The Hidden Side of Local Self-Organisation and Self-Regulation

Elements for the Comparative Analysis of the Constitution of Self-Organised Groups

Dieter Neubert

LoSAM Working Papers

Im Rahmen der LoSAM Working Papers werden theoretische und empirische Forschungsbeiträge der Wissenschaftler*innen der DFG-Forschungsgruppe 2757 publiziert. Sie dienen dazu, Ergebnisse der Forschungsgruppe zu publizieren und so rasch neue Impulse in die wissenschaftliche Debatte einzubringen. Die Beiträge spiegeln hierbei die gesamte Bandbreite und Vielfalt der Forschungsgruppe wider, indem sie sowohl disziplinäre als auch interdisziplinäre Forschungsergebnisse präsentieren. Des Weiteren werden auch Beiträge von assoziierten Mitgliedern der Forschungsgruppe bzw. von Kooperationspartner*innen veröffentlicht.

The Hidden Side of Local Self-Organisation and Self-Regulation. Elements for the Comparative Analysis of the Constitution of Self-Organised Groups

Dieter Neubert

Abstract

The notions self-organisation and self-regulation are at least implicitly loaded with a positive democratic connotation. The main corresponding debates on social movements, governance and civil society mostly refer to the Global North with a well-functioning state and democratic political systems. One consequence is that the less democratic and less liberal hidden side of self-organisation, seen by some critics, does not gain much attention.

After a short discussion of the main theoretical approaches, the paper presents a selection of self-organised groups depicting their different values, norms, and structural features. These examples reach from democratic groups marked by solidarity to racist violent groups that are a threat to differently minded people. The analysis of these examples leads to a set of criteria for the comparative analysis of the internal structure of self-organised groups including potential membership, in- and outward orientation, underlying basic principles of social order and types of trust with related types of decision-making. These basic elements help to understand the constitution and functioning of self-organisation, which are open to a wide range of value orientation.

Die verborgene Seite von Selbstorganisation und Selbstregulierung. Elemente für die vergleichende Analyse der Konstituierung von selbstorganisierten Gruppen

Zusammenfassung

Die Begriffe Selbstorganisation und Selbstregulierung sind zumindest implizit positiv konnotiert. Die entsprechenden Debatten zu sozialen Bewegungen, Governance und Zivilgesellschaft beziehen sich zumeist auf den Globalen Norden mit einem gut funktionierenden Staat und demokratischen politischen Systemen. Eine Folge davon ist, dass die weniger demokratische und weniger liberale verborgene Seite von Selbstorganisation, die durchaus von einigen kritischen Stimmen gesehen wird, auf recht wenig Interesse stößt.

Nach einer kurzen Diskussion wichtiger theoretischer Ansätze, präsentiert der Beitrag eine Auswahl selbstorganisierter Gruppen und stellt ihre Werte, Normen und strukturellen Eigenheiten dar. Diese Beispiele reichen von demokratischen von Solidarität geprägten Gruppen bis hin zu gewalttätigen Gruppen, die eine Bedrohung für Andersdenkende sind. Die Analyse dieser Beispiele führt zu Kriterien für die vergleichende Analyse der internen Strukturen von selbstorganisierten Gruppen einschließlich ihrer potenziellen Mitgliedschaft, Innen- und Außenorientierung, grundlegenden Prinzipien der sozialen Ordnung und Typen von Vertrauen und damit verbundenen Typen der Entscheidungsfindung. Die grundlegenden Elemente helfen die Konstitution und Funktionsweise von Selbstorganisation zu verstehen, die ein breites Spektrum von Werteorientierungen umfassen können.

_____

_____

Inhaltsverzeichnis

1   Introduction[1]

Since the 1980s self-organisation and self-regulation have been an ongoing topic of social science. Originally built on earlier debates on self-help and with some interest in social movements, it reached a wider audience with the Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom's book "Governing the Commons" (Ostrom 1990) that focuses on the use of natural resources. Elinor Ostrom showed that aside from a centrist state-controlled solution and private property rights arrangements, (local) self-regulation or self-governance is a successful option for a sustainable use of natural resources. Even when Elinor Ostrom referred to pre-modern or pre-state situations to understand self-organisation and self-regulation, the current debate points to the question of how self-organisation is part of political arrangements of modern states and how state and non-statal institutions interact. Most of the literature on self-organisation and self-regulation refers to political governance in modern states, modern multi-level political systems or to corporations in modern capitalistic economies. In this context the notion of self-regulation and self-organisation focuses on democratic governance and thus implies legitimate and relatively open institutions, and a certain effectiveness and rationality of political action (Greven 2008, 27). There are also some relations to the civil society debate that refers to the existence of democratic systems and the necessity of civil rights. Despite early sceptical voices that point to the existence of a "dark civil society" (Lauth 2003) or a "bad civil society" (Chambers/Kopstein 2001) the notions of self-organisation and self-regulation are at least implicitly loaded with a positive democratic connotation. Most of the studies focus on the governance in the Global North where these positive assumptions mostly seem to apply. This regional or more radically phrased, "provincial" bias does not only have far-reaching consequences for the transfer of the debate into the other and, all in all, bigger part of our world, but the bias risks limiting the theory itself. For a deeper understanding of self-organisation and self-regulation, we need to overcome this limitation and question this positive connotation. We need to look at the hidden side of self-organisation and self-regulation. This unbiased view facilitates the understanding of t the basic features of self-organisation and self-regulation. Self-organisation with the corresponding debates on self-help, social movements, governance, civil society and self-regulation applies to different levels and types of organisation reaching from the local level, to economic corporations – with regard to governance - to the state and international level. In this paper we will not address the general questions of the state, international governance, or national or local institutional multi-actor arrangements, the general democracy theory or economic corporations. The focus is on the constitution and the internal structure of self-organisation and self-regulation at the local level with a focus on the self-organised groups themselves.

---

[1] I am grateful to Rene Pfeilschifter, Hans-Joachim Lauth and Christoph Mohamad-Klotzbach for their critical comments and important arguments with regard to the critique of civil society, its history or the governance debate.

For this purpose, we will first shortly re-evaluate the general theoretical discussions, then look at some examples of self-organised and self- regulated groups that comply with the positive connotation and others that contradict this connotation. This will then lead us to pursue further research questions for an in-depth analysis of existing internal structures and the constitution of self-organisation und self-regulation in- und outside the Global North. As a result, the paper will introduce a simple typology that focuses the main basic elements needed to distinguish between different types of self-organised and self-regulated groups.

2 Theoretical debates behind self-organisation and self-regulation in implicit normative orientations

As previously mentioned, the analysis of self-organisation refers to a set of different debates. Most obvious is the notion of self-help. Since the 1980s self-help has been a popular issue in the debates on co-operatives, or on the so-called "third sector" and garnered much interest in development policy as an alternative to big state-managed development programmes (Anheier/Seibel 1990; Anheier/Kendall 2001; Ardener/Burman 1995; Francesconi/Wouterse 2021; Seibel 1992; Ton et al. 2014). The studies mostly describe the practice, the motivation of the members and challenges to keep self-help going without putting self-help into a wider analytical framework. Self-organisation is also obviously linked to studies on social movements. Social movements are defined as a "social entity of interlinked persons, groups and organisations [...], who express protests via collective actions with the aim to change social or political conditions or to counteract ongoing processes of change." (Neidhardt/Rucht 2001, 540). Social movements obviously follow a political interest and they are seen as collective actors, who are in conflict with clearly identified opponents, are based on dense informal networks and have a distinctive collective identity (Della Porta/Diani 2006, 20ff.). The conceptual debate relates the emergence of social movements to four main concepts: Political opportunity structures with a focus on the political context, resource mobilization analysing financial, human or symbolic resources, collective identity with development of belonging, and framing with a focus on how to express and narrate discontent and protest (Della Porta/Diani 2006; in a nutshell: Daniel/Neubert 2019, 7-9). Social movements mostly integrate different strands of protest, and they are centred around political action. They are fluid and often instable without a clear structure. Therefore, self-regulation is not really possible and does not play an important role in the analysis of social movements. However, social movements can be transformed into more stable structures of self-organisation. In this case their analysis points first to questions of their position in governance structures in context with the state or as part of civil society, and second to questions of the internal organisation of the stable self-organised group.

For our analysis of (local) self-organisation and local self-regulation, the general governance debate and the debate on civil society are especially important. The governance debate intensified in the 1980s. Whereas in the anglophone debate questions of corporate governance were quite important, in Germany the debate focused more on state governance in combination with non-state actors and self-regulation of non-economic and non-statal actors. For our purpose this strand is of particular interest. At the beginning, the term used in Germany was "*Steuerung*" with two different English translations. The German debate developed from the perspective of sociology which translated *Steuerung* as "guidance".[2] This sociological perspective identified three basic types of guidance marked as basic principles of social order: hierarchy with a subordination regulated by power, market regulated by a market-price mechanism and solidarity as co-operation based on common interest (Gretschmann 1986; Hegner 1985; Kaufmann 1984).[3] This understanding of guidance has been transferred to policy research. In policy research *Steuerung* has later been translated as "governance". Governance points at the question of how different actors in the political field are co-ordinated (Mayntz/Scharpf 1995). The basic types of governance are hierarchy and market, which were soon supplemented by networks or negotiation referring to federations/associations, clans, firms, NGOs (Börzel/Risse 2010, 114; Mayntz 2009, 45; Wald/Jansen 2007, 94). The main point was that regulation could not be accomplished by a well-meaning state alone but needed to include collective actors in a sector that bargains under the wise direction of the government. This understanding led to the concept of "actor-centred institutionalism" (Streeck 2015, 72). Under the influence of the anglophone governance debate, the perspective widened and included further international and multilateral levels of governance (Mayntz 2009, 44) and the term "governance" also entered publications in German. Both the sociological notion of guidance and the policy research notion of governance share the topic of solving societal tasks and problems but with a different twist. The sociological understanding focuses on basic principles of social order in general while the now dominate policy research's notion of governance focuses on different types of political processes in multi-actor settings. (Mayntz 2009, 43-46; for an overview: Benz et al. 2007). As we will see later in the analytical section on *Implications for the analysis of the constitution of self-organisation and self-regulation* this is more than just a change of wording. Especially for the analysis of the constitution of self-organised groups and defined social entities, the sociological debate is more suitable. It helps to identify differences regarding the internal constitution of groups and entities. To avoid confusion with the political science understanding I prefer the more neutral term "self-regulation" over self-governance.[4]

---

[2] For an early link between the German and the anglophone debate see: Kaufmann et al. (1986b).

[3] Streeck/Schmitter (1985) proposed "association" as a fourth basic principle of social order. I will discuss this later in the section "Implications for the analysis…"

[4] We are confronted here, as in other cases, with the question of appropriate translation of terms. The German term "*Steuerung*" can be found as "*Selbst-Steuerung*" in sociological publications with regard to different institutions and actors. The English translation "guidance" used by protagonists of the German sociological debate

The sociological debate on regulation (in the sense of *Steuerung*) discusses a wide range of social empirical contexts. For example, Kaufmann also refers to what he calls "traditional solidarity" as opposed to solidarity in "modern" societies (Kaufmann 1984, 166f.). Thus, he is in principle open to include pre-modern social features in his analysis. In contrast, the theory of self-governance refers, at least implicitly, to the existence of democratic institutions and the rule of law including legitimate institutions with a certain degree of openness expressed by an orientation towards public interest (Mayntz 2009, 43, 49). At the beginning of this debate, the dominating positivist approaches implied that societal goals could be rationally defined, which was not the case (Streeck 2015, 69). What still dominates is the assumption that self-regulation and governance follow public interest or aim to benefit the common good. Streeck points out that the theory of self-governance follows the normative intention to solve societal problems with the goal of fair and just solutions that contradict radical 'neo-liberal' understanding with a consistent orientation towards efficiency (Streeck 2015, 75). Thus, the governance debate mostly refers directly or indirectly to generally accepted norms and values, in the case of the societies under study: liberal democratic values. Critical voices are, however, still in the minority (Greven 2008, 27; Lauth/Thiery 2020, 295).

