Anti Authoritarian Movement (AK) goes to Balkan Anarchist Bookfair – Skopje 24-27.09

Anti Authoritarian Movement (AK) goes to Balkan Anarchist Bookfair.

This year, as all the previous ones, we are more than happy to participate in BAB, meet, discuss and co exist with other comrade friends.
The importance of the need to meet each other and share experiences and ideas is bigger than ever, in a world that societies are being militarized and war language is stepping down every discussion for human rights and freedom.

The Balkan Anarchist Bookfair, is a reminder that only through collective political and cultural engagement can people from every corner of the globe stand up to the violence of warmongering states.

Everyone is more than welcome to find us in our Bookfair corner, meet each other, talk and of course build connections!

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Skopje 24-27.09

Η Αντιεξουσιαστική Κίνηση πάει στην Βαλκανική Αναρχική Έκθεση Βιβλίου .

Φέτος, όπως και όλα τα προηγούμενα χρόνια, είμαστε παραπάνω από χαρούμενοι που συμμετέχουμε στο BAB, συναντιόμαστε, συζητάμε και συνυπάρχουμε με άλλους συντρόφους/ισσες και φίλους/ες.
Η σημασία της ανάγκης να συναντηθούμε και να μοιραστούμε εμπειρίες και ιδέες είναι μεγαλύτερη από ποτέ, σε έναν κόσμο

όπου οι κοινωνίες στρατιωτικοποιούνται και η γλώσσα του πολέμου υποβαθμίζει κάθε συζήτηση για τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα και την ελευθερία.

Η Βαλκανική Αναρχική Έκθεση Βιβλίου είναι μια υπενθύμιση ότι μόνο μέσω συλλογικής πολιτικής και πολιτιστικής δέσμευσης μπορούν οι άνθρωποι από κάθε γωνιά του πλανήτη να αντισταθούν στη βία των πολεμοκάπηλων κρατών.

Είστε όλοι/ες ευπρόσδεκτοι/ες να μας βρείτε στο σημείο μας στο φεστιβάλ, να γνωριστούμε, να μιλήσουμε και φυσικά να χτίσουμε δεσμούς και επαφές!

Σκόπια 24-27/9





«Anti-War Project» — Positions of Anti Authoritarian Movement(AK)

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Antiauthoritarian Movement — Self Presentation

Self-Governance – The Theory, the Praxis and the Call to Action (Workshop on Building Autonomy to the People's Platform Europe Conference in Vienna People's Platform Europe Conference in Vienna)

Introduction

After our participation in the first-ever *People's Platform Europe Conference* in Vienna, Austria, from February 14th to 16th, 2025, and in the **workshop** on ***Building Autonomy***, we felt the need to share our **brain,** views and strategic framework—expanded upon with knowledge exchanged during the event with fellow organisations and initiatives across Europe—on the topic of Autonomy and, more specifically, *Self-Governance*. We also focus on how self-governance correlates with the principles of *Self-Sufficiency* and *Self-Defense*, as well as real-world applications of these ideas and the movements that have inspired us. Lastly, we attempt to give our complete answers to the 3 main questions that were posed and discussed collectively during the Workshop's sessions, also including all the key points that were highlighted.

About the Conference

This conference marked an important step toward creating a transnational, structured, and militant internationalist movement to combat the accelerating threats of capitalist destruction, state repression, rising fascism, and ecological collapse. More than 800 delegates from 160 organizations and movements, spanning over 30 countries, convened under the slogan: *“Reclaim the Initiative!”*— not simply to analyze the crises of capitalist modernity, but to build concrete strategies for liberation.

Workshops covered a wide range of topics, including *democratic media*, *anti-genocidal struggle*, *methods of organizing and building autonomy*, *youth and feminist movements*, *ecological resistance*, *democratic confederalism*, and *anti-militarism*. The sheer diversity of perspectives and experiences brought together in Vienna highlighted the richness of the struggle and the necessity of coordination across different fronts of resistance.

The lessons from Vienna, however, must not remain confined within the walls of a single conference. We recognize that self-governance does not come from abstract theory alone but from continuous practice, adaptation, and the exchange of experiences between movements. In this document, we seek to contribute to this process by laying out a comprehensive analysis of *self- governance*, its theoretical basis, its practical applications, and the lessons we can learn from movements in Europe and beyond.

