The Anonymous movement in the context of liberalism and socialism

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to analyze the political worldviews of the Anonymous movement and the role that socialism and liberalism play in it. The paper seeks to analyse the worldviews represented in public video announcements posted by Anonymous activists on the Internet. The sample consists of 67 videos. With the help of political philosophy, differences between liberal and socialist worldviews are outlined. The results of the empirical study show that liberalism and socialism are both articulated within Anonymous in complex ways so that these two worldviews co-exist, complement each other, and also conflict to certain degrees.

1. Introduction

The wider public has gained knowledge of Anonymous especially because of the latter's support of WikiLeaks in December 2010. Distributed denial of server (DDoS) attacks were used for shutting down the websites of PayPal, PostFinance, Visa, Mastercard, and the Bank of America that disabled donation possibilities to WikiLeaks.

The task of this paper is to analyse the political worldviews of Anonymous and the role of socialism and liberalism in it. Anonymous describes its own political views as fluid and heterogeneous:

> Anonymous is not a political current, nor is it based on a political current. Some may say that it's anarchism, liberalism, communism, libertarianism, etc. – others say it's nothing but a bunch of twelve-year olds from 4chan having fun on the Internet. Anonymous is none of those – yet it encompasses elements of all these things and many, many more[1].

Although Anonymous is pluralistic, we can see it as a collective, in which certain political worldviews co-exist, complement, and/or contradict each other, and are represented to varying degrees at different times. This paper presents an analysis of the worldviews represented in public video announcements posted by Anonymous activists on the Internet.

The paper analyses both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of Anonymous worldviews and therefore tries to answer two specific research questions:

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[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cqP8qqqfI0 (accessed on September 29, 2013).

- To what degree are there elements of liberal ideology and a socialist worldview in Anonymous' public discourse?

- How are elements of liberalism and socialism expressed in Anonymous' public discourse?

Anonymous has like the Occupy movement emerged in a political situation of global crisis that resulted in new articulations of discontent (Fuchs 2014a). The crisis that started in 2008 is on the one hand an economic crisis of capitalism and on the other hand a crisis of the state and of neoliberal ideology. The economic, political and ideological levels of the crisis are articulated with each other. The crisis has questioned the dominance of neoliberalism and is therefore also a crisis of the contemporary form of liberalism. The Occupy movement can be described as a new socialist and working class movement that aims at reclaiming the commons that are produced by the collective worker of all citizens and that have been privatized by neoliberal class politics that benefit corporations and the rich (Fuchs 2014a).

Although Occupy is by many perceived as being made up of what non-Marxist, liberal theories of class describe as middle-class, the social composition analysed in the Occupy General Survey (N=5074) shows that more than half of the respondents were students, irregularly or informally employed or unemployed and only 31.6% had a full-time job. 59.3% of the respondents (N=3341) had a household income below the median income. The question what kind of movement Anonymous is and how it relates to liberalism and socialism matters especially in this conjuncture that is a crisis of liberalism that poses potentials for a new socialism. The question if Anonymous is a movement that is associated with left-wing socialist values, liberal values or a hybrid mixture is therefore relevant for both activists, who are looking for support of their activities, and social movement researchers (Fuchs 2014a).

I first ask what kind of movement Anonymous is (section 2), describe differences between liberalism and socialism in general and in Internet politics (section 3), introduce the employed research method (section 4), present and interpret the main results (sections 5, 6), and draw some conclusions (section 6).

2. What kind of social movement is Anonymous?

Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani define social movements as "(1) informal networks, based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest" (della Porta and Diani 1999: 16). Diani in another definition says social movements are "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities" (Diani 1992: 13). Based on these and other definitions, one can identify important aspects of social movements (Fuchs 2006):

- societal problems;

- the negation of dominant values, institutions, and structures;

- dissatisfaction;

- adversaries;

- shared collective identities;

- orientation toward social change;

- triggers of protest, contagion effects;

- mobilization, protest practices and collective action;

- protest methods;

- and extra-parliamentary politics.

A specific characteristic of Anonymous is that it is at the same time social movement and anti-movement; it is collective political action based on a shared identification with some basic values (such civil liberties and freedom of the Internet) that results in protest practices online and offline against adversaries, and at the same time for many of those engaging on Anonymous platforms individual play and entertainment. For most of the time, Anonymous exists "for the lulz", as fun for the users, but from time to time – and in the past years the frequency has increased – individual action turns into collective political action. Many people joining Anonymous' political actions share some basic political values that have been expressed in the text "5 Principles: An Anonymous Manifesto"[2]. These values include struggle for an "open, fair, transparent, accountable and just society", in which information is "unrestricted and uncensored", the upholding of citizens' "rights and liberties". Also, there is a guarantee of the "privacy of citizens" so that "citizens shall not be the target of any undue surveillance".

Anonymous says that it is based on three principles:

1) The media should not be attacked;

2) critical infrastructure should not be attacked; and

3) one should work for justice and freedom[3].

Activists have their own interpretations of these basic values of freedom and justice. The overall principles are very loose, unlike a political party's programme that is much more formalized. This looseness is also characteristic of social movements, but Anonymous differs from them by keeping a high level of anonymity of its activists and practices.

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[2] http://anonnews.org/press/item/199/ (accessed on September 29, 2013).

[3] http://occupywallst.org/article/anonymous-joins-occupywallstreet/ (accessed on September 29, 2013).

The chosen protest methods are unconventional and take place online (hacking websites, publishing personal data, DDoS) and/or offline (street protests). Anonymous like other social movements has different "logics of action" (della Porta and Diani 2006: 192) that can be combined in different ways. The first logic requires temporal synchronicity but there are distributed actions conducted over the Internet from a spatial distance. It is a logic of collective online action at a distance. The second logic of protest action is coordinated and planned online but makes use of temporal and spatial co-presence. Traditional social movements (just like political parties) tend to encourage and be based on personal relations, face-to-face meetings, discussions, and actions. In contrast, anybody who shares some basic values can declare an action to be part of Anonymous. In conventional social movements, campaigns are often focused on strategic adversaries. The highly decentralized and informal character of Anonymous in contrast often results in multiple independent and parallel campaigns that can become networked and coordinated but can also exist independently.

Anonymous activists often do not know each other and have not met but act in concert as a collective. Anonymous is easier to join and leave than other movements. According to Anonymous, "Anonymous is everyone. Anonymous is no one. Anonymous exists as an idea. You can also be Anonymous. Becoming Anonymous is simple. Just take action"[4]. So one specific quality of Anonymous is that it has no clearly defined membership – anybody can join it. Anonymous therefore defines itself as open idea:

> Now first and foremost, it is important to realize that ANONYMOUS – in fact – does not exist. It is just an idea – an internet meme – that can be appropriated by anyone, anytime to rally for a common cause that's in the benefit of humankind. […] This means anyone can launch a new ideological message or campaign under the banner of ANONYMOUS. Anyone can take up a leading role in the spreading of the ANON-consciousness. […] ANYONE anywhere can initiate an Anonymous operation, action, or group – and so long as they adhere to these 3 basic principles they are as much Anonymous as anyone. EVERYONE is Anonymous[5].

At the same time, this high level of informality can also result in a lack of trust, stability, and cohesion and can result in problems once the movement faces state repression or other problems.

Is Anonymous is a distributed intelligence that makes use of the wisdom of the crowd (Surowiecki 2005)? Anonymous on the one hand is a distributed and networked form of intelligence and collective action. On the other hand there are hubs of knowledge and action in this network. There seem to be, just like in most organisations that are embedded into modern society, contradictions of

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[4] http://anonnews.org/press/item/199/ (accessed on September 29, 2013).

