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The »Good Government« of the education system: Bertelsmann Stiftung

Originally, I was going to start out with Quentin Skinner's (1986) analysis of the imagery of republican virtues in Lorenzetti's painting *The Good and the Bad Government* that has been adorning the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena since 1340. It deals with the opposition between just and tyrannical government. This might lead a bit too far in this context, however. Instead, I shall group my contribution around seven theses.¹

1. At present, a world-wide privatisation of the political sphere is taking place that blurs the boundaries between economical and political. The problem with this development is not the privatisation process as such but the fact that within this process the rich and the super-rich are at an enormous advantage and are being empowered as privileged political subjects – far beyond the normal degree of bourgeois individual freedom of action.

Strategically, his process has a desired side-effect: the methodical financial drying out of the public sector that has been propagated for a long time by OECD, IWF, World Bank and other transnational protagonists – in 1970 already, well-known German publicist Günter Gaus demanded in an article in *Der Spiegel* magazine that the politicians of the Federal Republic of Germany put a stop to the privatisation of the political sphere by means of legislation: „If it is true then that the social-democratic governing party keeps the peace with Bertelsmann because it was unable to make peace with Springer, a wrong decision is in preparation these days the consequences of which will reach far beyond previous omissions in communication politics. For Bonn, the emerging concept of the Güterslohers² must suffice in order to finally develop the formulae for the taming of tomorrow's total information industry. [...] Well-meaning employee participation and the right to have a say as they are being practiced or thought possible at Bertelsmann are meaningless details compared to the totality of the influence a future information corporation of Bertelsmann's size will have on society“ (Gaus 1970, quoted in Böckelmann/ Fischler 2004, p. 217).

How lucid this assessment was back then is particularly apparent in retrospect, especially as Bertelsmann Stiftung was not founded until seven years later. Since then, at least, what Amos and Radtke (2006) have termed the reconfiguration of the national domestic area in the post-national constellation has been both road map and reality. Instead of taming the foundation, as Gaus had demanded then, the

governing political parties empowered it and its corporation, so that it has become the main protagonist on Germany's post-democratical stage.

According to daily paper *Frankfurter Rundschau*, admonitory voices are becoming increasingly louder. On the one hand, the media giant benefitted from the charitable status of Bertelsmann Stiftung through a positive image and manifold contacts. On the other hand, its efficiency and competition standards had far too big an influence on the Federal Republic's politics. The paper quotes Albrecht Müller, for example, the former head of the planning department in the Federal Chancellery under Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, who called the foundation a „highly dangerous octopus“ and said it was aiming at a system change towards a business-dominated republic (cf. Marohn 2004). Similarly, Frank Böckelmann and Hersch Fischler, the authors of *Bertelsmann. Hinter der Fassade des Medienimperiums* (Behind the façade of the media empire) (2004) detect the aim of bringing into line politics and economics in many activities.

But, we might ask, don't the rich do good deeds through the so-called non-profit activities? Possibly. Nevertheless the question arises whether, despite general consent for some of the philanthropies of the rich, and all charitable results aside, they are not highly doubtful when judged by the criteria for democratic opinion-forming and decision-making processes.

Well-known sociologist Arno Klönne, in any case, takes this view. According to him, a change has happened in the political system that could be termed a coup d'état to all intents and purposes, as it suspended the Federal Republic of Germany's constitution as a guiding principle for governmental actions. Following Klönne, employers' associations and CEOs today unashamedly and publicly draw up their own guidelines for the government's socio-political decisions, while democratic institutions have become mere service stations for big entrepreneurial expeditions and the political decision makers figure as mere helpers and promoters of the business world. „Why can't we help feeling slightly sarcastic here? Why don't BDI [federal association of German industry] and BDA [Federal association of German employers' associations] together with Bertelsmann Stiftung and corporate consultant firm Roland Berger take the business of politics into their own hands and save the people the costs for elections, parliaments and governments?“ (Klönne, 2004).

2. Through the strategic axis between Bertelsmann corporation and foundation, the boundaries between philanthropy and the furthering of the corporation's own profit interests have become increasingly blurred and, at the same time, very obvious

If it's good enough for Bertelsmann, it's good enough for the whole of the republic, Böckelmann/Fischer (2004) sum up the world outlook of company boss Reinhard Mohr, and they provide us with ample proof for it. To Bertelsmann Stiftung, we owe the idea of a low-wage sector, the development of the 'Bündnis für Arbeit',³ the 'Agenda 2010'⁴ and of 'Hartz IV'⁵; former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, former foreign minister Joschka Fischer and the present chancellor Angela Merkel promptly paid their inaugural visits. It was the foundation, too, that contributed the

idea of the necessity of a European foreign minister – an office Joschka Fischer had hoped to hold for some time – and it also deals with European military policy.

