the multi-
level designs discussed emphasise the importance of meso-level dynamics for mediating
between structural conditions of and individual participation in political violence. In some
form or another, social institutions or societal meso-structures integrate different analytical
levels. Discursive processes like protest framing, ideological auto-motivation, and the
reproduction of symbolic capital materialise in the argumentation, yet these elements have
to be elaborated and interrelated in more systematic ways.

Several implications for the thesis’ analytical framework result from these remarks. A
conceptual approach that can contribute to progress in theory formation in Rule’s sense by
successfully questioning common assumptions has to be empirically grounded and
theoretically sound at the same time. Its assumptions have to be made explicit and held
open to critique, even though empirical falsifiability might be harder to achieve than
traditional epistemologies suggest. Communication, discourse, and related concepts are
promising devices to construct such a theoretical approach, even though the terms are
problematic and complex in and of themselves. Finally, a conceptual framework that mainly
operates on the analytical meso-level is not necessarily blind to structural and individual
conditions of political violence since societal institutions play a major role in the unfolding of
macro- and micro-level dynamics.
Chapter 3 - Clandestine Political Violence as Political Communication: A Luhmannian Perspective

3. Clandestine Political Violence as Political Communication: A Luhmannian Perspective

A communication does not communicate [mitteilen] the world it divides [einteilen] it. Like any operation of living or thinking, communication produces a caesura. It says what it says; it does not say what it does not say. It differentiates.

(Luhmann 1994b, 25)

As the previous chapter has argued, attempts to make sense of terrorism or, in della Porta’s terminology, clandestine political violence draw on a wide range of conceptual frameworks. The review of uses of and approaches to theory has also substantiated significant differences in the degree of theoretical reflection and sophistication within terrorism studies already highlighted by Apter (1997b, 9). Epistemological positions on the possibilities, roles, and limitations of theory building on political violence differ substantially. Bearing in mind these distinctions and the inferences for conceptualising social-revolutionary political violence which have been drawn from different perspectives (see point 2.3), this chapter sets out to integrate two of the previously discussed broader currents within the study of clandestine political violence whose arguments are more closely related than commonly assumed. More precisely, the chapter argues that SMT conceptualisations of oppositional political violence and communicative approaches to terrorism can be brought into closer contact within a Luhmannian lexicon. Luhmann’s particular theoretical vocabulary and its idiosyncrasies were introduced in attempts to explore macro-structural aspects of terrorism in a systems theory perspective (see point 2.2.1, p. 42). The current chapter will deepen this engagement to develop the conceptual foundations of the thesis’ specific communicative take on SMO that use violent action repertoires.

To this end, the chapter adopts and translates Luhmannian terminology and concepts into an analytical framework for approaching clandestine political violence on the level of distinct groups as a form of organising fundamental opposition and radical protest based on symbolic communication. While SMTs influence most of the multi-level approaches discussed in detail above, the review in Chapter 2 also argued that relations between the discursive reconstruction of social realities and the reproduction of movements is not

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22 An earlier version of this chapter has been published in Critical Studies on Terrorism (CST) as ‘Political Violence and Political Communication: A Luhmannian Perspective’ (Edelmann 2014).
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extensively elaborated in detail beyond Apter’s ‘Inversionary Discourse Model’ (see point 2.2.4, p. 62). Yet, even the latter is designed to contrast and complement conceptualisations of political violence as material exchanges between proponents and opponents of the status quo or, as it were, as an inversion of the general rule of violent conflict as physical encounter. This thesis suggests a different perspective on the basis of a Luhmannian understanding of communication as a medium that intrinsically differentiates the social world as social that has introduced this chapter. Communication is hence not conceptualised merely as a functional aspect of political violence, but the other way round: political violence is a function of political communication in a much wider sense. In other words, material aspects of violent encounters are understood as essential elements of the discursive differentiation of a specific, very particular reality of conflict that becomes material in itself.

Contrary to established readings, this chapter argues that Luhmann’s social theory allows for approaching social movements in ways that address the question of how distinctive conflict realities emerge and are (re)produced in and by protest communication. Conceptualising interrelations between protest and conflict accordingly contributes to bridging gaps in and between communicative and SMT approaches to terrorism or clandestine political violence. Commonplace interpretations of Luhmann’s reading of social movements and protest contend that the concepts occupy at best a peripheral position in his theoretical edifice. Furthermore, these readings emphasise his highly sceptical or at least agnostic stance on the emancipatory potential of the participatory micro-politics often associated with unconventional, non-institutionalised political forms (King and Thornhill 2005, 183). As section 3.2.1 contends, Luhmann’s notion of communication as a practice of social differentiation, which is central to his general social systems theory and to his specific way of approaching social movements, allows for a far more nuanced argument than commonly assumed.

In this context, the chapter develops a conceptual framework aimed at functionally analysing the discursive, inversionary construction and reproduction of conflict realities by clandestine actors; this conceptual fundament will inform the thesis’ analytical strategy in the following chapter. To this purpose, the current chapter contends that a systems theory perspective allows for re-interpreting empirical observations on radical clandestine left-wing groups which followed an idea of armed struggle for revolution in non-revolutionary times and were able to sustain this perspective despite political marginalisation and constant
setbacks. Luhmann’s position on empirical research according to which ‘stimulating questions’ that examine and contextualise ‘the established from unfamiliar, incongruent perspectives’ are more important than readily available answers informs the analytical method (Luhmann 1998, 41-42). Furthermore, contributions that approach political violence from this perspective provide instructive illustrations on what this concretely involves (see below point 3.3.1). Within this framework, dysfunctional aspects in the communication structures of politically violent groups are reframed as defining elements of the ways in which armed formations distinguish themselves from their social environment and develop internally coherent systemic identities. Frequently observed idiosyncrasies in the writings and activism of terrorist groups including negative goal definition, eclectic but strictly observed ideologies, and cryptic jargon (see above point 2.1.2) do not only represent impediments to the dissemination of messages. Rather, they also play an important role in establishing and maintaining discursive reconstructions of conflict reality. In so doing, the seemingly dysfunctional might fulfil important functions for stabilising particular systems of action and conflict constellations.

The chapter’s conceptual argument reflects central elements of theoretical approaches to terrorism and political violence discussed above on the basis of Luhmann’s social theory and aims at developing these approaches further. For instance, della Porta’s and Scheerer’s remarks on the instrumentality of the dyadic relation between protest and its control in the emergence of organised political violence resonate with section 3.3.2 below, which sheds a different light on the issue. In this regard, the chapter argues that problematizing the notion of communication according to Luhmann allows for radically reformulating the question of how the functional logic of clandestine political violence is related to its apparently dysfunctional consequences. As he argues that communication as such is unlikely to succeed unless communicative encounters are conditioned, regulated, and normalised (Luhmann 1990b), attention shifts from the observation that communicative strategies frequently fail to the ways in which communication gone astray reproduces perceptions of reality and actor constellations. To this end, the chapter’s argument will proceed in five steps. After relating its argument to communication and social movement approaches in the study of political violence and terrorism, the chapter will discuss Luhmann’s specific take on protest, social movements, and conflict in detail. Thirdly, essential tenets of the self-referential reproduction of clandestine political violence are
conceptualised according to attempts of making sense of terrorism within a Luhmannian Lexicon by others and the conceptual principles previously developed. Subsequently, these considerations are synthesised into a set of concrete propositions on the conditions of continuity of clandestine political violence before drawing conclusions for developing the thesis’ analytical strategy in the proceeding chapter.

3.1 Bridging gaps between communication and social movement approaches with Luhmann

With its radical constructivism and strictly binary logic of (re)constructing social facts as ‘observation of observations’ (Andersen 2003, XVI), Luhmann’s social systems theory counterintuitively offers a third way to study terrorism and political violence. The two prevailing approaches or epistemological meta-narratives for observing terrorism conceptually build theory either by inferring generalisations from more or less thick descriptions of social realities of clandestine political violence, or by testing deductively established theories by confronting theoretical hypotheses with these realities. Paradigmatically, these two ways of approaching political violence are represented by the differences between the approaches of della Porta and Scheerer. While della Porta develops her theoretical model in close relation to comparative case studies (1995, 2013), Scheerer deduces conceptual propositions from a discussion of theoretical literatures (1988b) which are subsequently applied to a number of case studies (Hess 1988; Paas 1988; Scheerer 1988a). The two different ways of conceptualising theoretical progress according to Rule’s empirically grounded understanding of theory development or McAllister and Schmid’s (2011) as well as Boyns and Ballard’s (2004) critical rationalist positions discussed above (see point 2.3, p. 65) also highlight the dualism of theoretical perspectives in studies of political violence and terrorism.

In deconstructing or at least destabilising the conditions of possibility of both prevailing meta-approaches, this third possibility aims beyond descriptions of social realities, however thick, and beyond methods that reflect the classic epistemological programme of the social sciences (Luhmann 1995a, 479). On the one hand, the very act of thickly describing conflict realities to observe the latent dynamics behind their manifest appearance already presupposes analytical constructions of the observer (Barbesino and Salavaggio 1997, 82). In
other words, the first form of acquiring knowledge about political violence and its contextual preconditions already entails more than mere description. These are, in Luhmannian terminology, always second-order observations and cannot be separated from the position of the respective observer within a specific social context and its theoretical traditions (Luhmann 1994a, 19-20), here the wider field of terrorism studies or SMTs which are both part of the system of social science. On the other hand, any interpretation of subject-specific theoretical progress in understanding political violence in the second sense relies on ideas of empirical falsifiability, conceptual parsimony, scientific objectivity, and the accessibility of a pre-given reality by an appropriate set of methods (Boyns and Ballard 2004; McAllister and Schmid 2011). In distinguishing a set of statements as part of the (social) sciences, these elements fulfil an important function for maintaining the scientific system as a field of knowledge. Yet they represent only a conventional and contingent way of determining what science is and fail to acknowledge that social science itself regulates relations between inclusion and exclusion to its realm as the difference between subject and object becomes problematic in a radically constructivist perspective (Luhmann 1998, 36-40).

While the conditions of possibility of knowledge are accordingly limited to second-order-observations that need to exclude potential knowledge by including specific knowledge claims, these limitations are at the same time inescapable epistemological conditions. What has been dubbed a third possibility for the study of political violence, or more precisely to construct knowledge claims related to political violence, is thus much more concerned with acknowledging the limitations of scientific knowledge on a specific field and their consequences than with the attempt to actually overcome these restrictions (Luhmann 1992c, 68-72). Luhmann speaks in this regard of factually and conceptually supplementing epistemological programmes. On the factual level, he claims that established knowledge should be re-examined from unfamiliar, counter-intuitive or even incongruent perspectives to contextualise facts differently. With regard to concepts, he proposes the method of functional comparison according to which even the most disparate social phenomena can be approached within the same conceptual framework; the latter hence necessarily relies on abstract conceptual decisions (1998, 41-42). The aim of an approach to the study of political violence along these lines is to de-familiarise knowledge claims concerning clandestine political violence by approaching it from a different perspective while at the same time using a conceptual language that does not distinguish a priori between
normal and deviant social phenomena. Adapting Luhmann’s description of his epistemological programme, this attempt is about approaching the extraordinary as normal (Luhmann 1995a, 114).

Most of the macro-analytical interventions in theoretical debates on terrorism that draw on Luhmann (see below point 3.3.1) implement his concepts in order to interpret political violence in ways that question commonly held assumptions on the subject matter (Fuchs 2004; Ibrahim-Kudelich 2007; Schneider 2007, 2008). Accordingly, Fuchs’ argues that a system-theory perspective helps to demystify essentialist interpretations of terrorist violence (2004, 116). These remarks resonate with the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and conceptual programme of recent attempts at recalibrating terrorism studies, namely the critical project of CTS (Jackson et al. 2009; Jackson et al. 2011, 46-47). CTS’ emphasis on the discursive nature of terrorism-related knowledge claims and the social construction of the concept mirror central assumptions of Luhmann’s radically constructivist and consequently non- or even anti-foundationalist epistemological programme (Knodt 1995, xxxiii-xxxiv; Luhmann 1998, 35). These latter aspects of Luhmannian thought are currently being re-discovered in readings that transcend orthodox interpretations which usually depict his approach as inherently conservative, technocratic, and status-quo oriented, or as a structurally over-determined meta-theory in the worst positivist tradition (King and Schütz 1994, 283; Rasch 1997, 112).23 Radical approaches emphasise the metacritical24 and radically discomforting aspects of his social theory and suggest that taking these into account might prove extremely productive in encounters with critical thought (La Cour and Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013; Moeller 2012).

This chapter argues that this also holds true for critical approaches to the study of terrorism: while CTS has been prolific in analysing how terrorism is constructed in discourse (Jackson 2005, 2009; Raphael 2009; Toros and Gunning 2009), few conceptually oriented contributions ask how practices of clandestine political violence and their legitimisation

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23 This contemporary re-appropriation has its predecessors in attempts at reading Luhmann’s social theory as critical social analysis within the Anglophone Academia, highlighted in William Rasch and Cary Wolfe’s introduction to a special issue of Cultural Critique on Luhmann (1995).

24 Hans-Georg Moeller’s term ‘metacritical’ refers to conceptual thought that asks after the conditions of possibility of ‘Critical’ thinking, especially in the Frankfurt tradition, and their unintentional conservatism (2012, 31). In a nutshell, Luhmann contends that critical approaches with a capital C rely on the old-European idea of an enlightened position outside of society from which it is possible to criticise society and hence fail to fully embrace the consequences of the reflexive epistemology they propagate (Luhmann 1994b, 28; 1995b, 177; 2002b).
(re)produce temporarily stabilised discursive fields. Luhmann’s specific notion of communication, which is central to his social theory and his understanding of social movements, contributes to establishing and elaborating a ‘discourse theory of political violence’ in the latter sense (Apter 1997b, 14). As the previous chapter already discussed in detail, conventional studies of political violence and terrorism that highlight its communicative elements also do not address violent communication as discursive (re)production. While it has been argued above that elements of these communicative approaches are highly relevant for understanding the logics of terrorist campaigns, they fail to account for ways in which strategies of political communication by violence shape their authors’ respective realities. When interpreting clandestine political violence as an extraordinary, exceptional form of strategic instrumental reasoning, authors emphasise that it loses, at some point and to quite some degree, its grounding in socio-political realities. Therefore, any reference to a specific communicative rationality of politically violent behaviour almost always comes with extensive qualifications: as a communication strategy, clandestine political violence seems inevitably doomed to fail since it realises the communicative double-bind introduced in the previous chapter (see point 2.1.2, p. 38).

By contrast, approaches that draw on SMTs de-exceptio nalise clandestine political violence by relating its emergence to the context of larger protest cycles (della Porta 2013, 15; Gunning 2009). In establishing this context, SMTs highlight the importance of social reconstructions of conflictive realities for understanding conflict escalation (Jackson et al. 2011, 214). While these approaches implicitly also develop logocentric perspectives on violent politics, the particular notion of communication limits the conceptual reach. Theories of protest framing argue that the discursive reconstruction of social realities into highly selective interpretations which reframe socio-political critique into dichotomies and scandalise politics to mobilise potential discontent in ‘politics of signification’ (Snow and Benford 1988). However, effective framing is also strictly constrained by cultural compatibility, empirical credibility, and the logical consistency of protest frames according to these perspectives (Caiani et al. 2012, 13-15). Means of articulation establish further limits to the success of framing: while the use of disruptive repertoires characterises social movements, the systematic and strategic use of violence represents a strict barrier to socially acceptable articulations of dissent (della Porta 2013, 14).
Like communication approaches in terrorism studies, and contrary to Luhmann’s differentiational understanding of the term, SMTs assume that communication ‘discloses’ socially constructed facts: communication is understood in instrumental terms as the transmission of meaning or information, no matter how particular and distant from common experiences the transferred meanings are. Emphasising the functional and instrumental aspects of (violent) communications, both approaches aptly develop its problematic or even dysfunctional aspects from different perspectives. However, terrorism studies as well as SMTs are less well equipped to conceptualise how communication works as a medium of social differentiation. In this latter understanding of the term, anti-systemic movements as well as clandestine groups (re)construct themselves in and by communications – violent or otherwise. A communication theory of terrorism in this sense should ask how an ‘inversion of meaning’ related to the emergence of clandestine political violence from movement contexts enables and stabilises the (re)construction of collective identities (Apter 1997b, 14-15). It is argued here that inversionary discourse transforms original themes, goals and principles of protest communication according to dynamics and dimensions which follow the logics of establishing and maintaining the boundaries of each and any social system, albeit in particular ways. The following sections develop the relevant conceptional vocabulary to address systemic processes in a close reading of Luhmann’s writing on protest and social movements.

3.2 Observing social movements

A second form of selecting significant conflicts is more difficult to discern because it operates more independently of official structures. ... Sociology’s standard collective term for this is ‘social movement.’ But the concept of movement does not reveal much theoretically. (Luhmann 1995a, 398)

At first glance, this statement on the potential significance of ‘the concept of movement’ for a theory of society confirms conventional wisdom that Luhmann neglects social movements. As the quote fundamentally challenges established sociological categories in an apodictic voice, it suggests that his highly abstract, functional approach is

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25 ‘Disclose’ serves as a synonym for ‘communication’ in the sense of *miteilen*.  
26 In a similar vein, Michel Wieviorka’s focuses on the emergence of armed resistance out of social movement contexts and highlights the complex nature of the shift from movement to violent ‘anti-movement’. He conceptualises this transition not only as an attempt to pursue original goals by other means, but also argues that it inverts the meaning of this goals significantly (2004, 61-62).
not interested in the potential consequences of protest, dissent, and mobilisation for society. However, this observation is neither the endpoint of Luhmann’s involvement in debates concerning protest and movement nor is it understandable without contextualisation within his wider theoretical architecture. Firstly, it is quoted from the first formulation of Luhmannian social systems theory after the autopoietic turn towards a theory which contends that society and its subunits, interrelated social systems, consist only ‘in and by communication’ (Andersen 2003, 63). The ‘Outline of a General Theory’, as the caption of the German edition of his ‘Social Systems’ reads (Luhmann 1987a), establishes the frame of reference according to which Luhmann’s theoretical edifice evolves thereafter (idem 1998, 11-15). In subsequent work he elaborates on concepts, understandings, and spaces of movement within and for his framework (idem 1989, 1993b, 1998, 2002a; Luhmann and Hellmann 1996).

Secondly, the quoted statement denies the conceptual relevance of social movements only if approached in decontextualized and superficial ways. In contrast, it is argued here that this claim represents an expression of Luhmann’s way of addressing widely used but vague concepts. In developing his theoretical approach, he frequently starts from challenging notions and connotations which originate in the self-descriptions of society and its sub-units. Sociology, philosophy, political thought, or (political) economy and their respective terminologies provide, for that matter, nothing but different forms of societal self-descriptions on a different, supposedly higher level of reference (Luhmann 1987b, 92-93). Luhmann argues that such conceptualisations have to be observed accordingly to become theoretically more meaningful. As social systems manifest themselves in concepts, these very concepts (re)produce society even when they seemingly describe or even contravene societal interests. This is, for instance, the way in which Luhmann approaches the term conflict and its importance within a theory of society (1995a, 388). Consequently, he opposes any conflict theory of society that supposes the possibility of solving societal conflicts for good. Rather, he argues that conflictive issues become conditioned within the process of conflict reproduction and in turn condition society. The solution of a particular conflict is only a contingent by-product that changes how and where basic societal contradictions are actualised (ibid., 393-397). In a different theoretical language, the re-configuration of the observer perspective behind such shifts in the frame of reference could also be described as deconstruction. Familiar concepts, in this instance social movements,
are analytically dismantled which in turn allows for their reconstruction within a distinct and potentially more meaningful theoretical framework (Luhmann 1993a, 770). The relatively disparate theoretical status of social movement research accordingly calls for discussing its conceptualisations within a systems theory perspective on protest (Hellmann 1996, 30-31).

Luhmann’s approach, hence, does not claim to offer the only possible and true account of social reality, but to allow for instructive observations on every manifestation of the social. Michael King and Anton Schütz refer to the apparent ambiguity between grand theoretical design and insight into its epistemological limitations when characterising Luhmannian thought by ‘the simultaneous presence of ambition and modesty’ (1994, 261). His method is based on de-familiarising and challenging habitual terminologies of the social and political sciences. In this regard, he argues that social systems do not consist of human beings or their actions but ‘produce and reproduce themselves by communication alone’ (Andersen 2003, 77). This specific way of conceptualising the social, it is argued here, is equally relevant for re-thinking communication approaches to clandestine political violence beyond instrumental understandings of the term. Communication represents the constitutive element of all social forms whose pivotal function is to produce and process meaning. Consequently, the focus of a communicative approach to terrorism centres upon the discursive reproduction of specific meanings by protest and fundamental dissent according to Apter’s theoretical programme.

Non-linearity is repeatedly emphasised in Luhmann’s work as a main feature of a theoretical architecture that aims at understanding societal historicity, evolution, and differentiation as non-linear and essentially contingent, that is, neither inevitable nor accidental (1995a, lii; 1998, 1138-1139). Distinctions, decisions, and exclusions made while communicating in society and conceptualising societal communication could have taken place otherwise. Yet, since these selective events occurred in specific ways, they establish trajectories that influence which opportunities for action and theorising about these

27 Moeller dubs his interpretation of the tension as Luhmann’s ‘ironic reason’ (2012, 113).
28 Consequently, human beings are not conceptualised as the authors of communication but as necessary reference points for addressing communication to a concrete subject. In line with Luhmann’s programmatic statement that one of the fundamental fallacies in thinking about the social is to insist that society consists of human beings (1998, 24), Moeller calls this re-positioning of the role of the human from the centre of society into its environment ‘a fourth insult to human vanity’ (Moeller 2012, 28).
29 ‘Social evolution’ is conceptualised in strictly non-deterministic terms as a contingent, historical and recursive process without teleology or causal determination (Luhmann 1998, 413-431).
opportunities remain open. As Hans-Georg Moeller emphasises and Luhmann freely admits, there is no single zero point within this approach: most of the terminological and conceptual innovations upon which Luhmann’s account of society relies mutually presuppose each other, rendering the theoretical argument slightly inaccessible (Moeller 2012, 11-12). At the same time, Andersen emphasises that the explicitly non-linear theory design allows for and even requires choosing one of many possible pathways into his thought when analysing concrete social phenomena; these decisions in turn influence the direction of the analysis (Andersen 2003, 64).

An attempt to develop a Luhmannian perspective on political violence and political communication, or rather, on clandestine political violence as political communication, therefore has to account for the ways in which it takes essential conceptual decisions. Furthermore, re-enacting Luhmann’s entire theoretical architecture is not a necessary precondition for approaching its specific notion of social movements. Rather, the conceptual perspective developed in this chapter takes Luhmann’s communication-based understanding of social movements as a point of departure and unpacks its theoretical background where and as required.

The terms ‘protest movement’ and ‘social movement’ are used virtually interchangeably in Luhmann’s work; social movements communicate protest or a specific modern form of conflict (Luhmann 1996c, 201-201). This form is immediately contingent upon the current state of social evolution and addresses its unintended but inevitable consequences, above all harmful social and environmental impacts and the lack of political responsibility (Luhmann 1998, 859). Protest articulates, as it were, the dysfunctional aspects of functional differentiation. However, the difference between functional and dysfunctional only makes sense with reservations within Luhmannian lexicography, which does not follow Parsonian structural-functionalist thought (Moeller 2012, 10). The function of social systems solely resides in their ability to organise communications or to ‘give meaning to events which otherwise would be meaningless for society’ (King and Thornhill 2005, 9). Accordingly, functionality refers to the possibility of connecting communications to communications regardless of a system’s concrete ‘performance assessed on any other basis’ (ibid.). The indisputably harmful consequences of modern sociability nevertheless still fulfil functions

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30 This way into a ‘Luhmannian analysis’ also relates to the way in which Luhmann describes his conceptual approach as a series of interrelated theoretical decisions that openly address the decisions’ consequences (1998, 1138).
within society as they trigger meaningful communications (Luhmann 1992d, 22-23). Luhmann characterises protest as follows:

Protest communication happens inside society, otherwise it would not be communication, but as if it was from the outside. It considers itself the (good) society but this does not result in it protesting against itself. It speaks out of responsibility for society but against it. (Luhmann 1998, 853, original emphasis)

The dialectical relation between self-ascribed societal responsibility and antagonistic self-positioning towards the political mainstream expressed in this particular combination of ‘for’ and ‘against’ points to an intrinsic contradiction of protest. This description of protest communication as the form of social movements already relies on substantial and wide-ranging conceptual underpinnings which require unpacking. Furthermore, it raises two interrelated questions which will guide the argument of the following two sub-sections. First, we have to ask what protest is for the social system and specify its function within the complex society of late modernity. Second, we have to unpack the question of what qualifies protest as a social system and conceptualise the ‘essential variables’ of its systemic reproduction (Luhmann 1995a, 369).

3.2.1 Protest and society

In order to outline the significance of social movements within Luhmann’s conception of modern society it is crucial to reconstruct the necessary steps which lead from a theory of communication to a theory of a functionally differentiated ‘world society’. This term is both an observation of the condition of late modernity and at the same time a ‘problem formula’ for its inextricable contradictions (Luhmann 2002a, 220-227). As noted above, communication is according to Luhmann the elementary moment of society: all social formations are defined, temporarily structured, and limited by the fact that they communicate (Andersen 2003, 77). This perspective on society raises the question of how institutions and roles are established or establish themselves in difference to varying environments, reproducing self-generated differences as systemic identities (Luhmann 1995a, 9-11; 1998, 46-50). The term autopoiesis, which is borrowed from the post-Darwinian evolutionary biology of Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela, refers to the idea of an ‘autocatalectic’ or self-generated emergence of systems out of the interconnection of ephemeral elements or events. While these elements disappear once they have been actualised, their interrelation establishes, reproduces, and constantly transforms systemic
structures (Graham and McKenna 2000, 41-44). In this context, ‘reproduction’ and ‘to reproduce’ acquire a particular meaning.

Firstly, the prefix “re” refers to the idea that all products are themselves the result of production processes. Since Luhmann argues that the elements of autopoietic systems are produced in the operations of the system itself, reproducing means in a literal sense ‘production from products’ (Luhmann 1998, 97). From this, he infers a concept of ‘dynamic stability’: even if every act of reproduction always draws on the already produced, it also adds to the available stock of the produced and inevitably transforms the structure of the system (ibid., 52-53). Similarly to Giddens’ structuration theory (Giddens 1984), every systemic operation is considered as a cause and a consequence of the system at a given time. Hence, ‘reproduction’ does not imply a notion of stability, but rather of systemically conditioned, path-dependent permanent transformation. Only the reiterative connection of ephemeral communicative events incrementally establishes systemic history. By the same token, a set of specific requirements related to particular histories emerges which allows for identifying a communication as belonging to a specific systemic sub-setting (Luhmann 1994b, 29). Society and the social systems within it are the sediment of successive communicative events and ‘the basic sense of society’ is ‘communicative self-reference, expressed in a fashion highly specific to different social systems’ (Thornhill 2013, 268, original emphasis).

Consequently, Luhmann criticises communication theories, which argue on the basis of transmission-metaphors and related sender-recipient models, since they presuppose that it is possible to disclose meanings and ascribe communication failures to the ways in which messages are sent. More specifically, he contends that such models privilege the utterance of the message over the fact that its respective significance, the information or content, is only created by the addressee when information is perceived and not merely received. In Luhmann’s own words, the ‘metaphor of transmission locates what is essential about communication in the act of transmission, in the utterance’ which is ‘nothing more than a selection proposal’ (Luhmann 1995a, 139). Meaning or sense is communicatively constructed by drawing a particular distinction, in other words, by selecting a specific segment of all possible significations as actually meant by an utterance (Luhmann 1994b, 31).

Reinhart Koselleck describes the temporal structure of early modern politics in similar terms with the concept of ‘static mobility’ (Koselleck 2004, 22).
Chapter 3 - Clandestine Political Violence as Political Communication: A Luhmannian Perspective

33). A message can only offer a range of sense-making opportunities or potentials to select from, while the horizon of potential meanings represents the precondition for actualising specific significance (Andersen 2003, 73).

Luhmann defines meaning itself as the difference between the actual and the potential actualised in subsequent communicative events which establish factual, social and temporal modes of interrelating further communications: themes and contents that structure communicative events (Luhmann 1995a, 74-76). Since the systemic environment is ‘always already more complex than any and all systems’, reducing over-complexity within the system’s boundaries is the central reason for the emergence of systems (Rasch and Wolfe 2000, 22). The distinction between system and environment is thus the decisive moment of systemic emergence and replaces, according to Luhmann, all former modes of defining systems: the metaphor of constituent parts and a systemic whole, representing more than a mere sum of its components, or the difference between open and closed systems. Luhmann reformulates the basic programme of systems theory into the question of how the operational closure of autopoietic systems generates openness to irritations from its environment(s) (Luhmann 1992c, 28-30). The leading difference of his theoretical perspective is then how systems develop differential and – because there is no system without environment – relational self-descriptions in the process of re-producing systemic identities out of self-constructed elements (Luhmann 2002a, 16).

While the interrelation of communicative events as the essential social operation is necessarily a selective process (Luhmann 1987b, 77), each communicative event specifically consists in the synthesis of three analytically distinguished selection processes. Selecting a specific piece of ‘information’ determines what is communicated and which distinction can make a difference. Selecting how this information is communicated implies that its ‘utterance’ is in itself a selective process and, at the same time, a ‘selection proposal’ to be processed by the message’s addressee. What this proposal is about is selectively understood when communication occurs, as ‘understanding’ refers to linking further distinctions to the original ‘selection proposal’ but does not presuppose that certain communicated meanings are accepted (Andersen 2003, 76; Luhmann 1990b). Misunderstanding and dissent are hence

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32 In a formulation borrowed from Gregory Bateson, which constantly reappears throughout Luhmann’s work, information is defined as ‘a difference which makes a difference’ (Bateson 1972, 271-272; Luhmann 2000, 18-19).
‘understanding’ in the Luhmannian sense: they provoke further communications and open ‘modes of communication outside of normal constraints’ (Luhmann 1990a, 14-15). In this regard, communication is not limited to linguistically mediated encounters. It relates to any form in which meaning is selectively produced, uttered and understood as a trigger for further communications, including spoken and written language (King and Thornhill 2005, 12). Beyond that, Luhmann also contends that ‘violence is a first-rate communicative event’ (Luhmann 1998, 797).

Protest and social movements are in this context ways of disturbing the ‘normal constraints’ of established communicative conventions. Within the functionally differentiated society whose subsystems are highly selective and specialised, but therefore also deaf to the consequences of societal differentiation, these become more likely (Luhmann 1996c, 206). The constraints of social normality follow, according to Luhmann, from the ways in which communication and social differentiation are interwoven. Just as communication establishes a boundary between society and its environment, specific communications establish distinct societal subsystems that constitute environments for each other. Particular communications are thematically connected and ordered by different modes to anticipate reactions (Luhmann 1998, 597-598). To process the reciprocal insecurity of expectations, the double contingency which is the underlying condition of possibility of any social situation, subsystems establish specific codes that mirror the basic linguistic distinction between yes and no (Luhmann 2004, 321). In so doing, the crossing of a binary distinction becomes possible. Rejection does not end communication but further propels it. The falsification of a truth claim, for instance, facilitates new knowledge claims within the scientific system according to its operational code ‘true or false’. The rejected truth becomes the base for further communications and reproduces science as a social system (Luhmann 1992c, 370-371). Transitions of power from one actor to another actualise the differentiation of politics according to the distinction between holding a legitimate claim to power or not, reaffirming that the political is distinguished from other social systems including law and economy (Luhmann 2002a, 88-91).

Codes as such do not have a preferential value and cannot be applied to themselves. Strictly speaking there are, for instance, no absolute criteria for scientifically defining the truth of a truth claim across time, but only epistemological programmes consisting of theories, methods, approaches, and paradigms, sub-divided into disciplines. Furthermore,
the distinction as such cannot be true or false, it simply is; it therefore needs constant redefinition by programmes which are in themselves subject to permanent revision (Luhmann 1989, 38-42). The excluded third is hence re-introduced to allow for the code’s meaningful application: a system-specific rationale or ‘contingency formula’ establishes its validity conditions and programmes allow for allocating preferences to the code values (Luhmann 1998, 362 and 470). In the legal system, the general norm of justice paradoxically cannot rely on any external standards for its legitimisation but establishes a self-validating claim of equal treatment before the law (Moeller 2012, 134). This formula in turn depends upon conditional programmes like legal positivism or constitutional supremacy which occupy the void left by the impossibility of an external referent (King and Thornhill 2005, 64-65). In politics, legitimacy fulfils a similar function when postulating that the use of force is legitimate to regulate the violent potential of a sub-system based on power inequalities. Legitimacy rests on paradoxical foundations similar to its legal equivalent as it presupposes what it supposedly establishes in the first place (Luhmann 2002a, 122-123).

In so doing, society and its subsystems achieve a high degree of functional specialisation and differentiation. The respective societal sub-units react to specific irritations and produce highly specific information about their systemic environment, but cannot import information from this environment (Luhmann 1990a, 3-4). By the same token, subsystems remain indifferent to all irritations which the code and its programming exclude. If law is, for instance, employed as a resource to address political problems, the political question of which collectively binding decision is to be preferred is reformulated as a question of legality. Options of decision are bound to the distinction between legal and illegal while the question loses its political edge (Luhmann 1989, 72-73). In a similar vein, all attempts to deal with political violence within the framework of criminal law face the problem that the difference between the criteria licit and illicit is ill-suited to decide what constitutes the political nature of a political crime in the first place. Consequently, Luhmann rejects the idea of social integration and the possibility of representing society through one overarching principle, identified with a specific way of organising meaning, but emphasises the concept of difference (Kessler 2012, 80; Rasch and Wolfe 2000, 19). Even though functional systems cannot communicate directly across systemic boundaries, they often develop structural couplings which emerge, in Mathias Albert’s words, whenever a subsystem ‘generates models of other systems in the environment within itself’ in order to
react to the external world (Albert 1999, 249) and constitute internal representations of systemic environments (Luhmann 2000, 104). These limited ways of referring to systemic environments without interrelating with them organise how information is internally produced in temporarily stabilised forms (idem 1996e, 166). Such mechanisms include the institution of taxation at the intersection between politics and economy, a constitution which operates at the junction between the political and legal system or research grants which generate interfaces between politics and science. Structural couplings partially fill the gap left void by the impossibility of social integration through universal representation. They establish factual interfaces, but at the same time create the potential for disproportional irritations and conflicts between partial and contradictory systemic logics (idem 1998, 779-788).

The co-occurrence of differentiation and coupling, of functional autonomy and factual interdependence, and of self-substitutive subsystems that mutually presuppose each other is, according to Luhmann, the expression of the inherent ambiguity of modern functionally differentiated society. It is characterised by a duality: on the one hand, ‘complex systems require a high degree of instability to enable on-going reaction to themselves and their environment, and they must continually reproduce this instability’ (Luhmann 1995a, 501). Destabilisation is a precondition for the ability to select new forms of relating to other systems and reacting to profound changes within society’s environment, not least those caused by the problematic effects of social evolution (Luhmann 1998, 795). When adapting anticipations in the face of irritation caused by frustrated expectations, functional systems are engaged in processes of ‘cognitive learning’: they revise programmes, re-adjust self-descriptions and produce new forms of knowledge about the environment (Luhmann 1995a, 320). On the other hand, systems cannot develop meaningful structures when they try to react to each and any irritation. Highly specialised functional systems develop a highly selective ability to irritate themselves while being non-responsive to most disturbances. Therefore, minimal irritation in limited problem areas can result in disproportional levels of internal destabilization and hectic attempts to re-stabilize the system (Luhmann 1998, 770). While society is, under conditions of functional differentiation, unable to control the selection processes of its sub-units and to guarantee its unity by referring to universal principles, it still requires some semantic reassurance. In this context, security increasingly becomes the central social problem. It is re-interpreted as protection from the unintended
consequences of choice within functionally autonomous subsystems. This idea of security is related to a perceived ‘sum of inviolable achievements’ that constitutes the basis for ‘status quo as the new security formula’ (Luhmann 1992d, 23). Here, status quo is not just facticity but gains moral currency as an overarching problem solving formula. In the absence of other definitions of society’s purpose, status quo has to be safeguarded legally and politically, for instance by emphasising and managing difficulties to implement change through the technization of problem frames (ibid., 23-24).

Luhmann denominates such forms of dealing with insecurity and potentially frustrated expectations as ‘normative’: insisting on the normative value of an assumed status quo demonstrates incapacity or unwillingness to learn by changing the patterns of expected behaviour and aims at maintaining norms counterfactually (Luhmann 1998, 638). ‘Cognition’ signifies in this context the ability to generate and productively implement instabilities to counter tendencies towards dogmatism and orthodoxy inherent to normative reactions to the over-complex social environment of functionally differentiated society (Luhmann 1995a, 399-401). Communicative autopoiesis depends on normative operational closure and cognitive openness to irritations. Both elements presuppose each other: too much counter-factual insistence results in over-integrated, ossified structural patterns which become unable to adapt and respond to challenges, too much irritability impinges on the ability to form temporarily stable structures (Paterson 2006, 16). Given the inherently ambiguous foundation of functionally differentiated modernity already discussed, this balance is by definition precarious. Hence, the over-arching importance of the status quo as security formula increases and results in a general tendency towards over-privileging the normative. While the stabilisation of counter-factual, normative expectations is traditionally the social function of law (King and Thornhill 2005, 40), functional differentiation also implies that other social systems, above all the political subsystem, become increasingly unresponsive to changes in their environment (Luhmann 2002a). Crisis, social movements, and protest create necessary opportunities for cognitive learning if they cause irritations which cannot be ignored. In so doing, they contribute to ‘regularly de-dogmatising and newly adapting the system’ (idem 1992d, 27).

Crucial conceptual decisions in Luhmann’s communicative theory of society have been introduced and developed in this sub-section. As a means of differentiating specific societal sectors within the over-arching complexity of a non-representable social totality,
communication produces meaning in selective, relational, and iterative operations. The reduction of complexity, which renders the situation of double contingency more predictable to expectations, creates new complexities which require further reductions of complexity – changing conditional programmes and slowly evolving contingency formula. Consequently, increasing differentiation results in the strange duality of a need for irritation and longing for semantic reassurance. The balance between normative, counter-factual insistence and cognitive, innovative adaptation shifts towards the normative: the responsivity of societal subsystems to the problems generated by social evolution decreases in tendency. While protest movements in themselves are not considered as cognitive actors as will be discussed in the next sub-section they still fulfil cognitive functions for modern society by irritating over-integrated, non-responsive functional systems (Luhmann 1993b, 143).

3.2.2 Protest as a conflictive social system

Luhmann introduces social movements to his system typology, albeit with some reservations, after re-formulating his formal theory of social systems into a general and therefore also historical social theory (Luhmann 1998, 13). One of the main reasons to reassess the theoretical significance of the concept is related to aspects in the contemporary history of Germany related to recent protest cycles. Specifically, he contends that NSM which appear during the 1960s and gain influence and importance throughout the 1970s and 1980s represent new and different ways of observing the consequences of late modernity (idem 1996a, 65-66). Movements articulate societal concerns and perform society in their communications but are neither mere interactional systems nor just different forms of organisation (idem 2002a, 315). The communication of protest does not presuppose permanent physical presence in interactional systems. It is also not based on formalised membership criteria or delimited to making and communicating decisions which define organisation according to Luhmann (idem 2006, 61-69). Rather, movements draw on, combine, and re-interpret both aspects of systematicity in new and particular ways as action resources when addressing society in new and particular forms (idem 1996d, 186).

Luhmann argues that communicating across the boundaries of specific (sub)systems requires representing protest issues as decisions for or against a specific solution to a
perceived problem. Furthermore, cross-systemic communication presupposes that protest activity can be attributed to a quasi-personalised and concrete entity or organisation; in so doing, protest is often negatively defined against particular politics which are impersonated by a set of key-figures or spokespersons. Mobilising potential discontent and concern into protest events, which are characterised by the manifest presence of participants in interactions, also relies on structures that articulate and channel issues. Therefore protest relies at least on an organisational nucleus to be heard in society (Luhmann 2006, 388-390). Furthermore, only protest interactions can validate the claimed societal relevance of protest themes. Without bodies on the ground, the most sophisticated protest infrastructure remains futile. In other words, interactional protest events depend on organisational resources while the credibility of organised protest also depends on powerful sequences of interaction. Social movements are equally contingent upon moments of interaction and organisation but employ both elements in ways which transcend their usual understanding: interactions or communications in and by physical presence explicitly aim at convincing the absent and organising aims at overcoming the limits of conventional structures to organise decisions (idem 1996c, 202-203). Movements hence establish, according to Luhmann, a third theoretically not yet fully developed category besides interaction and organisation in the typology of societal communication across and outside established social subsystems (idem 1998, 813).

Accordingly, protest articulates first and foremost the difference between those who protest and the entities or functional contexts against which their protest is directed; this guiding difference represents the form of protest (Luhmann 1998, 854-855). However, drawing a distinction in this way is imperfect, in a specific sense, as Luhmann argues that it fails to fully establish a distinction in the sense of George Spencer-Brown’s calculus of forms. It does not effectively distinguish between marked and unmarked space in ways which mark a border that can be crossed: protest presupposes its opposite in a very literal sense and does not just presuppose an unmarked, indistinct other. It relies on specific societal subsystems and their performance, above all the political system and its function to achieve and execute collectively binding decisions, but also the legal sub-system that can challenge political decisions or outlaw protest behaviour, to be heard within society as anything else than mere noise (King and Thornhill 2005, 70). In so doing, social movements

33 On the concept and its significance within Luhmann’s theory see Andersen (2003, 64-71).
communicate within and with society ‘as if it was from the outside’ and try to mobilise society against itself (Luhmann 1992b, 142). Luhmann describes NSM as extremely heterogeneous phenomena. Participants often primarily voice indirect concerns about underlying political and environmental problem; furthermore, the issues articulated by protest are too diverse to understand movement dynamics only according to the issues which they address (Luhmann 1996c, 204).

Nevertheless, the themes and issues of protest matter: as the form of protest generates a quasi-code that mirrors the strictly binary codes of societal subsystems imperfectly, social movements employ protest themes as functional equivalents to system-specific conditional programmes. While qualifications to central communicative mechanisms introduced in the last section might appear as minor differences, they are still significant. Inasmuch as the distinction between for and against is obsolete without an adversary, it remains limited to a temporal structuration immediately related to protest issues; insofar as issues in turn fail to formalise into comprehensive conditional programme, they prevent that protest communication departs from this relatively simple scheme of attributing a distinction into an alternative bid for power according to a different political programme. Specific protest movements hence remain in tendency temporally limited phenomena, but may influence the emergence of a subculture of protest.

Luhmann contends that ‘protest is not an end in itself – neither for protest movements. They require an issue for which to campaign’ (Luhmann 1998, 856). This account does not imply that the issues, which trigger protest and potentially stabilise into specific themes that constitute the conditions for the temporary continuity of social movements, lack comprehensible and factual reasons. Rather, it suggests that the identification of specific causes that inform social critique represents an auto-performance (an Eigenleistung) of protest communication: occasions to oppose and related causal narratives are selected and identified by the movement itself and in turn define its identity (idem 1993b, 127). In so doing, movements address heterogeneous, contentious aspects of functional differentiation in drastic and immediately accessible ways. Consequently, the analytical depth of campaign politics is limited; the reaction to perceived risks prevails over the cognitive processing of problems. Problems that resonate with prefigured scripts are dramatized into unbearable conditions or extreme risks to emphasise why protest is justified and levelled at the proper target (idem 1998, 853-854).
If topics remain controversial and socially relevant over a longer period of time they tend to develop a discrete complexity of their own and depart from initial causes. In this context, themes are either linked to prefigured ideological rationalisations or crystalize into sufficiently developed and distinctive issue-related protest semantics which still remain vague enough to allow for diverse articulations, not unlike the contingency formula of social subsystems (Luhmann 1996c, 211). The semantics of ‘the alternative’ are a textbook example, but self-descriptions like anti-authoritarian or revolutionary, which are not overtly specific and do not rely on singular problem frames, fulfil analogous functions (idem 1990c, 140-141).

According to a social systems perspective, protest articulates distinct but heterogeneous topics that have hitherto remained under the radar of society and its subsystems as problems which urgently require action. In addition, social movements emerge when activists identify and introduce problem-schemata and preferred solutions to society by protest communication (Luhmann 1998, 860). While movements are therefore operationally closed in the basic distinction of protest, they have to remain thematically open. Movements might take up different issues, form alliances or segregate themselves into more specific sub-units or movement organisations. Protest communications are only successful if the themes they address resonate within societal subsystems, above all the political, and become gradually included into their respective conditional programmes. For the continuity of concrete movements, as the next sub-section will discuss in more detail, success is, however, double-edged and depends on parameters outside of participants’ reach. Success presupposes first and foremost that movements develop ways of reaching beyond the already mobilised protest strata or, in Luhmannian terms, establish structural couplings. Public opinion embodied in the mass media fulfils this function; protest therefore tends to enact ‘pseudoevents’, that is, spectacular performances specifically tailored to the requirements of media coverage (idem 1996c, 211-212). Reliance on media attention and resonance with public opinion, in turn, imply dependencies which delimitate the leeway of protest repertoires and their articulation (idem 2000, 77-78; 2002a, 316).

While social movements are situated outside the institutional structure of functional differentiation, observations on the reproduction of movement contexts in Luhmann’s reading of protest as a social system also highlight that protest communications still interact with and depend on societal subsystems. Movements practise politics consciously in extra-
ordinary ways without enacting the established code of the political system or restraining themselves to common modes of accessing power. Rather, they call from a peripheral position upon the political centre and question its prerogative on legitimate, universally binding decisions. Movements attempt to influence the centre towards taking up concerns and acting according to descriptions of problems and solutions in protest communication by creating noise at the periphery of the political (Luhmann 1998, 853). In so doing, social movements also articulate the specific form in which the political system is internally stratified according to a distinction between centre and periphery. Movements form part of the ‘new periphery’ of politics which raises issues that are not yet included into the conditional programmes of central political institutions, therefore providing important inputs (idem 2002a, 318).

Beyond that, movements also challenge the political establishment and its self-assumed centrality within the decision-making apparatus in a very profound sense. Protest forces the political system to reconfirm its central function, if necessary by a display of physical force, the ultimate brute resource of power, by reclaiming the right to voice concerns that matter politically outside the corridors of power and their well-established functional separation with disruptive means (Schneider 2008, 183-184). In so doing, the latent non-negotiable basis of modern politics becomes manifest and thus also vulnerable: the claimed dual monopoly of the political system on decision making and the use of force, embedded in the political contingency formula ‘legitimacy’ (Luhmann 2002a, 47-48). Whenever protest increases significantly, these interrelated claims have to be defended against contesters who do not enact the specific code of the political, the distinction between having and not having legitimate power, but a moralised sense of urgency. By identifying specific problems from an outside position of powerlessness, movements justify their moralised politics and challenge the legitimacy of political power itself (Schneider 2007, 128).

Encounters between challengers of the prevailing mode of social control and authorities, who reaffirm it during protest events, have a latent escalation potential. If protest remains unheard, it might increase disruptive communication tactics; if it is perceived as too disruptive, policing techniques might escalate and provoke counter-reactions (Luhmann 1996c, 204; Schneider 2008, 184). Repeated interactions foster reciprocal attributions and establish conflict history which absorb resources and generate
mutually exclusive solidarities (Luhmann 1995a, 389-391). The reiterated relational enactment of conflict during protest events thus produces and reproduces social movements as social systems with temporary and selective historicity. Particular systemic history, evolving over time and for a time, results simultaneously from the distinction protest movements draw and from the outcome of encounters (idem 1995a, 401-402; 1996b, 111-113). While developing into conflict systems, movements internally replicate the centre-periphery-distinction of the political system and establish concentric circles of core activists, followers, and sympathisers (idem 2002a, 316). The participation-oriented and diffuse structure of movements typically implies that these categories are fluid and do not establish strict hierarchies between militants but remain open to input from every level (Ahlemeyer 1995, 130-132). However, central activists might develop a self-understanding as vanguards over time and claim to have authority to lead by virtue of their higher investment in and dedication to movement histories.

This sub-section has argued that protest and social movements represent, according to Luhmann, particular social systems established in and by conflict over the consequences of functional differentiation. Based on the basic distinction between opponents and status quo, second-coded by the themes and issues that trigger dissent and potentially resulting in a new counter-hegemonic contingency formula, protest is located in the periphery of the political system and feeds on its paradoxical foundation. When social conflicts persist over time either because protest issues remain unheard or transform into peripheral political programmes, the particular challenge protest poses to the political system results in a series of encounters between opponents and proponents of the status quo. Conflict histories emerge which shape perceptions on solidarities, but also the ways in which social movements develop signs of institutionalisation in ways that mirror the internal differentiation of the political sub-system. Having discussed the theoretical foundations of Luhmann’s particular take on protest and social conflict, the argument now turns to relating these considerations to the emergence of clandestine political violence from protest cycles.
3.3 Observing clandestine political violence

As social systems, conflicts are autopoietic, self-reproducing unities. Once they are established, one can expect them to continue rather than to end. (Luhmann 1995a, 394)

As the discussion of macro-level approaches in the study of terrorism in the previous chapter has highlighted, conceptualising the conditions of emergence of clandestine political violence usually relies on some form of causal narrative (see above point 2.2.1). Earlier studies are dominated by mono-directional and relatively simple causal models which often champion the occurrence of terrorist violence to fundamental societal transformations which fail to deliver socio-politically and economically (Bonanate 1979; Steinert 1984; Targ 1988). Criticising these approaches as too simple and therefore misleading, more recent analysis contends that terrorism and its emergence represent multi-causal, complex social syndromes. Nevertheless, authors still insist that the search for root causes is key for making sense of clandestine political violence if multiple, fuzzy causalities are appropriately taken into consideration. More often than not this results in lists of vaguely related factors that might influence whether terrorist violence emerges if further conditions apply and deliberately establish only weak causal claims (Bjørgo 2005; Boyns and Ballard 2004, 22-23; McAllister and Schmid 2011, 262-262). As the quote above indicates, Luhmann suggests a radically different perspective when arguing that conflicts are among other things characterised by ‘the almost baseless quality of their beginnings’ (Luhmann 1995a, 391).

Consequently, some of the attempts to employ Luhmannian social and political concepts for making sense of terrorism which are discussed in detail in the next sub-section contend that the retrospective rationalisation of conflict causes often influences conflict dynamics more than its seemingly objective causes (Japp 2007, 173). Accordingly, causes for the emergence and persistence of conflictive constellations are constructed in descriptions and self-description of and within the conflict system in relation to perceptions of a larger social reality. If violence represents a ‘first-rate communicative event’ as was argued above (see point 3.2.1, p. 83), we can also expect that violent action attracts further communicative events and triggers discourses which aim at rationalising it. Advocates of the status quo are tempted to address even minor violent breaches of norms for stated political reasons as manifest threats to public order. Counter-hegemonic contenders in turn tend to
reinterpret any altercation as preventative self-defence against a totalising and repressive system which aims at absolute control of the lifeworld. Discursive struggles over meaning are especially prone to occur when violence for political ends is re-introduced into specific settings: socio-political contexts which are characterised by the sublimation of direct political violence into procedurally and institutionally highly regulated forms (Luhmann 2002a, 55-58).

Western democracies in particular adhere to a Weberian model of modern statehood in which the procedural legitimacy of political power relies upon the ideal of a governmental monopoly on the use of violent, coercive means. This also implies that force, as violence is usually dubbed when it is governmentally sanctioned, is not employed on a regular basis. Violence is no longer an immediate medium of communication but a symbolic generalization or a symbiotic symbol that guarantees political power (Schneider 2007, 136-137). Only if non-use of violent means by the state remains the rule, the state’s monopoly of force, which historically has been established to control the violent potential of ubiquitous power inequalities in the first place, remains legitimate (Luhmann 1979, 146-152; 2002a, 46-48). Accordingly, forcing the state to lay bare the violent foundations of its claim to power in reactions to non-state political violence is the communicative angle of clandestine politically violent groups.

If and when this explains the communicative potential of using political violence outside and against the constraints of Weberian conceptions of power and statehood theoretically, it also strictly confines a strategy of political communication by counter-hegemonic, clandestine political violence. Whenever power is thrown back to its symbolic foundation in coercion and violence, it loses some of the selective capabilities which constitute the essence of power as a medium of political communication (Luhmann 1979, 112). The attempt to unveil the violent core of political domination by provoking reactions involved in the political project of armed struggle accordingly risks narrowing the meaning of politics down (see below point 3.4.5). As politics and violence are interwoven but categorically separate elements of the legitimisation discourses of Western market democracies, the pressure to rationalise why and how both categories reconvene in the

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34 In a similar formulation, Karl W. Deutsch discusses relations between the potential to use force and the prerogative to resort to violence only in extra-ordinary circumstances as the political equivalent of reserve capital. Since institutionalised trust usually safeguards compliance, a widespread deployment of the coercive apparatus of the state already indicates a crisis of legitimacy (Deutsch 1966, 120-124).
concept of ‘armed politics’ (RZ 1979, 23) further increases. In this context, it is expected that the further removed from positions of socio-political influence violent groups are, the more stress they put on the active, discursive reconstruction of dissenting realities (Moss 1997, 85-88).

Accordingly, the conceptual argument developed in the following section contends that legitimisation discourse and self-ascribed normative positions against the hegemony of ordinary politics play an important role in the emergence, development and continuity of clandestine political violence as an action repertoire. Moreover, these aspects are interwoven: modes of continuation are related to the contexts from which clandestine, politically violent groups emerge. It is argued here that the paradoxical foundation of modern politics provides not only the conditions of possibility for clandestine political violence, but also regulates its inherent limitations. While conditions for the emergence and continuity of terrorism are conceptualised as interrelated, they are still not coextensive, for instance when origins and foundational generations are re-interpreted and mythologised in post-factual rationalisations of the armed struggle. Therefore, both aspects are analytically differentiated and theoretically approached in different sections. While the conceptualisation of the conditions of emergence follows from a close discussion of Luhmannian authors and Luhmann’s work, developing the thesis’ specific analytical propositions and strategy represents its original theoretical contribution and departs from just discussing the literature.

3.3.1 Luhmann concretised: Political violence in systems theory perspectives

As briefly outlined above (see point 2.2.1, p. 42) elements of Luhmannian theory focused on the role of protest and social movements within his notion of the political have inspired attempts at making sense of terrorism and political violence. Generally speaking, these contributions operate on a highly abstract level and focus on macro-theoretical, structural arguments by relocating the resurgence or resilience of irregular violence as a means of politics to Luhmann’s notion of a regionally differentiated and unevenly developed world society as the result of functional differentiation (Luhmann 1993a, 775; 1998, 806-812). Fuchs argues that terrorism is a communicative escalation within the functionally differentiated world society of late modernity that intervenes in complex communication
processes (2004). In a formulation that is reminiscent of Baudrillard’s remarks on the singularity of the attack (see above point 2, p. 30), violent interventions aim at causing a short circuit by disturbing the network of communications on which the world system relies (ibid., 49). Fuchs considers terrorism in itself as a social system and formulates a set of interrelated propositions that describe it as a ‘moment of society’ which thrives on the intrinsic contradictions of modern societal differentiation (ibid., 16). He argues that terrorism as such is not a political phenomenon but a parasite of the political system: it tries to exploit the political system’s inability to find solutions to urgent issues (ibid., 42). Consequentially, terrorism is understood according to Fuchs as an unanticipated consequence of societal evolution, a paradox functional system (ibid., 105-112).

In a similar vein, Japp redefines the search for root causes by theorising ways in which objectively existing grievances are articulated and argues that the mere existence of injustice fails to explain the occurrence of political violence (2007, 166-167). As a social system, conflict only becomes self-sustaining and self-perpetuating if it is retrospectively rationalised according to causal narratives whose margins are set by potentially conflicting differences within world society. In this context, reasons to resist by specific extraordinary means, for instance clandestine political violence, are related to perceived injustices and inequalities which are nevertheless real for conflict participants. Such narratives resonate within relevant constituencies and develop a momentum of their own if and when they manage to establish linkages to already existing ideological tales or conflict rationalisations crystallise into free-standing ideologies (ibid., 173-176). Japp argues that it becomes possible or even likely that a scheme of negative double contingency emerges if conflicts occur outside institutionalised problem-solving mechanisms: reasons for conflict are constructed in ways which facilitate an extremely convincing semantic reduction of complexity, the mutual recognition as antagonists (ibid., 182-187).

Drawing on the idea of a parasitic system, Schneider addresses terrorism as a specific instance of the principle that order emerges from noise (2007, 2008). Radical dissent which unsettles the functional codes of the political system but cannot be ignored activates secondary scripts for coping with paradoxical developments or noise. According to

35 This somewhat ambiguous terminology does not refer to pest-metaphors in the classical sense of being a nuisance that require efforts of extermination, but to a perspective focusing on the symbiotic aspects of relationships between host and parasite, or order and noise (Serres 2007).
secondary codes, the system tries to relocate protest issues or resorts to force: parasitic systems emerge which process information outside the usual communication channels of politics (idem 2007, 126-128). Widespread disruptive protest is, for instance, not treated as a political utterance but repressed as a public order problem. Reactions to policing result in the emergence of further parasitic systems including networks of legal aid and self-defence, but also clandestine violent groups. Although Schneider argues that the development of systemic parasites is contingent, some factors increase the likelihood of violent order from noise: the intensity of ‘noise’, the perceived weakness of fundamental opposition, and repressive overreactions that amplify drift (idem 2008, 183-185). In so doing, the institutionalisation of violent interaction systems depends on internally credible distinctions between friend and foe which remain open to situational re-interpretation (idem 2007, 132 and 144-147).

In a close reading of Luhmann’s concept of the political (Luhmann 2002a), Ibrahim-Kudelich discusses how political violence can be addressed as a form of organised protest that exploits the paradoxical foundation of modern ideas of power (2007, 196). Terrorism is understood as yet another configuration on the periphery of the political system, comparable to social movements and protest campaigns. While peripheral politics are characterised by volatile, issue-focused, and dynamic structures, they provide necessary inputs outside the entrenched and highly selective access options of the political system. Since organised violence represents, according to Ibrahim-Kudelich, the ultimate boundary of the legitimate order and protest alike, terrorism contests first and foremost established legitimacy claims (ibid., 201-204). He argues that this provocation becomes possible because of the central paradox of the political, its uneasy and precarious relation to physical force. In modernity, violence is the symbiotic symbol of power and only perceived as viable and legitimate if not deployed on a regular basis as ‘violence serves to exorcise violence’ (ibid., 210-211). Using political violence outside accepted boundaries not only questions this construction, but also actualises its central aporia. Whether the state over- or under-reacts to irregular political violence, it always reacts wrongly since its legitimacy claim rests on the ability to prevent political uses of violence with a minimal use of physical force (ibid., 216). Nevertheless, the chances that ‘terrorism’ articulates anything else than this paradox and is perceived as a problem for the political system are extremely limited (ibid., 221).
In sum, all four authors focus on different elements of Luhmannian thought to conceptualise the emergence of clandestine political violence which provide instructive insights, although all of them also argue on an abstract, macro-theoretical level. While Fuchs, Japp, and, to some degree, also Ibrahim-Kudelich relate the phenomenon to inherent contradictions within the functionally differentiated modern society, Japp and Schneider also identify concrete communicative mechanisms by which conflict systems emerge and reproduce. Ibrahim Kudelich, finally, develops a framework for understanding how and why the ways in which terrorism can gain currency within the discourses of the political also delimit its political reach, theoretically grounding Crenshaw’s observation on the strange duality of self-sustenance and self-defeat (see above, point 2.2.2, p. 46). Despite their differences, all four emphasise similar elements: semantic rationalisations of the beginnings and causes of conflict; strong delimitations which transform the political adversary into an existential enemy; and the combination of rigid othering, which establishes counter-hegemonic identities, with the necessity to keep closed identity claims open to ideational and situational reinterpretations.

