

# **Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of the participation of the Left in government and its actuality for today**

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# The Structure of the Presentation

- 1. The five main objections toward the participation of the Left in a “bourgeois government” of Rosa Luxemburg**
- 2. The difficulties to prove the contrary**
- 3. The challenges by the current crisis**
- 4. Conclusions**



# I. The five main objections toward the participation of the Left in a “bourgeois government” of Rosa Luxemburg



1. Capitalism cannot be changed in its essence but only abolished

2. only a revolution can solve the basic problems

3. the state is only the instrument of rule of the economically ruling class

4. a participation in a government weakens the Left

5. the Left by its governmental participation only makes the continuation of right-wing policy possible

## II. The difficulties to prove the contrary

Theory and practice of socialism as a process of solidary transformation

1. The current society is a battlefield of dominant capitalist tendencies and solidary countertendencies

2. A shift of the balance between these tendencies overcoming the dominance of capitalist accumulation is possible

3. The state is a battle ground of very different forces (Poulantzas)

4. An effective participation in government depends to a high degree on the strenghts of the broader Left (hegemony)

5. The Left should join a government only if it is prepared and able to make a real and lasting difference

# III. Challenges by the current crisis

# 1. Challenge

- To be able to act with regard to different contradictory alternatives and to form different alliances with regard to these alternatives



# Crisis of reproduction and integration of financial-market capitalism and the constitution of social alternatives

## **De-civilised Capitalism**

*Goals:* Authoritarian rule of economic and political reaction

*Means:* Unveiled “terror of the economy” and strong militarist and police control, right-wing populism and extremism, mafia structures

*Power block:* authoritarian circles of elites in economics, politics and the military, populistically mobilized parts of the population

## **Authoritarian neoliberal articulation of financial-market capitalism**

*Goals:* Strengthening of offer power of big capital, redistribution to the top

*Means:* social deregulation, liberalization of world markets, adjustment to world market constraints

*Power block:* Transnational enterprises, big actors on international financial markets, conservative elites, economic-cultural upper-classes; leadership of the USA

## **Social democratic multilateral articulation of financial-market capitalism**

*Goal:* Growth and social partial reconciliation

*Means:* Adjustment to world market constraints, activating social state, competitive state, promotion of medium-sized companies

*Power block:* Involvement of broad middle-class strata into the power block of neoliberalism and functional integration of a part of the under-classes (“working poor”)

## **Emancipative reform alternatives**

*Goal:* social-ecological sustainability, justice, emancipation, democratization

*Means:* participative democracy, socially, ecologically and democratically controlled mixed economy

*Power block:* civil society, democratic actors of the social middle-strata and socially disadvantaged strata