[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cqP8qqqfI0 (accessed on September 29, 2013).

power. There are power asymmetries immanent in modern society that allow powerful organisations such as state institutions (the FBI in the case of Anonymous) to monitor and try to control networked structures.

One should not be mistaken: although everyone can join, Anonymous is not a pure leaderless, decentralized network. There are core activists with specific technical skills, media skills, and organisational skills who carry out the core of hacking activities (Olson 2012). According to Parmy Olson (2012), they often meet in secret IRC channels, in which they plan campaigns. Olson (2012: 9) argues that in many actions, there were several hundred activists, but a group of about ten who "managed most of the decisions". Olson (2012: 74f, 113-122) argues that in many DDoS attacks carried out by Anonymous, only a minor share of the participating computers was made up by the thousands of activists that simultaneously used the LOIC or other software tools (such as Gigaloader, JMeter), but that rather around 90% (e.g. in the attack on PayPal.com) of the "firepower" came from botnets, which are large networks of ten or hundred thousands of "zombie" computers that are controlled by single activists (such as Civil and Switch) with the help of malware that was injected into the computers of users without their knowledge in the form of downloads or viruses so that temporary remote control over these computers is enabled. Anonymous is a rhizomatic network of distributed activists (Coleman 2011), but this network is neither hierarchyless nor without internal conflicts and power structures. There are activists that have strategic skills and roles and form hubs in the activist network.

The employment of symbolic means of expression is particularly important for Anonymous. When Anonymous activists join or organise street protests, they wear Guy Fawkes masks. Guy Fawkes was involved in the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, in which activists tried to bomb the British House of Lords. The Fawkes mask became popular in Alan Moore's comic "V for Vendetta", in which the revolutionary V struggles against a fascist regime. The use of the masks is a media strategy itself because it aims at directing the media and the public's attention on Anonymous. Given the importance of symbolic expression for Anonymous as well as videos that are created in a crafty manner and often an expression of artistic creativity are important means of expression for Anonymous. They contain political messages, announcements of campaigns, statements about broader goals, etc., and are spread on user-generated content platforms like YouTube or Vimeo.

For example, Project Chanology against Scientology started with the YouTube video "Message to Scientology" (Coleman 2012). An IRC channel called #press was set up, in which activists co-ordinated the production of the video and press releases (Olson 2012: 70-72). The video was based on a leaked Scientology video that featured Tom Cruise and Scientology tried to (unsuccessfully) stop its spread (Norton 2012). Videos have had a special relevance for Anonymous, which is the reason why specific methodological attention is given to such content in this paper. The use of video platforms and other social media attracts "media attention while simultaneously binding together and rejuvenating" the

movement's spirit (Coleman 2012). Videos and social media are just like the Fawkes masks and a peculiar and strange kind of humour characteristic for Anonymous' own culture (Norton 2012).

Anonymous makes use of principles of video activism in a specific way:

- *Complementarity*: The videos are part of larger campaigns (Gregory 2012) and complement the politics of hacktivism. The videos are a means, by which Anonymous communicates the meaning of its hacktivism to the public.

- *Digital swarming and spreadability*: Anonymous' videos tend to be uploaded to multiple spaces and copied so that they are manifestations of the digital swarming (Chanan 2011) and spreadable media character (Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013) of political videos on the Internet.

- *Online video declarations and online video mobilizations*: Video activism is often participant reportage shot by activist citizen journalists who upload footage that documents what happened at certain protests to the Internet. Anonymous' videos are qualitatively different from participant reportage: because the activists want to stay completely anonymous, they do not show images of themselves or other Anonymous activists. They use computer voices and masks in order not to reveal their identities. The videos serve the purpose of either explaining why a certain hack attack was undertaken or mobilizing supporters to join protests. The first kind of video resembles anonymous declarations of militant groups that explain their actions and that have due to the kind of activism just like in the case of Anonymous always been anonymous. Traditionally such declarations have been distributed in printed form, e.g. as letters to newspapers, whereas Anonymous makes use of the Internet. The genres of video activism that Anonymous uses could therefore be described as online video declaration on the one hand and online video mobilization on the other hand.

- *Circumventing mainstream media*: YouTube and other online video platforms are means of communication that activists use for attempting to circumvent the lack of representation in mainstream media (Jenkins 2009). Anonymous just like other social movements tries to spread political content to the public by making use of these video channels because it does not control mainstream channels.

- *Digital arts and craft*: Participant video reportage is often de-professionalized, technologically simple, lo-fi and deliberately amateurish because it is footage taken in the midst of action. Examples are the videos that documented the police violence against Rodney King or the Occupy movement. Anonymous' videos in contrast are often small artworks, highly creative and artistic, an artistic manifestation of what can be termed "digital craft work" (Gauntlett 2011: 88)

According to Diani (1992), social movements have collective identities. Group identities are in many social movements formed by personal encounters of activists. Anonymous groups and activists hardly know and meet each other,

they remain anonymous to the public and to other activities. Nonetheless Anonymous is able to act politically. Anonymous' identity is mainly formed by collective action and communication at a distance, joint enemies and collective symbols, but without knowledge of the personal identities of single activists.

Social movements have been characterized as networks of activists (della Porta and Diani 2006, Diani 1992, Diani and McAdam 2003). Anonymous makes use of the Internet as means of communication and protest. But single groups that call themselves Anonymous may not at all be connected to each other. They nonetheless operate under the same name and share basic goals. They are in this respect more like semiotic guerrilla movements that multiply and spread, but remain independent from each other and do not form a network. Anonymous is at the same time a network and anti-network.

Anonymous is a liquid social movement. It expresses the liquefaction of society (Bauman 2000/2012) at the level of social movements. It more than other movements permanently transgresses the boundaries between individual and collective action, online and offline, movement and non-movement, networking and autonomy, spatial distance and presence, anonymity and knowledge, play and protest work, entertainment/fun and politics, presence and absence, appearance and disappearance, the mundane and the uncommon, normality and absurdity, the real and the symbolic, online and offline action, conventional and unconventional behaviour.

3. Liberalism and socialism

The modern use of the term "liberal" goes back to the 18th and 19th century (Williams 1983: 180). Reviewing classical and contemporary concepts of liberalism, Gaus and Courtland (2011) in an encyclopaedic article about liberalism argue that a common characteristic is that "liberals accord liberty primacy as a political value".

John Locke (1690), the founder of classical liberalism, argued that civil liberties and private property are natural laws and rights of human beings. David Hume (1739) made private property a central element of liberal theory, arguing that justice and private property require each other mutually in any society. John Stuart Mill (1859) derived from the assumption of human autonomy the liberties of conscience, thought, feeling, opinion, sentiment, expression, discussion, publication, tastes, pursuits and association. He also propagated an individualism that gives humans the right to pursue their own good in their own way.

Mill (1848) contrasted a system of private property to a socialist/communist system of collective ownership. He argued that communism would result in "uniformity of thoughts, feelings, and actions". Mill (1848) acknowledged that capitalism creates inequality and argued that freedom is preferable to equality. Based on the liberal principles of liberty, individualism and private property, Adam Smith (1759/1790) formulated the doctrine that the rich whom he considered to be naturally selfish "are led by an invisible hand to [...] advance

the interest of the society" (p. 165). He considered private property as fundamental human right and that one of the "most sacred laws of justice" is to "guard his property and possessions" (p. 75).