In more detail: With about 80,000 employees and six company divisions, Bertelsmann AG is the world's fifth largest media corporation. It comprises Random House, the world's largest book publisher with more than 100 publishing houses in 16 countries; Gruner + Jahr, Europe's largest magazine publisher with Financial Times Deutschland, amongst other publications, and, jointly with Axel Springer AG, founder of a gravure printing company that has become European market leader in magazine printing; there is also RTL Group that heads the European radio industry with its 67 companies, from Ufa film and television production to Bavarian radio station Antenne Bayern and Radio Hamburg: „Each day, more than 170 million viewers in Europe watch TV channels operated by RTL Group: RTL Television, Super RTL, VOX or N-TV in Germany; M6 in France; Five in Great Britain; Antena 3 in Spain, RTL 4 in the Netherlands; RTL TVI in Belgium; and RTL Klub in Hungary to name only a few“ (Bertelsmann AG 2006: >RTL Group).

Furthermore, Sony BMG⁶ with its international top ranking in the music business is part of the corporation, as is Direct Group with 30 million members in book and music clubs and a 40% share in a Chinese book retail chain; and finally, the service provider Arvato AG (we'll come to this in just a bit). Reinhard Mohn's second wife Liz is chairwoman of management company Bertelsmann Verwaltungsgesellschaft (BVG), which holds an absolute majority of the corporation's voting shares. Liz Mohn represents Bertelsmann on the charity circuit, from the German stroke association to Carl Bertelsmann award and European foreign policy.

What does Bertelsmann want? observers of the company's changeable entrepreneurial course over the last few decades might ask themselves, a course that leaves to be guessed where the corporation actually sees its core business. Böckelmann/Fischler (2004, 314f) assume that in the future Arvato AG and RTL Group will become the corporation's supporting pillars. They demonstrate how the transformation of the corporation into property of Bertelsmann Stiftung was achieved behind the façade of a philosophy of renouncing power, but nevertheless remained characterised by the the Mohn family's unlimited right of disposal. In addition to Bertelsmann Stiftung's share of common stock in the corporation of around 58%, the family holds around 17% of the common stock in Bertelsmann AG (cf. Meyer 2006).

Funded through profits and tax abatements, the foundation, in turn, has a yearly budget of about 70 million euros at its disposal and it likes to be termed a 'reform workshop' or a 'thinking factory'. The foundation's 280 employees work on reform bills and model projects on topics within the realm of economical, social and educational policy (cf. Marohn 2004). They often co-operate with ministries or associations, the German trade union's educational foundation (Bildungswerk des DGB) or work together with other foundations like the Green Party affiliated Heinrich Böll Stiftung or the trade union owned Hans Böckler Stiftung. Bertelsmann Stiftung differs from other foundations, however, in that it „functions exclusively as a private operating foundation“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006: > The Foundation), i. e. it does not receive requests for funding from others but defines

itself the public welfare projects the development of which it then commissions to itself, the foundation, or its affiliates.

3. The activities of Bertelsmann Stiftung integrate the definition of public welfare into a new, dangerous and aggressive European policy in the interest of the corporations. In Bertelsmann Stiftung's new world order, only those who work towards an opening up of the markets for the corporations and vice versa can be seen as 'democratic'. By pushing forward into this direction, it is presently gaining an almost unlimited power of definition over the project of the civilian society.

In 1994, the foundation set up the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE). From that point onwards, it has been spearheading the business orientation of universities and the implementation of the bachelor and master university system. The Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) at Munich university was added in 1995. Just like CHE, it receives the largest part of its funding from Bertelsmann. The academic quality and the independence of the CAP activities do, therefore, indeed raise some questions. The Centre for Applied Policy Research with its 60 employees is run by Werner Weidenfeld, a political scientist and a networker, who has been a member of Bertelsmann Stiftung's board of directors and, later, its committee, since 1992. CAP is working on several joint projects with the foundation. These mainly focus on so-called strategic concepts for a future Europe, which also includes exerting an influence on the draft of a European constitution (cf. CAP 2004a).