A New Internationalism: Beyond Borders, Beyond Nations

This platform is not merely a moment of discussion—it is a foundation upon which we must continue to build an internationalist, anti-capitalist, and anti-patriarchal

movement. The Kurdish Freedom Movement and the Democratic Academy of Modernity have shown remarkable organizational capabilities in bringing together revolutionary forces from across Europe. Their ability to orchestrate *multilingual, multi-sectoral, and transnational coordination* at such a level is an inspiration for all self-organized struggles.

However, if we are to move forward effectively, we must overcome the limitations of fragmented resistance. This means breaking free from self-imposed ideological insularity, forging common strategic objectives, and ensuring that our diverse struggles are not merely *parallel* but actively reinforcing one another. As stated in the final part of the conference:

"Let us unite our struggles, perspectives, and capacities, and build the free life that the people of the world and all beings of this planet deserve! Our differences are our strength, not our weakness, and they will only make us stronger on our shared path."

This moment calls for decisive action. The rise of *militarism, fascism, environmental devastation, and mass displacement* is accelerating. We no longer have the luxury of passivity. We must *coordinate, strategize, and organize* across Europe and beyond—learning from past movements, avoiding past mistakes, and remaining steadfast in our refusal of co-optation by the state or liberal institutional frameworks.

Let this document serve as both a contribution to ongoing debates and as a call to action for all those striving toward autonomy and self-governance.

The Anti-Authoritarian

Movement, the Theory and the Praxis of Self-Governance

The **Anti-Authoritarian Movement (AK)** is not merely a network of collectives but a living practice of self-determination. It operates outside the logic of state control and market domination, rejecting hierarchical power structures and advocating for Direct Democracy as the means to shape social autonomy. We understand self-governance as the lifeblood of autonomy, a process of continuous self-institution and collective reorganization from below. It is not about seizing power but about abolishing it, dispersing it back into communities, and ensuring direct participation in all aspects of life.

The Urgency of Self-Governance (Why Self-Governance?)

We live in a time of deep systemic crises—economic, political, ecological, and social. The **neoliberal capitalist system, this capitalist modernity**, has reached its limits, generating widespread **economic, social and gender inequality, social fragmentation, environmental destruction, and escalating authoritarianism,** through its control over life, alienating people from their communities, degrading ecosystems, and maintaining structures of **hierarchy, state oppression, and gendered domination**. However, as the system intensifies its violence in its efforts to avoid collapsing on itself, the necessity for alternatives emerges.

Another world is possible, and more than that—it is already being built. Across the globe, movements are constructing **autonomous self-governing structures** as viable alternatives to the state and market-controlled systems. These structures are **not theoretical exercises**—they are lived realities that reject

the inevitability of capitalism and hierarchical governance.

Self Governance – Some Theory

Self-governance, the capacity of individuals and communities to manage their own affairs without external control, is a foundational concept in our political philosophy. It emphasises the importance of autonomy, direct participation, and decentralised decision-making in shaping societies that reflect the genuine will and needs of their members.

At its core, self-governance involves individuals and groups exercising control over their own lives, making decisions through participatory processes that ensure equal input from all members. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, as people collectively determine the rules and structures that govern their interactions.

In practice, self-governance manifests in various forms, such as direct democracy, where citizens engage directly in the legislative process, and libertarian municipalism, which advocates for local assemblies managing community affairs. These models prioritise grassroots involvement, aiming to dismantle hierarchical systems that concentrate power and often lead to alienation and disenfranchisement.

A self-governing society is characterised by its commitment to continuous self-reflection and adaptation. Members are encouraged to question existing norms and institutions, fostering an environment where change is driven by collective deliberation and consensus. This dynamic process ensures that the society remains responsive to the evolving needs and aspirations of its members. Therefore self-governance is not just an ideal; it is a **continuous process of self-institution**, a conscious forging of institutions from below that safeguard collective freedom and lay the groundwork for a society unshackled from capitalism.

Moreover, self-governance is closely linked to the concept of autonomy, which entails individuals and communities having the freedom to define their own paths without undue interference. This autonomy is not merely about independence but involves the active creation and maintenance of social structures that embody shared values and goals.