The concept of civil society is another important source of the notion of self-organisation and self-regulation. It presents a general concept of the relation between the state and society and its self-organisation. The concept has its roots in the 18th century with Hegel's "*bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*" (to be translated either as bourgeois or civil society) (Baumgarten et al. 2011; Neubert 2015, 132-134). The current understanding of civil society was mainly influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville who was impressed by the democratic USA and described this system in his book "De la démocratie en Amérique" in 1835 (Tocqueville 1954). For him civil society represents the idea that people regulate the issues themselves at the community level. This points at self-regulation and at the notions of self-determination and of freedom as the core element of American citizenship. The local self-regulation offers space for initiative and action against the background of communitarian values. Without using the expression itself, Tocqueville's understanding of civil society includes the concept of subsidiarity, in which the state offers a legal framework for self-regulation and only takes care of issues that could not be regulated at the level of the communities.

In the recent 'International Encyclopaedia of Civil Society,' civil society is defined as: "the arena of unconstrained collective action, arranged around shared interests, tasks

---

(Kaufmann et al. 1986a) cannot be further developed to "self-guidance" because "self-guidance" is coined by psychology as a term referring to individual persons. This is another reason to prefer the term "self-regulation".

Knowing that the terms self-regulation and self-organisation overlap, I follow the terminology used in the LoSAM research unit (using self-regulation instead of self-governance): "While self-governance focuses on the results, self-organization refers to the process." (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 10).

and values' ('International Encyclopaedia of Civil Society': Irish 2010, 166).[5] Social movements may be part of civil society.[6] But civil society includes a wide range of more or less organised associations, for example charities, non-governmental organizations, community-based groups, women's groups, faith-based groups and organisations, professional and business associations or trade unions who also practice a kind of "self-regulation". This makes civil society an important conceptual reference for our analysis. Even when it is not directly expressed, civil society is usually linked to democratic values as already expressed by Tocqueville. Even in the Marxist understanding of civil society as a place of political struggle where bourgeois hegemony should be challenged, the aim is a real democracy among the majority of the workers, according to Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971, 106-114; Forgacs 2000; Kebir 1991; Merkens 2004).

This short review of the theoretical background of self-organisation shows certain implications that come with the concepts of self-regulation and self-organisation. From the debates on regulation and governance in sociology and political science we can see the assumption of the existence of legitimate institutions with a certain openness, a basic understanding of the importance of "common good" and just solutions. The reference to civil society especially in the Tocquevillian communitarian understanding sees the community as the centre of self-organisation and self-regulation with collaborative, solidary decision making for the solving of collective problems based on the needs of the community or group. Whether intended or not, the concepts of "local self-regulation" and "local self-organisation" are often linked with democratic ideals. This leads to an, at least, implicit value orientation of these concepts.

3 Examples of self-organisation and self-regulation

There are a great number of examples of self-organisation and self-regulation that represent the democratic values of these concepts. With the reference to Tocqueville, the local administrative communities (counties, municipalities) in the USA that have a wide-ranging level of autonomy are the first example. Even today in the USA communities elect not only their political representatives but also the head of police (sheriff), the judges and other leading positions. The national and state level provide the main laws that may be supplemented by local by-laws. The communities also organise schools and have a far-reaching level of autonomy that goes far beyond the local self-regulation in other decentralised countries of the Global North.

---

[5] The encyclopaedia follows in its outline and the choice of keywords the Tocquevillian understanding of "civil society". I thank Rene Pfeilschifter who called my attention to this point.

[6] However, some social movements support uncivil and undemocratic values, such as fascist or racist movements. They are still social movements, but they divert from the basic understanding of civil society (for the relation between civil society and social movements see: Daniel/Neubert 2019).

The existence of a community of self-organisation and self-regulation cannot be taken for granted. I would like to begin with examples from the time of industrialisation. With the industrial revolution in the 19th century, a growing part of the population, mainly former agricultural workers, small farmers, outworkers and farmhands from agricultural areas moved to new industrial cities. Especially at the beginning of the 19th century before trade unions and workers' associations and new political parties were formed, these people faced a loss of former community relations as a consequence of capitalistic development. As Karl Polanyi put it, capitalism triggered a process of disembedding or the separation of economic structure from social structure (Polanyi 1995).[7] The consequence of an uncontrolled economic development was the dissolution of the social fabric. Even after the formation of workers' associations and trade unions, a considerable part of the unqualified workers had no permanent employment nor secure housing and moved frequently to search for new employment.[8] Already at the beginning of the 19th century, the British entrepreneur Robert Owen reacted with a (utopian) philanthropic experiment that counteracted the pauperisation and uprooting of industrial workers (for the following see: Brie 2015; for Owen's ideas see: Owen 1991 [at first 1813]).[9] The core idea was to create a humane working relationship in a new community of workers in a production plant. His model included fair payment, proper working and housing conditions, free schooling for children and leisure opportunities. He was socially and economically quite successful and his "New Lanark factory" in U.K. created a new community as a kind of counter world to capitalist production and exploitation. However, it was still under his personal paternalistic rule. This first successful step led to early socialist thinking and the new model of a self-organised and self-governed community that works and consumes together. He started the project "New Harmony" in the USA with a group of like-minded philanthropes, but with less success than his British New Lanark factory. The ideal plan never materialised either economically or socially. The legal constitution and status of the workers who ideally should participate in the profit and the decision making remained unclear and the mix of poor workers and idealist middle-class members did not form a new community. However, alone in the USA 130 similar experiments with socialist and/or religious protestant background started (Brie 2015, 32). Despite the widespread failure of these production and consumption communities, they are the predecessors of many current projects.

One established and quite old example are the Amish in the USA (for the following see: Hostetler 1993). This protestant group from Germany and Switzerland first formed a typical Christian migrant community with their own theological interpretation of the Bible that settled in the U.S. and Canadian countryside. The contemporary

---

[7] The nascent civil society in the early 19th century was mostly formed from members of more privileged parts of the society as the examples from Trentmann (2000) show.

[8] A very detailed documentation of this fundamental process of change from a Marxian perspective is given by Kuczynski (1953ff.).

[9] Polanyi mentions Owen as one of the important reactions to the process of disembedding (Polanyi 1995, 178ff.)

Amish communities began to form in the 1860s as groups that distanced themselves from the developments of modernity with regard to technology, new forms of social norms and public life. They decided to keep their way of life and did not take part in the ongoing societal, economic and political developments in the USA and Canada. This rejection of modernity especially draws attention to the Amish today. They are farmers and produce traditional handicrafts and mainly adhere to a 19th century life-style with regard to clothing and technological equipment. They rarely own any modern machinery or electronics or cars. There are only a few exceptions such having a landline telephone or the use of other people's cars in exceptional cases. Their communities are still separate from other communities, and they organize and govern themselves. They have a democratic decision-making process with male leaders chosen by a combination of random selection and election who run the everyday business. Two times a year they have a bigger meeting to discuss crucial questions. New rules need a consensus of all male members. Minorities that do not succeed with their ideas might accept the decisions hoping that the majority ratio might change. Those who are not content with decisions might leave and found a new small community. In the end, important decisions are made according to the grass-roots democracy principle. Members might leave the Amish community but there are still around 300,000 Amish living in different communities (www.amish-people.de). This underlines the fact that these self-organised communities are sustainable.

Another striking example of self-organised and self-governed communities are Israeli kibbutzim (see: Spiro 2004; for a detailed ethnography see: Spiro 1956). The first kibbutz started in the early 20th century founded by Jewish Russian migrants after the failed 1905 revolution (Spiro 2004, 557). They combined Zionist ideas with socialist principles. The main kibbutzim movement developed after the founding of the Israeli state in 1948. The basic principles of the classic kibbutzim were:

> "(1) members live on, and make their living from, the land; (2) property is collectively owned; (3) goods and services are distributed according to 'need'; (4) luxurious living is eschewed; and (5) equality is the dominant mode of social relations." (Spiro 2004, 557)

This radical notion of equality – including males and females – goes together with similar living and working conditions for all members, similar equipment with restricted personal consumption including similar clothing. Every member is supposed to have the same value regarding access to leadings positions. These positions rotate every three years and do not carry any privileges. The group is more important than the individual and the members have a mutual responsibility to each other. Togetherness is a crucial value, and the members see themselves as a large family. Even when couples have their own small premises the children live in children houses where members of the kibbutz formally rear and train them. Work is jointly organized and manual work is held in high esteem. At the beginning, consumption followed the principle of "ascetism" or limited to one's basic needs (Spiro 2004, 558f). These kibbutzim played an important role in the development of Israel and in the middle of the 1960s, a total of 85,000 people lived in 229 kibbutzim. With just three percent of the Israeli

population, they contributed 33 % percent of the gross national farm product (Spiro 2004, 559). This rigid social order was part of the common conviction of the members. However, for the second generation who did not decide themselves to be part of a kibbutz this could also be seen as a forced community. This observation leads Goldenberg and Wekerle (Goldenberg/Wekerle 1972) to draw parallels to Goffman's notion of a total institution such as orphanages, army barracks, prisons, monasteries (Goffman 1961). One reaction was that this classical kibbutz-model changed step by step. The strict rules were loosened. Members gained more room for individuality and privacy, the standards of life improved with more possibilities of consumption beyond the strict limitation to basic needs. This included the ability to keep more personal belongings aside the basic principle of joint production and consumption. These changes came from younger members born and educated in the kibbutzim who did not freely decide to join a kibbutz. Some even leave the kibbutz especially when they disagree with the idea of collectively shared property. The classic type of kibbutz is an especially striking example of the ideal romantic notion of self-organisation and self-regulation and even the contemporary kibbutzim realise these basic values oriented at the common good of the kibbutz community. However, the more distanced attitude of the younger generations born and raised in the kibbutzim shows that the value orientation does not automatically transfer via education.

Again, in the USA we find a more recent development that has influenced communal notions. In 1966 a new counterculture movement started in San Francisco and gained world importance: the "hippies". They moved to the San Francisco Haight Ashbury district "in search of love, peace, community and self" (Ashbolt 2007). "Hippies constituted a community in that they possessed a collective style (revolving around drugs, music, fashion generally), which brought them together no matter where they were." (Ashbolt 2007, 40). Together with the wider protest against the Vietnam war and a notion of free sexuality, the label of "love and peace" directly corresponds with that movement. It also closely interacted with rock music and influenced the general youth culture of the time. This movement was not a closed commune of people living and working together but it was much more "[...] an insubstantial or amorphous sense of community" (Ashbolt 2007, 40). Whereas the San Francisco movement slowed down, and Haight Ashbury transformed into an alternative yet settled district, the utopian ideas were still around (Ashbolt 2007, 45) and influenced later movements not only in the USA but in many parts of the Global North.[10] This movement expressed utopian dreams that became a point of reference even when they were not achieved (Ashbolt 2007, 45).

A similar movement took place in rural areas of North America where so-called "hippie communes" were founded and attracted quite some media interest. Clothing and habits were reminiscent of the San Francisco movement and there were certain links.

---

[10] A number of hippies moved for different reasons to places in the Global South where they formed hippie communities. One of the largest concentrations of (former) hippies can be found in Goa/India.

But Timothy Miller underlines they were not a simple outcome of the San Francisco hippie movement but started even a little bit earlier and some of them even outlived the short-lasted San Francisco boom (Miller 1992). These communes developed more or less in the older tradition of closed local communities with their own set of values and practices, like the U.S. Owenist and other socialist communities and religious groups like the Amish and others. The hippie communes followed an alternative life-style with a communal understanding and often with common ownership of goods produced in a rural setting. Beside these communalities they had particular features such as open membership, the use of drugs (at the time often LSD), and as Timothy Miller puts it a "[...] flamboyant outrageousness that thumbed its nose at the rest of society" (Miller 1992, 79). In addition, they rejected restrictions of sexual behaviour (Miller 1992, 80) and offered their members the space to perform all kinds of fine arts (Miller 1992, 87). The pacifism of the hippie movement lives on in these communities who also refuse any kind of hierarchy resulting in a more or less anarchic structure (Miller 1992, 87). Together with open membership and membership fluctuation, this lifestyle attracts freeloaders and misfits living at the expense of the community. Against all odds some of these communes continue to survive even today. They also might have influenced more recent utopian communities that combine the strict com-munalist idea and the critical position on consumption in search of a sustainable way of living (Daniel/Klapeer 2019, 19f.).