One of the current projects is the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index*. It involved setting up a world-wide network of consultants and is intended to be a ranking that „provides the international public and political actors with a comprehensive view of the status of democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of political management in each of these countries“ (BTI 2006). This worldview is very much in the vein of the one that Christoph Keese, editor-in-chief of *Financial Times Deutschland*, succinctly stated as follows: „The public authorities need experienced managers. Not consultants but in-house professionals who could well earn half a million or a million euros per annum. In the long run, this is much cheaper for the tax payer than dilettantism“ (Keese 2004, quoted in Krysmanski 2004, p117). Through BTI, 119 states are currently being ranked following „the goal of a consolidated, market-based democracy“ (BTI 2006). Countries with a high willingness for free-enterprise transformations and privatisation of the public sector „receive the highest scores“ (BTI 2006: >Ranking).

A further CAP project and financed by Bertelsmann, too, is *Größeres Europa – Entwicklung eines politischen und institutionellen Ordnungsrahmens für die erweiterte Europäische Union*. (Enlarged Europe – Developing a Political and Institutional Frame of Reference for the enlarged European Union). It is concerned with „governability“ (CAP 2004b) „in the view of the continuing deficit in scope of action and democracy“ of the EU-25+ as well as the „inner consolidation of the political system“, particularly as far as „issues of defence politics“ (CAP 2004c) are concerned. Bertelsmann Stiftung's strategy on Europe, in turn, is embedded in a geo-strategical global view. Seen from CAP's perspective, Europe is „more susceptible to interference than any other actor in global politics“, its economic and political interests reach „far beyond its own scope of action“ (CAP 2004d).

In 2004, CAP's so-called *Venusberg Report* provided a complement with regard to military strategy. Following this report, it is important „to ensure conflict dominance in most scenarios short of state to state war. EU forces would thus require significant air superiority and strike capabilities able to operate from land and maritime platforms“. What Europe needs, therefore, is „a force that can get anywhere, fight anywhere, eat anywhere, stay anywhere“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2004). „[P]reventive missions world-wide to stop attacks in Europe or on European interests“ were expressly stated as part of the intended package of measures. Nevertheless there were concerns about a lack of acceptance by the population, and thus the Venusberg Report states that so far, the development has „taken place behind closed doors involving policy-makers and experts without any reference to European publics“. Now, however, „a parallel public information campaign is needed that both informs and involves European public opinion“ (ibid).

4. The next strategic step when taking over sovereign tasks is the privatisation of the public administration in 'central Europe'.

The privatisation of the public administration and public institutions is currently the most important governmental field of intervention within the area of civil society. This only paves the way for the hegemonic reconfiguration of the post-national domestic area – a process the Swiss globalisation critic Alessandro Pelizzari (2001) poignantly called a 'cultural revolution': The public administration is being divided into independent units that operate like profit centers and are competing against each other. There are regular reviews in order to establish which kind of tasks can continue to be provided by the public authorities and which are the ones that can be privatised. Measures accompanying this development are employment reduction, an increasing pressure to perform, the permanent demand for self-activation, the so-called flexibilisation of contracts of employment and of remuneration systems from dustman to university professor, as well as, last but not least, the privatisation of financial aids, as in the case of kindergarden vouchers, educational grants and study fees – all of these effective means of inducing discipline and exerting behavioural control.

As a service provider with 34,000 employees, the above-mentioned Arvato AG has on offer the complete package, „from conventional printing down to modern services“ (Bertelsmann AG 2006: Arvato). It has so far escaped most people's notice that Arvato has been taking care of the council administration for the British local government district of East Riding in Yorkshire, on the basis of an eight-year contract for the time being. „Therefore, a German company carries out sovereign [...] tasks that, up until now, came under the jurisdiction of the British state; it manages the town, levies charges and collects taxes“ (Ristow 2005).

According to Arvato's chairman of the board, Hartmut Ostrowski, East Riding is an „important step into the market of public services which we hope will have a signal effect in Germany also.“ It should become „a kind of 'showcase' for the full spectrum of services that interested institutions can outsource“. In the medium term, Ostrowski continues, „Arvato has set its sights on Central Europe and especially Germany“. Until the start of the first model projects, however, it might „still take two or three years“ (Bertelsmann AG 2006: >Presse>FAQ>).

5. Meanwhile, Bertelsmann Stiftung has been preparing a further expansion of the company's main business areas within the educational and academic system.