In essence, self-governance advocates for a decentralised approach to societal organisation, where power is distributed among the people, and decisions are made collectively. This framework seeks to cultivate societies that are more equitable, participatory, and attuned to the authentic desires of their members.

But self-governance must be grounded in substance. For us, this means it must be:

- **Free** – liberated from both the state and market constraints. It cannot be subjected to capitalist exploitation or state administration but must be independently sustained by the communities themselves.
- **Public** – reclaiming and inhabiting the **public sphere** beyond privatisation and state bureaucracy. It is the **common ground** where decision-making occurs transparently, ensuring that governance does not become an elite function.
- **Communal** – ensuring that power flows **horizontally**, through **assemblies** and participatory processes where decisions reflect the collective will of the people. A powerful example of this is **Vio.Me**, the worker-run factory in the city of Thessaloniki, Greece, where the decision on what to produce is being made by the **solidarity assembly** and, the **way of production** is determined by the workers themselves**,** embodying a model where production is determined by the needs of the community rather than profit motives and where knowledge

and experience are being respected.

Beyond Capitalism: Towards Ecological and Social Autonomy

Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism

Bookchin's ideas of **social ecology** and **libertarian municipalism** lay the groundwork for understanding self-governance as an **ecological and directly democratic alternative** to both capitalism and the nation-state.

- The **hierarchical organisation** of society is not inevitable but is socially
- **Direct democracy in decentralised municipal assemblies** is the foundation of true self-
- The **state is inherently oppressive**, as it monopolises decision-making and enforces top-down control.

- **Capitalism is ecologically unsustainable**, as it prioritises endless growth & profit, and capital accumulation over community and ecological well-being.

From this perspective, self-governance requires the **dismantling of centralised state institutions and the creation of federated communes**, where people govern themselves through **face-to-face assemblies** rather than distant bureaucratic structures.

The Radical Imagination and Autonomous Self-Institution

Castoriadis expands on self-governance by emphasizing the **role of imagination and autonomy in shaping society**.

- **Society is self-instituting**: No institution is natural

or eternal—every social structure is created and can be changed by collective will.
- **Autonomy means self-legislation**: True democracy is when people **continuously create and re-create** their own social and political institutions.

- **Capitalist alienation must be broken**: Modern capitalist societies suppress autonomy by enforcing passive consumption rather than active participation. Self-governance is **a process, not a fixed system**—a continuous **creation and recreation of institutions based on participatory decision-making**.

Anarchism and Decentralised Power

Chomsky approaches self-governance from an **anarchist and libertarian socialist perspective**, emphasising:

- **Hierarchical power should always be questioned**: The burden of proof must be on those who justify authority, not on those who resist it.
- **Decentralised, federated structures** are necessary for democracy to
- **Mutual aid and solidarity** are natural human tendencies, contrary to capitalist ideology that promotes individual competition.

Here we reinforce the idea that **state power and corporate control are not necessary for organising a functioning society**—rather, self-governance flourishes when people have **equal access to information, decision-making, and resources**.

If self-governance is to be a true alternative, it must **directly challenge the economic system that sustains hierarchy and societal and ecological devastation**. The **capitalist growth model**, which prioritises endless accumulation and profit, has led to **climate catastrophe**, economic inequality and insecurity, social fragmentation and patriarchal oppression. Our response cannot be a mere critique; it must be **a radical**

counter-strategy that envisions an **organised exodus** from the economic paradigm of domination.

This shift is embodied in the strategy of **degrowth**, a deliberate transition away from capitalist expansion towards **autonomous, ecological, and democratic societies**.

Degrowth: Both Ecological / Anticapitalist and Societal

Degrowth is **not about austerity or scarcity**, but about **redefining wealth and well-being** outside the capitalist framework. It prioritises **human and ecological flourishing over profit-driven growth** through:

- **Production for social needs**, respecting planetary boundaries rather than exhausting
- **A radical shift in production relations**, embracing **horizontality** and collective control instead of wage labor and exploitation.
- **A transformation in wealth distribution**, ensuring resources are shared equitably and sustainably across generations.
- **A re-imagining of society**, where value is placed on collective well-being rather than individual accumulation.