3.3.2 Conditions of the emergence of clandestine political violence

Although the last section highlighted that causes of conflict do not constitute the immediate focus of Luhmannian approaches to political violence, allow for theoretically grounded propositions concerning the emergence of terrorist groups. These considerations are related here to the observation that success and failure are equally tragic for protest movements. If protest issues become incorporated into conventional politics, they only continue to trigger protest communication if fundamentally reformulated, for instance, into a radical critique of the status quo and its ways of appropriating protest themes. Otherwise, the formalisation and institutionalisation of social movements in tendency excludes the possibility of protest communication. If movements, by contrast, fail to set their topics on the agenda, they risk losing clout, credibility, and the support which is indispensable for organising interactional protest encounters (see above, point 3.2.2, p. 87). The institutional space of protest between interaction and organisation results from its double tragedy. Ephemeral, self-consuming protest communication can become institutionalised by formalising movement structures, but only at the cost of demobilisation.
Since the autopoiesis of specific protest movements is precarious, movements are only able to reproduce themselves temporarily as specific social systems (Luhmann 1993b, 128). In contrast, conflicts tend, according to Luhmann, towards continuation as conflict systems establish their own communicative regularities (Luhmann 1995a, 391-394). If declining mobilisation cycles leave latent, radicalised protest potentials, the continuation of protest by other means becomes more than just a distant possibility. As Schneider argues, intervening factors influence whether it materialises into clandestine political violence; these are above all the level and form of confrontation, violence, and oppression during the unfolding of protest events (Schneider 2008, 184-185). Furthermore, the very form of protest already resists a purely functional interpretation. In its challenge to the societal status quo from a presumed outside position, the form of protest entails latent tendencies toward developing into dichotomous logics of us and them.

In a similar vein conflict systems tend, according to Luhmann, towards over-integration beyond mere operational closure and react to frustrated expectations by counterfactual insistence. As participants increasingly reconstruct complex interaction patterns and social situations entirely according to the basic antagonism, conflicts are inclined to absorb multi-faceted roles and de-differentiate societal complexity. All socially relevant information is then processed first and foremost according to us-them-bifurcations (Luhmann 1995a, 389-390). Accordingly, social realities are exclusively interpreted in relation to conflict patterns which become self-reinforcing and stabilise conflict to a degree where it becomes hard to reintroduce non-antagonistic meanings (ibid., 390). Social movements, especially their more active and committed centres, might develop over time an equally over-integrated and totalising description of social realities according to which inherent dichotomies fully unfold and determine how reality is reconstructed.

Radicalising protest frames is a viable reaction when issues wear out or are taken up by functional subsystems, that is, when the double tragedy of success and failure materialises. Radicalisation has significant consequences as it diminishes opportunities to reach out and chances of generating wider consensus on protest themes (Luhmann 1993b, 36)

Della Porta associates similar observations with the notion of an ‘ideological group’ that requires ‘total commitment to a cause’ or total involvement in the group that represents a ‘greedy institution’ according to a term which she borrows from Lewis Coser’s conflict sociology (della Porta 1992a, 17-19). Coser develops the concept of ‘greedy institutions’, which ‘make total claims on their members, seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and attempt to reduce competing role claims’, in distinction to Erving Goffman’s concept of ‘total institutions’ (Coser 1974, 4-16).
The possibility of radicalisation presupposes, according to Luhmann, the development of self-descriptions that entail a concept or even a theory of movement which allows for transcending purely issue-related goals and for imagining movement as trajectory: especially if empirically un-defined, self-ascribed movement teleologies can ‘help to identify resistance and opponents in the present, to assemble readiness for conflict, and to provide direction for common action’ (idem 1995a, 401). In this context, radicalisation represents not a ‘condition of emergence’ for protest movements but can become a ‘condition of continuation’ (ibid.).

The ways in which movements transcend issue-related goals influence whether and with which consequences this ‘condition of continuation’ materialises. If movements draw on logically consistent, self-fulfilling, all-encompassing, and ideologically safeguarded interpretations of reality, which are theoretically compatible or conceptualise the movement’s role in history, an initially ill-defined teleology can evolve into a purposeful and unquestionable sense of mission (Luhmann 1987c). In this case, committed and convinced activists can address the transformation of movements into more formal political organisations, a common way of reacting to the inherent limitations of protest dynamics, as a betrayal of original movement goals. Such reactions potentially foster radical tendencies. If movements, on the other hand, develop independent problem frames in more open-ended forms, which can be integrated and transferred into different forms of articulating issues, similar dynamics are less likely to materialise. In this case, movement identities lack the cohesion of ideologically integrated self-descriptions. Teleology might amount to nothing more than influencing the political agenda (idem 1992a, 149-152).

While these considerations on the interrelations between the decline of specific social movements and the conditions of emergence of more radical action repertoires remain abstract, they speak to some of the theoretical arguments discussed in the last chapter. In particular, they resonate with della Porta’s and Scheerer’s respective conceptualisations of strong interdependencies between protest and its control in the radicalisation of action frames (see above, point 2.2.2, p. 51). However, the argument developed here also points beyond these approaches as it integrates material and immaterial aspects of escalation on the analytical meso-level, theorising ways in which dissident realities are socially (re)constructed. Dyadic moments of escalating protest dynamics are not denied but embedded into a wider framework which allows for
conceptualising the importance of ideology, or in Luhmannian terms conditional programmes in making sense of antagonistic encounters. Accordingly, the function of ideology in the emergence of clandestine political violence is reconceptualised in a dual sense: it is neither a root cause for developing deviant collective and individual identities nor a mere mobilisation resource. In other words, ideology is neither an independent factor nor just a semantic device, but the ways in which semantics, ideological convictions, processes, and socio-political realities interact have to be brought into focus (Luhmann 1987b). Action-reaction dynamics only become social facts by communicatively ascribing meaning to a series of events.

In the perspective developed here, pursuing protest movements’ original goals by other, more disruptive means is contingent upon specific ideologically supported constructions of reality. Consequently it is argued here according to Apter’s proposition of a ‘discourse theory of political violence’ (1997b, 14) that these constructs fulfil crucial functions in the occurrence of more radical action repertoires. In so doing, the conditions of emergence of clandestine political violence reflect polarising tendencies in the form of protest and the ways in which protest communication interacts with the political sub-system, challenging its legitimacy claims and provoking reactions of social control. If and when attempts at controlling protest foster protests’ inherent potential towards escalation, such over-reactions coincide with receding mobilisation, and a diffuse protest potential with an internally inclusive contingency formula is established during the cycle of protest and reaction, more disruptive action repertoires can emerge. Radicalisation as a condition of the continuity of conflict, then, depends on particular forms of dealing with frustrations, which follow from the double-bind of success and failure of protest according to a strong, ideologically grounded, and all-encompassing teleology of the movement.

That these remarks are still abstract is at least partly due to the specifically Luhmannian take on causal narratives introduced above. While the conditions of emergence of political violence describe a possibility space, they are ill-suited for conceptualising strong causal links. Parallel to ‘the almost baseless quality’ of conflict beginnings (Luhmann 1995a, 391), Luhmann contends that the occurrence of socio-political movements ultimately remains unpredictable and contingent within the possibility space of modern society (Luhmann 1987c, 168). By extension, the same applies to the root causes of political violence: why and when clandestine political violence occurs can only be determined in
hindsight. Accordingly, the second aspect of the question posed by Apter and Japp comes into focus as the more important and interesting one, namely how causal narratives or mythologies allow for the reproduction of clandestine political violence over time. Nevertheless, reflections on the conditions of emergence in this section already indicate which elements influence the persistence of clandestine political violence from a Luhmannian perspective. Ideologies or ways of interpreting and re-producing the world according to normatively rationalised distinctions and decisions matter, but as frames that mediate between politics and practices rather than as root causes of clandestine political violence.

3.4 Conditions of continuity of clandestine political violence

All that remains of it are the hideouts of terrorists and with these the hubris to be able to perform guilt as innocence. (Luhmann 1992a, 147)

The framework developed in the following subsections contends that a set of interrelated conditions allows for conceptualising different dimensions of whether, how, and in which ways politically violent, clandestine groups persist in explicitly non-revolutionary situations. Accordingly, conditions of continuity of clandestine political violence include: 1) the basic form of its communications; 2) ways in which groups draw a distinction between inside and outside; 3) modes of rationalising and justifying the fundamental difference according to ideological orientations; practises of 4) organising systemic boundaries and 5) establishing structural couplings; and 6) the limits of systemic learning pertaining to the decision to pursue political goals by violence. While this sub-section draws on three main sources, it also represents the core of the thesis’ original theoretical argument. In so doing, it develops conceptual propositions concerning the discursive foundations of all six differentiated but interrelated analytical dimensions arising from the previous discussions of theories in terrorism studies literature as well as Luhmann’s theory on conflict, protest, and social movement as developed in his own work and its readings.

Firstly, conceptualisations of social movements as expressions of conflict within and against society which are adapted to clandestine, politically violent groups provide a source for the section’s argument. Accordingly, it contends that particular incidents and societal
reactions to these represent interrelated communicative events, but also that political violence as such can be conceptualised as communication. Like protest, but with very different means and consequences, clandestine political violent fundamentally challenges the socio-political status quo and expresses radical dissent. Nevertheless, it happens in society and reproduces society by communication. Secondly, approaches to political violence and terrorism from the perspective of Luhmannian thought and other brands of systems theory inform the section’s conceptualisations (Fuchs 2004; Ibrahim-Kudelich 2007; Japp 2007; Schneider 2007, 2008; Straßner 2005; von Baeyer-Katte 1982). In so doing, the theoretical argument emphasises the communicative reproduction of clandestine violence and focuses on meso-level analysis or, in Luhmannian terms, the system’s reference of clandestine groups and their environments. However, ways in which structural approaches use Luhmann’s terminology and theory as a conceptual toolkit to conceptualise different aspects of political violence are instructive for the section. Thirdly, the abstract conceptual discussion is illustrated with examples of terrorist discourse understood in a broad sense as a set of practices and texts related to clandestine political violence or text in context (see below, point 4.3). As the section argues that the social reality of political violence in itself constitutes communication, communiqués, strategic analysis, political interventions, and related forms of the so-called ‘terrorist literature’ (Cordes 1987a, 319) represent crucial expressions of the discursive creation of the socio-political reality of clandestine political violence.

Although the detailed, fine-grained, and deep analysis of these literatures is the scope of subsequent chapters, empirical feedback is already a crucial element of the conceptual approach developed here, following the above argument that theoretical knowledge claims and empirical reality cannot be neatly separated (see above, point 2.3). In this regard, the analytical framework neither attempts to build theory from thick descriptions of reality nor to develop a purely deductive theory to be tested subsequently. Rather, a macro-analytical birds’ eye perspective on the body of relevant writings from a broad variety of armed formations helps to illustrate and integrate the different conceptual influences into an original analytical framework. Methodologically grounded, deep and detailed discourse analyses of two case studies aims at challenging these analytical propositions to evaluate which elements of the empirical reality they could illuminate and what has been left out.
While the conceptual argument emphasises the analytical meso-level, it presupposes that developments of and within groups can only be understood in relation to structural and interactional, that is, macro- and micro-social conditions. In a similar vein, Luhmann argues that conflicts only become socially relevant or perpetuate themselves, spread, and lead to wider consequences if they allow for connecting further communications ‘outside the boundaries of present interaction’; in other words, bridging the difference between micro-sociological event and its macro-sociological reproduction establishes social relevance (Luhmann 1995a, 393). It is argued here that conflict systems can become institutionalised over time on a relatively insignificant level if conflict fails to spread, but also does not disappear entirely, as in the case of social-revolutionary armed politics in 1980s Germany (Luhmann 1992a, 147). This chapter contends that such marginal institutionalisations require establishing functional equivalents to social relevance which allow for reproducing anti-systemic discourse. Groups have to construct internally convincing narratives as substitutes for failures to mobilise wider support. Elements of constructing systemic identities are conceptualised according to the six analytical dimensions in the following.

### 3.4.1 The communication of armed struggle

The reproduction of politically violent clandestine groups as systems of communications depends on a basic unit that realises distinct and very particular meanings to which further specific communications are linked. Identifying this elementary communicative element is a pivotal feature of most Luhmannian approaches to terrorism. Fuchs suggests conceptualising the ‘terrorist deed’, that is, the interruption of regular communications caused by the deed, at this level (Fuchs 2004, 20-23) and Schneider argues that ‘attacks’ fulfil this function (Schneider 2007, 131-132). Both authors emphasise that acts of terrorism represent intense moments of communication as they address guilt by targeting the innocent, consciously undermining established norms of violent conflict (Fuchs 2004, 56; Schneider 2008, 188-189). These considerations reflect Luhmann’s remarks on the communicative quality of violence, especially when it articulates ‘existential dedication’ (1998, 796-797). However, both authors also introduce an element of intentional indiscrimination on this elementary level. Even if seemingly arbitrary attacks constitute components of politically violent communication strategies, they are hardly an indispensable
defining element (see above point 2.1.2, p. 37). While not necessarily aiming at representatives of the established order in a strict sense, empirical studies reveal that targeting patterns of terrorist groups are more often than not highly selective (Drake 1998, 78; Tucker 2001).\(^{37}\)

On a different note it is suggested here to start from Luhmann’s supposition that interrelating communicative events requires distinguishing the potential from the actual. In so doing, communication produces and reproduces meaning and ways of ordering communicative events thematically (see above point 3.2.1, p. 82). Communicating involves selecting particular meanings as thematic and content-related references. Accordingly, protest selectively communicates the urgency of its issues by addressing them through disruptive tactics; concurrently, protest repertoires imply the meaning that the themes they articulate require widespread mobilisation (Ahlemeyer 1995, 88-89). Clandestine political violence increases and escalates this selectivity even further as its extra-ordinary, violent means aim at de-sublimating the subdued and domesticated relation between force and political power. Resorting to political violence from a minoritarian position communicates not merely that the specific historical and socio-political conditions justify mobilising discontent, but rather call for a specific form of intervention, the radical and violent politics of armed struggle. The choice to wage this struggle is constructed as the choice to be on the right side of history. There is, for instance, no third option between armed politics and playing according to the rules of the system when the Italian *Brigate Rosse* (BR) or Red Brigades state: ‘Historical compromise or armed proletarian power: this is the choice of the day for the comrades since there is no more middle ground’ (BR 1973, 16).\(^{38}\)

To some degree, this claim is self-affirming: violence is not only a means to an end but also an end in itself as this specific way of performing political conflict aims at underlining its own historicopolitical necessity by inverting the relation between politics and violence. In this regard, the German *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF) or Red Army Faction states: ‘mobilising the masses for anti-capitalist action without simultaneously establishing the

\(^{37}\) Indiscriminate attacks may force, for instance, the political centre to re-affirm and re-articulate its central position: if terrorist groups deliberately abstain from targeting the core of the political system and its representatives in campaigns of political violence, they reject the establishment’s claim towards political centrality. In so doing, intentionally indiscriminate attacks aim at dismantling the promise of the state to act as a guarantor of individual security that justifies its centrality. The author is grateful for these remarks on an earlier draft of this chapter to one of the anonymous reviewers of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*.

\(^{38}\) All English translations from groups’ papers are the author’s.
conditions of successful military resistance ... is adventurism’ (RAF [1971] 1997b, 106). The use of a specific exceptional method emphasises that the situation in which these means are employed is exceptional in itself. Concrete practice, the transgression of the monopoly on violence, aims at establishing a thematic link to a perceived state of emergency which is discursively constructed by resorting to arms. Since activists are socialised into the politics of dissent during protest cycles and through their ideological debates, including debates on adequate tactics and action repertoires, they are aware of how selective this particular interpretation of reality is, for instance when pre-emptively inverting the critique of ‘adventurism’ in the RAF quote. The feasibility of the project to wage armed struggle in itself represents medium-range teleology. Consequently, the RAF states in one of its first programmatic communiqués: ‘whether it is adequate to organise the armed resistance here and now depends on whether it is possible’ (RAF [1971] 1997a, 40). By invoking semantics of armed struggle in this self-affirming and tautological way struggle becomes the overarching, if not the only, meaning of politics. Political communication is thematically narrowed to the confrontational expressivity of disruptive repertoires: only militant mobilisation or mobilisation that includes a militant potential is adequate political mobilisation. For the RZ, for instance, a revolutionary perspective requires developing illegal, armed capacities since ‘in legality, an adaptation to dominant rules of the game is necessary’ (RZ 1977k). This reduction of the complexity of protest determines specific relations of inclusion and exclusion.

The self-referential semantics of armed struggle further reduces an already highly selective construction of socio-political reality and unfolds the diffuse antagonistic potential of the form of protest. Nevertheless, it is argued here that concretising what the semantics of struggle signify in attempts at de-tautologising their self-referential logic allows for different perspectives. Levels and modes of confrontation represent different understandings of armed struggle. While the level of confrontation relates to violent repertoires, ranging from high-level deadly attacks on persons to low-level arson and bombings causing material damage, the mode of confrontation describes the status of armed struggle within political projects. Political violence on a high level, it is argued here, develops more easily into a self-supporting interpretation of reality and gathers a momentum of its own since it emphasises the decision for a clear-cut, intransigent rupture between purely ‘verbal protest and physical resistance’ (Meinhof [1968] 1988). The
boundary between normal and extraordinary politics, that require exceptional means, is set when elements of physical force define resistance. Accordingly, the BR state: ‘the movement of resistance and the area of autonomy are constructed and articulated around the guerrilla and not vice versa’ (BR 1975, 22). Since such tactics deliberately provoke forceful reactions, processes of recursive escalation are more likely that fully reproduce the negative, over-integrated double contingency of conflict (see point 3.3.1 p. 96). How ‘violence and counter-violence’ are discursively distinguished is essential to the self-understanding of groups as ‘counter-violence runs the risk of becoming violence’ (Meinhof [1968] 1988). If normal or revisionist protest and extra-ordinary or revolutionary politics are distinguished in absolute terms, it becomes internally possible to conceive of the group as a politico-military unity. This unity represents the only viable conflict configuration and poses the question of power or, in the words of the BR, the ‘political-military action of communists opens the revolutionary phase on the basis of developing the capacity to revolt … in strict dialectic relations with the artefacts of power’ (BR [1984] 1996a, 503).

In contrast, it is argued that low-level violence can connect discursively and symbolically to existing social conflicts. The continuity of clandestine political violence then depends on the protest dynamics to which it can refer if armed politics do not establish a self-sufficient project and completely redefine the spaces of dissident politics. Here, the limited use of violent means represents intervention in the context of sectional, concrete conflicts and not an absolute decision. Championing interventionist tactics is expected to correlate with self-descriptions as armed elements or wings within wider socio-political movements. A self-description of the RZ puts this as follows: ‘however, we see ourselves as part of a – weak – social-revolutionary and anti-imperialist tendency … (E)ssentially a struggle for the heads and feelings of the people is waged, but precisely not a war’ (RZ 1983a, 2). In this context, armed struggle is conceptualised as one element within a broadly defined arsenal of resistance repertoires. However, high risk activities still demarcate the boundary between determined ways to resist and protest that remains immanent to the dominant condition. This position, it is argued, co-communicates that influencing protest towards more radical and disruptive repertoires is part and parcel of strategic interventions. Again, the RZ state in this regard: ‘our politics have to continue aiming at strengthening the left, at its radicalisation and increased militancy’ (RZ 1983f, 27). While not yet waging a direct attempt on the power structure, building the first nuclei of counter-power by low level
tactics defines the mode of intervention. As long as considerable moments of protest exist, such an interpretation of armed politics can symbolically relate to wider struggles and avoid full auto-logical closure in the semantic form. Yet its discursive rationalisation remains dependent on mobilisation dynamics or the ‘economic cycles of movement’ (RZ 1992c, 5).

Consequently, the self-affirming semantics of armed struggle escalate the urgency of protest communication by substituting disruptive for outright illicit, violent means of communication. Two consecutive differences influence how this semantics depart from its beginnings and potentially become persistent. If armed struggle is understood as politico-military strategy on a high level of violence, it is more likely that these semantics become a fully independent interpretation of the world which continues to integrate despite conflicting external realities. As this presupposes a high level of communicative closure, internally credible rationalisations and self-fulfilling political teleology or the normative control of ideological programmes represents the more important condition of continuity. If, by contrast, low level violence is imagined as intervention into ongoing movement struggles, it is more likely to avoid full auto-logical closure. At the same time, sustaining the semantics counterfactually, that is, without a symbolic point of reference in movement dynamics becomes more difficult and continuity remains more dependent on external conditions.

3.4.2 Friend and enemy: The basic distinction

As establishing the semantics of armed struggle in recurrent and internally meaningful ways is contingent on decisions and differentiations, the form in which clandestine political violence draws a distinction between inside and outside or groups and their social environment requires further conceptualisation. It is argued here that tendencies toward reconstructing the world in personalised us-them-bifurcations which already have been addressed in relation to protest communication (see above point 3.2.2, p. 88) are escalated when they are actualised by violence. In this context, Fuchs contends that the categorical difference between innocence and guilt allows holding everybody who does not directly resist, responsible for the opposed status quo. This distinction has its zero value in the notion of fundamental hostility which allows for attacking the guilty by targeting the innocent (Fuchs 2004, 56 and 88). While these considerations reflect Luhmann’s observations on terrorism as ‘the hubris to be able to perform guilt as innocence’ (Luhmann
1992a, 147), it remains doubtful whether this difference constitutes the original distinction or a form of making sense of us-them-dichotomies to claim the legitimising authority of ‘undisputable values’ (idem 1987c, 165). As Fuchs infers his conceptualisation from an attempt to understand religio-political ‘new’ terrorism (Fuchs 2004, 9-14), his analysis strongly relies on moral categories of good and evil or guilty and innocent.

Nevertheless, the criteria of guilt and innocence also appear in social-revolutionary writing, for instance when the RAF insists on a clear distinctions between ‘perpetrators and victims’ in ‘international class war’ (RAF 1985b, 4). However, the guilty are defined here in antagonistic terms since ‘the relation between us and them is war’ (RAF 1985a, 7). In these quotes, the identification of supposedly legitimate targets is couched in notions of responsibility or even guilt, but these rely on a concept of the enemy. The primary distinction between friend and enemy is second-coded by distinguishing the guilty from the innocent. In a similar vein, Schneider argues that the construction of a rigid, selective difference between friend and enemy constitutes the basic distinction between armed group and social environment (2007, 143). Not unlike the form of protest that primarily distinguishes itself from the dominant order in negative terms as it is directed against the consequences of the status quo, the difference between friend and enemy is constructed in a particular way which reinforces totalising tendencies of antagonist differentiation. Dividing the world into friends and enemies presupposes that groups are not only able to distinguish themselves from the hegemonic consensus, but also from protest strata which remain integrated and from other groups on the armed left. Members of the prisoners collective of the Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre (GRAPO) or First of October Antifascist Resistance Groups, for example, judge one BR faction and its support base as follows: ‘It is one thing to call oneself anti-imperialist and another to turn out to be an enemy of these principles and the communist obligations’ (PCE(r)/GRAPO [1986] 1995, 18).

It is argued here that the ideal-typical taboo of organising violence for political ends requires painting reality in stark contrasts that allow for an absolute moral judgement on the basis of definite reasons. Basically, no alternative course of action, be it normal politics or disruptive militant protest, can be right if the accepted consequence of acting politically entails death. The RAF, for instance, literally puts the contemporarily common, inclusive appellation comrade into quotation marks when stating that ‘comrades’ ignore the system’s violence and ‘consume what they pretend to fight’ (RAF [1972] 1997b, 149). As even
comrades are easily othered if they fail to fully agree with analysis and political practice of the group, the positive ‘us’ is merely a negation of the negative ‘them’. Formally speaking, only the non‐enemy is the friend, as he who defines the enemy in the same negative ways is perceived an ally. In so doing, discursively shared exclusion largely substitutes positive inclusion. As autopoiesis is reproduced negatively, an ‘inversion of preference’ (Fuchs 2004, 57) takes place. The side of the distinction which intuitively seems preferable, the positively connoted term ‘friend’, remains so vague that it does not allow the meaningful interrelation of communicative events; operational reproduction depends on the negative value (ibid., 57-58). This does not elude the protagonists themselves when the BR claims in an assessment of the political relevance of the RAF: ‘In the Germany of the ‘70s, the RAF thus takes shape at the same time as product and dialectical negation of this counterrevolutionary process’ (BR 1977, 22).

In this context, Schneider contends that different ways of defining the enemy vary in their capacity to interconnect communications and rationalise conflicts. The enemy is only in very particular circumstances defined by conflict realities themselves; even in these cases categories of us and them are subject to constant social (re)construction (Schneider 2008, 198-199). Drawing on Luhmannian approaches to terrorism, it is argued that descriptions of the enemy remain open to provide leeway for reconstructing and concretising against whom the struggle is directed in concrete situations according to a general, broad notion of the fundamental conflict; a socially established and compatible notion of the antagonist that invokes a shared core of ideological convictions fulfils both functions (Fuchs 2004, 88; Schneider 2007, 143-144). However, such descriptions of ‘them’ presuppose that respective interpretative schemes are socially relevant and established on a broader base in the first place. While this might be the case in conflicts that relate to or are based in historically founded ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983), it is less likely among groups which emerge from relatively recent movement cycles. Here, radical politics are mostly based on shared ideological descriptions of the enemy which resonate only within limited politically defined ‘radical subcultures’, which build collective identities on shared experiences of political struggle and not vice versa (Waldmann et al. 2010).

It is argued here that social‐revolutionary armed groups have to construct their social relevance differently and with fewer opportunities to refer to pre‐established, handed down signifiers of collective identity. Accordingly, such groups aim at actively establishing
relevance by drastic means which aim at constructing two forms of communicative recognition: firstly, the image of the public enemy (see below point 3.4.5) and secondly, the image of determined fight, the self-validating moment of violent politics. In a similar vein, Apter interprets political violence as an ‘extreme form of interpretative action’ which ‘establishes its own communicative fields’ (Apter 1997b, 17). Efforts to establish and maintain social relevance within a self-sufficient radical sub-culture require a high degree of ideological control. This does not necessarily manifest itself in theoretically consistent ideologies, as discussed in the next sub-section in detail, but rather in thematically re-interpretable definitions of the enemy that relate to ideologically mediated empty formula. Speech figures like ‘the unified strategy of the imperialist bourgeoisie to solve the global political economic, social crisis of the system’ employed by the RAF in the 1980s (RAF 1986, 20), the Belgian Cellules Communistes Combattantes (CCC) or Fighting Communist Cells’ ‘enemy machine’ of the ‘military-imperialist apparatus’ (CCC 1984b, 3), or the (in)famous construction the ‘Imperialist State of the Multinationals’ by the BR, reified in the acronym SIM39 (BR 1977, 1) are cases in point. To remain communicatively meaningful, these ideologically defined and highly generic abstractions require that language use is controlled and defended against deviations. If enemy stereotyping, in contrast, attempts to invoke already established conflict patterns, for instance class identities or concrete adversaries in the struggles of specific ‘sectorial movements’,40 this is also problematic. It is argued here that such ways of defining the antagonist easily become too specific and have to withstand validation by concrete conflict parties. In other words, concretised forms of describing the enemy become reliant on externally defined conflict realities and create expectations which can be frustrated.

In sum, a basic distinction between friend and foe, which is at the same time absolute and open for further specification, again establishes a dual discursive space: whenever the other is described in ideologically mediated abstract terms, highly regulated language use establishes a coherent pattern that substitutes social relevance for resonance within a

39 The acronym stands for the Italian expression ‘Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali’.
40 The terms ‘Teilbereichsbewegung’ and ‘Teilbereichskampf’ or ‘sectorial movement’ and ‘sectorial struggle’ are contemporary shorthand for ‘single-issue movements’ in radical discourse. In the writings of the RZ it relates either to ideas of a difference between main contradiction, the space of revolutionary conflict, and subsidiary concrete struggles which might contribute to a revolutionary solution of the primary contradiction (RZ 1992b) or to conceptions according to which ‘an all-encompassing revolutionary movement will always also consist of different sections’ (RZ 1992a, 26).
limited radical subculture. Whenever groups try to embed the ideological reconstruction of reality within the shared perceptions of broader protest environments, strictly ideological patterns fail to become self-sustaining and the ways in which socio-political conflicts develop are less easily rationalised ideologically. While maintaining an interpretative frame over time depends in the former case on regulating language use, the latter way of defining the enemy depends on recognition within the left-libertarian movement family.

3.4.3 Programming armed struggle

When reflecting on the relevance of ideologies for drawing and reinforcing a basic distinction, the chapter has already started to address the crucial communicative function of ideological reasoning which is discussed more systematically in the following. The sub-section draws on Luhmann’s conceptualisation of how teleologizing movements allows for transcending original protest causes and transforming them into more radical conditional programmes (see point 3.2.2, p. 99). It argues that communicative strategies avoid concretising interpretative frames into potentially falsifiable action programmes, allowing for the continuation of violent campaigns. Vague approximations of the future society help ‘to identify resistance and opponents in the present’ (Luhmann 1995a, 401) and, in so doing, fully unfold the communicative function of ideologically over-determined teleology. The following RAF statement provides a particularly poignant example of this logic: ‘It is absolutely pointless for the fight to search now for the big strategic plan … or to philosophise on council republic and morals’ (RAF 1986, 16).

To a certain degree, the semantics of armed struggle in itself become a first, general formulation of the conditional programme of clandestine political violence when registers of struggle and war dominate political discourse. In one of the few programmatic texts of the 1980s, the RAF for instance defines the struggle against oppression and alienation as its political project, declaring in the same breath that ‘armed illegal organisation represents the core of this strategy’ (RAF [1982] 1997, 294). Even if the RZ, in contrast, contend that concrete political utopias which anticipate the future society in today’s struggles are necessary elements of this very struggle, realising emancipated futures in the present depends on armed practice: ‘to realise it in the hearts requires the collective revolutionary practice’ (RZ 1978d, 19). Rationalising the political necessity of armed struggle in similar
semantic constructions and historicising it into a cyclical notion of revolutionary processes (e.g. BR 1971, 10-12) substitutes for visions of concrete political alternatives. It is argued here that groups tend to close themselves not only by drawing a strict distinction between friend and foe, but also on the level of conditioning the basic distinction: radical dissent is always also reduced to the facticity of the militant form.

Although violent struggle evolves into an end in itself, clandestine political violence nevertheless also addresses concrete issues. Consequently it is asked whether issue-related and situation-dependent armed campaigns provide secondary conditional programmes which reopen communicative spaces which were closed by the semantics of armed struggle and the differentiation between friend and enemy. If this is the case, constructions of reality within groups might still relate to and confront social realities within their environment. This sub-section contends that two elements influence the degree to which secondary programming regenerates open discursive spaces, namely differences in ideological rationalisation and enemy re-definitions. In this context, different ways of invoking ideological thought and relating it to the general notion of conflict, it is argued, are more important than eclectic ideologies themselves. In a similar vein, different logics of re-specifying the enemy are considered to make more of a difference than generic and abstract enemy stereotyping as such. In other words, the argument evolves around the immanent criteria of the discursive functions of ideologically interpreting the world and the other, not according to external criteria such as theoretical coherence or empirical credibility of framing.

Ideological reconstructions of external realities can either draw closely on a developed and formulated interpretative system or realise terms borrowed from such systems as situation-dependent signifiers that lend credibility to tactical decisions. In the early 1980s, for instance, both the CCC and the RZ aim at intervening in the resistance against the NATO Double-Track Decision on the basis of an analysis of imperialism. However, ‘imperialism’ is used in significantly different ways: the CCC rationalise attacks in an eclectic, determinist re-interpretation of classic Leninist theory on imperialist war and the tendency towards state monopoly capitalism: ‘The imperialist war is absolutely indivisible from the capitalist mode of production; in fact it is its product’ (CCC 1984a, 3). This understanding presupposes an objectively right way of analysing current affairs which determines the correct line of attack within an ideologically defined framework. In contrast, the RZ harshly
criticise the anti-deployment movement for not realising the imperialist dimension of the issue (for details see below point 6.4.3) but understand the analysis of imperialism as ‘a chance to see through mechanisms of division and domination and to identify fissures in the “project future” in which our resistance can develop’ (RZ 1983f, 21). Here, anti-imperialism is not so much an abstract concept, but a concrete conceptual tool for connecting diverse moments of dissent into a radical politics to come. The term figures as an empty signifier that lends theoretical authority to a concrete analysis of current affairs and, in so doing, points beyond the concrete occasion. This latter form of relating ideological readings of external realities to armed practice is no less rigid than the former, but is intransigent in a very different sense. While rigidity and internal credibility in the first case rely on an external theoretical referent and strict ideological control, they presuppose in the second case the ability to rationalise events and developments ex post facto into a coherent narrative in ideologically supported terminology.

In a similar vein, descriptions of the enemy can either concretely re-specify a tangible and more or less stable quasi-personification of the hegemonic block or remain deliberately vague. An example of the first option is the identification of the Italian Christian Democratic Party with the dominant order of the SIM (see above point 3.4.2 p. 111) by the BR, for instance, in the following: ‘the political force to which the big multinational groups have disposed assuming the responsibility of actualising this complex and ambitious counter-revolutionary project is CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY’ (BR 1977, 2, original capitalisation). The ideologically supported notion of a monolithic Christian Democracy serves here to concretise strategic goals as ‘Strategic Directive no. 4’ also establishes parameters for assessing strategic success on this basis. When enemies are re-specified in intentionally vague terms, only concrete militant practice determines who represents antagonistic social forces. Accordingly, the RAF in the 1980s explicitly disregards a static and monolithic notion of the dominant order stating: ‘One may not conceive of the system as a rigid block ... but as a necessarily escalating movement, as politics, as strategy’ (RAF 1986, 19). In other words, the choice of targets personifies the established power structure in ways that are modified according to the requirements of ever-changing concrete circumstances. Relatively flexible enemy re-specifications can rationalise the direction of attacks without establishing a clear strategic line. The hegemonic block is not a reified entity but is perceived as dynamic process or historical tendency.
In concluding this sub-section it is argued that both bifurcations coincide and have consequences. A rigid, unfalsifiable ideology that closely relates to established ideological patterns and employs a concrete, stable definition of the enemy is able to develop a high degree of internal coherence but exposes itself to the risk of frustrating its own expectations. If this happens, the degree of ideological control determines whether the semantics of armed struggle can be maintained counterfactually. More flexible, tactically managed ideological orientations that leave the notion of the enemy open increase a group’s ability to react to changing external realities and to adopt to frustrated expectations. However, the second option also implies the risk that activism becomes arbitrary. The impossibility of strict ideological control requires the development of additional communicative mechanisms. While continuity depends in the former case on strict ideological control of frustrated expectations, groups remain able to act more flexibly if expectations are addressed more vaguely. However, the definition of a concrete political project that legitimises the struggle also becomes a permanent problem.

3.4.4 Centre and periphery: Defining systemic boundaries

The distinction between friend and enemy also affects the ways in which clandestine armed formations manage their boundaries while relating to a periphery of supporters and hypothetical sympathisers. Different authors that develop systems theory perspectives on terrorism have argued for a common trend in this context. Accordingly, terrorist groups tend to integrate ever-growing sectors of peripheral support bases into the organisational core to ensure that internal structures remain functionally diversified and capable of acting. In this perspective, the periphery forms an integral, hierarchically subordinate part of the system and fulfils functions equivalent to party-affiliated organisations (Straßner 2005, 65-66; von Baeyer-Katte 1982, 190-193). While this conceptualisation of the systemic boundaries of armed groups covers a wide range of centre-periphery relations, a focus on the semantic (re)construction of armed struggle suggests a different, more differentiated perspective. It is argued here that different modes of concretising the role of the armed struggle and its relation to a largely imagined notion of the masses matter for defining and relating centre and periphery. Drawing on distinctions between unified politico-military structure and embedded armed intervention discussed above (see above point 3.4.1), two forms of
constructing relations to a wider audience are distinguished: a strategy of armed avant-gardism and a mass-militant approach which also draw on the two ideal types of terrorist organisations, hierarchy and network, discussed by Mayntz (see above point 1, p. 23).

The concept of an armed vanguard presupposes that a broad perspective of struggle can be triggered and developed by the exemplary action of a conscious, highly organised minority. While objective conditions for fundamental societal change may be ripe, there is no historical subject to seize this opportunity as the oppression and exploitation of the hegemonic order is veiled and the exercise of power mystified. The RAF, for instance, claims ‘the system reproduces itself in the metropolis by its progressing offensive on the psyche of human beings and precisely not openly fascist’ (RAF [1972] 1997a, 166). The role of the vanguard is to educate the masses practically by answering the question of ‘how and where the system is best opposed ... in the dialectics of theory and practice’ (ibid., 167). Therefore, the process of developing broad revolutionary consciousness – the subjective prerequisite of an objectively necessary revolution – is the prerogative of the determined few who define the appropriate level of confrontation. In the words of the BR: ‘the consciousness of the necessity of revolution rises alongside and not out of the struggles of the masses ... it emerges as a dialectic leap’ (BR 1985, 34-35, original emphasis). The process of revolutionising the masses or influencing the emergence of a revolutionary subject, is also considered to be difficult, incremental and dialectical in the non-linear sense in the writings of the RAF: ‘the seizure of power by the proletariat is [mistakenly] understood as a more or less exactly limited event and not as a protracted, partly steady partly volatile, process’ (RAF [1971] 1997b, 99).

Nevertheless, the text also implies a notion of almost inevitable expansion by invoking the metaphor of a ‘raging current which will tear away the system of oppression by its overwhelming force’ which emerges out of the ‘well’ of the first armed units (RAF [1971] 1997b, 101). It is likely, it is argued here, that marginal positive resonance is counterfactually re-interpreted into the first signs of broader support and symbolically included into the system if the spread of avant-garde perspectives fails to materialise. The ‘front concept’ of the RAF in the early 1980s is a case in point. It also highlights that a self-proclaimed vanguard demands full ideological compliance form its peripheries:

The front will only become real if everybody, wherever his place, takes it on himself to identify moments and forms of the unity between armed struggle from illegality and political-
Especially if the strategic line is less than clear and obvious, the avant-garde claim to leadership depends on the control of abstract ideological terms and on maintaining a strongly hierarchical notion of relational structures. Accordingly, armed avant-gardism can develop an internally credible functional equivalent for the failure to spread if it can draw on a marginal but dedicated core of supporters, but only as long as the vanguard maintains rigid control over their supporters’ political position according to its eclectic ideology.

A mass-militant perspective addresses the problem of creating the subjective preconditions for objectively necessary revolt in different ways. This crucial problem is conceptualised as militant consciousness-raising, rather than as an issue of leadership. The RZ, for instance, argue that potential supporters and sympathisers have to be encouraged to experience opportunities to resist here and now in concrete, particular struggles: ‘in an aggravating political climate ... we have tried to start spreading militant forms of struggle by a relatively continuous “propaganda of the deed”’ (RZ 1983d, 25). To this purpose, they consider the spread of practical, easily accessible knowledge and reproducible, relatively uncomplicated techniques crucial, do not claim a monopoly on armed interventions, and emphasise autonomous organisation (ibid., 24-25). Education is an important element in the centre-periphery relation, but by facilitating autonomous initiative that leads towards broad militant activism rather than by exemplary action and leadership. Political violence and clandestine action are interpreted as tactical resources whose spread within movement contexts allows for transcending subjective self-restraint and for re-materialising and re-experiencing the latent, structural violence of the dominant condition. Contributing to the escalation of protest to a point at which it constantly questions the establishment’s legitimacy is accordingly the RZ’s medium-term goal: ‘our subversive illegal actions are a means to break with legalistic approaches and to contribute to the stabilisation of a militant anti-institutional left’ (RZ 1980c, 34).

The spread, success and ‘massification’ of armed struggle are not a matter of discursively controlling a periphery of assumed followers. The goal of armed politics is to unsettle peripheral protest potentials by establishing autonomous nuclei in a de-centred approach to politics and by providing practical examples for how this can be done by illegal means. Again in the words of the RZ this ‘is first and foremost a matter of subverting the
bases of domination, that is, impuissance, and thus a matter of changing human beings and not of “overthrowing the state” (RZ 1981d, 13). When success is defined as ‘political damage’ by increasing the use and acceptance of violent action repertoires (ibid.), a tendency to over-estimate the groups’ influence and to reduce movements to their militant potential is a likely consequence of broadening the base for armed struggle. By the same token, the successful spread of militant action frames of such a de-centred and by definition uncontrollable concept is not unproblematic in itself. If centre-periphery relations are supposedly self-regulatory, othering those who interpret the conditions of armed resistance differently, but invoke the same ideas of activism becomes necessary, for instance when individual Cells distance themselves from ‘irresponsible activism that fetishizes militant action in itself’ (RZ 1991a, 4).

Consequently, armed avant-gardism is able to counterfactually stabilise centre-periphery relations even if, or rather because its stated aim of a mass-perspective fails to materialise. A self-declared conscious minority, by definition ahead of the objectively oppressed but subjectively unaware majority, can substitute the spread of its understanding of struggle with a core of determined supporters as longs as it exerts ideological control over these. By contrast, a mass-militant perspective delimits the possibility of independence from movement cycles and establishing a distinctive political project. The credibility of centre-periphery conceptualisations depends less on ideological control and hierarchical organisation than on ideologically and practically compatible realisations of dissent in protest politics.

### 3.4.5 Structural couplings

According to communication approaches in terrorism studies, the communicative structure of clandestine political violence is characterised by a double bind since it aims at causing insecurity in the broader public and raising sympathies among potential supporters by the very same communicative event (see above point 2.1.2, p. 38). From a Luhmannian perspective, this observation refers to the general problem of how systems can reach beyond the limitations of their systemic space, which results in the emergence of structural couplings at the interface of different domains. Regarding protest, it has been argued that recognition in the mass media fulfils this function (see above, point 3.2.2, p. 90). The
communicative double bind of political violence is accordingly reformulated. Two elements are crucial for the ability of armed groups to establish effective structural couplings: occupying specific roles and spaces in public discourse and establishing relations to immediate social environments. Both moments, it is argued here, rely on each other, at the same time conflicting with each other and with ways of organising systemic boundaries.

Successfully conquering discursive spaces presupposes that the groups’ own basic bifurcation into friend and enemy is reflected within the political sphere. The RAF, for instance, explicitly refers to this mechanism when it argues that armed groups represent ‘the fraction and praxis that are combated most severely since they draw a clear line between themselves and the enemy’ (RAF [1971] 1997a, 42). As to their recognition in political and media discourse, it consequently concludes: ‘the urban guerrilla cannot expect anything from this public but fierce hostility’ (ibid., 43). It is argued here that clandestine, politically violent groups only achieve wider social relevance, often counterfactually, if they are recognised as public enemies and are addressed according to the very essence of their self-description: as political actors insofar as they openly question the state’s monopoly of violence. For instance, the BR attribute far-reaching claims regarding the potential political impact of the European armed left to the fact that states react consistently and coordinately hostile to the re-emergence of political violence:

To the degree to which the guerrilla is recognised as common and main enemy by everyone, the “fight against terrorism for the defence of western society” becomes ... the base of the so-called “European unity”. (BR 1977, 23)

In a similar vein, the ‘political damage’ of armed politics, which the RZ define as a benchmark of their success, relies first and foremost on keeping some degree of struggle alive in spite of counter-terrorist efforts (RZ 1981d, 13). In so doing, self-perceptions reflect how clandestine political violence actualises the central contradiction of modern politics according to Ibrahim-Kudelich: while the use of force is monopolised in the political system, this monopoly remains legitimised only if and when the violent potential does not frequently materialise itself (2007, 212-213). Generally speaking, attempts to occupy public discourse by political violence also realise a double bind. The more a group is recognised as a public enemy, the easier it becomes to disregard its politics. While it is relatively likely that groups represent a problem for the political system and activate scripts of public security, it is much less likely that they are deemed to address political problems and contribute anything else
to its discourse apart from the hegemonic externalities of counterterrorist discourses (for details see above point 3.3.1).

Furthermore it is argued that attempts to avoid the thematisation trap by disseminating written communications is precarious, since concrete practices always also have to speak for themselves. An incommunicable attack cannot communicate meaningful information and vice versa or, in the words of the RZ, ‘an action against the wrong object is a wrong action even if the opposite is stated in a communiqué’ (RZ 1991a, 3). As such a principle is more easily postulated than practically implemented, the Cells already consider it a communicative success if the general message that illegal, armed resistance is possible is not outright rejected within broader movements (RZ 1980c, 33). Accordingly, this subsection contends that communiqués, self-presentation, and strategy papers above all aim at communicating political positions to a different audience: writings are supposed to establish and maintain relations to an immediate social environment of targeted peer groups – supporters and sympathisers. However, it is already difficult to disseminate messages as mainstream media are often reluctant to reprint ‘terrorist literature’ verbatim and the protest subculture’s own channels of counter-information are less prone to act on behalf of armed groups than these expect, as for instance the B2J complains (B2J [1975] 2001, 243). Counterhegemonic media have their own agenda, comment on voices from the underground according to their own politics, and substitute, in the words of the RZ, critical solidarity for ‘subtle imperialist propaganda’ (RZ [1975] 1993, 183).

Setting up an independent dissemination structure to avoid such unwanted or, according to armed groups, unwarranted interference and to trigger discussions and limited critical involvement with targeted peer groups transcends mere structural couplings. Since the disseminated material is regularly incriminated, communication networks also develop clandestine structures and become part of the system’s periphery. This corresponds with self-perceptions of networks of communication when, for instance, the editorial of ‘Fighting Together’, an irregular periodical dedicated to documenting texts of the ‘West European Guerrilla’, states:

We organise the newspaper from the outset illegally since this is the only possible way. To us, this decision is not only a necessity ... but first and foremost an offensive step towards broadening the area of substantial discussion and debate in the context of the revolutionary front. (ZK 1986)
Consequently, communication channels only reach those who are already located within specific political milieus and only establish a semblance of wider reach, as the RAF retrospectively admits shortly after declaring a limited ceasefire: ‘During these times there were at best illegal flyers or newspapers from our political networks which, then, of course could only reach the initiated’ (RAF [1992] 1997, 430).

Relations to targeted peer groups are thus arguably inevitably precarious and realise a particular double-bind: they do not just establish structural couplings to a system’s immediate environment, nor are peer groups located within a defined space at the system’s periphery. The balance between critical solidarity and demanded compliance is difficult and rests on an unstable consensus of shared ideological convictions and a general acceptance of the mode of intervention. Speechlessness between centre and periphery increasingly manifests itself as a consequence of this precarious equilibrium. For instance, the RAF writes ‘If people talk to each other, which have different mentalities, clarification is impossible, everything is strange’ (RAF 1986, 17). Yet, this speechlessness is also still rationalised according to the formula that ‘there is no point in trying to explain the right thing to the wrong people’ (RAF 1970b) when the 1986 RAF paper states that among the radical left ‘there are many, who have only been waiting to finally stir up hatred or legitimise their own retreat’ (RAF 1986, 17).

In summary, both elements of structural coupling are fraught by a delicate balance between contradictory tendencies. The more public discourse can be occupied, the less likely it becomes that this opens productive communication channels. In a similar vein, the more effectively relations to targeted peer-groups are organised, the more exclusive they become and the less probable it becomes that they cause irritations to rigidly integrated constructions of socio-political realities. The search for establishing structural couplings therefore represents a constant challenge for the continuation of political violence; as soon as these efforts become self-complacent or cease, the very legitimisation of armed politics becomes precarious.

**3.4.6 Systemic learning**

The conceptual argument developed in this section thus far has emphasised tendencies towards over-integration and systemic encapsulation beyond mere operational
closure in various ways. However, it has also stressed moments of bifurcation in which clandestine, politically violent groups can decide between different options. As previously discussed (see point 3.2.1, p. 81), choices affect, according to Luhmann, further developments within distinct social systems and establish specific histories (Luhmann 1996b, 111). The crucial point, it is argued here, is whether moments of decision also represent opportunities for cognitive learning in which groups react to self-produced irritations with tactical and strategic innovations (see point 3.2.1, p. 85). While the ability to learn in a practical and logistical sense is a precondition of sustaining systemic boundaries with which groups often cope relatively successfully discrepancies between practical military possibilities and their political realisation become obvious in this process. For instance, the RAF states in a reassessment of the ‘German Autumn’: ‘Although the campaign did hit the state’s nerve, we did not act on the political level of the provocation’ (RAF [1982] 1997, 303).

In a similar vein, the RZ comment on the deadly attack on the Hesse minister of economy (see below, point 6.4.1, p. 261): ‘it has to be noted that aim and form of the action were miles ahead of the contemporary level of the movement’ (RZ 1983d, 29). According to the conceptualisations already developed, this sub-section argues that capabilities to learn are contingent upon different interpretations of armed struggle. Whether and to which degree discrepancies, frustrated anticipations, and external critique trigger internal reorientation depends on the ways in which ideology and organisational concepts are invoked in the groups’ ideologically rationalised reconstruction of reality.

Accordingly, groups which draw on avant-garde models and rigid ideologies closely related to a relatively stable and formulated interpretative scheme are least capable to process irritations cognitively. While difficulties associated with the revolutionary project are analysed and reflected extensively, inflexible, normative ideological frames limit the consequences of reflection. The BR, for instance, undergo a well-documented internal rift after a series of setbacks in the early 1980s in which two positions fiercely confront each other. The so-called ‘First Position’ maintains that ‘protracted war’ or ‘armed struggle for communism … is the strategy that guides the necessarily protracted conflict with the bourgeois state apparatus from beginning to end’ (BR [1984] 1996a, 506). In contrast, the ‘Second Position’ states that ‘the fighting initiative is (in non-revolutionary situations) not an “act of war”, but a fundamentally political act … the armed struggle is not a strategy’ (BR [1984] 1996b, 558). These supposedly irreconcilable positions still share much common
ground: none of them is willing or able to give up the crucial idea of the ‘fighting communist party’. Rather, the theoretical and later also organisational schism is due to irreconcilable discord over its correct interpretation as a fundamental recreation or re-interpretive adaptation of Lenin’s concept of the communist party (BR 1985, 7-8). The identification of a historically correct line hence inhibits fundamental adjustments to core elements of the worldview. Furthermore, as the vanguard is by self-definition and self-description basically right, frustrated anticipations can be relatively easily reinterpreted counterfactually and hinder substantial self-critique, as has been argued above (see section 3.4.4, p. 116).

In contrast, mass-militant perspectives with more flexible and less rigidly entrenched ideologies, it is argued, remain able to reinterpret fundamental elements of their belief system. Core ideological concepts can be significantly redefined if these seem no longer compatible with the state of consciousness within the movement strata to which clandestine groups refer. If such conceptualisations are managed as re-specifiable empty formulas in the first place, such a move does not immediately endanger internal coherence. Originally, the RZ, for instance, rationalise their dedication to internationalism and anti-imperialism in categorical terms when they state: ‘Yet, there is a part of our politics which, insofar as we have led the discussion, many comrades do not understand and accept … However, we still consider it appropriate’ (RZ 1975e, 227). Only a few years later, the same concepts are reread in pragmatic and relational terms as potential moments that unite sectorial struggles in times of declining mobilisation in which protest potentials drift apart: ‘anti-imperialist struggle means identifying and attacking the common denominator time and again and, with that, establishing a basis for the harmonisation and broadening of the revolutionary forces’ (RZ 1978d, 19, original emphasis).

Whether strategic frustrations result in tactical adjustment is furthermore contingent on the self-understanding of clandestine groups. As it has been argued above, self-declared vanguards depend on cohesive, closed and totalising interpretations of external realities to maintain strict ideological control (see section 3.4.4, p. 116). Groups tending towards this model are prone to rationalise even concrete tactics as an outcome of a correct line, that is, within the confinements of the ideologically rationalised strategy. If strategic choice is right in the light of an objective historico-political truth despite its current materialisation in the
antagonistic struggle, tactics can only be wrong to a limited degree. The RAF, for instance, declares in the light of devastating critique of the killing of an American private to obtain his ID from its ideational support base: ‘Today we state that the shooting of the GI was a mistake in the concrete situation’ (RAF 1986, 12). However, the tactic was wrong only insofar as the escalation was not properly explained and rationalised ‘since it only can follow from a thorough political and strategic definition’ (ibid.).

In contrast, mass-militant perspectives depend to a much lesser degree on controlling ideological systems according to an all-encompassing politico-historical teleology, as has been argued above (see point 3.4.4, p. 117). Strategy and tactics are therefore interrelated less rigidly: if fundamental ideological repositioning remains possible, tactical decisions a fortiori can be subject to substantial auto-critique. Particularly when an ideologically stabilised and secured, overarching and clearly defined strategy is less important for reproducing constructions of socio-political realities, doubts over the correct line and their implementation can be articulated, as the following RZ quote suggests: ‘instead of orienting ourselves towards that which was going on in the movements, we proceeded to intend to orient the movements towards that which we deemed politically explosive and necessary’ (RZ 1981d, 11). Generally speaking, it is contended that the tendency to inhibit irritations normatively and to avoid the difficult and uncomfortable process of cognitive learning should be less developed among self-proclaimed mass-militant formations.

Nevertheless it remains an open question whether this is just a different strategy of counterfactual immunisation. Just stating an alternative model for organising the armed struggle does not necessarily imply its factual existence as groups affiliated with the RZ network claim that ‘the certainty of a “social-revolutionary project” of the RZ’ only exists as discursive wishful thinking (RZ 1985a, 2). Hence, limited abilities to learn require that basic assumptions, for instance the existence of a ‘social revolutionary project’, can be maintained despite their actual volatility. The original decision to wage the armed struggle represents a historical self-commitment which has to be continually re-validated by the use of names, symbols, and speech figures. If fundamental contradictions cannot be inhibited any longer, it

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41 This is consciously formulated as an inversion of the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the dialectic relationship between strategy and tactic according to which the historically correct strategy can be realised by a variety of seemingly contradictory tactics.
is argued that the reproduction of the system becomes precarious. In a debate over the necessity to reposition militant left-wing politics, a Cell accordingly states: ‘subject to negotiation is our politico-organisational concept’ (RZ 1992c, 6).

To conclude, this sub-section contends that the more clandestine political violence is rationalised within an interpretational scheme that is not only closed and rigid in itself, but also oriented towards a theoretically grounded ideology, the less capable it is to react cognitively to frustrated anticipations. The more ideas of the armed vanguard dominate a group’s self-concept, the less likely it becomes that tactical mistakes trigger strategic learning processes. The requirement to inhibit central contradictions appears as the absolute boundary for the reproduction of clandestine political violence as a distinct social system. If it can be no longer maintained, the continuity of the autopoietic reproduction becomes precarious and dissolution probable.

### 3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed how a framework for analysing clandestine political violence that draws on Luhmann’s social systems theory allows for approaching relations between political communication and political violence differently. It has argued that such a perspective observes political violence as political communication, or more precisely as communication that strives for a position of radical dissidence from society and its deeply engrained moral, legal, and political norms while it still occurs within society and forms part of its wider network of communication — if only by the hostile reactions it evokes. Furthermore, the chapter contends that such a theoretical approach challenges assumptions about the communicative structure of clandestine political violence. When interpreting terrorism as a form of political communication by violence, analysts usually identify its communicative structure with the double bind that the same violent acts attempt to communicate totally different messages to totally different audiences. As violent communication, clandestine political violence is hence doomed to fail.

The conceptual and analytical framework proposed here problematizes this notion of communication and allows for asking how apparently failing communication strategies discursively reproduce clandestine political violence. The double bind does not disappear but is related to the specific problem of how groups reach beyond just being recognised as
public enemies. Specific and seemingly dysfunctional features within practices and statements of the clandestine armed struggle, for instance descriptions of the enemy, which are dehumanising and highly personalised at the same time, the notable absence of developed revolutionary visions or eclectic but rigidly observed and highly decisionistic ideologies, can be approached differently. These aspects of the communication structure of social-revolutionary, clandestine politically violent groups have been re-interpreted as essential elements in the discursive construction of dissident realities. The inability to disseminate specific messages appears less as a consequence of structural deficiencies but rather corresponds with the functional requirements of stabilising conflict constellations after mobilisation declines and widespread dissent disappears.

In so doing, the self- affirming communication of armed struggle further escalates the disruptive and polarising potential of protest, while differences in the level and mode of violent intervention influence how this semantics potentially become self-sustaining. High levels of violence and communicative closure are more likely to develop a larger degree of independence from external realities; interventionist, low-level strategies remain dependent on opportunities to relate symbolically to movement cycles in order to persist. The system-environment-difference of clandestine groups is communicatively constructed by separating friends from enemies in absolute terms, which still leave space for discursive re-specification. Whether these definitions are grounded in tangible and concrete socio-political conflict realities or mostly realise abstract ideological criteria again influences the sustainability of the distinction and its subsequent rationalisations. On the level of conditional programmes, ideological convictions either establish a rigidly integrated, unfalsifiable system for interpreting the world or provide empty signifiers to rationalise social and political struggles within a radical frame. Here, the persistence of interpretative frames either depends on ideological control or on maintaining the search for a political project of armed struggle.

Conceptualisations of the centre-periphery relations of groups tend towards models of an armed vanguard or ideas of radicalising broader movements into massive militant campaigns. While the first option more easily develops counterfactual functional equivalents of a broad support base, the second depends on the spread of violent repertoires to claim success and, in so doing, encounters problems of communicatively controlling this success.
Chapter 3 - Clandestine Political Violence as Political Communication: A Luhmannian Perspective

The attempt to establish structural couplings beyond being recognised as public enemies and preaching to the already convinced remains a constant feature of violent campaigns as long as its authors search for external legitimisations of the armed struggle. Finally, capabilities for systemic learning strike a balance between inhibiting central contradictions of the self-affirmative semantics of armed politics, permitting self-critical assessment and adapting to frustrated expectations. Differences in interpreting armed struggle, conditional programmes, and conceptualisations of centre-periphery-relations influence how long this balance can be maintained. To a certain degree and until a certain point, clandestine groups therefore depend upon immunising themselves against fundamental changes in the way they perceive and construct their world in order to persist in a hostile environment. According to Luhmann, this blind spot is a property of any social system. If it is observed within the system, it collapses. A disintegration of the discursive frame of reference often has more far-reaching consequences than defeat by external influence. The imprisoned members of the Belgian CCC, for instance, still defended the necessity of the armed struggle adamantly (CCC 1992, 3) when the remaining free RAF militants already had declared a permanent ceasefire arguing that their armed politics had come to a dead end (RAF [1992] 1997, 446). For clandestine, politically violent groups, the function of ideology is to prevent a collapse of the discursive frame.

In so doing, groups negotiate between flexibility and rigidity when admitting gradual changes that do not jeopardise worldviews as such. This comes at a price and results in a predominantly counterfactual reconstruction of the world. While society differentiates the function of normatively observing social facts onto a functional subsystem, the typically small clandestine groups lack this opportunity and tend towards normative over-integration which can enable groups to outlive the movement contexts from which they originally emerged. While success and failure are equally detrimental to social movements, the development of a semantic of armed struggle backed by intrinsically coherent ideologies can render clandestine groups relatively independent from the frustration of expectations. Groups might survive over substantial periods of time in spite of or rather because of the fact that their revolutionary hopes prove futile or stick to militant semantics even if materially defeated. Ultimately, the Luhmannian perspective allows for approaching the logics of clandestine political violence in a different way. Since rationality is not essentially moralised and the term implicates no value judgment, systems theory allows for a less
biased approach to idiosyncratic systemic rationalities. Consequently, it is possible to avoid projecting irrationality, dysfunctional organisational structures or defective political socialisation onto terrorist groups as an analytical point of departure. Furthermore, this perspective suggests that the self-descriptions which groups construct according to particular interpretations of their environment cannot be dismissed only because of the fact that they are ideologically biased. Rather, these constructions express systemic rationalities according to groups’ specific understandings of temporality, sociality, and factuality.

Analytical Strategy does not consist of methodological rules but rather of a strategy that addresses how the epistemologist will construct the observations of others – organisations or systems – to be the object of his own observations in order to describe the space from which he describes. From an epistemological point of view the perspective constructs both the observer and the observed. (Andersen 2003, XIII)

In contending that clandestine political violence ought to be interpreted as political communication by armed groups in a wider sense, the last chapter also argued that their communications, in the strict sense of their writings, are crucial for understanding the phenomenon. For this perspective, the ways in which clandestine actors communicate by publishing and disseminating texts provide insights into how they (re)construct socio-political reality. This chapter accordingly develops methods for analysing ‘terrorist literature’ (Cordes 1987a, 319) as performative and expressive discourse. Adopting Luhmann’s concept of ‘functional comparison’, which states that even the most dissimilar moments of sociality reproduce and are reproduced by similar functions (1998, 41-42), it is anticipated here that the ways of communicating by and about political violence also realise crucial elements of political discourse. From a discourse analysis perspective, Paul Chilton identifies three critical strategic functions of discourse in politics: (1) coercion and compliance, (2) representation and misrepresentation, and (3) legitimisation and de-legitimisation (Chilton 2004, 45-47). He contends that the latter represents the meta-function of discursive political strategies. Legitimising and delegitimising political choice is part and parcel of every political communication which intrinsically invokes a conception of the right and just constitution of society. Justifying and substantiating political action by whichever means relies, in political language, on constructing and reconstructing a binary opposition between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ or related concepts (ibid., 198-200).