In order to achieve this, Bertelsmann has been introducing principles of performance rating and optimisation, parts of the so-called 'new steering models', in public libraries, amongst other institutions: BIX (1999-2004) – the library index – was followed by the Library 2007 project (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2002-2004) and the development of the German internet library – „quality instead of questionable links“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2002-2004a), and also internet courses for librarians in Poland (cf. Bibweb 2006), management optimisation in Spanish libraries (cf. Fundación Bertelsmann 2006) as well as the build-up of stock aimed particularly at young readers. In general, 'reforms' of the education and science sectors have been at the centre of Bertelsmann Stiftung's work since the beginning of the 1990s. Over a prolonged period of time, „more than 50 percent of all expenditures“ have been invested in this area (Böckelmann/ Fischler 2004, p. 223).

It is in public libraries and universities, kindergardens and schools that Bertelsmann returns to its traditional core business: developing and providing content – not with religious edification booklets these days, like in the early days of company history, but through campaigns on topics like *Bildungswege in der Informationsgesellschaft* (Educational Paths in the Information Society) (BIG 2006), *Gesundheitserziehung* (Health Education), *Notebooks im Schulranzen* (Notebooks in School Bags) (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2003-2006), *Förderung der Musikkultur bei Kindern* (Promoting Children's Musical Culture), *Wirtschaft in der Schule* (Business Studies at School) (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2005, cf. Schule Wirtschaft portal 2005) and *Toolbox Bildung* (Toolbox Education) (2006), to name just a few.

In schools, Bertelsmann Stiftung equally paves the way for an expansion of the company business by introducing performance indicators, evaluations and further appendages of the new steering models. The *Internationale Netzwerk innovativer Schulsysteme* (International Network of Innovative School Systems) (1997-2005, cf. Netzwerke 2006) that was started with the help of North Rhine-Westphalia's federal government, amongst other sponsors, stood quite at the beginning of this process. In North Rhine-Westphalia, it was Reinhard Mohn himself who provided the route of march for „central impulses for a sustainable school system“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006a) to the local *Bildungskommission* (educational commission) in the mid-1990s. More recently, the Bertelsmann project *Eigenverantwortliche Schule und Qualitätsvergleiche in Bildungsregionen* (Self-Responsible Schools and Quality Ranking in Educational Regions) was tackled for the first time with initial aid from Lower Saxony's federal state government: To begin with, about 130 general-education schools received the tools provided by Bertelsmann Stiftung in order to set off on their way towards „self-responsibility right after the autumn break“. „With the SEIS (Self-Evaluation in Schools) programme package, they receive valuable support, comparable to quality management systems in business.“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006b).

Less than a year later, 1,225 schools are already using Bertelsmann Stiftung's „software-based self evaluation instrument“ for the „quality improvement at schools“ that „will support school heads and staff in monitoring and planning school development processes with the help of data“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006c).

In other cases of privatisation of the public sector, the separation of supervisory and operative function may be strategically relevant. For privatisation projects used by Bertelsmann in order to steer the reconfiguration of the educational domestic area in the post-democratical constellation, however, this can only be true if we lower our sights considerably. In this area, functions that we would rather see divided according to the principle of the separation of powers, are virtually united in the hands of one company. As a result, incredibly tight closed-loop systems develop that functions something like this:

In Hamburg, for example, the model project *Selbstverantwortete Schule* (Self-Responsible School) was started (cf. FHH 2004). As has repeatedly been stated, this project gives „more autonomy“ to schools – on certain conditions, however: „Self-governing schools“ are asked to „align their profiles with the Club of Rome's maxims“ (ibid). An active member of the Club is Liz Mohn (CoR 2006). The schools in question also have to apply for „admission to the Club of Rome's nation-wide development programme“, with the „mid-term aim of being certified as a Club of Rome school“ (FHH 2004). A CoR school will then embody everything that has been expected of a 'good school' for some time now.