# Strategies of the ruling elites

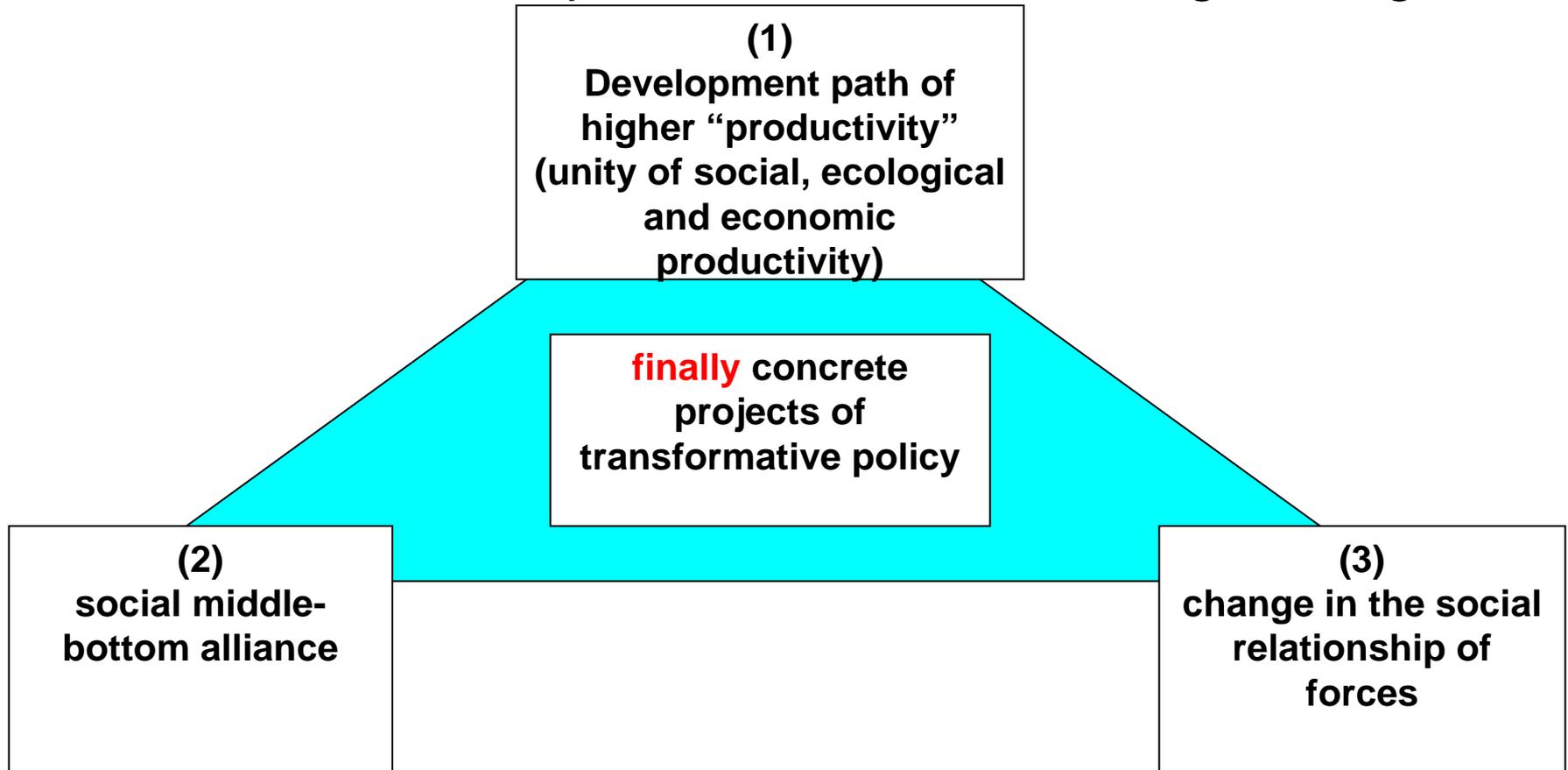


1. A new state interventionism
2. The Regulation of the Financial Markets and the Fight over a New Bretton Woods
3. A Public New Deal
4. A Green New Deal
5. Millennium Goals and Struggle for a more Just World Order
6. The emergence of an entire range of variations and the competition of post-neoliberal developmental paths
7. A New Authoritarianism

# 2. Challenge



The Left has to work as a counter-hegemonic transformative force to use this open situation as a chance. This implies to deal with a strategic triangel.



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# Higher productivity (1)