Accordingly, it is argued here that successful coercion is contingent upon the invocation of a higher legitimised authority even if it only consists in the rightness of greater coercive means. Representations and misrepresentations, on the other hand, basically regulate access to information that determines what is right or wrong in a given situation and what thus can be legitimately known. Both other functions of political discourse depend on (de-)legitimisation by linguistic and non-linguistic means of communication. As the last
chapter has discussed, Luhmann conceptualises legitimacy in similar terms when he introduces it as the ‘contingency formula’ of politics (see section 3.2.1, p. 84). Legitimacy represents a specific and context-dependent rationalisation of a greater good of the political. Regardless of whether it is claimed by the centre of the political system as legitimate authority to make and execute universally binding decisions or contested in its periphery to invoke a right to resist this very authority, the legitimisation of politics is at stake (Luhmann 1987c). The difference between legitimacy and illegitimacy also represents an underlying factor of all conditions of continuity of clandestine political violence that have been conceptualised in the last chapter out of Luhmannian interpretations of conflict, protest, and social movements. The semantics of armed struggle invoke the higher legitimisation of history for using de-legitimised means and establish criteria for defining the enemy which can be legitimately targeted. Ideologically rationalised representations justify these decisions while boundary definitions regulate who is on the historico-political legitimised side. Finally, struggles over legitimacy have been explicitly discussed with regards to structural couplings and implicitly influence the normative limitations of systemic learning (for a summary see point 3.5).

Consequently, constructing an analytical strategy for approaching clandestine political violence from a thoroughly communicative angle involves reconciling discourse analysis and systems theory perspectives that allow for observing the ‘observations of others’ to paraphrase Niels Å. Andersen (2003). The chapter’s central aim is to concretise the conceptual framework developed in the last chapter into a methodological framework or analytical strategy that realises this condition. To this purpose, the chapter proceeds in six steps. After discussing differences and similarities between Andersen’s concept of ‘discursive analytical strategies’ (2003) and understandings of methodology in the first section, affinities and differences between critical linguistics and Luhmannian theory are elaborated. Thirdly, the chapter develops the conceptual underpinnings of the thesis’ analytical strategy before discussing the concrete elements of its methodological framework and introducing how the analytical strategy was adopted in the research process in a fifth subsection. Finally, these elements will be summarised into a system for encoding critical elements of meaning making in the communication of clandestine political violence.
4.1 Methodologies and Analytical strategies

As discussed in the chapter’s introductory remarks, questions of (de)legitimisation are central to the analysis of political discourse and the thesis’ discursive approach to the (re)production of political violence. However, these theoretical suppositions require concretisation, modification and translation to inform the framework for a discourse analysis of political violence in subsequent case studies. In this context, the Luhmannian conceptualisations developed in the last chapter are combined with discourse studies methods to develop concrete analytical tools for doing so. As Andersen’s above quoted remarks suggest, the theoretical shift to a radical constructivist perspective of second-order observations according to Luhmann implies a shift in relations between ontology, epistemology, and methodology. If and when all social formations are understood as systems of communication that observe their environment according to a primary distinction the study of social phenomena consists in observing observations; this description of the systemic programme of the social sciences challenges common understandings of the role of methodology (see point 3.1). Andersen argues that any second-order approach is epistemologically over-determined and consequently presupposes an empty ontology (2003, XII). Accordingly, ontology can only recognise the ontic quality of reality being as such without making any further claim about its concrete mode of being or is, as Oliver Kessler puts it, ‘based on a de-ontologization of its concepts’ (2009, 134).

This perspective, Andersen contends, cannot be reconciled with classical notions of the scientific process, according to which strict methodologies mediate between ontologically over-determined facts and the epistemological limitations of observing these facts. Rather, it requires developing ‘Discursive Analytical Strategies’ as his book and eponymous approach are entitled (Andersen 2003). He characterises such strategies by the need to actively and explicitly choose an observer position which is necessarily contingent and presupposes ‘something in order to recognise and observe the object’ (ibid., XIII, original emphasis). Working with analytical strategies implies laying bare and reflexively questioning presuppositions about the object of study or, for that matter, to de-ontologise it by not ascribing any predefined qualities to this very object outside of the research process. This approach to knowledge calls for meticulously reflecting on the reasons for choosing a perspective, which is constructed by the observer, and for giving an account of the likely
consequences of choosing a specific analytical strategy as it inevitably allows for seeing some aspects while neglecting others (ibid., IX-XVI).

Andersen's remarks on differences between classical notions of the research process and second-order conceptualisations are highly relevant and highlight the specific difficulties involved in methodologically translating a theoretical perspective rooted in a radical constructivist epistemology into a concrete analytical programme. However, it is doubted here whether the distinction between method and analytical strategy is as clear-cut and straightforward as Andersen puts it for two reasons. Firstly, Luhmann's ontological position is more complex than the notion of an empty ontology implies. He programmatically states in 'Social Systems': ‘The following considerations assume that there are systems. Thus they do not begin with epistemological doubt’ (Luhmann 1995a, 12). While Hans-Georg Moeller interprets this take on reality as clearly embracing critical realist ontology (Moeller 2012, 79), William Rasch is more cautious and reads it as a quasi-ontological grounding of Luhmann's theoretical architecture (Rasch 2013, 40). However, both attempts to reappropriate a radical interpretation of Luhmannian theory argue that its ontic or even ontological underpinnings presuppose a notion of reality that cannot be accessed directly in observations but is nevertheless a condition of possibility for constructing social realities. In other words, an actually existing material reality, although not completely substantially defined, is the precondition for constructing system-specific realities and purposes that regulate the respective reconstruction of reality (Moeller 2012, 81-84; Rasch 2013, 49-53).

Secondly, Luhmann is less concerned about the (im)possibility of methodology in a theory, which assumes that nothing but second-order observations are possible, than Andersen's remarks suggest. Nonetheless, he harshly criticises classical and critical understandings of the role of methods in the research process as both aim at establishing concordance between thinking and being. While the former dissolve complex social realities into manageable variables, the latter confront supposedly dominant and manifest conceptions of social normality with their latent underpinnings from a self-assumed, normatively grounded critical position. Hence, epistemological conservatism is inherent to both conventional and critical perspectives (Luhmann 1995b, 177). Rather, Luhmann argues that methods should enable the researcher and his or her research to surprise itself by interrupting the 'immediate continuum of reality and knowing' or, as it were, between being and thinking (Luhmann 1998, 36-37). Methodology cannot introduce an external point of
Chapter 4 - Methodology as Discursive Analytical Strategy: Linking Theory and Methods of Enquiry

Reference independently from the theoretically predisposed observer position and the specific difference it makes. In other words, theory and methodology are, according to Luhmann, inherently interwoven. The theoretical construction of the knowable influences what we can know about (social) reality. The aim of theoretically grounded methods is, then, to condition this circular logic by introducing conceptualisations as choices with specific consequences and providing reasons for choosing concepts with specific meanings in transparent and self-reflexive ways that remain open to critique and subsequent revisions (Luhmann 1995a, 479). At this juncture, Luhmann concretises his considerations by suggesting the method of functional comparison already discussed above (see above point 3.1, p. 73), which approaches even extremely disparate social facts within the same conceptual frame of reference.

4.2  (Socio)Linguistic methodologies and Luhmannian theory: Elective affinities and differences

The qualifying remarks on Andersen’s strict distinction between methodologies and discursive analytical strategies have highlighted why and to which degree this difference is meaningful for the thesis’ analytical framework. Firstly, Andersen rightly points out that the methodological implementation of a Luhmannian perspective is not straightforward; theory and methods are inseparably interwoven and cannot be tidily dissected. Method is not just the translation of a theoretical position, nor does theory immediately suggest a certain methodological protocol. Secondly, the theoretical perspective does not preclude methods from being an important element in the study of social phenomena. This chapter understands analytical strategies as a specific form of constructing methods of enquiry rather than as a counter-concept to methodology: a form that does not deny the essential element of choice and construction that is implicit in any form of reasoning about society and societal phenomena (Gouveia 2003, 56). Interestingly enough, there is an elective affinity between Luhmann’s system theory and positions related to systemic linguistics, sociolinguistics, social semiotics, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Three aspects of theoretical and epistemological relations are particularly remarkable.

First of all, Luhmann points out that Hallidayan systemic functional grammar provides a theoretical language that addresses aspects of communication which sociological theory is
either unable to address or unaware of (Luhmann 1998, 37-38). According to M.A.K. Halliday, the ‘system network’ of language depends on meaning which is constituted by interconnections of potential and necessary choice:

It represents a language, or any part of a language, as a resource for making meaning by choosing. Each choice point in the network specifies (1) an environment, consisting of choices already made, and (2) a set of possibilities of which one is (to be) chosen; (1) and (2) taken together constitute a system in this technical sense. (Halliday 1985, xxvii)

In this regard language, or more precisely its semantic system, are conceptualised as functions of making sense in ideational, interpersonal, and textual terms. Language does not just represent, but actively co-creates the social. Meaning-making or the semantic function of language depends on interrelating textual symbols according to perceptions of reality, to constructions of social relation including social order and to their textural and intertextual organisation (Halliday 1978a). In so doing, the use of language is unavoidably selective and addresses that which remains excluded by using a particular referencing system (Halliday 1978c, 60). This perspective on the ways in which language communicates by interconnecting and differentiating resonates with the Luhmannian understanding of meaning in which sense emerges from the difference between the actual and the potential (see above point 3.2.1 p. 82). When Luhmann emphasises the theoretical depth of systemic functional grammar, he refers to Hallidayan reflections on the complex and multimodal referencing structure of text and language which also establishes an important link between systemic linguistics and CDA (Fairclough 1995f, 6).

Secondly, critical approaches to the study of discourse that are interested in the social functions of language and language use mirror the Luhmannian considerations on epistemology, methodology, and theory previously discussed. Different voices highlight that theoretical background and methods of enquiry of any study of social realities are closely intertwined. The manifest and, more often than not, immanent objectives of respective theories therefore influence analytical strategies. Consequently, authors do not claim that discourse analysis establishes a unified methodology but point to important links between theoretical and methodological perspectives (among others: van Dijk 2007; Wodak and Meyer 2009). The classical distinction between theory and its application in concrete studies mediated by methodology is re-defined both in Luhmann’s social theory and discourse studies.
Thirdly, Luhmannian thought is either explicitly referenced in contributions to discourse studies or can be implicitly linked to their concepts. Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak mention Luhmann’s work as one of the ‘grand theories’ that influence the development of CDA (Weiss and Wodak 2003, 6). More specifically, they argue that critical approaches to the study of discourse require re-conceptualising relations between system, action, and subject or micro- and macro-contexts. Symbolic practices do not simply take place in social systems, but (re)produce and transform these structures; the acting subject is accordingly a social and semantic construct which allows for attributing such practices, not a constituent part of society. Consequently, Weiss and Wodak state that ‘engaging in an action equals system reproduction, or in our concrete case text production equals system reproduction’ (ibid., 10).

These conceptualisations of interrelations between process and structure reflect the idea of autopoietic emergence and reproduction that results in dynamically stabilised structurations (see above point 3.2.1, p. 81). Besides, Carlos A. Gouveia advocates an understanding of language and the thematic organisation of communications in society as a difference between open potentiality and its discursive manifestation highly reminiscent of the ways in which Luhmann approaches meaning. He contends that ‘language has to be seen as a set of multileveled layers of meaning in interconnection, which may only be defined by the interconnections ... with yet other interconnections’; accordingly, language emerges as the difference ‘between a meaning potential and its realization in discourse’ (Gouveia 2003, 55-56). In a similar vein, Michael Stubbs argues that linguistic semiosis is the result of complex selective processes that depend on ‘language potential from which selections are made as the potential is realized in a particular text’ (1996, 34). Finally, Philip Graham and Bernard McKenna outline a framework for discourse analysis in the theoretical and analytical sense which adopts the concept of autopoietic systemic (re)production to criticise rationally over-determined approaches. The authors suggest that autopoiesis, especially its re-formulation in sociological terms by Luhmann, is not just compatible with socio-linguistic approaches. Rather, it also helps in conceptualising how language use shapes, maintains, and changes systemic self-descriptions, for instance when system-specific idiosyncratic notions of rationality and purpose are constructed (Graham and McKenna 2000, 48-51).

However, elective affinities cannot gloss over significant differences between Luhmann’s theoretical position and central aspects of some discourse studies approaches, particularly CDA. Most obviously, the normative understanding of critique within CDA is at
odds with the Luhmannian position on the possibility of a critical science discussed earlier in this chapter (see point 4.1). Norman Fairclough contends that the main goal of a critical study of discourse is to analyse how ‘semiosis figures in the establishment, reproduction and change of unequal power relations’ (Fairclough 2010b, 231). Here, discursive meaning-making is understood as structurally embedded and institutionally situated social practice by language use which is inevitably related to power. CDA focuses on the ways in which semiosis, the production of meaning, and ideology are linguistically mediated in the reproduction of specific social formations (Fairclough et al. 2011, 360). The analysis of language use is not only a research programme but also a politically engaged research practice that aims at advancing emancipatory goals (Titscher et al. 2000, 147). However, these categorical definitions of critique and political aspirations have caused objections, even among authors sympathetic to a critical project in studies of discourse.

Michael Billig points to the dangers of establishing a critical orthodoxy by transforming heterogeneous approaches that critically examine social preconditions and effects of language practices into a successful, marketable scientific brand with its own canonised authors, disciplinary history, and sub-divisions (Billig 2003). He also emphasises the performative contradiction that critical discourse studies relies on some of the linguistic constructions which they criticise as instances of ideological reproduction. Namely, ‘nominalization’, the substitution of verbal clauses by noun phrases, and ‘passivization’, the increasing use of the passive voice, two mechanisms which supposedly fulfil ideological functions by mystifying agency and simulating neutrality are also prominent features of critical approaches (idem 2008, 788). Another set of critiques addresses relations between ideological language use and the maintenance of established socio-political formations, a foundational supposition of CDA. Cognitive studies, Chilton argues, suggest that linguistic information is processed by the subjects which CDA aims to emancipate in complex ways. They actually resist ideologically motivated (mis)representations to a much greater degree than CDA assumes (Chilton [2005] 2013, 36-38). Accordingly, he argues that a nearly exclusive focus on ‘language in the service of power’ obfuscates the linguistic richness of political discourse. Ultimately, reductionism impinges on the formulation of perplexing and interesting questions – the central purpose of critical research (idem 2004, 198). In a similar vein, Gouveia contends that CDA has to avoid projecting a specific reading, namely a critique of ideology, onto discourse if it takes its own constructivist epistemology seriously;
otherwise, it risks reifying the very power structures it set out to criticise (Gouveia 2003, 57-59).

Luhmann’s deep-seated scepticism regarding the possibility of self-ascribed critical positions reflects these latter doubts about the critical potential of the critical project. One of the consequences of a radical constructivist perspective, he argues, is that any theoretical position that claims to observe society and all its manifestations from an external perspective becomes impossible. If ideology is a social construct, than the critique of ideology and its societal functions is also socially constructed. Critical perspectives which neglect this consequence reify the critique of reification. In Luhmann’s words ‘there is no privileged point of view, and the critic of ideology is no better off than the ideologue’ (Luhmann 1994b, 28). Consequently he does not criticise Frankfurt School inspired approaches for being radical, but for not being radical enough. In assuming that it is still possible to construct an enlightened observer position that allows for looking behind the manifest qualities of communication, such ways of observing replicate the subject-object-distinction and aim at the unity of ideal and reality or ought and is (Moeller 2012, 31). The ongoing search for a non-conflictive, non-differential representation of society in society or social integration according to a critical ideal ignores the contradictory factuality of modern society (Luhmann 2002b). Therefore, it is argued here that it is both theoretically justified and methodologically interesting to adopt some of the methodological tools and positions developed in critical linguistic approaches without buying into their specific narrative of critique. The remainder of this chapter develops methods of analysis based on these considerations.

4.3 Discourse as text in context: A framework for an analytical strategy

Despite explicit theoretical and methodological heterogeneity, critical approaches to discourse studies share a common point of departure beyond the understanding of critique and its social functions, introduced and problematized in the previous subsection: an interest in the resources and processes of discursive meaning-making as social practice (Fairclough et al. 2011, 357-358). Due to their background in socio-linguistics and social semiotics, these perspectives emphasise that the discursive analysis of texts depends on close textual analysis of meaning making. Text, defined as interactive social practice in
written and spoken language, does not only represent but also constructs socio-political realities (Fairclough 1995f, 4-5; Wodak and Meyer 2009, 31). In other words, the semiotic content or meaning of a text cannot be fully understood without exploring its form or linguistic organisation and vice versa; form and content are inseparably interwoven and texture is an integral part of the text (Fairclough 1995d, 188). For the purpose of this chapter, the development of an analytical strategy for the study of clandestine political violence as self-referential discourse that reproduces discursive communities, this implies two additional suppositions for a socially embedded study of discourse. Firstly, it is argued that the ways in which the construction of socio-political reality according to the semantics of armed struggle are concretely articulated both influence and are influenced by processes of meaning-making. Secondly and following from that, it is expected that processes of communicatively (re)producing a discourse of revolt or revolutionary identity in non-revolutionary times express themselves in linguistically specific ways. The practice of clandestine political violence, in other words, is likely to result in a language of clandestine political violence. Before developing concrete tools for exploring this language, the section discusses the methodological frame of reference for doing so.

According to critical discourse study perspectives, ‘linguistic systems’ are characterised by the interplay between lexicography and lexicalisations, grammatical and syntactic structure, phonological articulation, textual organisation, and the construction of semantics (Fairclough 1995d, 188). These systems not only metaphorically represent specific social processes and practices, but also are an immediate, material manifestation of these. Discursively reified practices which are naturalised in discourse symbolically represent particular ideologies. Struggles over lexical labels for social practices are hence interpreted as attempts to change social realities by naturalising alternative, counter-hegemonic, and resistant lexicalisations (Fairclough 1995a, 32-34). In this regard, socio-linguistic approaches highlight the function of specialised jargon and political slogans that necessarily reduce social complexity in the construction of secondary, linguistically mediated realities. Strategies that involve reifying ideologically and politically motivated readings of social facts are by no means exclusive to dominant discourse, but occur also in social critique (Wodak 1989, 140-144).

Beyond CDA’s focus on language in power, the socio-linguistic approach to power encompasses practices of negotiation, contention, and struggle over discursive dominance.
(Wodak and Meyer 2009, 10). Consequently, Teun van Dijk argues that it is possible to analyse the function of discourse in and for society in critical ways without presupposing a specific relation between discursive reproduction and the reproduction of socio-political inequalities. In other words, social practice is always enacted discursively and can be critically studied on the level of language use (van Dijk 1997, 24). Text refers in this regard to materialisations of social action in communicative events that transcend the immediate reality of short-lived speech situation and establish ‘semiotically significant material artifacts’ (Lemke 2003, 30). Texts are further organised into different genres, styles, and registers which represent socially validated ways of language use, are linked to certain social institutions or types of activity, and form patterns of meaning in the social world (Stubbs 1996, 11). In so doing, texts are constituents of discourse and part of a network of intertextual and interdiscursive linkages. They relate to other texts and discourses explicitly or implicitly by means of direct cross-reference, evocation, argumentative transfer, or the attempt to re-contextualise established meanings in different referencing structures. These contexts represent another critical element of linguistically oriented discourse studies. It refers, often simultaneously, to the immediate co-textual discourse or the linguistic and referential structure of text itself; to intertextual and interdiscursive contexts of co-articulated meanings; to institutional and other extra-linguistic settings; and finally to the wider socio-historical, socio-economic, and socio-political macro-context of specific discourses (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 89-93).

‘Discourse’ is accordingly ‘a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective’ (Fairclough 1995f, 14). A set of interrelated socially and cognitively mediated processes is involved in discursive signifying practices. Meaning is coded by the use of grammar, syntax, and lexicography, the ‘morpho-syntactic coding’, while routines of speaking and writing regulate how meaning is inferred from these; both steps require planning and interpreting what is meant by the semantic code (Tomlin et al. 1997, 65-66). Accordingly, it is argued that discourse has to be approached on interacting analytical levels: in terms of its linguistic expression and in terms of its intertextual relatedness. Relations to other texts are realised in specific and distinct lexicalisations and these relations, in turn, influence different linguistic realisations and genre variation

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42 Douglas Biber points out that the use of these terms is not consistent within the wider socio-linguistic community and claims that ‘register’ represents the only widely used general concept (Biber 1995, 8-9)
(Fairclough 1995d, 191-193). In this sense, textuality focuses on the social origins of producing, reading and understanding text. Social semiotic perspectives contend that all forms of meaning-making are situated to some degree in the field of politics as they refer to relations of power and are therefore contentious and contested (Kress et al. 1997, 259).

Ways of producing and disseminating text, the so-called ‘discourse practices’, are considered as constitutive elements of wider discursive fields. Since specific forms of text production and dissemination relate textual discourse back to the wider context of social practices from which it emerges, the study of ‘discourse practice’ is an integral aspect of discourse study (Fairclough 1995b, 133-134). Analytically significant elements of discursive practices include ways of accessing established communication channels, attempts to circumvent obstacles for doing so, and struggles to establish alternative forms of communicating dissident, counterhegemonic voices (Fairclough 1995f, 2 and 10-12). The visual qualities of disseminated text, its circulation mode, and the genres and overarching discursive structures complement the analysis. These aspects of discourse practice establish the situatedness of texts within their wider socio-political context (Fairclough 1995b, 156-157; 1995e, 106-107). Discursive practices are usually multi-layered, complex phenomena which combine and interlink a plethora of styles, discourses, forms, and meanings. Identifying the various layers involved in meaning-making is hence an integral task for studying discourse and its practice (Fairclough 2010a, 540-541).

The emergence of distinct genres and styles in discursively mediated social practice or register variance is considered to be related to non-linguistic circumstances of specific socio-political situations in which text is produced and perceived. Context variables include differences in purpose, participants’ relations, levels of interaction, and modes of text production and dissemination. Suzanne Eggins and J.R. Martin distinguish three crucial dimensions. Firstly, the contextual mode of immediate or delayed, direct or indirect, written or spoken communication influences communicative situations. Secondly, the roles performed and enacted by text producers establish its tenor. Finally, the level of technicality and specificity which discursive lexis and intertextual references presuppose constructs the field of a discourse (Eggins and Martin 1997, 233-234). If the ways in which social conditions are perceived and linguistically expressed reach a high level of distinctiveness, they may result in sub-languages: highly specific registers of language use that organise restricted domains of meaning and subject matters (Biber 1995, 7). Halliday discusses the concept of
anti-language, the observation that modes of resistance in society are frequently generative of and generated by alterations in language use, in this context (Halliday 1976). Instances of distinct collocations, lexicographic idiosyncrasies and the co-occurrences of particular linguistic features, including tense and aspect markers, sentence structure and the level of lexical specificity or generality, are indicative of a sub-language (Biber 1995, 15).

Preferences in the selection and co-selection of specific expressions, clauses, and lexical items point to distinctive, idiosyncratic patterns of language use, so-called idiolects. While text production often follows idiomatic patterns, longer sentence structures entail more instances of creative choice; similarities between frequent co-selections and other articulations of idiosyncratically bound choice therefore become significant (Coulthard 2007). As a lexico-grammatical system in the wide sense of a network of linguistically mediated semantics, language use depends not only on choice but also balances freedom and constraint. The co-selection of distinct lexical items and grammatical structures establishes routines that regulate and structure discourse according; this occurs on the wider, more general scale of dominant meaning-making as well as in more localised, bound and particular discourses (Stubbs 1996, 36-45). Since patterns of co-occurrence are not easily established in the analysis of text corpuses, the theoretical identification of basic dichotomies and their linguistic expressions, which are expected to relate to variations in the co-occurrence of different items, are preconditions for the empirical analysis of register variation (Biber 1995, 35-37). As a method for the analysis of context-dependent functional variation in language use, register and genre analysis therefore involves two interrelated steps: (1) contextually conceptualising which ‘meanings will be at risk’ and how they might be linguistically encoded in text(s) and (2) inferring the context in which a given text has been produced including its ideational and ideological aspects (Eggins and Martin 1997, 236-237).

4.4 Texture and context in writing clandestine political violence

One of the fundamental assumptions of this thesis is that the temporarily limited persistence of groups that employ clandestine political violence for self-declared revolutionary aims in non-revolutionary times is contingent upon the emergence and reproduction of a discourse community that allows for sustaining the communication of
armed struggle. Consisting of the group itself, more or less peripheral support structures and a set of structural couplings in the form of a counter-public of ‘supposedly interested third parties’ (Münkler 1980, 320), it has been argued that this discursive community is largely imagined in and by symbolic practices. This general hypothesis implies a secondary, more specific proposition: the ways in which a discursive community of clandestine political violence is symbolically (re)produced also result in a specific register variation or a language of clandestine political violence. Answering the question of whether and to which degree linguistic variation represents a sub-language involves, according to approaches to register variation discussed above, two elements: theoretically identifying central semantic contradictions or ‘meanings at risk’ and conceptualising their expected linguistic encodings. The theoretical approach to the self-referential differentiation and reproduction of a semantic of ‘armed struggle’ developed above fulfils the first requirement (see point 3.4). Just as the conceptual propositions represent the thesis’ original theoretical contribution, their methodological implementation builds on previous discussions of discourse studies methods’ and adapts them in original ways. The aim of this sub-section is to develop the expected lexico-grammatical realisations of ‘meanings at risk’ in the reproduction of clandestine political violence. It is argued that these meanings are encoded by the use of specific lexicalisations and imagery, forms of intonation and addressing, and particular grammatical and textual structures.

Two interrelated questions guide this crucial step in establishing a methodologically grounded analytical strategy. These include whether a clearly distinguishable genre of ‘terrorist literature’ exists and whether and how an ‘ideolect’ – an idiolect that articulates ideologically motivated re-interpretations of complex socio-political realities – manifests itself. Contributions in terrorism studies that emphasise the importance of studying writings by clandestine groups and participants in armed struggle usually do not address these questions. Either, they explicitly presuppose that ‘terrorist literature’ constitutes a specific textual sub-category (Cordes 1987a, 321-323; Pluchinsky 1992, 35-40), or ground the analysis of significant differences in terrorist articulations of established genres, including ideological-theoretical interventions or autobiographical accounts, implicitly on such a presupposition (Fetscher et al. 1981; Rapoport 1988). While it is reasonable to assume that political communication by extraordinary, violent means reflects on its actual discursive and textual rationalisation, justification, and legitimisation, it is also necessary to reassess
interrelations between politically violent practice and textual expression. It is argued here that methodologically conceptualising and systematically analysing ways in which this interrelation articulates itself is a precondition to go beyond relatively trivial findings. Studies of the writings of armed groups reveal, for instance, a common ‘need to rationalise and justify what they do’ (Cordes 1987a, 332) or the eclectic properties of terrorist ideologies that privilege the rationalisation of practice over theoretical rigour (Fetscher et al. 1981, 179–183). While such observations provide a point of departure, this chapter argues that discourses of clandestine political violence are more complex.

According to the methodological frame of reference discussed above, a strategy for the textual analysis of register variation in discourses of clandestine political violence includes inferences not only from their concrete texture but also on their context. How these interrelated aspects of a supposedly distinctive sub-genre of terrorist writing are expected to be realised linguistically follows from the analytical dimensions of meaning making distinguished above. In so doing, a methodological strategy for the textual analysis of communication by and of clandestine political violence in subsequent chapters focuses, on the one hand, on aspects of texture in groups’ writings and asks whether and how these texts are linguistically encoded, constructed, and structured in characteristic, idiosyncratic ways that establish a selective sub-genre. Crucial elements of the analysis include the textual organisation and sequencing of statements according to repetitive schemes or in less coherent ways; whether long-winded and complex syntax or rather succinct and simple patterns characterise sentence construction; which diction and specific word-families are articulated in specific and formal registers or more idiomatic ways; instances of nominalization, passivization and technologization which point to a language of domination and control; and finally the relational structure of texts which employ ‘deictic expressions’ such as pronouns or markers of tempo-spatial distance to ‘relate the uttered indexical expression to various situational features’ (Chilton 2004, 56).

In relation to the contextual embedding of discourses of armed struggle, textual comparison focuses on intertextual qualities expressed in writings across different groups and across time. Analytically important aspects encompass ways of representing socio-

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43 ‘Register’ is here and in other instances, where the argument does not refer to the overarching register variance of a genre, understood in the more narrow sense of a specialised and/or technical vocabulary according to specific social situations (Wardhaugh 2010, 232)
political context in concrete and tangible terms or in more abstract and general formulations; constructions of purpose, goals and means-ends-relations in concrete reference to societal discourse or in largely auto-referential ways; representations and reconstructions of external authorities such as theories of revolution, historical examples or specific conflict histories; and interrelations between violent practice and its reflection in text production. In this regard, it is argued that it makes a difference whether writing mainly takes place on the occasion of action, which delimits opportunities for cross-referencing socio-political context, or is independent from specific activism, which provides opportunities for a more diverse contextual embedding. Whether interconnections between action and rationalisation are temporarily and factually close, disconnected, sequenced, delayed or only gradual is also significant: the less distance the more violence has to speak for itself and the less leeway for politically and ideologically rationalising it.

The chapter contends that a potential sub-language, based on expected interrelations between violent practice and textual representation, is realised as jargon or according to Wodak as ‘a special language which is based on the common language, but which contains special features in the lexical, semantic and syntactic areas’ (1989, 141). On the lexical level, the specialised language relies on newly coined or ideologically reinterpreted expressions which are used iteratively to normalise specific understandings, like the coining and persistent use of the SIM by the BR (see above point 3.4.2, p. 111). Semantically, this is supported by techniques of changing, narrowing, and redefining meanings such as euphemism, pejoration, circumlocutions, antonomasia, personalisation, synecdoche, stereotyping, or de-humanisation. This feature is most prominently illustrated by vilifying victims as ‘pigs’ or reifying their role as symbols of ‘the rule of pigs over humans’ (B2J [1972] 2001, 12). In syntactical terms, the jargonistic language of political discourse is realised by a set of related mechanisms. While over-complex noun and verbal phrases condense, constrict, and narrow semantic expressiveness, increasing reliance on the passive voice obfuscates agency and responsibility. Finally, emphasis, recapitulation, and merely rhetorical introductory, transitioning and concluding phrases which only restate claims represent attempts of normalising jargon (Wodak 1989, 142-143). Theories of genre and register variation, especially Wodak’s reflections on jargonalisation in political discourse, provide ways of concretising the analytical strategy. It is argued here that discourses of (de)legitimisation in communications by and of clandestine political violence realise
tendencies towards jargon in specific ways. In each of the six dimensions of systemic reproduction, particular lexico-grammatical realisations of ‘meanings at risk’ are expected to occur.

### 4.4.1 Encoding the communication of armed struggle

The communication of armed struggle (see section 3.4.1), it is argued, expresses itself in a process parallel to Fairclough’s observation of the increasing marketization and technologization of discourse in ideological language use (Fairclough 1995b): the militarisation of political language. The proliferation of lexical registers of war and military in groups’ writings and the forms in which these registers are used provide an assessment of the degree to which language is militarised. The frequent use of expressions form these word families, including the martial terminology of ‘struggle’, ‘battle’, and related concepts as well as military vocabularies of detachments, rank, and command (see Table: Encoding ‘Meanings at Risk’ p. 161), indicates high levels of militarisation. Apart from these register choices, a register shift is expected: the increasing collocation of political and military lexicalisations is symptomatic of shifting conceptualisations of politics. These manifest themselves most likely in the re-appropriation of terms of the highly politicised warfare of the 20th century like ‘class warfare’ and ‘people’s war’ for radical writings. Employing related lexicalisations as regular vehicles of meaning-making normalises the reconstruction of politics as war. In contrast, it is also significant whether the semantic field of politics is also articulated without military and martial collocations in the writing of armed groups; the less these registers are interwoven, the less developed are militarisation tendencies.

As the semantics of armed struggle have also been associated with strong decisionism and a forceful sense of mission, which depend on constructing the historico-political necessity of politically violent interventions, it is expected that these elements find specific linguistic expressions. First of all, it is likely that decisionistic teleology is syntactically realised by a prevalence of affirmative statements since an authoritative interpretation of reality and not its deliberative negotiation is key for confirming these semantics. Declarative and imperative sentences prevail while interrogations mainly figure as rhetoric tools and not as genuine markers of uncertainty or doubt. With regard to the lexical aspects of constructing historico-political legitimacy, a high frequency of expressions related to history
and theories of historical transformation is anticipated, including ‘development’, ‘phase’ and
‘tendency’ as well as dialectically contrasting pairs like ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ or
‘destruction’ and ‘reconstruction’. Michel Wieviorka argues that late 20th century European
armed left formations operate in an interim space between a declining conflict scheme and
the emergence of a new one (Wieviorka 2009, 17); consequently, complex navigations
between past and future are expected to invoke the present as a transitional phasen to
legitimise violence.44

Since it has been argued above that level and mode of confrontation further
distinguish different forms of concretising armed struggle, both aspects are likely to be
reflected in communicative patterns. The level of confrontation, the most-important non-
linguistic element of violent communication, is related to tactics, action repertoires and
targeting patterns (della Porta 1995, 119-129). Crucial variables are the objects, means and,
outcomes of attacks as well as their intended direction and stated purpose (see Table:
Encoding ‘Meanings at Risk’ p. 161). Encoding different modes of struggle in relation to
levels of violence is related to anticipated lexical differences: while highly violent repertoires
most likely activate scripts in which illegality becomes a quality of its own in a martial
language of power, leadership, guidance and unity, low level violence is expected to
articulate tendencies, relationality, and militancy while communicating clandestine activism
in the sense of imparting its logics. Another crucial feature in this regard is whether
differences in mode and level of intervention correlate with different ways of invoking time
and history. It is anticipated that the more a broader movement remains a significant point
of reference, the more specific the conflict histories which are invoked in future-oriented,
open reference structure.

4.4.2 Linguistic realisations of the basic distinction

Regarding the basic difference between friend and enemy (see section 3.4.2),
vocabularies for identifying, addressing, and justifying the essential, supposedly
insurmountable antagonism are central to the analysis. It is argued here that the lexical
encoding of irreconcilable hostility has to accomplish two functions: it specifies more or less

44 In a similar vein, Waldmann categorises the temporal reference structure of terrorism according to different
ideologies as redeeming the past, influencing the future, or transcending worldly time (Waldmann 2005a).
concretely who the enemy is in concrete situations and creates morally over-determined distance that allows for the transgression of socially entrenched norms when dealing with the enemy. Labelling the adversary closely reflects the discursive strategies of ‘naming’ and ‘predication’: Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak argue that these common strategies create linguistic references and discursive identifiers for objects, social actors, and processes by the reiterative use of specific deixis, tropes, attributions, and related theoretical devices (Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 93-94). In terms of deictic markers, the reiterative use of us-them-distinctions in notions of the fighting self and the reactionary other are expected to represent the most common encoding of the distinction. It is argued that second-coding this bifurcation into moral and existential categories, including ‘good’ and ‘evil’ or ‘living’ and ‘being lived’, relate its foundational exclusion to socially validated semantic fields; historical and political vocabularies that transport definite value judgements, such as Nazi-comparisons, provide means for doing so.

While the last aspect already suggests which tropes are relevant for (re)producing the essential difference, it is anticipated that distinct registers also realise the double function of specifying and distancing the enemy by identifying and devaluing him or her. Two specialised vocabularies are particularly convenient in this regard: the register of crime transports a strong value judgement and allows for vilifying representatives of power while the register of hunting, which includes a wide imagery of animal behaviour, even dehumanises the antagonist when used to identify him or her. Parallel to previously discussed likely register shifts, it is expected that the languages of morality, crime and hunting are also collocated with political terms. Furthermore, a jargon of political hostility is anticipated to result in syntactic idiosyncrasies, namely the frequent use of contrasting constructions when interrelating expressive statements by contrast. The level of textual abstraction in describing the enemy is also crucial for encoding bifurcations discursively: whether it represents a de-personalised hypothetical entity or a concrete, (quasi)personalised figuration, also matters for attributing responsibility.

4.4.3 Semantic aspects of conditional programmes

On the level of programming the armed struggle (see section 3.4.3), attention shifts to ways in which target selection is discursively realised and, in doing so, supposedly justified
by constructing reasons and purposes for action and practice. Drawing on Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s remarks that legitimation reconstructs an institutional order as ‘objectively available and subjectively plausible’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967, 110), Theo van Leeuwen argues that strategies of legitimisation in discourse usually manifest themselves in a mix of different elements that relate specific statements to sources that legitimise their truth or plausibility.\(^45\) He distinguishes four functions of legitimisation: 1) invoking personal authority by virtue of status, expertise, or role-model and impersonal authorisation by virtue of tradition, customs, law, and conformity; 2) referring to ‘often very oblique’ systems of moral values; 3) appealing to notions of rationality and instrumental relations between means and ends; and 4) creating mythopoetic narratives ‘that is, legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions’ (van Leeuwen 2007, 92). These different elements of legitimisation are linguistically performed by realising argumentative strategies which relate authorisation, moralisation, rationalisation, and mythologisation to a notion of what is perceived as reasonable, correct, and right (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, 110). The semantic analysis of conditional programming in groups’ writings accordingly focuses on the ways in which the legitimacy of armed politics is constructed by invoking different elements of discursive legitimisation strategies.

Authoritative status is expected to be drawn from invoking personal revolutionary examples, especially ‘fallen comrades’ and ‘political prisoners’. These examples might include socially and geographically distant personifications of status authority, especially when concrete points of reference are scarce in groups’ own histories. ‘Verbal process clauses’, which express an ‘obligation modality’ by virtue of moral authorisation (van Leeuwen 2007, 94), are anticipated to employ indirect, passive ways of invoking authority: revolutionary examples, for instance, ‘call for’, ‘remind of’ or ‘oblige to’ follow in their footsteps, but are rarely directly referenced. Invoking authors of revolutionary and guerrilla theory, conceptual discussions within the radical left, and the writings of other armed groups represent another, more direct form of claiming theoretical and expert authority. It is also expected that expertise, status and theoretical legitimacy merge, since the practitioner of resistance is by virtue of his or her ‘revolutionary’ experience likely to be considered a

\(^{45}\) In so doing, van Leeuwen’s argument realises in itself two forms of legitimation by authority: the authority of quoting an established voice of academic discourse and the authority of conformity by using the adverb ‘usually’ (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, 104-105).
theoretical authority. In a similar vein, it is argued that ideological convictions and revolutionary theory are invoked in ways that resist a clear-cut distinction between impersonal authority, instrumental and theoretical rationalisation, and moral legitimacy claims. Ideology and theory are expected to manifest themselves as sources of revolutionary tradition and extra-legal proletarian justice, that is, by claiming the impersonal authorisation of a higher level order. This is realised either in verbal process clauses or by keywords indicating causality and historicity such as ‘rule’, ‘consequence’, ‘precondition’, or ‘tradition’ and ‘their cognate adjectives and adverbs ... which often appear in impersonal clauses’ (van Leeuwen 2007, 96).

Ideological and theoretical reasoning also provides instruments for rational legitimisation, that is, for discursively objectifying the goals, means, and desired effects of actions which define, explain, and even predict socio-political realities (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, 106-108). Linguistic resources for doing so consist in the use of markers that establish purpose links, especially subordinating conjunctions that relate clauses in modal, causal, consecutive, conditional, or final ways. Furthermore, qualifiers like ‘right’, ‘possible’, and ‘justified’ rationalise and validate actions while attributive and significative verbs like ‘represent’, ‘constitute’ or ‘symbolise’ objectify and generalise actions, people, and institutions. Finally, ideological interpretations are linguistically portrayed as common sense by the use of markers like ‘of course’, ‘naturally’, ‘hence’, and ‘therefore’ (van Leeuwen 2007, 101-104). Since all the aforementioned elements are also characteristic of everyday language use, the crucial question in this context is not how often they appear but how they discursively validate ideologically motivated interpretations of socio-political realities. How moral and political categories are expected to merge in ideological discourse has already been discussed in preceding paragraphs. As politics defines what is morally justified, the question of right and wrong semantically delimits the realm of the political (Chilton 2004, 198-199). In so doing, forms of legitimisation by implicit value judgements either rely on evaluative adjectives, which moralise activity by invoking higher values, or on morally abstracting those qualities into general guidelines (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999, 108).

Finally, multifaceted legitimisation strategies are internally linked by narratives of the overarching consequences of acting in the world, van Leeuwen’s ‘mythopoetic narratives’ (2007, 92). In this regard, it is expected that specific representations of historical time, development, and the continuity or discontinuity of revolutionary traditions provide the
narrative fabric for doing so. Reconstructing the reasons, purposes, and conditional structure of the armed struggle is related to these semantic representations and figures as a frame of reference for constructing more or less coherent and concrete representations: argumentative explanations of the role of armed politics in different conflict constellations. The antagonistic class structure of capitalist society in its particular historic manifestation or specific sectorial movements are cases in point. Van Leeuwen distinguishes two forms of these narratives: the ‘moral tale’ in which performing or restoring legitimate social practice results in rewards and the ‘cautionary tale’ that narrates potential results of non-conformist behaviour (2007, 105-106). As it has been argued above that negative delimitation and reactive, ex post facto reasoning are more common in the semantics of armed struggle (see points 3.4.2 and 3.4.3, pp. 109 and 114), it is expected that cautionary narratives prevail which emphasise, for instance, the dangers of underestimating ‘fascist tendencies’ or ‘reformist’ social critique.

By establishing an explanatory account of the likely outcome of non-conformity with revolutionary convictions as the benchmark of legitimacy, such narratives help identifying adversaries and ideologically realising the basic distinction. Linguistically, this relies on rhetoric and argumentative tools; typical practices and functions of public discourse and argumentation are performed when dismissing objections fosters groups’ own positions, when establishing normative frames to define in-groups, and when negotiating interpretations of reality that question established truth claims (Reisigl [2008] 2013, 350-353; Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 94). Since this requires deliberating complex and often contradictory meaning structures, it is anticipated that elements of political jargon characterise conditional programming. The use of neologisms and semantic reinterpretations aims at establishing dissident meanings. Discourse deictics such as demonstrative pronouns, conditional and causal conjunctions, and attributive modifiers, which imply highly frequency and normality, construct coherence and consistency. Tropes, euphemisms and other forms of redefining discursive meaning discussed above reinforce dissident meaning. Recapitulation and emphasis in complex syntactic structures supposedly lend credibility and normalise the use of ideological jargon.
4.4.4 Linguistically defining systemic boundaries

Lexical representations of the self and its immediate environment are crucial for analysing centre-periphery-differences according to the ideal types of armed vanguard and mass militancy conceptualised above (see point 3.4.4). Generally speaking, this dimension focuses on lexicographic aspects of linguistic encoding rather than on elements of syntax and deixis. While the wide use of terms borrowed from Marxist-Leninist organisational doctrine, including ‘party’, ‘cadre’ or ‘historical block’ in an affirmative sense indicates avant-garde positions, references to autonomist, left-libertarian vocabularies including ‘social struggles’, ‘mass worker’, and ‘social movement’ are less unambiguous as New Left currents and NSM blend into each other (della Porta 1995, 24). Here, it is argued that the form and system of reference become relevant. Whenever the masses and its potentially broad ‘movements’ are not considered as subjects in themselves, but reified as objects within historical constellations that need intellectual and practical support to become historical subjects, vocabularies related to ‘leadership’, ‘guidance’, and ‘education’ point towards a vanguard perspective. It is expected that ways of creating hierarchic relations between self and masses are also reflected in an indirect deixis that expresses distance and a prescriptive syntax of command, especially in slogans.

Whenever terms like ‘spontaneity’, ‘autonomy’, ‘self-organisation’, and a language of empowerment describe relations to protest strata and socio-political movements, this is indicative of mass-militant perspectives. Additionally, lexical references to ‘movement contexts’ and ‘subcultures’, the direct and concrete engagement with conceptions of reality within the protest sphere, and the use of deictic markers that invest these social actors with agency, for instance ‘out of’, ‘in the context of’ or ‘as a consequence of’, suggest more open and participatory self-conceptions. Such forms of lexically encoding protest, it is expected, are an indicator of the attempt to actively engage with moments of protest as collective subjects in their own right. It is likely that this approach is also reflected in the syntax of addressing potential peer-groups: rather than imperative slogans, inviting or hortative verbal phrases are likely to dominate.

In addition to the discussed linguistic encoding of self and other, further elements of discourse semiosis are relevant for assessing different forms of centre-periphery-distinctions. First of all, the direct identification of addressees in texts explicitly points to
targeted peer groups or the imagined revolutionary subject. It is argued here that it does make a difference for conceptions of self and other whether the outer subject is exclusively described in a general, abstract, or even removed fashion, for instance as the ‘metropolitan proletariat’, ‘newly marginalised classes’, ‘the left’ or ‘Third World liberation movements’, or whether its description includes tangible, concrete social actors, such as concrete instances of protest and revolt. It is expected here that it is much easier to speak on behalf of an abstract and general subject and that such abstractions, therefore, are a means of coping with mobilisation failures.\footnote{The notion of a revolutionary subject establishes the claim to represent a supposed constituency. In addition to attempts at constructing ideological legitimacy discussed in preceding sections, this concerns the second central concept of modern politics, namely representation (Wodak 2009, 20)} Secondly, relations to imagined addressees and peer-groups are also implicitly expressed by the use of linguistic markers, for instance by levels of formality and informality or by the use of colloquial and vulgar registers that reflect sub-cultural language use (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 169-170). Visual language such as layout, typesetting, and graphical design are additional elements of analysing text in context. Thirdly, the discussion of different organisational conceptions and ways of defining illegality as a precondition of revolutionary action in non-revolutionary times is a prominent feature in the writing of armed groups (BR n.d. [1974]; RZ 1978l, 3-10). While it cannot and should not be taken for granted that these conceptualisations reflect the material reality of clandestine organisation, they nevertheless provide indispensable insights into the ways groups perceive their internal differentiations and immediate periphery.

4.4.5 Realising structural couplings

While the elements of an analytical strategy developed so far mainly addressed textual and semantic features of the discursive reproduction of clandestine political violence, assessing structural couplings bring discourse practices and their wider context into focus (see section 3.4.5). It is anticipated that the modes by which groups attempt to occupy discursive spaces in public opinion and establish links to targeted peer groups interact with the ways in which communications, that is, concrete instances of communicating by text are produced and disseminated. Analytically relevant elements of discourse practice encompass a set of features that are relevant for establishing patterns of typicality and aypicality in communications.
First of all, this includes the distinction of different types of communications, including immediately event-related attack communiqués, campaign statements, strategy papers, interviews and self-interviews, and organisational and practical manuals. The analysis focuses here on the question of which particular types of writing prevail. Furthermore, how communications are interrelated will be assessed by (a) idiosyncratic language use such as the frequency of specific concepts, lexis and word coining, characteristic tropes, topoi and registers as well as textual organisation and the visual language of statements, (b) cross-referencing, which includes not only references to groups’ own writings, but also to cognate formations, larger protest strata, and mainstream media, and (c) designation including denomination, captioning, numbering, and dating. Another important aspect is to which different audiences writing is addressed, for instance to the general public, to concentric circles within ‘the left’, or to potential moments of protest and societal unrest. It is argued that the more diverse the forms of writing, cross-referencing, and addressing are, the more groups still seek to establish structural couplings beyond negative recognition as public enemies.

Secondly, the analysis focuses on the rate and extent of communications and their distribution over time. It is anticipated that the more frequent and the more extensive writing is during specific phases in the development of clandestine political violence, the more important for a groups’ self-understanding it is to produce and reproduce specific ideological positions. This can either point to an internal legitimation crisis or express attempts at re-positioning armed politics in the face of different understandings of its role or the direction of socio-political struggles at large. The more distance between armed practice and writing is created, on the other hand, the more leeway for ideologically rationalising particular practices is intended, which risks neglecting and contradicting the immediate symbolical dimension of the violent act.

Thirdly, the analysis of discourse practices focuses on communication channels available or established to disseminate of messages. The study focuses on whether and in which form communiqués and other writings are reported in alternative media of counter-information. While its dramatic effect and contentious value mobilisation ensure some form of attention, the necessity of reducing complex and contradictory information into digestible units that remain commensurate with established values also strictly limits opportunities for communicating radical messages with radical means to the media (Wodak 2009, 18). How
declarations and longer statements try to deal with these repercussions in terms of diction, recognisability, authenticity claims, symbolism, and argumentation structure is as revealing as the categories and registers in which communications are reported, for instance in terms of moral outrage, crime, political vandalism, deviance, conspiracy, or the mistaken consequentialism of comrades gone astray. With regard to attempts at establishing independent, clandestine dissemination structures such as self-distributed journals, brochures or leaflets frequency, regularity or irregularity, and length are considered; qualitative aspects like language choices, textual structure, and visual qualities inform the analysis. It is argued here that the more consistent and discrete patterns can be identified and the more frequent and regular material is produced and disseminated, the more attempts to spread the message represent an integral element of a communication strategy that aims beyond the immediate systemic domain.

Another important aspect of the analysis is whether, how and to which degree statements realise distinct styles or reflect genres established in different contexts. Potentially cognate forms of typified text production are common sub-genres of political language, including party programmes, forms of political advertising, press releases, and campaigning material (Chilton 2004, 69 and 92; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, 83; Reisigl and Wodak 2009, 90-92). Additionally, it is argued that protest subcultures develop a parallel and more or less innovative set of political texts which includes leaflets, flyers, pamphlets, and ideological intervention. Forms of political text realise modes of rhetorically and argumentatively convincing an audience of the truth of certain facts to legitimise particular positions by invoking moral, utilitarian, instrumental, and authoritative explanations with persuasive rhetorical tools (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012, 109-112; Wodak 2009, 120). Typical argumentative strategies consist, according to Wodak, in constructing and representing antithetical social actors or ‘nomination’, linguistic characterisation of these actors by predicative and evaluative attributions or ‘predication’, and in the establishment and reiterative affirmation of specific argumentative topoi. These are substantiated by common rhetorical fallacies, above all threat scenarios, personalised attacks on the moral integrity, honesty and sincerity of the antagonist, over-generalisations of the ‘collective character’ of adversaries and ‘appealing to prejudiced emotions, opinions and convictions of a specific social group’ (Wodak 2009, 40-45). The crucial point is whether and to which degree political discourse by clandestine groups relies on similar argumentative and
rhetorical mechanisms or aims at realising different forms of establishing claims towards truth and legitimacy. How argumentation and legitimisation strategies are perceived in radical and sub-cultural media complements and triangulates the focus on the communications and practices of armed groups. In so doing, socio-historical and socio-political layers of context are introduced into the analytical strategy as important contextual elements for making sense of struggles over meaning involved in linguistic representations of social facts (Weiss and Wodak 2003, 22). The analysis focuses on lexicalisations used for describing and commenting on manifestations of clandestine political violence and their aims such as registers of war, political crime, escalation, de-politicisation, mistaken comrades, or conspiracy and counter-insurgency.

### 4.4.6 Expressions and limitations of systemic learning

When addressing the ways in which systemic learning and its inherent limitations are expressed (see section 3.4.6), attention shifts to instances of critique and self-critique as well as elements of consistency and contradiction within texts of clandestine groups. Semiosis, semantics, and argumentation represent forms of discursive, ideologically influenced meaning-making that aim as much towards the outside world as towards internal consumption, self-confirmations and stipulating ‘generalized historical or etiological explanations of social phenomena’ for the in-group (Silverstein 1998, 136). First of all, the frequency and vocabulary in which tactical and strategic errors are expressed in communications, for instance as ‘mistakes’, ‘errors of judgment’, and ‘illusion’, are significant. The more often differences between expectations and actual developments are voiced and admitted in the first place, the more likely it remains that these trigger rethinking and adaptations in general. The more the lexical means of voicing mistakes, on the other hand, contain an element of subjective calculation, the more likely are attempts to implement perceived lessons of frustrated expectations. While ‘defeat’ and ‘failure’ are more easily rationalised as a consequence of external conditions and thus warrant only gradual adjustments, ‘errors of judgment’ let alone ‘wishful thinking’ are related to subjective delusion and require thorough auto-critique.

Another aspect of this complex is how critique is addressed and who is held responsible for mistakes. It makes a difference whether ‘mistakes have been made’ or
whether ‘we’ have made them. In the first instance, it is easier to direct the critique to singular elements within the clandestine structure or the antagonistic environment in which it supposedly moves. In the second instance, indisputable personal responsibility is already assumed on the level of deixis which makes it much more difficult to avoid concrete group-related consequences. Furthermore, the terms in which critique and self-critique are expressed are analytically meaningful. They can either fulfil affirmative functions, for instance when a highly ideological terminology of Marxist-Leninist rituals of critique and auto-critique is invoked, or represent instances of genuine deliberation when doubt, insecurity, and the struggle to make sense of socio-political realities are voiced in a more mundane and less jargon-ridden vocabulary. It is expected that forms of presenting the question of the right direction of armed politics in a technological vocabulary are correlated with the former function of critique. In contrast, defining strategies in a process-oriented language of ‘intervention’, ‘escalation’, ‘communicability’, and ‘compatibility’ that is more reminiscent of the language of protest politics points towards genuine critique and self-critique.

A crucial element of the semantic analysis of systemic learning is thus also the self-identified frame of reference. It establishes a set of political goals and revolutionary expectations to which macro-societal developments are compared and against which potential frustrations become meaningful. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on moments of consistency, inconsistency, and contradiction within argumentation strategies. It is anticipated that in the medium term of the existence of groups as distinct, defined entities, meanings shift regularly and substantially as self-descriptions, interpretations of the wider socio-political context, and perceptions of the conditions of antagonistic politics are subject to processes of critique, self-critique, and adaptation. Changes in explicitly and implicitly addressed socio-political environments and organisational conceptions over time indicate potentials for learning and re-adjusting fundamental convictions.

How this is argumentatively mediated, how much (in)consistent and contradictory meaning potentials are (re)produced and which degree of inconsistency and contradiction can be tolerated is indicative of capacities and limitations of systemic learning. As Susan U. Philips argues that ‘silences in language ideologies are as important as what is expressed’ (Philips 1998, 220), it is particularly interesting whether and, if so, which topics, tropes, and topoi disappear in the course of time. Firstly, the appearance and disappearance of concepts
and their argumentative entrenchment in itself point to significant changes in defining strategic and tactic goals. Secondly, it has been argued above that a core of meaning has to be permanently safeguarded against reinterpretation (see section 3.4.6, p. 124); which specific concepts and topoi do not disappear from groups’ communications is an important indicator for the content of non-negotiable truth claims. It is anticipated here that these claims are invested with higher argumentative authority by invoking categories of history and historical self-commitment, symbolically represented in iconic events, dates, and names.

4.5 Analytical strategy in the research process

According to the approaches to discourse analysis discussed in this chapter, the materiality of texts as they were initially issued and distributed is an integral element of textuality: layout, editing, graphic design, and different ways of dissemination establish distinctive discourse practices. Therefore, this thesis has opted to access groups’ writings wherever possible in their original form, for which extensive archival research in the Netherlands and Germany was conducted as discussed in more detail in the introduction (see above, point 1.3). The thesis relies on source editions and reprints only as a contingency option when the quality of historical copies was beyond readability or central texts could not be retrieved, especially since both of the respective source editions of the papers of the B2J and the RZ have significant shortcomings that constrain their use as academic sources (see below points 5.1 and 6.1). Apart from groups’ texts, the contemporary radical counter-hegemonic public establishes the immediate discursive context; in this regard, collections of pamphlets, leaflets, posters, and radical journals were accessed.

The retrieved documents were digitised and post processed to produce readable files for the textual analysis, conducted using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA which allows for complex, process-oriented coding. Accordingly, a combination of theoretical and free coding was applied in the analysis of the primary sources: the six conceptual dimensions and their expected textual realisations were first translated into a differentiated coding tree with subcategories, and subsequently refined during the analytical process. Whenever significant features of the reconstruction of revolutionary identities by argumentation, rationalisation, and linguistic mediation could not be fully grasped with the pre-established coding categories, respective passages were freely coded with ad-hoc
categories. After a cooling down period for reflection, these encodings were included into the original coding tree and, in so doing, informed the analysis of subsequent texts. However, they were kept visually and analytically distinct to allow for the comparison of theoretically expected realisations of discourse and its actual manifestations. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from primary sources are translated by the author and follow the original German texts as literally as possible, including idiosyncratic syntax and punctuation.

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter has set out to develop an analytical strategy for the study of discourses of clandestine political violence on the basis of the theoretical argument discussed above, which elaborated a Luhmannian framework towards understanding political violence as political communication. In so doing, the chapter has discussed and negotiated between two distinct but interrelated perspectives on how to make sense of discourse: as the discursive reproduction of societal realities by the text of written and spoken language which is at the same time constituted by and constitutive of the contexts of different social structures or as a critical tool for challenging discursively mediated hegemonic normality. ‘Discourse’ in the latter sense is also a normative term, for instance when the discursive construction of social realities is related to a predominant episteme of power and knowledge to oppose this normalised discourse to an ideal speech situation (e.g. Wodak 1996, 24-29). While CDA and cognate ways of critically analysing the linguistic reproduction of society tend towards integrating the analytical and the normative, this chapter has argued for a different approach to text in context. Drawing on an immanent critique of the normative bias in social semiotics and on Luhmann’s critical remarks on the conditions of possibility of critique from a radically constructivist perspective (see above point 4.2), the chapter understands discourse as an analytical term in the sense of Andersen’s ‘discursive analytical strategies’. Accordingly, the argument explicitly departs from a mainstream of broadly defined critical discourse studies for two reasons.

Firstly, it is argued that language in power is not the only relevant constellation of struggles over meaning in and by text that can be effectively studied and deconstructed with methods of discourse. The close interrelation between the Weberian institutionalisation of
power and counter-hegemonic attempts to challenge it fundamentally by reintroducing violence into highly regulated political conflicts represents a core element of clandestine political violence (see above point 3.4.5). The ways in which discursive (de)legitimisation by clandestine formations reproduces or departs from regular political discourse are indicative of the degree to which political violence remains related to politics. Secondly, a discursive analysis of clandestine political violence challenges and deconstructs basic assumptions and illusions of its socially constructed realities. It represents, like any discourse analysis, critical research even if it explicitly does not subscribe to a critique of ideology in the sense of Critical approaches with a capital C (Maingueneau [1999] 2007, 48). Consequently, the thesis’ perspective is also understood as an attempt to overcome tendencies of establishing critical orthodoxies by broadening the scope of critical analytical strategies.

In this context, the thesis argues that deliberate attempts to challenge hegemonic power structures and trigger socio-political change by illicit, violent, and extra-ordinary means can and should also be also understood as discursively challenging normalised legitimacy claims. Clandestine political violence as extreme and radical interpretative action aims at establishing a new, fundamentally dissident order of discourse or a counter-hegemonic (re)construction of socio-political reality that claims its own legitimacy. It represents therefore not so much deviant behaviour but rather a very particular form of struggle over meaning that aims at exploiting contradictions within the political status quo. The analytical strategy developed here focuses on studying a specific aspect of this struggle over meaning, namely the ways in which clandestine groups establish and reconstruct internally credible rationalisations for armed politics over time that resonate within a limited discursive community. The different conditions of continuity conceptualised in the previous chapter on the basis of a communicative theory of conflict have been related to its expected lexico-grammatical realisations in a particular language of clandestine political violence. This methodological strategy starts from Andersen’s reflections on the different analytical strategies employed in Luhmann’s work. He distinguishes the analysis of the form or the paradoxically grounded guiding distinction, the analysis of the system-environment-difference based on this form, and the analysis of semantic choices that attribute meaning to these distinctions. Any analytical strategy drawing on Luhmannian ideas, he concludes, has to combine these different analytical aspects in ways that allow for asking different questions (Andersen 2003, 78-92).
It has been argued above that the concept of the armed struggle is contingent upon the paradox of re-introducing manifest violence for political ends into societies, whose understanding of politics sublimates the nexus between force and power on a regular basis. In so doing, it relies on a clear-cut but re-interpretable distinction of enemy and friend and aims at unfolding this basic self-reference in various dimensions to rationalise the practice of clandestine political violence. While the perspective developed here reflects central tenets of Andersen’s systematisation of different Luhmannian analytical strategies, it also goes beyond his abstract conceptualisation and concretises its elements of analysis within the different analytical dimensions. With regard to the communication of armed struggle, a militarisation of language according to a set of register choices and register shifts in combination with a complex temporal reference structure and a syntax that focuses on declaration and affirmation are expected to occur; different interpretations of armed struggle influence communication by deeds.