It becomes evident from this discussion that individual civil liberties are in liberal ideology connected to an individual right of private property that stands above considerations of socio-economic equality, which is not considered as a fundamental right. Socialism is a worldview that contests liberalism's focus on private property as individual right.

Raymond Williams (1983: 287) traces the earliest use of the term "socialist" in English language to 1826. Socialists, in contrast to liberals, think that "the rewards of production [...] are due to society as a whole, and to its members equally, rather than to particular individuals" (Barker 1991: 485). In the realm of property and labour, "means of production are commonly possessed" in a socialist society (Barker 1991: 485). Important values in socialist thought include equality, communal and co-operative production, workers' control of production/self-managed companies (Barker 1991), and socio-political solidarity (Buzby 2010). Socialism maintains that the source of human value is human creativity and co-operation liberated from class power (Thompson 1959).

The notion of socialism is not limited to the economic realm, although the economy is seen as an important foundation of society. Participatory democracy, the political dimension of socialism, involves the "democratisation of authority structures" (Pateman 1970: 35) in all decision-making systems, such as government, the work place, the family, education, housing (Held 2006, Pateman 1970).

Table 1 summarizes some main differences between liberalism and socialism. Freedom is the dominant value in liberal thinking and equality the dominant value in socialist thinking. This does however not mean that these values are not present in both worldviews; the respective value is rather subsumed by the dominant value and takes on another meaning and role in the worldview, in which it is not dominant (Hall 1986). Equality in liberalism means the equal rights and opportunities of all regarding individual freedom (Hayek 1960: 510, 96). For Marx (1857/58: 159, 833; 1867: 171; 1894: 373), a socialist society is based on communal property of the means of economic production. At the same time, freedom is not absent from this vision but takes on the meaning a specific meaning: the freedom to determine one's own activities under conditions of high productivity, high levels of disposable time and well-rounded individuality (Marx 1857/58: 541, 706; 1867: 557; 1894: 958f). For Marx, a socialist society is one in which all people together own and control the economy, a society based on social-economic equality. Freedom is subsumed under this value and does not mean, as in liberal thinking, the individual freedom of ownership, but rather the development of rounded individuals and the maximization of free time under the conditions of socio-economic equality, post-scarcity, and high productivity.

	Liberalism	**Socialism**
Basic value	Freedom	Equality
View of society	Individualism	Sociality, solidarity
Economy	Private property	Collective ownership
Source of wealth	Capital	Co-operation of creative human beings freed from exploitation
State and politics	Private affairs are not controlled by the state, representative democracy	Participatory democracy
Culture	Plurality of interests and worldviews	Universal rights and interests
Private life	Separation of the private sphere from the public sphere	The private realm as distinct realm that allows individuality, but is not separated from, but connected to politics and public life
Political struggle against:	Regulating state	Capital interests, exploitation, capitalist state, ideology

Table 1: Differences between liberalism and socialism

Socialism and liberalism differ in their basic values, although specific notions of freedom and equality can be found in both. Liberalism is based on the idea of individual freedom, whereas the idea of equal opportunity is subsumed under this value. (Hall 1986: 41; Williams 1983: 181). Socialism is based on the idea of socio-economic equality, whereas the idea of free time and free activity is subsumed under this value (Williams 1983: 287).

Libertarianism is a political worldview that, on an abstract level, "holds that agents are, at least initially, *full self-owners*" (Vallentyne 2010). Raymond Williams (1983: 180f) notes the ambiguous meaning of the term, indicating that the meaning of the notion "libertarian" is sometimes close to the term "liberal", but has in the 20th century also acquired the meaning of "libertarian socialism" that is not a form of liberalism, but a type of socialism. Different forms of libertarianism interpret self-ownership in different ways. This circumstance has resulted in the existence of both right- and left-wing forms of libertarianism.

> Right-libertarianism holds that typically such resources may be appropriated by the first person who discovers them, mixes her labor with them, or merely claims them—without the consent of others, and with little or no payment to them. [...]

> *Radical right libertarianism* [...] holds that that there are no fair share
> constraints on use or appropriation. Agents may destroy whatever natural
> resources they want (as long as they violate no one's self-ownership) and they
> have the power to appropriate whatever natural resources they first claim
> (Vallentyne 2010).

So right-wing libertarianism interprets self-ownership as meaning the freedom
of the individual to own as much property as s/he wants and chooses to. "Left-
libertarianism, by contrast, holds that unappropriated natural resources belong
to everyone in some egalitarian manner. [...] It holds that natural resources
initially belong to everyone in some egalitarian manner" (Vallentyne 2010).

Self-ownership is not interpreted individualistically, but rather as collective
characteristic of humans. Right-wing libertarianism is close to classical
liberalism and contemporary neoliberalism, left-wing libertarianism to social
anarchism. Libertarianism shows that political worldviews are contradictory,
overlapping, and ambivalent. No "ideology is ever wholly logical or consistent.
All the great organic ideologies bring together discordant elements and have to
struggle to make contradictory ideas fit the scheme" (Hall 1986: 36).

Libertarianism is an ambiguous worldview cutting across the distinction
between liberalism and socialism displayed in Table 1. There are forms that are
more associated with liberalism and forms more associated with socialism.
Freedom is a central value in both, but is either interpreted as an individualistic
or collectivistic value. This distinction has also been reflected in anarchist
thought. Anarchists argue that domination opposes human interests and that all
aspects of society should not be ruled by authorities, but can be voluntarily
organized based on self-organization, self-management, self-government,
bottom-up decision making, grassroots democracy, decentralized networks, free
agreements, and free associations. Freedom from domination is a central value
of anarchism. This freedom is interpreted differently in individual and
social/collective anarchism. The first form has e.g. been represented by Max
Stirner, who stressed the necessity of the abolition of social and moral bonds
and the creation of an association of egoists. Individualist anarchism

> emphasizes individual liberty, the sovereignty of the individual, the importance of
> private property or possession, and the iniquity of all monopolies. It may be seen
> as liberalism taken to an extreme conclusion. 'Anarcho-capitalism' is a
> contemporary variant of this school (Ostergaard 1991: 21).

Social anarchism, as e.g. represented by the thought of Mikhail Bakunin, Peter
Kropotkin, Rudolf Rocker, or Murray Bookchin, holds in contrast that the
means of production and the structures of decision should be controlled in
collective processes of self-organization by communes that freely associate
themselves in federations. Socialist anarchism "rejects private property along
with the state as a major source of social inequality. Insisting on social equality

as a necessary condition for the maximum individual liberty of all, its ideal may be characterized as 'individuality in community'. It represents a fusion of liberalism with socialism: libertarian socialism" (Ostergaard 1991: 21).

In Internet politics, liberalism and socialism have been expressed in distinct forms as cyberlibertarianism and Internet socialism.

> Cyberlibertarianism refers to a perspective (some would say philosophy) which claims that cyberspace and the Internet should be regarded as uncontrolled and unregulated electronic spaces where anyone is free to be whatever they wish and express themselves however they like. It thereby shares many of the same principles as free-market libertarian ideologies which regard individual freedom as the primary political aspiration, the unregulated market as the essential mechanism for distributing goods and services, and a loathing of government which is seen as the main obstacle to the achievement of personal liberty (Bell, Loader, Pleace and Schuler 2004: 35).

