

## WORKSHOP 9

### **Democratic Media: The battle for hearts and minds**

Beyond bullets and bombs, the battle for hearts and minds is on the rise. Today's wars are not only fought on physical battlefields, but also for human perception through the media. The so-called 'cognitive warfare' is in full swing as global wars escalate.

There is a struggle between various power elites for the hegemony of truth and opinion. This has been increasingly reflected in the media landscape and has confused minds. That's why we must reclaim the initiative and counter their narratives, which are locked into the logic of the capitalist system and power.

We must bring left, democratic socialist ideas back into the mainstream of society by organising democratic media from below. Political civil society - women, youth, workers and the oppressed - and their search for truth and discussions about a just and good life is our base for this.

The latest forms of communication have always been key tools for exerting and resisting power, as well as driving social change. They've been used to recruit, share and spread information, and to mobilise support. Think of the pen, the printing press, the telegraph, radio, television, the internet, artificial intelligence or other digital technologies.

However, the recent digital revolution and the capitalist media industry's role in shaping public discourse present us with significant technical, methodological and moral challenges as a society and social movements.

While those fighting for radical change are severely underrepresented in the mainstream mass media, the liberal side can rely on traditional media. The nationalist and right-wing populist forces have achieved influence in new digital media. This shifts the social discourse. Society is torn between different strategies of manipulation and propaganda.

The emergence of 'social media' in itself implies a democratisation of mass media and the overcoming of state and private media monopolies. However, by leaving the ownership structures untouched, this democratisation leads to its opposite. Where private companies have the power to control the flow of information according to the interests of profit maximisation.

The attacks on social consciousness are not just an attempt to destroy trust in the respective enemy actors or to misinform the public, but a calculated strategy to disrupt social cohesion. Liberalism, with its bombardment of information, has severely limited people's reflexes and need for action. People see the injustices in the world, but they do not feel addressed and have little impetus to act.

Nevertheless, there are a large number of radical journalists, newspapers, free radio stations and new digital media technologies, and a long tradition of alternative media on which we can build for a much-needed renaissance of democratic media serving the self-organisation of society.

**In our workshop we want to discuss some of the following questions:**

- How can we effectively counter the cognitive warfare that aims to disrupt the cohesion of our communities?
- How can we put digitalisation at the service of the democratisation of the media and build networks of alternative media for this purpose?
- How can we, as democratic media, create the ground for social movements and what is needed for this?
- What foundations do we need to create so that people can even imagine a different world? How do we move 'the window of what can be said' or 'imagined'?