When the San Francisco youth movement reached Europe via the media and as part of the youth culture linked with rock music this led to the foundation of many small communes both in urban and rural areas. One project became especially important, "Freetown Christiana". In 1971 a group of people occupied an unused military com-plex in the middle of Copenhagen and started a project of alternative urban living. They tried to achieve legal status with mixed success. Freetown Christiana still exists today even though its legal status remains contested. The basic notion of freedom al-lows individuals to pursue their understanding of urban living. As in the hippie cul-ture, drugs play a role in the lifestyle and drug dealing is accepted. This contradicts Danish law and is a recurrent issue with the Danish authorities. It can be seen as social experiment that had about 900 inhabitants in 2001 (Thörn et al. 2011, 8) which might still hold true today. The introduction of the edited book "Space for urban alterna-tives. Christiania 1971-2011" presents a comprehensive overview of the research on Freetown Christiana (Thörn et al. 2011). Researchers, the media and the Christiana population have used a variety of different labels expressing different notions of this project. One important understanding was coined quite at the beginning which pre-sented Christiana as a countermodel to materialism with an idea of practical socialism (without common assets) offering participation and self-determination with anarchic elements (Thörn et al. 2011, 12f.). Already in the 1970s Christiana also referred to ecological ideas of a sustainable community (Thörn et al. 2011, 13). It was and is a space for alternative culture. Despite some socialist references, the population is marked by a certain inequality described by slightly different categories: Aside from

the core group of activists that express common values, there is a group of passive followers and another group of people who join Christiana mainly for the access to cheap housing (Thörn et al. 2011, 20, 23). This underlines the fact that besides the self-organisation Christiana is not a closed community and not at all a commune, but rather an alternative organisation of urban living. This is the reason why there are recurrent conflicts resulting from the tension between individuality and community (Thörn et al. 2011, 26). However, Christiana is still a dynamic creative urban milieu that became a model or an inspiration for many alternative projects of urban living world-wide (Thörn et al. 2011, 29).

These examples prove that self-organisation and self-regulation according to the ideal concept is possible and it can be sustainable. They follow democratic or even anarchistic principles either by decision of the whole community or by elected leaders, and they support the notion of equality. However, in the case of the Amish participation, leadership is limited to male members only. At the same time, it is obvious that the Amish, Israeli kibbutzim and other projects of alternative living usually cover a limited group of people who mostly share a strong normative orientation and a strong sense of community with a clearly defined common way of living and producing. Changes to their way of life or to group regulations are possible if there is a wide-reaching consensus, for example the space for more individuality in kibbutzim or a moderate acceptance of some modern technological developments in Amish communities. However, the strong common normative orientation is rarely at stake. Members who disagree will leave and either form a new subgroup, as in the case of the Amish (or in projects of alternative living), or they leave the community behind as individual members. These "radical" examples of local self-organisation and self-regulation underline the importance of a very binding and strong set of values and norms for the sustainability of these groups. There are certainly many more cases as described here but referring to the society as a whole, they are still an exception. Freetown Christina is less a strict example in which activists with a strong common understanding of community live together with less committed inhabitants accompanied by ongoing tensions. Despite its prominence, it might stand for other less consistent but also successful and striking examples of (local) self-organisation and self-regulation.

This describes a gradual transition to the variety of associations at the core of civil society that can be found in most countries of the world and that are less closely integrated than the presented examples. They reach from self-help groups either of women working together, rotating saving groups to farmers' associations, self-help groups of people that share a common challenge such as Alcoholics Anonymous, or business associations, trade unions, sports clubs and associations, human rights and environmental NGOs, charities with local, national and worldwide activities and many more. This is what civil society is all about today. As we have known for some time, their activities and internal organisation do not always fully match the high expectation put on them (Edwards/Hulme 1996; Neubert 1997a, b). Nevertheless, they are a dynamic part of many societies. Compared to the more radical democratic examples,

they usually fulfil special functions and cover only a limited part of the life of their members. The shared interests, tasks and values that are the basis for their existence refer only to special topics, functions and tasks and leave the members of these associations and groups space for individual action and do not demand full compliance with a comprehensive life plan based on a common philosophy. It is the openness that makes them attractive combined with the option to join and to leave these associations and groups without serious consequences for one's life. This shows that for the analysis of self-organisation and self-regulation the coverage of activities of the members that are regulated and the compliance to norms and values expected from the members is an important point, and it is a point we will come back to in the analytic section of this paper. The reality of self-organisation and self-regulation often only partially follows the basic ideas and might not fulfil the romantic notion that comes with these concepts.

The examples presented thus far represent more or less the connotation of self-organisation as democratic and as oriented towards the common good. Especially the post-Owen communities, other socialist groups, the hippies, and the kibbutzim represent a romantic notion of self-organisation and self-regulation. However, when we only look at the core idea of self-organisation and self-regulation as the creation of a community that will organise and govern itself, we find communities that hardly represent democratic values and who understand the common good in a very different way. One example of a closely integrated community that opposes the romantic picture is the "Peoples Temple" founded by Jim Jones. After working for social justice in San Francisco and Los Angeles and criticising American capitalism, Jim Jones and a group of followers moved to Guyana and founded the "Peoples Temple". Their uncontested spiritual leader was Jim Jones. This group attracted worldwide attention in 1978. After accusations that the community was preparing a collective mass-suicide, an American congressman visited the community in Jonestown, Guyana. On his way back, he and his companions were assassinated. Shortly after, the Peoples Temple community with over 900 members including children committed mass suicide with a poisoned drink to pre-empt, as they were convinced, a deadly attack on their compound (Moore 2000, 2013; Robbins 2003). The event triggered official investigations by U.S. government institutions, research by journalists and scholars that analysed and wrote about this extreme event (Barker 1986). The Peoples Temple is described as a socialist experiment, religious cult or doomsday cult or as mixture of all the above (Moore 2013, 313). The case attracted not only scholars from different disciplines but also conspiracy theories of various kinds (Moore 2000, 18-21). Against this background, a further analysis would require sound empirical data and an in-depth study. Despite the different interpretations of this event as a mass-suicide or murder, at least against the children, the poisoning itself is well documented. In the context of self-organisation and self-regulation, it shows that community norms and values and the understanding of a "common good" can vary extremely. Besides this extreme case, we also find other closed communities that are far away from liberal democratic values

and that follow nationalist right-wing authoritarian concepts, for example, small nationalist communities in Germany who try to detach from the German state (Schmidt 2014)[11] or the now defunct notorious fascist Colonia Dignidad run by German migrants in Chile that closely co-operated with the Pinochet regime (Falconer 2008).

The USA with its wide range of local autonomy and individual freedom also provides other well-known cases for self-organised communities that challenge the romantic notion that comes with the term of self-organisation. One prominent example is the Ku Klux Klan. Founded in 1866 in the southern state of Tennessee after the Civil War, it started as a fraternity with a limited political agenda, but driven by racist motives. It soon developed into a racist social movement of white Protestant Americans fighting for white supremacy, intimidating black community leaders and Northerners who supported the black community. For the Klan the enemies of Americanism were also Catholics, Jews and communists (Chalmers 1987, 5; Cunningham 2013, 26). Despite their violent actions they saw themselves as representing morality and law and order. From the beginning, the Klan used the typical iconography with long white sheets and hoods and secret rituals. It soon developed into a political organisation with relatively autonomous local groups ("klaverns"), with leaders called officers, and the "Grand Wizard" as the overall leader. Alone in North Carolina the Klan had up to 40,000 members. Locally they acted as vigilante groups which gained wide political support and managed to influence local and even state elections in the South by supporting racist candidates, When the Klan became more radical and violent including killings, the police began to go after them and Klan members were prosecuted. Only a few years after its foundation it lost popular support (Cunningham 2013, 17-22).[12] There were various attempts to revive the movement, but with limited success. This changed in 1915 when, a salesman (William Simmons) "refounded" the organisation by starting a small Ku Klux Klan group. A couple of years after the slow start the Klan grew rapidly in the 1920s. It created a hope for white middle class Americans, who "felt their status devalued by looming changes" (Cunningham 2013, 24), to stabilise their social position threatened by an agricultural crisis and changing patterns of industrial production (McVeighn 1999). The new leaders employed professional recruiting agents.

> "For the payment of ten dollars, the Klansman could become a member of the mysterious Invisible Empire, the masked protector of the virtue of white womanhood, and of one-hundred-percent Americanism." (Chalmers 1987, 115)

In only a few years membership grew to 5 million with a women's and a youth Klan (Cunningham 2013, 24).[13] The Klan was still violently fighting its enemies the African Americans, but it also attacked Jewish capitalism and Catholics (Chalmers 1987, 425). For a few years the Klan became a political force. At the top of the formal hierarchical

---

[11] I thank Christoph Mohamed-Klotzbach for this reference.
[12] For the most detailed description of the history of the Ku Klux Klan see Chalmers (1987).
[13] Alternative suggestion: 3 to 6 million see McVeighn (1999, 1463).

organisation was the "Imperial Wizard" followed by the "Grand Dragons" and the "Grand Titans" at the provincial level and with the Klansmen as ordinary members (Chalmers 1987, 116). At the same time, the local groups often acted on their own. Escalating violence and internal fights of the leadership about financial control weakened the organisation. As the Klan supported politicians who did not deliver on what they promised, the Klan's influence and structure deteriorated quickly (Cunningham 2013, 24-26). The main values of the Klan survived, and local groups often linked to local churches still met. The attempts to revive the Klan as a movement only had mixed success. Nevertheless, in the 1950s and 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement, Klansmen attacked civil rights activists and bombed churches (Chalmers 1987, 431) and more recently they were involved in the violence during rallies supporting Donald Trump. The Klan was and is a revitalisation of a social movement with locally organised groups driven by a xenophobic ideology supporting white supremacy. Complaints that the enemies, African Americans, the Jews and others, take their jobs and business point to the fear of losing their status they claim belongs to real white Americans. Thus, socio-economic claims are justified by cultural and moral supremacy. Like the Amish and other Protestant groups in America, they believe in the superiority of their particular morals, values and norms. But whereas the Christian and alternative communities that represent the ideal of local self-organisation life in their own "cosmos", the Klan has a political agenda to change the society back to a glorious past and they are willing to use violence including terror attacks to pursue their goal. However, like other groups, they have the feeling of a shared identity and belonging nurtured by the conviction of standing up for morals and the right values. The Ku Klux Klan is not an exceptional case. There are numerous right-wing and racist local organisations that organise themselves as militias and that played a prominent role especially at the end of Trump's presidency in protests against "the stolen election" and in the storming of the Capitol in January 2021 (Cooter 2013; Kutner 2020).

Vigilante groups who claim to be defending law and order and protecting the good or right-minded people from enemies can be found in many settings world-wide. Whereas the Ku Klux Klan often opposed the government who 'protected the real enemies', other vigilante groups gain legitimacy because they fill a gap left open by weak states or assumed weak state agents who do not fulfil the task of guaranteeing protection from crime. A vigilante group founded in the Nigerian city of Aba attracted some scholarly interest, the "Bakassi Boys".[14] In the city and especially at the markets people felt a strong increase in crime and rising number of incidents of witchcraft. From the view of the people the police constantly failed to provide security. As a reaction a group of traders took the initiative. They hired a group of over five hundred young men to act as informal police called the "Bakassi Boys". They paid full-time wages out of contributions from the market traders. The Bakassi Boys organised their activities themselves and their leaders even negotiated with the police (Harnischfeger 2001,

---

[14] Here I draw from Neubert (2011, 55).

2003). They were supposed provide the missing security and fight witchcraft. The Bakassi Boys pursued criminals and organised public executions of criminals and witches as a demonstration of their power, torture was an accepted practice of interrogation. They acted as police and judges at the same time. With this understanding they violated basic civil rights. In the beginning the weak state police tried to block the actions of the Bakassi Boys, but step by step the Bakassi Boys were accepted as a powerful reality and the police stopped interfering. The Bakassi Boys were successful and gained a wide amount support from the people. They were seen as different from the regular police, not as corrupt and with their fight against witchcraft shared the popular notion of crime and security and of wrong and right. It was the overlapping of their norms and values with the local norms and values that supported their legitimacy. Thus, they stood for the local understanding of order that diverted from the juridical understanding of law and security as provided by Nigerian laws. This also included the elicit compliance by simple force (Human Rights Watch 2002; Meagher 2007). Due to their success they spread over the wider region (Igbo state) and they were even formally registered (Meagher 2012, 1091). However, their strong position and missing effective control led to a certain derailment. They more and more abandoned the common sense of right and wrong and became a local power in their own right and acted for their own benefit while collaborating with local elites and ultimately transformed into a kind of shady security agency seen as threat to ordinary people (Meagher 2007).