Right-wing cyberlibertarianism is an ideology that is based on the liberal idea that state intervention should be minimized and that argues for freedom of information, freedom of speech, and against censorship on the Internet. Individual freedom of expression and to do whatever one wants to do (freedom of action) is a central aspect of right-wing cyberlibertarianism. In addition, it frequently has a pro-business agenda and favours the use of the Internet for the purpose of capital accumulation. Langdon Winner (1997) characterizes the cyberlibertarian ideology as technological determinism (the Internet would automatically result in a better democracy, an "electronic neighbourhood"), radical individualism, the idea of individual rights without social responsibilities, attacks on altruism, social welfare, and government intervention, and oriented on deregulated free-market capitalism – as being close to right-wing political thought. Cyberlibertarianism is an expression of neoliberal thinking (Fisher 2010).

> "The combined emphasis upon radical individualism, enthusiasm for free market economy, disdain for the role of government, and enthusiasm for the power of business firms places the cyberlibertarian perspective strongly within the context of right wing political thought" (Winner 1997: 16).

Cyberlibertarianism's main value is profit; it wants to accumulate capital by e-commerce, virtual enterprise, and the Internet economy. Such values have e.g. been expressed by *Wired* magazine, the Progress & Freedom Foundation, and individuals like John Perry Barlow, Stewart Brand, Esther Dyson, George Gilder, Kevin Kelly, George Keyworth, Nicolas Negroponte, or Alvin Toffler. With the rise of social media, cyberlibertarianism has been re-articulated in the form of positions that stress the empowering potentials of platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Dahlberg 2010, Fuchs 2014b).

It should be noted that cyberlibertarianism has been the term used commonly in the literature for this ideology. The employment of the term "libertarianism" shall designate the origins of the Internet in the hippie culture and anarchist counter-culture of the 1960s. The term cyberlibertarianism is, however, confusing because libertarianism has, as argued, has both a right-wing and a left-wing version. It is therefore more correct to characterize the Californian ideology as right-wing cyberlibertarianism, neoliberal cyberlibertarianism, or cyber-neo-liberalism and to maintain that there is also a socialist form of cyberlibertarianism.

An alternative to right-wing cyberlibertarianism is socialist Internet politics that argues for an alternative Internet that is free from corporations and instead controlled and owned by the users. Cybersocialism and cybercommunism have been expressed in various academic works (e.g. Dyer-Witheford 1999) and manifestos like the dotCommunist Manifesto (Moglen 2003), the Telekommunist Manifesto (Kleiner 2010), or the Cyber.com/munist Manifesto (Barbrook 2007): "Now, with the advent of the Net, this gift economy is challenging market competition at the cutting-edge of modernity" (Barbrook 2007). "In overthrowing the system of private property in ideas, we bring into existence a truly just society, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Moglen 2003).

Liberalism and socialism contrast especially in how they stress the importance of freedom/equality, individualism/sociality and individual/collective ownership in society. Libertarianism is a combination of liberal and socialist thought that comes in various versions that more or less take a left- or right-wing direction and are either closer to socialism (as in social libertarianism) or liberalism (as e.g. in anarcho-capitalism). These distinctions are important theoretical foundations for the empirical analysis of contemporary political worldviews, such as the ones held by Anonymous.

4. Research method

To which extent and how does Anonymous express elements of socialism and liberalism in its political discourse? For answering this question, it is best to analyse Anonymous' self-description of its worldviews with the help of discourse analysis (van Dijk 2011) and content analysis (Krippendorff 2004). I employ content analysis for the quantitative part of research in order to identify how often certain worldviews and ideologies (liberalism, socialism) occur in public statements of Anonymous and discourse analysis for identifying arguments and discourses that are typical for liberal and socialist thinking that can be found in these public statements. Content analysis is used for the quantitative part of research, discourse analysis for the qualitative part.

Critical text/document analysis is a general critical analysis technique of texts that encompasses both quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis (Jupp 2006). It analyses assumptions made in texts in the light of power structures of society (Jupp 2006) One important question that one can

ask when conducting a critical document analysis is: "What public and/or institutional discourses are important in terms of knowledge of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'?" (Jupp 2006: 279). In the quantitative analysis presented in section 5, I analysed for each video if statements were made that presented elements of liberalism (such as freedom, individualism, private property, representative democracy, individual civil liberties; see table 1) and/or (such as equality, solidarity, collective ownership, participatory democracy, social liberties; see table 1). I coded for each video if it represents liberal values, socialist values, both or something different. The results of the quantitative analysis will be presented in section 5.

Teun van Dijk (1998, chapter 5) classifies the structure of discourses. A discourse defines and presents the membership, activities, goals, values/norms, group relations and resources of a group in a certain way. In conducting a qualitative analysis of Anonymous-videos, I identified typical expressions of answers to questions that according to van Dijk (1998) discourses deal with and that Critical Discourse Analysis analyses:

> "* Goals: Why do we do this? What do we want to realize?
> * Values/norms: What are our main values? How do we evaluate ourselves and others? What should (not) be done?
> * Position and group-relations: What is our social position? Who are our enemies, our opponents? Who are like us, and who are different?" (van Dijk 1998: 69f).

I looked for typical expressions of socialist and liberal goals and values and boundary designations that named political enemies. The results of this qualitative analysis will be presented in section 6.

As argued at the end of section 2, online video, a medium that Anonymous uses for communicating its ideas to the public, are videos posted on the Internet. These videos are, on the one hand, artistic pieces and contain, on the other hand, political messages. They are therefore well-suited material for the analysis of Anonymous' political worldviews.

Everyone who becomes active and uses the name Anonymous for this activism is part of the Anonymous movement. There are low entry- and exit-barriers. The movement's anonymity principle makes it very difficult to distinguish where an Anonymous video posted on the Internet originated. It is common practice that multiple users post videos on multiple platforms and, by making use of multiple profiles, that translations are created, and that based on a basic message, different versions of videos are produced and spread by different people. The fluid and anonymous nature of the movement and the lack of distinctive membership boundaries do not automatically allow mapping certain videos to certain nodes or individuals. They are all an expression of the collective movement Anonymous. Anonymous is a collective political worker.

The multitude of practices and explanations of political practices (as in the form of videos) is unified by overall shared values. The methodological implication is

that analysing the worldviews of Anonymous via public statements (as expressed in videos) means analysis of the political speech used by individuals and groups who claim the Anonymous banner for themselves. There is and can be no guarantee that these are the same people who conduct the actual operations or that the videos and the political actions are part of the same concerted planning effort. Anonymous is a culture and an idea. Therefore what one can analyse is how this idea is expressed in public by whoever claims to be Anonymous. Everyone who acts or speaks on behalf of Anonymous and shares its basic values is Anonymous. Direct action activists that engage in DDoS-attacks are just like people who create, publish, or distribute Anonymous messages part of the movement.

Therefore, the content and discourse analysis of videos conducted in this paper focuses on the one hand on an important part of the public perception and expression of what the culture and ideas of Anonymous stand for, which is part of Anonymous' culture itself.