A degrowth-oriented society is not one of **scarcity**, but one of **abundance**—abundance of time, autonomy, and shared wealth, where production serves **communities rather than capital.**

The Commons and Peer-to-Peer: Collective Organization Beyond the

Market and State

The Commons as the Infrastructure of Self-Governance

The Commons are systems where resources are owned and managed collectively, outside the control of both corporations and states. They are not merely resources or accommodations; they are living **social relationships**, grounded in collective responsibility and shared decision-making.

A commons-based society does not operate on private ownership or state control but on **community stewardship**. There is no universal model—the commons evolve in response to local conditions and needs. The ideology of the Commons aligns perfectly with **self-governance** because it **removes property from the market and state control** and places it **in the hands of the people**.

Examples include:

- **Traditional / physical commons**, such as a herding or fishing community managing shared lands and waters.
- **Worker-owned cooperatives**, where labor and decision-making power belong to the workers and the solidarity communities.
- **Knowledge Commons** (open-source software and **digital commons**, such as free software movements that create shared resources under licenses like GNU General Public License, education, research).
- **Social Commons** (cooperatives, mutual aid, free housing projects).

The commons represent **a break from industrial-era organisational models**, emphasizing **cooperative production and community governance over hierarchy and competition**. They **ensure economic independence** from capitalist structures,

prevent enclosure—when corporations or states seize resources for profit and **reinforce democratic control**—resources are governed by those who use them, not external elites.

Examples of the Commons in Action

1. **Community-Owned Energy Cooperatives (Denmark, Spain, Germany)**
    - Instead of **private energy corporations**, communities generate and distribute power
    - Everyone has **a say in how energy is used and distributed**.
    - The system **prioritizes sustainability over profit**.

2. Common Land and Food Sovereignty Movements

- Peasant movements like **La Via Campesina** reclaim land from agribusiness corporations to

grow food for communities rather than export markets.

- Land is **not owned individually**, but held in **common by farmers and cooperatives**.
- **Self-governance emerges naturally**, as communities decide together how to manage the

3. Digital Commons: Free Knowledge Movements

- Wikipedia, Creative Commons, and Free Software projects prove that **knowledge can be governed collectively**.
- No corporation or government owns the knowledge—it belongs to all, and everyone can **contribute to and sustain it**.

Peer-to-Peer: A New Social and Economic Paradigm

Peer-to-peer (P2P) is **a type of social relation;** it is a **social model** rooted in **mutual aid, reciprocity, and**

decentralised cooperation and exchanges between individuals and groups without hierarchical mediation. It embodies the **prefigurative politics** seen in both indigenous

societies and modern movements like the **Zapatistas** and **Rojava**, where decentralized networks of people sustain resources **without intermediaries**. It is an **organizing principle** that underpins self- governance. It denotes systems where every person, every member of the community, has the power to contribute to and sustain a shared resource, while also benefiting from it. These relations existed in the earliest human hunter-gatherer societies. (Since the mid-1990s, with the rise of the internet, they are back with a vengeance.)

- **Instead of central authorities** (states, corporations, institutions), P2P structures rely on voluntary, cooperative, and networked interactions.
- **Instead of consumer-producer relationships**, P2P fosters **active participation**—everyone contributes and benefits.

This philosophy aligns with self-governance because **autonomous societies must function without top-down control,** as it:

- **It eliminates hierarchy** by ensuring that everyone has equal access to knowledge, power, and decision-making.
- **It creates resilience**—P2P networks are **harder to dismantle than centralized institutions** because they do not rely on a single node of power.
- **It fosters collective intelligence**, enabling communities to govern themselves without external control.

Peer-to-peer economies **reject extractive capitalism** and instead create horizontal structures where people contribute to and benefit from **shared wealth and knowledge**. Whether in the form of digital collaborations, self-managed workplaces, or community-led food systems, P2P relations reframe the **very meaning of economy and governance**.

Examples of P2P in Self-Governance

1. **Free Software and Open-Source Communities (GNU/Linux, Wikipedia)**
    - No central authority dictates how the software or knowledge is

· Communities collaborate, improve, and distribute resources freely.