Vigilante groups of this kind can be found in different parts of Africa filling the open space left by weak states and unreliable police forces. Kate Meagher also mentions Eastern Congo (Meagher 2012) as well as reports from Port Elizabeth in South Africa where the police are still trying to stop the vigilantes (Buur 2006). There are also rural areas groups that refer to a similar tradition as so-called hunter societies (*Dozo*) in the northern Ivory Coast that are used to close the security gaps, and in this case under the control of neo-traditional chiefs (Förster 2009). In Burkina Faso we find newly organised vigilante groups like the Bakassi Boys, the so-called *"Koglwéogo"* and also *"Dozo"* hunter societies like in Northern Ivory Coast (see LOSAM sub-project F: "Local Self-Governance for the Provision of Security", Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 123; Tiegna 2021; Tiegna/Zanté 2021).

A final and very extreme example are the local militias and vigilantes that perpetrated a large part of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 with 800,000 or more victims and 2.5 million refugees. The mass killing was a genocide in the true sense of the word, planned by extremist Hutu in the Rwandan government at the time. The victims were mainly ethnic Tutsi and a few democratic Hutu politicians were killed or forced to seek refuge outside of Rwanda. When the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel movement led by the Tutsi, took control the Hutu extremists and parts of the Hutu population also escaped into neighbouring countries. The NGO Human Rights Watch's analysis of government documents confirmed that the genocide was planned and cold bloodedly implemented by Hutu extremists in the administration (DesForges 1999). The genocide itself and the prior conflict is well researched. It started during the process

of externally forced democratisation and the subsequent civil war between the government and the RPF a group of former political refugees (mostly but not solely Tutsi). The multifaceted conflict was turned into a racial confrontation between Hutu extremists in the Rwandan government on the one hand and Tutsi rebels on the other hand. This simplification ignored democratic forces inside the Hutu political elite and Hutu opposition members in the Tutsi dominated rebel army. An interim peace agreement between RPF and the Hutu dominated Rwandan government failed after the shooting down of an airplane with the Rwandan and Burundi presidents on board.[15] This was the trigger for the final genocide organised by the Hutu extremists.[16] While there is no doubt that the Rwandan government and its administration were responsible for the genocide, this official responsibility is not sufficient enough to explain what happened. Most of the victims were killed by local militias and loosely organised local groups using archaic means like clubs and machetes. Local organisation and targeted activities of the government administration joined together and made the mass killing in the short time of roughly 100 days possible. This local element of the genocide requires some attention.

It started well before the genocide. Parallel to the ongoing escalation of the conflict and the more and more ethnic and racist reading of the conflict, radical Hutu leaders organised local militias (the best known are the *Interahamwe*). They received military training and were equipped with clubs and machetes. Together with less organised, often loosely organised local groups they were responsible for local violent attacks and pogroms against Tutsi with at least 2,000 victims (DesForges 1999, 87f.). The mostly young men acted as a mob driven by the mixture of hate, thrill and excitement about their own power. None of these atrocities were prosecuted. This created a culture of impunity (Wagner 1999). Violence became a legitimised ordinary means of political conflict (Neubert 2004). The radio station "*Radio Mille Collines*" and the radical newspaper "*Kagura*" spread racist propaganda against Tutsi and their "collaborators" and dehumanized them as "cockroaches" (African Rights 1995a; Chrétien 1991). When the genocide started, not only did security forces, the army and the administration become active, but the local Hutu militias, the newly founded "committees for civil defence" and other loosely organised local groups also became active. They followed the ongoing appeal on the radio "to do their work", rightly understood as the killing of Tutsi and of Hutu who tried to protect them and oppositional Hutu (African Rights I995a, XXII).

Once it became clear that killing was not only accepted but a politically supported option, the militias, the loosely organised groups, and new local committees for civil defence took more and more control over their local territory (their village or their neighbourhood in cities), set up check points that controlled mobility and blocked the

---

[15] It is widely assumed but not fully proved that Hutu extremists were responsible for the shooting.
[16] African Rights (1995a), Chrétien (1991), DesForges (1999), Guichaoua (1995), Marx (1997), Prunier (1995), Wagner (1998, 1999).

chances for Tutsi to escape. They tracked all Tutsi and people who dared to help or hide Tutsis. The genocide became a decentralised action carried out by locally self-organised groups who decided over life and death based on their own judgement. The testimonies of survivors documented in the African Rights Watch publication show this in frightening detail (African Rights 1995a). Not only did the organised or spontaneously formed vigilant groups take part, but people from the neighbourhood also joined in. They helped to track down Tutsi and their supporters and cheered when the killings took place or they actively took part in them. As we now know, women were also involved as killers (African Rights 1995b).[17]

The Rwandan genocide was possible through the combined action of a government administration that ensured that no government institution supported or offered the Tutsi protection, the army that supported the militias and local groups, and the militias and local groups themselves who conducted the mass killings at the local level. This extreme case dramatically shows how local self-organisation can be responsible for mass killing. Secondly, in this case local self-organisation acted in line with the extremists that took power in the government and set up the framework for mass killing using the administration and the army. Local self-organisation became the main instrument for the implementation of the planned genocide.[18]

These extreme cases from the Peoples Temple, to the Ku Klux Klan, the Bakassi Boys and to *Interahamwe* and loosely organised local groups in the Rwandan genocide show the normative openness of local self-organisation and self-regulation. There are no inherent barriers against extreme actions including the killing of "the others" defined via ethnicity, race and/or morality. This goes together with an extreme interpretation of the common good. The own group stands above all others, and this legitimises any form of violence against the dehumanised non-group members or dissenters (Ku Klux Klan, Rwandan genocide). Or the so-called "common good" justifies violence and suppression up to the point of torturing and killing deviants (Bakassi Boys and other vigilantes acting as security forces). Even a collective suicide can be committed for the sake of one's own faith like the Peoples Temple and their Jonestown massacre. In contrast to these violent cases, the first set of examples presented here is more or less oriented around liberal concepts of freedom, self-determination and a humanitarian understanding of the common good. They represent, at least roughly, the expectations raised implicitly in the theoretical debate.

The organisational features of self-organisation are as diverse as their value orientations. Some follow the ideal concept of self-organisation and self-regulation; they are democratic in the sense that all members may participate in decision making, often even via direct vote; and if there are elected leaders, they are directly accountable to

---

[17] Others were also coerced to kill (African Rights 1995b, 41-52).
[18] One might interpret this "delegation" of mass murder to the local level as a perverted form of subsidiary government.

the members. The Jonestown massacre is an example of hierarchy and complete sub-mission as part of self-organisation and self-regulation. We can also find the combi-nation of leadership cult like in the Ku Klux Klan with the overall "Grand or Imperial Wizard" and relatively autonomous local cells (klaverns). Another kind of organisa-tion is the far-reaching local autonomy as in the case of the Bakassi Boys and other vigilante groups or the loosely organised local groups in the Rwandan genocide. The local processes of decision making are open with regard to rule, forms and content.

This diversity can also be observed in the relation to the state. Some groups like the Amish, hippie communes or the Peoples Temple claim a notion of self-determination and freedom away from the state. In a way this also applies to the kibbutzim, even though they see themselves as a perfect implementation of the overall reason for the State of Israel. Violent groups such as the Ku Klux Klan or the Bakassi Boys claim to solve collective problems based on the needs of the local or even national population in the name of a common good via their self-organisation and often also self-regula-tion. The main perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, the *Interahamwe*, other local militias, loosely organised groups and the committees for civil defence have a very different standpoint. They in principle accept the regulating and governing role of the state. An extreme case not discussed here is the Jihadist movement in Syria and Iraq that formed itself into the "Islamic State" (Al-Tamimi 2015; Schweitzer/Einav 2016).

These examples between a "real" sometimes even utopian democratic and liberal un-derstanding and extreme violent, racist und authoritarian notions of self-organisation present the wide scope of self-organisation and self-regulation. Their values, their re-cruitment of membership and their patterns of self-regulations vary extremely. The majority of cases of self-organisation and self-regulation are positioned between these poles. As some of our examples show, they refer to so-called "traditional" values (Bakassi Boys), position themselves critically toward the modern economy (Amish) or at least oppose capitalism (hippie movement). This reminds us of Elinor Ostrom's analysis that showed that self-organisation and self-regulation are not solely linked to modernity but also possible in pre-modern and modern settings.

There are also examples in ancient times of self-organisation and self-regulation. The research unit "Local Self-Governance in the Context of Weak Statehood in Antiquity and the Modern Era (LoSAM)" has already presented in its first phase a wide range of historical and contemporary cases of "Local Self-Governance in Central Anatolia from the Iron Age to the end of the Roman era (ca. 1100 BC to 400 AD)", "Local Self-gov-ernance in Judea in the Second Century BCE", "Local Self-Organizing, Urban Civil So-ciety and Church Norms: Alexandria and Antiocheia in the Roman Empire", "The Or-ganization of University Education and Credit Lending in immigrant communities of South Brazil", "Local Self-Governance for the Provision of Security: Vigilantes in Burkina Faso"," Urban Shadow Spaces in the Postcolonial State: Self-organization of Land and Water Resources in the Periphery of Maputo (Mozambique)", "Renewable Energy and Local Governance in China" (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 19-25).

This short discussion shows that once we detach our assessment of self-organisation and self-regulation from the values of the particular groups, there are striking similarities. The obvious differences between the groups are their values including their definition of the common good and their definition of the group. The implicit democratic, liberal notion with links to the concept of civil society of self-organisation is a product of the shared values of those who contribute to this debate and their focus on liberal democracies. When we really focus on the basic understanding of self-organisation and self-regulation in strict terms, the examples of violent, racist or extreme religious faith are part and parcel of self-organisation and self-regulation. They represent the hidden side of this phenomenon, which is often overlooked because they do not follow or even **contradict** our values of a "good society". In a way this misunderstanding compares to the previously mentioned and often overlooked difference between civil society based on liberal democratic notions and social movements that are not linked to particular values (Daniel/Neubert 2019).

4 Implications for the analysis of the constitution of self-organisation and self-regulation

The analytical debate on self-organisation and self-regulation focuses mainly on Europe and North America. Thus, it refers to settings within the framework of a strong modern state. This is in historical terms, and also with regard to the current situation, a special case. A large part of our political systems cannot be described as a strong state. This needs to be considered for a more nuanced analysis of self-organisation and self-regulation. Firstly, a descriptive approach to capture forms of self-organisation and self-regulation is a set of six simple questions, which are used in the "LoSAM" research unit: What is regulated? Who regulates? How are things regulated? Where does regulation happen? Why does it happen? How are local groups' relations with the state regulated? (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 13-16). This offers a systematic way to describe and compare cases with regard to their task, the setting in which they are active and in which way they act. This also includes cases of local self-governance in multi-actor settings. We might dig a bit deeper regarding the constitution of self-organised groups. Our examples show that there are several linked additional elements of self-organisation and self-regulation that need to be considered.

As we have seen, the values and norms of self-organised groups can vary extremely. However, the values do not automatically define the way the self-organised group is organised or how it works or how it is regulated. We need to look at the self-organised group with regard to membership, target group, internal constitution and legitimacy. This may also help us to understand at least some factors that might influence their stability.