Searching for the keyword "Anonymous" on YouTube showed that the channels by the users anonopss and TheAnonMessage are two of the most frequently accessed sources of video material that represent Anonymous. AnonOps (http://www.anonops.org/) is the name of an IRC chat from which Anonymous operation such as the Operation Payback have emerged. Anonops is, however, also the name of a news blog about Anonymous that is "only dedicated to reporting news about Anonymous" and a connected YouTube channel[6]. The popularity of the videos posted by the anonopss-user on YouTube become clear by the circumstance that e.g. the video "What Are We Capable Of – THIS IS ANONYMOUS!"[7] had obtained 654,506 views on August 7th, 2012 (06:02 AM, CET) exactly 12 months after it was uploaded. Texts posted below many of anonopss' YouTube videos link to the Anonops blog[8] (see e.g.). The Anonops IRC website http://www.anonops.org/ says that it does not run the Anonops blog anonops.blogspot.com[9]. TheAnonMessage is another Anonymous news channel operating a YouTube channel[10]. The popularity of this channel becomes clear by the fact that the video "Anonymous: Message to SONY on SOPA" had on August 7th, 2012 (06:01 AM, CET), been accessed 683,539 times[11].

Both anonopss and TheAnonMessage portray themselves as messenger channels of the Anonymous movement that publish videos made by various Anonymous activists. They want to communicate to the world meanings that Anonymous activists choose to give to actions and both consider themselves to be part of the Anonymous movement. Given that YouTube is the most-popular

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[6] http://www.youtube.com/user/anonopss.

[7] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP9q61Fjlqo&feature=plcp

[8] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP9q61Fjlqo&feature=plcp

[9] http://www.anonops.org/misc.html, accessed on August 7th, 2012.

[10] http://www.youtube.com/user/TheAnonMessage

[11] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjOPXpd9PSU

video platform in the world, that anonopss and TheAnonMessage are highly publicly visible (meaning that people looking for several videos about Anonymous on the Internet are likely to see videos from these two channels), and do transmit content from various sources over their channels, sampling videos from these two channels is feasible because it guarantees both a diversity of video sources as well as reliance of the analysis on videos that are considered by the public as being an expression of what Anonymous stands for.

Commander X is an Anonymous activist who after being charged by the US District Court in San José for cyberattacks revealed his association to Anonymous and the People's Liberation Front (PLF). He operates a Vimeo news channel[12] and the website of the PLF[13]. Commander X is one of the few activists who has publicly revealed his identity, admitted participation in illegal Anonymous actions, and has at the same time operated a public video channel that features videos that express his views of Anonymous. By including videos from his channel in our analysis, we can guarantee that also views of what Anonymous stands for by an activist engaging in illegal protest practices are included in our sample.

The sampling of video material involved all videos posted on these 3 channels until December 1st, 2011 that presented announcements of Anonymous operations to the public. The sample is neither a random sample nor a purposive sampling. In random sampling, due to the inability to analyse all items of analysis, a random selection of items is collected. In purposive sampling, a number of items are selected because they have certain characteristics. I used a complete sample, i.e. I analysed all videos that were available on the three video channels on December 1st, 2011. As Anonymous is a relatively young movement, the amount of published videos was not overwhelmingly large in 2011 and it was therefore possible to use complete sampling.

This method resulted in a sample consisting of a total of 67 videos: 18 videos posted by anonopss, 42 videos posted by TheAnonMessage, and 7 videos posted by Commander X. The sample included all videos posted on the anonopss- and the AnonMessage-channels in the period of analysis. From Commander X's channel, 7 out of a total of 22 videos were selected. The majority of videos posted by Commander X were not Anonymous operation announcements but rather reposts of announcements included on the anonopss or AnonMessage-channel. These included interviews, documentaries, and a press conference. These videos were not included in the sample because they only provided secondary material that interpreted original Anonymous sources, whereas worldviews can best be analyzed based on primary material. The posting date of the oldest sampled video was December 14th, 2010, while the date of the newest one was November 24th, 2011.

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[12] http://vimeo.com/user6433195/videos

[13] http://www.peoplesliberationfront.net

Sampling videos from different sources that describe themselves as being part of Anonymous reflects section 2's theoretical assumption that Anonymous is a liquid social movement that blends individual and collective action as well as autonomy and networking. Activists and groups of activists act on the one hand are relatively independent, but on the other hand share basic values, symbols and enemies that are articulated in protest actions. This allows treating Anonymous as a collective actor in the conducted analysis.

I coded the videos with the help of two binary variables that determined for each video if liberal and socialist political viewpoints were expressed or not. A second person independently coded 6 of the videos, which is around 10% of the overall sample, and obtained the same coding results, which shows high inter-coder reliability. Given that Anonymous' political self-understanding is heterogeneous, I assumed that the two worldviews are not mutually exclusive but can be simultaneously present. Therefore I used a category that coded videos that contained both socialist and liberal elements. After the coding of all 67 videos, the share of videos with liberal viewpoints (cyberlibertarianism index), the share of videos with socialist viewpoints (cybersocialism index), the share of videos with both viewpoints (social cyberlibertarianism index) and the share of other viewpoints were calculated.

A typically expressed attitude that signified liberal viewpoints was the condemnation of the governments' limitation of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of information, and freedom of the press. A typically expressed viewpoint that was interpreted as socialism was the condemnation of socio-economic inequality and the control of wealth and the economy by companies and banks. This means that the coding was conducted by observing the presence of different political values: freedom in the case of liberalism and equality and justice in the case of socialism.

Section 5 presents the quantitative results of the analysis and section 6 the qualitative ones.

5. Presentation of the quantitative results

Category	Total number	Percentage share
Videos expressing only liberal viewpoints	37	55%
Videos expressing only socialist viewpoints	5	8%
Videos expressing both worldviews	15	22%
Videos expressing other or none of the two viewpoints	10	15%
Total number of postings	67	100%

Videos expressing liberal viewpoints (only liberal or mixed)	52	78%
Videos expressing socialist viewpoints (only socialist or mixed)	20	30%

Table 2: Degree of socialism and liberalism in Anonymous' public video announcements. N=67

Table 2 presents the quantitative results of the study, namely to which extent the totality of all analyzed videos contained liberal and socialist values.

There were 10 announcements that involved clarifications about the originality of messages, messages to other crackers, announcements without expressed worldviews, or in one case an announcement that was neither relating to the liberal nor to the socialist worldview. The latter was the case in video #63 that focused on animal rights ("Animals are our friends and we do not eat our friends", #63), which is a green topic that can be appropriated by all worldviews and ideologies (from the far left to the far right).

The results show that liberalism was the dominant worldview in the analyzed videos. 55% of all videos presented liberal ideology while 8% presented socialist viewpoints. Of all videos, 22% contained both socialist and liberal worldviews. Of the videos, 78% contained liberal elements (including those videos that also expressed socialist views) while 30% contained socialist worldviews. These findings show the heterogeneity of Anonymous, the presence of different worldviews in the movement that to a certain extent co-exist in parallel and to a certain extent form part of one larger worldview. This circumstance points towards the existence of at least three political worldviews in Anonymous: cyberlibertarianism as the dominant position and social cyberlibertarianism as well as cybersocialism as minority positions. Qualitative analysis allows us to characterize how Anonymous expresses these three positions.

6. Qualitative results

This section presents the qualitative results of the analysis of Anonymous' worldviews. It is organized in such a way that it focuses on each of the political worldviews that were introduced in theory section 2 and discusses how Anonymous uses these worldviews. Section 6.1 focuses on libertarianism, 6.2 on social libertarianism, and 6.3 on socialism.

6.1. Anonymous' libertarianism

Cyberlibertarianism is based on the liberal political values of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of information, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. It conceives government institutions' attempts at limiting these rights as the main threat for society and either sees capitalist businesses and capitalist media as harbingers and carriers of freedom or does not comment on their role in society. Cyberlibertarian values can be found in the mission statement of

Anonnet that formulates as a main value and goal: "We believe in freedom of expression, and we want to help you make your voice heard"[14]. These rights were also explicitly formulated as core values or rights in some of the analyzed videos: "Freedom of Speech. Freedom of Press. Freedom of Expression. These are Our Rights" (#9). In this respect, governments are seen as the main actual or potential violators of freedom: "We stand for freedom, we stand for freedom of speech, the power of the people, the ability of them to protest against their government. [...] No censorship, especially online, but also in real life" (#17).