- Decisions are **made collectively**, with anyone able to

2. Rojava's Direct Democracy System

- **Power flows horizontally**, with councils and assemblies functioning as P2P decision- making bodies.
- Instead of **centralized governance**, multiple councils share knowledge and decisions **across** different communities.
- Women's organizations **exist independently**, ensuring autonomy in

3. Mutual Aid Networks in Times of Crisis (COVID-19, Climate Disasters)

- Communities **shared food, medicine, and resources** without state
- Organizing was **horizontal**, ensuring no one was in control over
- People **contributed voluntarily**—no one was forced, but everyone

The Bare Minimum: No Seizure of Power, No Hierarchy, Direct

Democracy

For **self-governance to flourish**, we must break away from the **state-centric and hierarchical models of past revolutions**. Unlike traditional leftist strategies that sought to **capture and reform state power**, we believe that self-governing movements should prioritise the **dismantling of centralised authority** through the construction of **autonomous alternatives**. This means:

- **Rejecting the seizure of power**—true autonomy does not seek to take over the state, but to **dismantle it by building decentralised alternatives.** It aims to **render it obsolete** by creating **self-sufficient, bottom-up institutions** that replace it.
- **Anti-hierarchical structures**—ensuring that all social and economic relations are organised horizontally and that power does not concentrate in any elite, party, or leadership class.

· Direct democracy as the foundation—decision-making through open assemblies, rotating responsibilities, and participatory structures

Our movement does not require **a single ideological orthodoxy** or **dogmatic adherence** to a single theoretical framework. What unites us is the commitment to **open, public assemblies**, whether in free social spaces, self-managed workplaces, or broader political movements. We embrace a **pluralism of struggles**, each contributing to the broader goal of **a world without domination**.

Global Inspirations: The

Zapatistas, Rojava, and the Ongoing Struggle for Autonomy

AK's perspective on self-governance does not exist in a vacuum. We stand in **solidarity** with global movements that have pioneered autonomous self-management under the most difficult conditions.

- **The Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico**, have built a system of **autonomous governance**, rejecting both the state and corporate interests in favor of **collectively-run councils, education systems, and sustainable agricultural practices**.
- They created **Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Good Government Councils)**, rotating governing bodies that ensure no single group monopolizes decision-making, developed a **self-sufficient agrarian economy**, practicing communal land ownership and **resisting extractivist capitalism** and built an **anti-patriarchal social structure**, ensuring women's leadership in governance, education, and self-defense.

- Their emphasis on **communal decision-making** and **resistance to extractivist capitalism** provides a model for anti-authoritarian movements worldwide.

- **Rojava's democratic confederalism** has demonstrated that **autonomy is possible even in war-torn regions**. Rooted in **direct democracy, women's liberation, and ecological balance**, Rojava's system actively resists both state oppression and capitalist Its key aspects are:
- **Council-based self-governance, with rotating leadership and direct participation at every level.**
- **Women's self-determination**, with autonomous women's councils and militias (YPJ).
- **Cooperative economies**, rejecting capitalist wage labor

in favor of sharedproduction.

- **Ethnic and religious pluralism**, ensuring Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian, Yazidi, and other communities coexist without state-imposed nationalism.
- **Ecological policies**, including reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and anti-extractivist practices.
- Despite ongoing military aggression, their model of self-governance **proves that radical democracy can be defended and sustained in practice**.

These examples show that **autonomy is not just a theory—it is a living struggle**, requiring both **vision and militant defense** against those who seek to crush it.

Further examples of movements that build autonomy and inspire us: The Landless Workers' Movement (MST) – Brazil

The **Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)** is one of the largest agrarian social movements in the world, fighting for land redistribution and **food sovereignty**. MST occupies unused land and builds:

- **Self-managed farming cooperatives**, based on communal decision-
- **Autonomous education and healthcare systems**, disconnected from capitalist and state
- **Environmental protection initiatives**, ensuring sustainable agriculture rather than corporate monoculture.

MST's commitment to **land justice, agroecology, and collective governance** provides a model for anti-capitalist rural autonomy.