As mentioned at the beginning, some publications criticise the implicit liberal democratic connotation of self-organisation and self-regulation that is found in theoretical

debates. The notions of "dark civil society" (Lauth 2003) and "bad civil society" (Chambers/Kopstein 2001) point at self-organisation as being distant from civil values and remind us of the normative openness of the concept of self-organisation. The definition of social movements, mentioned at the beginning, refers to the role of collective identity linked with common norms and values without specifying the values (Della Porta/Diani 2006, 20 ff.). Even if the majority of social movement studies prefer to deal with democratic and liberal social movements, we also find anti-democratic, racist and other movements that oppose liberal values (e.g. Loimeier 2012, 2015; Virchow 2017). Jeffrey Alexander who developed the notion of the "civil sphere" as a social theory linked with the concept of civil society (Alexander 2006) reminds us that the concepts of democracy and justice do not offer general rational solutions and answers for societal challenges. They are the result of values that are even contested between protagonists of civil values (Alexander 2015, 184-186). Streeck goes one step further. He states that even Etzioni – who provided, according to Streeck, the theoretically most advanced version of governance theory (Etzioni 1968) – could not answer the question in which direction governance should lead active society for its advancement (Streeck 2015, 70). The critical hints are often overlooked because we are much too often caught by our liberal and democratic values and norms when we deal with self-organisation and self-regulation. The examples discussed earlier obviously present a wide range of value orientations between "love and peace" in hippie communes and the participation in the Rwandan genocide in the case of Rwandan militias and the local loosely organised groups and committees for civil defence. Therefore, the definition of self-organisation provided by the LoSAM research unit, based on a discussion of different approaches, is very helpful:

> "Self-organization is understood here as an open collectivization process, through which common interests and positions are stabilized in social relationships, networks and often in a shared real-life 'locality', while groups are institutionalized through the mechanisms of solidarity and/or hierarchy." (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 10)

It refers to common interests and positions and a shared life-world. This shared life world may refer to a wide range of different norms and values. We will come back to the influence of norms and values later. We will first look at the constitution of self-organised groups or as the definition argues the institutionalisation through the mechanisms of solidarity or hierarchy. This starts with the simple question of who belongs to the group. When we look at local self-organisation, this might be all people of the spatial or political unit that describes the locality. However, the notion of a self-organised group refers to joint norms and values. The group may be open to (all) people who share specific interests, values and norms (inclusive membership). This applies for example to hippie communes or kibbutzim. Other groups recruit their members from particular social positions, from a particular ethnic background, particular religion or a particular race (exclusive membership), e.g. the Hutu based groups in the Rwandan genocide or the Ku Klux Klan whose self-image was and is based on white supremacy thus only white people – usually Protestants – could join. Also, inclusive

group membership may be restricted according to age – often only adult members are accepted – or it may be restricted according to gender (either exclusively men or women). The Bakassi Boys and many other vigilante groups would not accept women. The *Interahamwe* and the other groups who took part in the Rwandan genocide usually had male members even when some women were involved in the killings (African Rights 1995b). In the Ku Klux Klan historically all members were men. During the renaissance of the Klan in the 1920s, a women's Klan was organised, but the organisation in general was still dominated by men, especially after the Second World War. Other groups like Owenist, Amish, kibbutzim, hippies, the Peoples Temple included whole families who settled together in a chosen locality. Some groups have special procedures for new membership like initiation ceremonies or baptism in many religious groups. This is often linked with a formal decision on the part of new members. Others are much more informal and open like the hippie communes. In any case, common values and norms as an important foundation of the self-organised group also imply a certain pressure to conform to this common foundation. This may also result in the exclusion of members that do not follow the internal rules or contest the common values and norms.

For the analysis of the constitution of self-organised groups the mechanism of institutionalisation is crucial. The reference to hierarchy and solidarity refers to the debates on governance and the sociological debate on regulation (*Steuerung*). Here the difference between the political science governance debate and the German sociological debate on regulation (*Steuerung*) is relevant. Whereas the governance debate has been developed with an interest in multi-actor settings, the sociological debate points to principles of social order in general that can and are also applied to social groups and any other social entity. The term social order refers to the basic principles of social organisation with regard to the distribution of goods and influences and the internal structure of the social entity under study. Therefore, we again need to remind ourselves of the basic principles that were previously mentioned in the conceptual section (Gretschmann 1986; Hegner 1985; Kaufmann 1984) for a short summary see (Neubert 1997b, 63f.).[19] *Markets* are based on exchange and regulated by a market-price mechanism that co-ordinates the selfish motives of the individual or corporate actors. *Hierarchy* refers to institutionalised rule including the norm of subordination regulated by power. Goods are centrally acquired and redistributed. Hierarchy is linked to institutionalised rule and subordination. *Solidarity* refers to assumed common interests, norms and values of those who feel solidarity with each other. In the case of solidarity, common interest is more important than individual interest and the group co-operates even when this might contradict individual interests (Kaufmann

---

[19] For a similar typology see e.g. Brown/Korten (1991, 49-53) or Hyden (1990). This refers to basics of sociology and social anthropology. Talcott Parsons refers to types of structuration (market, bureaucracies and associations) (Parsons 1971, 22-26) and Karl Polanyi refers to different patterns of the transfer (exchange, redistribution and reciprocity) (Polanyi 1957, 250). Also, more recent publications follow this basic pattern see Lauth et al. (2019, 12).

1984, 160, 162). Solidarity expresses the ideas of reciprocity and the 'one for all' principle (Hegner 1986, 412). These three basic principles of social order describe the underlying reasoning and logic of social order and refer to decision-making but are not restricted to it.

Streeck/Schmitter (1985) proposed "association" as the fourth basic principle of social order. The main reason for this is to capture social entities that are neither based on market nor are they organised like the state and they also do not follow the principle of a family or clan-like community. At first sight, this is helpful because it captures the wide range of associations such as unions, professional associations, and other interest associations, one might also add NGOs. However, Streeck and Schmitter change the terminology from market, hierarchy, and solidarity to market, state and community. Thus, they use the terms state and community to focus on particular social entities and less on principles of social order. This applies even more for the fourth type, the association, with the basic principle of "inter- and intra-organizational concertation" (Streeck/Schmitter 1985, 125). The strength of the original sociological concept with three basic principles is the abstraction from particular social entities and the possibility of analysing every social entity according to the underlying principles of social order or as a particular mixture of the principles. The three-type concept also follows other basic sociological and anthropological typologies (see footnote 20).

Streeck and Schmitter's proposition represents an important move from the sociological debate to the governance debate. The governance debate uses somewhat different concepts referring to market, hierarchy and networks and/or negotiation (Wald/Jansen 2007, 94). Whereas the definition of market is similar to the sociological concept, there are differences with regard to the definition of hierarchy and especially to the third type network/negotiation. At the beginning hierarchy was seen in line with a state-like bureaucracy. In a more sophisticated understanding hierarchy is seen as stable relations between partners of transactions in a formal order with centralised allocation of information and interdependence of tasks. This understanding includes an acceptance of hierarchy based on a contract (e.g. between employer and employees) to include **the thinking** in particular social entities also enterprises. Networks and/or negotiation are less clearly defined. They are not restricted to transactions, and they are based on trust and may include friendship. At the same time, networks are seen as a hybrid of the continuum between market and hierarchy (Wald/Jansen 2007, 94-96). This deviates from the sociological understanding of the three basic and different principles of social order.

This difference especially between network/negotiation, on the one hand, and solidarity as an expression of the priority of group interest over individual interests on the other hand reflects the different analytical perspectives of the political science governance debate and the sociological debate. Governance theory focuses on multi-actor systems usually in the context of a state. The sociological analysis tries to capture all forms of social order. This includes the state, any other hierarchical order and

different social entities also with regard to their internal organisation. The most important difference lies in the description of the third element aside of market hierarchy/state. It can be seen as solidarity, negotiation and/or network or it is even split between two other types community and association. Therefore, we need to choose between the different terminologies. For the governance debate, a typology with a focus on particular social entities might be appropriate. But the definition of the third type still varies as network and/or negotiation and the proposition to see the third type either as a combination of market and hierarchy or the contradicting proposition to add a fourth type. For a general analytical tool, a more abstract and clearly defined concept that is open and not bounded to particular social entities seems to be more appropriate. Especially when we accept that these categories are ideal types and real social entities are a mixture of these types.

For the purpose of analysing self-organised groups, market with its focus on the co-ordination of different actors does not apply. Solidarity and hierarchy are the most relevant because they also apply to the internal regulation of self-organised social groups. They refer to the question of the internal structure or the basic principles of regulation. The hierarchical mode of social order points to decision making being a centre following the interpretation of the common values and the common good by the ruling power. Decisions are taken by a person or a small ruling group based on their own authoritative power without being delegated or elected while, at the same, time, excluding all other members from the right to decide. This comes close to an authoritarian structure or restrictive participation as described by Mohamad-Klotzbach (2021). It also includes the notion of "command and obey" and goes together with an unequal distribution of power. An extreme case is the Peoples Temple, where the understanding of common good led to a joint mass suicide. Other examples for hierarchical groups are the Bakassi Boys and the Rwandan *Interahamwe*. The concentration of power also allows for following goals diverting from the group interest under the garb of the common good.

The principle of solidarity builds on a shared understanding of the common good. When we focus on the internal structure of groups it does not exactly point out how decisions are made; but solidarity describes the reasoning behind the internal order including decision-making. The solidarity mode of social order works perfectly with decisions that are taken jointly by all group members (e.g. hippie communes). This comes close to an egalitarian structure with comprehensive participation as described by Mohamad-Klotzbach (2021). It is also possible to delegate decision-making to leading figures, appointed via formal elections, informally or just accepted as leaders. In principle, all members could be leaders and decisions are not simply commands to be obeyed but need to be generally accepted even when some members do not agree. This applies for instance to the Amish or the kibbutzim. Leaders are bound by the solidarity principle and the principle of equality of all members, and they are accountable to the

members.[20] More precisely, we can say "full group members". Groups that include e.g. families usually restrict the right to participate in decision-making to adults, and some groups, depending on their values, restrict decision making to gender (usually men) or social position. Based on the values of the group, members without the right to participate in decision-making are represented by the "full members", e.g. via the representatives of their family. All these regulations are legitimized by the common values and norms of the self-governed group.[21]

Hierarchy and solidarity as basic principles of social order are ideal types. In the real world we find different kinds of mixtures. Leaders of a solidarity-type self-organised group may accumulate a certain amount of power that is not easy to oppose, which gives their decisions a character of a command. On the other side, in hierarchical groups the ruling power may consider ordinary members' viewpoints in their decisions to find widely accepted solutions either voluntarily or because of pressure from the ordinary members. The ideal types of hierarchy and solidarity describe the poles of a continuum. In practice, the social order of a group is positioned on this continuum at the extremes or somewhere in between.

Another important element especially for self-regulation are the types of decision making and the implementation and the underlying principles of legitimisation. El-wert sees rule-based decision-making as one side and arbitrary decision-making on the other (Elwert 2001, 422). Rule-based decision-making follows a set of principles and fixed rules or laws and acts irrespective of person. Neither those who decide nor those who are affected by a decision or action matter. This includes routines and often activities can be carried out without requiring a discussion on the particular case. The ideal type of rule-based decision-making is a Weberian bureaucracy. Even though this concept was developed for states and big organisations, it may be applied to self-or-ganised groups that follow fixed rules that are either written or generally known and accepted. A good example are the kibbutzim. The opposite is an arbitrary mode of decision-making. Decisions are taken not according to fixed rules or laws but rather due to a particular situation, a particular case or the people involved. Who will be affected by a decision or activity is always taken into consideration. What counts with regard to people involved is power is personal influence, and personal relationships, and not the case as such. Arbitrary decision-making is possible when one leader or a small group of leaders makes a decision and when all members take part in the decision process. The hippie communes are good example of the latter case. This type of

---

[20] Of course, it is possible to differentiate between self-organised groups who take decisions jointly by all members and those who appoint leaders as "authorized representatives" which results in a "more differentiated hierarchy" (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 14). We will come back to this point later.

[21] Exclusion from group rights were and still are common in democracies that see themselves as egalitarian. In the early stages of democracy voting rights were often linked to income, and in the USA African Americans in the southern states were de facto excluded from voting until the 1950s and 1960s due to bureaucratic restrictions. We need to remind ourselves that in Western democracies women were excluded even in the 20th century. Even today children are excluded from voting. We also find these exclusions in families, where the parents decide for their children who are below the legal age.

decision-making is possible even when there are fixed rules. They are either very loosely interpreted or simply ignored. For political systems this is referred to as neo-patrimonialism (Erdmann/Engel 2006). In neo-patrimonialism decisions may be explained with regard to rules, but they are interpreted according to the people involved in a case and the preferences of the people in power. This also applies, as Sara Berry has shown, for most of the neo-traditional authorities in Africa even when they claim to follow their "traditional rules" (Berry 1993).