Cyberlibertarian Anonymous activists tend to think that freedom needs to be defended with attacks against those who restrict freedom. In one video, Abraham Lincoln is quoted in this respect: "Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves" (#1). Similar to the campaign against Scientology, in 2011 Anonymous' "Operation Brotherhood Takedown" attacked the Muslim Brotherhood, about which Anonymous says that it resembles Scientology in limiting by terrorist means the freedom of members to leave the organization (#48).

Cyberlibertarian values are also articulated in Anonymous' struggle against censorship of the Internet and the media by governments. Anonymous therefore says that it does "not forget that knowledge is free" (#5) and struggles for ascertaining "the free flow of information" (#22, #39). Government institutions are therefore attacked if Anonymous perceives them as violating the free flow of information or attempting to censor the Internet. So, for example, Anonymous opposes state censorship of the media by the right-wing Hungarian government:

> Your law that restricts independent media is censorship, and with us censorship is to be dealt with harshly. [...] Independent media is the only thing standing in the way between people, and the corrupt lies of government. [...] We will not forgive your denial to free speech (#22).

Anonymous stresses that Obama and Clinton on the one hand spoke out against Internet censorship (#5), but that on the other hand the Protect IP Act and the Stop Online Piracy Act violate freedom of speech:

> The United States Congress is trying to pass a bill that will make it a criminal offense to stream copyrighted material without authorization. [...] Uploading a video to YouTube or some other means of multimedia communication can land someone up to 5 years in prison based on the idea of copyright infringement. [...] This is not only a form of censorship; this is the very essence of denying the free flow of information (#39).

In 2011, the United States Government introduced two bills called the "PROTECT IP Act" and the "Stop Online Piracy Act":

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[14] http://site.anonnet.org/

> These controversial laws effectively allow the US government to censor creative thought and Free Speech by making it a criminal offense for any one that "violates" existing copyrights, trademarks, or patents. [...] We will not allow the Government to decide what is 'economic creativity' and 'intellectual property'. If you take away Innovation, Free Speech, Freedom to Access Information, and our Right to Privacy, we are SLAVES to the Government. [...] To the United States government, you should've expected us (#58).
>
> To the American Congress: If you pass this bill, you will pay for it (#56).

Anonymous' position clearly differs from the *Magna Carta of the Knowledge Age* that supported intellectual property rights. Anonymous, however, does not go beyond liberal values. Although it questions intellectual property rights, it defines this issue only as one of government control and addresses the US government and Congress as the main problem.

The analysed Anonymous videos share with right-wing cyberlibertarianism the focus on state control. Topics relating to the market, capitalism, and socio-economic (in)equality are bracketed and ignored. Although Anonymous thereby does not directly share the economic values of right-wing cyberlibertarianism, it ignores economic issues, overstresses the role of the states, and thereby keeps the power of neoliberalism ideologically untouched. It finds a common ground with right-wing cyberlibertarianism in the strong focus of critiquing state power. It does not much take into account that intellectual property rights are mechanisms enforced by media corporations, that media companies and industry associations put pressure on governments to enforce intellectual property rights, and that these rights are not only problematic because they limit freedom of information, but also because they make culture a commodity and help media companies derive profit at the expense of the people. Questioning intellectual property rights is also a socialist concern; by reducing the problem to one of government control Anonymous overlooks the political economy of this issue and does not engage with questions relating to the corporate ownership of culture.

Anonymous actively supported the Arab Spring. Therefore, the question arises what the reasons were for this support. For some Anonymous activists, the main reason seems to be the circumstance that the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and other countries violated the right of their people for free assembly, expression, and speech. Therefore e.g. one analyzed video stated that there were "Tunisian attempts at censorship", that the "Tunisian government" restricted "the freedoms of their own people", and "in doing so, [...] has made itself an enemy of Anonymous" (#6). "We do not forgive the denial of the right to freedom of expression. We do not forget the injustices caused by the removal of this right" (#6). In the course of the Egyptian revolution, Anonymous addressed Mubarak saying that "the use of secret police forces, the torture of innocent citizens and political activists, the repression of the freedoms of speech and assembly, and

the murder of the Egyptian people are all testament to your tyrannic disposition"[15].

Although oppression of the opposition and of freedom of speech were important factors of the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, there were also other aspects of domination, such as decreasing real wages, repression against trade unions and the political left, a widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasing poverty, mass lay-offs, and food crises as effects of the global economic crisis, increasing prices, or high illiteracy rates. Although Anonymous also mentioned in single instances the importance of "economic security"[16] in the Arab spring, its main focus is on criticizing undemocratic political regimes, not also the class dimension and the political economy of the conflicts, the repression of workers' protests, the strong wealth gap between the poor south/west/centre and the richer east and north of Tunisia (Ayeb 2011, Björklund 2011, Dixon 2011). The Arab spring was not just a demand for political rights, but also for "social and economic rights", it was a struggle against "economic, social and political marginalisation" (Ayeb 2011: 478).

The Occupy movement is a new socialist movement struggling against capitalist power (Fuchs 2014a), as can be seen from its self-definition:

> #ows is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims to fight back against the richest 1% of people that are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future[17].

It has become a common theme in contemporary political theory that Occupy can be considered as a socialist or communist movement due to its struggle for the re-appropriation of the commons that have been privatized and commodified, but are produced by the global worker of all citizens: Žižek (2012) argues that new social movements had abolished "class-struggle essentialism" by stressing the "plurality of anti-racist, feminist and other struggles", whereas the Occupy movement sees "capitalism" as "the name of the problem" (Žižek 2012: 77). The activists would be communists because "they care about the commons – the commons of nature, of knowledge – which are threatened by the system" (Žižek 2012: 83). The Occupy movement would be discontent with "capitalism as a system" and with the reduction of democracy to representation (Žižek 2012: 87).

Alain Badiou (2012) argues that the Occupy movement and other contemporary movements (such as the revolutionary Arab spring movements in Egypt and

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[15] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvgVtcR861k (accessed on December 3, 2011).

[16] Ibid.

[17] http://occupywallst.org/about/ (accessed on December 3, 2011).

Spain) are communist movements because they call for the realisation of the common interests of all people (the Communist Idea) and transcends class structures in its internal organisation – it constitutes a "movement communism" and stands for the "creation in common of the collective destiny" (Badiou 2012: 111). Jodi Dean (2012) makes an argument similar to the one by Žižek and Badiou, stressing that Occupy as a communist movement asserts the commons and represents the 99%. Occupy is neither an online movement created by individualised online connective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2013) or online networks of outrage and hope (Castells 2012) nor a pure street movement organized on squares, but rather a movement that is based on a dialectic of the occupation of squares and mediated communication (as argued in Fuchs 2014a; for my criticism of techno-deterministic accounts of contemporary revolutions and revolts à la Castells, see: Fuchs 2012; Fuchs 2014b: chapters 8+4).