La Via Campesina: Global Food Sovereignty Movement

A transnational peasant movement, **La Via Campesina** unites small-scale farmers, landless workers, and indigenous communities against the **corporate takeover of food production**. Their principles include:

- **Reclaiming land for collective farming**, rather than market-driven
- **Building self-managed agricultural cooperatives**, resisting dependency on capitalist supply chains.
- **Defending indigenous and peasant autonomy**, ensuring traditional farming practices remain outside corporate control.

Their model reinforces that **self-governance is deeply tied to economic autonomy**, particularly in reclaiming food production from agribusiness.

Vio.Me – Worker Self-Management in Thessaloniki, Greece

Vio.Me, a **worker-run factory in Thessaloniki, Greece**, emerged from the economic collapse of the country's industrial sector. Instead of allowing their factory to close, workers took control and:

- **Operated under direct democracy**, making all decisions in collective
- **Shifted production from industrial adhesives to eco-friendly cleaning products**, serving community needs rather than corporate interests.
- **Integrated solidarity networks**, ensuring community participation in their

Vio.Me exemplifies how **worker self-management** can challenge both **corporate ownership and wage labor exploitation**, laying

the groundwork for **self-governed economies**.

These are not future dreams or distant visions, but realities we can build now in liberated spaces, where the potential exists, in free social spaces as they are, and, ultimately, in a society unshackled from capitalism.

But we must sharpen these proposals with the language of a new, defiant perspective. Faced with the unbridled capitalist growth that spawned the climate catastrophe, we must aggressively reverse this destructive trajectory with the strategy of degrowth – an organised exodus from the reign of the economy-centric society, embracing instead the liberating vision of autonomous ecological and democratic societies. The embrace of the commons and peer-to- peer relations is crucial now.

To break free from the ideological baggage and organizational models of industrial society, we embrace contemporary forms of political and organisational structure forged by the Zapatista struggle and, more recently, the autonomous movement of Rojava. Our framework is this: No seizure of power. Anti-hierarchical structures. Direct democracy. This is the bare minimum for the social spaces we occupy (or not occupy). As an anti-authoritarian movement, we refuse ideological dogma. Our foundational principle is the open and public assembly, whether for free social spaces or political assemblies.

The Supporting Pillars of Self-Governance

A. Self-Sufficiency: How Can We Sustain Our Autonomous Spaces?

One of the biggest obstacles to autonomy is **material dependency**—on state funding, on capitalist markets, on external institutions. **How do we sustain ourselves, our**

movements, and our communities without being pulled back into the logic of the system?

Strategies for Self-Sufficiency:

3. **Autonomous Economies** – Worker-owned cooperatives, solidarity-based production (e.g., Vio.Me), alternative currencies, and barter networks.
4. **Communal Food Production** – Community farms, permaculture, food-sharing initiatives, and reclaiming abandoned land.
5. **Autonomous Health Care** – Free clinics, mutual aid networks, and reclaiming traditional and herbal medicine to reduce dependence on privatized healthcare.
6. **Liberation from Industrialism** – Resisting capitalist industrial expansion and building **eco- industries** that respect planetary boundaries.

Projects like **Dunja Social Center in Skopje** showcase how spaces can sustain themselves **outside the capitalist market**, while **solidarity agriculture movements in Europe** prove that **food autonomy is not only necessary—it is entirely possible**.

Yet, **self-sufficiency is not just material—it is also ideological.**

B. Self-Defense: How Can We Protect Our Autonomous Spaces?

In every instance where autonomy is successfully built, it has been met with **aggression**—be it from the state, fascist forces, or internal ideological disintegration. **How do we defend these spaces?**

Self-defense is often misunderstood **solely as physical defense**, but it is far broader—it is **ideological, cultural, and psychological**. It means resisting the **mental colonization of capitalist modernity** and rejecting the false idea that

“there is no alternative.”

Strategies for Self-Defense:

1. **Community-Based Defense** – Organizing neighborhood patrols and response teams against state repression, police violence, and fascist attacks.
2. **Ideological Defense** – Combatting liberal co-optation, dogmatism, and internal conflicts that weaken movements.
3. **Cultural and Language Defense** – Revitalizing indigenous languages, local histories, and traditional knowledge systems.
4. **Feminist Self-Defense** – Recognizing that **the frontline of self-defense is the fight against patriarchy**. Without **autonomous women’s organization**, there can be no real autonomy for anyone.