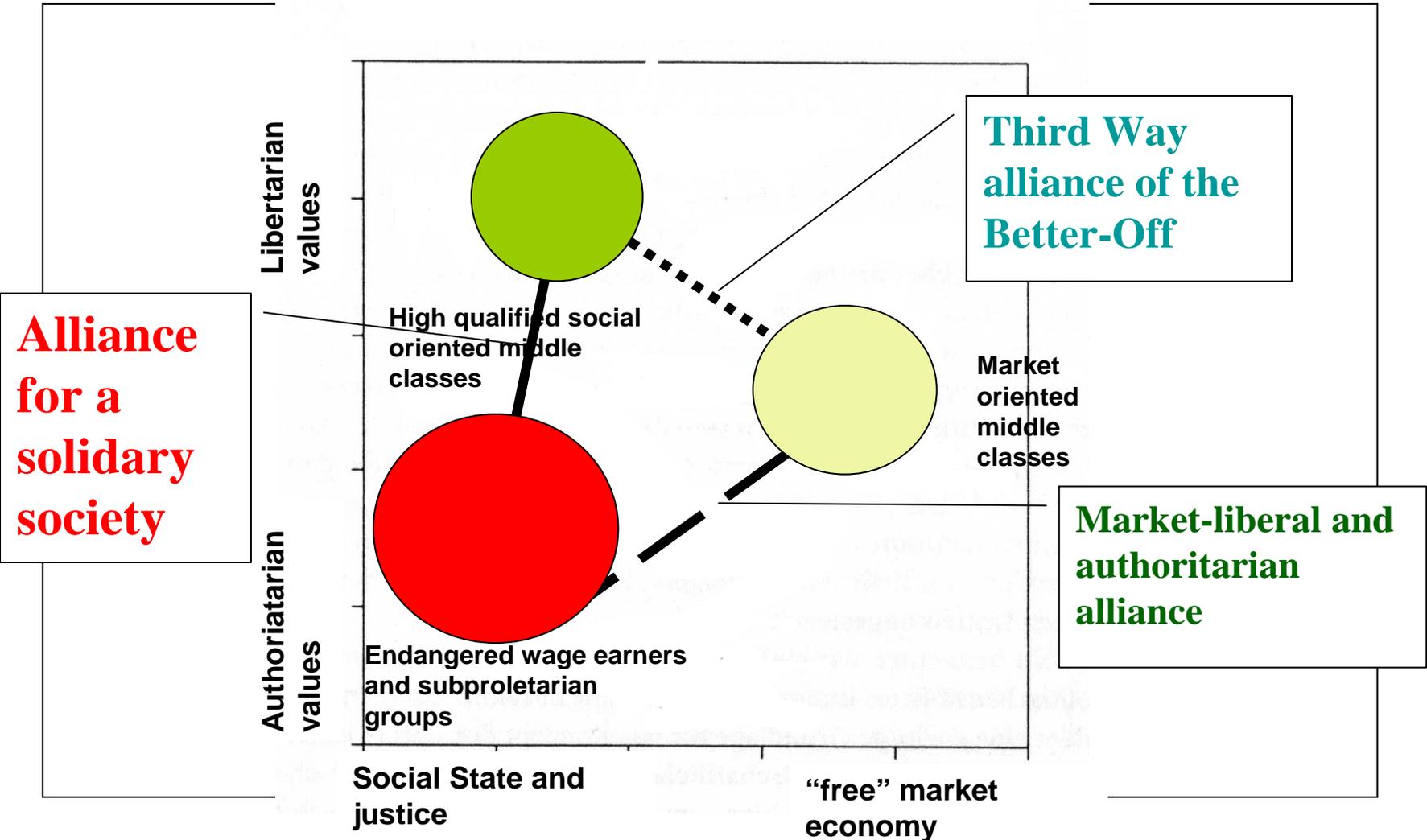
- “A class formation”, thus Wolfgang Fritz Haug in the *Historical Critical Dictionary of Marxism* with reference to Antonio Gramsci, “is ‘historically progressive’ thanks to its historical ‘productivity’, that means the expansionism of concrete political and economic regimes thanks to which it ‘drives forward the whole society, by not only fulfilling existential needs but by enlarging the number of its leaders by a continuous appropriation of new industrial and productive spheres of action’ and by thus nourishing the convincing expectations of individual ‘life perspectives

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## Higher productivity (2)

- „The path followed by several ‚progressive‘ governments [in Latin America] suggests that the reconstitution of the Latin American Left is no longer defined by radical changes in institutional politics and macroeconomic policies, but by the implementation of social reforms... Despite making a positive difference in the lives of the citizens affected by these policies, they do not add up to a comprehensive alternative model to neo-liberalism.” César Rodríguez-Garavito; Patrick Barrett; Daniel Chavez 2008

# Different social-cultural alliances



# Changes in the relation of power reducing (and overcoming) the dominance ...

- of capital accumulation over democracy
- of property owners over wage earners and subproletarian groups
- of the private over the public
- the elites over the broader masses
- of the North over the South

# The proof of the pudding is the eating: concrete projects of change

- Initial projects mediate between reform and revolution as well as between protest and design by inducing lasting shifts of power constellations and drawing a broad re-grouping and re-definition of actors in society in their wake.
- Initial projects must not only be designed for success but they must also make people capable of dealing with success.
- Initial projects mediate between locality, regionalism and globalism.
- Initial projects mediate the totality of way of life, cultural and historical identity.
- Initial project are processes of conscious social learning in the unity of change and self-transformation.

# Antagonistic concrete projects in the crisis: The German model of a wreckage bonus (2500 Euro) vs. a public transport for free

## Public transport:

Social costs are about 20 to 50 % of private transport

Especially high benefits for the lower classes and the marginalized

High reduction of the use of space

CO2-emission is about 10-20 %

Higher individual mobility

Democratic participation and public spaces





# Integrative School vs. the German class educational system

## Integrative school

- One school for all until the 10th class
- Individual support and solidary learning (social competence)
- School as a place for the whole day and with a lot of choices
- No Stay down and a high degree of collective project work instead of the mere interplay between teachers and pupils

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# Conclusion: Participation in government – both a principal question and a concrete problem in concrete circumstances

- Left governments often emerge in cases of a crisis and emergency
- The conditions are formed by neoliberalism and not easily to overcome
- Often the conditions for an effective participation in government must be formed ex post and have to be reproduced
- One of the most difficult questions is to develop the Left in government as a coherent part of a broader Left

# rls Three options

Man can act in three different ways:

Firstly, by analyzing, this is the most honored way,

Secondly, by imitation, this is the easiest way, and

Thirdly by experiences, this is the most bitter way.



Confucius