The distinction between friend and enemy is anticipated to result in related lexical choices, register shifts, and contrasting relational and syntactical structures. While conditional programmes are encoded in different elements of argumentatively legitimising and delegitimising actions and ideological jargon, differences in terminologies and ways of addressing systemic environment and in-group in various formats of textual communications linguistically realise systemic boundaries and structural couplings. Systemic learning is finally related to argumentative consistencies and inconsistencies as well as the appearance and disappearance of distinct topoi. Linguistic realisations of armed politics are also related to a specific deixis, syntax and to non-linguistic elements of communication (see Table: Encoding ‘Meanings at Risk’ p. 161). The analysis of texts of two armed formations in subsequent empirical chapters is grounded in the analytical strategy developed here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension and discursive function</th>
<th>Lexicography and semiosis</th>
<th>Deixis</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Non-linguistic features of communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Communication of armed struggle: Establishing the semantics of armed struggle | **'Militarisation'** of political language:  
- **Register choice:** registers of war ('struggle', 'battle', 'fight', 'combat', 'front', 'confrontation' etc.) and military ('brigade', 'unit', 'strategic direction' etc.);  
- **Register shift:** collocation or replacement of political and military language; register of politicised warfare ('class warfare', 'people's war', 'partisan', 'guerrilla', 'resistance' etc.) | **Markers of temporal and historic reference** (prepositions, adjectives and adverbs);  
- **complex navigation** between past and future to define a specific interpretation of the present; | **Prevalence of declaratory and commanding sentences;**  
- **Interrogations are predominantly used rhetorically;** | |
| 1.2 Communication of armed struggle: Interpreting the semantics (correlations between mode and level of confrontation) | **High level violence:** 'power', 'unity', 'military'; illegality as a substantial category;  
- **Low level violence:** 'tendency', 'movement', 'relation'; emphasis on mediating and communicating illegal activity; | **Reference to more general conflict history in closed and more retrograde reference structure;**  
- **Reference to specific protest histories in more open and future-oriented ways;** | **Objects of attack: infrastructure, private property, or persons**  
- **Means of attack: arson, bombing, shooting, kidnapping etc.;**  
- **Outcomes of attack: death, physical and psychological harm, material damage;**  
- **Intended direction and symbolical representation: power structures, economic interests, organs of social control, class enemies etc.;**  
- **Stated purpose of attacks: political, logistical, self-referential (e.g. prisoners);** | |
| 2.1 Basic distinction: Identifying and distancing the other | **Register choice:** languages of crime (devaluation) and hunting (dehumanisation);  
- **Register shift:** collocation with or replacement of political language; | **Social deixis:** pronouns establishing us-them distinction;  
- **Second-coding the distinction:** moral and existential expressions; | **Use of contrast in the syntactic interrelation of statements** | **Personifications of the other in targeting patterns;** |
| 2.2 Basic distinction: realising ideology and attributing responsibility; | **Abstract categories of otherness;**  
- **Concretisation of abstract notions;** | | | |
| 3.1 Programming the armed struggle: Ideologically legitimising armed politics | **Personal authority:** status, expertise and role model merge in referencing; impersonal authority: supra-legal 'proletarian justice' and revolutionary tradition (history);  
- **Rationalisation:** instrumental and theoretical aspects of ideological reasoning merge;  
- **Moral evaluation:** register shifts (collocation of moralised and political categories); use of evaluative qualifiers; | **Prepositions and conjunctions as purpose links;**  
- **Discourse deictic as linkage for contradictory narratives:** demonstrative pronouns; causal and conditional conjunctions; modal adverbs; modalities of high frequency and naturalisation: 'usually', 'of course', 'naturally' etc.; | **Indirect rather than direct verbal process clauses;**  
- **Strategic use of passive and active tense (constructing and mystifying agency);**  
- **Nominalisation of verbal process clauses as a means of creating authority and objectivity;**  
- **Nominalisation to abstract evaluative qualifiers;** | |

Table: Encoding ‘Meanings at Risk’
### Chapter 4 - Methodology as Discursive Analytical Strategy: Linking Theory and Methods of Enquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension and discursive function</th>
<th>Lexicography, specialised vocabulary and semiosis</th>
<th>Deixis</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Non-linguistic features of communication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Programming the armed struggle: Ideological jargon</td>
<td>• Frequent use of tropes, euphemism, pejoration, personalisation, synecdoche, personalisation and other rhetoric tools;</td>
<td>• Markers of indirect reference (relations of distancing and intended control);</td>
<td>• Complex sentence structure;</td>
<td>• Complex sentence structure;</td>
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<td>• Frequent use of neologisms and ideologically redefined concepts;</td>
<td>• Markers of direct reference (relations of critical engagement and intended empowerment);</td>
<td>• Frequent instances of reiteration, recapitulation, emphasis</td>
<td>• Frequent instances of reiteration, recapitulation, emphasis</td>
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<td>• Use of specialised jargon to normalise ideological interpretations;</td>
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<td>• Frequent merely rhetoric functional phrases (introductory, transition, and conclusion);</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Systemic boundaries: Linguistically (esp. lexically) delimiting external and internal boundaries</td>
<td>• Terminology related to 'party', 'organisation' (in the formal sense) and 'hierarchy' vs. invocations of 'autonomy', 'spontaneity' and 'empowerment'</td>
<td>• Forms of address and addressing;</td>
<td>• Syntax of command and control: use of imperative voice;</td>
<td>• Visual language of documents: layout, typography, graphical design;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Referring to movements: languages of 'leadership' and 'education' vs. languages of 'commitment' and 'engagement';</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Syntax of invitation and inspiration: hortative syntax and use of inclusive prompts;</td>
<td>• Mirroring subcultural practices and attempts at establishing distinct visual brands;</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Systemic boundaries: Identifying imagined reference groups</td>
<td>• Explicit and implicit addressing: creating the 'revolutionary subject, invoking sub/counter-cultural language;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organisational conceptions;</td>
<td>• Forms of addressing different audiences;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Notions of illegality;</td>
<td>• Markers of authenticity;</td>
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<td>• Markers of recognisability;</td>
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<td>• Forms of referencing to clandestine violence in wider societal discourse (mainstream and alternative media);</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Structural Couplings: Using and establishing communication channels (intervention in public and counter-hegemonic discourse)</td>
<td>• Types of communications (communiqués, longer pamphlets, manuals, interviews);</td>
<td>• Forms of addressing different audiences;</td>
<td>• Realisation of ideological jargon (see point 3.2);</td>
<td>• Relations between writing and practice: immediate, delayed, mediated, or weak;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Idiosyncrasies of language use (concepts, lexis, topos);</td>
<td>• Markers of authenticity;</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rate, extent, regularity and length of communications;</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Cross-referencing and designation practices;</td>
<td>• Markers of recognisability;</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visual language (see already point 4.2);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Argumentation strategies: relation to ideological jargon (see point 3.2);</td>
<td>• Forms of referencing to clandestine violence in wider societal discourse (mainstream and alternative media);</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Systemic learning: Performing critique and auto-critique</td>
<td>• Extent and forms of addressing 'failure';</td>
<td>• Impersonal referencing, passive voice;</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Registers of critique and self-critique: affirmative or deliberative language use;</td>
<td>• Personalised deixis ('we', 'our' etc.);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Argumentative consistencies, inconsistencies, and contradictions</td>
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Chapter 5 - ‘Being radical means: Getting down to the root of the trouble’: Constructing Revolutionary Identity in the Writings of the 2nd of June Movement

5. ‘Being radical means: Getting down to the root of the trouble’: Constructing Revolutionary Identity in the Writings of the 2nd of June Movement

The movement only ranks itself among the vanguard if and when it “ranks among the first to take up arms”. It does not turn into the vanguard by simply calling itself thus. The rifle alone and the execution of “revolutionary actions” do not suffice to justify the aspiration. (B2J [1972] 2001, 10)

Hitherto, this thesis developed a systematically communicative approach to clandestine political violence and elaborated a corresponding analytical strategy from a critique of existing literatures on political violence and terrorism. The aim of the remaining chapters is to scrutinise this framework through the analysis of a set of case studies. As discussed above, the thesis conceptualises the conditions of continuity of clandestine political violence as forms of discursively constructed and reconstructed revolutionary identities. These conditions were conceptualised in six analytical dimensions and methodologically synthesised into different ‘meanings at risk’ (see section 4.6). Two radical left armed formations in Germany provide the empirical cases for assessing the framework’s validity. This chapter sets out to analyse source material of and on the self-defined social-revolutionary ‘Bewegung 2. Juni’ (B2J) or ‘2nd of June Movement’. While the group was active under this name first and foremost in West-Berlin from 1972 until the mid-1970s (Korndörfer 2008), its roots and predecessors reach back to the radical fringes of the late 1960s revolt in Berlin (della Porta 2013, 124) and it was only ‘officially’ dissolved by a statement in court in July 1980 (B2J 1980).

As the first attacks by circles from which the B2J emerged in early 1972 date back to late 1969, the militant sphere in West-Berlin occupies an ambiguous space in the chronology of armed struggle in Germany (Balz 2006). On the one hand, it is among the first on the radical left to use violence in more organised, planned, and clandestine forms outside of the immediate confrontation during marches. On the other hand, the B2J only starts using a recognisable label and establishing a political project (B2J [1972] 2001) two years after the RAF entered the stage with the spectacular liberation of Andreas Baader from prison (RAF 1970a). In this sense, the B2J belongs to the first and the second generation of radical left armed formations in late 20th century Germany: in terms of activist networks and activism,
Chapter 5 - ‘Being radical means: Getting down to the root of the trouble’: Constructing Revolutionary Identity in the Writings of the 2nd of June Movement

it predates the RAF, in terms of organisational formation, it succeeds it. Complemented by a second case study, which focuses on the ‘Revolutionäre Zellen’ (RZ) or ‘Revolutionary Cells’, the chapter’s empirical findings build a basis for comparatively assessing the thesis’ conceptual and theoretical argument. The B2J’s approach to armed politics is commonly described as largely a-theoretical and practice-oriented. Conceptual and strategic thought supposedly only influences the group’s actions to a limited degree; theory represents at best a semantical device to rationalise practices (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 171-172; Korndörfer 2008, 248; Wunschik 2006b, 537-540). A close reading of B2J texts in the following also aims to reassess whether our approach confirms this evaluation.

In so doing, the chapter focusses on analysing primary sources by and pertaining to the B2J and its organisational predecessors according to the methodological strategy developed above. The body of relevant documents consists mostly of attack communiqués and reactions to these in the contemporary radical press, which changes according to transformations of the protest sphere towards the end of the 1960s. Out of the diverse but inclusive coalition of the ‘Außerparlamentarische Opposition’ (APO) or ‘Extra-Parliamentary Opposition’, in which the ‘Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund’ (SDS) or ‘Socialist Students Association’ integrated different currents of non-institutionalised politics emerged a differentiated, largely disconnected left landscape: a plethora of dogmatic student parties and a less well-defined undogmatic camp which tried to establish concrete anti-authoritarian initiatives in neighbourhoods and workplaces (Scheerer 1988a, 275-286). The first documents of and discussions on armed struggle appeared in ‘Agit 883’, a pluralist, anti-authoritarian radical weekly of the late APO days (Andresen et al. 2006, 22-27). Later statements are published and discussed mostly in the ‘Info Berliner Undogmatischer Gruppen’ (InfoBUG) or ‘Info of Berlin Undogmatic Groups’ whose self-identification with the latter of the two dominant left currents of the 1970s is already part of its denomination (DadA 2001b).

While the coding system according to which these documents are analysed follows from the six analytical dimensions, both case studies proceed chronologically to identify continuities, discontinuities, and trends in discourses. Accordingly, the chapter’s argument

47 While a difference of a few years might not appear significant for the social sciences in general, activist perceptions of time and history often differ substantially from the rest of society. A few weeks during which significant developments occur can actually represent a difference between eras (Curcio and Scialoja 1993).
will be developed in four main steps. Firstly, the context for the emergence of the ‘2nd of June Movement’ and its predecessors will be discussed according to the literature. Secondly, sources on the formative years of the B2J between 1969 and 1972 will be analysed; while the focus is clearly on militant communications themselves, reactions to the emergence of armed struggle in the contemporary radical counter-public will be included. Subsequently, the chapter will turn to the active period of the B2J, which is additionally sub-divided into two periods, and will focus on particular papers and the discussion around these in contemporaneous left-wing debates. The concluding section will, finally, ask how the negotiation of revolutionary subjectivities of the B2J changes after the main space for doing so becomes either the dock or the prison cell, synthesising the analysis’ main findings.

5.1 Radical New Left subculture in West Berlin: Contexts of emergence

In the ever-growing literature on irregular political violence, the B2J and its organisational predecessors occupy a peculiar intermediate position, not unlike the groupings’ ambiguous generational space between the beginnings of armed struggle in Germany and its later transformations. Particular aspects and details of its history are frequently discussed not only in analyses of left-wing clandestine political violence (among others della Porta 1995, 2013; Kraushaar 2005; Scheerer 1988a; Varon 2004; Waldmann 2005b), but also in general overview studies on political terrorism (among others Crenshaw 2011; Cronin 2009; Hoffman 2006; Laqueur 1987; Richardson 2006); by contrast, detailed accounts concerning the group are rare (Claessens and de Anha 1982; Kraushaar 2005, 2006a). A relatively recent book chapter convincingly argues that ‘the 2nd of June Movement virtually has been treated as an orphan’ (Wunschik 2006b, 531-532). Accordingly, M.A. theses or student research papers are regarded as valid academic sources (Korndörfer 2008; Schiffer 2001; Stern 1998). Two interrelated reasons help in understanding this duality in the literature.

Firstly, Michael ‘Bommi’ Baumann’s autobiographical ‘How everything began’ (Baumann 1979c), originally published in 1975, and Susan Stern’s ‘With the Weatherman’

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48 Baumann’s book has been translated into English and edited as ‘Terror or Love?’ with different captions in the late 1970s (Baumann 1979a, b). The editorial history of the German original is also an instructive example of the ways in which contemporary anti-terrorist discourse tried to use criminal law to silence supposedly...
(Stern 1976) range among the earliest inside accounts of New Left political violence. Baumann, a Berlin native from a sub-proletarian background, actively participated in the 1960s revolt and in the circles of the mostly student protest movement, which gradually escalated action repertoires in response to a series of trigger events (König 2006, 440-442). Among the first imprisoned for participating in the ‘militant struggle’ of ‘commandos working in the underground’, he became the focus of a solidarity campaign which styled him into an idol of the protest scene and a leader of its militant hard core (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 123-126; Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 8). This image has stuck even after he defected from violence already in 1972 (Spiegel 1974a): Baumann is still widely regarded as a ‘leading member’ of the B2J (among others Hoffman 2006, 81). Consequently, his book is treated as an authentic key testimony on the motivational and organisational dynamics of left-wing terrorism and keeps being cited (among others Crenshaw 2011, 105-106) despite its highly subjective, unrepresentative perspective which covers only the formative phase of the B2J, as Baumann concedes (Baumann 1979c, 1-2).

Apart from the exponential attention that ‘How everything began’ still draws, a second set of particularities provide reasons for the frequent but spurious attention paid to the B2J in terrorism studies. Even by the standards of small clandestine armed formations in Western democracies, which are by definition extraordinary political phenomena, the group is elusive, contradictory, and exceptional. While it is one amongst the different radicalised armed factions which emerged out of the socio-spatially relatively well-defined radical subculture of West-Berlin’s post-68 non-institutionalised left (della Porta 1995), it is the only one that almost exclusively used the divided city as its operational base (Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 11). Such an unusually strong sense of territoriality, however, is not reflected in a remarkable visible presence in Berlin’s active contemporary protest scene apart from during the movement’s formative days (B2J [1975] 2001, 242-243). Secondly, the B2J’s armed practice is characterised by a simultaneity between spectacular successes, including one of the few episodes of successful coercive bargaining by the European ‘armed left’ (see below point 5.4.2), and equally spectacular grave mistakes, which alienate supporters (see below dangerous voices and the liberal and left counter-public resisted these attempts (ABC Buchhandlung et al. 1979; Spiegel 1975a).

49 He died in July 2016 and is remembered in obituaries as a prominent contemporary witness of the protest generation (Sontheimer 2016).
points 5.3.3 and 5.3.5). The brief and turbulent history of the B2J is reflected in a dual mythology in contemporary and retrospective left-wing accounts: Firstly, the group’s social base and membership is portrayed as a proletarian counterpart to the petty-bourgeois, intellectualist RAF (Meyer 2008, 32; Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 10). Following from that, it is secondly associated with the myth of the cunning, streetwise outlaw which adapts flexibly to setbacks and mistakes (Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 54; Roth 1983-87, 73).

Consequently, academic literature on the ‘2nd of June’ largely focusses on deconstructing this twofold mythologization. Located in the interstices between urban sociology and social psychology, Dieter Claessens and Karen de Anha analyse relations between the particular socio-political ecology of West-Berlin’s radical subculture, the so-called ‘scene’, and the emergence of clandestine political violence (1982). They argue that a particular sociotope, characterised by an overflow of politicised young people, a dense academic infrastructure, and an emerging alternative counter-economy with experimental forms of communal living provided conditions for the radicalisation of protest repertoires. At the same time, it limited the institutionalisation of organised political violence: the authors claim that ‘this “movement” did not exist at this time’ (ibid., 26). Wolfgang Kraushaar as well as Karin König rationalise the emergence of organisational predecessors of the B2J with the idiosyncrasies of its protagonists and contend that the violent activism of the diffuse circles around a number of ‘communes’ at the counter-cultural margins of the protest sphere was essentially more interested in radical chic and self-fulfilment than in politics (König 2006; Kraushaar 2006a). Finally, Tobias Wunschik unpacks the mythos of the B2J’s proletarian origins to argue that the movement represents an interesting but limited epiphenomenon in the German experience of terrorism (2006b). While Claessens and de Anha have been criticised for their impressionist approach that fails to interrelate thick milieu descriptions and a largely event-based narrative of the development of clandestine violence (Narr 1989, 24-26), Kraushaar as well as König over-determine the idiosyncratic personalities and Wunschknik over-emphasises paralells between RAF and B2J.

By contrast, activist historiography and source editions argue against the mythology of an unpolitical, essentially criminal terrorism. As early as 1977, legal supporters of the large ‘2nd of June trial’ synthesise an overview of the historical development of the B2J out of the residues of late 1960s revolt from the writ of indictment and movement-related sources
(Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977). In the early 1980s, the collected writings of the B2J are published in two volumes as the ‘The Blues’ (Verteiler und Verteilerinnen 1987) and reedited in the original form in the early 2000s (Antiquariat "Schwarzer Stern" 2001); it consists of an uncommented, unstructured, and sometimes undated conglomeration of leaflets, press-clippings, and reprinted pamphlets. While a left review of the re-issue criticises the poor editorial standards, but emphasises their value as a living document of a hectic time (Hüttner 2002), former B2J member Till Meyer damns the volumes as sloppy, unauthorised leftist hagiography (Meyer 2008, 461-462).

The large-scale independent documentary project ‘Project Arthur – the question of violence’ by a grassroots ‘media workshop’ aims at reinterpreting the history of armed struggle in post-68 West-Germany from a history from below perspective to inform activism in the 1980s (Projekt Arthur and Medienwerkstatt 1983-87). Its extensive collection of material and analysis (Projekt Arthur 1983-86c, d), as well as a number of interview transcripts with former militants (see below), both of which cover the ‘2nd of June’, could be retrieved from the archives of the International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam. Finally, an annotated bibliography claims to establish a comprehensive and authoritative canon of texts on the German armed struggle from activist perspectives (Hein 1989, 4-8) and reprints programmatic statements by all major German armed factions, including the ‘2nd of June Movement: Programme’ (ibid., 121-124). While these sources openly take a partisan view on the subject, they nevertheless provide crucial information if approached accordingly.

A body of memory literature aims at establishing personal interpretations of the B2J’s short history, different to Baumann’s version of the beginnings of armed struggle. Dieter Kunzelmann’s autobiography (1998) and Marco Carini’s biography of Fritz Teufel (2008) re-narrate the stories of two founding members of the ‘Kommune 1’ (K1) or ‘Commune 1’, the first attempt to politicise the private in an experiment of collective living. It galvanised the anti-authoritarian revolt in Berlin and beyond with spectacular protest actions and had

50 According to a former member of the ‘Media Workshop Freiburg’, the title of the project plays on a common trope within 1980s left-libertarian circles, a postcard and poster depicting the image of a vaguely rebellious boy with the quote ‘live wild and dangerous, Arthur’ from a letter by Arthur Schnitzler to Arthur Rimbaud (private conversation with the author). The project itself never could be realised as planned due to political disagreement and withdrawal of consent from ‘women and men from the discussion context of the RAF’ (Projekt Arthur 1987, 22-23).
considerable legal consequences which contributed to the radicalisation of parts of the protest generation (Kommune Zwei 1971, 7-12; Langhans and Teufel 1968). Furthermore, memory literature consists in autobiographies of and extended interviews with the central B2J militants Till Meyer, Gabriele Rollnik, Ralf Reinders, Ronald Fritzsch, and Inge Viett (Meyer 2008; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995; Rollnik and Dubbe 2004; Viett 1997) as well as transcripts of interviews from the ‘Project Arthur’ files with founding member Norbert Kröcher (Kröcher 1983-87) and Karl Heinz Roth, operaist militant, theoretician, and fellow traveller of the ‘armed left’ (Roth 1983-87). If read critically and triangulated with other sources, including the original documents of the fighting years, these accounts provide personalised impressions from within the area of struggle.

Despite its differing character, literature on the B2J and its predecessors paint a remarkably similar picture of the movement’s origins, which are linked to the decline of broad student-led protest mobilisation and the drifting apart of its constituent currents after the peak of 1968 in one of its strongholds (Kraushaar 2006a, 514-516; Wunschik 2006b, 541-543). The student movement itself is commonly explained as a multi-causal phenomenon whose conditions of emergence include social and political conservatism of the post-war era, the largely silenced, but ever-present National Socialist past, educational expansion within dated, authoritarian university structures, the developing perception of ‘youth’ as a discrete life phase, and moral outrage in the context of anticolonial liberation struggles (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 38-44; Davis et al. 2010; Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 7-8; Scheerer 1988a, 254-257). Above all, the escalating US-intervention in Vietnam triggered processes of politicisation and feelings of internationalist solidarity which the SDS, an independent association of leftist students after its expulsion from the Social Democratic Party SPD in the early 1960s, could transform into wider mobilisation (della Porta 1995, 96-97; Fichter and Lönnendonker 1977, 106-140). Growing protest was met with conservative, law-and-order oriented policing strategies, which culminated in the death of Benno Ohnesorg by police shots during a rally against the visit of the imperial couple of Persia in Berlin June 2nd 1967, which resulted in a general feelings of prosecution and reinforced activism (Wolff and Windaus 1977, 29-55).

51 Finally, there is also Peter Paul Zahl’s fictional homage to the radical subculture in West-Berlin’s popular neighbourhood ‘The Lucky Ones’, the novel merges self-ironical narrative, heroic self-adulation, sociological observation of the milieu, and autobiographic account (Zahl 1979).
Furthermore, the date of the first widely recognised death during protest after the end of the war is described as a moment of personal awakening by many of the B2J’s former militants. According to autobiographical narratives, it is associated with a turning point and experiences of solidarity against a common threat that establish clear fronts as ‘they shot first’ (Kröcher 1983-87, 18; Meyer 2008, 126-134; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 18-19). Intervening factors substantiated and entrenched the perceived reality of belonging to a repressed, endangered community with symbolic and concrete ties to international liberation struggles. While the insular location of West-Berlin as a front city of the cold war resulted in militant anti-communism amongst its populace, it also provided draft exemption, cheap housing, and a rich cultural life, all of which attracted a large student population (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 28-38). Consequently, the city became a laboratory of the student movement and beyond in which new forms of living, new protest repertoires, counter-cultural influences, drugs, and contacts to migrant populations and radical, above all black, GI’s merged in the ‘great departure’ that turned into the ‘great slackening’ after the peak of mobilisation between 1967 and 1969 (Zahl 1979).

In so doing, activism and alternative forms of living stretched the boundaries of the legal: growing numbers of arrests and subsequent trials in the context of increasing militancy represent focal points for debate and organisation (Mohr 2006, 262-265). The emergence of the ‘Red Help’ and later ‘Black Help’ collectives, named after the historical prisoner and legal support structure of the German Communist Party, was one consequence which also played a crucial role in the unfolding of the armed struggle, supporting its prisoners and sometimes the struggle itself (Rübner 2012). Another outcome was the self-organisation of the more counter-culturally oriented elements of the political subculture around a number of communes into a more binding collective in 1969, the self-identified ‘Blues’ which rebranded itself as ‘Central Committee of Vagabond Hash Rebels’ and ‘Tupamaros West-Berlin’ (TW). Their aim was to defend counter-cultural spaces through collective violence and to counter the perceived demobilisation of the revolt into dogmatic grouplets or bourgeois careers by converting widespread verbal radicalism into violent activism (Balz 2006).
5.2 ‘How everything began’: ‘Hash Rebels’ and ‘Tupamaros West-Berlin’

The particular structure of the undogmatic left ‘scene’ in Berlin after the APO heydays has been described as heterogeneous and complex. It consists of a volatile agglomeration of groups, collectives, and communes with different political outlooks and degrees of formal organisation (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 55-57). The route to a definite rupture with mainstream protest politics and more radical action repertoires by some members of this scene in 1969 is characterised by a mixture of deliberate decisions and the unintended consequences of previous protest histories. Experiences of in-betweenness at the dawn of the armed struggle in West-Berlin are prominently voiced in a letter sent by former K1 communard Kunzelmann in September 1969 on the way to guerrilla training in Jordan. While it addresses the volatile situation of radical networks, it also gives detailed instructions for dealing with uncertainties in an authoritative tone and invokes the semblance of formal organisation for doing so by appealing to the duties of the ‘Central Committee of the Vagabond Rebel Hordes’ (Kunzelmann 1969). Although pseudo-formalistic, ironic phrasing is reminiscent of subcultural language use, it is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, ‘requesting’ a ‘statement of accounts’ invokes organic hierarchies despite the emerging group’s anti-authoritarian background (ibid.). The ‘Central Committee’ label represents, according to participants’ recollection, a pun on mushrooming self-aggrandisement by denomination after 1968 for publicity reasons (Baumann 1979c, 55; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 23). Its internal use, secondly, suggests that it is not only a (self-)ironic statement.

Furthermore, the text claims authority for giving detailed instructions by invoking a fake Mao Zedong quote whose original version was influential among ‘Hash Rebels’ and subsequent militant formations (Balz 2006). This coincidence of an expressively anti-authoritarian attitude and self-ascribed revolutionary teleology is paradigmatic for the balance the B2J tries to strike. Finally it is remarkable that a letter sent from Milan, one of the epi-centres of the Italian New Left and at the brink of a mobilisation with extraordinary levels of cooperation between worker and student militants, the ‘hot autumn’ of 1969 (Lumley 1990, 233-238), only comments superficially, stereotypically, and dismissively on the local situation (Kunzelmann 1969). Whether this indicates plain ignorance or implies a
judgment on the importance of different struggles abroad, it already points towards detachment from events.

5.2.1 ‘Shalom and Napalm’ (November 1969)

The first widely and controversially discussed attack communiqué by a grouping from the ‘Blues’ is signed by ‘Black Rats/Tupamaros Westberlin’ (TW 1969a). According to former participants, this represents one of the different denominations used between 1969 and 1972 to invoke the impression of a widespread militant movement in an act of counter-branding (Baumann 1979c, 72-73; Kröcher 1983-87, 13). In trying to fundamentally invert radical debate, it also shows a high level of detachment. The text claims the failed bombing of the Jewish Community Centre in Berlin on the anniversary of the Pogrom Night under the provocative title ‘Shalom and Napalm’ (TW 1969a). It is a remarkable document of counterfactually constructed legitimisation for an event that is at the heart of debates on anti-Semitic tendencies within the German New Left (Andresen 2006; Kraushaar 2005). A particular interpretation of protest against the Vietnam War frames the argument: growth and radicalisation of the anti-war movement result from the efforts of a conscious minority with whom ‘now, at the brink of the final and total defeat of the American army,’ millions march (TW 1969a). The text invokes Ernesto Guevara’s personal authority in a mythopoetic narrative that combines cautionary and moral tales to bracket the legitimisation discourse. ‘Vietnam War on all fronts’ means that a personified ‘imperialism’ defends its stakes by all means in the Middle East and that practically supporting the Palestinian cause contributes to its inevitable defeat (ibid.).

Two contradictory elements characterise the text on the basis of this mythopoetic narrative. Firstly, a definition of the enemy in abstract, ideological terms conflicts with tendencies to invest these terms with person-like agency. Secondly a particular moral evaluation according to which an incorrect interpretation of Germany’s historical responsibility serves as a pretext for the unconditional support of imperialist Israel. By contrast, ‘the Jews which have been displaced by Fascism have become Fascists themselves’ (TW 1969a). In so doing the text stereotypes a heterogeneous multitude, equates it with a body politic, and employs semblances of ethnic or even racist jargon. These claims are substantiated by simple rhetorical devices, including repetition, hyperbole, and inverted
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historical references, for instance the ‘Gestapo torture methods’ of the IDF (ibid.). The text aims to substitute precarious significance and legitimacy by assertion as a failed attack supposedly concretises abstract structures of imperialism by targeting choices. ‘True antifascism’ accordingly is ‘plain and simple solidarity with the fighting Fedayeen’ and direct action against ‘the close entanglement between Zionist Israel and the fascist FRG’ in a direct inversion of the common ‘never again’ narrative (ibid.).

The first reactions to the attack in ‘Agit 883’, however, highlight that its meaning is less than clear and cast doubt on the effectivity of its provocative approach. Without discussing the implicitly contested authenticity of the communiqué, the incident and its political background are understated by trivialising the bomb and arguing that poorly justified actions represent a welcome opportunity for vilifying the extra-parliamentary left that ‘cash in on the antisemitism complex of the population’ (Agit 883 1969d). Consequently, a two-pager of the thin magazine is dedicated to a ‘materialist-dialectical analysis of antisemitism’ (Agit 883 1969c). It argues for a thorny but crucial difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in leftist positions towards the Middle East conflict highlighting the urgency of this point by frequently addressing its readers and invoking the theoretical authority of Marxist-Leninist classics (Agit 883 1969a) despite the usually a-theoretical and agnostic tone of ‘Agit 883’ (Oy 2006, 50-51). Several shorter leaflets by ‘Blues’ and ‘Central Committee’ are reprinted in the same number with harsh comments on the groupings ‘petty bourgeois anarchism’, calling for a thorough auto-critique as a condition for publishing future papers (Agit 883 1969b). The journal that is usually quoted as the central mouthpiece of early militant currents (Kraushaar 2006a, 516-517) distances itself on the occasion of the first prominently claimed attack from the ‘Blues’ (Balz 2006, 133-134).

The texts reprinted as ‘Naïve Anarchism: Three Documents’ confirm and complement tendencies of the attack communiqué by quoting Fatah’s development ‘from revolutionary focus to revolutionary people’s liberation army’ as an authoritative example of an imprecisely defined notion of temporally and spatially differentiated stages of escalation (Haschrebellen and TW 1969). Potential reference groups are defined in a twofold way referring to a symbolic international revolutionary community and to the remainders of the extra-parliamentary, anti-authoritarian revolt in Germany which need to be forced into taking a definitive stand, counterfactually claiming that ‘the bomb in the Jewish Community
Centre has gone off’ in this sense (ibid.). Finally, blending the moral tale that the struggle has already begun with the cautionary tale that preventative counterrevolution is also marching substantiates a politically over-determined Manichaeism when the authors programmatical state: ‘We won’t rest until the last one is either in prison or out of it’ (ibid.).

5.2.2 ‘TW Extra’ (December 1969) and other early writings

Tendencies towards an immediate, almost existential understanding of militancy are also reflected in other early writings. Different texts collated as ‘TW Extra’ and signed by a plethora of pseudonyms invoke distant revolutionary examples as role models and reiterate accusations against the supposedly agonising post-Apo left (TW 1969b). Emerging ideas and topoi reappear and are deepened, namely the differentiation between stages and levels of struggle, dialectical understandings of movement dynamics in which exemplary action counters tendencies of regress, and an overarching, but spatially differentiated notion of revolutionary trajectory. Recurring figures of speech reaffirm the distinction between a truly ‘revolutionary existence’ and the ‘papery existence’ of pseudo-movements which represent the enemy within (ibid., 1). In so doing, tensions between developing a perspective for ‘revolution in our own country’ and direct reliance on distant, decontextualized experiences, for instance ‘the revolutionary discipline of the Black Panthers’ become manifest (ibid., 2).

Stylistically, the pamphlet is characterised by direct and aggressive language, which resembles the pseudo-proletarian radical sociolect cultivated in the Berlin ‘scene’ (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 169-170; Mosler 1977, 218-220). Document number 3 of ‘TW extra’, for instance, claims the failed bombing attack on a notoriously tough judge in graphic language and descends into the vulgar register by constantly referring to the legal profession as ‘pigs’ or ‘beasts’ (TW 1969b, 3). Moral outrage is justified with allegations concerning the judge’s Nazi past in which the historical narrative fulfils the double function of devaluing the victim and constructing an obligation to act. Neither outward-directed references nor inward-directed invocations of a wide militant sphere are, however, entirely one-sided or uncritical. Texts include a critique of the American Black Panther Party and the timing and communication of attacks by ‘the West-Berlin Guerrilla’ (ibid., 4).
An extended letter to the editors of ‘Agit 883’ from the same militant circles, published in strongly abbreviated form in its number 50 (Anonymous 1970b), further illustrates how revolutionary examples supposedly legitimise armed interventions in the imperialist centre (TW n.d. [1970]). The letter consists of strategic quotations from an article on the Uruguayan ‘Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros’ (MLN/T) or ‘National Liberation Movement/Tupamaros’. The ‘Main principles’ of the Tupamaros are cited largely void of context and become general, a-historical truths (ibid., 1-2). The second half of the text, which is omitted in its published version, aims ‘to apply some [of the] principles to our situation’, but remains largely abstract and substitutes analysis for a politics of slogan (ibid., 3-4).

Attempts to link immediate everyday struggles of the radical counter-culture to wider-reaching internationalist aspirations determine the tenor of a collection of communiqués in the leaflet ‘To May 1st’ (TW 1970b). It is ostensibly directed towards a varied, wider audience and addresses different topics without diverting into abstract lecturing. Statements claim, among others, attacks on the Berlin branch of a union-affiliated bank as a symbol of the German labour movement’s betrayal of the proletariat and discuss already introduced topoi in a considerably more vulgar tone. Derogatory language and the registers of hunting and crime describe the enemy as ‘uber-pigs’, ‘gangsters’, or ‘predatory Zionists’ while its agency is constructed in a particular way: the targeted bank, for instance, acts consciously in its own interest and is, virtually at the same time, a ‘stooge of monopoly capitalism’ (ibid.). Narrating time and historical references substantiate the normalisation of armed struggle, for instance in a ‘natural’ progression from today’s defence to tomorrow’s attacks. Furthermore, commando names invoke recent militant protest and insurrectionist traditions, discursively merging different topics into a single revolutionary totality.

Accordingly, targeting the bank not only renders its supposedly dubious role in real estate speculations visible, but also represents direct action against ‘Zionists in our own country’ (TW 1970b). How much credibility this discursive move develops is an entirely different question as ‘To May 1st’ is also liable for having ‘neglected the agitation’ (TW 1969b, 4). The importance of anti-Zionism for revolutionary politics is claimed by drastic

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52 The letter’s manuscript has been retrieved from the ‘Case Files 2nd of June’ of the ‘Socialist Attorneys’ Collective’ which are stored in the archives of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research. While the text itself is not signed, the context of retrieval suggests to attribute it to the close network of radical left political militancy.
language and moral outrage rather than politically rationalised. The ways in which the statements address failure and systemic learning over-determine practical efficacy as a criterion of political success: while self-critique is openly voiced, it remains restricted to technical and military aspects but does not touch upon political issues such as the timing and communication of armed politics.

5.2.3 ‘Universalising conflicts here is insanely difficult’: Two documents from August 1970

A similar understanding of critique and auto-critique is also expressed in personal statements. Georg von Rauch, core member of the ‘Blues’ states in a letter from prison during pre-trial detention that any action remains unfinished regardless of its actual outcome ‘until we have made a collective self-critique’ (von Rauch 1970, 1). However, his contribution to this collective exercise is exclusively dedicated to the practical, physical, and psychological preconditions of action. The fundamental problem is not the attack’s political communication, but overcoming individual constraints and social norms, von Rauch states: ‘this is the reason for the failure of the entire action: that we treated him like a human being’ (ibid., 3). The contention that the enemy and its concrete personifications are lesser human beings is not just a coping mechanism to dissociate from psychological strain (Post 1998, 2005). Rather, von Rauch describes redressing fundamental humanitarian convictions as a necessary and conscious effort, a precondition of becoming a true revolutionary: ‘being humane only means: retrieval, guilt feelings’ (von Rauch 1970, 3). The letter also offers instructive insights into the inherent problems of conceptualising the politics of armed struggle. Lamenting his position of forced withdrawal, von Rauch perceives history as currently unfolding which calls for urgent interventions: ‘and yet, so much is happening: Amman; alert of the Guerrillas/attack in Munich’ (ibid., 5). In this understanding of conflict,
armied struggle is immediate, direct intervention intended to escalate contradictions and channel discontent into a revolutionary political project here and now. However, von Rauch addresses the tension between particular struggles and the aspiration to generalise them when he complains about life in prison: ‘universalising conflicts here is insanely difficult’ (ibid., 6).

Which concrete shape the ‘universalisation of conflicts’ ought to take in the contemporary militant mindscape is illustrated by a leaflet from late August 1970, signed by an ‘Action Committee Neukölln’ and verbatim published in the September issue of ‘Agit 883’ (Aktionsgruppe Neukölln 1970b, a). The text outlines the political rationale and wider context for attacking the private house and car of the director of a Berlin company in apologetic terms; the incident is related to a factory-level conflict which caught widespread attention in the undogmatic left (Agit 883 1970). Accordingly, the bombing is justified by protest against mass redundancies which provide an example of the inhuman reality of capitalist exploitation and the relative weakness of class conscious workers’ organisations in Germany. The leaflet’s comparatively differentiated language, almost educational tone, and conventional argumentative structure differ significantly from other early writings. It claims that ‘in West-Berlin bombs are necessary to draw the attention of the press to a vicious sacking of 330 workers and employees’ (Aktionsgruppe Neukölln 1970b). However, the statement’s focus is quickly broadened as ‘crimes against the working populace’, some of which are at best loosely connected to the attack’s stated occasion, provide additional justification through constant repetition of the central statement that bombs are necessary for reaching a wider public (ibid.). The argument culminates in a twofold moral tale: ‘Learning from workers’ struggles in France and Italy’ not only implies that effective resistance against mass redundancies is possible, but also that their struggles did not depend on symbolic bombings (ibid.). Counter-intuitively, the militants’ own means of intervention are interpreted as a sign of weakness.

even ‘the Zionist massacre in the Munich retirement home’ (Kunzelmann 1970). The TM were a short-lived militant group in the Bavarian capital which pursued a similar approach to direct action against symbols of repression and imperialism as the TW and was in close contact with it, but organisationally independent (Projekt Arthur 1983-87, 31-35).

55 According to Reinders and Fritzsch, the attack was projected as an integral part of efforts to collectively establish an armed perspective in factory struggles by the early RAF and Blues. While the RAF dropped the initiative before it materialised, the Blues only just managed to execute its part of the planned attack during which militants were injured due to lack of technical expertise (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 41-42).
5.2.4  ‘How did Georg von Rauch die?’ (December 1971 to January 1972)

The death of Georg von Rauch during a shootout with police officers in December 1971 in the context of a largescale manhunt for RAF members (Rotzing 1971b) is crucial in the development from diffuse militant potentials to identifiable armed formation (Baumann 1979c, 108-116; Meyer 2008, 190-197). It highlights how oppressive policing contributed to the affective re-appropriation of practices which were politically controversial in the ‘scene’. Initial reactions are dominated by voices from the wider radical left while von Rauch’s fighting comrades only commemorate his death publicly in March 1972 (B2J 1972a). An early radical comment states matter-of-factly that ‘comrade Rauch has been murdered by West-Berlin plainclothes pigs’ and draws a clear distinction between us and them by dramatizing the situation of the non-institutionalised German left in the register of hunting (883 - Revolutionäre Aktion et al. 1971, 1).

However, the paper is ambivalent regarding the theoretical and practical consequences of the situation. While it distances itself from advocates of unmediated armed politics, the text embraces semantics of relentless struggle and hostility as ‘the destruction of the state and all its repressive organs’ represent common goals; differentiation and identification coexist uneasily (883 - Revolutionäre Aktion et al. 1971, 1). This ambiguous way of defining systemic boundaries is called critical solidarity: ‘the comrades of the RAF form part of the entire socialist movement’ whose political identity has to be defended, but whose theory and practice have to be critically reflected (ibid., 1). In so doing, the text not only aims at reconstructing a lost collective identity, but also invests it with social relevance as wholesale persecution of extra-parliamentary left-wing politics ‘is supposed to distract the populace from the current critical economic and political development’ (ibid., 2).

Other activist reactions further translate the cautionary tale into couplings between wider radical strata and militant formations. Arguing that public opinion suppresses truth in a ‘criminal conspiracy of silence’ (Solidaritätskomitee 1971, 4), counter-information becomes a vital necessity and equals ‘concrete investigative work as well as politics of unified action’ (RH 1972f, 3). In this interpretation, critical solidarity provides opportunities to relate to the first manifestations of armed struggle without debating them substantially: ‘the question whether it is ... possible and necessary to start fighting oppression with the weapon’ is irrelevant for assessing events when the politics of intimidation already constitute perceived
Chapter 5 - ‘Being radical means: Getting down to the root of the trouble’: Constructing Revolutionary Identity in the Writings of the 2nd of June Movement

reality (Solidaritätskomitee 1971, 3). Defence against repression also becomes a perspective for renewed activism when it is argued that hopes to crush radical opposition by criminalisation and public vilification have backfired since ‘investigative work as well as politics of unified action’ have led to the unintentional consequence that ‘the Berlin Left could actually broaden its base’ (RH 1972f, 3). Consequently, the paper concludes that long-term organisational strategies based on a purely materialistic analysis of dominant conditions fail in the face of the ‘bourgeois terror apparatus’ which closely resembles core elements of the communication of armed struggle (ibid., 4).

Outlandish as such readings of excessive policing might appear in hindsight, it is remarkable that more moderate contemporary voices problematize von Rauch’s death in terms that are not so different. During his funeral, for instance, the ministering pastor expresses concerns about a society in which an activist ‘is labelled in the press in incredibly reckless ways a criminal and a gang member’, relates ‘accidents’ of civilisation to radicalisation processes understood in a literal sense as attempts ‘to think anew from the root and to work for things to get better’, and compares in plain words ‘acts of violence against political prisoners’ in Germany and Latin American dictatorships (Christiansen 1971, 1-3).

In sum, the papers discussed above support claims by former protagonists of the radical, anti-authoritarian West-Berlin ‘Scene’ that their militant actions represent, despite common knowledge, the real beginnings of armed struggle in the FRG (Baumann 1979c, 91-92; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 33-34). However, after the dramatic, violent liberation of Andreas Baader from jail in May 1970 (Anonymous 1970a) followed shortly afterwards by the RAF’s first programmatic statements (RAF 1970b, 1971), discussions of militancy are dominated by the RAF. The debate becomes increasingly heated and requires taking a stand beyond abstract support for international liberation struggles (e.g. Redaktionskollektiv ’Hochschulkampf’ 1971a; Redaktionskollektiv ’Hochschulkampf’ 1971b; Rotzknastr n.d.

56 The RAF’s approach to establishing a militant perspective differs considerably from the TW. Firstly, the grand ideological and programmatic design precedes political attacks – political in the sense in which this term is introduced by della Porta as related to protest communication and not to purely self-referential goals (della Porta 1995, 120). Secondly, the group already coins a distinctive and recognisable brand in its first brief statement after Baader’s liberation: ‘Establish the Red Army’ (RAF 1970a). It could be argued that changes in organisational outlook and denomination practices towards a more clearly defined formation are partly due to these developments (Baumann 1979c, 98).
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Only a few statements by the militant networks out of which the B2J emerges are documented between summer 1970 and March 1972 which largely re-affirm the discussed tendencies, for instance the prevalence of aggressively anti-Israeli positions in parts of the radical left when rewriting an old antifascist battle cry into ‘beat the Zionists wherever you meet them’ (TW 1970a).

While the development of an armed faction does not happen in isolation and is debated within the radical subculture, tendencies of self-isolation also become apparent. Within a militant subset of the Berlin ‘scene’, increasing levels of radicalisation coincide with the escalation of protest repertoires which focus on arsons and bombings and do not directly target persons. Discursive links to a wider environment consist mostly in an uneasy relationship with 883 and the undogmatic currents around it. However, activism does not so much communicate particular politics to this audience, but rather confronts it with a decisionist, consequentialist stance in a language that mirrors its style. Accordingly, no stable structural couplings emerge apart from a shared sense of threat from the establishment, although ties to wider protest strata are still strong in the formative phase. While addressing a plethora of topics, the ways in which these are voiced in communiqués remain formulaic and generic; if agenda setting works, it does so in unintended ways as initial discussions on anti-Semitism highlight. In a similar vein, armed struggle becomes an inevitable topic for the wider left, but as a projection of its different political positions and as an object of solidarity rather than a political project in its own right.

5.3 ‘Enough is enough’: First communiqués and programmatic statements

The label ‘2nd of June Movement’ is first used in a communiqué that claims responsibility for the bombing of the Berlin State Office of Criminal Investigation on 3 March 1972 under the heading ‘Enough is enough’ (Projekt Arthur 1983-86d, 4). The attack is justified by revenge for the ‘murder of Tommi’ (B2J 1972a) or Thomas Weisbecker, another core activist from the Blues who died in a shootout with police forces (König 2006, 464-466).

Another attack during the formative period of the B2J, the failed bombing of the British Yacht Club West Berlin in protest of the events on ‘Bloody Sunday’ 1972 in Derry, however, resulted in the death of boat builder Erwin Beelitz (Claessens and de Anha 1982, 147). The bombing attempt was not yet ‘officially’ claimed by the B2J. Only a very short and cursory, stencilled leaflet under a generic denomination, which states the attack’s purpose as solidarity with the Irish liberation struggle and revenge for Derry, could be retrieved from the ‘Case files 2nd of June’ of the ‘Socialist Attorneys’ Collective’.
The incident is interpreted as further proof of a pre-emptive civil war in which the revolutionary left is subject to targeted killings, starting with its most militant cadres. Former activists and members recount that the re-branding of West-Berlin armed grouplets as the ‘2nd of June Movement’ was the result of an ongoing discussion between different militant sub-factions in late 1971 and early 1972 who finally merged in January 1972 (Kröcher 1983-87, 40; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 39). Accordingly, three main aspects influenced the politics of naming. Firstly, the date establishes strong linkages to one of the critical events of the protest cycle of the late 1960s for individual politicisation processes (see section 5.1). Secondly, this particular reference supposedly represents the smallest common denominator of an increasingly disintegrating radical left. Thirdly, the name should emphasise who fired the first shots and establish a discourse of armed resistance against the violence of the state by commemorating the events with every mention of the group (Baumann 1979c, 99-100; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 39-41).

### 5.3.1 The death of Thomas Weisbecker (March 1972)

The narrative of legitimate self-defence in a climate of open season against the extra-parliamentary left takes up large parts of the B2J’s first leaflet whose first sentence merges a formal, officially sounding tone with a sense of urgency and affective commemoration. The new group is presented matter-of-factly as an organisational reality already engaged in direct confrontation with the authorities. These, in turn, are immediately responsible for killing ‘us’ by invoking a trail of comrades ‘murdered’ by ‘the pigs’ which establishes a clear dichotomy and devalues the other (B2J 1972a). The ‘we’ is broadened by the inclusion of events at recent marches into ‘the balance of the last days’ which substantiates a narrative of legitimate defence against repression since ‘enough is enough’ (ibid.). Uttering a far-reaching threat against police officers is trivialised by colloquial language: the slogan ‘fire under the imperialist’s arses shortens the long march’, for instance, mirrors the ironic but deliberately vulgar anti-authoritarian style, but also turns any agent of repression into a representative of imperialism (B2J 1972a). The paper’s main argument, that increasing repression requires escalation of the struggle, is legitimised by quoting the personal authority of an intellectual leader of the recent revolt. Rudi Dutschke’s call ‘countering the
organised violence of the state apparatus by organised revolutionary violence’ also frames a communique that claims an arson attack on the Faculty of Law in Berlin (B2J 1972b).

Like previous deadly encounters of militants with law enforcement, Weisbecker’s death is widely discussed within the radical non-institutionalised left. Some already familiar topics and tropes reappear, but connotations also shift in renewed discussions of pre-emptive counterrevolution and ‘the method of legal murder’ (RH 1972b). In an early reaction, the Munich Red Help collective develops a narrative of victimisation in its assessment of the event’s meaning for the wider left (RH 1972c). The reality of a semi-official shoot-to-kill politics, which is substantiated by the ‘trail of dead’ trope, potentially targets ‘all socialists and communists in this nation’ (ibid.). However, the construction of a politics of open season on the emerging ‘armed left’ is also rationalised politically. Accordingly, the challenge to the state by political violence cuts to the essence of capitalist rule; crushing militant opposition is therefore discursively equated with silencing any fundamental opposition.

This particular narrative is further substantiated by a reference to the cyclical crisis of the capitalist system in which anti-terrorist politics represent only the testing ground for large-scale pre-emptive counterrevolution (RH 1972c). Different explanations for heavy-handed state responses highlight a tension in the interpretation of clandestine political violence which is simultaneously a potential threat to power and a welcome pretext to activate scripts of internal security. This reaffirms a contradictory relationship to armed struggle which is political only in the very limited sense of being an object of critical solidarity (see above point 5.2.4). A perceived new level of repression supports the cautionary tale of ‘fascisation tendencies’ which reach beyond the actual repressive apparatus, but include bourgeois parties and public opinion, reaffirmed by modal constructions, which invoke the legal register, and pseudo-scientific jargon (RH 1972e).

Militant voices develop this argument further: Kunzelmann rationalises fascist tendencies in a statement from prison as expressions of an increasingly ‘inwards directed imperialism’ in which repressive methods counter international revolutionary tendencies,

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58 Together with other articles first published in Munich, the statement is reprinted as the leader of number 4 of the ‘Red Help: News and Notices’ (RH 1972d). Since this journal represents the official, national voice of undogmatic legal aid collectives, the text is considered as an authoritative position.
but unintentionally also ‘create the conditions of resistance’ (Kunzelmann 1972). The published closing words of a less prominent member of a Munich ally of the TW strike a similar chord. The short text repeatedly invokes ‘we shall be more every day’ as a mantra and substantiates this claim by a twofold moral tale: dead or imprisoned comrades mobilise those who are alienated by objective conditions, but hesitate to realise their situation by providing individual inspiration and revolutionary example (Czenki 1972). In so doing, the perception of being the target of permanent, potentially deadly repression is not only scandalised, but also validates dissident identity claims.

5.3.2 ‘2nd of June Movement: Programme’ (June 1972)

The ‘2nd of June Movement: Programme’ is dated on June 1972 and elevated into authoritative status in semi-official radical source editions on the B2J and armed struggle in Germany (Antiquariat "Schwarzer Stern" 2001, 2; Hein 1989, 121-124). By contrast, former B2J militants Reinders and Fritzsch state that its authorship is ambiguous and claim that the paper only came to their attention after the fact. However, they also concede that it adequately describes the group’s contemporary programmatic thought (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 38-40). Furthermore, Kröcher recalls that the formative phase of the B2J included ‘thoughts on the organisational question ... also a theoretical superstructure in the form of a programme of some sort’ and states: ‘the programme was discussed and approved’ (Kröcher 1983-87, 39 and 41). Consequently, the ‘Programme’ is analysed in detail despite its disputed authenticity. As its content represents in participants’ accounts the result of internal debates, the text provides insights into the contradictions of the militant mindscape.

Registers of war and military appear frequently throughout the text and include lexicalisations of politicised warfare of the ‘politico-military commando’, but the text also invokes an open, process- and movement-oriented self-understanding and a notion of

59 Kunzelmann was already indicted in 1970 for his alleged participation in a number of arson and bombing attacks and held in lengthy pre-trial detention (Kunzelmann 1998, 130-144; RH 1974).
60 The statement is by Czenki, a member of the short-lived TM (see above note 54) who was indicted and convicted for a bank robbery related to the group (Projekt Arthur 1983-87, 31-35; Spiegel 1978d).
61 In contrast, the construct of a clearly defined organisation B2J with a binding programme was fiercely rejected during the process and its media-backing by protagonists and supporters including Reinders and Fritzsch (Die Unbeugsamen von der Spree 1978, 14-15).
armed struggle as ‘permanent revolutionary practice’ (B2J [1972] 2001, 10). The aspiration-reality-gap is pre-emptively addressed, which suggests sensitivity to problems of immunisation and systemic learning. At the same time, the paper tries to integrate inherently contradictory principles like ‘anti-authoritarian’ and ‘discipline’ (ibid.). By the same token, centre-periphery-relations are conceptualised in particular ways. The idea of an armed vanguard is not rejected, but avant-garde positions follow from continuous, communicable revolutionary practice and aim at their own redundancy; self-organisation and leadership are not definitively separated in this approach. Ideological and conceptual efforts largely remain confined to reproducing ideological jargon as the paper develops a spontaneist theory of practice: the ‘organisation of armed revolutionary counter-power’ relies on individual judgement and common sense, but these are based in an undefined ‘rich theoretical fundament’ that supposedly assures consistency (ibid.).

While these conceptualisations point towards an open understanding of organisation and struggle and avoid overstating the role of revolutionary violence, the text also contends that ‘the line of the 2nd of June Movement is unified politico-military’ (B2J [1972] 2001, 11). Legal and illegal militants are consequently defined as full-time revolutionaries working within the movement’s autonomous structures to develop ‘revolutionary methods of intervention’ without strictly differentiating licit and illicit aspects; illegality is understood as a consequence of revolutionary practice rather than as conscious decision (ibid., 12). In so doing, the text outlines an immediate understanding of struggle which negatively aims at ‘destroying the rule of pigs over humans’ and positively, but equally vaguely at ‘establishing a council democracy’ (ibid.). Apart from the domestic agenda of targeting real oppressors of the people, the ‘Programme’ also restates the international dimensions of struggle in already familiar ways (ibid., 13). In sum, the text develops a peculiar narrative that aims at integrating the self-referential semantics of armed struggle according to which violent activism confirms revolutionary identity with attempts to define an open, communicable, and intelligible notion of this struggle’s causes and aims. In so doing, it does not fail to recognise some of the fundamental contradictions involved in this synthesis, but relies on bold statements and a theory of practice approach to relocate any potential solution from the field of theoretical debate to the practical plane. Consequently, the early activism of the B2J remains largely self-centred and focuses on establishing the material basis for struggle:
logistics and an environment of legal supporters (Projekt Arthur 1983-86d, 4; Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 15).

5.3.3 ‘Little Peter’s journey to the moon’ (June 1974)

The text analysed in the following represents a peculiar piece of militant writing and triggered fierce debate concerning ways of dealing with betrayal, police informants, and apostates. Under the name ‘Commando Black June’, it claims the murder of Ulrich Schmücker, a former comrade who informed on the movement after his arrest in the context of a failed bombing on behalf of the B2J (Brückner and Sichtermann 1974, 5-8; Viett 1997, 92-93). In the communiqué’s words this reads: ‘the 2nd of June Movement carries out an execution which should safeguard it and other liberation movements against betrayal in the future’ (B2J n.d. [1974], 11). While disciplinary action against traitors is not without precedent within the German armed left, the only available related statement acknowledges in three sentences and graphic language the tarring of an ex-militant who informed on the RAF (RAF 1972). By contrast, the ‘Black June’ text goes to great lengths to explain the action theoretically in pseudo-Marxist jargon and pragmatically as a necessary act of revolutionary justice.

The paper invokes the triple authority of theoretical reasoning, higher principles of justice, and legalistic procedures to legitimise a highly contentious, inwardly directed act of disciplinary violence as genuine political deed in a controversial style and argumentation (Brückner and Sichtermann 1974, 18-29). Consequently, its dissemination and editorial history is contested. While an immediate radical critique quotes strategically from the paper as ‘Communiqué on betrayal’ (Chile-Solidaritätsbewegung 1974, 1), other contemporary left-wing sources complain that it has not been published and disseminated within the left-wing counter-public, deliberately silencing an important perspective (in der Legalität arbeitende Genossen 1974b, 4). Militant historiography is also ambivalent towards the paper. The paper itself is not reprinted in ‘The Blues’ although the Schmücker-affair and broader discussions on apostates and traitors occupy considerable space in its first volume (Antiquariat "Schwarzer Stern" 2001, 249-298). Project Arthur, in contrast, documents the text under the title ‘Little Peter’s Journey to the Moon’ and uses it uncritically as a source of information.
on the active phase of the movement without problematizing the episode (Projekt Arthur 1983-86c, 9).  

Directly addressing its audience in the colloquial and inclusive ‘comrades’, the communiqué aims at creating proximity and an air of seriousness by stating that ‘the paper in front of you is the result of the debate on betrayal’ (B2J n.d. [1974], 2). This way of setting the stage invokes not only the procedural legitimisation of deliberation, but also the authority of the revolutionary process since betrayal is described as an essential concern of any revolutionary movement. Urgency and decisiveness, recurring topoi of the semantics of armed struggle, supposedly attribute (co-)responsibility for this fundamental problem to the wider left: understanding, self-reflexive, and inclusive approaches to apostates mystify that ‘we are not responsible for the capital’s crimes’ (ibid.). In a formulation drawing on Mao Zedong’s ‘doily embroidering’ aphorism, the paper invokes a decisionistic and consequentialist notion of struggle: ‘antiimperialist struggle is no children’s game, roadshow, or romping about an adventure playground’ (ibid.).  

From this, a revolutionary ethics of individual conduct is derived: militants have to be aware of likely results of their actions and withstand pressure. While Marxist inspired jargon substantiates the narrative to a larger degree than in other B2J communiqués, it figures as an empty signifier and validates an existentially overdetermined notion of class struggle. For instance, the text argues that ‘the utility value of the liberation of the subject and the socialisation of the means of production’ characterises armed struggle while ‘betrayal obstructs the productive force of the individual and the relations of production in general’ (B2J n.d. [1974], 2). In this reading, violent politics realise pure utility value and immediately overcome the alienation of the subject. Talking to law enforcement is not only an individual breach of revolutionary ethics, but also objectively counter-revolutionary and requires  

62 As this was the only edition of the ‘Communiqué on Betrayal’, which could be retrieved from the archives, the text is labelled in the following ‘Little Peter’s journey to the moon’ according to the Project Arthur denomination. This title itself is a reference to a 1915 classic of German language children’s literature (Bassewitz 1912). Inasmuch as the incident is substantially discussed in project Arthur interviews, there is a tacit, slightly contradictory consensus: while the killing of Schmücker itself is considered a political mistake and the affair could and should have been handled otherwise, interviewer and interviewee employ operational and tactic necessities to invoke understanding for the situational circumstances that triggered the events (Roth 1983-87, 66-68).  