Movements like **the Kurdish Women’s Movement (TJK-E) in Europe** have pioneered **autonomous women’s self-defense structures**, ensuring that **liberation is not only collective but deeply gender-conscious**.

C. Organisational Forms: What Structures Can We Use to Build From the Bottom Up?

Building autonomy **requires strategic organisation**. Yet, the left in Europe often struggles with fragmentation, a **fear of structured organization**, and an inability to sustain long-term movements. **How do we overcome these contradictions?**

Forms of Organization for Self-Governance:

4. **Assemblies as Decision-Making Bodies** – Open, non-hierarchical, participatory decision- making must be at the heart of every autonomous structure.
5. **Neighborhood Councils and Communes** – Localized self-management through directly elected councils (e.g., Prosfygika in Athens, the Basque Batzarre).

6. **Confederal Structures** – Connecting local communes into larger **federated networks**, as seen in **Rojava, the Zapatistas, and the IDK network in Germany**.
7. **Parallel Institutions** – Creating alternative educational, healthcare, and economic structures that bypass the state and function independently.

To **build lasting autonomy**, we **must** go beyond protest and direct action—we **must build institutions of our own**.

Challenges in Self-Governance

While these models of self-governance offer hope, they also reveal significant challenges:

1. **External Attacks**: Both movements have faced **constant military aggression**—the Zapatistas from the Mexican state and paramilitaries, and Rojava from the Turkish military and ISIS.
2. **Economic Blockades**: Without access to state or capitalist funding, sustaining autonomous economies remains difficult.
3. **Internal Contradictions**: Balancing **collective decision-making with efficiency** can be complex. Movements struggle with internal conflicts, ideological rigidity, and maintaining long-term engagement.
4. **Scalability**: How do we expand these experiments beyond regional pockets into broader revolutionary movements?

The Challenge of Liberalisation: Breaking Free from Capitalist Modernity

A critical challenge facing self-governing movements in Europe is **the ideological trap of neo- liberalism; the liberalisation of our struggles**—the idea that isolated individual freedoms are sufficient, while systemic alternatives are dismissed as "unrealistic."

Liberalism presents itself as “democratic,” yet it functions to **depoliticise, fragment, and pacify**. It **absorbs** revolutionary potential, turning radical ideas into commodified, harmless versions of themselves.

If we are to **build real autonomy**, we must **reject the liberal tendency** of reducing politics to **individual lifestyles and symbolic actions**. We must **commit to collective struggle** and understand that self-governance is not about individual choice—it is about **shared responsibility and collective transformation**.

Recognizing these challenges **does not mean abandoning self-governance**—instead, it requires **strategic adaptation and learning from historical experiences**.

The Role of the Vanguard: Avoiding Dogmatism, Authoritarianism, and the State Mentality

How Do We Build a Vanguard Without Falling into Hierarchy?

The term **vanguard** has often been associated with **authoritarian structures**, centralized leadership, and rigid ideological control. However, if we revisit the concept **through an anti-authoritarian lens**, a **vanguard does not mean a ruling elite**, but rather a **collective force that pushes ideas and actions forward without imposing them on others**.

To **prevent ideological dogmatism**, we must rethink what **avant-garde organizing** means in the context of self-governance and anti-hierarchical movements. The **role of the vanguard should not be to dictate, but to inspire, experiment, and develop strategies that can be voluntarily adopted by communities.**

Lessons from the Past: Avoiding the Pitfalls of Traditional Vanguardism

Historical revolutionary movements—from **Marxist-Leninist parties** to **centralized labor organizations**—have often replicated the very **hierarchical structures they sought to destroy**. Some key failures include:

- **Centralization of power in the party elite**, leading to bureaucratic
- **Rigid ideological purity tests**, suppressing **plurality of thought** within
- **Replication of state authority**, where the revolutionary organization becomes the **new state apparatus** rather than dismantling state power altogether.

This is where **critiques of authoritarian socialism** are crucial: a **vanguard should not impose a "correct line" but rather provide an open framework for self-organization**.