Why has Anonymous supported this movement? One explanation is that parts of Anonymous supported the movement because police violence threatened the rights of free expression, speech, and assembly of the protestors. This interpretation is supported by a number of the analysed videos. "Occupy protesters peacefully marched, sang, danced, and drummed their way into the soul of their respective cities, but have often been met with hostility and aggression from law enforcement" (#18). "Occupations have been assaulted with armed forces and chemical weapons" (#41). "Let the people protest without shame and threat. Let the people protest with expression and freedom" (#29).

As a result of police brutality, Anonymous started Operation Paparazzi in order to watch the police: "Those we pay to protect and serve us should have nothing to hide from the public while they are on duty". [...] #OpPaparazzi is a movement in which all film our law enforcement at all times for all reasons" (#24). Anonymous declared a struggle against the Oakland police after one of the Occupy Oakland protestors, Scott Olson, was severely injured by a police bullet that hit his face (#50). It published a video with personal data (address, phone numbers, etc) of Anthony Baloney, a NYPD police officer, who, as Anonymous says, "was responsible for macing peaceful protesters in New York"[18]. The Anonymous video was banned on YouTube for "promoting hate speech"[19]. Anonymous also published a video with personal data about police officer John Pike, who, as a YouTube video shows, attacked students occupying the UC Davis campus with pepper spray[20]. Anonymous' idea is that it wants to act as a watchdog and exert counter-power against police brutality by threatening officers "found to be guilty of these crimes against peaceful protestors" to "their personal information [...] to the public"[21].

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[18] http://theanonmessage.blogspot.com/2011/09/youtube-bans.html (accessed on December 3, 2011).

[19] Ibid.

[20] http://vimeo.com/32465309 (accessed on December 3, 2011).

[21] Ibid.

Figure 1, which shows a screen shot from one of the analysed videos, stresses Anonymous' self-understanding as watchdog that exerts surveillance against those in power. Although these means might seem quite radical, they are an enforcement of the cyberlibertarian value of freedom of assembly, which seems to be the main reason for the support given to the Occupy movement by many Anonymous activists. Some of the analysed Occupy videos released by Anonymous focus on the issue of freedom of assembly, do not express solidarity with the socialist goals of the Occupy movement and thereby remain silent on class issues (#24, #29, #41, #49, #50, #53, #54).

Figure 1: Anonymous as watchdog of the powerful.
Source: screenshot from video #8

The focus on the libertarian values of freedom of speech, expression, assembly, information, and press dominates Anonymous' political communication. Anonymous differs from neoliberal cyberlibertarians like *Wired* magazine or the Progress and Freedom Foundations by not explicitly welcoming corporate control of the media and society, but expressing a strong focus on government censorship and governments' violations of freedom. Anonymous' version of cyberlibertarianism does not embrace corporate power; this type of power's criticism is, however, also not a fundamental topic. Issues relating to socio-economic inequality, social and economic rights, and the limitation of freedom by corporate control of the media are either not mentioned or remain a side note.

6.2. Anonymous' social libertarianism

The second worldview present in Anonymous' videos is a combination of liberal and socialist thought – social cyberlibertarianism. It shares the focus on freedom of information, assembly, and speech with Anonymous' dominant ideology, but other than the dominant ideology stresses that not only governments but also corporations limit these freedoms. Social and economic rights and the values of socio-economic justice and equality are neither foregrounded nor ignored, but rather subsumed under the value of freedom.

Social cyberlibertarianism is for example expressed in an Anonymous video that stresses that "people are the owners of the Internet, not governments, not corporations" (#2). The core value here is a free Internet, but freedom is seen as being both threatened by government and corporate control, which speaks in favour of the demand of an alternative Internet controlled by civil society.

Anonymous' motivations for the support of the Arab Spring are not purely liberal, for some activists rather a combination of liberal and socialist motives is important. A video about the Egyptian revolution stresses e.g. about the protestors: "The courage you demonstrate in you struggle for Freedom, Peace and Justice is a lesson to us all" (#11). In a video about Algeria, not just lack of freedom of speech is stressed, but freedom is rather one topic besides poverty, corruption, and oppression (#10).

In relation to the Occupy movement, for example, one video equally stresses political and economic domination by criticizing the "abuse and corruption of corporations, banks, and governments" (#15). Another video says: "The time has come to say: Enough! The abuse and corruption of corporations, banks, and governments can no longer be tolerated" (#27). It reduces these topics to the value of freedom: "What is our one demand? We want our freedom" (#27). One video stresses economic rights by saying that "the population is being taken advantage of for the sake of profits", but at the same time focuses strongly on government laws and bailouts:

> We witness the government enforcing the laws that punish the 99%, while allowing the 1% to escape justice unharmed for their crimes against the people. [...] This government who was willingly ignored the greed at Wall Street has even bailed out the perpetrators that have caused our crisis (#30).

In a message to those not participating in the Occupy movement, Anonymous shows concern for both political and socio-economic rights: "The Empire faces a crisis: a global recession, growing poverty, rampant violence, corruption in politics, and threats to personal freedom" (#35). It stresses the need for "a new age of tolerance and understanding, empathy and respect, an age of unfettered technological development, an age of sharing ideas an co-operation, an age of artistic and personal expression" (#35). At the same time it is foregrounded that "we are fighting for free speech" (#35). Some videos (#15, #16, #27, #30, #35, #67) show that for some Anonymous activists not only the concern for freedom

of assembly and speech of assembly, but also concerns about socio-economic inequality are motivations for supporting the Occupy protests.

Figure 2 visualizes Anonymous' social libertarianism with a screen shot that indicates criticism of the wealth of the rich class ("the top 1%"), but at the same time reduces the class topic of wealth gaps to a government regulation issue ("Why do you not pay taxes?", which implies the assumption that the state can solve the problem).

Figure 2: Anonymous and social libertarianism.
Data source: screen shot from #16

After activists had been imprisoned in Orlando for giving food to homeless people in Lake Eola Park, Anonymous started Operation Orlando. On the one hand, Anonymous shows concerns about the socio-economic issue of poverty by stressing that it stands "with the hungry people"; on the other hand the Orlando case is also considered as an issue of freedom because, as Anonymous reminds the police, "the public space being used to peacefully offer them food is a human right you must not interfere with" (#60).

Social libertarianism is not a dominant political view within Anonymous' public communication but is nonetheless one that is clearly visible. It adds issues relating to socio-economic injustice and inequality, class, poverty, and corporate power to the cyberlibertarian agenda and combines these values with a concern about government intervention that limits freedom. Freedom and socio-economic rights are either viewed as parallel demands or socio-economic issues are presented as an aspect of freedom.

6.3. Anonymous' socialism

The presence of socialist-libertarian messages partly blends into strongly socialist messages. One analyzed video has simultaneously a strong focus on individual liberties and socialism. It on the one hand criticizes the "attack on civil liberties" and defines liberty as "a concept of political philosophy […] [that] identifies the condition in which an individual has the right to act according to his or her own will". It on the other hand speaks of the existence of an "economic dictatorship" and says that "technological progress has been used […] to make a tiny minority extremely wealthy" and that "banks should not have the power to create the medium of exchange" (#67).

The third worldview that can be found in Anonymous' videos is cybersocialism. It stresses the critique of class inequality between the rich and the poor, owners and non-owners, capitalists and workers and makes demands for a non-corporate world and a non-corporate Internet that are based on participatory democracy and socio-economic justice and equality. It is not opposed to the value of political freedom, but stresses that companies and the corporate media in capitalist society due to their control of resources always limit the freedom of speech, expression, press, and information and that capitalist states' policies are strongly influenced by corporate interests. Freedom is connected to the topic of socio-economic justice, and a free society is presented as a society that is free from exploitation and capital and based on the free development of all according to their abilities and the free access to all collective resources, which would require the end of private property of the means of production. Freedom of speech, assembly, information, and the press would only be possible in a non-capitalist participatory democracy.