These two types of decision-making refer to different types of trust. In a nutshell, trust is intimately linked to predictability in social action, or like Georg Elwert (Elwert 1997, 284) puts it, trust creates "spaces of predictability". This goes in line with Luhmann who assumed that individuals are anxious about other people's reactions to their action. By placing trust in other people, individuals reduce the complexity of social action. Once we have trust we assume that we have a good chance of knowing what type of reaction will follow our social action (Luhmann 2000).[22] We usually link trust and social reactions to the relation with other people. We trust this or that person. However, trust can go beyond particular individuals. For Giddens, modernity includes, among other features, not only trust in people but also trust in "expert systems". Examples of this are the construction of houses or the production and operation and rules of surveillance of airplanes or of atomic power plants. Appropriate knowledge is only held by experts. The remaining members of society can only assume the effects of this knowledge as they trust the underlying expert knowledge and the expert systems based on that knowledge (Giddens 1993, 292). Whether expert systems can only be found in modernity might be debatable.[23] More important than the question of how long expert systems have existed is the conclusion that we can also put trust in anonymous institutions like "expert systems". This describes a fundamental difference to the trust in people. State or local administrations are not only structures of surveillance, but when they are organized according to a Weberian bureaucracy, they also deliver services such as technical or social infrastructure or courts that are available to interpret the law, all in principle, irrespective of the person concerned. The same holds true for smaller formal institutions like private service providers or associations and for decision-making in self-organised groups. This predictable way of acting creates trust and is the main source of the legitimacy of legal authority.

Usually (modern) expert systems or fixed rules of decision-making are based on written information or are formally codified. However, as long as the rules or the expert

---

[22] For Luhmann trust is only one way of solving the contingency of social actions linked to the calculation of risk. Another way is confidence that refrains from making a calculation of risk (Luhmann 2000, 99f.). For our purposes we can ignore the difference between trust and confidence because both refer to the management of insecurity with regard to the reaction to social actions.

[23] Experts existed before modernity (Rene Pfeilschifter, oral communication). Experts were individuals like master builders. The figure of a "universal scholar" shows that expertise in different fields was still accessible for one person. Giddens' expert systems refer to complex institutional networks that organise the knowledge of different experts to a system in which even the experts have to rely on the special knowledge of other experts. Trust is put in the system and no longer in a particular expert. In Giddens' understanding of modernity, wide parts of our everyday life rely on such expert systems e.g. with regard to transport, communication, production of goods etc.

knowledge exists as both practice and standardised knowledge that is independent from particular individuals, the rules may generate trust in institutions. Rule-based decision-making gains legitimacy via the trust in rules and the linked institution. Thus, the people involved in decision-making do not matter and may change without influencing the decisions that had been made.

The analysis of trust in institutions highlights the difference from trust in persons and its link to arbitrary decision-making. The ideal type of trust in persons does not need fixed rules. It is the trustworthiness of the person or the group that decides what people rely on. In this case the leader(s) or the group decide(s) arbitrarily while guided by moral, values, and power of judgment and responsibility. Trust in persons and their arbitrary decision-making and trust in institutions with decision-making bounded by fixed rules are also ideal types positioned at the opposite ends of the continuum. Self-regulated groups with rigid and inflexible rules might be an exception. However, rule-based decision-making can mostly be found for example in the kibbutzim and, with some limits, also in the Ku Klux Klan organisation (less in the local klaverns) between World War One and Two. The flexible arbitrary decision-making that adapts to a particular situation seems to be more frequent in self-organised groups. Again, the hippie communes are a good example but also the loosely organised locally acting groups in the Rwandan genocide.

The difference between trust in institutions and trust in persons should not be confused with the common difference between formal and informal institutions that point to the existence of written rules and codes versus informal rules and practices that constitute an institution. Informal institutions can also be rule-based (Bröchler/Lauth 2014). Trustful institutions may have a formal or an informal character. However, formal institutions, based on written rules, might gain legitimacy not because of the existence of formal written rules but because of the individual who represents the institution even when this person does not stick to the rules. Or representatives of formal institutions may act arbitrarily as in the case of nepotism or corruption. Whether they are seen as legitimate depends on the relation to the individual.

With regard to the internal structure of self-organised groups there are two crucial features, the basic principle of social order related to the constitution of the self-organisation and the fundament of trust and the corresponding type of decision-making related to self-regulation. This leads us to a two-dimensional typology with the dimension of social order between hierarchy and solidarity and the dimension of trust in institutions with rule-based decision-making and trust in persons with arbitrary decisions-making power. Thus, we end up with four ideal types. (For some of the ideal types we find easily examples in real life; other ideal types are less common in real life).

- hierarchical – rule-based decision-making with trust in institutions: e.g. the Ku Klux Klan between World War 1 und 2.[24]

- hierarchical – arbitrary decision-making with trust in persons: e.g. Peoples Temples, *Interahamwe;* less pronounced: Bakassi Boys, Owens New Larnak factory,

- solidarity – rule-based decision-making with trust in institutions: kibbutzim

- solidarity – arbitrary decision-making with trust in persons: e.g. hippie communes and Freetown Christiana activists; less pronounced: Amish, local vigilante groups and loosely organised local groups in the Rwandan genocide.

We again see that even with the restricted number of cases discussed in this paper, we have two types (hierarchical/trust in persons and solidarity/trust in persons) of groups with radically different value orientations.

These ideal types are confronted with a blurred reality. Real cases of self-organised and self-regulated groups usually do not fit completely in one of the types, but are rather situated between different types. They are not simply based on hierarchy or solidarity nor strictly marked by rule-based decision-making with trust in institutions or arbitrary decision-making with trust in persons. These criteria describe a continuum. The ideal types should simply help to navigate the blurred reality.[25]

Thus far we have looked at the constitution of the groups, their membership and internal organisation. We also need to be aware of the difference between self-organised groups regarding the target group of the activities whether it is only members or (also) non-members.[26] First, there are self-organised groups that direct their activities for the well-being of their members. We might coin this as inward versus outward orientation. This describes the range (*Reichweite*) of their activities. One ideal type is represented by self-organised groups that settle on their own usually far away from other settlements and/or those with a certain level of autonomy and independence from their surroundings, which is often accompanied by elements of subsistence. This applies to Owenist groups, Amish, rural hippie communes, kibbutzim or the Peoples Temple. They might sell products and buy things they don't produce. Most of their outside relations are simply a limited market exchange. With regard to their way of living, including their internal self-regulation all these groups try to distance themselves from the local administration and the state. We may address them as groups

---

[24] This type also describes bureaucratic authoritarian states e.g. Soviet or Chinese type socialism. It seems to be relatively uncommon in self-organised groups but not impossible.

[25] This typology obviously diverts from the governance types. Whereas Wald and Jansen position networks that are based on trust (they obviously refer to trust in persons) between market and hierarchy, in this typology networks would be positioned between solidarity and hierarchy. The concept of negotiation partly used in the governance debate together with network seems to be more open and might be positioned not only between hierarchy and solidarity but might also include elements of market. The systematic comparison of these typologies might need more conceptual work.

[26] This distinction was developed for NGOs and applies in a similar way to self-organised groups, in general (Neubert 1997a, 54f.; 2003, 259).

with "complete integration".[27] This puts a considerable amount of emphasis on conformity from the members with elements of Goffman's "total institution" (Goffman 1961) as already mentioned in regard to kibbutzim. However, these groups might be hierarchical, like the Peoples Temple, but there is no division between inmates and staff as in Goffman's examples of prisons, mental health clinics or concentration camps. The completely hierarchically integrated groups might refer in some respect to the other examples mentioned by Goffman like armies and monasteries. It is not surprising that we find some of the groups with complete integration in the USA. Laws in the USA leave considerable space for local communities to organise themselves including their particular local order, security and the education of children. Other self-organised groups have to fight for a comparable amount of autonomy like Freetown Christiana who negotiate in an ongoing process to secure their independence from the Danish government and the Copenhagen administration. The kibbutzim fit perfectly well in this category. They are part and parcel of the national identity of Israel and have an accepted role in society. Less separated are self-organised groups whose activities are directed towards the group members but refer only to particular activities or parts of their life. Examples are self-help groups, co-operatives and other associations with a clear and limited task. The members have a family life and also a profession to earn their living. Examples of this not discussed here in detail are Alcoholics Anonymous, or production co-operatives.

Secondly, there are also outward oriented self-organised groups whose activities clearly aim at non-members or at people outside the group. The Bakassi Boys and the shortly mentioned *Koglwéogo* or the *Dozo* hunters and other vigilante groups see themselves as providers of local security and claim to control the actions of the local people in general. The Ku Klux Klan follows this line and claims to protect morals, yet they have wider ambitions. They want to secure white supremacy against African American emancipation. The *Interahamwe* were even more radical and supported loosely and locally organised groups and committees for civil defence who saw themselves as conducting a necessary ethnic cleansing that ultimately resulted in the Rwandan genocide. These groups follow a programme to change society as whole in the name of a superior ideology. These examples refer to groups that act violently against others. But outward orientation is not restricted to violent groups. A typical example of this are Christian charitable orders like the prominent "Missionaries of Charity" founded by Mother Theresa in Kolkata, welfare organisations such as the Salvation Army or civil rights and ecological organisations such as Amnesty International and Green Peace. Many, but not all, NGOs are self-organised groups in the strict sense of the term.[28]

---

[27] I thank Rene Pfeilschifter for this term.

[28] NGOs may, despite being a non-profit organisation, act internally and externally as an enterprise or a "non-profit consulting company" (Neubert 1997a, 65). In Germany, large NGOs have been entitled as welfare corporations (*Wohlfahrtskonzerne*) (Lühr 1984).

Inward and outward orientation are also relevant for the stability of a self-organised group. If inward-oriented groups are not in conflict with their wider environment, their stability depends on the satisfaction and the unity of the members. As long as they share common interests, positions, norms and values and their material livelihood is stable they have a good chance of surviving. Some members might leave the group (like in the case of kibbutzim) others might join. Some of the Amish communities have existed for more than 150 years, meaning over many generations. There have been some adaptions to the changing world, but most of their daily life has not changed substantially. A few of the hippie communities also managed to survive for fifty years or more and often with many more adaptions to the changing environment. In these communes, we have some members who joined the community in its early days. The question whether they will survive after more generations to come is still open. The challenge is to transfer the norm and values to the children as next generation who did not decide for themselves to join the community. Another example of stable inward oriented groups are some orders who organise their life in seclusion within the confines of a monastery. Here all members join voluntarily.

Outward-oriented self-organised groups need not only generate internal support, but they also need external acceptance. The Bakassi Boys were most welcome as providers of security and of "law and order" at the beginning. The more they gained self-confidence and developed into a power in their own right while abandoning the common sense of right and wrong, the less legitimate they were seen from the people's perspective. They transformed themselves from a self-organised group into a kind of shady commercial security agency. The Ku Klux Klan was strong in a political environment marked by hate and racism. With the decrease in open race conflicts the Klan lost its wider support and membership but still managed to survive. Internal power conflicts were also a reason for its loss of support and significance. However, whenever the race conflict resurges in the USA, the Ku Klux Klan and its symbols gain some importance again. The *Interahamwe* and the supporting local groups are a striking example of the significance of the societal context of self-organised groups. The *Interahamwe* were founded in a situation of massive ethnic tensions and conflict. They and the supporting local groups became main perpetrators of the genocide. But with the advances and the ultimate military victory of the RPF they became the main targets of the conquering army and were either killed, jailed and prosecuted or they managed to flee to neighbouring countries. Some of the leaders re-organised themselves and founded militias terrorising the people in Eastern D.R. Congo.

Many outward oriented self-organised groups do survive. The best examples are the aforementioned Christian orders, welfare organisations and NGOs in general. Against this background we might depict the typology of self-organised groups in the two-dimensional typology and mark their in- or outward-orientation (see annex 1).