63 Mao’s original formulation is structurally remarkably similar but employs bourgeois culture and not the playground as metaphor: ‘A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery’ (Mao 1967, 6-7).
decisive reactions ‘to rebalance the conditions of productive force and relation of production within the revolutionary movement’ (ibid.). This ‘enigmatic sentence’ (Chile-Solidaritätsbewegung 1974, 1) invokes and inverts the authority of the classics to legitimise an inwards-directed act of retaliation in theoretical terms; furthermore, the text also claims formal organisational and procedural authorisation for doing so when ‘delegates of a people's tribunal’ share objective evidence (B2J n.d. [1974], 2).

Arrogated legal authority is also reflected in the phrasing of the questions of Schmücker’s ‘interrogation’ which presuppose a formalised, structured organisation with an equally regulated membership contrary to the organisational ideal outlined in the ‘Programme’ (see above point 5.3.2). In so doing, diction and turn-taking perform the semblance of juridical procedures and examination techniques through formulaic terminology, a strict sequence of question and answer, suggestive framing, and the repetitive rephrasing of interrogations (B2J n.d. [1974], 3-6). Some of Schmücker’s replies severely criticise internal practices and dynamics, for instance the failure to prepare militants for the very hardships discussed earlier in the paper. Other statements, however, also reflect the degree to which core ideological principles have become internalised. For instance, he reflects on the existentialist, integrated, and holistic character when he equals fighting with living and the ‘dialectic sublation of the pure negation [of imperialism]’ in a formulation which is highly reminiscent of Neo-Marxist terminology, but at odds with its theory (ibid., 6). The paper’s evaluation of the ‘testimony’ aims at further delegitimising Schmücker by contrasting his answers with strategic quotations from his police interrogation. In so doing, claimed exclusive access to supposedly privileged information implies authority to judge him. Formulaic, legalistic language, pseudo-formal style, and overtly complex lexico-grammatical constructions create distance from deed and victim (ibid., 7-10).

The paper’s political conclusion argues that a revolutionary position towards traitors, informants, and spies inevitably has to be hard and finally names the action for which it claims responsibility in a technocratic register as ‘execution’ (B2J n.d. [1974], 11). It also reaffirms the supposedly general-preventative rationale which has been previously

64 The authors of ‘Little Peter’s journey to the moon’ themselves unintentionally lend credibility to these critiques by stating that Schmücker has ‘revealed all structures and methods of the 2nd of june movement until the description of a doormat’ in earlier interrogations (B2J n.d. [1974], 7).
circumscribed in pseudo-Marxist jargon in plain words. By invoking the meta-historical authority of ‘the ranks of the revolution’ in which a traitor ‘has no business at all ... but his own death’, the paper claims that shooting a supposed informer is ‘a revolutionary political deed’ although it does not represent a ‘means of struggle’ (ibid.). In a paper that permanently restates central claims, this incidental distinction between different levels of acting is not trivial as it departs significantly from the ‘Programme’. The latter defines the goal of armed politics as ‘permanent revolutionary practice’ (B2J [1972] 2001, 10), presupposing that every deed by definition is a ‘means of struggle’. In contrast, ‘Little Peter’s Journey’ argues implicitly that organisational subsistence, control of members’ behaviour, and the prerogative of interpretation to determine who belongs to the discourse community represent political goals in themselves, not just the logistical prerequisites of acting politically.

In the long run, the dubious role of the Berlin State Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the regional branch of Germany’s internal intelligence service, in the events around Schmücker’s death became one of the main focuses of the eponymous affair (Spiegel 1986a). It turned into the longest standing criminal trial of the FRG (Spiegel 1990). Affair and trial regularly resurface in left-wing discussions as textbook examples of politicised abuses of law enforcement, secret services, and the judiciary branch (Klinggräff 2013; Künast 1987; Maurer 2002; Querkopp 1986; Verfasserkollektiv 1981; Ziege 1991). The internal debate within a larger and more active radical left scene in the immediate aftermath of the events emphasises very different aspects. To begin with, none of the contemporary reactions discussed in the following categorically rule out that violence is necessary in the revolutionary process under specific circumstances.

The first radical commentary on the act, signed by a collective pseudonym, is pivotal within the debate on the ramifications of Schmücker’s murder (Chile-Solidaritätsbewegung 1974). It triggers a direct response in the name of the B2J (B2J 1974a) and is immediately reprinted with editorial comments or as part of a wider discussion on the B2J (InfoBUG 1974; Redaktionskollektiv ‘Der lange Marsch’ 1974). The text includes the B2J as important if marginalised comrades in wider left-wing debates and prominently expresses its authors’ uneasiness with the communiqué’s ideologized jargon. However, pointed remarks on ‘your enigmatic sentence’, which is quoted in full to expose the pseudo-Marxist circumlocution of
the killing, remain the only direct discussion of attempts to ideologically rationalise the act (Chile-Solidaritätsbewegung 1974, 1). Instead, the open letter focuses on recapitulating reactions to the assassination in radical circles, stating that the wrong people identify with it for the wrong reasons. Accordingly, one of the main problems of armed struggle is that it fails to attract a politically conscious and reliable constituency. The production of traitors is less an issue of capitalist dominance and individual failure than a consequence of ‘the illusion armed struggle would consist in arming oneself’ (ibid.).

Without fundamentally challenging that violence is an integral element of revolutionary politics, the open letter argues that armed struggle reduces essentially political questions to mere technical problems whenever it is also an end in itself. While framing this argument rhetorically in a series of direct, harshly formulated questions conveys the impression of open debate, the text also provides supposedly correct answers and reads like a catechism of critique (Chile-Solidaritätsbewegung 1974, 2). The sequencing of the argument aims at making a general point about preconditions of struggle, but remains largely void of concrete propositions. In so doing, the letter addresses the fundamental, potentially irreconcilable contradictions of militant politics: the difficulty of communicating notions of the enemy to different audiences; the importance of starting from popular consciousness when raising the consciousness of the masses; and the problem of developing a differentiated approach to politics on the basis of intransient conceptualisations.

In contrast to the inclusive and reflective, if also lecturing style of the open letter to the B2J, its reply reads considerably more aggressive, preclusive, and self-reassuring. Other than distancing itself from former ‘comrades’ in quotation marks and the third person plural, the text insists on the euphemistic language regime of the ‘execution of the operative Schmücker’ (B2J 1974a). In an attempt to delegitimise the substantial critique of armed politics and the B2J’s dealing with betrayal the open letter is disqualified in strong, pejorative language. The reply takes issue with the open letter’s ‘inept and arrogant’ tone, which supposedly mirrors the language of everyday agents of repression and removes a ‘left bourgeoisie’ even further from the B2J’s self-acclaimed proletarian lifeworld: ‘contrary to you, we have experienced the class contradictions not from a privileged position’ (ibid.). By contrasting an intellectual, privileged, and bourgeois left to the figure of the ‘class conscious proletarian’, who naturally understands the necessities of class struggle, the text avoids
engaging with the critique of the B2J’s concept of armed politics. Political debate is reduced to claimed class difference, when the authority of historical experience substantiates proletarian distrust of intellectual allies: ‘it is the eternally old story: the progressive bourgeois tells the stupid prole how he has to make the revolution’ (ibid.). Accordingly, the reply disregards, misunderstands, and repudiates all substantial points raised in the open letter just as the latter avoids engaging with the political rationalisations of ‘Little Peter’s Journey’. Limitations of critical solidarity and debate also become obvious in further contributions. The statement of ‘a currently legally working comrade’ already expresses proximity to the area of struggle in its temporalized, processual conception of legality (ein z.Z. legal arbeitender Westberliner Genosse 1974). Frequent rhetorical questions and reiterations aim at constructing a persuasive argument for an understanding of revolutionary struggle according to which political violence is integral and follows its own clandestine logics.

While ‘critical solidarity’ is understood here as a form of unconditionally embracing the particular circumstances of clandestine comrades, the following intervention pretends to develop a more nuanced position. Its heading implies that relations between wider left and armed formations are complicated; apparently, not all comrades still apply the inclusive ‘comrade’ to the B2J (in der Legalität arbeitende Genossen 1974b, 1). The paper states that the Schmücker-affair finally started a long overdue debate on the relationship between legality and illegality, albeit the discussion fails to focus on substantial political issues: ‘we’ and ‘they’ have drifted so widely apart that communication within the left has become almost impossible. The text contends that ideological trench warfare between factions which disagree on the concrete implementation, not the principle of armed intervention serves ‘as substitute for the real class enemy’ (in der Legalität arbeitende Genossen 1974b, 1). Ironically, the paper itself contributes to polarisation when it invokes privileged information to blame the legal left for supporting armed struggle only nominally and failing to embed militancy into grass-roots politics. In this context, the paper constructs a double bind: going underground involves a high risk of failure and isolation from social bases while

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65 The text is first published in InfoBUG number 20 under a collective pseudonym (in der Legalität arbeitende Genossen 1974a). Introductory remarks on the version which the present analysis is based on suggest that different dissemination channels co-exist and problematize the paper’s authorship (in der Legalität arbeitende Genossen 1974b, 1).
staying legal makes frustration and assimilation likely. Critique of armed formations becomes projection as these perform ‘activities, one approves, but “does not have the heart to do”’ (ibid., 3). Rhetorical questions support the paper’s central claim that there is no alternative to final answers to betrayal, no matter what its structural or individual causes might be. A threefold argumentative move legitimises this position as a result of a hard learning process not without mildly criticising the hubris of acting as a 'people's tribunal in 'Little Peter's Journey'. Firstly, recapitulating the lenient and inconsequent treatment of previous apostates creates distance between real and nominal leftists, blaming the latter for the affair. Secondly, claiming insider information invokes unquestionable discursive authority. Thirdly, individual inadequacy is categorically differentiated from its consequences to vindicate a consequentialist approach to failure (ibid., 5).

Analysing radical left reactions to Schmücker’s assassination and its rationalisation has highlighted that none of the voices in the debate are actually interested in open and constructive debate. The very particular and highly problematic ideological and organisational concepts of the claim to responsibility are discussed rudimentarily, if at all which suggests that the notion of politics has significantly shifted in contemporary radical thought. Interestingly enough, this mirrors to quite some degree ways in which terrorism is discursively performed as a political problem, described by George Kassimeris as ‘playing politics with terrorism’ (Kassimeris 2008). Accordingly, the affair provides an opportunity to rearticulate internal left-wing debates and a welcome pretext for restaging already defined positions on correct revolutionary strategy. Blaming the respective other for the performative contradictions of ideologically and socially entrenched perspectives rhetorically verifies each side’s own position. The human tragedy, that deliberately waging war for emancipating humanity from ‘the rule of the pigs’ (B2J [1972] 2001, 12) results in instrumentalizing comrades is not discussed in any depth. Consequently, the reprint of an open letter by Schmücker’s mother, in which she elaborates why her son never could have collaborated with security services and why this should have been obvious to members and sympathisers of the B2J, fails to cause substantial reactions (Schmücker 1974).
5.3.4 ‘Propaganda of the deed’ (July 1974)

A short communiqué published during the heated debate on betrayal in ‘InfoBUG’ and signed by ‘Movement of the Revolutionary Left, Group “Petra Schelm”’, takes responsibility for the bombing of a police station in Hamburg (BRL 1974). According to activist historiography, the grouping forms part of attempts to reorient the regional focus and activist outlook of the B2J beyond the limitations of the radical left-wing scene in Berlin (Projekt Arthur 1983-86d, 8; Prozeßbüro Berlin 1977, 22).\(^{66}\) While the concise text puts considerable effort into constructing different layers of legitimacy, the claimed attack also highlights tendencies toward inwards-directed activism. Politics of naming and relationality dominate its exuberant titling which invokes at least three different legitimising narratives. Firstly, the document’s caption ‘Info Nr.3’ suggests that the present text forms part of a longer standing militant practice.\(^{67}\) Secondly, the group name summons the authority of the revolutionary example twice. It refers to a homologous radical Chilean organisation which represents an important point of reference for the contemporary German left (Enriquez 1974)\(^{68}\) and commemorates Petra Schelm, the first RAF member who died in an encounter with the ‘murder machinery’ (RH 1972a). Theoretical and historical authority is, thirdly, reconfirmed by a Kropotkin quote which emphasises the unity of word and deed in ‘permanent revolt’ (BRL 1974).

Accordingly, reiterating and reaffirming the semantics of armed struggle dominate the communiqué’s argument. To this purpose, it develops an extended ideological interpretation of the attack’s stated occasion, the third anniversary of the ‘murder’ of ‘our sister Petra Schelm’ (BRL 1974). While this legitimisation of the bombing merges personal authority and moral evaluation, the construction of the purpose narrative that her death

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\(^{66}\) Attempts to move to areas outside of West Berlin and its established but also thoroughly limited radical left subculture are also mentioned in biographical accounts. Several arrests and shootouts in the FRG are linked to efforts to widen the B2J’s regional and thematic operational base, for instance the abortive ‘Rote Ruhr Armee’ (‘Red Ruhr Army’) who tried to establish factory-level armed nuclei after the example of the BR (Meyer 2008, 295; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 67-68; Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 55)\(^{69}\). The death of B2J militant Werner Sauber (B2J 1975d) and the severe injury and subsequent imprisonment of his companion Roth in early May 1975 are cases in point (Freunde von Karl Heinz Roth 1976, 3-7).

\(^{67}\) Previous ‘infos’ could not be retrieved.

\(^{68}\) The ‘Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria’ or ‘Movement of the Revolutionary Left’, propagated and practiced a radical programme, including a clear commitment to armed struggle for revolution, well before the events of September 1973. Consequently, the group was able to wage an armed campaign against the dictatorship after the military coup lead by Pinochet and became an even more important point addressee of internationalist radical solidarity in the early 1970s (Verlag Roter Stern 1974).
resulted from her resistance ‘against the dominant oppression and enslavement of the huge mass of workers’ links rationalisation and moral judgment (BRL 1974). By claiming dead comrades regardless of their affiliation as martyrs of a common cause, the paper semantically invokes the commonality of armed struggle. Escalating repression also highlights the struggle’s significance as a contemporary manifestation of the ubiquitous and perennial struggle of the oppressed, the reason for installing ‘the entire state apparatus’ in the first place (ibid.). Consequently, comrades and groupings that face prosecution and heavy policing represent an integrated collective whose revolutionary character is negatively confirmed by the reality of oppression and victimisation. This materialises most directly in the ‘torture by isolation of the prisoners of war’, reinterpreting legal consequences of illicit activism in the martial register (ibid.). Likewise, the paper argues that the concrete choice of target and its spatio-temporal symbolic relation to the assassination of a martyr of the common cause militantly remembers and reaffirms her revolutionary and personal choice and is not mere revenge.

5.3.5 ‘On the execution of a judge’: Communiqués on and reactions to shooting Günter von Drenkmann

While ‘Propaganda of the deed’ argues for a strict distinction between revenge and remembrance, this intricate but ambiguous difference is not maintained in thematically related papers. Two communiqués which claim responsibility for the deadly shooting of Günter von Drenkmann, presiding judge of the Berlin court of appeal, in November 1974 rationalise the avenging of fallen comrades as retributive justice and holding a member of the elite accountable ‘who never had to bother himself about responsibility’ (B2J 1974b). Revenge is also rationalised as remembering the death and reaffirming the community of struggle by overcoming the impression that ‘our rallying cries remained in reality only impotence’ (B2J 1974c).

According to former militants, the decision to redirect an already planned abduction to von Drenkmann was a spontaneous reaction to news concerning the death of Holger

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69 Von Drenkmann already figures as an impersonation of the enemy in early writings of the TW which identify the judge as one of the notorious ‘henchmen of class judiciary’ and personalise this value judgement by a pejorative wordplay on his last name (TW 1970b).
Meins, an imprisoned member of the first RAF generation, during a hunger strike. Unmediated anger and immediate fear for the life of other comrades resulted in an ill-planned kidnapping attempt to support the hunger strikers, whose victim resisted and was lethally shot (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 64; Viett 1997, 124-125). Rollnik remembers that the unintended outcome was retrospectively justified: ‘We wrote a vindicatory leaflet in which we made Drenkmann’s death appear as a response to Holger’s murder’ (Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 28). The brief communiqué (B2J 1974c), did not fulfil its purpose and was followed by a second larger statement (B2J 1974b). Public reactions to the first deadly attack of left-wing militants on an office holder, which included granting a day off for public employees to march in mourning and protest, might also have created additional need for explanation: the second communiqué ends on the call to the general populace ‘deny the hypocrites the “solidarity”, leave them amongst themselves on Thursday’ (B2J 1974b, 2).

‘On the execution of a judge’ starts by invoking the familiar trope of an ever-growing trail of dead comrades, naturalised as undeniable reality by reiterative syntax and the cumulative use of modal adverbs of high frequency (B2J 1974c). The self-critique of having failed to realise justified revenge in the past is ideologically overdetermined as impotence towards a structurally violent totality. When those who ‘did not feed him enough artificial nutriments’ during forced alimentation are held directly responsible for Meins’ death, agency is constructed and deconstructed in remarkably contradictory ways: his conscious decision to go on hunger strike turns him into a passive receiver of ‘nutriments’, while the text at the same time reaffirms Meins’ revolutionary subjectivity as an authoritative example for the struggle (ibid.). Establishing relations between the incapacity to act and impotence, the paper contends that the current hunger strike establishes a red line for re-appropriating the power to (re)act: it claims that militants agreed beforehand that those ‘responsible will pay with their lives’ if comrades should die (ibid.). Von Drenkmann’s personal responsibility for prison conditions is constructed towards the end of the short text by implication. Mimicking the jargon of control and insinuating that he was involved in concrete negotiations about the prisoners’ demands turn him into a ‘hard core’ member of the establishment who ‘approved that still further revolutionaries will die’ (ibid.). Elevating the law of talion into a principle of revolutionary justice and blurring boundaries between political and religious reasoning, the
statement concludes in the language of the Old Testament and upper cases: ‘HE WHO SOWS VIOLENCE SHALL REAP VIOLENCE’ (ibid., original capitalisation).

In contrast to this thinly veiled attempt to justify revenge as a dramatic re-appropriation of agency, ‘On the attack on Berlin’s supreme judge: Terror or resistance’, the second communiqué, develops a clearer argument (B2J 1974b). It aims at establishing a coherent narrative of legitimisation by rebuking attempts to delegitimise the shooting of von Drenkmann as an assault on social peace and inner security. Paradigmatically, it asks ‘who is “shocked” about Günter Drenkmann’s death and why’ to answer the rhetorical question right away as official reactions represent ‘the outcry of the ruling about the death of one of their own’ (ibid., 1). In so doing, it identifies the enemy, creates distance, and redirects responsibility to the antagonist. Consequently, the remainder of the communiqué aims at substantiating this claim in a threefold discursive move. It argues that von Drenkmann embodies a particular German class constellation, relates this constellation to a larger context of oppression, and situates the armed left and the aims of its struggle within this context.

Drawing on private details of the victim’s life addressed in obituaries (among others: Tagespiegel 1974), the text challenges his personal integrity by inverting the moral evaluation of the eulogies. In so doing, it focuses on the judge’s supposedly critical stance during National Socialism, the aspect which conflicts most openly with New Left creed. Without bluntly accusing von Drenkmann of complicity, the communiqué problematizes the meaning of his ‘antifascist’ convictions to invoke a different narrative of historical continuity. It claims that his family’s persistently close ties to power under constantly changing historical constellations represent a textbook example of socially stratified, impermeable German class constellations against which armed struggle intervenes by unsettling the complacency of the ruling class. Accordingly, misrepresenting its actions which ‘always have been directed against those who exploit, deceive, fool, and betray the people’ and reinventing von Drenkmann as a ‘citizen just like any other’ mystifies who is actually in danger (B2J 1974b, 1-2). To contrast this narrative, the paper broadens the context of oppression to everyday experiences of alienation and exploitation. This discursive shift supposedly reifies the unbridgeable gap between a collective ‘working populace’ and the elitist ‘presiding judge of the court of appeal Drenkmann’ (ibid., 2).
Chapter 5 - ‘Being radical means: Getting down to the root of the trouble’: Constructing Revolutionary Identity in the Writings of the 2nd of June Movement

The paper contends that claims for solidarizing with the victim and his family by established politics are exercises of pre-emptive de-solidarization with armed formations, whose relevance is rhetorically elevated by historical metaphor. Parliamentary politics in the mid-1970s supposedly follow the maxim ‘there are no more parties there are only Germans’, commonly associated with the dawn of the Great War (B2J 1974b, 2). The comparison implies that the ruling class invokes inter-class solidarity to obfuscate objective class interests through exclusionary unity against an imagined common enemy. Countering this generalisation of a specific threat by describing armed politics as pre-emptive resistance to ‘terror from above’, the concrete attack reaffirms the claimed class identity against the elite (ibid.). This arrogated positionality is normalised by reiterating central claims, stressing technical, euphemistic descriptions of the deed, and repetitive, almost incantatory formulations. Finally, the text aims at rationalising von Drenkmann’s implied responsibility for Meins’ death. Invoking the particularly reactionary practice of rulings by the Berlin court of appeal as a well-known fact, it argues a fortiori that its president is responsible for this stance and substantiates the claim by analogy to the entrepreneur ‘who does not get his own hands dirty’ (ibid.).

The attack triggers fierce critique and vehement distancing in radical periodicals (Anonymous 1974a); reactions reach from bewilderment and denial of the assassination’s authorship (Frankfurter Genossen 1974; Redaktionskollektiv ‘Wir Wollen Alles’ 1974, 2) over tactical considerations on their timing and impact on campaigns in support of hunger strikers (Anonymous 1974d; Redaktionskollektiv ‘Wir Wollen Alles’ 1974; RK 1974) to questions of revolutionary ethics raised by the targeting of a symbolically, rather than directly responsible, public figure (Anonymous 1974e). However, the discussion on the dual event also includes adamant defences of the assassination as an adequate reaction to Meins’ death.

A paradigmatic example for these voices and militant sense-making in general is an anonymous text whose caption claims that shooting von Drenkmann was an act of solidarity (Anonymous n.d. [1974]). It interprets radical reactions as expression of a fundamental contradiction in the belief system of the non-institutionalised left since critical solidarity represents the fundamental inconsistency of positions towards the armed struggle: ‘solidarity with the dead guerrillero – but denouncing the fighting guerrilla’ (Anonymous n.d.
Contrary to the concept, exploiting half-hearted solidarization for parochial, self-serving goals contributes to the isolation of fighting groups and reaffirms splits while unconditional solidarity with ongoing, relentless struggle is politically thorny, but also the litmus test of revolutionary identity. When ‘the left’ is ostracised for failing to pay its ‘last respects’ and for victimising comrades ‘killed in action’ instead of honouring the revolutionary example, a solemn, militarised language of hero worship turns militancy into an existential question (ibid., 2). Similarly, claimed class positions delimit revolutionary identities in pejorative language that borders on anti-intellectualism and contrasts a concrete ‘reality of armed struggle’ with left-wing ‘pathological differentiation attempts’ (ibid., 3). In so doing, critique becomes betrayal as whoever doubts the struggle’s inevitably revolutionary character ‘sides – intentionally or not – with repression’ (ibid., 4).

Rhetorical questions construct a dichotomy between bourgeois and revolutionary ethics which represent an inalienable precondition for supporting prisoners, especially in alliance politics, since everything else means ‘to adjust oneself between revolutionary politics and liberal opinion’ (Anonymous n.d. [1974], 5). Accordingly, decisionistic semantics of armed struggle without a middle ground even determine concrete left-wing realpolitik and have to be defended against attempts of co-optation; revolutionary identity also becomes struggle against oneself. Consequently, the text argues that the New Left has to come to terms with the existence of armed formations as these represent an inherent consequence of its history and a critical element of its strategies. The isolation of the armed struggle is indicative of ‘our real social isolation, our objective weakness’ (ibid., 7).

When the text finally states that ‘we do not need to be told that a struggle between an atomic part of the people and the state apparatus is fought here’ (Anonymous n.d. [1974], 10), it aptly summarises this sub-section’s main findings. Immunising a highly controversial legitimatory narrative and transforming the B2J counterfactually into a revolutionary authority by the normative facticity of the revolutionary deed characterises not only voices from its environment, but also the group’s own writings. Despite attempts to define a positive political project in the ‘Programme’, a largely defensive understanding of struggle which reacts to threats by the state only leaves limited room for development.
5.4 ‘How everything ends’: Peak and collapse of activism in 1975

These limitations also become apparent in the first elaborate conceptual statement after the ‘Programme’, which dates between the assassination of von Drenkmann and the B2J’s largest single operation in March 1975. In general, the year represents the zenith of the group’s activism and publishing practice with the abduction of local CDU politician Peter Lorenz (B2J 1975c) and subsequent self-presentations which celebrate the action’s success (B2J 1975a) and explain the group’s approach in more detail (‘Otto’ and ‘TB’ 1975). However, commemorating the death of another long-term comrade, foundational member Werner Sauber (B2J 1975d), and the arrest of the majority of the group’s militants as a result of an extended and targeted manhunt in the aftermath of the successful kidnapping also take place in 1975 (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 175-176). In this regard, triumph and failure, or a partial victory over the state and the factual end the B2J’s activist phase coincide, and are remarkably closely interrelated.

5.4.1 ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ (January 1975)

The topically entitled paper ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ (B2J [1975] 2001), which precedes these events, has an ambiguous editorial history: remarks on a reprint of the text in the booklet of an activist history workshop suggest that it has been individually authored by Sauber and ‘attracted wide attention among the militant left and also among the “2nd of June Movement”’ (Vorbereitungsgruppe B2J 1998). In contrast, ‘Project Arthur’ treats it as a collective statement and assesses it as an ‘awfully good paper: thesis, antithesis, synthesis’ (Projekt Arthur 1983-86c, 13). Since the text further develops central organisational concepts and issues addressed in earlier writings in the first person plural, it is considered here at least as an expression of collective decision-making processes among B2J militants.

The first part of the paper establishes an analytical narrative of a structural economic crisis in the mid-1970s. Implicitly, the argument draws not only on New Left practices of ‘proletarian inquiry’ in Italy (Controinformazione 1976; Wright 2002, 21-25), but also on Italian operaist theories of the increasing tendency towards a command economy which results from the unfolding of capitalism’s inherent contradictions (Negri [1973] 2005, 66-73).

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70 This editorial comment is repeated in an online collection of B2J texts on the occasion of an activist congress on the history of the B2J (Kongressgruppe 2005b).
Its second half outlines the concept of an ‘armed mass line’ out of a critique of the RAF and an assessment of the beginnings of the B2J (B2J [1975] 2001, 239-245). It is only vaguely related to the preceding analysis, reflects legitimisation strategies discussed above, and rearticulates inconsistencies of the semantics of armed struggle. Despite these contradictions, the paper’s level of theoretical sophistication is remarkable when compared to the B2J texts discussed above.

The analysis of the contemporary reality of crisis focuses less on economic causes than on its social and political implications. It calls for a differentiated approach to the composition of the multi-layered exploited class after a short moment of increased workers’ militancy in 1973. Without referencing the source, the argument closely resembles the first chapter of Karl Heinz Roth’s ‘The “Other” Workers’ Movement’, an operaist reading of class conflicts since the foundation of the German Empire first edited in 1974 (Roth 1977, 5-19). The paper integrates recent episodes of increased repression of the radical left into the ideological narrative of the pre-emptive oppression of developing solidarity ties and contends that a wave of largely futile searches ‘was an action that should spread fear and terror exactly at the points where social resistance movements … are threatening to associate’ (B2J [1975] 2001, 228). In so doing, the text constructs a mythopoetic tale of crisis as double-edged political tool. Crisis allows for restructuring production and provides a means to pre-emptively repress potentially rebellious minorities, but also indicates fundamental societal change and points to the limits of control as ‘it seems as if currently a final stage of capitalist domination would be reached’ (ibid., 230).

While this cautious formulation and the conjunctive mood linguistically substantiate the paper’s claim to develop an open, differentiated analysis, the social and political consequences of restructuration are presented as matters of fact. The text integrates increasing marginalisation, a general move to the right, and revisionist foreign politics into a single ideological narrative (B2J [1975] 2001, 232-235). In so doing, it sets the stage to ask after viable strategies of resistance which are constrained by the defensive position of workers and the multiply split left, failing to transform correct analysis into practice and develop existing contacts with the marginalised into political perspectives. This proposition, in itself already tautological, supposedly validates the semantics of armed struggle without
further argumentative mediation since ‘real proletarian counter-power is armed workers’ power’ (ibid., 238).

Consequently, the remainder of the paper constructs different interpretations of ‘armed politics’ into a contrastive pair to suggest which understanding is supposedly correct. Comparing the practice of RAF and B2J in openly partisan ways allows for the synthesis of a third alternative, the ‘armed mass line’. While ‘terrorism’ has earlier been used in quotation marks or to vilify the enemy, ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ describes the RAF’s armed politics as ‘antiimperialist terrorism’, stating that its actual potential to act is ‘bound by repression’ (B2J [1975] 2001, 239). Nevertheless, ‘the comrades of the RAF’ are credited with 'abandoning the difference between person and politics' and for ‘their revolutionary practice and experience’ which outweighs words (ibid.). Stating that ‘the realisation of the armed mass line here and now’ is the yardstick of critique in solidarity (ibid.) the text presupposes the very synthesis which it supposedly develops dialectically (see above p. 198).

In so doing, it argues that ‘antiimperialist terrorism’ remains an elitist project, overemphasises the educational potential of violence, cannot establish links to everyday oppressive experiences, and fails to generalise resistance against overall conditions of repression (ibid., 240-241).

By contrast, the paper presents the short history of the B2J as an alternative conceptualisation of clandestine political violence and substantiates this claim in three ways. Firstly, it argues that the group’s members and support base highlight its predominantly proletarian class identity. Secondly, its emergence from a politicised proletarian subculture and gradual development into an armed formation suggest an evolutionary, process-oriented approach. Thirdly, its organisational ideal realises a relational understanding of struggle since ‘the comrades tried to become an armed section of the undogmatic Berlin left’ (B2J [1975] 2001, 242). However, the text also identifies the problems of the early years and blames difficulties of disseminating and communicating political messages on left-wing allies and the challenges of establishing the logistical preconditions of struggle. This self-historicisation depicts the development of the 2nd of June as a learning curve and states that the perceived revolutionary subject changed significantly from the left ‘scene’ to the marginalised of late capitalism. In so doing, the text relates negative episodes like the silencing of radical voices to mechanic solidarity within the chosen constituency of the
undogmatic left and positive experiences of passive support during phases of intense repression to the quasi-natural solidarity of working class neighbourhoods (ibid., 243-244).

It contends that calculated political intervention and self-referential reaction can be reconciled through adequate communication strategy and discourse practice, substantiating this claim by a reference to the attack on von Drenkmann. While the ruling class supposedly stayed largely amongst itself during official remembrance and condemnation, the B2J supposedly orchestrated it with the successful distribution of leaflets in Berlin’s working class neighbourhoods (ibid., 245). The text consequently concludes that conceptual and organisational alternatives already exist within the reality of armed struggle. In contrast to the elitist programme of ‘anti-imperialist terrorism’ the ‘armed mass line’ is oriented towards everyday practices of resistance and relates to perspectives which aim at generalising sectoral struggles as a new revolutionary project (ibid., 246).

Negotiating time and history reflects the objective necessity and subjective legitimisation of armed struggle. Firstly, the cautionary tale of an Orwellian future invokes the looming reality of an ‘all-encompassing network of surveillance and discipline’ which has to be prevented at any cost (B2J [1975] 2001, 246). Secondly, referencing scattered episodes of armed revolutionary struggle which represent ‘not just “heroic combat history”’ but historical obligation establishes the moral tale of subversive traditions (ibid., 246). Furthermore, the text relates these traditions to ‘the armed struggle of multinational forced labourers and young German prole’ towards the end of World War II, the historical equivalent of the emerging revolutionary subject of marginalised sub-proletarians (ibid., 247).\(^71\) Constructing a fragmented and discontinuous but vital ‘historical line’ translates into a Manichean interpretation the present: either armed politics are established in viable, resilient ways or 'Western Germany becomes again a metropolis of repression' (B2J [1975] 2001, 247). Here, the paper implicitly comes full circle: if economic developments are understood as occasions to restructure and reinforce the grip of the ruling class upon society, a gloomy interpretation of politics-to-come is consequent. However, the paper’s argument fails to relate its concept of a new rationality and social base for the armed struggle to the political-economic analysis of class constellations in 1970s Germany beyond

\(^71\) Debatable as these references may appear, they resonate with core motives of New Left ‘history from below’ projects which search for a resistant past silenced by official historiography (Roth 1977, 156-174).
the self-referential sequence of repression and reaction or, as the following sub-section highlights, between imprisonment and attempts to free imprisoned comrades.

5.4.2 The Abduction of Peter Lorenz

The abduction of local CDU party leader and mayoral candidate Lorenz in February 1975, and the subsequent flight of five imprisoned comrades to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, are core elements of the mythology of the cunning outlaws (Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 27). The episode is not only eulogised in a brochure, issued by the B2J and relatively widely disseminated in Berlin by its sympathisers (see below, p. 204), but also represents the quintessential proof of the movement’s political ingenuity and realistic outlook according to autobiographic accounts of former militants and activist historiography (Baumann 1979c, 5; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 106-109; Roth 1983-87, 72-74). Despite immediate delight over a defeat of the state, contemporary reactions in the radical press are more differentiated. They emphasise the crucial difference between acting politically and on behalf of comrades imprisoned as a consequence of their politics, or actually relating revolutionary politics to daily struggles of the people and staging a spectacle, which degrades the left and the general populace to the role of spectators (Anonymous 1975a, b; Redaktionskollektiv 'Der lange Marsch' 1975a, b; Redaktionskollektiv 'Wir Wollen Alles' 1975).

Written in a matter-of-fact, grounded tone the first document of the episode is a rare example of strategically elaborate, successful political bargaining by social revolutionary clandestine groups (Wunschik 2006b, 531). It makes a clear and widely circulated, albeit highly controversial, political statement, establishes a catalogue of negotiable demands, and

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72 The abduction and release of senior prosecutor Mario Sossi by the BR achieved, in their own words, at least some of its aims by unmasking the state of democracy in contemporary Italy and by revealing the true nature of the enemy (BR [1974] 2007). Furthermore, it ended in a way that allowed the Brigades to establish their credibility without appearing intransigent (Galli 1993, 93-94). Other cases of high-profile kidnappings and similar actions ended mostly unsuccessfully if the establishment of long-lasting myths is not deemed a success in itself. More precisely, neither the occupation of the German embassy in Stockholm by a RAF commando, nor the abduction of president of the Employer Association Hans-Martin Schleyer by the RAF (Wunschik 2006a, 474-475) or the kidnapping of Christian Democrat politician Aldo Moro by the BR (Moss 1989, 154-164), resulted in freeing a single prisoner but left a trail of dead victims and attackers. The assessment of one of the BR’s historical cadres that ‘the comrades have a nuke on their hands and treat it like a squib’ (Franceschini et al. 1990, 124) mirrors a widespread feeling that all these actions were not based on sound strategic calculation.
utters a credible threat on the basis of the B2J’s recent track record. Already the dissemination of the ‘Communication’ calls for official recognition: it is distributed via one of the largest German news services and published in widely circulated ‘bourgeois’ broadsheets (InfoBUG 1975). The paper’s authors call themselves ’armed women and men of the 2nd of June movement’ and describe the action euphemistically as an arrest to normalise the events (B2J 1975c). The text vilifies prison conditions ‘in the gaols of the FRG and Berlin’ as outrageous and claims the moral high ground since Lorenz ‘will be better off than the inmates in state prisons, albeit he also will not be benefitting from the comfort of his Zehlendorf mansion’ (ibid.). In so doing, the B2J arrogates the authority to take prisoners in the ironic, personalised, and direct style of the undogmatic left, which regularly paraphrases privilege in metonymies.

74 The announcement of intent to ‘interrogate’ the ‘prisoner’ on ‘his connections to the economy, to the bosses and to fascist governments’ not only underlines claims to authority, but also serves to distance the victim and introduce a political message (B2J 1975c). This message contends that Lorenz is qua function directly accountable for a long catalogue of grievances. As most of these are clearly outside his actual competences, the paper establishes symbolic and moral responsibilities counterfactually. Two of these follow, for instance, from Lorenz’ high-ranking local party office, and underline internationalist positions to construct an overarching narrative. Namely, he is described as an ‘agitator of Zionism, the aggressive politics of conquest of the state Israel’ and supposedly ‘has a bloody share in the military coup’ in Chile (ibid.).

Subsequently, the text enumerates a detailed list of demands including the unconditional release of protesters, incriminated during marches in remembrance of Holger Meins, and the freeing of six identified militant comrades to establish a concrete bargaining

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73 According to accounts of participants, negotiations towards the exchange of Lorenz’ and the prisoners’ freedom included at least four further ‘Communications’ by the B2J, disseminated simultaneously through various communication channels; these are documented verbatim in Reinders and Fritzsch (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 82-92). As these texts address first and foremost practical specifics of the negotiations and exchange, they are not analysed in detail.

74 Left-wing popular culture and music, which associates different class positions clearly with distinct addresses or holiday destinations, provides illustrative examples of this rhetorical move (Degenhardt 1973; Reiser and Lanrue 1972).
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situation. Particular conditions underline the B2J’s politics, particularly the demand that prisoners should be accompanied on their outbound journey by a former mayor of Berlin, in office during the events of 2nd of June 1967. The paper reaffirms its authors’ bargaining position by an explicit, but measured threat further concretised by invoking ‘consequences like in the case of supreme judge G.v. Drenkmann’ if demands should not be met (B2J 1975c). Finally, the communiqué addresses ‘the comrades in prison’ and ‘the populace of Berlin’ directly and informally to open the conversation beyond the bargaining situation. While it apologises to ‘political prisoners’ for the action’s limitations, it calls upon the people of Berlin: ‘do not render any assistance, leave the police, the bigwigs, and the press amongst themselves’ (ibid.).

A brochure entitled ‘The abduction in our view’ dates from the immediate aftermath of the kidnapping, prisoner exchange, and subsequent release of Peter Lorenz. According to its authors, it pursues the threefold objective of self-presentation, rationalisation, and counter-information as ‘we want to uncover a part of all the fabrications by press and politicians’ (B2J 1975a, 2). Its relatively high standard of lettering, lay-out, graphics, and print indicates the B2J’s level of technical sophistication and attention to detail. In the accounts of Reinders and Fritzsche, the distinctive graphic symbol with fist, rifle, and globe was adopted from the Cuban magazine ‘Tricontinental’ exclusively for the abduction and brochure to highlight the group’s understanding of internationalism (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 40). While the pamphlet states a circulation of 50,000 copies (B2J 1975a, 9), it is acknowledged that the actual number of printed papers reached 30,000, most of which were disseminated in a cloak-and-dagger operation throughout Berlin (Nowakowski 2015). That the movement and its supporters were able to mount such a risky and labour-intensive action during the height of the manhunt for B2J members is indicative of its relatively high level of organisation and support.

75 While the two remaining imprisoned protesters were freed and eventually cleared of all charges, only five of the initially named six militants in prisoned agreed to the exchange (Viett 1997, 138-141). Horst Mahler, who already had distanced himself from the RAF and the conception of armed struggle by small bands of ‘Urban Guerrillas’ beforehand (Mahler 1974), consequently condemned the abduction and publicly declined his consensus to be flown out (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 86-87).

76 However, a similar brand logo already was used earlier in ‘Info no. 3’ of the ‘Movement of the Revolutionary Left’ (BRL 1974).
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The B2J introduces itself in unmediated ways without ideological ballast and directly addresses its audience, the wider Berlin populace, rhetorically asking ‘who are we’ (B2J 1975a, 2). By delimiting themselves directly from depictions in the media and widespread prejudices, the text tries to establish a differentiated self-description that highlights its non-academic background, proletarian class position, and a realistic assessment of ‘armed politics’. In so doing, it stresses class difference and argues that attempts to represent the B2J as a threat to the common man are a sign of the ruling class’ existential insecurity. Figures of speech, repetitive and suggestive language use, and frequently employed rhetorical questions aim at establishing a wider discursive context according to which the violent and oppressive normality suggests one particular answer: going beyond ‘words and verbal demands’ (ibid.). While this resembles the decidedly popular tone of the second communiqué on von Drenkmann, the brochure also adds new nuances.

The abstractly defined wider context of oppression and exploitation is illustrated and concretised by a tangible example, the declined requests of ‘Mrs Busch’, single mother of a child with special needs, for support to Lorenz which the kidnappers found among his personal papers (B2J 1975a, 3). Dichotomies between politicians whose parties are ‘one and the same club’ and the people who are free to ‘choose between the devil and the deep blue sea’ are confirmed in a voice from the people (ibid.). Reified by a quoting from a trope from leftist popular culture, this translates into a moral tale according to which the ruling class must be coerced into giving up its privilege. Since ‘urban guerrilla spells phantasy and spirit’, it manifests qualities upon which ‘the people’ or the marginalised and underprivileged classes already depend in their daily lives (ibid.). While the ‘we’ of the guerrilla in principle already represents the ‘you’ of these classes, the communitarian, collective self-understanding of armed formations is the fundamental difference since ‘we have realised that one has to stick together, to organise if one wants to achieve something’ (ibid.).

Further developing its dialectical argument, the brochure approaches the complementary rhetorical question ‘who is Peter L.’, drawing on papers and conversations, which are no longer called interrogations, as privileged information to delegitimise his public image (B2J 1975a, 3). In so doing, it mirrors the construction of a legitimising narrative of

77 The text quotes the chorus of the leftist hit ‘The Struggle Continues’ by the Berlin band ‘Ton Steine Scherben’ which summarises the supposedly classist judicial practice of German courts against radicals as follows: ‘He who’s got the money, has got the power and he who’s got the power is in the right’ (Reiser and Lanrue 1971).
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armed politics as real popular struggle, focusing on deconstructing Lorenz’s depiction as a ‘man of the people’ by illustrating his elitist life-style and politics (ibid., 4). In an argumentum ad exemplum the case of ‘Mrs Busch’ is further elaborated to substantiate that politics neglects the needs of the working class. Firstly, the B2J seizes the opportunity for an act of practical communication and donates the cash Lorenz was carrying when he was abducted to her. Secondly, documenting the correspondence in detail becomes part of the argument. Instead of an official response, which Mrs Busch, according to the text, never got, the B2J writes a reply (ibid., 4-5).

It argues that the particular case and ‘the indifference of the parties towards your worries and hardships’ highlights larger issues and explains why ‘we take such rigorous measures’ (B2J 1975a, 6). This position is further justified by generalising the example into the moral statement that politics either cares for the problems of the populace or is redundant. In contrast, the letter contends that armed politics is also about practical support, even if sending Lorenz’s cash to Mrs Busch cannot right the great wrong immediately. After discussing the concrete example in a letter which is directed at a larger audience the text returns to the general narrative of exploitation and abuse of power. Sharing ‘secret information’ serves as an argumentative device to substantiate that established politics is not only dishonest and corrupt, but also incompetent and impotent. Lorenz is personally denounced as a textbook example of this system, ‘fully bound to the interests of capital’, by the publication a breakdown of his personal income and its sources (ibid.).

Subsequently, the paper addresses the destination of the freed prisoners, Yemen, to contrast the pejorative depiction of politics as usual with the ideal of revolutionary politics. The history of Yemen illustrates not only the system of imperialism, but also the prospects of anti-imperialist resistance which highlights the truism that there is no liberation without violence. The authority of concrete, historical ‘truth’ supposedly reaffirms the B2J’s consequential approach to politics; the moral tale that processes of revolutionary change are long-term and complex only adds to the gravitas of this truth-claim (B2J 1975a, 7-8). In contrast, the remaining pages of the brochure include less solemn references and aim at establishing a wider discursive frame. Firstly, reprinting a ‘Lorenz-song’, which re-narrates the story of the abduction in the style of contemporary protest songs, relates the episode to
radical left popular culture (ibid., 10). Secondly, visuals and sloganeering mirror the style of undogmatic journals by explaining central ideological messages in cartoons and repeating core ideas from autonomous organisational approaches.

To conclude, ‘The abduction in our view’ develops an internally coherent argument of legitimisation and de-legitimisation outside the usual forms of ideological reasoning and is presented in comprehensible, plain words. The brochure aims at a wider audience, including but not limited to the left ‘scene’. Consequently, not all of the closer addressees appreciate how far the text goes in popularising its political analysis and tone, for instance, polemically criticising the paper’s ‘theoretical trick’ to construct a ‘general resistance of the abstract ghost ship “people” against whichever manifestation of the chimera “state”’ out of scattered, unrelated incidents of practical dissent (Redaktionskollektiv ‘Der lange Marsch’ 1975a, 5). The political limitations of an action which first and foremost aims at self-referentially sustaining the area of struggle are hence subject to debate in contemporary radical discourse even if the brochure in itself is still regarded as a PR stunt.

5.4.3 ‘Audiotaped minutes from 3 April 1975, recorded in West-Berlin’

In the immediate aftermath of the abduction of Lorenz, self-representations of the B2J adopt the interview as a format of militant writing. The Tupamaros first employed staged self-interviews in which theoretical and practical positions are didactically presented in questions and answers not unlike the catechism books of Christian traditions (Tupamaros 1968). Further notable examples of this genre include the self-interview ‘After a year of work’ by the BR (BR 1971) and the ‘Interview with the urban guerrilla group “Revolutionary Cell”’ which occupies a prominent space in RZ writings (see below point 6.2.1). In contrast to the sometimes carefully crafted sequences of turn-taking, the conversation between an unidentified Swedish journalist and a B2J member under the pseudonym ‘Otto’, in which interrogator and interviewee often widely and openly disagree, appears as a genuine interview. For instance, there are several controversies about the politics of naming and

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78 According to a retrospective article on the abduction in one of Berlin’s large broadsheets, the ballad is a genuine expression of widespread approval among radical leftists and was circulated in the immediate aftermath of the successful kidnapping (Nowakowski 2015). Lyrics and sheet music of the song are printed in InfoBUG in identical typeset and layout (Anonymous 1975c) about ten days before ‘The Abduction in our view’ was disseminated in Berlin (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 105). Therefore, it is plausible that its inclusion into the brochure actually refers to perceptions of the events within the left subculture.
different notions of violence. While the interviewer freely uses the term ‘terrorism’ for
clandestine political violence, ‘Otto’ insists that ‘we defend ourselves against a terrorist,
inhuman system’ and therefore cannot be called ‘terrorists’ (‘Otto’ and ‘TB’ 1975, 2). The
‘Audiotaped Minutes’ represent an attempt to explain armed practice and justify it politically
to a sympathetic but critical audience. ‘Otto’s’ answers highlight the limitations of an
approach to political violence that emphasises the normative power of its practice without a
defined strategic concept.

While rejecting contemporary imaginations of a unified command structure held
between the B2J and RAF, ‘Otto’ describes a common area of struggle as shared reality in
which ‘ideological-philosophical debate with the RAF’ is inevitable, but only on the base of
sister- and brotherhood in arms (‘Otto’ and ‘TB’ 1975, 1). He depicts relations across groups
in terms of learning from the experience and failures of others: the collective identity of
solidarity in struggle is independent from membership cards, but depends on shared
experiences of fighting and remembering dead comrades. Outlining the particular
organisational concepts of the B2J, ‘Otto’ emphasises notions of autonomy and
independence which are based more on sympathy than on absolute political consensus.
Accordingly, solidarity ties and mutual experiences constitute a ‘form of commune’ and an
immediate, existential understanding of armed struggle: ‘at the same moment at which we
smash the old society, we already try out the new one’ (ibid., 2).

The topoi of revolutionary immediacy and the primacy of its practice reappear
frequently. For instance, ‘Otto’ describes struggle as a way of living and an attempt to
revolutionise the life-world continuously and notes the irony of a purely theoretical
 anarchism that develops an authoritative anarchist canon. Consequently, anti-imperialist
solidarity is practical solidarity, targeting imperialist infrastructure and not engaging in
‘theoretical wailing about the evil imperialists’, which also establishes a discursive link to
international liberation struggles (‘Otto’ and ‘TB’ 1975, 3). ‘Otto’ contends that two levels of
struggle are interrelated. While economic-political war means striving for a fundamental
change in the relations of production, ‘cultural-philosophical war’ which is ‘dialectically
related’ is defined even more vaguely: ‘to the cultural war: the liquidation of the ruling
philosophy and its moral swamp requires necessarily abstracting from reality’ (ibid., 5). Upon
request for clarification, he adds that this move towards abstraction envisions an ideological
mix which borrows from different sources and avoids either-or-decisions and is sceptical towards set theoretical positions. However, ‘Otto’ insists that this is not a refusal to theorise, but rather an invitation to ideological debate without blinders.

Asked to relate his theoretical digression back to the concrete practice of the B2J, he emphasises the topic of the ‘terrorist system’, claiming that the shooting of von Drenkmann, who is a ‘main enemy of the people’ qua function, and the abduction of Lorenz are part of the same practice: the fight against an inhuman system (‘Otto’ and ‘TB’ 1975, 6-7). Ostensibly criticising the circumstances of Schmücker’s assassination, the event’s supposedly objective outcomes, the prevention of future infiltration, are justified. Objectification further immunises the argument against unavoidable contradictions when ‘Otto’ rebukes questions on the potentially counterintuitive outcomes of militant politics by invoking historical ‘facts’ or boasts about ‘whiny pleas to the populace only not to get involved with us’ in parliamentary debates (ibid., 7-8). The interview ends on the reaffirmation of existentialist interpretations of the semantics of armed struggle, in which ‘Otto’ describes his lifestyle as embracing the possibility of death in the middle of life. While the interviewee highlights that his statements do not represent the official line of the B2J, his answers restate topoi already discussed above, most prominently the orientation towards a theory of practice, which deliberately leaves conceptual ideas vague and highlights the importance of personal examples. Obligation to dead comrades constitutes a functional equivalent to a clearly defined political project, either abstractly invoking the sacrifice of the people of the Third World or concretely referring to fallen friends.

5.4.4 ‘To the death of our comrade Werner Sauber’ (May 1975)

This tendency also becomes evident in the obituary to B2J militant Werner Sauber, although the ways in which he is remembered differ substantially from the politics of commemoration in earlier papers (B2J 1975d). The document’s visual language resembles ‘The abduction in our view’ and, in so doing, suggests that the group starts to develop a distinguishable visual brand. The first remarkable feature of the paper concerns discourse practices: contrary to earlier examples of remembering the fallen, which communicated by text and deed, the paper stands alone. Militant message and several calls to action are not related to any concrete act of revenge, retaliation, or remembrance. In so doing, the text
invokes the personal authority of the deceased ‘fighter’ by the double qualifier ‘internationalist and antifascist’ and reaffirms his agency when he is not described as a victim of police violence, but as killed in action (ibid.). Appreciating Sauber’s commitment to the cause emphasises the unity of struggles: he is depicted as a co-organiser of ‘militant and armed struggle’ in his ‘longstanding legal and illegal work’ (ibid.). Furthermore, the interpretation of his death goes beyond narratives of revenge. Rather, a biography of long-term political dedication is reflected in an authentic language of loss as ‘his death affects us deeply’, discursively reaffirming an international dimension of struggle by including ‘the entire revolutionary movement in Europe’ into the ‘us’ (ibid.).

However, the circumstances of Sauber’s death also allow for concretising the enemy: while the text concedes that capitalism in its different manifestations, not the police, is the main enemy, the security forces’ systemic function of silencing fundamental dissent turns them into direct antagonists. Consequently, encounters with the police are matters of life and death. Necessary defence in such situations reaffirms revolutionary identity, just as the security forces’ attempts to bring those ‘by whom they are combatted and threatened’ down reaffirm the revolutionary significance of fundamental dissent (B2J 1975d). Despite the fact that the shootout also claimed the life of an unmentioned officer, the B2J therefore states that ‘our comrades in Cologne have fought bravely’ in a language reminiscent of official remembrance of the fallen (ibid.). The narrative of loss and grievance subsequently turns into a legitimisation of the struggle’s continuation and deepening. The paper invokes heroic examples to argue that death and pain are part of any struggle for liberation and emancipation. Learning from revolutionary examples means accepting this fact since ‘a fistful of dedicated fighters’ is the beginning of any liberation movement (ibid.). Repetition and formulaic incantation aim at reaffirming this message, but also establish a cautionary tale: armed struggle equals strategic calculation which neither leaves room for overestimating one’s own strength nor for underestimating the enemy, reaffirmed by a laconic reference to the RAF’s catastrophically failed raid on the German embassy in Stockholm (see below point 6.2.2, p. 233). While the text develops a more productive and forward looking perspective on an established topic, the fallen comrade, it also reaffirms the tension between an increasingly, inwards-directed perspective, in which armed struggle is a
self-fulfilling end, and the need to de-tautologise this circle through an outwardly directed political project.

5.4.5 The ironic guerrilla?

Regressing to irony represents for the B2J an attempt to re-open the progressively more narrow and isolated reality of the fighting group, according to former protagonists’ memoires (Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 49-50; Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 54). Most notably, two bank raids in late July 1975 are staged in ways that should reassure clients and staff and set at the same time an example against the pessimistic zeitgeist within the left scene, highlighting in the words of the Lorenz-brochure how ‘urban guerrilla spells phantasy and spirit’ (B2J 1975a, 3). To this avail, the raiders provide not only chocolate marshmallows, but also a nonchalant leaflet which euphemises the robbery ironically to staff and customers (Viett 1997, 149). As this very short leaflet is an exception to the rule that logistical operations remained unclaimed (B2J [1975] 2001, 243), it is worth a closer look despite consisting of merely two sentences. The tongue-in-cheek self-aggrandisement of its title ‘Economic stimulus package of the 2nd of June Movement’ (B2J 1975b) is reminiscent of similar tendencies in the early days, most notably the notorious delimitation ‘Central Committee of Vagabond Hash Rebels’, and indicates tendencies of nostalgia and self-historicisation. The short text employs a colloquial language and economic metaphors, queering the verbal images to produce a satirical effect which mitigates the imperative ‘out with the dough’ (B2J 1975b). Referring to the sweets brought along, the text is signed by ‘Revolutionary chocolate marshmallows of the 2nd of June Movement’ further ironizing the direct and aggressive message (B2J 1975b).

Another example of attempts to approach a serious issue in not-so-serious ways is a leaflet which comments on Baumann’s ‘How everything began’. It argues that the book provides a sensational, deeply distorted, and ultimately counterrevolutionary account of the B2J and feeds into the official narrative of evil terrorists. However, this assessment is written in a language that closely mirrors the hypercritical, if not vitriolic, but also (self-) ironic and playful tone of contemporary undogmatic journals. The layout is a spoof on the cover of the first edition of Baumann’s book under the heading “‘Bommi’” Baumann: How everything ends’ and depicts him in a commercialised Santa Claus outfit as a comment on his implied
economic interests (B2J n.d. [1975], 1). Establishing the central theme of commercialisation, the text delegitimises Baumann’s autobiography as part of a coordinated and profit-oriented campaign against violence from below orchestrated by ‘left-wing’ editorials (B2J n.d. [1975], 2). Sarcastic religious metaphors and pop-cultural references supposedly deconstruct Baumann’s credibility and relate his work to a narrative of general, widespread sell-out of the principles of revolt.

A mix of serious and absurd questions establishes a psychologised reading of the book as mainly driven by its author’s need to project, rationalise, and be recognised (B2J n.d. [1975], 3). This supposedly cathartic element of Baumann’s account is theorised in ways which point beyond the particular case: ‘How everything ends’ argues that merely hedonistic attempts at emancipation are ultimately counterrevolutionary as ‘emancipation without revolution is impossible’ (B2J n.d. [1975], 4). The leaflet’s ironically veiled value judgement on a former B2J militant and co-founders is not well received within its target audience: according to a contemporary comment ‘“strange” was still one the tamest expression which the scene found’ (Anonymous [1975] 2001).

However, the pamphlet represents one of the last public communications of the activist phase of the B2J, which ends with a wave of arrests in 1975. Attempts to regroup and reorganise the logistical base of the group in subsequent years include a collective prison break, a kidnapping without political profile to raise funds, and an initially successful liberation attempt which ultimately resulted in the arrest of more of the remaining militants (Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 62-83; Viett 1997, 155-159 and 169-174). None of these activities could develop a political perspective beyond the focus on the persistence of armed struggle. While the space of the B2J’s contributions to political debates of the radical left shifted to communications from prison cell and dock, controversies also became increasingly inwardly directed and opened fissures within the organisation which had hitherto been covered by the necessity of maintaining an underground existence (B2J/RGO n.d. [1978], 4-6).

The analysis of communiqués and programmatic statements from the 2nd of June’s active phase suggests that its relatively short-lived practice and limited political outreach have reasons beyond the mere recalcitrance of a non-revolutionary reality. As the B2J’s foundational attack is already largely inwards-directed and does not develop a political project beyond the vague necessity of defending a politicised subculture practically,
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5.5 ‘We are all from the 2nd of June’: Conclusions

After the end of a short-lived practice under the denomination ‘2nd of June Movement’, which lasted for a little over four years if we take reported negotiations between different sub-factions of the unstructured militant underground in West-Berlin in autumn 1971 into consideration, the reality of the militants changed fundamentally. Those who were arrested and put into pre-trial detention before two long-lasting, large trials against members of the B2J in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Öffentlichkeitsausschuß 1978b; Radikal n.d. [1981]), report a deep-felt disruption of the frenzy of living underground, constantly on the lookout and organising the next steps of a precarious practice and life (Meyer 2008, 68; Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 57-58). While imprisonment initially provided a breathing space from the mundane stress of clandestinity, the fight against prison conditions and the prison as an institution became the new focus of existence. Consequently, a
considerable part of ‘The Blues’ is dedicated to different aspects of ‘prison struggle’, from campaigns to address the high security regime under which all members of armed factions were held, attempts to organise prisoners politically, to providing testimony on the individual consequences and struggles of internment (Antiquariat "Schwarzer Stern" 2001, 299-490).

While this opens a new chapter of strictly limited activism and equally limited new forms of interaction with legal supporters and the wider left who rediscovers and reconsiders its relation to ‘political prisoners’ (Zahl et al. 1977), its detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter as it did not result in significant violent activism beyond the short-lived liberation of Meyer at gunpoint by his own comrades (Polizeipräsident Berlin 1978). The action is celebrated in the BUG-Info (InfoBlues 1978a), but Meyer and most of the all-female commando that waged the raid on the prison were captured less than a month after the events (InfoBlues 1978b). In this context, the freeing of prisoners, another aspect of ‘prison struggle’ becomes largely obsolete despite its initial success as well as an earlier successful self-liberation by Rollnik, Viett, and Juliane Plambeck. By contrast, autobiographical accounts of those women who managed to free themselves and started to organise the regrouping of the B2J voice a feeling of disappointment once back in liberty (Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 68-70; Viett 1997, 166-169). Previous organisational and political concepts had become obsolete and the residual core of activists started orienting themselves towards the previously criticised line of the RAF’s ‘antiimperialist terrorism’ (see above point 5.4, p. 200). Rapprochement between the rump-faction around Viett and Plambeck after the re-arrest of Rollnik in June 1978 did result in an ‘official’ statement of dissolution of the B2J that declared its merger with the RAF (B2J 1980), but did not yield much by way of practical consequences, apart from the pooling of logistics (Viett 1997, 236-246).

Furthermore, another aspect of the reality of prison manifests itself in the angry, defiant reply to this document by the faction around the B2J prisoners Fritzsch, Reinders, and Klaus Viehmann (Reinders et al. 1980): in-fight and factionalism broke out after the uniting force of a shared underground existence ceased to hold different conceptions on the future of ‘armed politics’ and interpretations its experience together (Meyer 2008, 414-417; Reinders and Fritzsch 1995, 135-154; Rollnik and Dubbe 2004, 91-93). In contrast to
totalising the perceived war with the state according to RAF positions, the second faction intervened under different pseudonyms, including ‘The Indomitables from the Spree’ and ‘Revolutionary Guerrilla Opposition’. It defended the original ‘Blues’ approach against attempts to construct the image of a unified, military-style underground organisation (Die Unbeugsamen von der Spree 1978, 16) and developed a renewed concept of ‘daily resistant behaviour’ according to which militant acts on different levels can incrementally unravel the omnipotence of the capitalist state and normalise the question of political violence (B2J/RGO n.d. [1978], 8-10; Reinders et al. 1980, 12). While this resonates with similar conceptualisations by the RZ (see below point 6.4.2), such suggestions remain mere appeals when uttered from the prison cell. Consequently, papers from fellow travellers who claim that ‘We are all from the 2nd of June’ on the occasion of the historical date’s 10th anniversary (Anonymous 1977a) as well as concluding statements in court by Reinders (Reinders 1981) and Viehmann (Viehmann n.d. [1981]) represent attempts to iconise and re-appropriate the history of the armed struggle, not least as a legacy for future generations of activists – particularly the emerging autonomist movement of the 1980s.