The programme is financed by the Club of Rome-Schulen Deutschland gGmbH, founded by the Club of Rome's German section. The Club of Rome, formerly considered the moral conscience of Europe because of its attitude based on conservative values, has been marginalised somewhat by neo-liberalism recently. Amongst other members of the CoR school committee, there are Hamburg's former education secretary Reinhard Soltau, the former chairman of the trade union for education and science (GEW) Dieter Wunder, the managing director of North Rhine-Westphalia's Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry as well as the Club of Rome's vice president Eberhard von Koerber, who was part of Swedish-Swiss technology corporation ABB's management and heads a society for investment and asset management today. The committee of CoR schools is chaired by Peter Meyer-Dohm, Volkswagen AG's former head of personnel development and a member of the advisory body of Bertelsmann Stiftung's *Qualitätsentwicklung von Schulen und Schulsystemen* (Quality Development of Schools and School Systems) (cf. CoR schools 2006). CoR schools – and now we're coming full circle – are evaluated through Bertelsmann Stiftung's SEIS, *Self-Evaluation in Schools*. It is networks like these that currently drive the privatisation of schools in Germany.

There can, however, be no question of voluntariness or even autonomy, as the federal governments in question increasingly tie a schools 'good reputation' to its participation in Bertelsmann projects. Whether the school heads want it or not: they either participate in a Bertelsmann project of their own accord or they are forced to participate by the respective federal state governments, caught themselves between Scylla, the policy of 'empty public coffers' and Charybdis, the vice-like grip of permanent quality evaluations. Bertelsmann Stiftung or one of its affiliates is always already there and in this way provides a „standardised steering tool“ to „interested schools“, a tool that helps „school masters and mistresses/heads of school and their

staff to evaluate and plan school development processes with the help of data“. It feeds from an „internationally viable quality concept of what constitutes a good school“, an understanding that Bertelsmann came to through experts that were chosen accordingly and that is being „concretised through tools (questionnaires for pupils, teachers and parents, employees and trainers) that have been scientifically validated and put to the test in practice“ and that have equally evolved from Bertelsmann projects. The result of the deployment of this steering tool is a „School Report“ that „serves as a basis for the planning of measures“ (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2005a), i. e. as a basis for driving the schools' own commodification and promoting its market-like transformation.

As a driver in the process of abolishing public general education, this form of privatisation is currently predominant at school level and in this way even more important than direct forms of commercialisation like the ones that determine the development in the United States, for example. Nevertheless, privatisation and commercialisation are becoming interlinked, are mutually dependent and reinforce each other: In Germany, too, „public school systems that used to function according to the public institutions' own laws in the economy's 'slip stream',„ have long become „fields of commercial activity, where companies begin to restructure work forms and pedagogical relationships within schools, to divide school systems into a multitude of specific markets and to incorporate them into a spiritual and material privatisation process“ (Flitner 2006, S. 246). The OECD's PISA study, in particular, serves this purpose. With appropriate media coverage that always conceals the commercial interests at stake, „PISA, as a product of private corporations [helps] to incorporate commercial companies' management criteria into schools in the shape of quantifying performance reviews.“ (ibid.; cf. also for the commercial interests behind PISA).

Therefore, the European common market policy is not in contradiction with the workings of a protagonist like Bertelsmann for the time being, as it grants the international service industry access to educational institutions pursuant to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). It is quite likely, however, that during this process the existing agreement in interests between the „octopus“ and the „locust“⁷ will come to an end sooner or later. Then, what was once the clever move of making Bertelsmann Stiftung the majority shareholder in the PLC, could turn out to be the opposite. After 22 May 2006, in any case, the third owner of Bertelsmann AG besides foundation and Mohn family, Belgian finance investor Albert Frère's *Groupe Bruxelles Lambert* (GBL), will have the right to demand the company's initial public offer at the stock exchange (cf. Jakobs 2006).

6. The reconfiguration of the civil and educational domestic area through foundations that is taking place at the moment is ambivalent. Perhaps it also offers new windows of opportunity for democratic development.

In the context of his differentiation between the rich and the super-rich, US-American sociologist Ferdinand Lundberg (1968) defines the rich as those people, who have at their disposal a great deal of money that was often acquired very quickly but who still live in the danger of losing their fortune all of a sudden. The fortune of the super-rich, however, be so vast, so diversified, so well-placed and

frequently hidden that this planet would have to desintegrate to let even them stand in their underpants (cf. Krysmanski 2001, S. 134f).

In its present new shape, German foundation law is an effective lever for putting the rich and the super-rich at a fiscal advantage and, at the same time, it represents an effort to stabilise, a little bit at least, the financial situation of the rich that is nevertheless still precarious. This is why, for some years now, the course has been set in some far-reaching socio-political directions via the seemingly un conspicuous issue that is foundation law. The objective is the building up of a 'Third Sector'.