5   Conclusion

The examples presented in this paper show the wide variety of self-organisation. These were groups that represent the liberal democratic ideals of local self-organisation and self-regulation and there are many more groups like the numerous associations of civil society including co-operatives, self-help groups, NGOs and others. Once we widen our perspective, cases that challenge the liberal democratic ideal of self-organisation are easy to identify. The Bakassi Boys and other local vigilantes who claim to fill the need for security at the local level that the weak state does not provide do not fulfil liberal democratic expectations but they might fulfil local needs. The *Interahamwe* and the loosely organised local groups that committed large parts of Rwandan genocide contradict our positive image of self-organisation and self-regulation even more. However, seen from an analytic standpoint, they are self-organised and self-regulated. The case of the Ku Klux Klan shows that violent and racist self-organisation is not a phenomenon of the Global South but is also a reality in the Global North. Even though the Ku Klux Klan has lost the majority of its power and wider attraction since the 1960s, the armed right-wing militias in the USA may be seen as a kind of reiteration of the group just in a new garb.

Self-organisation and self-regulation describe a certain form or type of organisation centred around common values and norms. The different values and norms define the basic principle of social order either hierarchy or solidarity (or anywhere in between) that constitutes their institutionalisation, the aims of the group, the in- and outward orientation and the potential membership, including the definition of "full membership" and the "self" of the self-organised group. This again directly corresponds to the identity of the group. Identity might be defined via locality, language, ethnicity, social position and always via the shared values and norms. The main structural features resulting from the basic values are described by the two-dimensional typology within the dimension of social order between hierarchy and solidarity and the dimension of trust in institutions with rule-based decision-making and trust in persons with arbitrary decisions-making abilities. In addition to potential membership, we need to consider in- and outward orientation.

Even when it is easier to find hierarchical elements in racist and anti-liberal groups and patterns of solidarity in groups that follow liberal values and ideas of equality, it would be far too simple to assume that groups with racist values are always hierarchical and authoritarian. The local chapters (klaverns) of the Ku Klux Klan and the loosely organised local groups participating in the Rwandan genocide show that this ideology can be combined with elements of a social order marked by solidarity. The original New Larnak factory founded by Owen was marked by ideas of equality and of a more just society, but, at the same time, it was marked by its patriarchal structure and clear elements of hierarchy.

The clear-cut picture of four basic ideal types of self-organisation might also cover internal ambiguities and contradictions. Self-organisation marked by solidarity and arbitrary decision-making with trust in persons can and often does change into a more authoritarian type with a charismatic leader whose arguments and positions are widely accepted. This has been noted in the analysis of anti-authoritarian education and coined as "Neil authority".[29] A hierarchical self-organised group with arbitrary decision-making and trust in persons easily implies an incalculable reign of terror. However, the person(s) at the top are decisive. They might also be well-meaning and successfully support the common good of the group, e.g. Owen's New Larnak factory or some charismatic religious communities. A self-organised group that formally ad-heres to fixed rules with trust in institutions implies reliability and effective function-ality. However, "bureaucracy" has, not including Max Weber's ideal type, a mixed im-age at best and is often seen as ineffective and inefficient. Efficiency of decision mak-ing is independent from the basic principle of social order and the criteria of efficiency might also vary according to the value orientation of the self-organised group.

For a clear picture of the phenomenon of self-organised and self-governed groups we need an analytical approach that starts with the definition of self-organised groups being "[…] understood as an open process of collectivisation […] with often shared life-worldly 'locality' common interests and positions." (Lauth et al. 2019, 12). This gives us access to the phenomenon as a whole without any bias. For the analysis of the self-organised groups themselves we need to refer to the simple questions asking for what, whom, how, where and why the self-organised groups regulate (Pfeilschifter et al. 2020, 13-16). This is a first but crucial step. The more we want to assess a self-organised group beyond the analytical description of their internal organisation and tasks, the more the assessment refers to norms and values. They define the preferred principle of social order, and it depends on the values and norms of the group and what they define as the common good. The group suicide of the Peoples Temple was from the perspective of the followers seen as a means to save the group from evil and thus as way to fulfil the common good. Questions of participation, justice and even efficiency and effectiveness or of reliability are also essentially influenced by the val-ues and norms of the group. This creates a huge challenge for the analysis of self-organisation. The hidden side of self-organisation reminds us that only when the val-ues and norms of a self-organised group are included in the analysis will we get the full picture.

One final remark: The analysis of the constitution of self-organised groups focuses on the internal structure. However, self-organised groups are mostly part of a wider in-stitutional arrangement. Even fully integrated groups need at least the acceptance of the wider context. All other self-organised groups are in touch with other institutions

---

[29] Neill was one of the founders of the concept of antiauthoritarian education. Critiques showed that in his envi-ronment he was a charismatic leader that rarely saw any opposition.

and the state. Especially those with an outward orientation need to define their relationship to other institutions and at least indirectly e.g. to the legal regulations of the state. For the analysis of these relations, we must move to the level of a multi-actor system which is the topic of the governance debate. For the discussion on self-organised groups, these two levels, the internal constitution and their outward relations as part of a multi-actor institutional arrangement, need to be clearly differentiated.

References

African Rights (ed.) (1995a): Rwanda. Death, despair and defiance, revised edition ed. London.

African Rights (ed.) (1995b): Rwanda. Not so innocent. When woman become killers. London.

Al-Tamimi, Aymenn (2015): The evolution in Islamic State administration: The documentary evidence, Perspectives on Terrorism 9, 117–129.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2006): The civil sphere. New York.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2015): Nine theses on the civil sphere, in: Peter Kivisto / Guiseppe Sciortino (ed.): Solidarity, justice, and incorporation: Thinking through the civil sphere. Oxford et al., 172–189.

Anheier, Helmut K. / Seibel, Wolfgang (ed.) (1990): The Third sector: comparative studies of nonprofit organizations. Berlin.

Anheier, Helmut K. / Kendall, Jeremy (ed.) (2001): Third sector policy at the crossroads. An international nonprofit analysis. London.

Ardener, Shirley / Burman, Sandra (ed.) (1995): Money-go-rounds. The importance of rotating savings and credit Associations for women. Oxford/Washington.

Ashbolt, Anthony (2007): 'Go ask Alice': Remembering the summer of love forty years on, Australasian Journal of American Studies 26, 35–47.

Barker, Eileen (1986): Religious movements: Cult and anticult since Jonestown, Annual review of Sociology 12, 329–346.

Baumgarten, Britta / Gosewinkel, Dieter / Rucht, Dieter (2011): Civility: introductory notes on the history and systematic analysis of a concept, European Review of History/ Revue européenne d'histoire 18, 289–312.

Benz, Arthur / Lütz, Susanne / Schimank, Uwe / Simonis, Georg (2007): Handbuch Governance. Wiesbaden.

Berry, Sara S. (1993): No condition is permanent: the social dynamics of agrarian change in sub-saharan Afrika. Madison (Wisconsin).

Börzel, Tanja A. / Risse, Thomas (2010): Governance without a state: Can it work? Regulation & Governance 4, 113–134.

Brie, Michael (2015): Wie der Sozialismus praktisch wurde. Robert Owen – Reformer, Visionär, Experimentator, Philosophische Gespräche 40, 1–55.

Bröchler, Stephan / Lauth, Hans-Joachim (2014): Die Lokalisierung von Schneisen im Dickicht – Konzeptionelle Grundlegungen und empirische Befunde informaler Governance, Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft 8, 1–33.

Brown, David L. / Korten, David C. (1991): Working more effectively with nongovernmental organizations, in: Samuel Paul / Arturo Israel (ed.): Nongovernmental Organisations and the World Bank. Cooperation for development. Washington, 44–93.

Buur, Lars (2006): Reordering society: Vigilantism and expressions of sovereignty in Port Elizabeth's townships, Development and Change 37, 735–757.

Chalmers, David Mark (1987): Hooded Americanism: The history of the Ku Klux Klan. Durham.

Chambers, Simone / Kopstein, Jeffrey (2001): Bad civil society, Political Theory 29, 837–865.

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre (1991): Presse libre et propagande raciste au Rwanda. Kangura et "les 10 commandements du Hutu", Politique Africaine 42, 109–115.

Cooter, Amy B. (2013): Americanness, masculinity, and whiteness: How Michigan militia men navigate evolving social norms. PhD dissertation. Ann Arbour, University of Michigan.

Cunningham, David (2013): Klansville, USA: The rise and fall of the civil rights-era Ku Klux Klan. Oxford et al.

Daniel, Antje / Klapeer, Christine M. (2019): Einleitung. Wider dem Utopieverdruss. Queer*feministische Überlegungen zum Stand der Debatte, Femina Politica - Zeitschrift für feministische Politikwissenschaft 28, 9–31.

Daniel, Antje / Neubert, Dieter (2019): Civil society and social movements: Conceptual insights and challenges in African contexts, Critical African Studies 11, 176–192.

Della Porta, Donatella / Diani, Mario (2006): Social movements: An introduction. 2. ed. Oxford.

DesForges, Alison L. (1999): "Leave none to tell the story." Genocide in Rwanda. New York.

Edwards, Michael / Hulme, David (ed.) (1996): Beyond the magic bullet. NGO performance and accountability in post-cold war world. West Hartford (Connecticut).

Elwert, Georg (1997): Schmückendes Gerede und reale Entwicklungsbedingungen – Über soziokulturelle Bedingungen der Entwicklung, in: Manfred Schulz (ed.): Entwicklung: die Perspektive der Entwicklungssoziologie. Opladen, 261–290.

Elwert, Georg (2001): The command state in Africa. State deficiency, clientelism and power-locked economies, in: Steffen Wippel / Inse Cornelsen (ed.): Entwicklungspolitische Perspektiven im Kontext wachsender Komplexität. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Dieter Weiss. München/Bonn/London, 419–452.

Erdmann, Gero / Engel, Ulf (2006): Neopatrimonialism revisited. Beyond a catch-all concept. GIGA Working Paper 16. Hamburg, German Institute for Global and Area Studies.

Etzioni, Amitai (1968): The active society. New York.

Falconer, Bruce (2008): The torture colony: In a remote part of Chile, an evil German evangelist built a utopia whose members helped the Pinochet regime perform its foulest deeds, The American Scholar 77, 33–53.

Forgacs, David (ed.) (2000): The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935. New York.

Förster, Till (2009): Limiting violence – culture and the constitution of public norms: with case study from a stateless area, in: Anne Peters / Till Förster / Lucy Köchlin / Greta Fenner (ed.): The role of non-state actors in standard setting. Cambridge, 324–347.

Francesconi, Gian Nicola / Wouterse, Fleur (2021): The potential of land shareholding cooperatives for inclusive agribusiness development in Africa. Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics: online first.

Giddens, Anthony (1993): The nature of modernity, in: Anthony Giddens: The Giddens reader. Ed. by Philip Cassell. London, 285–315.

Goffman, Erving (1961): Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates. Garden City (New York).

Goldenberg, Sheldon / Wekerle, Gerda R. (1972): From utopia to total institution in a single generation: The Kibbutz and the Bruderhof, International Review of Modern Sociology 2, 224–232.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971): Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. Ed. by Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York.

Gretschmann, Klaus (1986): Solidarity and markets, in: Franz-Xaver Kaufmann et al. (ed.): Guidance, control, and evaluation in the public sector. Berlin/New York, 387–405.

Greven, Michael Th. (2008): „Politik "als Problemlösung und als vernachlässigte Problemursache. Anmerkungen zur Policy-Forschung, in: Frank Janning / Katrin Toens (ed.): Die Zukunft der Policy-Forschung. Wiesbaden, 23–33.

Guichaoua, André (ed.) (1995): Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994). Lille.

Harnischfeger, Johannes (2001): Die Bakassi-Boys in Nigeria. Vom Aufstieg der Milizen und dem Niedergang des Staates, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Auslandsinformationen 12, 13–46.

Harnischfeger, Johannes (2003): The Bakassi Boys: Fighting crime in Nigeria, Journal of Modern African Studies 41, 23–49.

Hegner, Friedhart (1985): Öffentliche Förderung von Selbsthilfe und Selbstorganisation, in: Karl-Dieter Keim / Laszlo A. Vaskovics (ed.): Wege zur Sozialplanung. Opladen, 156–181.