According to this chapter’s analysis of the B2J’s writings, this is a difficult and particular heritage that aptly highlights some of the fundamental contradictions of ‘armed politics’. Regarding the semantics of armed struggle, the texts largely develop a defensive narrative, according to which political violence is a reaction to concrete threats and activities by law and law enforcement, but also to the structural violence of the status quo. While notions of different phases and historical references mostly serve to substantiate this interpretation, registers of military and war are not particularly prevalent to lexicalise it. Rather, common tropes consist in the necessity of decision, the measuring of revolutionary theory and identity according to concrete practices, and the frequent invocation of martyrdom as a revolutionary quality. Insofar as notions of struggle are specified more closely, the texts argue for a differentiated, measured approach which is more than slightly contradicted by parts of the armed practice itself: badly planned, almost arbitrary impulsive activism coexist with high levels of planning. While some of the symbolic bombings of the formative phase pursue genuinely political goals of propaganda, later activism is entirely directed towards the area of struggle itself.
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In the second analytical dimension, the distinction between friend and enemy, it is remarkable how vague the definition of the enemy remains: insults and pejorative language often substitute a clearer definition of the ruling class, and the notion of its representatives’ responsibility is constructed in wide terms. While self-victimisation is an important element of defining the in-group, later writings emphasise a self-ascribed class position to create distance to dominant classes, the left-wing establishment, and other armed formations. With regard to conditional programmes, the third conceptual element, textual analysis confirms the inwardly directed logic. Apart from the two more conceptual papers, which define a political project of continuous revolutionary practice directed towards tangible counter-power and non-representative structures, and the vague notion of freed territories within popular quarters of West-Berlin in earlier papers, narratives of legitimisation and de-legitimisation mostly draw on moral evaluation, particular readings of history, and the invocation of revolutionary examples. Ideological terms play a relatively negligible role and mostly form part of a ritualised jargon; reiterations, enumerations, and rhetorical questions substantiate argumentation. The ways in which systemic boundaries are discursively constructed develop the notion of a factual vanguard which does not claim a higher truth, but offers the practical insight into the necessities of struggle and is related to different constituencies. While the texts mostly address these constituencies in colloquial, straightforward, and inclusive terms, the tone gets considerably more authoritative and harsh when reasoning with left-wing critics and other clandestine groups, which sometimes seem to represent competitors.

Structural couplings, discourse practices, and dissemination highlight strong, intuitive linkages between practice and texts. Firstly, most of the writings are immediately related to activisms, although not always in the most effective ways as hasty formulations and subsequent communiqués suggest. By contrast, some of the texts are crafted in highly effective ways and considerable effort goes into dissemination strategies that directly reach the local populace without intermediaries. Professionalization of text production, increasing visual and semiotic branding, as well as significant changes in style from the forcefully proletarian sociolect of early writings to a tone that uses plain, straightforward language as well as irony and subcultural references in more coherent ways already point towards potentials for systemic learning. However, immunising the argument against critique mostly
prevails over open self-critique; whenever self-critique is voiced it also addresses misperceptions of left constituencies which are more integrated than anticipated. Together with stylistic inconsistencies, for example the unusually abstract language of ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ or the regression into the language of the early days in ‘How everything ends’, this emphasises the clear limits of development and internal coherency. In sum, a close reading of B2J texts does not challenge the common narrative dramatically, but supplements it. Even in the case of the deliberately less literate and intellectual fighting formation, discourse analysis deepens the understanding of its practices.
6. ‘One has to be as radical as reality’: Negotiating Revolutionary Identities in the Writings of the Revolutionary Cells

In the light of the generalisation of economic, political, and military violence, the revolutionary process [and] mass movements can only unfold from the outset against bourgeois legality [and] have to embrace the form of struggle of the guerrilla, in so doing gradually establishing [and] legalising the illegal, non-permitted. (RZ 1976e, 7)

The norms of otherness are only variations on the dominant rules. (RZ 1981d, 7)

The analysis of the last chapter highlighted the difficulties of formulating a coherent, sustainable political concept which merely focuses self-referentially on the feasibility of armed struggle and on imprisoned or dead comrades (see above, point 5.5). Preoccupation with the dialectics of legality and illegality in the revolutionary process in the above quoted writings of the RZ points in a similar direction. However, the network of autonomous groupings which operated under the shared acronym ‘RZ’ between 1973 and the early 1990s, one of the attempts to maintain a militant perspective in social revolutionary politics beyond the B2J, also faces a discursive problem very different to militant tunnel vision. RZ activism stretches over roughly two decades, relates to various topics, and extends over many states of the FRG. Therefore, the historical, socio-political, and regional contexts of ‘armed politics’ differ substantially over time and space, not only from the close-knit radical subculture of early 1970s Berlin which constituted the B2J’s particular sociotope. Since a less exclusive notion of a revolutionary fight ‘against the myth of armed struggle’ is part and parcel of the approach (RZ 1977i, 2), it is anticipated that it becomes crucial, and at the same time difficult, to integrate diverse and divergent political positions into one overarching narrative that regulates revolutionary identities.

The politics of naming already hints towards discursive redefinitions and changes. When spelled in full, the meaning of ‘the two letters’ (Projekt Arthur 1983-86b, 1) evolved from the original ‘Revolutionäre Zelle’ or ‘Revolutionary Cell’. First it becomes pluralised in an attack communique in September 1976 (RZ 1976j) and the caption of issue 3 of the RZ’s irregular journal ‘Revolutionärer Zorn’ or ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ – yet another meaning of the acronym – in May 1977 reads ‘Organ of the Revolutionary Cells’ (RZ 1977o).79 ‘Women of the

79 The plural is already used in an open letter directed ‘to all the comrades of the RAF’ by ‘one Revolutionary Cell’, published in issue no. 136 (13 December 1976) of the Berlin based InfoBUG (RZ 1976a). However, the
Revolutionary Cell’ start using, around the same time, the name ‘Red Zora’\textsuperscript{80} in their communications and establish a radically feminist interpretation of the acronym (RZ 1977s). While the influence of feminist thought on the evolution of the Cells’ political perspective is discussed in detail below (see point 6.4.4), the development of the Zora into an autonomous, radically anti-patriarchal militant grouping (Katsiaficas 2010, 250-251) is beyond the scope of the chapter. This is for two reasons: firstly, the Red Zora produced her own substantial corpus of writings, collected in a semi-official camouflage edition (RZ 1989c) and continued into the 1990s (RZ 1993b), whose additional in-depth analysis would exceed the constraints of the chapter. Secondly and more importantly, the thesis avoids reducing one of the very few examples of an all-female, radically feminist fighting formation with a significantly different theory and practice to a mere organisational footnote, as academic and activist literature on the RZ often does (Blumenau 2014, 28; Projekt Arthur 1983-86a; Varon 2004, 359).

Both ways of rebranding the original abbreviation, one a mere nuance and the other a fundamental shift in the coordinate system, take place less than a year after events in Entebbe in June 1976. A joint Palestinian-German hijacking in which two founding members of the RZ, Brigitte Kuhlmann and Wilfried Böse, participated ended in military and political disaster when an IDF unit rescued the remaining, mostly Israeli hostages and killed all militants, who failed to achieve any of their goals (Blumenau 2014, 59-69). While targeting ordinary people and the perils of close transnational collaboration are prominent points in a retrospective, self-critical evaluation of ‘Entebbe’ by a RZ collective, the paper focuses on an even more substantial issue. It argues that the participation of German left-wing radicals in the selection of Jewish\textsuperscript{81} hostages a little more than 30 years after the liberation of

\textsuperscript{80} The name refers to a classic of German-speaking children’s and youth literature, the novel ‘The Red Zora and her Gang’ (Held 1941) translated into English as ‘The Outsiders of Uskoken Castle’ (Held 1967), written by former German communist militant Kurt Kläber under the pseudonym ‘Kurt Held’ while in Swiss exile (Meister 2007). The work’s narrative of rebellious, marginalised youth in a Croatian port town that organise under the leadership of a girl, the eponymous ‘Red Zora’, shows how autonomous forms of mutual help outside and against the village bourgeoisie lends itself to militant projection. Consequently, an unauthorised collection of texts by the Red Zora, that is, the militant organisation edited in the late 1980s uses a spoof on the dustjacket of the contemporary German standard edition of the children’s novel as camo-cover (RZ 1989c).

\textsuperscript{81} Whether the separation between different groups of hostages on flight 139 from Tel Aviv to Paris was based on citizenship or also on ethnic and religious criteria, in other words whether the attack was ‘just’ directed
Auschwitz is ‘the political dimension of the catastrophe’ (RZ 1991g, 5-6). In this context, the change in names, it is argued here, is not merely coincidental, but an expression of what the 1991 text calls the ‘deafening confession’ of the Cells’ silence on Entebbe in the aftermath of the failed attack (ibid., 14). It is remarkable that the first direct cursory reference to the events and the killed comrades is published almost five years after the fact in Revolutionary Wrath number 6 (RZ 1981b) while commemorating ‘murdered revolutionaries’ prominently and iconographically is a common feature of the Wrath (Raspe 1976; RZ 1978n; RZ 1981k, 1). Like the politics of naming, the question of who is remembered and in which ways represents another indicator of discursive continuities and discontinuities.

This brief discussion of (dis)continuities within a discourse community described and integrated, but also differentiated by ‘the two letters’, outlines the chapter’s central goal in a nutshell. It analyses whether and to which degree tendencies towards an increasingly self-sufficient discourse of armed struggle also characterise the RZs’ writings. According to a self-fulfilling narrative of ‘armed politics’, struggle itself becomes its central if not only meaning while groups progressively turn into their own revolutionary subject. Widespread against Israeli politics or also reveals moments of anti-Semitism is still widely debated. Blumenau, for instance, indicates that citizenship was critical for deciding which hostages were freed, but also characterises these as ‘Jews’ (Blumenau 2014, 62-66). In contrast, the events, particularly the ‘selection of Jews’, represent according to Kraushaar a textbook example of inherent, deep-seated, but deliberately silenced anti-Semitism, a key aspect of the history of the RZ and the wider German radical left (Kraushaar 2006b, 599). While the discussed, self-reflexive critique of ‘Gerd Albartus is dead’ is not shared amongst all tendencies within the cells (among others: RZ 1992d, 14) and some former RZ militants still justify the commando’s actions in hindsight as purely anti-Israeli (Schneipel et al. 2000), Kraushaar conveniently ignores not only the 1991 text but the entire discussion about left-wing anti-Semitism in Germany it helped to trigger in the early 1990s (among others: Anonymous 1995; FrauenLesben 1996). As the purpose of this thesis is an analysis of the very discourse communities in which this and other debates on the Cells have taken place, it is beyond its scope to answer definitively according to which specific criteria hostages in Entebbe were selected. The most important finding here is that a debate on the anti-Semitic potential of international solidarity regularly emerges in activist discussions on different levels of reflection well beyond academic debates (Agit 883 1969c; Anonymous 1981b; ISF et al. n.d. [1987/88]).

82 However, a communiqué dated on 1 January 1977 already claims responsibility for arson attacks on some German cinemas, which screened an action movie based on the events at Entebbe, in the name of ‘Revolutionary Cells/Fighters for a free Palestine’ and commemorates Böse and Kuhlmann as comrades who ‘sacrificed their lives’ (RZ 1977r). In contrast to the common practice of the 1970s according to which attack communiqués were regularly reprinted in the ‘Wrath’ and thereby became officially sanctioned parts of the authoritative RZ position, this leaflet did not find its way into the pages of the Cells’ journal. Other than that, only a very vague and spurious reference to ‘Entebbe’ as a shorthand for imperialist counter-guerrilla tactics appears in an attack communiqué dating from December 1976 (RZ 1976h) and is authorised by inclusion into no.3 of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ (RZ 1976g).

83 The title page of Wrath number 6 depicts, among others, portraits of Juliane Plambeck and Wolfgang Beer, two RAF militants who died in a car accident in July 1980 (Schult 1980; Straßner 2005, 16-17), with the more than slightly unrelated caption: ‘one can murder, torture, incarcerate human beings but never the will and hope for revolution’ (RZ 1981k, 1).
assumptions about the B2J’s poorly articulated, ill-defined theoretical perspective were the point of departure for a critical analysis of writings on and of the B2J (see above point 5, p. 164). Accordingly, common sense in the research literature has it that the RZ are also mostly focused on practice: ideological perspectives are described as theoretically underdeveloped, dichotomising social reality, and tending towards counterfactual encapsulation (Blumenau 2014, 27; Fetscher et al. 1981, 178; Wörle 2008, 264).

To develop a more nuanced analytical picture, the chapter’s argument will proceed in the following steps. Firstly, the context of emergence of the RZ will be discussed according to the research literature. Secondly, writings of the Cell(s) will be analysed within their discursive environment, the changing landscapes of radical left-wing activism. To this purpose, three different phases of militant activism further subdivide the textual analysis. Since the relevant corpus of militant writing and its discussion in radical periodicals is significantly larger than the body of texts by and on the B2J, not all sources will be analysed in depth. Finally, concluding remarks will summarise the case study’s main findings in the light of (self-) critical debates on the future of militant activism in the early 1990s to prepare the ground for a comparative analysis of both examples of radical left clandestine political violence in the thesis’ conclusion.

### 6.1 Frankfurt ‘scene’ and RAF sympathies: Contexts of emergence and activism

The already quoted title of Kraushaar’s paper ‘In the shadow of the RAF’ (Kraushaar 2006b) is paradigmatic in more than one sense. It not only reaffirms perceptions of the RZ as a phenomenon of secondary importance in journalist and academic accounts on political violence and terrorism, but also suggests that their formation is overshadowed by the earlier emergence of the RAF in a tangible sense. Before developing both aspects in more detail, the general state of literature on the Cells requires a closer look. If and when research on the B2J has been described above as sparse and disparate (see above, point 5.1), this is all the more true for the RZ.

Firstly, there are only a handful of stand-alone publications on the formation, all in the form of book chapters. As Kraushaar focuses mainly on their emergence and early years, he addresses later developments only to substantiate his central arguments, namely
widespread logistical and personal integration within the militant sphere and silenced but crucial anti-Semitic tendencies within the RZ (Kraushaar 2006b, 598-599). In so doing, he mostly draws on primary sources from the archives of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (ibid., 592). However, Kraushaar, a former Frankfurt-based political activist and writer with close but difficult relations to the ‘Sponti-left’ (Kraushaar 1977, 1978), implicitly draws on his intimate and subjective knowledge of the contemporary regional left-wing ‘scene’ as a valid source of information. Johannes Wörle, on the other hand, reconstructs the development of the RZ from their origins to the debate about the flipside of international entanglements in the early 1990s that resulted in their factual dissolution (2008). In so doing, he argues on the basis of secondary sources, official interpretations, and strategic quotations from the Cells’ collected papers that a cellular structure and the lack of definitional authority over ideological positions ultimately lead to the political failure of an alternative approach to clandestine political violence (268-273).

Secondly, comparative studies on political terrorism mention the RZ as a particular case study in either systematic and structured (Blumenau 2014, 26-28; della Porta 1995, 100-105) or more sporadic and spurious ways (della Porta 2013; Varon 2004). In this context, the group largely represents an additional example which contrasts, supplements, or extends the argument. For instance, Iring Fetscher et al.’s ideology critique of the early RAF contains a chapter that analyses writings of the RZ in the 1970s and contends that these progressively abandon originally broader concepts in favour of a theory and practice of full-fledged terrorism (Fetscher et al. 1981, 158-178). However, these findings first and foremost serve to substantiate the argument of the general ideological trajectory of contemporary terrorism (ibid., 176-183).

Thirdly, the RZ also produced a prominent apostate: Hans-Joachim Klein, a Frankfurt-based militant of the Cells’ who participated in a raid on a meeting of OPEC ministers (see below point 6.2.2, p. 239), left the group in 1977 with media-backing (Klein 1977). In a

84 Sometimes, denominations become blurred as both authors use ‘Rote Zellen’ or ‘Red Cells’ instead of Revolutionary Cells despite referencing RZ writings (della Porta 2013; Varon 2004). The similarity of German names and acronyms can be confusing as various ‘Red Cells’ existed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, these were very different from the RZ and often represent transitional phenomena: mostly faculty-based or thematically integrated political collectives that emerged during organisational debates towards the end of the inclusive APO-phase (Mosler 1977, 17-18). To complicate matters even further, some ‘Red Cells’ were more (Rotzknaust n.d. [1971]) or less (Rotzing 1971a) adamant and vocal supporters of the emerging armed struggle.
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subsequent interview, he presents his way underground as a prototypical career in the 1970s non-institutionalist left from diffuse early activism into the militant hard core of Frankfurt’s ‘scene’ and argues that self-referential militaristic feedback loops, organisational dependencies, and the idiosyncrasies of leading figures determine the RZs’ trajectory (idem 1978). Although he admits that his contacts within the Cells were limited, he speaks with the conviction of authoritative knowledge about internal details while also factually misrepresenting specific events. Further interviews and his autobiography make similar claims and have equal weaknesses (idem 1979; Spiegel 1978b).

Apart from documents on the RZ in the ‘Project Arthur’ files (Projekt Arthur 1983-86a, b) discussed above (see point 5.1), there is, finally, a considerable amount of publications from left and radical left perspectives. Engaged journalism, political comment, and activist historiography amalgamate into re-interpretations and re-appropriations of ‘movement history’, in which it is difficult to disentangle ought from is (e.g. Autonome L.U.P.U.S.-Gruppe 2001; Broschüren AG 'Ohrwürmer' 1998; Dia-Gruppe 2000; Einige aus dem Bündnis für Freilassung 2000). Most notably, writings of both RZ formations have been reprinted in the commented two volume source edition ‘The Grapes of Wrath’ (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam 1993b, a). In contrast to the unsystematic, uncommented, and largely undated edition of the B2J’s collected texts (see above, point 5.1, p. 168), the volumes pursue clearly defined objectives and are clearly structured. They aim to set standards for activist historiography and to make sources accessible for future generations of activists and researchers, but not to provide a historical-critical complete edition (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam 1993b, 11-13). Accordingly, the volumes contain topical introductions and historical-conceptual references as reading aids, but not a comprehensive source-critical apparatus. While ‘The Blues’ has been described as disjointed and unedited, the collected RZ

85 For instance, a bomb-hoax with which the RZ orchestrated a counter-statement on a series of contemporary bombings on railway stations (RZ 1975i) becomes in Klein’s account ‘the bomb in Munich which was deposited in a locker’ (Klein and Bouguereau 1978, 13). The interview with the French left daily ‘Libération’ has also been translated and published in a collection of documents on ‘The German Guerrilla’ (Klein and Bouguereau 1981).

86 The collection’s title not only plays on the Cells’ (and Zora’s) irregular journal, but also is a direct reference to a particular subheading, included into an undated and slightly edited reprint of the programmatic leader ‘For we do not perish in defeats, but in the fights we do not fight’ of Wrath number 4 (RZ n.d. [1978], 36).

87 In the original political objective and further development of the Edition ID-Archive, later renamed ID-Press, debates on militancy and the history of the armed struggle played a significant role (ID-Verlag n.d.). The history of the archive can be traced back to the first attempts of establishing an organised, movement oriented and undogmatic platform for ‘counter-information’, the Frankfurt-based ‘Information Service for Omitted News, founded in 1973 (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam n.d.).
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writings are sometimes over-edited: structuring the volumes according to thematic and historical principles, selecting particular writings, and at times omitting considerable parts of original texts conveys the impression that the editors try to establish an authoritative interpretation of a particular episode of militant history.

Outside of activist literature, the RZ often represent a mere afterthought to the long shadow of the RAF, the ostensibly more authentic, proficient, and significant militant organisations in a strangely competitive, sometimes almost sports-comment-like language. Contemporary accounts in a renowned German investigative political magazine, for instance, sneer at the ‘youth squad from the Revolutionary Cells’ (Spiegel 1979, 132) or treat the RZ as mere subsidiary ‘branches’ in ‘a solvent corporation’ of terrorism dominated by the RAF (Spiegel 1980, 68). Academic contributions and the security community also employ partial analysis of the Cells’ politics and practice as a contrasting layer to substantiate particular arguments or wider generalisations as the discussion of Fetscher et al.’s study of terrorist ideologies has argued. Another case in point is David Th. Schiller’s ‘Germany’s other terrorists’ (Schiller 1987). Here, the author contrasts declining RAF activities with an overall increase in politically motivated arson and bombing in the mid-1980s and invokes the example of the RZ to counter perceptions of decreasing threat levels in the FRG (Schiller 1987, 99). Furthermore, the RAF casts a concrete shadow on the emergence of the RZ as the majority of known foundational RZ members’ activist histories include commitments in solidarity networks for armed militants in the early 1970s (della Porta 1995, 102-103; Wörle 2008, 257-258). Literature and the group’s self-presentations also describe active delimitation from RAF and B2J as a crucial impetus for the Cells’ formation (Fetscher et al. 1981, 158-159; RZ 1975h, 1).

A variety of particular developments within the radical left in Frankfurt am Main after the heydays of student protest and anti-authoritarian revolt between 1967 and 1969 played a significant role in the emergence of the RZ (Klein 1979, 166-202; Kraushaar 2006b, 585-592). The city was already an epicentre of the student movement and home to one of the theoretically most influential factions within the federally differentiated and regionally

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88 Hans Josef Horchem’s contribution on European terrorism from a German perspective develops a similar narrative (Horchem 1982). Contemporary left-wing journalism regularly points to the self-referential functions of alarmist accounts of RZ activism for the security apparatus (among others: Arbeiterkampf 1985; Verlag Roter Stern et al. 1976).
asynchronous SDS (Fichter and Lönnendonker 1977, 115-121; Mosler 1977, 63). After the
demobilisation of the inclusive protest coalition, two main currents emerged out of the anti-
authoritarian, undogmatic current in the city. On the one hand, former SDS members and
associated groups founded the organisation ‘Revolutionärer Kampf’ (RK) or ‘Revolutionary
Struggle’, which turned after brief and largely unsuccessful attempts to organise
interventionist groups on the factory level to urban politics and identified as Spontaneist or
‘Sponti-left’ (della Porta 1995, 103-104; Mosler 1977, 78-81).

The latter was involved in the first wave of squatting in West Germany with
sometimes considerabliy violent clashes between squatters, supporters and the police.89 It
also contributed to establishing a local alternative infrastructure of self-organised projects as
well as attempts at organising an undogmatic counter-public with a national reach. The
journals ‘Wir Wollen Alles’ or ‘We Want Everything’ and ‘Autonomie: Materialien gegen die
Fabrikgesellschaft’ or ‘Autonomy: Materials Against Factory Society’ were edited by
collectives from different organisational backgrounds with interventionist, operaist
perspectives (Scheerer 1988a, 285-286; Wildcat 1986a, b). By contrast, the ‘Informations-
Dienst zur Verbreitung unterbliebener Nachrichten’ (ID) or ‘Information Service for the
Dissemination of Omitted News’, also based in Frankfurt, understood itself as an open
publishing platform for different undogmatic currents (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam n.d.).
The later founded ‘Pflasterstrand’ (‘Cobbles’ Beach’) was more closely related to the growing
local alternative subculture and counter-economy in Frankfurt, but still regularly reprinted
the communiqués of armed factions and discussions on the armed struggle (Pflasterstrand,

On the other hand, the Frankfurt-based publishing house ‘Roter Stern’ or ‘Red Star’
did not only follow a decidedly militant editorial line, publishing books and periodicals
dedicated to anti-imperialism and the support of different liberation movements in the Third
World. It also provided an organisational resource for linking internationally oriented
solidarity networks (Klimke 2006, 570-571; Kraushaar 2006b, 588-590). Some of the known
foundational members of the RZ originate from these networks as well as parts of Local Red

89 Out of RK structures evolved a radical defence squad, the famous but relatively short-lived ‘Putzgruppe’
(‘Cleaning Squad’), one of the few examples of highly organised semi-clandestine structures to safeguard
marches and squats (Wildcat 1986a, 45-48). While this organisational approach is somewhat modelled on the
example of the ‘servizi d’ordine’ of New Left organisations in Italy (Moss 1989, 53-55), semi-military clandestine
self-defence structures were much less common in Germany (della Porta 1995, 110).
Help collectives (Klein 1979, 46-48). After Frankfurt witnessed the first wave of RAF activism and the arrest of some leading militants in spring 1972 (Scheerer 1988a, 335-336), 1973 represents a decisive moment in the history of the radical left in Frankfurt and the RZ in particular. With wildcat strikes in several German automotive factories (RK 1973), large-scale evictions of squats in Frankfurt (Wildcat 1986a, 43-44), and the brutal coup of a military junta in Chile against the left-wing government of Salvador Allende (Verlag Roter Stern 1974), it is a year of hope and crisis. On 16 and 17 November 1973, the organisational history of the Revolutionary Cell begins with two bombings on ITT branches in Berlin and Nuremberg, justified by the company’s involvement in the events in Chile. Reaching beyond the Rhine-Main-Area, the thematic and temporal coordination of the attacks with a common communiqué, and its dissemination within a narrow timeframe in two of the Frankfurt-based journals with reach beyond the region, point to rather well-developed networks of the newly founded group (RZ 1973a, b).

6.2 ‘Share, reprint, do-it-as-well’: The early years 1973-75/76

Publicly using the name ‘Revolutionary Cell’ for the first time, the communiqué on the dual foundational attack presupposes the group’s existence and oscillates between an official tone and a language of immediacy (RZ 1973b). The enumeration of the unsolicited and unwarranted interventions of ITT in Chile’s recent politics in the lexis of crime and the personalisation of its politico-economic entanglements establishes a narrative of the company’s direct political involvement in the recent coup. The concrete target subsequently becomes incrementally abstracted into a textbook example of ‘US-imperialism’, but still in very concrete, immediate terms. Argumentative and rhetorical contradictions as well as implicit assumptions characterise the legitimising discourse. For instance, the overarching violence of the dominant condition requires material ‘resistance of the people’ to which the attacks on ITT contribute despite their ‘symbolic character’ (ibid.). An unmediated notion of imperialism and an existential understanding of struggle help in bridging the gap between an overarching repressive totality and limited possibilities of intervention. An initial reaction to the statement addresses this last aspect in a sympathetic, but critical tone (A.S.C.O. 1973). It contends that the Cell’s communiqué fails to establish a link between militant solidarity with Chile and everyday realities of oppression in the metropolis, pointing to an inherent problem
of ‘symbolic violence’. Accordingly, political violence is by definition political if and when it concretely challenges power structures which the RZ ignores, albeit ‘the bosses of ITT have understood your actions exactly as that what they were: an attack on their power’ (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the Cell’s next attack, the bombing of the Chilean Consulate in Berlin during the FIFA World Cup in Germany in 1974, further emphasises symbolic representation (RZ 1974b). It supposedly upsets the official narrative of sport events as ‘unpolitical spectacle’, the normality of the diplomatic mission of ‘Chile’s fascist military dictatorship’, and narratives of scaremongering against armed groups (ibid.). The text aims at denouncing the hypocrisy of public opinion by establishing a dichotomy between a left that actually cares for human beings and cynical politicians complicit in crimes against humanity. Meaning collapses almost perfectly into form when the paper suggests that deliberate tactical self-restraint carries a political message. Relating the attack to other protest events claims the unity of different forms of struggle, for instance by using the slogan ‘Chile sí, Junta no!’ (ibid.), which was also the rallying cry of a wider left campaign against the military regime during the championship (Kraushaar 2008).

An intervention in November 1974 already indicates a political trajectory beyond anti-imperialism: torching the private car of a factory manager during an industrial conflict is rationalised as protest against corporate politics to establish a militant workers’ perspective as a necessary but insufficient element of concrete struggles (RZ 1974a). The targeted manager is portrayed as the labourers’ structural enemy, whose behaviour merits decisive reactions; mimicking proletarian language use and adapting factory-level demands invokes congruence between armed intervention and concrete grievances. This impression is underlined by spicing the text with internal trivia about the Berlin-based company’s business practices and the populist slogan ‘better yet without a boss’ (RZ 1974a). A harsh rejection of the arson by organised grassroots militants suggests that the Cell’s concept of intervening in industrial conflicts is at odds with radical positions of workers’ autonomy (Betriebsgruppe Krone 1974). That both papers are printed in the midst of the third collective hunger strike of prisoners from armed formations and ongoing debates about the assassination of von Drenkmann (see above, point 5.3.5) indicates, however, that the central mouthpiece of Berlin’s undogmatic left deems the issue important enough to dedicate its limited resources to it.
6.2.1 ‘Interview with the urban guerrilla group “Revolutionary Cell” (RZ)’
(February/May 1975)

A first attempt to explain the programmatic position of the relatively unknown group (Anonymous 1974b, c) adopts the form of an interview discussed above (see point 5.4.3) and dates either on February (RZ 1975g, 8) or May 1975 (RZ 1975e, 203). On 24 densely written pages, its full version develops in detail the Cell’s particular understanding of ‘urban guerrilla’ in the mid-1970s, including existential moments of self-defining as a ‘guerrillero’ (the term is not yet gendered) and relations to legal left and other armed formations. Apart from three different print versions in the year of its publication,90 the interview has been included in any collection of RZ texts (Anonymous n.d. [1987], 334-355; Hein 1989, 125-130; ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam 1993b, 96-115). While this editorial history indicates the importance of the text, the RZ also insist in later years that it represents a ‘historical critique’ which ‘is wrapped up in the fine words of timeless validity’ if read outside its context (RZ 1987a). One aspect of contextualising ‘interviews’ as a sub-genre of militant writing is the question of whether they represent genuine conversations or didactically motivated catechisms. Frequent use of the first person singular, highly subjective content, and the colloquially elliptic, rambling, and sometimes almost breathless sequencing of clauses suggest that the RZ interview is the product of an actual interlocution.91

The text delimits the RZ towards strictly legal political commitments or ‘mass work’ and towards existing armed formations. The feeling that ‘we were in no position to define concretely and positively something new’ is reframed, de-personalised, and in so doing objectivised into defiant attitude: ‘the comrades then said to themselves: “let’s try it anyways”’ (RZ 1975h, 1). This contradictory point of departure sets the tone for the entire text: it oscillates between attempts of developing a positively connoted, objective, and

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90 Firstly, a typewritten and poorly hectographed pamphlet with a handwritten table of content and the vague source indication ‘Interview of an Austrian underground journal’ (RZ 1975h) was ‘circulating in the FRG and West-Berlin’ (RZ 1975g, 8). Secondly, a revised full version is included under the title ‘Questions to the Urban Guerrilla: Interview with the Revolutionary Cell’ into a collected volume of contributions to the debate on armed struggle after Meins’ death (RZ 1975e). A third significantly abbreviated and ‘in some places slightly altered’ print of the text is part of the first issue of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ (RZ 1975g). According to the thesis’ overall methodological approach to use primary sources in their original version wherever possible, analysis within this sub-section and beyond is based on the first version.

91 Furthermore, the editorial comment in ‘Holger, the Struggle goes on’ reports a covering letter in which the RZ claims that the interview was conducted ‘… by an Austrian underground journal with one of our female comrades’ (RZ 1975h, 203).
realistic ‘theory of practice’ of armed struggle and negatively mapping out the radical landscape of contemporary West Germany, in which only the guerrilla provides a real space for subjective emancipation. While the importance of an external revolutionary subject is not denied, revolutionary subjectivity in the struggle is a means of avoiding ‘the tremendous danger, which is inherent to mass work: namely to leave oneself out of it’ (ibid., 2). A topos emerges which is repeated with variations on the following pages as ‘struggle’ is over-determined into an existential and identitarian category: ‘a guerrillero has chosen to let his personality, thoughts, feelings, and actions become congruent’ (ibid., 4).

This totalising vision of politics opposes RZ positions against particular interpretations of contemporary developments within the radical left. Firstly, the interview argues that the left is in a state of retreat and identity crisis, defending itself against the challenge of armed struggle and increasing repression. Secondly, the text defines ‘wrong consciousness’ as inadequate conceptualisation of theory and practice, which is contrasted with ‘the theory of the urban guerrilla’ as theory-in-becoming and theory of practice (ibid., 4-5). Thirdly, left positions concerning armed politics become criteria for assessing their revolutionary credibility. The text argues in a detailed critique of different dogmatic and undogmatic reactions to the emergence of armed struggle that the debate was dominated by dissociation: most non-institutionalised currents did only engage seriously, but largely in moral terms with the RAF when the recalcitrance of events forced them to (ibid., 6-7). Subsequently, the interview outlines the second element of the RZ’s relational self-understanding: a concrete and emphatically involved critique of the militant practice of the RAF. While the text claims that critique has to focus on the problems and shortcomings of its concrete practices, ‘practice’ explicitly refers not only to actions, but also to ‘papers and to their impact on the political situation’ (ibid., 10). If and when this evaluation becomes concrete, it focuses on the writings’ limited audience, contentious style, authoritarian delivery, and on supposedly problematic concepts of armed avant-gardism and revolutionary determinism.

Attempts to define armed politics positively reveal tendencies toward insistence and pre-emptive immunisation when controversial aspects of attacks are inverted into positive externalities. Polarising the left and imposing a decision supposedly fulfils a crucial function in distinguishing between revolutionary and reformist currents. Without explicitly
mentioning Herbert Marcuse’s concept of repressive tolerance (Marcuse 1969), but in a closely related argumentative move, the text contends that counter-milieus are only tolerated because they do not pose a real perspectives of fundamental change. Armed politics are normalised when comparisons and mirroring allow for arguing a fortiori that left objections against political violence actually challenge the conditions of possibility of New Left radical politics. These include relatively weak ties to potentially revolutionary classes, the anticipative character of organisational approaches, and the gap between the objective conditions of capitalism and subjective experiences of oppression, alienation, and the inherent violence of capitalism (RZ 1975e, 14-15). The interview contends that a mix of political exoticism and repressive tolerance explains why the left fails to understand this interrelation. While it is much easier to conceive of the subjective repercussions of objective conditions from a distance, even radical comrades are still susceptible to capitalist ideology and act in ‘the room still left to us’, an inherently limited residual sphere of liberty (ibid., 16).

A subjectivized and existentially over-determined concept of revolution also influences strategic and tactical considerations: the text argues that armed interventions disrupt the social pacification of conflicts symbolically, undermine the dominant condition ideologically, and revolutionise subject positions. When invited to outline a more concrete picture of the RZ and their actual practice, the interviewee reaffirms and refines abstract conceptualisations already discussed, but adds a new layer of meaning. Previously introduced topoi are conflated into a Manichaean interpretation of the world as war according to which ‘all-encompassing war against the system of dominance of humans over humans also includes concurrently and symmetrically the fight against the capitalist system in ourselves’ (RZ 1975h, 18). Either concrete practices oppose at the same time the external and the internal enemy, that is, contribute to self-emancipation while fighting for collective emancipation, or they are futile. This resonates with Guevarist notions of the emergence of the new human being in and out of guerrilla struggle (Guevara [1960] 1986, 78-81), again without explicitly referencing conceptual links. The text uses a cautionary, carefully considered language of trial and incrementalism to outline this more than slightly presumptuous aspiration, creating tensions between conceptual grandeur and material pragmatism.
Only the last pages of the interview concretely outline the Cell’s politics and practice. These concrete remarks are triggered by an invitation to comment on the marginal attention to the RZ in public opinion and the left counter-public. The interview constructs a twofold negative correlation: between public demonization and recognition and between recognition in bourgeois press and counter-hegemonic media. Accordingly, not being publicly demonised outright equals a lack of mass media coverage and therefore also decreases the interest of radical periodicals. Apart from this critique of the leftist media landscape, the text outlines an alternative plan for developing structural couplings based on anti-cyclical communicative safety instead of short-term, spectacular publicity. Three elements define this communicative approach: transparent and unambiguous actions which limit opportunities for counter-propaganda; high standards of physical safety for activists; and embedding activism by making sure ‘that there already have been campaigns on this or that conflict’ (RZ 1975h, 21).

However, the interview also sets a clear, non-negotiable limit to mediating and embedding militant activism: internationalism or ‘solidarity with the comrades of foreign guerrilla movements and ... the fighting peoples of other countries’ is defined as an integral, inalienable ‘part of our politics which as far as we have led the discussion many comrades do not understand and accept’ (RZ 1975h, 22). This position inevitably contradicts the threefold principle of communicability, restraint, and embeddedness. The interview also explicitly addresses a further limitation of this communicative approach: unambiguous, comprehensible interventions in larger campaigns, such as the attacks in solidarity with Chile, might provoke no significant reaction since they are simply too uncontroversial: ‘bourgeois press and television ... have problems to say anything against bombs at ITT (so do the Jusos) as they also “find outrageous” what went down in Chile’ (ibid., 22).

The particular problems that accompany the use of counter-hegemonic channels of communication and of relating to left currents to which the Cell claims its strongest ties are rationalised as initial miscalculations. The text concedes that the RZ underestimated the

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92 The ‘Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Jungsozialistinnen und Jungsozialisten in der SPD’ (Jusos) or Association of Young Socialists in the SPD is the traditional youth organisation of the German SPD. Entryism of former APO members consolidated not only their organisational membership but also resulted in a distinctive organisational turn to the left (Fichter and Lünnendonker 1977, 143). From a radical left perspective, however, Jusos and a broadened left perspective within the SPD still represent an integrated, centrist, and ultimately revisionist force (Carini 2008, 152-153; Kraushaar 1978, 9).
degree to which the logic of newsworthiness and tendencies of ‘playing politics with terrorism’ influence radical discourse and states that: ‘we also have to focus our efforts increasingly on dissemination itself’ (RZ 1975h, 23). Nevertheless, the text describes the group in double delimitation to both other German armed formations, neither as party nor movement in itself, but as part of the wider protest environment, and subscribes to an idea of slow organic growth. At the same time, the text also concludes that ‘we are obliged to confront the left with the question of armed struggle’ (ibid., 24).

6.2.2 ‘Revolutionary Wrath: Journal of the Revolutionary Cell’ (May 1975) and beyond

The first issue of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’, the Revolutionary Cell’s irregular journal, dates from May 1975 and represents a tangible result of focusing ‘our efforts on dissemination itself’ (RZ 1975h, 23). It provides a vivid, illustrative example for the ways in which the RZ aim at constructing a recognisable and distinctive, but also flexible, brand. On the one hand, different numbers of the ‘Wrath’, as the journal is informally dubbed (Anonymous 1977d, 29; RZ 1987a), are edited under evolving organisational names. While the ‘Organ of the Revolutionary Cell’ (RZ 1975k, 1) subsequently becomes the collective voice of a plurality of ‘Revolutionary Cells’ (RZ 1977o, 1), the masthead of its last regular issue represents it as a joint publication by Cell and Zora (RZ 1981k). On the other hand, the journal’s structure and content remain remarkably similar over the course of the years.

Most issues feature a topical title graphic, not necessarily related to the contents, followed by one or two leaders, which addresses current issues of armed struggle and radical politics in a strategic, conceptual, or even theoretical perspective (e.g. RZ 1978d, 1981d; RZ 1981l). In addition, diverse texts are reprinted which are more closely related to the practice of different Cells including attack communiqués (e.g. RZ 1975p), open letters (e.g. RZ 1977m), campaign leaflets (e.g. RZ 1976d), shorter political comments on specific

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93 The numbering and authenticity of the eight periodicals edited and disseminated as ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ is contested. Number 7 from April 1980, whose contents and visual language differ significantly, states the organisational name again in the singular and claims that the entire imprint of a previously produced number 6 has been seized by law enforcement (RZ 1980b, 9). However, the January 1981 issue of the Wrath is numbered ‘6th journal of the Revolutionary Cells’ and makes no reference to the 1980 edition or the incidents mentioned in it (RZ 1981k). Accordingly, an open letter signed in the name of the RZ complains that ‘this content-free rag by an arcane cell is presented as no. 7 of our “wrath” and our own number 6 and 7 are really cunningly renumbered’ in an internally controversial collected edition of RZ texts (RZ 1987a).
topics (e.g. RZ 1986a, 1), technical tutorials (e.g. RZ 1978i), and press clippings (e.g. RZ 1981k, 26). According to a contemporary comment, the Wrath was disseminated over the network of left-wing bookshops but without their consent: copies were directly deposited in shops or sent without prior order (VLB 1977, 28).

The lettering, print and layout of the first issue fulfil the professional standards of contemporary radical periodicals with a high number of reprographics and a masthead that contains the date, caption, and the trademark logo of a five-pointed star with the two letter (RZ 1975k, 1). The visual language of the front page outlines the wider context in which the RZ locates itself. Reprints of iconic pictures of contemporary struggles around the globe, including Vietnamese Guerrillas, peasant marches in Latin America, and wildcat strikes in Germany, visually construct an imagined international revolutionary movement (ibid.). In contrast to this inclusive picture of the Cell’s potential constituency, the topical leader ‘Stockholm: What’s next?’ is mainly an exercise of demarcation and definition of true revolutionary identities (RZ 1975m). Despite posing seemingly open questions regarding the recent setbacks of ‘armed politics’, the text concludes in a defiant more-than-ever-message: ‘the beautiful sentence “he who has realised his situation, how should he be stopped?” really does apply’ (ibid., 12). It consists in an assessment of the abortive occupation of the German embassy in Stockholm by the RAF from a militant perspective and an appeal to ‘those who feel on the same side as we’ but do not walk the walk (ibid., 2).

Turning factual constraints into normative assertion, the text contends that the attack was legitimate, as it pursued the goal of freeing prisoners with the only available, and therefore justified, means. The events’ assessment focuses on practical aspects and rhetorically inverts short-term failure into opportunities for long-term adaptation. Accordingly, an abstract collective, ‘the urban guerrilla’, represents the in-group on whose behalf the text vows vengeance, and restates the political character of the raid (RZ 1975m, 2). While military and moral registers merge as ‘revolutionary guerrilla warfare’ against ‘the profiteers of this system everywhere’ paraphrases the assessment of ‘Stockholm’, the attempt to convince comrades of this narrative strikes a more pedagogical chord (ibid.). To this end, the text differentiates ‘the left’ into former radicals ‘and “the others”, who indeed feel on the same side as we do, but do not realise their problems’ (ibid.). The construction of common ground conflicts with an authoritarian tone when notions of struggle as immediate
totality are generalised into defining the day to day of radical politics, which becomes a mere intermediate step in the ‘extremely protracted and difficult development … towards guerrilla as mass perspective’ (ibid., 12).

The second stand-alone piece consists of an annotated list of RZ attacks from 1973-75; it bridges the gap between general political statement and specific attack communiqué by relating attacks to overarching themes (RZ 1975I). The text synthesises three directions in the Cell’s activism: ‘anti-imperialist actions’, ‘actions against the subsidiaries and accomplices of Zionism in the FRG’ and a residual category of intervention ‘in the struggles of workers, youth, women’ (ibid., 3). The less abstract these goals are, the less well-defined become their ramifications. While the text already fails to explain why ‘anti-Zionist’ attacks are differentiated from anti-imperialist activism, feminist positions are lumped together with the struggles of the socio-economical marginalised and the Cell claims the right to act on all of their behalves. The ways in which RZ attacks between 1973 and 1975 are justified in a timeline, all of which caused only material damage, show significant differences. Rationalisations include broad notions of personal and corporate responsibility, blanket personalisation and rhetorical inversion that permit holding an abstract collective accountable as in the case of so-called ‘anti-Zionist’ activism, or just brief references to symbolic dates (ibid.). Not all attacks listed are claimed in communiqués94 while others are summarised into collective statements which invoke the impression of topically coordinated campaigns.95

Despite the emphasis put on communicable, unambiguous, and self-explaining activism in the interview, the limits of this principle become manifest as an editorial comment supplements the enumeration of interventions. Strong moral evaluations construct clear-cut, morally over-determined distinctions and turn the decision to take up arms into a categorical question. Ideological rationalisation, moral evaluation, and rhetoric interact when the commentary’s premise is inverted: it departs from arguing that RZ politics can only be understood in the context of international struggle and claims instead that only an armed perspective, for which the Cell stands as a proxy, allows the development of a

94 More specifically, statements on the ‘anti-Zionist’ attacks in September 1974 on Korf Engineering Works, Mannheim, and the El-Al offices Frankfurt as well as the ‘anti-patriarchal’ arson of Bamberg Cathedral in March 1975 are neither included in source editions nor could they be retrieved from archival collections.

95 Both ITT bombings in November 1973 and the attacks around 1 May 1975 are each claimed in joint communiqués.
coherent concept of internationalism (RZ 1975I, 4). Ways in which ‘anti-Zionist’ activities are rationalised further illustrates the threefold alliance of moralisation, decisionism, and consequentialism in the Cell’s discourse of legitimisation and de-legitimisation. Firstly, the text constructs a solidarity community by opposing a personalised ‘Palestinian people’ to the personified, yet impersonal entity ‘Zionism’ (ibid.). Secondly, references to German history justify attacks in support of the struggles in Palestine in uncompromising terms. Describing Israeli politics with the historically loaded terms ‘genocide’ and ‘campaign of extermination’, for instance, delegitimises ‘Zionism’ ideologically by implicit, but not very subtle lexical comparison to National Socialism (ibid.). Thirdly, a reinterpreted ‘never again’ narrative establishes the historical obligation to actively counter Israeli politics.

Particularly in the context of the third strategic direction, described in later writings as intervening in ‘social struggles’ (RZ 1981c, 20), the commentary on RZ attacks employs an outspokenly existentialist notion of armed politics as ‘resistance on all levels, by all means is the only possibility to remain human, to become human’ (RZ 1975I, 4). Practice is supposedly related to concrete and limited conflicts, such as the campaign against the penalisation of abortion, struggles around autonomous spaces, and factory-level conflicts. However, almost overly specific references employ abstract terms and fail to specify how exactly violent acts and particular confictive development interact. This highlights an intrinsic problem of aiming to intervene militantly in ongoing social struggles, namely the fallacy of reconstructing thematic intersection as real interrelation or in the text’s words a tendency ‘to refer more or less formally to movements’ (ibid.).

Implicitly and tacitly criticising other armed formations, the comment also problematises the consequences of direct action ‘against cops, the judiciary, [and] for the liberation of the imprisoned revolutionaries’: such activism reduces conflict to a dyadic confrontation between ‘us and the state’ and isolates the guerrilla not only objectively, but also allows for the mobilisation of public opinion against armed struggle (RZ 1975I, 4). However, the text turns this problematisation dialectically on its head and highlights the normative limits of critical self-reflection when it concludes that ‘the liberation of comrades from prison is nevertheless an urgent necessity’ (ibid.).

Two of the communiqués reprinted in issue 1 of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ relate in different ways to the third, more broadly defined direction of activism. The fire-bombing of
the private car of a Berlin district councillor is justified matter-of-factly in a brief statement by his administrative involvement in the eviction and demolition of a squatted youth centre in a working class neighbourhood (RZ 1975n). Despite its seemingly minor occasion, this represents one of the few occasions in which early attacks are not only noticed, but even acclaimed in radical journals (Anonymous 1974b, c). The text constructs a stark contrast between the ‘long-standing work’ of a local grassroots initiatives and would-be professional politicians who seek short-term gain ‘at the expense of youth, at the expense of the people’ to vindicate the indirect responsibility of a relatively low level office holder as a sufficient reason for arson (RZ 1975n). Rationalisation and moral evaluation merge in a relatively simple narrative of antagonism between ‘the people’ and authorities who ‘ruthlessly disregard the interest of the people’ as the concrete case supposedly highlights a general trend towards authoritarian politics (ibid.).

The communiqué on a number of symbolic bombings on thematically and geographically diverse targets around Labour Day 1975 strikes a similar chord with a different intonation (RZ 1975c). Originally published in the Frankfurt-based ‘ID’ (see above, point 6.1, p. 225) with an editorial comment on inadequate media coverage (RZ 1975d, 14), its publicity puts complaints about the ignorance of radical periodicals into perspective. The text contextualises different manifestations of crisis and oppression within an overarching narrative that borrows implicitly from German readings of operaist theory, namely the concept of changing class constellations which result in the emergence of the multi-national mass-worker as a potential autonomous revolutionary actor (Roth 1977, 5-19). Different directions of attack, which include corporate lobby groups and the foreigners’ police, are related in the communiqué to an interpretation of crisis as technique of dominance. Accordingly, ‘capitalist syndicates’ are directly responsible for cyclical economic crisis, merging structural and actor-based explanations for the inherent flaws of bourgeois capitalism with moral outrage concerning ‘greedy, inhumane, bigwig vermin’ (RZ 1975d, 14). The pejorative scandalisation supposedly integrates social groups from youth to ‘foreigners’ and corner shop owners into an inclusive ‘we’ that is pre-emptively disciplined by existential

96 It is remarkable that the second larger programmatic statement from the B2J employs a similar narrative and also dates also from the first half of 1975. While it seems unlikely that these overlaps are merely coincidental, they point above all to the influence of Roth’s counter-historiography among the contemporary radical militant left. Roth himself recounts in his project Arthur interview contacts with RAF and B2J militants, but not with members of the RZ (Roth 1983-87, 55-56).
angst. Repetition, inclusive addressing, and the personalisation of abstract relations of exploitation support the narrative of crisis as an opportunity for preventing collective action.

Enumerating two different sets of examples aims to substantiate this hypothesis. Firstly, several distinct legal constraints on social and political autonomy – the aliens act, anti-abortion law, and unspecified restrictions on fundamental opposition – are juxtaposed as manifestations of a universal logic. Secondly, recent episodes of conflict provide proof for the smooth working of ‘countless laws that aim to prevent and criminalise any effective form of resistance’ (RZ 1975d, 15). Selective acts of control against supposedly vulnerable, but also particularly conflictive, proletarian sub-groups, migrant labour and the youth, intertwine both sets of targets: corporate lobby groups, now described in the register of crime, and the foreigners’ police pre-empt potential political unrest and keep an oppressive system economically safe. The timing of the attacks around International Workers’ Day establishes a symbolic reference to the historical workers’ movement. Accordingly, the communiqué reclaims its militant interpretation as ‘the history of the workers movement is the history of the struggle against this [alienated] labour by all means … by barricades, sabotage, [and] armed actions’, to invoke tradition as a further layer of legitimisation for RZ practices (ibid.).

Wrath number 1 finally features a second extended editorial comment which focuses on a particular set of critiques of armed struggle that the interview only mentions tangentially: the reproach that political violence only contributes to the ‘fascisation’ of society by providing welcome excuses for repressive politics against any fundamental opposition (RZ 1975f). In so doing, the text is related to ongoing theoretical debates over contemporary French radical thought within the undogmatic German left (Kraushaar 1978, 66-67), above all Michel Foucault et al.’s ‘New Fascism, New Democracy’ (1972) and Nicos Poulantzas’ ‘This Crisis is not only an Economic Crisis’ (1974). Its main hypothesis is that repressive tendencies in Western Germany are the structural consequences of ongoing processes of restructuration in a capitalist, imperialist Europe rather than direct reactions to a particularly weak German left.

Discrepancies between the relative weakness of revolutionary forces and an ever-increasing repressive apparatus are rationalised into the cautionary tale that an all-party coalition aims to destroy the non-reformist left pre-emptively. A threefold historical narrative on the possibilities of radical opposition in Germany substantiates the tale. Firstly,
the years following the 1960s revolt represent an exception to the foundational militant anticommunism that links post-war Germany to its predecessors. Secondly, this interlude is explained by the primarily elitist class character of the revolt, its undogmatic ideological outlook, and a general legitimatisation crisis. Thirdly, the outcome of crisis and revolt, the historical change to a SPD-dominated government, coincided with deepening socio-political contradictions (RZ 1975f, 10).

Leeway for inclusion and reform therefore decreases while the relative importance of Germany within the Western European block increases due to regime change, political instability and ‘a growth of the revolutionary forces in the Mediterranean, but also in the rest of Europe’ (RZ 1975f, 10). Detailed, reasonably well-informed analytical argument and ideological interpretation merge when the text infers that this dual relationality explains disproportionate responses to protest. Consequently, the causal narrative of the ‘fascisation’ argument is rhetorically inverted: it is not the actions of the urban guerrilla that provide a pretext for repression, rather the state constructs such a pretext for strategic reasons (ibid., 10-11).

The remainder of the text locates this explanation of perceived repressive tendencies within wider left-wing debates to increase the credibility of its analytical narrative. It appeals to the authority of the revolutionary example by introducing the concept of ‘sustained crisis’ coined by the Chilean MIR and enhances its theoretical leverage by quoting Poulantzas’ argument that the unfolding of the crisis in 1970s Europe suggests that attempts to manage it politically oscillate between authoritarian tendencies and social democratic reform. Moving beyond this duality, the paper suggests that fascist tendencies and social democratic crisis management complement each other, reflecting André Glucksmann’s thoughts on a new fascism which co-opts traditional labour organisations into policing unruly elements of the working class without directly referencing the concept (1972, 66-68). The text concludes in a mythopoetic narrative which merges the moral tale of crisis as a potential moment of ‘revolutionary disruption’ and the cautionary tale of looming authoritarian tendencies. By defining the strategic project of struggle as transforming ‘the economic crisis into a political one’ which ‘can only be resolved violently’, an irreconcilable contradiction between

97 However, the text does not provide a concrete source like some early RAF texts (RAF [1971] 1997b) or subsequent texts by the RZ (e.g. RZ 1978d).
structural interpretations of crisis and voluntaristic, activist politics becomes apparent (RZ 1975f, 11-12).

The image of a populist, carefully calculating armed formation that does not cover all activities of the Cell and its members is carefully maintained, for instance in two statements that deny any involvement of the ‘armed left’ in a series of bombings at rail hubs (RZ 1975b, j). As the non-negotiable internationalist ‘part of our politics’ (RZ 1975h, 22) indicates, this understanding of internationalism also allows for recruiting RZ militant Klein for an operation that takes a meeting of OPEC leaders in Vienna in December 1975 hostage, spilling considerable amounts of blood while seizing the building (Blumenau 2014, 52-55). A commando under the leadership of Ilich Ramírez Sánchez or ‘Carlos’, and with ties to a Palestinian breakaway faction, takes responsibility for the attack (Skelton Robinson 2006, 876-877). The publication of translated excerpts of its communiqué, which justifies the attack with support for the rejectionist front and resistance against a ‘conspiracy which has been prepared by Zionist and imperialist forces’, is one of the few direct reactions to the events in the radical press (Bewegung der Arabischen Revolution 1976). When Klein’s relations to the Frankfurt ‘scene’ become public knowledge (Schröm 2004, 93-94), however, searches at the seat of ‘Red Star’ publishing and press reports about its alleged involvement in terrorist networks trigger immediate responses (Verlag Roter Stern 1976).

The open letter rationalises search operations as a publicity stunt by an overblown and self-serving security apparatus which is in danger of losing its enemy and justification, merging Nazi-comparisons and considerations on the political function of terrorist threats. In

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98 Contemporary press reports were quick to associate the incidents, some of which claimed several wounded, with left-wing armed formations and their infrastructure of supporters (e.g. Spiegel 1975b, 25). However, nothing but more or less educated guesswork concerning the authorship of these attacks could be established (Altenmüller 2015; Brahms and Krause 2014). In contrast to earlier complaints by the Cell, both statements are republished in the influential ID; while the statement on Hamburg is printed in full in the context of a focus on the issue (RZ 1975i), which externally reaffirms the impression of a coherent area of struggle, the declaration on Cologne is slightly abbreviated (RZ 1975o).

99 Klein was, according to some voices in the literature, a core member of the RZ (Rapoport 1988), while others consider him a more peripheral figure driven by an absolute will to prove himself as a dedicated fighter (Kopp and Reinhardt 2007, 95; Schröm 2004, 69-71). Klein’s own autobiographical account points in the latter direction (Klein 1979, 46-57; Klein and Bouguereau 1978, 6).

100 An identical version of the letter with a higher number of collective and individual signatories, including contemporary celebrities of the Frankfurt scene such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit was published in the ID and as a separate leaflet (Verlag Roter Stern et al. 1976). Earlier investigations at the premises of the publishing house ‘Red Star’ after a failed attack on an Israel passenger plane in Paris were also answered by angry open letters (ID-Redaktionskollektiv and Verlag Roter Stern 1975).
so doing, it shift the narrative from Klein’s undeniable involvement to the ways in which his affiliations in Frankfurt supposedly allow the construction of guilt by association in ‘widespread police speculations with computer logic’ (Verlag Roter Stern 1976). Contrasting alarmist press reports with their actual legal background allows for the claim that the press is an extension of the police. The letter also takes issues with argumentation and language practices, contending that the permanent use of modal verbs and the conjunctive mood converts circumstantial evidence and common sense into strong causal claims. By invoking the familiar cautionary tale of a repressive, anti-left consensus, it suggests that the production of ‘terrorists’ is not just an unintended consequence of heavy-handed policing, as ‘despair about the German conditions these days already has become a moment in the calculation of state security authorities and their scribes’ (ibid.).

In summary, two particular lines of argumentation characterise the early writings of the Revolutionary Cell. On the one hand, different texts develop a holistic, existentialist and almost totalitarian vision of ‘armed struggle’. Armed struggle, accordingly, embodies the consequent continuation of revolutionary aspirations of the New Left, allows for the identity of person and politics, and represents an integral element of all efforts towards fundamental socio-political change. On the other hand, strong elements of ‘radical realpolitik’ also characterise at least some of the papers when day-to-day questions of social movements, mobilisation cycles, and specific societal struggles influence projected strategies of intervention and escalation. Both of these lines potentially contradict each other as it is difficult to reconcile the possession of a higher truth with more humble aspirations and the realities of activism. Acting on behalf of others’ struggles provides only a precarious compromise between the two options. Apart from the controversy between Cell and factory level group, this aspect is also highlighted in an exchange of open letters between the Berlin

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101 While Kraushaar contends with the privilege of hindsight that ‘leftists have rarely embarrassed themselves with a media bashing in similar ways’ (Kraushaar 2006b, 597), recent scholarship strongly suggests that the leftist interpretation is far less outrageous and out of touch with reality than his remarks suggest (e.g. Jackson et al. 2011; Stuka 2008; Zulaika and Douglass 2008). Ironically, Kraushaar also employs a similar argumentative technique to contemporary press reports criticised in the open letter by the ‘Red Star’ collective: the modal ‘should’ and the adverb ‘obviously’ cluster significantly in his chapter and convey the impression of undeniable causation without actually making causal claims (Kraushaar 2006b, 592-598).

102 Peter Brückner’s extended essay ‘Ulrike Marie Meinhof and the German Conditions’ argues, on the basis of an analysis of Meinhof’s journalistic and militant writings, that morally over-determined, misguided, but understandable disenchantment with post-war German politics and society lead to armed consequentialism, a widely shared conviction among the contemporary undogmatic left (Brückner and Meinhof 1976).
Red Help and the RZ. While both sides claim their interest in open discussion about the possibilities of militant intervention into concrete conflicts, deliberate misunderstandings on both sides inhibit a dialogue (RH 1975a, b, c; RZ 1975a). Asynchronies and discrepancies characterise not only writings, but also deeds, which stretch from organised political vandalism to involvement in acts of international terrorism.

6.3 ‘One has to be as radical as reality’: Escalating rhetoric and hardening positions in the late 1970s

In the late 1970s RZ writing becomes more prolific and regular in frequency as ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ appears almost regularly, and the frequency of attacks and communiqués increases while their justifications start to establish distinctive if not always entirely coherent campaigns. Discussions around an open letter to ‘all Comrades of the RAF’ (Anonymous 1977b, c; Berberich 1977; RZ 1976a, 1977a; RZ 1977f, n) and the first prominent and vocal RZ apostate Hans-Joachim Klein (Diskussionsgruppe 1978; Pflasterstrand 1978b; Pflasterstrand, Klein, et al. 1977; RZ 1979; RZ et al. 1977) result in renewed debates between RZ and radical left despite their fierce, almost autistic character. It goes without saying that the escalation of the standoff between RAF and German state starting in spring 1977 with the assassination of Federal Prosecutor General Siegfried Buback and culminating in the events labelled as ‘the German autumn’ leaves its mark on the RZ – in word more than in deed.