A pure socialist worldview could only be found in a smaller portion of the analysed videos. It is, however, interesting to observe that almost all of these videos were related to the Occupy movement (#31, #34, #36, #40), which is in itself a socialist movement. Although there were also liberal motivations of Anonymous activists in deciding to support the Occupy movement, it looks like the emergence of this movement in September 2011 has changed Anonymous and has created more internal importance of socialist values.

In Anonymous' socialist videos, a clear articulation of the assessment of class inequality as unjust and non-reducible to government power is visible.

> For too long the crimes of Wall Street bankers, CEOs, and a corrupt political system have created economic injustice that has gone unchallenged. […] We are thrown out of our homes, we are denied medical care, we suffer from poverty and pollution. We work long hours just to stay afloat while the 1% reap the benefits we dream of. Our sworn enemy is the corrupted corporation (#31).

Anonymous in these videos stresses the importance of the working class: "The lifeblood of the country *is the working class* and without it our people and our economy will crumble" (#31). It furthermore does not focus on reforming governments, but rather calls for an abolishment of capitalism. One video's title

is therefore called "Global Revolution Day" (#34). It argues that the big Occupy protests on October 15th, 2011, should focus on demanding "a true democracy", should "stand up against corporatism, wars and militarism", "stand up for human rights, worker rights and jobs", and "demand an end to private for profit prisons, fight for affordable healthcare, education, and housing for everyone" (#34). The primary value articulated in these videos is not freedom, but rather equality, fairness, peace, and socio-economic justice in the realms of the economy, the workplace, wealth, welfare, healthcare, and education. The Occupy movement is envisioned as being able to "together [...] make a global revolution" (#34). Anonymous also calls for removing "funds from the major banking institutions to non-profit credit unions" (#36). Figure 3 visualizes socialist worldviews found in Anonymous videos.
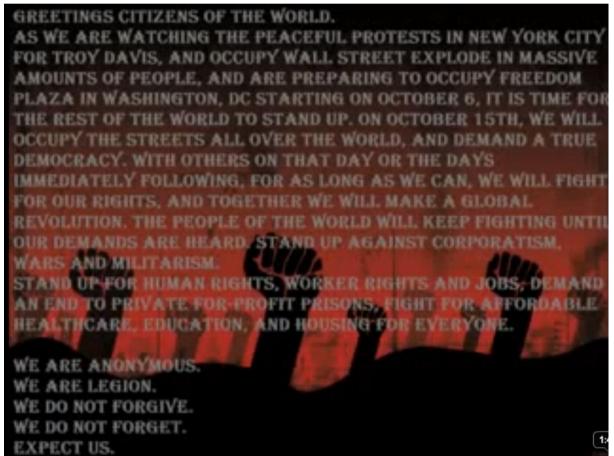

 Figure 3: Socialist Anonymous.
Data source: screen shot from #34

Socialist criticism of socio-economic inequality, exploitation, neoliberalism, and other forms of inequality that are not voiced as being subsumed to liberal demands and the call for the creation of a just and equal participatory democracy that overcomes putting profit over people constitute a minority

position in Anonymous' public communication. The emergence of a new socialist movement, the Occupy movement, seems to have transformed Anonymous to a certain extent so that socialist worldviews have become more present and also blend with liberal demands.

7. Conclusion

The empirical analysis of this paper was based on 67 videos that represent Anonymous' public communication. An analysis of the political discourses found in these videos was conducted. The results confirm the assumption that Anonymous is, due to its open, decentralized, dynamic character, politically heterogeneous and open for change.

Of the analysed videos, 55% expressed pure liberal viewpoints, 8% pure socialist views, 22% blended liberalism and socialism. Cyberlibertarian positions are dominant, but Anonymous' version of this ideology is different from classical right-wing cyberlibertarianism as represented by *Wired, the Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*, or the *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*, but shares its focus on the critique of state power, which has ideological implications. Anonymous shares classical right-wing cyberlibertarianism's distrust of governments and its criticism of media and Internet censorship by states, but not its advocacy of intellectual property rights. Anonymous' libertarian faction favours free access to knowledge and culture, does not advance a profound criticism of commodification and inequality, and sees intellectual property not as an ownership conflict related to the capitalist economy, but as a pure governance issue. Anonymous' weak form of cyberlibertarianism opens up actual and potential connections to socialist views, struggles, and demands. Anonymous' worldviews are shaped by the partly conflicting, partly co-existing, and partly complementary existence of cyberlibertarianism, social cyberlibertarianism, and Internet socialism.

Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) argue that the liberal Enlightenment ideology turns into its own opposite that it initially questioned so that "irresistible progress is irresistible regression" (p. 28). "Once harnessed to the dominant mode of production, enlightenment, which strives to undermine any order which has become repressive, nullifies itself" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 73f). Although "freedom in society is inseparable from enlightenment thinking", the negative dialectic of freedom in capitalism is that the very concepts of enlightenment thinking, such as freedom, "already contain[s] the germ of the regression which is taking place everywhere today" (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: xvi). The freedoms proclaimed by liberal Enlightenment ideology find their actual violation in the practice of capitalism: The ideal of freedom turns into an opposite reality – unfreedom.

Anonymous describes itself as "the 21st century enlightenment" (#35). It is part of the dialectic of the enlightenment of 21st century informational capitalism. It demonstrates and discloses the contradictions of freedom and liberal ideology by demanding the very rights and values that capitalism, its constitutions and

politicians proclaim and that in economic and political reality turn into their opposites. Anonymous shows the difference of proclaimed essence and actual existence of liberalism. If Anonymous, for example, argues in favour of the freedom of assembly and expression of the Occupy movement and criticizes police violence against activists, then it, on the one hand, stays within the categories of liberal thought. At the same time it shows how within the United States, the country in the world that most stresses the liberal value of freedom, freedom is actually limited by state action, which drives liberal values ad absurdum and shows their actual contradictory existence. Anonymous thereby conducts a practical immanent political critique of liberalism. It, however, frequently misses taking this form of critique to the next step and advancing from immanent critique towards a transcendental critique that sees the limits of the realization of liberal values within capitalism and calls for the establishment of an alternative to capitalism, in which individual and collective values can exist through each other. In the case of the Occupy movement, Anonymous has managed to a certain degree formulate transcendent values by taking up issues of socio-economic inequality, class, and capitalism.

One can understand Anonymous not only as immanent critique of liberalism but also as parody and absurd theatre of liberalism. Humour is to a certain degree used as a political weapon. Anonymous makes fun of its political opponents and uses clownery (in the form of Guy Fawkes armies) as symbolic strategy to attain the media's and public's attention. There is also a connection of Anonymous to Brecht's (1967a, b) absurd theatre: by proclaiming liberal values and criticizing how they become violated in capitalist reality, Anonymous shows the contradictory dialectic of liberalism.

The freedoms that capitalism negates can only be realized in a society of equal owners and participants, a participatory democracy. Anonymous is a theatre of liberalism, and in its own political demands complexly articulates the conflict between liberalism and socialism that is expressed in the presence of the three political positions analysed in this paper. Liberal enlightenment ideals negate themselves in turn in capitalism and turn into their opposite. Only negating the negative dialectic of the enlightenment by establishing a new society can overcome the consequences of the negative dialectic.

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