Hegner, Friedhart (1986): Solidarity and hierarchies: Institutional arrangements for the coordination of actions, in: Franz-Xaver Kaufmann et al. (ed.): Guidance, control and evaluation in the public sector. Berlin/New York, 407–429.

Hostetler, John A. (1993): Amish society. Baltimore/London.

Human Rights Watch (2002): The Bakassi Boys: The legitimization of murder and torture, Human Rights Watch 14.

Hyden, Goran (1990): The changing context of institutional development in Sub-Saharan Africa, in: World Bank (ed.): The long-term perspective study of sub-saharan Africa, Institutional and sociopolitical issues 3. Washington, 43–59.

Irish, Leon E. (2010): Civil law and civil society. In: Helmut K. Anheier / Stefan Toepler / Regina List (ed.), International encyclopedia of civil society, New York: Springer, 166-170.

Kaufmann, Franz-Xaver (1984): Solidarität als Steuerungsform - Erklärungsansätze bei Adam Smith, in: Franz-Xaver Kaufmann / Hans-Günter Krüsselberg (ed.): Markt, Staat und Solidarität bei Adam Smith. Frankfurt/New York, 158ff.

Kaufmann, Franz-Xaver / Majone, Giandomenico / Ostrom, Vincent (ed.) (1986a): Guidance, control and evaluation in the public sector. Berlin.

Kaufmann, Franz Xaver / Majone, Giandomenico / Ostrom, Vincent (ed.) (1986b): Guidance, control, and evaluation in the public sector. Berlin.

Kebir, Sabine (1991): Gramscis Zivilgesellschaft. Hamburg.

Kuczynski, Jürgen (1953ff.): Die Geschichte der der Lage der Arbeiter unter dem Kapitalismus. Dokumente und Studien zur Geschichte des arbeitenden Kindes in Deutschland von 1700 bis zur Gegenwart. Berlin.

Kutner, Samantha (2020): Swiping right: The allure of hyper masculinity and crypto-fascism for men who join the Proud Boys, ICCT Research Paper (May 2020), 1–33.

Lauth, Hans-Joachim (2003): Ambivalenzen der Zivilgesellschaft in Hinsicht auf Demokratie und soziale Inklusion, Nord-Süd aktuell 2, 223–232.

Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Fischer, Doris / Krüger, Dominique / Mohamad-Klotzbach, Christoph / Pfeilschifter, Rene / Rothfuß, Eberhard / Schachner, Andreas / Schmitz, Barbara / Werthmann, Katja (2019): Interdisziplinarität. eine Grundlegung zu Begriffen, Theorien und Methoden in einer geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungsgruppe. LoSAM Working Paper 2. Würzburg, LoSAM. https://opus.bibliothek.uni-wuerzburg.de/opus4-wuerzburg/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/19348/file/Lauth_et_al_LoSAMWorkingPaper2.pdf.

Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Thiery, Peter (2020): Politikfeldanalyse, in: Hans-Joachim Lauth / Christian Wagner (ed.): Politikwissenschaft: Eine Einführung. Paderborn, 271–303.

Loimeier, Roman (2012): Boko Haram: The development of a militant religious movement in Nigeria, Africa Spectrum 47, 137–155.

Loimeier, Roman (2015): Al-Shabab, Jihadisten in Nordmali, Boko Haram: ihre soziale Basis, INAMO 82, 8–17

Luhmann, Niklas (2000): Familiarity, confidence, trust: Problems and alternatives, in: Diego Gambetta (ed.): Trust, making and breaking cooperative relations. Oxford, 94–107.

Lühr, Volker (ed.) (1984): Die Dritte Welt vor der Tür? Zwischen christlichem Wohlfahrtskonzern und türkischem Frauenladen: Berichte über Projekte der 'Selbsthilfe' in Berlin. Saarbrücken/Fort Lauderdale.

Marx, Jörg (1997): Völkermord in Rwanda. Zur Genealogie einer unheilvollen Kulturwirkung. Eine diskurstheoretische Untersuchung. Hamburg.

Mayntz, Renate (2009): Über Governance. Institutionen und Prozesse politischer Regelungen. Frankfurt.

Mayntz, Renate / Scharpf, Fritz W. (1995): Steuerung und Selbstorganisation in staatsnahen Sektoren, in: Renate Mayntz / Fritz W. Scharpf (ed.): Gesellschaftliche Selbstregelung und politische Steuerung. Frankfurt, 9–38.

McVeighn, Rory (1999): Structural incentives for conservative mobilization: Power devaluation and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925, Social Forces 77, 1461–1496.

Meagher, Kate (2007): Hijacking civil society: the inside story of the Bakassi Boys vigilante group of south-eastern Nigeria, Journal of Modern African Studies 45, 89–115.

Meagher, Kate (2012): The strength of weak states? Non-state security forces and hybrid governance in Africa, Development and Change 43, 1073–1101.

Merkens, Andreas (2004): Erziehung und Bildung im Denken Antonio Gramscis. Eckpunkte einer intellektuellen und politischen Praxis, in: Gramsci, Antonio, Erziehung und Bildung, ed. by Andreas Merkens. Hamburg, 5–46.

Miller, Timothy (1992): The roots of the 1960s communal revival, American Studies 33, 73–93.

Mohamad-Klotzbach, Christoph (2021): Operationalisierungsvorschlag für die Binnenorganisation lokaler Selbstregelungen. Internal LoSAM Working Paper.

Moore, Rebecca (2000): Is the canon on Jonestown closed?, Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions 4, 7–27.

Moore, Rebecca (2013): Rhetoric, revolution, and resistance in Jonestown, Guyana, Journal of Religion and Violence 1, 303–321.

Neidhardt, Friedhelm / Rucht, Dieter (2001): Soziale Bewegungen und kollektive Aktionen, in: Hans Joas (ed.): Lehrbuch der Soziologie. Frankfurt, 533–556.

Neubert, Dieter (1997a): Development utopia re-visited. Non-governmental organisations in Africa, Sociologus 47, 51–77.

Neubert, Dieter (1997b): Entwicklungspolitische Hoffnungen und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit. Eine vergleichende Länderfallstudie von Nicht-Regierungsorganisationen in Kenia und Ruanda. Frankfurt/New York.

Neubert, Dieter (2004): Die gewalttätige gesellschaftliche Situation. Eine Analyse eskalierender Gewalt am Beispiel des ruandischen Genozids, in: Julia M. Eckert (ed.): Anthroplogie der Konflikte. Bielefeld, 121–135.

Neubert, Dieter (2011): Competing orders and the limits of local forms of socio-political organisation, in: Georg Klute / Birgit Embaló (ed.): The problem of violence. Local conflict settlement in contemporary Africa. Köln, 49–68.

Neubert, Dieter (2015): Die Fallen der „Rumsfeld Utopie". Das widersprüchliche Verhältnis zwischen Mittelschichten, Zivilgesellschaft und Demokratie, in: Gerhard Hauck / Ilse Lenz / Ingrid Wehr / Hanns Wienold (ed.): Entwicklung, Gewalt, Gedächtnis. Festschrift für Reinhart Kößler. Münster, 128–141.

Ostrom, Elinor (1990): Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action. Cambridge.

Owen, Robert (1991 [at first 1813]): A new view of society and other writings. London.

Parsons, Talcott (1971): The system of modern societies. Englewood Cliffs.

Pfeilschifter, Rene / Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Fischer, Doris / Rothfuß, Eberhard / Schachner, Andreas / Schmitz, Barbara / Werthmann, Katja (2020): Local self-governance in the context of weak statehood in Antiquity and the modern era. A programm for a fresh perspective LoSAM Working Papers 1. Würzburg, LoSAM. https://opus.bibliothek.uni-wuerzburg.de/opus4-wuerzburg/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/20737/file/Pfeilschifter_et_al_2020_LoSAM_Working_Paper1_English_Edition.pdf.

Polanyi, Karl (1957): The economy as an instituted process, in: Karl Polanyi / Conrad M. Arensberg / Harry W. Pearson (ed.): Trade and market in the early empires: economies in history and theory. New York, 243–270.

Polanyi, Karl (1995): The Great Transformation. Politische und ökonomische Ursprünge von Gesellschaften und Wirtschaftssystemen. Frankfurt a. M. (at first 1944).

Prunier, Gérard (1995): The Rwanda crisis 1959-1994. History of a genocide. London.

Robbins, Thomas (2003): Comparing incidents of extreme "Cult Violence": A comment on "Is the canon on Jonestown closed?", Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions 6, 365–375.

Schmidt, Anna (2014): Völkische Siedler/innen im ländlichen Raum: Basiswissen und Handlungsstrategien. Berlin.

Schweitzer, Yoram / Einav, Omer (ed.) (2016): The Islamic State: How viable is It? Tel Aviv.

Seibel, Hans Dieter (1992): Self-help groups as financial intermediaries: a training manual for self-help groups, banks and NGOs. Saarbrücken.

Spiro, Melford E. (1956): Kibbutz; venture in Utopia. Cambridge (Massachusetts).

Spiro, Melford E. (2004): Utopia and its discontents: The kibbutz and its historical vicissitudes, American Anthropologist 106, 556–568.

Streeck, Wolfgang (2015): Von der Gesellschaftssteuerung zur sozialen Kontrolle: Rückblick auf ein halbes Jahrhundert Soziologie in Theorie und Praxis, Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik 60, 63–80.

Streeck, Wolfgang / Schmitter, Philippe C. (1985): Community, market, state-and associations? The prospective contribution of interest governance to social order, European sociological review 1, 119–138.

Thörn, Hakan / Wassede, Cathrin / Nilson, Thomas (2011): Introduction: From 'social experiment' to 'urban alternative' – 40 Years of research on the Freetown, in: Hakan Thörn / Cathrin Wassede / Thomas Nilson (ed.): Space for urban alternatives. Göteborg, 7–38.

Tiegna, Janneke (2021): L'impact de groupes d'autodéfense et vigilantes dans l'extrémisme violent, in: Valérie Rouamba-Ouedraogo (ed.): Crise sécuritaire dans les pays du G5 Sahel: comprendre pour agir. Paris, 287–320.

Tiegna, Janneke / Zanté, Nestor (2021): Forschung über Bürgerwehren in Burkina Faso: Herausforderungen und Strategien des Feldzugangs. LoSAM Working Paper 4. Würzburg, LoSAM. https://opus.bibliothek.uni-wuerzburg.de/opus4-wuerzburg/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/24057/file/Tiegna_Zante_LoSAMWorkingPaper_4.pdf

Tocqueville, Alexis de (1954): Democracy in America. Reprint. New York.

Ton, Giel / de Grip, Karin / Lançon, Frédéric / Onumah, Gideon E. / Proctor, Felicity J. (2014): Empowering smallholder farmers in markets: Strengthening the advocacy capacities of national farmer organisations through collaborative research, Food Security 6, 261–273.

Trentmann, Frank (2000): Introduction: Paradoxes of civil society, in: Frank Trentmann (ed.): Paradoxes of civil society: New perspectives on modern German and British history. Oxford/New York, 3–46.

Virchow, Fabian (2017): Post-fascist right-wing social movements, in: Stefan Berger / Holger Nehring (ed.): The history of social movements in global perspective. London, 619–646.

Wagner, Michele D. (1998): All the bourgmestre's men: making sense of genocide in Rwanda, Africa Today 45, 25–36.

Wagner, Michele D. (1999): "Culture of impunity": discretionary justice in Rwanda's history, Revue francaise d'histoire d'outre-mer 324/325, 99–123.

Wald, Andreas / Jansen, Dorothea (2007): Netzwerke, in: Arthur Benz / Susanne Lütz / Uwe Schimank / Georg Simonis (ed.): Handbuch Governance. Wiesbaden, 93–105.

Annex 1 Typology of self-organised groups (inward-oriented: red, outward-oriented: blue)

Solidarity

Hippie communes	
Amish	Kibbutz
Vigilante groups (Rwandan genocide)	
	Large co-operatives
Arbitrary decision-making with trust in persons — Local Ku-Klux-Klan	**rule-based decision-making with trust in institutions**
First Owen community	
Bakassi Boys	
	Ku-Klux-Klan
Interahamwe Peoples Temple	

Hierarchy