Despite theoretical and abstract deliberations on the necessity of freeing ‘imprisoned comrades’, no activities in this direction materialise apart from the disastrous hijacking to Entebbe disaster in summer 1976. However, contemporary comments by the RZ (RZ 1978d) and retrospective analysis of the consequences of 1977 in the Wrath (RZ 1981d) suggest that 1977 is a turning point in more than one sense. The ‘44 days in autumn’ between the abduction of the president of the Employers’ Association Hanns Martin Schleyer to free high-profile RAF prisoners and his subsequent murder provide a number of symbolically highly charged dates, reference points and images. The events include the hijacking of a German Airliner by a unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), named ‘Martyr Halimeh’ after Kuhlmann’s Arab nom de guerre, and the collective suicide of leading RAF
members under not entirely unambiguous circumstances in the maximum security wing of Stammheim prison (Blumenau 2014, 74-83; Libération 1977; Varon 2004, 196-199).

6.3.1 ‘Revolutionary Wrath: 2nd Journal of the Revolutionary Cell’ (May 1976)

The second issue of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ further illustrates the tension between grand design, that is, the discursive reaffirmation of a historically justified ‘armed left’ and the more mundane question of the trajectory of its confrontational politics. Despite the journal’s irregular publication frequency and clandestine production, it attempts to react to recent events. The suicide of Ulrike Meinhof in prison on 8 May 1976 is addressed on its cover graphically and in cross-references (RZ 1976f, 1) and in the issue’s conceptual leader ‘One has to be as radical as reality’ (RZ 1976e). While the graphic design and content of the sleeves mirror attempts at left-wing myth-making related to Meinhof’s death, the text harshly judges its political assessment within the wider left. By contrast, the final quarter of the number celebrates tangible and relatively low-key clandestine interventions campaigning for free access to public services (RZ 1976c, d).

‘One has to be as radical’ relates Meinhof’s day of death to general conflict history by emphasising that ‘our comrade and sister Ulrike Meinhof died’ on the anniversary of the liberation from fascism (RZ 1976e, 2). The reference to antifascist tradition reassures the ‘we’ in its historic trajectory and lends credibility to one of the text’s central arguments: the continuity between fascist and ‘bourgeois relations of violence’ in which the ‘detention of extinction’ and the escalation of repression are manifestations of the same structural conditions and antagonistic social relations as the National Socialist regime of terror (ibid.). Examples of mundane control and oppression are synthesised into the cautionary tale that repression is not mere aberration or excess, but manifests a general tendency. This message is reaffirmed and structured by the repetition of the rhetorical question ‘one says this is repression – but what is repression’ as a chorus (ibid.).

Consequently, a mythopoetic narrative emerges that criticizes the left for insisting on a conceptual vocabulary that mystifies dominant relations of violence inherent to bourgeois

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103 For instance, number 105 of the Berlin InfoBUG depicts the same iconised version of Meinhof’s mug shot used on the front page of Wrath number 2 (InfoBUG 1976b) and presents her ‘murder’ as plain fact on the first two pages of the ‘skeleton edition’ on this occasion (InfoBUG 1976a).
society into a technologically inspired metaphor of repression, ‘which only states that something applies pressure on something else’ (RZ 1976e, 3). By contrast, the text argues that the intrinsically violent system ‘is the mistake’, not particular manifestations of violence (ibid.).¹⁰⁴ In this context, the paper employs a vague narrative of fascisation and ‘new fascism’ according to which pre-emptive social control and international influence substitute brute force and blunt intervention while the dominant counter-revolutionary project remains largely the same. This narrative is firstly substantiated on the lexical level by paratactically equivocating historic manifestations of fascist rule with their supposed contemporary equivalents, for instance: ‘instead of press censorship its voluntary co-optation’ (ibid., 4).

On a more conceptual level, the text cross-references and further develops central arguments of issue 1 of Revolutionary Wrath, particularly on the interpenetration of the politics of internal security and developments within the imperialist block (RZ 1975f). The construction of a double-edged, universal social-democratic project in which social reform and integration are only the flipside of preparing for coming unrest is rhetorically substantiated by invoking examples from different European countries and societal sectors. For instance, a broad range of measures by security forces are merged into a single narrative of ‘selective terror against the people’ which ranges from martial shows of force on the occasion of large-scale anti-terrorist roadside checks to ‘terror at police stations against drunks’ (RZ 1976e, 4). Consequently, sectorally and regionally limited conflicts around concrete issues are reinterpreted as instances in which ‘the brutality of police operations’ increases exponentially whenever ‘the people’ fight for their objective interests and create potential moments of revolt (ibid., 5).

Being the target of repression also assures the relevance of the ‘armed left’ and the essentially fascist character of the system in a self-fulfilling narrative which is further legitimised by cross-references and historical analogies, for instance by quoting Clara Zetkin on the causal relations between revolutionary indecision and the rise of fascism in the 1920s (RZ 1976e, 5). In a similar vein, ‘we’ failed to translate the late 1960s revolt into a new ‘revolutionary block’ whose outlines already manifested themselves in the ‘great identity of

¹⁰⁴ This formulation borrows authority from the title of Peter-Paul Zahl’s speeches in court: ‘The system does not make mistakes. It is the mistake’ (Zahl 1974).
understanding and acting’ that characterised the early 1970s (ibid.). The close proximity of
critical analysis of recent protest history and its simplistic ideological interpretation in the
text is stunning. In this context, the Cell as part of the ‘armed left’ claims leadership
despite the incremental, grassroots-based notions of struggle outlined in earlier writings. As
repression is a specific manifestation of generalised violence of dominant social relations in
capitalism, any radical perspective of struggle ‘should draw on the contradictions of the
violent apparatus’ (ibid.).

Consequently, the text outlines the ramifications of ‘a practice against the violence’
in more than slightly tautological and contradictory ways (RZ 1976e, 6). On the one hand,
daily practices of subversion and direct re-appropriation, as well as generalising clandestine
behaviour and activist self-help, turn activism as such into counter-violence. On the other
hand, defining repression as ‘the generalisation of economic, political and military violence’
also rhetorically rationalises a much higher level of violence (RZ 1976e, 7). Confrontational
language significantly escalates and becomes martial as directly targeting ‘members of the
apparatus of violence’ renders ‘the relation of capitalism’ tangible and ‘military actions are
at this stage a crucial possibility of transforming resignation into action’ (ibid.). Struggle
finally collapses into meaning as an early version of the trademark slogan ‘Create
Revolutionary Cells’ turns self-designation from mere denomination into an organisational
concept.

The remainder of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ 2 consists of two shorter campaign leaflets
on recent activism related to ‘social struggles’ (RZ 1976d). Under the title ‘Fake Tickets –
Flambéed Vending Machines: Fare struggle’, whose triple alliteration stylistically invokes
copy writing and journalism, the first of these synthesises protests about rising public
transport fees into an overarching ‘transport fee struggle’ (RZ 1976d, 8). Sometimes fierce
and militant local conflicts on questions of urban infrastructure that spread beyond the usual
leftist constituencies (Mayer 2008, 296-298; Wildcat 1986b, 5) are reinterpreted as textbook
examples for the preventive oppression of dissent. By the same token, state and public
service providers are conflated into one category so that protests concerning accessibility
and costs of service become moments of potential revolutionary rupture. The first instance

105 Even though this analysis reads in hindsight more than slightly out of sync with wider socio-political realities,
it is worth highlighting that contemporary movement historiography which is above suspicions of proselytising
for the armed struggle reaches at very similar conclusions (Mosler 1977, 233-248).
of introducing ‘new forms of action’ into ‘transport fee struggles’, the large-scale forgery of tickets of West-Berlin’s public transport authority is also a textbook example of communication guerrilla.

According to the text, the distribution of fake tickets in ‘working class neighbourhoods’ was orchestrated by leafletting and pirate radio broadcasts (RZ 1976d, 8-9).\(^{106}\) Arson of vending machines and leaflets on DIY sabotage are also rationalised as attempts of bridging the gap between widespread discontent and the failure of established forms of protest. Both actions are claimed as successes since they inspired others to act ‘against the bourgeois society and its norms of conduct’ which is substantiated by implication and counterfactual recognition by transport authorities and the right-wing press (RZ 1976d, 9-10).

An extensive brochure from March 1977 explicitly references ‘the analysis of the RZ in “Revolutionary Wrath” no. 2’ as a major theoretical influences in discussions among ‘West-Berlin comrades from different grass-roots groups’ about the future of non-institutional left activism (InfoBUG 1977a). The text is one of the few documented contemporary examples of how conceptual thought by the RZ influences wider radical debates. ‘We have to be as radical as reality’ adopts, elaborates, and complements the argument of a ‘New Fascism’ according to the experiences of legal activists (Berliner Basisgruppen 1977, 5).

6.3.2 ‘Revolutionary Wrath: 3rd Journal of the Revolutionary Cells’ (May 1977)

Despite the emphasis on daily subversion and intervening concretely in social conflicts, only two actions in 1976 might actually fulfil these criteria: the ‘punishment’ of a nationally well-known real estate speculator in Cologne which is signed with the plural ‘Revolutionary Cells’ for the first time (RZ 1976j) and the arson of the ‘Fining Offices’ of the Frankfurt Transport Authority (RZ 1976i). Both of these statements employ a tangible, direct, and ironic language to normalise the use of violent means. Other than that, RZ activism until the publication of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ number 3 in May 1977 focuses on ‘anti-imperialism’

\(^{106}\) The action also find broad approval within the radical counter-public; for instance, the Frankfurt ID reports with relish the details of the dissemination of fake tickets while scandalising counter-measures by the Berlin transport authority BVG (ID-Redaktionskollektiv 1976).
with symbolic bombings of US targets (RZ 1976b; RZ 1976h, 1977e) and arson attempts against cinemas for showing a feature on ‘Operation Entebbe’ that represents ‘imperialist propaganda’ (RZ 1977r). The texts concerning attacks on US facilities define ‘our struggle as that of a colonised people’ (RZ 1976b) and invoke an existentially over-determined concept of imperialism in which relations between military potential and cultural domination imply that ‘imperialist culture is a culture of death’ (RZ 1976h) and ‘dollars, tanks and Coca Cola’ metaphorically threaten ‘native culture’ (RZ 1977e). Furthermore, attacks on court-appointed attorneys in terrorism trials, the so-called ‘coercive attorneys’ (RZ 1977b), and the chairman of the Frankfurt Bar Association (RZ 1977q) highlight self-absorptive tendencies. Both are criticised in radical journals for their martial tone and generous approach to the ethics of revolutionary violence (InfoBUG 1977b; Pflasterstrand, Anwaltskanzlei Hochstraße, et al. 1977, 13).

Wrath number 3 opens with the extended theoretical leader ‘Against the myth of armed struggle’, which claims to address misperceptions of armed politics within the radical left (RZ 1977i). Under the slightly but notably different heading ‘The myth of armed Struggle’ (RZ 1977c), it is republished in extracts as part of a larger debate on ‘the armed left’ in ‘Pflasterstrand’ (Pflasterstrand, Klein, et al. 1977) and provokes an angry reply which deconstructs the leader’s central argument from the vantage point of radical politics (Anonymous 1977d). Apart from that, issue number 3 consists of a long and – by virtue of publication within the central mouthpiece – authorised reply to the open letter from December 1976 (RZ 1977m), practical tips on organising clandestine activism (RZ 1977h, p), and selective reprints of attack communiqués and political commentary. Most notably, controversial statements on the cinema arson attempts (RZ 1977f; RZ 1977r) and attacks on ‘coercive attorneys’ in Dusseldorf (InfoBUG 1977b; RZ 1977b) are missing. Furthermore, the issue comes with a supplement documenting statements on the recent assassination of federal prosecutor Buback, one of the leading contemporary German anti-terrorism experts and an object of widespread hatred within the militant left (RZ 1977k).

The issue’s leader implies an open dialogue between ‘armed left’ and legal groups stating that ‘many people ask’ for the motives ‘of the whole thing’ (RZ 1977i, 2). However, the text immediately insists that RZ deeds and words provide a self-explanatory answer to questions about the political project of armed struggle which left discussions ignore.
Selectively quoting voices from the radical mainstream out of context, and interpreting these quotes in an informal vernacular which draws on the language practice of the ‘undogmatic’ sub-culture by merging pop-cultural references with the vulgar register and echoes of sociological slogan support this allegation. By contrast, the text claims that recent RZ activism ‘means to ask the question concretely’ (ibid.) and invokes the authority of revolutionary tradition by indirectly referring to Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler’s ‘Solidarity Song’ and the 1970s re-appropriation of workers’ songs (Conrads 2008). The text emphasises correlations between dominance and its reification in social relations which ‘colonises’ the ‘heads and souls’ of the populace (RZ 1977i, 3). This perspective is theoretically substantiated by quoting Jean-Paul Sartre on the relations between capitalism, colonialism, and neurosis and is rhetorically supported by environmentalist metaphors.107

The double-edged myth of armed struggle, vilifying ‘terrorists’ as sub-humans or glorifying them as super-humans, supposedly reifies the impossibility of resistance. By contrast, the text invokes the authority of the revolutionary example to argue for the normality of resistance. It quotes accounts by members of ‘Euskadi Ta Askatasuna’ (ETA) or ‘Basque Country and Freedom’ of ‘operation ogre’, the deadly attack on Carrero Blanco, Francisco Franco’s designated successor (ETA and Agirre 1976) as ‘the work of totally ordinary people’ (RZ 1977i, 4). Drawing on established tropes, namely the Manichean totality of militant existentialism, struggle is positively defined by the potentiality of a new collective identity of ‘autonomous peoples’ when the text enumerates very different examples of collective resistance into a single narrative (ibid., 5). Accordingly, negative self-identification is reframed into a positive quality as ‘relentless hatred against these man- and peoples-eaters’ is ‘the most humane in us’ and transforms subjectivity in ‘revolutionary tenderness’ (ibid., 5-6). 108 Accordingly, ‘the armed struggle is not the solution of all contradictions, but without it there is no solution’ (ibid., 6).

The next original contribution in Wrath number 3 (RZ 1977m) represents the ‘official’ answer by the Cells to the open letter from December 1976 (RZ 1976a) as earlier

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107 Although not directly specified, all Sartre quotes in ‘Against the Myth’ refer to his topical and highly influential foreword to Frantz Fanon’s ‘The Wretched of the Earth’ which forms also part of the contemporary German standard edition of the book (Sartre 1969).

108 Ironically, harshly criticised tendencies towards new subjectivity and ‘politics in the first person’ within a ‘Sponti’-left that increasingly focuses on concrete utopias and realising alternative forms of living and working use a similar ‘jargon of immediacy’ (Kraushaar 1978, 28).
interventions in the name of the RZ are not reprinted (RZ 1977f, n). It refers to the Cells for the first time as a defined, consolidated organisation instead of conceptualising organisational ideas in theoretical and largely abstract terms. Accordingly, questioning the unity of the ‘armed left’ by playing ‘the “good” RZ, the “cheeky” 2nd of June and the “bad” RAF’ against each other is as ‘cop-like’ as arrogating a name that identifies ‘our organisation’ to validate an objectively counterrevolutionary position (RZ 1977m, 9). Furthermore, the text dissociates itself from ‘the so-called undogmatic left’ and positively identifies as ‘part of the armed left’ (ibid., 10). The latter faction’s relative isolation is qualitatively not different from the difficult position of any progressive activism, anticipates the new society from a precarious and dangerous position, and expresses the relative weakness of the German left. In so doing, the argument goes full circle: instead of deconstructing leftist ‘myths of armed struggle’ the Cells construct a third one, the claimed normality of political violence which transforms subjects, reshapes collective relations, and already realises the goals of struggle in ongoing conflicts.

The subsequent, practically oriented ‘Create many Revolutionary Cells’ consequently claims that ‘many feel addressed, but do not get off their backside’ to outline how ideas of mundane subversion can become reality (RZ 1977p, 13). Contrasting the wanting tradition of resistance in Germany to the importance of subjective choice, the text argues that armed struggle relies on the deliberate, consequent subjective decision to act and ‘not to be a victim anymore’ (ibid.). Familiar existential, identity-based notions of struggles are not only associated with personal awakening, but also translate into advice for practically organising ‘armed politics’. Sharing technical knowledge and lived experiences in self-critical ways is in itself considered political which includes the insight that the communication of attacks is crucial. The ‘political statement’ should match activism, ‘not retrospectively jazz up [actions] on a piece of paper’ as a detailed critique of the communiqué on attacking ‘coercive attorneys’ underlines (ibid., 14).

Finally, the ‘Statement on the “Case Traube”’ (RZ 1977g), represents a very different form of written intervention, even though topos and argumentative structure do not differ dramatically from texts previously analysed. It neither justifies concrete activism nor conceptualises armed politics theoretically, but comments on current affairs. The comment on the illegal wiretapping of nuclear scientist Klaus Traube, triggered by his at best indirect
acquaintance to RZ militant Klein before the latter went underground (Spiegel 1977, 23-25), also includes ecological problems into notions of structural violence.

6.3.3 ‘Everybody who wants to know it knows what it means’: Writing armed politics after the ‘German Autumn’

The absolute escalation of the confrontation between the RAF and established institutions during the ‘German autumn’ forces the wider radical left to leave the fence. Introductory comments to number 15 of ‘Pflasterstrand’, written while the events were still unfolding, vividly illustrate a dilemma. On the one hand, the text strongly condemns the ‘military-style’ assault which plays with the lives of its direct targets and security personnel. On the other hand, hysterical reactions from public opinion which wholesale equate radicals with sympathies for or support of terrorism ‘absurdly … renders for many of us the step, which the guerrilla takes, more understandable’ (Pflasterstrand 1977a). Being forced to distance oneself from clandestine comrades by the circumstances also results in defiant reactions. For instance, a ‘comrade from Frankfurt’ claims that only the radical left can criticise ‘the guerrilla’ on an equal footing (Ein Frankfurter Genosse 1977) and ‘Pflasterstrand’ keeps publishing thinly camouflaged RZ statements during the ongoing confrontation (RZ 1977l).

The events of 1977 also constitute a crucial incentive for a redefinition of the RZs’ political project and reference group in attempts to develop a deeper, more nuanced, and grounded concept of ‘imperialism’ in Revolutionary Wrath number 4 from January 1978 (RZ 1978m). The issue starts by establishing a frame for remembering the dead of the armed struggle – including casual references to Kuhlmann and Böse – which invoke a long revolutionary legacy and an equally long history of counterrevolutionary betrayal by the SPD (RZ 1978n). Consequently, topical editorial remarks stipulate an authoritative reading of events at Stammheim: even considering that they could constitute anything but murder distinguishes nominal radicals from real comrades (RZ 1978h). Strategically and disapprovingly quoting a ‘Pflasterstrand’ comment which actually also question the official

109 In comparison, the first larger theoretical document of the RAF after 1977, the so-called ‘Front Concept’ from May 1982, represents a step back to a schematic notion of imperialism and the tactics of directly targeting its protagonists (RAF [1982] 1997).
suicide narrative (Pflasterstrand 1977b), the Cells turn readiness to accept the ‘facts’ of extra-legal execution and partly open fascism into a ‘duty to resist’ as those who doubt militant articles of faith are co-responsible for the repressive status quo, including dead comrades (RZ 1978h).

‘For we do not perish in defeats, but in the fights we do not fight’, the extensive theoretical leader, conceptualises fundamental changes in the conditions of possibility of protest and their implications (RZ 1978d). The text’s reprint as a stand-alone brochure in slightly abbreviated but thoroughly re-edited form indicates that the paper was deemed important by some activists (RZ n.d. [1978]). However, none of the regularly published undogmatic journals with national reach and distribution advertises Wrath number 4 or discusses its contents.110 Invoking Glucksmann’s theoretical authority, the paper claims that ‘the model Germany’ has become a concern for radicals across Europe and the world while the home-grown left is in a state of disarray and denial. By contrast, the conceptualisation of the new constellation of the imperialist block, ‘the United States of Europe under German-American hegemony’, reified by the abbreviation ‘USE’ and alliteratively described as a ‘Europe of Cops and Corporations’, provides a radical critique of the status quo (RZ 1978d, 4).

The text draws extensively on diverse sources which go far beyond the leftist literature previously quoted and includes conservative papers, policy documents, and counter-insurgency literature. In describing and analysing the new manifestation of imperialism, the text claims theoretical authority and develops an almost academic style, with frequent references, footnotes, and a remarkably nuanced and specific language (e.g.: RZ 1978d, 6). Analysis focuses on concrete intra-imperialist contradictions, transnational

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110 While the ID reports on legal consequences of distributing the issue (ID-Redaktionskollektiv 1978a, b) and the above-ground successor of the illegalised InfoBUG refers only indirectly to it (Meyer 1978), the clandestine Info publishes extracts out of context and with a significant delay (RZ 1978f). In the aftermath of the ‘German Autumn’, InfoBUG as one of the most reliable sources for reporting communiqués from the underground in full text became the target of extensive legal measures, which resulted in a lengthy trial against associates of the leftist Berlin print shop who were held responsible for its contents (Solidaritätskomitee 1978, 2). In the aftermath, the journal’s editorial collectives split into a fraction which tried to tone the journal’s radical approach down to cope with legal requirements and one that opted for its entirely clandestine production and distribution (DadA 2001a). Consequently, different collectives started to issue their own version of the undogmatic Berlin info in a similar spirit; because of ongoing criminalisation and confiscation, archival collections of the journal are incomplete (DadA 2001b). Especially from the ‘Info Blues’ series, one of the different titles under which the InfoBUG was continued clandestinely more or less regularly, only a handful of numbers could be retrieved.
integration, and structured competition. Germany is no longer considered a quasi-peripheral, colonised state but plays an active part in the strategies of ‘transnational capital and its social democrat stirrup holders’ within the restructuration of the global market during the crisis of the late 1970s (ibid., 5).

The paper argues that the crisis’ structural consequence is a new international differentiation of labour that transforms ‘imperialist invasion’ into direct investment according to differences in the organic composition of capital between centre, semi-periphery, and periphery (RZ 1978d, 6). Based on determinist interpretations of these ‘inherent laws of capital’, the text develops a critique of globalisation avant la lettre which is constantly backed up by references. Illustrated by the weaponisation of food help and the security aspects of the new international differentiation of labour, the argument cumulates in the narrative of an ongoing war: global restructuration not only continues imperialist intervention by other means, but also undermines the very conditions by which the global relations of production are reproduced (ibid., 8).

The approach combines anti-imperialist argument with a tacit, carefully orchestrated critique of the revolutionary significance of anti-colonial liberation nationalisms. An integrated strategy of economic pressure, political diversification, and covert military engagement constitutes ‘the method of “indirect intervention”’, imperialism’s key lesson from ‘its defeat in Indochina’ (RZ 1978d, 9). This claim is substantiated rhetorically by inverting the Clausewitzian cliché and transferring the well-introduced vocabulary of the Vietnam War onto other contexts. A universal cautionary tale of a counter-revolutionary international emerges which includes pre-emptive co-optation of national liberation movements, the division of the Third World between the super powers, and the full integration of the Soviet Union in the world market (RZ 1978d, 9-10). Restructuration increases the influence of transnational capitalism while ideological differences decrease in significance which the European left fails to realise in its focus ‘on the politics of liberation movements’ (ibid., 10-11).

Subsequently, the paper relates ecological issues, social problems, and political oppression to the changing relations of production in an attempt to develop a holistic understanding of crisis. Increasing technologization, permanent adaptations, high structural unemployment, and an undercapitalised welfare state all underline that the system is
Chapter 6 - ‘One has to be as radical as reality’: Negotiating Revolutionary Identities in the Writings of the Revolutionary Cells

beyond reform and tends toward ‘preventive counterrevolution’ (RZ 1978d, 12-13). Further supported by invoking the BR as revolutionary and theoretical authority, this cautionary tale of structural unreformability substantiates the fascisation narrative. In this context, the argument increasingly departs from its more theoretically rationalised beginnings into the declaratory, immediate, and more than slightly paranoid style of earlier writings. The narrative integrates very different examples of oppression into the alarming tale of a ‘strategy of coercive pacification’ in Europe under German hegemony (ibid., 14).

The strange duality of articulated analysis and its highly alarmist interpretation resonates with the ways in which the paper constructs an emerging counter-hegemony between optimist grandeur and pessimist restraint. The moral tale of a plethora of diverse movements across Europe that articulate human needs against ‘totalitarian centralisation’ and represent a growing ‘new force which takes up the cause of the struggle for a “Europe of autonomous peoples”’ illustrates the former (RZ 1978d, 15). A broad spectrum of supposed moments of rupture with the status quo amalgamates nationalist-separatist, radical left, and NSM perspectives. However, the cautionary aspect of the mythopoetic narrative is never far off: contradictions and problems of broad public movements are mainly discussed in terms of their dependence on legally guaranteed, publicly accepted spaces of dissent and activism. By contrast, sources as different as the coverage of oppressive policing of recent anti-nuclear marches in ‘Pflasterstrand’ and early RAF texts substantiate that the leeway for licit protest is ever decreasing, especially in the FRG (ibid., 16).

The permanent expansion of the internal security apparatus and efforts to rationalise it propagandistically also highlight the permanent legitimisation crisis of a deeply disturbed, over-securitised ‘regime’, the paper argues. Quoting unreferenced statistics, invoking the revolutionary authority of Meinhof, and projection substantiate the reinterpretation of vague discontent as growing class awareness and active deviance. The claimed co-occurrence of renewed revolt and totalitarian tendencies in all societal sectors allows the presentation of violent repertoires of action as a natural consequence. Adopting ‘the practice and technique of covert, clandestine struggle on a large scale as quickly as possible’ becomes a functional imperative when protesters face police forces that resemble civil war armies at nuclear construction sites (RZ 1978d, 16). Quoting the foe, a contemporary German counter-guerrilla author (Spiegel 1974b, 34), lends authority to the claimed
effectiveness of small group violence in unsettling ‘the carefully balanced structure’ of complex industrial societies, especially in light of imbalances that ‘we have demonstrated in this study’ (RZ 1978d, 16-17).

In this context, the text contends that armed struggle aims at the same time at perpetuating the crisis and preparing for its ‘fascist solution’ by arming ‘the anti-imperialist struggle ... in a certain contradiction to mass organisations’ (RZ 1978d, 17). Fundamental differences between open political mobilisation and clandestine methods are reinterpreted as ‘contradictions’ whose sublation is a matter of consciousness-raising by pedagogy of the deed. Activism ‘under the perspective of “massification”’ (Vermassung) implies that the goal and form of each action should be immediately accessible and replicable while targeting patterns follow developments within the movement sphere (ibid.). This is no longer conceptualised as intervention but as participation in the struggles of social movements, in which legal and illegal elements ‘act together like the yeast in the dough’ (ibid.). Biological and organic metaphors, namely the imagery of leaven, gamete, and cell division, invoke ideas of a natural integration of armed militancy within broader movements and the symbiotic growth of both aspects, despite contemporary tendencies to imagine alternative lifestyles and hard-nosed revolutionary politics as incommensurable (Pflasterstrand 1979).

By contrast, the paper vaguely refers to a ‘different tradition’, the hidden history of militant resistance of the oppressed in Roth’s sense (Roth 1983-87, 57), and gradually but significantly redefines the ‘necessary but insufficient’ topos: ‘that is what we mean when we say that there are no guarantees, adding that there is no other possibility’ (RZ 1978d, 18). In this context, ‘anti-imperialism’ is brought back in as a potential way of theoretically re-integrating different moments of leftist politics that have been drifting apart. In light of the previous re-conceptualisations of imperialism, the paper also redefines its meaning for ‘the movement’ on the basis of a short conceptual history of its use within the non-institutionalised left. It reflects (self-)critically on the revolutionary impatience and problematic understanding of historical processes of a revolt which seemingly aligned itself with a winning cause. However, necessary disenchantment and political normalisation cannot justify the ‘conceptual and practical decoupling’ of struggles in centre and periphery (ibid.). As developing a new approach to anti-imperialism basically suggests a return to the supposedly practical understanding of solidarity during the anti-Vietnam War movement.
minus the revolutionary optimism of the late 1960s, the argument becomes tautological. Furthermore, inconsistencies become apparent: Defining the objective role of the US army in the FRG as an ‘imperialist occupation force’ either openly contradicts earlier claims regarding the imperialist character of Germany in the 1970s (see above p. 251), or implicitly introduces a sub-category of occupied centres. ‘Collective revolutionary practice’, that is, armed struggle in ‘fighting collectives’ not only helps overcoming individual constraints, but also anticipates the society to come in today’s struggles in a doctrine of immediate salvation (RZ 1978d, 19). Emotional language, biological metaphor, materialist analysis, and idealist striving merge when these collectives finally become the spaces in which ‘communism is to be realised in the hearts’ or the ‘gametes of a new society’ (ibid.).

A collation of two attack statements under the title ‘Nuclear Industry and Racism’ provides an impression of how newly identified areas of intervention and attempts to redefine ‘imperialism’ supposedly interact in developing new perspectives of resistance (RZ 1978a). In both incidents, targeting suppliers of key components for the production of nuclear energy articulates far-reaching claims concerning imperialist implications of dual use technologies. Detailed factual information on the attacked companies and their business practices establish a threefold legitimising narrative for the attacks. Firstly, it claims that the nuclear industry is paradigmatic for the changing face of imperialism, characterised by the collusion of business and state interests (ibid., 20). Secondly, both companies illustrate how the global restructuration of labour, changing accumulation strategies, and security interests interact in a concrete sense. Thirdly, the attacks also address the limitations of the growing movement against Nuclear Power Plants (NPP). While the anti-NPP-movement is credited for significantly disrupting the industry, its failure to address the integration of the industry in the imperialist project and its limited protest repertoires imply that ‘the mass movement can get in the danger of sterile impotence’ (ibid., 21). In this regard, the attacks supposedly outline ways of symbolically and practically opening new perspectives.

Another intervention in the ‘zero tariff campaign’, activism against transport companies and their ‘reactionary war of profit against us’ (RZ 1977f), states in immediate and informal, almost casual language the escalation of action repertoires ‘on this front’ (RZ 1978e). The text laconically euphemises the punishment of low level employees of the Frankfurt transport authority by arson and bombing, a qualitative step from forging tickets
and sabotage against infrastructure (RZ 1977j). Drastically escalating the campaign is rationalised by moral outrage over theft from the underprivileged and by interpreting heavy-handed anti fare-dodging policies as signs of a wider development towards the surveillance state (RZ 1978e).

In line with the self-assigned political mandate to share practical experiences, number 5 of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ is announced as a ‘special edition practice’ (InfoBUG and Zellen 1978; Pflasterstrand 1978a). The issue consists of an updated and revised version of ‘Create many Revolutionary Cells!’ from Wrath number 3 (RZ 1977p), which focuses on guidelines pertaining to the concept of autonomous cells and provides the theoretical framework for an extensive technical-practical manual and a short piece on counter-propaganda (RZ 1978l, 10-40). Unlike the much more substantial number 4 and despite its legally problematical contents – the section on practice includes blueprints for improvised timing, explosive, and incendiary devices – the issue is partly reprinted in the radical press (RZ 1978b, c, j).

The paper identifies two layers of ‘us’: a factual vanguard in the literal sense of walking ahead since ‘we have only started it’ and a potentially much larger ‘we’ that can follow suit, but not without pre-emptively ostracising those who might adopt the discussed advice differently as ‘political imbeciles’ (RZ 1978l, 3). This wide notion of the in-group relies on empowering individuals to identify with genuine RZ politics, rejects differentiating between actors and bystanders, and insists on a non-hierarchical notion of action repertoires. To a certain degree, the text re-calibrates theories of practice when it states that ‘a group’s most important practice is the political discussion’ which precedes activism (ibid., 4).

Formulated as an organisational imperative, the total group develops in ‘continuous, all-encompassing political discussion’ relying neither on coercive nor therapeutic in-group relations but on processes of individual and collective emancipation; it is only on this basis that essential technical and practical knowledge becomes meaningful (RZ 1978l, 5-6). Concluding reflections on counter-propaganda develop a detailed critique of the undogmatic left-wing media landscape and claim that the consequences of the tightening of laws concerning propaganda crimes have resulted in the far-reaching self-censorship of radical
In this context, the clandestine dissemination of potentially incriminated texts by mundane means is elevated into the genuinely political act to reach beyond the already convinced (ibid., 39-40).

A remarkable communiqué from May 1978 uses an entirely different communicative strategy to reach out and avoid incrimination. The text, written as a fictitious press release by an equally fictitious ‘Office of Counter Statements’ of the city of Heidelberg relies on ironic figurative speech acts to convey its message (RZ 1978g). By denying responsibility in the name of the town’s mayor whose initials happen to coincide with the acronym ‘RZ’ as the text does not fail to point out, it claims authorship for an act of arson on Heidelberg Castle to protest the city’s commodification by urban planning. The communiqué’s concrete claims, which include that town hall romanticises the image of Heidelberg for its mainly American tourists and privileges business interests over those of vulnerable citizens, use formal templates of the language of counter statements. This rhetorical technique creates ironic distance and renders the political message more tangible and comprehensible at the same time: sentence structures and wholesale disclaimers sound awkwardly similar to institutionalised political newspeak. The leaflet’s effective use of figurative irony establishes a contrast to the blunt and anxiously demotic language of topically related statements (RZ 1978o; RZ 1978q).

As the start of the large ‘2nd of June’ trial galvanises the remnants of the radical left-wing undogmatic ‘scene’ (Öffentlichkeitsausschuß 1978b), an RZ attack on court-appointed attorneys in this context interprets the proceedings as an offensive against legitimate but illicit political violence ‘to criminalise the armed social-revolutionary struggle’, (RZ 1978p). The attacks’ rationalisation resembles an earlier critique of court appointed ‘coercive attorneys’ as constitutional fig leaves in political trials who deliberately benefit from counterterrorist ‘psychological warfare’ (ibid.). However, its level of violence is unprecedented: for the first time actions of the Cells within the FRG do not stop short of

\[\text{111 The text refers to the impacts of the statutory incrimination of ‘Anti-Constitutional Endorsement of Criminal Offences’, a particularly contentious element of anti-terrorist legislation of the late 1970s which did influence the left-wing media landscape significantly (Berlit and Dreier 1984, 286-288). The RZ account is reflected in contemporary analysis of the concrete consequences on effective counter-information by organisations of leftist publishers and book traders. However, these voices emphasise how self-censorship and pre-emptive incrimination counterfactually support the intransigent narrative of protagonists of the armed struggle and might radicalise activists in undesired ways (VLB 1977).}\]
directly targeting their victims’ life and limb. In a personal, direct and unmediated language, the statement claims a shoot-to-wound attack, utters far-reaching personalised threats, and indicates further escalation (ibid.). While the defendants themselves publicly embrace the attack, their leftist supporters and ‘lawyers of confidence’ criticise the shots as useless if not counterproductive (Öffentlichkeitsausschuß 1978a; Vertrauensanwälte 1978).

Further communiqués in 1978 are related to anti-imperialist activism that causes only material damage and speak a largely abstract language. For instance, another bombing of US military facilities is rationalised by a simplified version of the redefined theory of imperialism according to ‘For we do not perish’ (RZ 1978k). However, an immediate comment on the statement contends that even this summary, applied version of the conceptual argument is very much out of sync with contemporary radical realities (Anonymous 1978). Albeit anecdotally, this reaction highlights the problem of translating theoretical grand design into concrete armed practice, related to a topic and target that should naturally resonate with the wider radical scene.

The reaction also points to a larger issue that has emerged in this sub-section’s analysis: increasingly, two interpretations of what it concretely means ‘to be as radical as reality’ contradict each other. One part of the answer relies on Manichaean distinctions of the political between marginalised revolutionaries, the area of struggle, and the rest, and is based in fascisation theory and attempts at recalibrating anti-imperialist thought. However, its other half emphasises that armed politics are nevertheless much less prescriptive and inaccessible than is commonly assumed and tries to reach a wider sphere of protest by radicalising emerging single-issue movements. In so doing, a left-libertarian movement family that increasingly tends from New Left radicalism to New Social Movement (NSM) perspectives (della Porta 1995, 42-43) is targeted as a reference group in the name of a relatively closed and immunised ideological perspective. Furthermore, it is not always entirely clear who speaks for the RZ. While organisational aspirations and concepts of organic growth establish an inclusive image of the area of struggle, belonging to this area also presupposes a highly developed radical consciousness and a considerable level of political experience to avoid the brand being used in unintended ways. By criticising communication in the name of the Cells or leading fierce debates in the left counter-public, the negotiation of revolutionary identities is further complicated.
6.4 ‘The Wind is turning, a storm is brewing’: Attempts to redefine revolutionary politics in the 1980s

Della Porta argues in a periodisation of the relations between protest cycles and political violence in Germany from 1960 to 1990 that the climate for non-institutionalised, extraordinary politics thoroughly changes in the new decade while still related to previous phases of mobilisation (della Porta 1995, 43-46). Protest politics professionalise and normalise in the latter half of the 1980s after a peak between 1980 and 83, characterised by a broad, inclusive and issue-oriented new peace movement against the NATO Double-Track Decision, in which non-violence became a foundational principle. A subsidiary radical subculture never disappears, but violent tactics become increasingly marginalised and semi-organised political violence does not transition into full-blown clandestinity on a large scale (ibid.). While this overview of medium-term trends is consistent with similar, more recent findings in the literature on NSM in the FRG, it does not capture the whole picture (Roth and Rucht 2008, 30-33). Its other half consists of the negative institutionalisation of political violence on a relatively high level as ‘armed struggle, by the mid-1980s, appeared to be a permanent feature of West German political life’ even if its socio-political base is insular, dispersed and marginalised (Varon 2004, 302).

Unsurprisingly, contemporary voices assess the degree of political violence in much less tranquil ways. An article on ‘The Battle about Nuclear Energy’ muses in Summer 1986 that ‘the steel bearing balls and nuts’ hurled by ‘autonomist’ slingshots during confrontational marches against the police ‘are not only more dangerous, but also have a different political quality’ than the cobblestones of APO-days (Spiegel 1986b, 29). On a related note but from the opposite perspective, a listicle enumerates almost daily militant attacks whose targets reach from military and police infrastructure to nuclear energy and GM technology companies. The document boasts that ‘hopefully there can be no talk of completeness’ of its account which totals 312 incidents, 66 of which used explosives, and approximately 25 million Deutsch Marks in material damage in 1985 alone (Anonymous
Accordingly, the Cells’ attempt to redefine the project of clandestine revolutionary politics ranges between two conflicting, but coinciding poles.

On the one hand, a broader, if also volatile and precarious militant undercurrent of a new generation of ‘autonomist’ activists in many ‘sectoral movements’ seemingly validates some of the RZ’s central strategic claims, but also poses new challenges. The amount of RZ communiqués skyrockets since “the Cells” still dutifully fulfilled their attack quota every month’ according to a more than slightly exaggerated and sarcastic reminiscence to ‘the good old days’ of ‘autonomist’ struggles (Gerber 2008). However, the broadening of low level violence also signifies that not all activism complies with the claimed high political standards of the RZ – if a general standard still exists: conflicts between different groupings within the context of Cells, Zora and their environment surface in the ‘scene-internal’ public (RZ 1985a; RZ 1987a; RZ [1984] 1989, 126; Verteiler und Verteilerinnen 1987).

On the other hand, a changing protest sphere requires new theoretical approaches, in which new or renewed interest in issues such as the threat of nuclear war, ecology, energy politics, biogenetics, sexism, racism, and the new social question reshapes the practices and politics of protest. While the almost regular edition of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ with its conceptual leaders ceases after number 6 in January 1981 (RZ 1981d), a string of conceptually oriented, issue-specific papers aims to influence debates within the protest sphere. Mostly, these texts elaborate militant positions from a critique of tendencies within a departmentalised protest sphere not unlike the approach of the Wrath, but with a more self-critical edge (RZ 1983a, d, 1984d; RZ 1983f). However, some writings also develop genuine RZ perspectives independently from outwards-directed critique (RZ 1986a, 1989b). As attack communiqués rarely introduce new conceptualisations and the sheer quantity of these documents calls for a selective approach, the analysis in the following sub-sections focuses on larger, conceptual papers and discusses particular statements only insofar as they highlight significant tactical changes or form part of attempts to stage independent campaigns (e.g. RZ 1980a; RZ 1981f, 1986a, b, 1987b).

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112 The table was filed in the archives of the German Democratic Republic’s Ministry of State Security and is obviously sourced from an unreferenced ‘autonomist’ periodical (Anonymous 1986). It could be retrieved from the collections of the Hamburg Institute for social research.
6.4.1 ‘It’s time that we start living’: First statements in the 1980s

The first documented attack of the decade targets the Federal Labour Office in Nuremberg in January 1980 and is claimed under the heading ‘It’s time that we start living’ (RZ 1980a) which plays on the title of a novel on resistance against National Socialism, a left-wing insiders’ tip (Geissler 1976). Addressing its audience directly and inclusively, the text speaks as part of a constituency which loses individual agency due to joblessness and computerisation. It contends that labour market policies of the early 1980s contribute to ‘the rationalisation practice of capital’ by increasing the ‘silent reserve’ of barely administered, redundant jobseekers and normalising substandard labour conditions (RZ 1980a). The statement invokes a pseudo-alternative between wholesale acceptance of the consequences of the perpetuated crisis as the new capitalist normality and resisting it in the name of a ‘human and nature-oriented production’ to rationalise the attack (ibid.).

An interview with self-identified militants of the Cells speaking ‘only for a part of the RZ’ on ‘Clandestine struggle in the anti-NPP-movement’ discusses in detail how relations between particular ‘sectoral movements’ and clandestine perspectives concretely unfold (RZ 1980c). The text, published in a special issue on anti-nuclear resistance in the new series of ‘Autonomy’ (see above, point 6.1, p. 225) is remarkable for two reasons: firstly, turn-taking between complexes of thorough and very specific questions and equally detailed answers suggest a genuine exchange of ideas between above-ground radicals and clandestine militants. Secondly, the replies indicate a high degree of self-awareness but also highlight the limitations of self-ascribed revolutionary positions regarding NSM when addressing initial unease towards approaching nuclear energy as an issue in itself and not as a manifestation of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal system’ (RZ 1980c, 30). The ways in which changing attitudes towards targeting the anti-NPP-movement are rationalised reveal the duality of over-emphasising clandestine agency and self-critical accounts. On the one hand, direct attacks on the nuclear industry represent an opportunity for overcoming the movement’s impending stalemate. On the other hand, questions of energy politics and ecology only ‘became a central focus for us’ because of a necessary conceptual reassessment of the domestic and international political-economic implications of anti-nuclear protests (ibid., 31). Furthermore, the paper concedes that initial expectations of radicalising the
protests did not materialise while the general crisis of 1977 affected the Cells’ membership base: ‘at that time a couple of comrades left the RZ’ (ibid.).

The text nevertheless insists on the significance of clandestine activism when it argues that non-violence and legalism as political principles limit resistance to ‘ultimately ineffective forms of protest’, transforming ‘effectivity’ into a normative quality (RZ 1980c, 32). In contrast to the tendency of NSM perspectives towards integration, the text interprets the increasing regionalisation of protest as a potential rallying point for resistance and a renewal of autonomist politics in spite of lost traditions of non-conformity and subversion. In so doing, it associates popularising subversive action with implementing ‘ideas, plans, phantasies, and dreams that we encounter in daily resistance and the anti-NPP-movement’ without just jumping the bandwagon of protest movements or isolating oneself from it (ibid., 33). A modest measure for successfully popularising clandestine action helps in discursively avoiding this double-bind: if attacks are recognised as acts of resistance worth debating, they already have an impact. Beyond that, the success of clandestine militancy depends on the emulation of its practices, which is where the interview articulates an ambiguous relation to the Cells’ self-identified reference group: while growing decentralised clandestine activism is welcomed, large parts of ‘the radical anti-NPP-movement’ still do not fully grasp its potential to overcome the wrong alternative between stalemate and re-integration by developing sustainable radical politics ‘in the places in which one lives and works or doesn’t work’ (ibid., 34).

Although the text claims that there is no hierarchy between forms of resistance, it insists not only that clandestine activism is a ‘precondition for the development of a free society’, but also argues that not all forms of militancy are equal (RZ 1980c, 34). The interview reclaims, in a jargon of immediacy and self-liberation, a particular position for the Cells: ‘as part of the anti-NPP-movement and not as its military wing’ they consider themselves as integrated while at the same time working to overcome the movement’s thematic constraint by including ‘perspectives of resistance in other sectors’ into framing resistance against NPP (ibid., 34). Consequently, this dual relationality is not rationalised as contradiction, but as interdependence.

The statement on the fatal shots on Heinz-Herbert Karry, Hesse state minister of finance, in May 1981 speaks a very different language although it also associates targeting
Karry with NSM struggles against big infrastructure projects, namely the enlargement of Frankfurt Airport by an additional runway and the state’s nuclear programme (RZ 1981f). The text, disseminated almost a month after the deadly attack when speculation about the events was rampant (Pflasterstrand 1981b), defends in a belligerent, defiant, and brutal tone an attempted shoot-to-wound assault gone wrong. Mimicking ‘the language and unlimited cynicism of the ruling class’ constructs a stark contrast between the clearly stated deeds of ‘our long struggle against the capitalist machinery of death’ and hiding dominant violence behind newspeak (RZ 1981f, 13). Cynically describing the events as an occupational hazard and putting part of the blame for the deadly outcome on the victim immediately contradicts this message; a spurious, largely vindicatory auto-critique embraces the outcome. This deliberately detached interpretation of the events glosses over the qualitative shift in tactical repertoires: kneecapping has only been used once before and in the very different context of a self-referential punishment attack (see above point 6.3.3, p. 256).

Personally devaluing the victim largely substitutes political rationalisation when Karry is portrayed as the personified mover and shaker behind any large-scale, environmentally problematic infrastructure project, champion of anti-employee politics, and a corrupt stirrup holder of capital. In so doing, the statement establishes only an indirect justification for the new level of violence as exemplary tit-for-tat justice against the ruling class and ‘their filthy, bloody business of dominance’ (RZ 1981f, 14-15). The ways in which the text immunises its argument against critique from the movement sphere is also characterised by inversion. Countering allegations that attacks only provide pretexts for repression, it generalises the particular occasion into a general dichotomy between ‘broken spine or walking upright’ or reformist activism and revolutionary perspectives (ibid., 16).

While critical comments on the attack and communiqué from ‘autonomist’ circles do not fail to notice the contradiction between RZ principles of unambiguous, self-explanatory activism and the attack on Karry, they also highlight opposing conceptions of militant politics. A first critique contends that the shooting of the minister ‘is an expression of an opportunistic resistance’ (Anonymous n.d. [1981], 1): it fails to confront bourgeois protest with the military, imperialist underpinnings of the airport enlargement and to identify its victim for what he really is, ‘a servant of US/FRG-imperialism ... a facilitator of and accessory to genocide’ (ibid.). Highlighting contradictions of the attack therefore helps in arguing for a
clear cut between militant anti-imperialism and integrated protest sphere. On a different note, an anonymous collective of autonomist opponents of the runway criticises the shots and related RZ interventions in the growing movement against the airport extension immanently. Accordingly, the ill-communicated act and its subsequent legitimisation are highly problematic because they are not clearly directed against power instead of people, and fail to deepen contradictions within the hegemonic block (Anonymous n.d. [1982], 1).

Militancy is in this ‘movementist’ critique not a matter of principle, but a matter of measure: social movements are not radicalised by qualitative leaps, but in slow, painstaking processes of consciousness-raising which have to respect a gradually shifting consensus on the limits of accepted militant protest behaviour (ibid., 2-3).


Number 6 of Revolutionary Wrath is at the same time the first and the last ‘regular’ edition of the Cells’ journal in the 1980s (RZ 1981k). Apart from a masthead containing the logos of Cells and Zora, its front page employs the visual language and message of earlier numbers while the issue’s back cover reflects the copy-shop aesthetics of punk fanzines with a mashup of arbitrary press-clippings on freely associated topics over a black and white photography (RZ 1981k, 28). The contrast between front and back matter illustrates the range of the contents of the issue. These include the familiar, counterfactual re-affirmation of an ever growing area of struggle, on which editorial comments to a partial reprint in ‘Pflasterstrand’ focus (RZ 1981h, i), a new emphasis on commenting on current affairs (RZ 1981j) and the first programmatic statement of the Red Zora (RZ 1981l).

The number starts with a self-historicising introduction which celebrates eight years of RZ activism, presents organisational ideas as facts, and invokes the dialectical relation between armed struggle and broad movements. RZ actions ‘originate from societal conflicts, in which we participate … draw on political debates there’ and seek to ‘escalate

113 The text discusses the political exploitation and wider background of the bomb attack on the Munich Oktoberfest in September 1980 under the title ‘Campaigning with Deaths’ (RZ 1981j). The incident represents to this date the deadliest act of political terrorism in Germany after World War II and was supposedly committed by a lone wolf with close ties to neo-fascist groups (Blumenau 2014, 28-29). The RZ text argues on the basis of quotes, campaign strategies, and inconsistencies in the official narrative in relatively measured ways that the attack aimed at a shift within the hegemonic block (RZ 1981j, 22). Furthermore, it contends that the bombing was most likely initiated by ‘right-wing and fascist cops’ who disagree with official security politics and ‘do private politics’ in collusion with ‘political gangsters’ on the extreme right (ibid., 25).
contradictions’ (RZ 1981a, 2). At the same time, the text also claims the Cells’ prerogative to act in purely self-referential ways to maintain logistics and dish out revolutionary justice ‘to safeguard prisoners’ (ibid.). However, it also clarifies that armed politics in the 1980s does not imply direct attacks on power structures or waging a ‘war’ in any sense of the word, but rather the beginning of a protracted struggle for hearts and minds. The notion of déclassés as reference group has changed considerably from the ‘mass worker’ of the 1970s and refers to the new youth movement and ‘autonomist’ revolt: the text approvingly quotes its slogans which discursively ignore the boundaries between legal and illegal (Radikal 1980).

While quoting Brecht’s parable on the mistake from ‘Stories of Mr K’ highlights the reflexive and sometimes even ironic style of the Cells, the quote also reaffirms a familiar mythopoetic tale: there is no success guarantee, but also no alternative other than ‘to fight by all means available’ (RZ 1981a, 3). The text substantiates this tautological justification of political violence in two ways. Firstly, it mirrors radical critiques of the post-68 left by a younger generation of activists (Pflasterstrand 1981a) and mocks those who now ‘certainly have more to lose but their chains’ to oppose ‘insurance mentality’ and a revolt which is still justified (RZ 1981a, 3). Secondly, it emphasises the subjective moment of political emancipation in collective struggle, turning the shared experience of subjective resistance against concrete threats into existential issues as, for example, ‘our neighbourhoods are out-developed if we do not fight it back’ (ibid., 4).

By contrast, the issue’s political and conceptual leader ‘The wind is turning, a storm is brewing’ focuses on assessing organisational history, addressing critique, and delivering self-critique to outline a perspective for coming struggles rather than on mythopoetic self-assurance (RZ 1981d). Arguing in metaphors, aphorism and truism substantiates the idea that struggle still remains possible in a ‘social-technocratic surveillance state’ which is why antiterrorist discourse – with the help of ex-guerrilleros who project their own failure onto former comrades – aims at presenting the supposedly pathological internal dynamics of clandestine struggle as scientific truth (ibid., 4-5). Rationalising the mistake of having been ‘preoccupied with the wrong addressees for too long’ the text also contends that the Cells mistook the public of a self-defined left ‘scene’ for the ‘state and the tendency of the movement as such’ and failed to realise the degree to which former comrades were reintegrated (ibid., 5). While there is a wrong critique from the former radical left
establishment, ‘critique on the guerrilla by the guerrilla’, above all by exit of ‘individual militants’ beyond publicly known renegades, is ipso facto serious as it articulates real concerns and organisational crisis (ibid.).

Arguing with the authority of revolutionary identity establishes seemingly self-critical criteria for discussing fundamental problems of the armed struggle. The text claims to focus on two internal critiques: the gap between emancipatory rhetoric and clandestine reality and the failure to develop a strategic perspective for armed resistance beyond feasibility arguments. Quoting different authoritative sources in a paratactic, almost stenographic style in which pleonasms, figurative language, and examples abound, elevates an understanding of radical politics according to which ‘re-appropriation is tantamount to denial, to sabotage, to destruction’ into a general principle (RZ 1981d, 6). In so doing, the paper’s take on the conditions of possibility of radical politics is contrasted much more to the alternative movement in which ‘supposed negation of the old and outline of the new coalesce in a placid synthesis’ than to these internal critiques (ibid.).

However, it also contends that the ‘proclamation of the new human being by the guerrilla is not free from a similar mechanism’, that is, from premature synthesis that bypasses and reproduces central contradictions (RZ 1981d, 7). While the mere fact of taking up arms together did not reconcile the need for individual emancipation with processes of active negation of the status quo, the text puts the burden of dealing with this paradox back onto an already overburdened revolutionary subject. The supposedly self-critical assessment of motivations for leaving the guerrilla comes full circle when the discussion of tensions between total aspiration and factual limitations concludes: ‘if we say that liberation is only possible in the decision against the system then this includes intransigency towards internalised relations of violence’ (ibid., 8). The text rationalises increasing alienation from the wider left-libertarian movement family as a result of discrepancies between perceived and real processes when the cycle of struggles in the 1970s did not develop as anticipated (ibid., 9).

The perceived emergence of new societal conflicts in combination with a set of shared experiences and convictions explains the decision to start a ‘protracted attack on power’ by decentralised, autonomous groups; these experiences are dubbed ‘knowledge’ and include the importance of the voluntaristic act and the practical example of the RAF (RZ
1981d, 9-10). By contrast, selective recollection of the ways in which the unity of a heterogeneous youth revolt dissolved into a plethora of sectoral struggles without a common denominator helps in understanding how those ‘who maintained the goal of a mass guerrilla regardless’ increasingly got out of touch with the actual development of societal conflicts (ibid., 10). Arbitrary RZ activism, symbolic instead of concrete interventions, the prevalence of indirect ties to movement discussions, and the mistake of associating continuity with ‘the fact that it burned or banged once in a while’ are rationalised as a consequence of aspiration-reality-gaps (ibid.).

Furthermore, the paper admits that the Cells increasingly did not refer to protest politics, but tried to determine their trajectory, illustrating this argument with examples of ‘the attempt to re-mobilise the left by building on old “traditions”’ such as widespread mobilisation against rising transport fees or for internationalist goals (RZ 1981d, 11). RZ positions became totalised, different priorities turned into hierarchies, and analytical differences into incommensurable positions. In encoded form, the text admits that the reality of organisational dynamics significantly resembles the previously rejected accounts of apostates and social scientists: organisation becomes an end in itself and substituting missing social referents results in specialisation and alliances that jeopardise autonomy. Despite delivering this implicit self-critique of the way of RZ militants into international terrorism and describing ‘the problem of the prisoners’ as an additional element of isolation, the text insists on the moral and political obligation posed by ‘political prisoners’ (ibid., 12).

While an overtly technical, pseudo-scientific language in which nominalisations abound reifies the claim of ongoing white torture in German prisons, freeing imprisoned comrades seems no longer a viable tactical option; the discussion of self-referential activism above already indicates that supporting them is imagined in different forms in the 1980s (see p. 264). In so doing, lessons learned from episodes of direct confrontation include the redefinition of general criteria for the success of a strategy of organising weak revolutionary forces on the final page of ‘The wind is turning’. Here, the text fully departs from earlier concepts of establishing material counter-power to a project of armed politics as consciousness-raising. Broadening action repertoires and deepening notions of legitimate resistance accordingly aims at symbolically corroding ‘the foundations of power’ (RZ 1981d, 13). A network of autonomous groups is still the organisational ideal, but their conflict with
the state takes place on a performative and communicative plane ‘since the heart of the state is the people and not its [the state’s] individual representatives’ (ibid., 13). This redefinition of power indicates that among the conflicting interpretations of armed politics the concrete, movement-oriented, and open-ended one kept the upper hand.

However, this reinterpretation also immunises the argument, pre-empts a renewed frustration of expectations, and introduces new contradictions. The text establishes intangible criteria to measure success, namely ‘neither the number of actions nor the caused material but the political damage resulting from a long-term shift of power constellations’ (RZ 1981d, 13). Yet, it also asserts that ‘political damage’ can be quantified: the spread of militant groups and the fact that ‘the board of attacks has been unabatedly updated since autumn ’77’ tentatively validates the renewed perspective (ibid.). It remains open how exactly this differs from the self-critique of having confused continuity with outbursts of politically motivated violence. Furthermore, the text identifies an emerging ‘new youth movement a promising fusion of mass militancy and subversive action’ as the coming revolutionary subject and claims that this ‘tendency’ was encouraged by the RZs’ continuous existence (ibid.). In so doing, redefining armed politics also serves to reconfirm old articles of faith.

Further contributions to Wrath number 6 consist in topical articles on current affairs and indicate a clearer distinction between analytical and practical intervention. ‘Anti-Imperialist Struggle Remains Necessary’ goes beyond previous conceptualisations of ‘imperialism’: the paper argues for a complex understanding of imperialism which is not grounded in the assumption of a central contradiction but conceptualises intersecting relations of domination and over-exploitation (RZ 1981c). It addresses race and gender as constituent elements of exploitative international relations of labour’, cultural aspects of hegemony’, and the problematic subject position of Western radicals between political intervention and defence of metropolitan privilege (ibid., 18-19). Two particular aspects which become influential in subsequent conceptual discussions of the 1980s emerge in this context: the concrete situatedness of the FRG within the hegemonic system (RZ 1981e) and nationalist undertones in the early 1980s peace movement (RZ 1981g). Finally, the limitations of the self-critique of an approach that puts as much emphasis on organisational continuity and self-historicisation as on development and adaptation becomes apparent in a
short piece on the issue’s inner sleeve. The text remembers ‘Entebbe’ as well as ‘our friends’ Böse and Kuhlmann for the first time directly and with their full names (RZ 1981b). In this context, it buys into the schematic narrative of earlier, not officially authorised communiqués (see above, point 6.3.2, p. 246) despite the fact that the concept of imperialism has been substantially redefined in the meantime and despite earlier implicit and tacit critique of international collaborations (see above, p. 266).

6.4.3 ‘In distress and dire need, the middle ground leads to decease’: Critical interventions in current movement debates

The short period between spring 1983 and spring 1984 witnesses a remarkable clustering of extensive conceptual interventions by Cells and Zora which comment on different aspects of current affairs: renewed extreme right terrorist activities in autumn 1982 (RZ 1983a); the crisis of the movement against the construction of a new runway at Frankfurt airport (RZ 1983d); the peace movement’s largescale mobilisation against the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles during the ‘hot autumn’ of 1983 (RZ 1983f); and the current round of collective bargaining in the metallurgic industry in early 1984 (RZ 1984d).

The first of these papers, ‘Beethoven vs. Mac Donald’ [sic] argues for a strict differentiation between anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism; it addresses alleged nationalism in NSM on the occasion of a series of neo-fascist bombings targeting the daily life of US servicemen and their families (RZ 1983a). However, the paper conveniently ignores earlier statements which rationalised anti-imperialist attacks in dubious, ethnically and culturally over-determined ways (see above, point 6.3.2, p. 246) and ambiguous activism including deadly shots on one of the few high-profile Jewish politicians in post-war Germany (Anonymous 1981b). By contrast, anti-imperialism is defined here as a strategy of deepening contradictions and fissures within imperialist realities, for instance by not merely othering ‘yanks’ but by exploiting inherent race and class differences in the army. In so doing, the Cells insist on a difference between armed struggle and ‘terrorism’, which targets people instead of power in a ‘strategy of tension and massacre’ (RZ 1983a, 2). Instead, the attempt to reconceptualise armed politics in the 1980s ‘as part of a – weak – social-revolutionary and anti-imperialist current’ emphasises processuality over determinism and cautionary, non-
arbitrary symbolic attacks over war metaphors as ‘we do move in the early stages of this process in which essentially a struggle for the heads and feelings of humans is waged, but precisely not a war’ (ibid.).