Programmatically, the Free Democratic Party, for example, states on this topic: „The most important level of cultural diversity in our country are the private initiatives and foundations of the citizens“ (FDP-Bundestagsfraktion 2005). Germany's Green parliamentary party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and the MPs for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) basically share this view: In a draft bill from 1999, it says that foundations are an important „part of a civil society that wants to take part in the development of society beyond the state's responsibility through an orientation of money and property towards the common good „. And the Christian Democrat as well as the Christian Social Union emphasise that foundations are an „important building block for the development of the Third Sector between state and economy that stands for the citizens' commitment, voluntariness and participation“. Every citizen should be able to do for the common good „what he himself wants to contribute and the state cannot contribute. The individual should have more scope of action in society and more right of disposal of his income and financial assets“ (CDU/CSU 1999). The Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) also agreed with the „moderate approach“ of the reform that did not seem far-reaching enough to the FDP (Deutscher Bundestag 2000).

The amount of money donated to the foundation must be calculated in a way that ensures „the continuous and sustainable fulfilment of the foundation's purpose“ (cf. BMJ 2000), and this from the interest yielded by the funds that were transferred to the foundation. Therefore, and assuming a 6% credit interest rate, the foundation's assets would have to amount to €300,000 to form the basis for an €18,000 contract commissioned out once a year in order to research Bertelsmann Stiftung's influence within the educational and academic system, for example. So there must be quite a bit of money first.

In addition to the policy of 'empty public coffers', this way of strengthening civil society consequently promotes the already existing extreme inequality between rich and poor and it continues to exclude the vast majority of the population from the political process. But still: As there is little reason from a historical point of view to transfigure the socio-political structure that has dominated Germany so far, the development of a „Third Sector between the state and the economy“ might generate new scope for action. And why not new actors as well?

What can an educational scientist do in this situation? On this issue, my seventh and final thesis: Three things at least.

Firstly, take a closer look at who we co-operate with in the future, as foundation does not equal foundation, third party funds do not equal funds and even civil

society does not equal civil society conceptionally. Secondly, analyse what has become and will become of the general pedagogical beliefs/conviction that pedagogical acts had a structure and a logic of their own compared to the economical. Thirdly, carry out network analyses of the new, post-national influence networks by means of Power Structure Research (cf. Burris 2006) or at least through investigative journalism and make the results known to the public. At least, as long as we still have one. And in this way, contribute to the process of a „second enlightenment“ (Peter Sloterdijk).

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² The Bertelsmann corporation's headquarters are located in the city of Gütersloh in Eastern Westphalia.

³ Faced with the problems on the job market, the federal government brought into being the 'Alliance for Work, Vocational Training and Competitiveness' with representatives of business associations and of the trade unions, in order to discuss joint measures. The talks were discontinued in 2003 because of unsurmountable differences between trade unions and business associations.

⁴ The 'Agenda 2010' was the federal government's concept for a neo-liberal reform of the social system and the labour market initiated by Gerhard Schröder in 2003. The government was made up of SPD and Bündnis90/Die Grünen at the time but large parts of the opposition parties CDU/CSU actively participated in its development. The term Agenda 2010 also refers to the so-called Lisbon-Agenda, an action plan decided on by European heads of government in Portugal in the year 2000 that was meant to turn the EU into „the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based region of the world“ by the year 2010. .

⁵ Hartz IV designates the amalgamation of unemployed benefit and social welfare, bringing it down to a level below the previous social welfare (from 2005 onwards). The Hartz concept is based on the proposals made by a commission chaired by Peter Hartz, member of the Volkswagen AG board of directors. The commission's task was to make proposals for rendering the labour market policy in Germany more efficient. In front of running TV cameras, Peter Hartz and Gerhard Schröder proclaimed in 2002 that the Hartz proposals would help reduce by half within four years the number of what were then four million unemployed. The implementation of the fourth package of the proposal, in particular, resulted in a sometimes drastic deterioration of the situation of many unemployed.

⁶ Sony BMG might be sold shortly in order to free funds to counteract the unwanted initial public offer that Belgian finance investor and Bertelsmann shareholder Albert Frère strives for.

⁷ In a German parliamentary session in 2005, SPD party whip Franz Müntefering used the term 'Heuschrecken', locusts, to refer to the business conduct of certain transnational corporations: „Some financial investors just do not think about the people whose jobs they destroy. They stay anonymous, have no face, hit companies like locust swarms, feed on them and move on“ (quoted in Die Zeit 2005).