Subsequently, the text stigmatises leading figures in the peace movement as nationalists if not crypto-Nazis in deliberately pejorative language to construct a stark contrast between criticising a transnational like McDonald’s on the basis of political-economic analysis or in the name of a crude concept of ‘cultural imperialism’ (RZ 1983a, 3). To substantiate claims that ignoring this categorical difference has opened the mainstream left to dangerous tendencies, it compares the trajectory of neo-fascism towards anti-Americanism to diffuse, undifferentiated fear of the American other in a left-wing daily. Finally, the paper outright rejects the authenticity and validity of earlier assertions that the bombing campaign was a professionally staged counter-terrorist plot in the name of the RZ (RZ 1983c): ‘the claim of that alleged “RZ” … we consider as utter nonsense’ (RZ 1983a, 4).

Arguing with unfounded conspiracy theories, accordingly, not only plays the neo-fascist problem down, but also dangerously misperceives the state of socio-political conflicts in 1980s Germany which is characterised by targeted repressive policing, not open state terrorism.

The next, substantially larger paper dates from August 1983 and assesses the shortcomings of a broad campaign to learn lessons for future activism and start ‘an open and radical discussion’ between militant participants in the struggle against the extension of Frankfurt airport (RZ 1983d, 2). The title ‘No Runway West’ adopts the slogan of one of the largest single-issue movements in the history of the FRG, which mobilised an inclusive coalition of locals, environmentalists, and ‘autonomists’ in protest against the impact of increasing air traffic (Katsiaficas 2006, 87-88; Kriesi et al. 1995, 121-122). Its title graphic combines the logos of movement and RZ like earlier interventions in the anti-runway struggles (RZ 1982). Arguing that movement historiography from activist perspectives is a necessary but missing link in left debates, the text develops a comprehensive approach from project background (RZ 1983d, 3-9), over the unfolding of resistance (ibid., 10-23) to a self-critique of the Cells own activism within its context (ibid., 24-29). In so doing, it merges technical, economic, and ideological jargon and contends that economic, ecological, and military aspects converge in a radical critique of large infrastructure projects.
In this context, concrete constellations of power behind projects define perspectives of resistance. An ‘in principle non-negotiable’ extension to safeguard the dual civil-military use of the airport implies that only particular mobilisation might successfully obstruct the project: ‘making the region “ungovernable” over a long (!) period’ by physical disruption of building works and increasing pressure from the streets (RZ 1983d, 8-9, original emphasis). ETA’s continuous attacks on the construction site of a NPP provide an authoritative example of backing protest politics with violence. The text conveniently ignores the episode’s highly problematic aspects, including dead workers and the first widespread popular mobilisation against the organisation (Bechberger 2010, 356-358). A detailed chronology of the movement’s decisive months argumentatively reconfirms a particular reading of protest events. An indistinct ‘we’, ‘including many bourgeois’ made their first shared experiences with illicit activism and was ready for confrontation at several points, but the politicos in SMO outmanoeuvred these tendencies (RZ 1983d, 12-13). Activist perspectives are contrasted with the more institutionally oriented, pragmatic perspective of the ‘citizens’ initiative’, a particularly German form of organising issue-oriented protest coalitions (della Porta 1995, 38-39) for which the power to de-mobilise represents an important bargaining chip.

Addressing the failure to develop a continuous, autonomous form of organising protest against the exploitation of temporary advantages by professionalised pragmatic activists, the text refers to past organisational discussions. Factory-level activism and a ‘committed (not strict) organisation of the radical left’ are conceptualised as potential catalysts for consolidating disruptive activism (RZ 1983d, 15). However, backward-looking organisational concepts contrast with a well-informed critique of movement politics. The text argues that the citizens’ initiative provides ‘the official political form’ of the anti-runway movement without actually representing its pluralist constituency (ibid., 19). Sociological jargon substantiates the argument: accordingly, the initiatives’ key members come from a ‘new middle class’ background whose societal status is threatened by declassification and capitalist restructuration. Therefore, their activism is defensive and characterised by a limited critique of the excesses of capitalism. A combination of protest experience and middle class habitus predestines ambitious, status-oriented ‘movement politicians’ for
leadership positions in NSM, which provide ‘control over movement’ and allow for entering established politics (ibid., 20).

A quote from Geissler’s ‘It’s time that we start living’, that implies a quasi-natural relation between living and resisting and points towards the impossibility of controlling dissent, sets the discursive frame for a partly self-affirmative, partly self-critical discussion of the RZs ‘practical and written contributions’ in the anti-runway movement (RZ 1983d, 25). In this regard, militant practice is two-sided: a means to the concrete end of disrupting building works, but also a form of concrete pedagogy that aims at broadening the movements’ repertoires and perspectives of activism. Furthermore, the text claims that low-tech sabotage of construction infrastructure was relatively widely accepted and imitated within the protest coalition and reaffirms that militant practice helps in countering tendencies toward professionalization, delegation, and representation. Nevertheless, ‘the embedding of our actions’ into the movement is also imagined ‘as different responsibilities (some kind of differentiation of labour), but similar goals (with reference to the Runway)’ (ibid., 26).

Contradictions between conceptually objecting to delegation while factually embracing the differentiation of ‘responsibilities’ suggests that RZ perceptions and the reality of protest differ significantly. In a similar vein, ‘autonomist’ critics argue that RZ activism failed to divide the movement, not because of its embeddedness but precisely because it mostly took place beside and not within the broad and inclusive activist consensus (Anonymous n.d. [1982], 11-13). Consequently, auto-critical comments in ‘No Runway West’ underline that the Cells failed to develop a coherent political perspective for their interventions which could have been communicated in activism and writings. Conceding that some attacks represented ‘mere … “replacement activities”’ for a missing general concept mirrors the radical critique quoted (RZ 1983d, 27). In particular, an extended auto-critique addresses the deadly shots on Karry and contends that the attack ‘triggered fierce internal conflicts’ while the reactions of the wider left were ‘rather mild’ (ibid., 28). Even if we follow for a moment the Cells’ exclusion of the ‘Pflasterstrand-left’ from the non-institutional left-wing (RZ 1984a), this is hardly true as the discussion above has shown (see point 6.4.1, p. 262). The text itself criticises in particular the attack’s high level of violence, inadequate political rationalisation, and failure to relate to ongoing struggles, highlighting that the ability to act decisively has been confused with organisational
and activist continuity similar to earlier auto-critique (see above, point 6.4.2 p. 266). By contrast, the text argues for strict, non-negotiable revolutionary ethics which includes the dimension, timing, and location of attacks, problematizes Manichaean elements in the claim of responsibility, and emphasises the close interrelation of word and deed. Accordingly, assaulting a high-level target in times of stagnating mobilisation would have required a substantial, politically sound rationalisation as ‘even the fiercest appeal remains just an appeal and cannot dispense from the necessity of practical and political continuity’ (RZ 1983d, 28).

Immediate responses to ‘No Runway West’ in ‘Radikal’ or ‘radical’, an undogmatic left journal from Berlin which became one of the most important voices of the early 1980s ‘autonomist’ squatter movement (DadA 2001c) do not discuss its contents substantially. Rather, the paper provides an occasion for polemically debating developments within ‘autonomist’ circles (Anonymous 1983; Bazillus Optimistikuß 1983) which indicates that critical discussion between Cells and its new target constituency are limited at best. The journal’s earlier attempts to discuss relations between diffuse militant spheres and clandestine groups in the context of the anti-runway movement (Radikal 1983) failed to trigger a reply by the RZ. Consequently, the Cells’ reaction to critique of ‘No Runway West’ is controversial rather than constructive when comparing the tone and position of ‘Radikal’ to the supposed betrayal of militant positions by the ‘Pflasterstrand-Left’ (RZ 1984a).

The paper ‘Crisis, War, Peace Movement’, whose more figurative main title provides this sub-section’s caption, is issued in the name of main current of the Cells and the radical feminist Red Zora (RZ 1983f). It criticises the growing movement against the deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles from the perspective of an economically oriented theory of crisis and imperialism established in earlier writings (RZ 1978d, 1981d). However, its introduction also explicitly argues against determinist and under-complex conceptualisations of the links between the ‘economic tendency and social practice’ of resistance (RZ 1983f, 1). The text argues that a ‘culture of catastrophe’ is cultivated within NSM which reinterprets real threats as fate and imperialist relations of exploitation as a mixture of systemic constraint and personified malice. This approach prevents the development of concrete social utopia and trades political protest for a- or anti-political moral concern (ibid., 2).
Without explaining the implied categorical difference between anti-runway and anti-deployment protests, broad protest alliances are thus not to be confused with the opportunity to spread revolutionary positions: ‘yet another time the wrong hope that movement possibly still might be everything and the goals [are] of secondary concern has proven to be a fallacy’ (RZ 1983f, 3). Consequently, the text criticises ‘autonomist’ attempts to radicalise the peace movement from within. Instead of pluralising the contents and forms of protest, the ill-fated alliance resulted in the control of social-revolutionary elements while the differences between pacifist mainstream and anti-militaristic minority were reduced to an abstract conflict about militant protest behaviour.

After discursively delimiting itself in both directions, the paper develops a substantial critique of the wrong politics of the peace movement to convince its uneasy radical fellow travellers of the futility of any effort to influence it. The consequent use of indirect speech, discourse deixis, and conjunctive mood suggests that synthesising the peace movement’s analysis of the deployment as a form of neo-colonialist occupation merely reports positions ‘in most factions of the broad spectrum’ without interpreting them (RZ 1983f, 5). Countering this supposedly prevalent reading, the text argues for a concept of imperialism which is grounded in the unity of the difference between intra-imperialist competition and outward-directed cooperation. Germany’s role in implementing the Double-Track Decision, accordingly, constitutes a sign of its growing importance within the imperialist block rather than a function of imperial dominance. Far from holding Europe hostage, NATO states ‘have made wars again calculable for themselves’ which allows for intensifying economic and political exploitation below the threshold of all-out-war (ibid., 7).

This analysis not only stigmatises the Euro-centrism and racism of liberal pacifists, but differentiates the Cells from mainstream radical left readings of the strategic reasoning of the deployment as a means for countering Soviet support of Third World national liberation movements. The failure of prevalent development models in the three continents, the re-emergence of class struggles within the third world, and renewed US interventions in Central America support a different reading. Since soviet economic underperformance severely limits its capacity to support even strategical allies in the ‘fraternity of peoples’, all attempts to rationalise ‘the military escalation by NATO’ as containment of ‘Soviet expansionism’ are out of touch with reality (RZ 1983f, 10-12).
Instead, the paper rationalises imperialist strategy as a function of the capitalist relations of production: an attempt to deal with the consequence of its inherent contradictions, namely the tendency of falling profit rates and the increasing organic composition of capital. Increasing military pressure does not aim at annihilation, but at unrestrained capitalist exploitation of Eastern markets to shoulder the costs of capitalist restructuration. An adaptation of the Clausewitzian cliché, claiming that ‘military escalation ... has to be understood as the continuation of détente by other means’, substantiates the RZ counter-narrative to rationalisations of the NATO Double-Track Decision by peace movement and radical left (ibid., 14). The imperialist ‘project of the future’ combines strategic reorientation and capitalist restructuration, which also changes the conditions of social conflict and control fundamentally: ‘the classic factory system and “free” wage labour’ and with it the ‘white male metropolitan worker’ as political, historical, and revolutionary subject are no longer central (RZ 1983f, 17-18). Consequently, the theoretical authority of ‘feminist theory’ suggests that ‘the question for future protagonists of revolutionary change has to be posed completely new and much more comprehensively’ (ibid., 19).

Failure to specify concrete references in the large body of feminist theoretical literature and discuss in detail how a new revolutionary subject emerges, however, indicate that sexism and patriarchy still represent a subset of overarching relations of domination despite earlier recognition of the ‘essential contradiction between women and men’ (RZ 1980c, 35). Instead, the text addresses trends of increasingly total data collection, surveillance and control as indicators of a new coercive regime which replaces the long-cherished concept of ‘new fascism’ as a central element of RZ ideology since it described a specific ‘political-economic condition of the post-war era’ (RZ 1983f, 19). While the text explicitly references ‘the former “Gauche Proletarienne”’ as past theoretical influence, it fails to come up with an equally coherent conceptual alternative. Rather, it invokes the inability of late capitalism to develop a legitimising narrative beyond consumerism and the failure of imperialism to provide anything but exclusion and othering as ideological reassurance of domination.

Accordingly, current societal and political problems from hooliganism, xenophobe violence and gang-rapes to video games and military interventions in the Third World are constructed into a general cautionary tale of conservative backlash in Western societies. The
attempt to persuade rhetorically by repeating and re-wording claims in a highly suggestive and figurative language substitutes coherent argumentation in this context, while the paper still insists that only thorough, relentless analysis helps in identifying ‘breaking points in the “project of the future”’ (RZ 1983f, 20). In its conclusion, the text contends that the only progressive peace movement is not inclusive but unapologetically anti-imperialist: tendencies of co-optation call for polarisation, not for alliances. While the critique of a particular sectoral movement and attempts at radicalising it identifies fundamental problems in radical politics, these are conceptualised as the potentially resolvable omission of political-economic critique within the NSM (ibid., 25). Organisational suggestions on how this is to be done differ significantly from earlier conceptions of militant intervention into broader protest (RZ 1980c). Based on the insight that this particular social movement did not provide a suitable petri dish for radical cell division, the paper establishes the idea of defining ‘own fronts’. Instead of acting within the context of wider social movements, these counter-movements supposedly establish an external corrective to conservative tendencies within the protest sphere (RZ 1983f, 26).

Compared to almost non-existent immediate reactions to ‘No Runway West’ from the wider radical left (see above, p. 272), ‘Crisis, War, Peace Movement’ triggers wide discussions. Feedback reaches from the benevolently patronising (Revolutionäre Sozialisten 1984), to the stubbornly belligerent (Anonymous n.d. [1984]; Autonome Kommunisten 1984) and the tellingly celebratory (Pohrt n.d. [1984]). Firstly, a paper by a residual faction of one of the larger Trotskyist groups within the German New Left (Nitzsche 2006, 59), embraces the essence of the critique of the peace movement’s nationalism. Nevertheless, it deconstructs the theoretical credentials of Cells and Zora in a detailed analysis of the political-economic and geopolitical argument of the paper (Revolutionäre Sozialisten 1984, 4). An intervention by ‘Autonomist Communists’ speaks a different language (Autonome Kommunisten 1984). Emphasising the common political background by referencing all other conceptual RZ texts discussed in this sub-section as crucial influences in radical discussions, it contends that ‘Crisis, War, Peace Movement’ contains ‘disorienting thoughts and also does not communicate the RZs’ relation to “the movement”’ (Autonome Kommunisten 1984, 1).

114 Some of these issues, for instance the difficulties of defining national liberation struggles as necessarily emancipatory projects, haunt the RZ as irreconcilable contradictions in debates of the early 1990s.
In a meticulous textual analysis, the autonomist paper identifies supposedly ‘disorienting’ elements to argue that the Cells’ understanding of fundamental contemporary problems is too abstract. It does not provide the platform for the proposed counter-movement, a ‘pseudo-radical ... sectarian’ approach in the first place (Autonome Kommunisten 1984, 9).

In contrast, Wolfgang Pohrt’s commentary in the alternative ‘tageszeitung’ (‘daily’) praises the text as ‘meticulous, detailed, and solid as a scientific report and moreover fluently and readably, even suspensefully written’ which differs significantly from the supposedly dull and potentially dangerous texts of the peace movement (Pohrt n.d. [1984]). He claims that this paper completely inverts common assumptions concerning the relations between ideology and reality in the underground, as ‘the man with the fuse’ confronts those in the limelight of public perception with the consequences of their objectively wrong political analysis (Pohrt n.d. [1984]). Accordingly, Pohrt suggests that in times in which an RZ paper is more significant than any of the group’s activism, ‘the return into legality is a matter of practical reason for radical leftists’ and calls for an unconditional amnesty to make this possible (Pohrt n.d. [1984]).

The decreasing level of immediate practical involvement in the topics discussed represents the common trajectory of the conceptual interventions by Cells and Zora in 1983/84. While ‘Beethoven vs Mac Donald’ touches upon the vital issue that neo-fascist attacks were initially attributed to the RZ even by parts of the radical left and thus require political clarification (RZ 1983a, 1), ‘No Runway West’ directly reflects experiences of interventionist participation in socio-political conflicts. Even the extended critique of the early 1980s mobilisation against the NATO Double-Track Decision is related to a number of attacks in the context of anti-militarism and the deployment of medium range nuclear capacities before and after the publication of ‘Crisis, War, Peace Movement’ (RZ 1983b, e, 1984c). By contrast, ‘Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing’ represents an attempt to establish a radical reading of discussions over the reduction of working hours in industrial conflicts in the metallurgic industries (RZ 1984d). While it interprets this question as yet another attempt

115 Needless to say, it took almost another ten years, the end of the systemic competition between East and West, and the factual self-disarmament of the organised formations of the armed left until a conditional offer of dialogue and reconciliation was seriously considered by the FRG government (Straßner 2005, 184-190).

116 Consequently, the editorial comment to its publication in ‘Radikal’ voices doubts whether and why such a paper should be reprinted since its supposedly superficial analytical quality calls for fundamental critique (Poltrone 1984).
at using crisis to restructure capitalism in predictable ideological terms and patterns of argument, it also repeats the project-metaphor, which already appeared in ‘Crisis, War, Peace Movement’, by describing restructuration as the ‘project of capital’ whose ‘breakage points’ provide new opportunities for activism (ibid., 12). This indicates a theoretical shift: the hegemonic block is no longer conceptualised as a quasi-personal, compact entity, but deconstructed into a series of interrelated processes whose weak links have to be identified as they constitute activist leverage points. In so doing, any attempt at developing sustainable counter-hegemonic strategies become process-oriented as well – a remarkable anticipation of the neo-liberal tendency to deconstruct complex social phenomena into project-based flow-charts. Apart from that, the papers discussed in this sub-section further highlight ambiguities in the ‘movementist’ approach to ‘armed politics’. Despite tendencies towards self-historicisation, ‘Beethoven vs. Mac Donald’ fails to address how the discourse and practice of the RZ reflects the difficult boundaries between anti-imperialist ideology and redwashing nationalist sentiment. ‘No Runway’, by contrast, underlines how not being outright excluded by broader movement contexts to which violent activism refers becomes counterfactually rationalised as successful embedding. Finally, the last two texts emphasise how closely the critique of protest from a radical perspective borders retreat from engagement with social movements.

6.4.4 ‘Social revolution against imperialist refugee politics’: Attempts at radical agenda-setting in the late 1980s

Two central discursive threads lead from the first RZ texts of the 1980s, over the conceptual contributions in 1983/84, to attempts at redefining the radical agenda in the latter half of the decade which will be discussed in this sub-section. Both aim at developing new perspectives on the future ‘of the social revolutionary project’ (RZ 1985a, 2) and are inherently entangled in the approach of searching for a theory of practice peculiar to the RZ. Firstly, the more pragmatic and practice-oriented question asks how relations between the spheres of social movement and militant, self-declared revolutionary politics concretely help establishing continuities within a volatile, ever evolving protest environment. Secondly, contributions also renew the theoretical discussion on concrete conceptual frameworks which might allow for a discursive integration of radical perspectives into the socio-political
struggles of the day. While discussions of how protest can be practically radicalised oscillate between thematically mediated participation and confrontational counter-movement, the conceptual debate negotiates between two equally distant poles: the inflexible and dogmatically defined understanding of imperialism of the RAF and anti-imperialist autonomists (Haunss 2008, 456-459), and the deliberate lack of theory among new social movements and movement-interventionist autonomist currents (Balz and Friedrichs 2012, 18-19).

With regard to the first aspect, RZ positions slowly shift from dichotomising avant-gardist and broad militant approaches to an idea of embedded leadership which aims at steering debates and activism against the grain of current waves of mobilisation. Regarding the second aspect, the notion of a ‘concrete anti-imperialism’ (RZ 1986a, 1) which addresses interrelations between developments in centre and periphery gains currency. In contrast to attempts at keeping the debate on the changing faces of imperialist interest politics alive by more traditional militant interventions in the spirit of international solidarity (RZ 1984b, 1985b), a self-titled and non-numbered ‘Extra’ of Revolutionary Wrath from October 1986 articulates both tendencies more clearly. The thin but dense special issue pursues a dual goal. Conceptually, it aims at explaining coherently why and how ‘actions against institutions of deterrence and control of refugees’ fit into an anti-imperialist framework (RZ 1986a, 1). Organisationally and practically, the text aspires to set the activist agenda independently from developments within the movement sphere by constructing a coherent campaign against ‘imperialist refuges policies’ (ibid., 4).

In this reading, the global trend of capitalist imperialism, which relies on over-exploiting the periphery while sealing off the centre, repeats itself within the metropolis by excluding, controlling and punishing those social strata which are no longer required for capitalist production. According to this cautionary tale, fighting for a ‘factual right of residence of refugees’ is morally and politically justified even if its linkages to the deguaranteed sector will only become concrete in the medium term (RZ 1986a, 1). The text contends that acting on behalf of migrant communities neither means appealing to power nor classical left-wing campaign politics, but aims at establishing concrete spaces beyond state control, that is, in the language of armed politics attacking state institutions and subversively supporting refugees. In this regard, the introduction outlines the rationale of
the campaign’s target selection and describes concrete methods of attack to emphasise that the ways in which the campaign is realised aims at maximal material and symbolic damage, but minimal danger to humans. The communiqués on the following pages of ‘revolutionary wrath-extra’ further elaborate and illustrate these general rationalisations of the refugee campaign, starting with an attack on ‘special department 624’ of hamburg’s police, the body in charge of surveillance and control of the local refugee population (ibid., 2).

A threefold moral evaluation substantiates why targeting the agencies in charge of the ‘the asylum seekers problem’, which is deliberately created to provide a pretext for its heavy-handed solution, is justified (RZ 1986a, 2). Firstly, the ‘right to asylum’ divides migrant populations into the desired and the redundant. Secondly, neither official politics nor left middle classes are prepared to give up privilege and cope with the consequences of increasing migration. Thirdly, the struggle for a right to stay by all means necessary realises the quasi-natural, self-evident right to mobility of the main victims of transnational accumulation. Consequently, the second attack communiqué in this context addresses the question of access to legal residence status for refugees, which is in contemporary Germany a decision of administrative courts. While targeting the concrete senate is justified by its particular practice of ruling, this is only symptomatic of a structural problem: the nominally wide scope of the constitutional guarantee of asylum directly correlates with its restrictive administrative interpretation and highlights the pseudo-contradiction between liberal values and reactionary reality ‘the formula according to which bourgeois democracy functions’ (ibid., 2-3). In so doing, the right to asylum is factually abrogated in administrative and juridical practice if it is claimed by the wrong people, the dispossessed of the global south, instead of the privileged white males for whom it was constructed.

The dual claim that the Central Register of foreigners in Cologne anticipates the comprehensive introduction of new techniques of social control ‘in seamless continuity to National Socialism’ legitimises bombing the vital periphery of its central IT unit (RZ 1986a, 3). Furthermore, the attack commemorates a Turkish asylum seeker who committed suicide to prevent his deportation, constructing a genealogy of the FRG’s structurally racist and imperialist refugee politics.117 The last statement is less concretely connected to the

117 Cemal Altum represents a textbook example for collusions between German authorities and authoritative regimes in the name of interest politics within left discussions (Arendt-Rojahn 1983).
manifest function of the state apparatus of controlling and policing refugees, but recapitulates the political logics of the refugee campaign by directly linking its prospects ‘to the development of a new approach to anti-imperialism of the radical left’ (ibid., 4). This ‘radical left’ represents the campaign’s reference group beyond the migrant population on whose behalf it claims to act, as well as the main audience of its communiqués. While stating that refugees represent a globalised ‘proletariat of a new kind’ the text also reflects on the problems of developing a common class interest between refugees and German subaltern classes (ibid., 4). A pragmatic ‘theory of practice’ approach again brushes over obvious shortcomings within the political conception; while blanks are openly reflected, addressing them is postponed until after a new practice is established.

While all acts claimed and discussed in ‘Wrath - Extra’ remained limited to material damage even if targeting individual representatives instead of institutional infrastructure, two cases of physically assaulting office holders in Berlin are also related to the ‘refugee campaign’. Both victims, the head of the foreigners’ registration office Harald Hollenberg and presiding judge of the asylum senate of the Federal Administrative Court Günter Korbmacher are kneecapped in shoot-to-wound attacks, justified by their respective personal responsibility for repressive politics towards refugees and migrants.118 As the auto-critique of the deadly failure of a similar attack in ‘No Runway West’ establishes internal criteria for assessing the legitimacy of such tactics (see above, point 6.4.3, p. 271), it is possible to measure both incidents against the Cells’ own words.

The statement on Hollenberg implies complicity between the foreigners’ registration office in its police functions and xenophobic, extreme right-wing tendencies. It argues that policing strategies toward migrant populations in Berlin represent ‘state controlled stigmatisation’ and ‘precisely calculated ethnic mobilisation’ that contribute to a climate in which racist pogroms become possible (RZ 1986b, 1375). Hollenberg’s direct responsibility is rhetorically constructed by conflating jurisdiction with personal authority, by personalising organisational action, and by identifying National-Socialist principles of administration and leadership with contemporary administrative practice. Compared to this schematic and

118 Some voices in the literature cite practices of Italian militants to deliver ‘proletarian justice’ by similar shoot-to-wound attacks (Moss 1989, 38-39) as a direct model for this tactical and symbolical escalation (Blumenau 2014, 27; Wörle 2008, 263). Contemporary conservative press, on the other hand, speculates that escalating the action repertoire represents a business card for resurfacing former B2J cadres under the RZ label who aim to demonstrate their seriousness to potential allies (Kahl 1986).
sweeping, but hardly reflective rationalisation which barely fulfils the RZ criteria of coherently rationalising direct personal assaults, the communiqué on the kneecapping of presiding judge Korbmacher develops a relatively sophisticated argument. It spans from quoting the literary and theoretical authority of Brecht to argue for the personal responsibility of office holders to reflections on the revolutionary right to maim or even kill representatives of the enemy, the ‘most ultimate and extreme means in class struggle’ (RZ 1987b, 4). It links the court’s practice of rulings, substantiated by quoting from rejection orders against Kurdish asylum seekers to a qualitative shift towards ‘imperialist global domestic politics’: excluding particular refugees from legal protection not only supports counterinsurgent campaigns in the periphery, but also contributes to reorganising peripheral populations according to capitalist logics of exploitability (ibid., 2).

Having established a narrative of moral and political complicity between legal power and capitalist interests, the communiqué turns to establishing the victim’s personal responsibility. It argues with the authority of his office, his public political statements, and the rhetorical weapon of Nazi-comparisons to rationalise the kneecapping as revolutionary distributive justice, which has to match the ‘unveiled brutality of class dominance’ by ‘an adequate choice of weapons’ (RZ 1987b, 4). In sum, the communiqué argues considerably more coherently than the superficial, abstract or even cynical legitimisations of similar attacks and may fulfil the RZ criteria for adequate political justifications of physical assaults. However, it is still employs a remarkably callous and brutalised tit-for-tat logic which makes it difficult to distinguish between the new ‘concrete anti-imperialism’ directed at encouraging broad support for refugees and the militarised anti-imperialism of the RAF that consists in the exchange of largely symbolic blows.

The last substantial theoretical text in the name of the Revolutionary Cells ‘What is the Patriarchy?’ speaks an entirely different language (RZ 1989b). It represents an attempt to integrate a critique of political economy with ‘triple oppression’ approaches that interrelate

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119 The sentence ‘we think that the highest asylum-judge Korbmacher is a dreadful jurist’ (RZ 1987b, 3), for instance, is a direct reference to the ‘Filbinger Affair’ in the late 1970s. Antifascist writer Rolf Hochhuth, backed by his moral and political authority, used the expression ‘dreadful jurist’ to morally devalue Hans Filbinger, then Baden-Wuerttemberg Minister-President and former military judge during National Socialism (Spiegel 1978a); the affair finally resulted in Filbinger’s renunciation (Spiegel 1978c). Other than that, Korbmacher’s managerial style and person are described in a jargon full of associations to National-Socialist practices of trivializing and administering crimes against humanity (RZ 1987b, 3).
racist, sexist, and classist aspects of domination into a notion of the contradictions of the status quo and have made their way from black feminism into the debates of the metropolitan radical left (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam 1993a, 528-529; Projektgruppe 1991). The argument proceeds from a particular case, the ‘South African gender order’ (RZ 1989b, 3-9) to a set of general statements on the patriarchal essence of capitalism and its usual left critique in a highly specialised theoretical language full of sociological jargon (ibid., 10-14). While not free from the reproduction of racist stereotypes such as the essentially phallocratic ‘old tribal codices of the black man’, it reflects on the ways in which deliberately misunderstood, selectively adopted ‘tribal codices’ and forced spatial differentiations contribute to the disappearance of black women as historical subjects (ibid., 3).

Drawing on different sources from South African community workers and subaltern readings of Hegel, Marx, and Engels to autonomist feminism, these processes are interpreted as expressions of capitalist logic. An increasingly total control of the black female body renders her economically central labour power socially ephemeral through unmediated exploitation, which includes reproductive aspects (RZ 1989b, 5-8). The text argues that the system of de-subjectifying black working women illustrates the brute logic of profit maximisation and surplus production in late capitalism by generalising the particular example (ibid., 8-9). It contends that the original relation of exploitation, the extraction of female reproductive work, becomes effectively mystified as it generates no equivalent exchange value, but becomes the social preconditions for the generation of value equivalents. Since only that which is recognised within dominant discourses socially exists, this exclusion of reproductive female labour from the production of exchange values equals an effective exclusion from societal power (ibid., 11-13).

‘What is the Patriarchy?’ employs a constructivist perspective, according to which the human being is a historical idea based on biological facts, not a natural species, to argue that the the ‘promises of equality’ of revolutionary theories also contain an element of threat (RZ 1989b, 13). The mythopoetical narrative that an original, mystified act of appropriating reproductive labour produces society helps in arguing for a categorical difference between class and gender antagonism. While the former can be overcome in perspective, the antagonistic relation of gender is irreconcilable since ‘the existential surplus labour of the woman, which continues to exist beyond all relations of domination, is deliberately
disregarded’ (ibid.). Borrowing from archetypical tales of classic mythology, the text associates genetic engineering with the Promethean tradition of the ultimate wish to free man from the gods by overcoming gender-specific reproductive difference. Finally, the text concludes that emancipation might still be possible, but requires more than sublating the class antagonism. Conceptualising patriarchy in terms of a real theory of social labour means abandoning the ‘historical idea’ of man, or in the words of the text:

The end of the exploitation of women means the end of the possibility to squeeze male power from the existential surplus labour of women. The man without power – that is the end of the historical man. (ibid., 14)

If and when this text represents the zenith of genuine theoretical efforts in the writings of the RZ, it is also a watershed in a different sense. For the first time far-reaching conceptualisations are developed outside of the context of a theory of practice. While theoretical relations to the reinvented anti-imperialism of the refugee campaign have been highlighted (ID-Archiv im IISG/Amsterdam 1993a, 529), translating the text into practical campaign politics remains difficult to say the least. Accordingly, contemporary radical comment, mostly in the Berlin weekly autonomist info ‘interim’, voice discomfort with the text for its failure to overcome a male perspective in which the female is inevitably victimised (Anonymous 1989c), for its problematic notion of ‘labour’ and ‘value’ (Anonymous 1989a), and for its omission to translate analysis into programmatic suggestions for ‘concrete struggles and approaches’ in the reality of the late 1980s (Anonymous 1989b).

However, the established brand ‘RZ’ still has some bearing in times of a general left drawback: members of a successive generation of activists who ‘do not belong to the traditional part of the RZ’ according to their own words draw on this tradition to develop a perspective for revolutionary politics beyond the 1990s (RZ 1989a, 4). The text argues that radical left identities and perspectives, including Cells and autonomists, are in crisis even if their cultural identifiers still influence urban left-libertarian milieus. Drawing on core elements of RZ ideology, for instance imagining militant practice as an individually transforming experience that overcomes ‘internalised relations of violence’, the text tries to develop new rationalisations for revisiting militant practices (ibid., 9). Making a virtue out of necessity, it insists that clandestine small-group activism is an adequate mode of radical intervention in Post-Fordism. While organising resistance in the productive and reproductive
sector becomes ever more difficult in an atomised society, times of restructuration are also ‘significantly more vulnerable to disruptions’ by forms of effective resistance (ibid., 9-10).

While a ‘trademark’ which ‘stands for a left institution’ provides discursive reassurance, the text also addresses problematic RZ mythologies (RZ 1989a, 11). Namely, the refugee campaign is criticised, as a largely voluntaristic attempt at influencing radical politics and problematic ‘actions in the RZ history, namely ... the participation in the hijacking to Entebbe’ require a serious self-critique (ibid.). It is remarkable how claiming discursive continuity to a project of armed struggle which started under entirely different circumstances nearly two decades ago supposedly provides higher legitimacy for a campaign that represents, at best, militant defence of limited urban free spaces and, at worst, an autonomist version of bourgeois ‘not in my backyard’ politics (Mayer 2008, 301-303). The degree to which reactions to the text reflect its point of departure, complaints about repetitive, self-referential radical left debates is also remarkable. While some comments welcome the paper as a contrast to hermetic theoretical pretensions of the ‘increasingly withdrawn vanguard’ RZ (Revolutionäre Vire 1989, 3), others criticise it exactly for not reaching the conceptual depth of ‘What is the Patriarchy?’ (Puderzucker 1990) or state that usurping the label serves to reconfirm the mythologies it tries to deconstruct (Klassenkrieg 90 1989).

6.5 ‘This is not a love song!’ Conclusions

As the last sub-section discussed, debates in the name of the Cells towards the end of the 1980s oscillate between the need to redefine the political project of the ‘armed left’ fundamentally and a more activist, self-identified younger current that insists on the conceptual and normative power of violent practices. In a way, the RZ have come back to the debate within the radical, autonomist, and militant left which also starts addressing ‘the fetish of militancy’ around the same time (Geronimo 1990, 184-190). The question of what remains of militant politics when violence – during marches or in clandestine forms – becomes a purely self-referential, expressive element of radical left self-understandings is equally important for the RZ in the early 1990s. While the new decade starts with a number of attacks in relation to Germany’s supposedly racist politics towards migrants and refugees (RZ 1990, 1991d, f), activism against Gulf War I (RZ 1991b; RZ 1991h), and attempts to
intervene against perceived historical revisionism in the context of the German reunification (RZ 1991c; RZ 1991e, i, j), some of these incidents trigger harsh critique in the name of the Cells – the very organisational name under which they have been claimed (RZ 1991a). The text ‘This is not a love song’ rejects in particular the failed bombing of a landmark of German nationalism and an arson attack on the Reichstag in 1991 as both attacks violate ‘the old militant wisdom according to which an action against the wrong object is a wrong action even if the opposite is stated in a communiqué’ (ibid., 3).

Accordingly the text, in which ironizing language and a serious message balance each other, is only the beginning of a discussion on the meaning, limitations, and inherent problems of an activism that substitutes radical analysis of the status quo for the radicality of the militant gesture and eventually ends in the factual dissolution of the Cells. The paper ‘Gerd Albartus is dead’, already quoted in this chapter’s introduction, starts the debate by addressing problems of left anti-Zionism, the difficult relation to national liberation movements, and the perils of close international militant cooperation (RZ 1991g). Others follow suit: a fundamental critique of the refugee campaign and movementist RZ politics in general which declares the self-dissolution of one Cell (RZ 1992b); a radical rebuke of this argument which associates its particular criticism with a fundamental misunderstanding of the Cells’ principles (RZ 1992a); and an internationalist rejection of parts of both critiques that argues that armed politics is more important than ever as the New World Order emerges, but is also vulnerable (RZ 1992d). Finally, the authors of the original papers publicly reply to all the different positions, defend their initial critique, and insist that this does not imply the end of the project of the RZ, but a fundamental reorientation of militant politics in the early 1990s (RZ 1992c).

While the papers are widely discussed throughout 1992 on the pages of the Berlin autonomist weekly ‘interim’, which results in the edition of a stand-alone brochure that collects most contributions to the debate (Weber 1992), its title ‘Critique only makes us stronger’ is a largely counterfactual claim. Only two attacks are claimed under the brand afterwards, a failed bombing on Neo-Fascist infrastructure, whose authenticity is contested (Einige Antifas 1992), and an attack on the facilities of the Federal Border Force in protest against the already passed narrowing of the constitutional guarantee of asylum (RZ 1993a). This relatively unspectacular fading out after almost 20 years of militant practice and an
estimated almost 200 attacks (Wörle 2008, 273) indicates that the contradictions within the Cells’ politics and between different Cells became too wide while the unaddressed burden of a ‘left institution’ also implied that starting a fundamental debate would open many old wounds.\footnote{One of the many unaddressed contradictions remains, that despite an almost obsessive preoccupation with the only prominent apostate Klein (RZ 1977d, 1979; 1981d, 5), the only prominent prisoner of the late 1970s is not referenced at all although his case provides ideal propaganda material. Hermann Feiling was arrested, seriously injured after the premature explosion of a bomb, and intensely questioned in critical condition which violated any constitutional guarantee of his rights not only according to contemporary radical sources (Anonymous 1981a), but also according to academic assessments of the affair (Kraushaar 2006b, 598).}

In light of the RZ’s silent dissolution in the early 1990s, it is argued that the chapter’s main analytical observations highlight an interrelation between organisational development and unresolved contradictions. Regarding the communication of armed struggle, three different phases of defining the mode of confrontation can be distinguished in the activism of the RZ. In the beginning, armed interventions are supposed to develop revolutionary consciousness by polarising the left, while the rhetoric gets more belligerent in the late 1970s as ‘all-out war’ represents the dominant normality; armed struggle is a necessary but insufficient element of revolutionary perspectives and the use of the military register becomes frequent. Throughout the 1980s armed practice with limited goals is conceptually related to concrete struggles and a vocabulary of conflict is more prevalent. In terms of the level of confrontation, the predominant tactics are armed propaganda by arson and bombings against different symbolical targets. While action repertoires also include some punishment attacks by physical assault, involvement in acts of international terrorism is not officially claimed.

With respect to distinguishing friend and foe, largely abstract and concrete definitions of the enemy coexist uneasily. While some documents reveal sophisticated, ideologically rationalised depictions of the antagonist, others rely on the language of immediacy. Accordingly, conditional programmes emphasise the existential, immediate moment of fighting and rely on a concept of revolutionary subjectivity. There is no clearly formulated, determined ideology, but rather constant work on defining ideological terminology, most notably in the changing notions of imperialism from essential belief, over political-economic analysis, to inclusive umbrella term for different relations of dominance in the sense of triple oppression theories. Furthermore, different strategic directions
supposedly constitute thematic brackets for larger campaigns which change over time and include attempts at active agenda setting, especially in the 1980s.

Similarly, ways of imagining systemic boundaries change significantly over time. While the ideal of autonomous groups, whose practices are clandestine without illegalising its militants personally, is a constant feature, these groups first represent organisational nuclei alongside legal groups, turn into a functional vanguard in the latter half of the 1970s, and are conceptualised as politically embedded in the 1980s. Frequent retrospective self-critique, however, highlights that these ideals do not reflect the reality of the RZ. In a similar vein, outer revolutionary subjects are different moments of social movement according to the changing environments of protests. Even when publicly breaking with the ‘undogmatic left’ in the late 1970s, this voices the perception that the particular left subject is not moving any more, rather than a rupture with New Left traditions. Consequently, activism aims at broadening protest repertoires and follows ideals of communicability, adequacy, and replicability which are also frequently violated. While branding and symbolical coherence are important elements of the cellular organisational concept, they also become increasingly problematic, especially when activism spreads.

While there is always a large variety of different formats, dissemination strategies and discourse practices evolve over time: after early reliance on media of counter-information results in voiced frustration, the RZ start editing ‘Revolutionary Wrath’ with a distinct visual language until 1981, which also provides discursive integration. Afterwards, the focus of dissemination changes to ‘autonomist’ publication and larger, more conceptual papers whose style starts resembling DIY aesthetics. As significant ideological reorientations indicate, remarkable elements of systemic learning and self-critique can be identified in the Cells’ writings. However, the core belief in the necessity of political violence also limits capacities for reflection and renders the organisational memory selective. When this core contradiction is finally addressed and conceptual approach and violent practice are disentangled, the semantics of armed struggle disintegrate relatively rapidly. In conclusion, common assessments of the level of theoretical sophistication in the literature have to be re-evaluated according to this chapter’s findings. While a clear and consistent theoretical line could not be identified, the level of conceptual depth in the writings of the RZ is considerably more developed than suggested.
7. Conclusion: Comparing concepts, findings, and cases

This thesis has set out to develop an original approach for analysing how radical discourse produces and reproduces over time collective identities in self-identified social-revolutionary armed groups in delimitation, but also in relation to their respective environments. This was done through developing a theoretical framework grounded in Niklas Luhmann’s communication theory of society. The theoretical and empirical arguments of the thesis were guided by the question which elements influence the potential longevity of such particular forms of violent activism from a Luhmannian perspective and how these materialise in the discourses of groups. Previous chapters have first identified critical junctures for the emergence and maintenance of discourse communities of political violence within larger radical sub-cultures which in themselves are related to the developments of a larger protest sphere. Subsequently, the conceptual framework informed a particular analytical method which was employed to analyse the writings of two radical left armed formations and their discursive relations to their immediate social environment. The task of this chapter is therefore to integrate the different threads of the argument to compare the findings of the empirical chapters and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed theoretical approach.

To this end, the chapter will proceed in three steps. Firstly, the main conceptual arguments of the discussion of theories of terrorism and political violence, central tenets of Luhmannian communication theory, and approaches to discursive analytical methods will be summarised. In a second step, the concrete theoretical propositions, their expected empirical realisations, and the findings of the textual analysis will be compared according to the six conceptual dimensions, namely communication of armed struggle, basic distinction, conditional programmes, systemic boundaries, structural couplings, and systemic learning. In this regard, the analytical narrative will depart from the chronological structure of the case study chapters and return to the theoretical differentiations developed in previous chapters. Nevertheless, developments over time in each analytical dimension will allow identifying continuities, discontinuities, and trends. Thirdly, the chapter will evaluate the extent to which the conceptual framework provided useful reading aids for approaching the empirical material and where it has to be refined. Finally, the chapter will highlight ways forward and discuss the implications of the thesis’ findings.
7.1. Theoretical and methodological argument

After problematizing the contested and contentious term ‘terrorism’, the thesis established its working definition of clandestine political violence or terrorism. Accordingly, revolutionary terrorism is understood as the strategic use of extra-legal political violence by underground counter-hegemonic movements in potentially durable campaigns which employ violent means predominantly in symbolic or communicative ways. The discussion of theoretical approaches on the analytical macro-level highlighted that structural conditions influence the emergence of forms of counterhegemonic violence without establishing clear causal links. On the meso-analytical level, it was argued that organisational networks and group dynamics influence the development of clandestine actor constellations. Discussing attempts to develop wider-reaching conceptual approaches on the analytical micro-level, in contrast highlighted the difficulties of establishing psychologically tenable theories of ‘terrorist personalities’ or related micro-mobilisations to collective experiences during protest cycles. Consequently, multi-level approaches integrated macro- and micro-analytical arguments with meso-level institutional aspects, either focusing on symbolic or interactional exchanges.

Drawing on these discussions, Chapter 3 introduced Luhmann’s concept of communication as a threefold selective process in which society constructs, reproduces, and transforms meanings as a form of integrating these levels differently. Furthermore, Luhmann’s particular approach to protest and social movements was discussed; these represent, on the one hand, reactions to the inherent contradictions of modernity and are, on the other hand, typologically situated between formal organisation and mere interaction. In a next step, conceptualisations on the emergence of violent protest forms from repeated interactions during protest events were reconstructed within a Luhmannian perspective. This discussion emphasised the relevance of processes of meaning making and the establishment of movement teleologies for the transformation of protest mobilisation into different organisational forms. While protest as a social system is, according to Luhmann, structurally and temporally limited, the topics, themes, and particular organisational forms which it produces can materialise into self-referential, potentially durable conflict systems.

Accordingly, the radicalisation of interpretative frames and the reduction of social realities to a dual scheme of antagonism were identified as the decisive elements for the
construction of retrospective causal narratives that rationalise the continuation of conflict even if fails to become socially relevant on a larger scale. The discussion of elective affinities and differences between a Luhmannian perspective and sociolinguistic methodologies in Chapter 4 argued that even critical discourse studies approaches are not necessarily restricted to the study of language in power, but also help analysing counterhegemonic attempts on power as text in context. Approaches of register variation that study whether and how particular social subfields also establish sub-languages by functional variation, normalising jargon, and lexical differentiation were identified as promising ways for assessing the assumption of a language of political violence. Since a perspective of register variation relies on the theoretical identification of ‘meanings at risk’ – distinctive critical aspects of meaning making – and their expected lexico-grammatical realisation, the chapter reinterpreted the six conceptual dimensions of the conditions of continuity of clandestine revolutionary violence accordingly.

7.2. Comparing conceptualisations and findings

While the analysis of both case studies followed the chronological development of the groups’ discourses, all texts were analysed according to a coding system that follows from the conceptual discussion summarised above. The task of this subsection is to synthesise and compare the empirical findings according to the six dimensions of reproducing revolutionary identities. Regarding the communication of armed struggle, it was argued that the communicative immediacy of acting politically in the medium of violence results in narrowing the political down to a perceived situation of war. Accordingly, it was expected that this is lexically realised in a shift of registers in which political vocabulary increasingly is collocated with or substituted by an imagery of war. In the case of the B2J, no definite shift of register could be identified: while images of protracted war, prisoners of war, or politico-military units appear at times, the perception of the conflict situation is more often a defensive one in which the state wages a deadly conflict against the left. Accordingly, it is rather the other side that is involved in acts of warfare, but its actions are also frequently described in the registers of hunting. Later papers explicitly distinguish between offensive strategies and notions of revenge, violent retributive strategy, and disturbing the tranquillity of the status quo in a brutally immediate, but not martial
language. The situation in the case of the RZ is more differentiated. Early texts explicitly construct permanent war into an existential condition and the rhetoric becomes increasingly more belligerent in the late 1970s. However, an imagery of armed struggle or armed politics prevails even at the height of the conflict between state and armed formations. The supposedly violent normality is described more in political categories, above all the ‘fascisation’ trope, than in the military register. In the 1980s there is a significant and explicit shift away from the war metaphor which indicates a reassessment of the situation.

While the level of violence increases significantly in the case of the B2J, this does not correspond with a coherent self-description. Armed men and women or simply ordinary people who understand their situation act as the necessity to wage armed struggle supposedly explains itself by the violence of the dominant condition and the long list of dead martyrs. In contrast, the mostly low-level violence of the RZ is rationalised extensively and most of the times in relation to the changing states of the movement. At the same time, perceptions of these interactions change considerably from implied claims to leadership, over a self-reliant armed left, to organic interactions and the idea of violent agenda setting. Accordingly, notions of the role of armed struggle within this relationship shift as well: from confronting ‘the movement’ with the inevitably violent reality of revolutionary struggle to forms of practically providing necessary supplements to integrated protest repertoires. While the participation of RZ militants in highly visible international attacks is not claimed directly, physical assaults are rationalised differently from acts of sabotage: direct attacks are defended stubbornly and counterfactually as self-referential confirmations of the area of struggle or acts of redistributive revolutionary justice. A full militarisation of political discourse did not materialise in either of the cases. While the B2J employs a discourse of self-defence, changing interpretations of armed struggle contain genuinely political aspects to different degrees in the case of the RZ.

With regard to the basic distinction, it was expected that strict differences between enemy and friend are expressed in devaluing and dehumanising registers of crime and hunting, as contrasting syntax and deixis, and abstract categories of otherness which need further concretisations. While most of these anticipations were represented in the analysed texts, there were also significant differences between them. First of all, texts by the B2J regularly actualised a discourse of self-victimisation which grants more agency to the other than anticipated. Equally, the register of hunting referred more often to ‘us’ than to ‘them’,
as ‘we’ are the ones hunted by the system. Wide and sometimes barely rationalised notions of responsibility allow for constructing relations between victim and deed. Self-descriptions focus on class identity and class antagonism, which corresponds with the declared shift towards the marginalised of late capitalism as a reference group in the second larger conceptual paper. In the case of the RZ, abstract and concrete descriptions of the enemy coexist, at times within the same issue of ‘Revolutionary Wrath’. Especially from the end of the 1970s onwards there is a tendency of developing relatively complex narratives of responsibility in which particular mechanisms of domination or exploitation are identified. The target is in the 1980s regularly identified with a critical or weak link in the system, according to an articulated shift in understanding the system as project and tendency. While the system is sometimes described in registers of immunology, organic metaphors are increasingly used from 1978 onwards to describe self and target audience. In sum, antagonistic reinterpretations of social relations defined the discourse of both groups. However, a complete inversion of preferences in which the notion of the enemy becomes the integrating factor of the in-group did not take place.

In terms of conditional programmes for the armed struggle beyond its self-fulfilling reality of determined, relentless, and uncompromising activism in the face of an oppressive totality, the analytical strategy anticipated a focus on complex narratives of legitimisation and de-legitimisation in which appeals to the personal authority of the revolutionary example and the higher truth of history merge with rationalisations, moral evaluation, and mythopoetic narratives that emphasise the cautionary tale. In this regard, the most significant difference to expected realities was that the moral and the cautionary tale often merge into a single narrative in which the threat also reifies the opportunities of struggle for both groupings. In the case of the RZ the degree to which the invoked authorities differed was remarkable. These included references to wider left-wing and sometimes even academic debate. In a similar vein, rationalisation regularly followed a conceptual instead of a purely instrumental logic.

Jargonising language use and overabundance of rhetorical argumentation strategies were prevalent among both B2J and RZ albeit in different ways and in the case of the RZ with changes over time. While the B2J mostly employs a language of immediacy and refers to a radical common sense in repetitive language, theoretical jargon is rather an exception. Early texts of the RZ strike an immediately existentialist chord and become increasingly more
theoretically and conceptually sophisticated. Considering topics and ideological reasoning, the writings of the B2J remain mostly confined to the defensive narrative already enshrined in its denomination, relate to the problems of prisoners and repression, and fail to develop a farther-reaching ideological programme, apart from the ‘Programme’ and ‘With one’s back to the wall?’ which both did not translate into actual activism. In comparison to that the amount of topics addressed and the ideological productivity of the RZ is immense. However, most of the campaigns initiated – from the focus on establishing ‘zero tariff’ by sabotage and communication guerrilla to the refugee campaign in the 1980s – never got over the level of appeals and symbolic relations to the wider movement sphere. In a similar vein, the larger ideological tracts remain mostly limited to scandalising and criticising the status quo or the politics of others. Even when the RZ develop their most elaborate and original theoretical paper ‘What is the patriarchy’ its conclusion is merely negative which indicates a clear limit to the critique of the weapons. In conclusion, the B2J largely failed to develop a programme for the armed struggle beyond its self-affirming narrative. While the RZ also did not establish a fully integrated ideology of their ‘armed politics’, constant conceptual work provided a functional equivalent.

With regard to *managing systemic boundaries* or the ways in which groups discursively construct relations to their wider environment, different lexicalisations of self and other were expected to correlate with differences in addressing the audience and organisational conceptions. In a way, both groups continue the New Left’s search for a revolutionary subject throughout their existence, increasingly turn away from New Left audiences in this context, mirror sub-cultural language practices, and do not use openly hierarchical terminology as expected. Even the B2J, whose activism and conditional programme is mostly inwardly directed, goes to considerable length in appeals to a wider constituency. At times, texts employ accessible language and develop a narrative that tries to reach out to disseminate a message beyond the facticity of the violent act. In its dealings with the nearer constituency, harsh and critical tones that demand compliance dominate. Organisational concepts remain relatively vague and integrate a claim to factual avant-gardism with the idea of representing a movement.

By contrast, the RZ change their articulated conception of the revolutionary subject according to developments within the protest sphere from undogmatic left and transnational ‘mass worker’ to different sectoral movements and the ‘autonomist’ scene.
They also make considerable efforts to reach out to these constituencies, but address them mostly by criticising and lecturing about the wrong directions of their respective politics. In different contexts, papers suggest the same alternative or addition time and again: clandestine struggle. Ways in which relations of the Cells’ to constituencies are imagined change over time: from factual avant-garde, to militant constituent and the idea of radical agenda setting. Throughout the activist phase, internal coherency remains a constant negotiation process. Accordingly, forms of defining relations between groups and their targeted reference groups did not clearly follow one of the previously established ideal types ‘armed avant-gardism’ or ‘mass militancy’. Rather, both oscillated between different, partly contradictory organisational conceptions and did not cease the search for a historical subject.

Structural couplings or ways to reach beyond the immediate radical sub-culture were associated with discourse practices and dissemination strategies. Both groups put considerable effort in branding and recognisability; both show at times relatively high levels of professionalism in editorial style and forms of circulating texts. The frequency of writings is more irregular among the B2J with a large gap between 1972 and 1974; the texts also show a high degree of content-related variation. Short vindictive attack communiqués and some larger, more carefully crafted documents coexist. While dissemination practices indicate a considerable support base, discursive relations to the wider audience also often consist in mutual animosities, especially with regard to the Schmücker affair. While dissemination and discourse practices of the RZ change to quite some degree over time, they show considerably similar characteristics. However, sometimes writings from the underground trigger discussions beyond the mere critique of the armed faction and are recognised as genuine contributions to radical debates. Despite constant complaints of not being recognised within alternative or subcultural media, texts regularly are reprinted in above-ground publications and reach their readership. A particular element of structural couplings in RZ writings is the dissemination of detailed practical manuals; the surge in low-level violence in the first half of the 1980s indicates that it had some impact. Ultimately, attempts at establishing structural couplings were more varied than anticipated: they did neither materialise in stable discursive links nor clear trends of total encapsulation.

Finally, the capacity for systemic learning and cognitive reaction were expected to be reflected in the ways in which failures and frustrated expectations are uttered, in the
disappearance of established tropes, and in argumentative consistencies. The short history of the B2J did not reveal much in this regard: voiced auto-critique mostly reassures previously held convictions by invoking the semblance of critical reflection. In the case of the RZ, significant core concepts were frequently redefined. Most prominently, the definition of imperialism is subject to almost permanent revisions from 1978 until the last theoretical paper in 1989; furthermore, the theorem of a ‘New Fascism’, which conceptually dominated the 1970s, was explicitly abandoned in the early 1980s. In a similar vein, auto-criticism was a prominent feature of texts; especially relations to imagined reference groups and the militant principles of self-explanatory activism were regularly addressed. With regard to changing revolutionary subjects, the self-critical discussion often resembled mere ritual: detailed criticism resulted in the reaffirmation of old concepts in slightly altered forms. By contrast, the Cells’ principles of activism represented an integral part of their self-understanding and organisational mythology. When contradictions between militant myths and reality started to be voiced openly, the foundational consensus became precarious and the RZ factually disintegrated. Accordingly, cognitive limitations represent a function of organisational longevity. Furthermore, there is a clear limit as to how much self-critique antagonistic collective identities are able to tolerate.

In sum, not all of the conceptual dimensions generated equally unambiguous findings. The effects of violence on communication were less distinct than expected, antagonistic relations still leave room for negotiating identities, and ideologies do not have to develop rigid reinterpretations of socio-political realities to integrate revolutionary identities. However, some form of interpretative frame or political project was crucial for maintaining an internally credible semantics of armed struggle. Ways of managing systemic boundaries and establishing structural couplings were closer interrelated than conceptualised and follow patterns of cognitive reassessment and normative insistence at the same time. While the conceptual framework as such was crucial for focusing on the complex processes of negotiating revolutionary identities in non-revolutionary times, conditional programmes and systemic learning provided the most distinctive findings.
7.3. Critique of the applied method and ways forward

The empirical findings indicate an interrelation between the ways in which discourse communities of clandestine political violence reproduce their collective identities despite the fact that revolutionary aspirations fail to materialise and their longevity. In the case of the B2J, the absence of a political project beyond the focus on prisoners and self-defence correlates with a short organisational lifespan. By contrast, the RZ could maintain a constant process of delimitation to different social environments and negotiation of ideological concepts over a relatively long time without risking the fundamental consensus in spite of the absence of a clearly established ideology. However, relations between a weakly defined goal of the struggle and short existence on the one hand, and permanent attempts at redefining the project and long lifespan, on the other hand, cannot establish strong causal claims.

First of all, the explorative comparison of two cases does not allow for a large level of generalisability. Additional empirical research within a similar framework, but on a different set of cases is required to increase the significance of findings. Secondly, the thesis’ conceptual approach has to be compared to different explanatory models to assess its validity, which focus more on the material realities of political violence. In this regard, alternative explanations for the B2Js short lifespan could include the particular territorial focus, the fundamental organisational catastrophe after a short period, and the limited group size. Preliminary counterarguments include that the RZ were able to cope with their share of organisational disaster while their Berlin branch followed a very similar approach to the original B2J concept of low-level counter-power more successfully. Furthermore, former B2J militants recount that recruitment was a lesser problem during regrouping attempts than the lack of political perspective.

More importantly, however, the thesis’ approach also has to be criticised immanently to assess whether additional research within its framework is promising. In this regard there are two main points to make. First of all, the empirical analysis has highlighted that effects of the initial decision by groups to use violence for political ends were still conceptualised in under-complex and too schematic ways in the thesis’ theoretical chapter. Especially in the case of the RZ, violence did not result in a clear-cut trend towards militarisation and political reductionism. While these trends became prevalent for some time during the
confrontational atmosphere of the 1970s, they were later countered deliberately in attempts to identify new areas of activism and different approaches to the use of militant means. Although these attempts were not successful in the long run, the group could establish itself for some time within a different constituency and in a different role: as a remnant of earlier cycles of activism, which provided a manifest link to recent conflict history. It is beyond the scope of this thesis and the empirical material analysed to establish a clear connection between the surge in low-level political violence in the early 1980s and the persistent presence of the RZ; however, there are some indications that both phenomena have at least affective affinities. This suggests that the organisational effects of violence have to be reconsidered to refine the proposed theoretical framework. Beyond that, one of the key assumptions of terrorism studies literature might require considerable reassessment, namely that strong and clearly defined long-term effects on organisational realities follow from violent action repertoires including pathological group dynamics and increasing encapsulation. The thesis empirical findings suggest that discourses of violence are more complex than this proposition suggests. In this regard, its Luhmannian perspective provides a promising starting point which allows for further reconceptualizations.

Secondly, not all of the analytical dimensions conceptualised were either as clear-cut or as meaningful as expected. Especially the interrelations between managing systemic boundaries and efforts to reach beyond the already convinced were more closely than anticipated. Furthermore, forms of drawing the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ were less focused on the antagonistic binary than the thesis’ conceptual framework suggested. More precisely, identification did not exclusively follow a pattern of negative delimitation from the enemy, but left room for a positive notion of the in-group; the processes of positive identification were also more differentiated than anticipated. This suggests that the conceptual distinctions of the framework have to be reassessed to focus more closely on the interrelations between the different analytical dimensions. Beyond the thesis’ own theoretical approach, this implies that the concept of radical subcultures could also benefit from reassessment to develop a more complex understanding of the relations of groups to their immediate environments. In this regard, the thesis’ exploratory analysis also points towards the advantages of reflexive theory building.

To conclude, this thesis’ conceptually informed close reading of papers of two groups which are usually on the margins of terrorism studies not only contributes to reassessing
these particular cases, especially with regard to the development of the RZ in the 1980s. There are strong indications that this phase does not just represent a prolonged aftereffect of previous experiences of clandestine political violence. Future research on cases in different socio-political contexts can establish whether this is just an outlier from the common analytical narrative of inevitable permanent decline of terrorist groups or whether its foundations have to be reassessed. Furthermore, the theoretically grounded analysis also casts doubt on whether a widely shared interpretation of ‘terrorist literature’ is as generalizable as often argued. To some degree, both case studies suggest that the language of political violence does not always and necessarily descend into a mere jargon of semantically one-dimensional, self-affirmative ideological rhetoric. At times, both groups were actively engaged in political communication and not just in inwards-directed propaganda to the already convinced. On the basis of its explorative comparison, the thesis could not verify the assumption of a sub-language of political violence, but rather encountered a highly self-referential and intransigent form of arguing with political violence. Finally, this indicates that the impact of antiterrorist policies on groups and campaigns might be much more limited than the war-analogy suggests. The discursive reconstruction of anti-systemic identities is complex, rests on a variety of interrelated factors, and establishes remarkably stable interpretations of social realities. The most prudent responses to terrorism might well be those that manage not to foster its discourse – and that is already quite a task.
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