The Vanguard as Facilitators of Self-Governance, Not Controllers of It

A **true libertarian vanguard** does not seek to **command but to empower**—it must be **a catalyst for autonomous action**, not a ruling body.

1. The Vanguard Must Be Experimental, Not Absolute

- Instead of **dogmatic correctness**, a **real vanguard embraces experimentation** and adjusts based on **real-world struggles**.
- This means testing **alternative models of governance**, **community resilience**, and **economic self-sufficiency** rather than enforcing **one-size-fits-all solutions**.

2. The Vanguard Must Be Pluralistic, Not Monolithic

- Recognizing that **different communities require different structures** based on their
- The **anti-authoritarian vanguard must embrace multiple tactics**, perspectives, and strategies without forcing **a singular ideological narrative**.

- Feminist movements, indigenous struggles, workers' self-management, and ecological struggles **each have their own forms of leadership and organization— none should be subordinated to a single ideological model**.

3. The Vanguard Must Be Temporary, Not Permanent

- Unlike traditional vanguards that create **self-perpetuating leadership circles**, an anti-authoritarian vanguard must be **constantly evolving, self-dissolving, and rebuilding itself through rotation and decentralization**.
- This aligns with the principles of **Rojava's Democratic Confederalism**, where leadership is **temporary, accountable, and non-hierarchical**.

The Danger of Adopting State and Capitalistic Mentalities

One of the most subtle yet **dangerous traps** for any revolutionary movement is the **unconscious replication of state mentalities**. Even within decentralized, anti-authoritarian spaces, the logic of the state can creep in through:

- **Bureaucratic managerialism** → When movements become **focused on administration rather than revolutionary action**.
- **Security paranoia & centralized control** → Over-policing of movement members, creating internal hierarchies of

who is trusted and who is not.

- **Suppression of dissent** → A refusal to allow internal critique, which leads to a **rigid ideological orthodoxy rather than a living, evolving movement**.

How Do We Avoid Reproducing State Mentalities?

1. **Power Must Be Continuously Dismantled**

- The key difference between **self-governance and statecraft** is that in true self- governance, **no structure should be permanent**.
- Decision-making structures should be **constantly evaluated, rotated, and altered** to prevent consolidation of power.

2. Emphasize Collective Responsibility Over Leadership

- Leadership should be **functional, not positional**—it exists for **specific tasks, not as a permanent role**.
- **Zapatista governance** follows this principle by rotating community roles and ensuring that those in governance are accountable to the assemblies, not the other way around.

3. **Encourage Internal Critique and Horizontal Accountability**

- Movements must be **self-reflective** and **open to constructive criticism**.
- Internal discussions should **prioritize horizontal debate**, not top-down
- **The dea of autonomy as self-institution** teaches us that every **community must re- invent its governance continuously**—nothing should be set in stone.

The Challenge: Can We Be Organized Without Hierarchy?

Some argue that **without centralized leadership, movements will fall into chaos**. However, history and practice show that **organization does not require hierarchy**—it requires **deep-rooted participation and accountability structures**.

Case Studies of Non-Hierarchical Organization in Action

1. The Zapatistas: Governance Without a State

- No **permanent leadership**—community assemblies rotate
- Decisions are made through **direct participation, not delegation to elites**.
- Structures are **fluid and can be adapted by the people** based on

2. Rojava: Democratic Confederalism

- **Women's autonomous councils prevent male domination** within
- **Multiple ethnic and religious groups self-organize**, ensuring no **centralized nationalism**
- **Committees manage key social functions** (food distribution, education, security)without creating a **bureaucratic state apparatus**.

3. Vio.Me (Greece): Self-Managed Industry Without Bosses

- Workers collectively make decisions **without a management class**.
- Instead of **hierarchical production structures**, all workers share **equal say in economic planning**.
- **Solidarity networks** ensure long-term

The Path Forward: How Can We Build and Sustain Self-Governance?

A. Creating Self-Governing Institutions Locally

We must **build autonomous structures where we live**—starting in **neighborhoods, workplaces, and social spaces**. This includes:

- **Neighborhood Assemblies**: Organizing **direct democratic structures** where decisions are made collectively.
- **Worker Cooperatives**: Reclaiming the means of production through **horizontal economic** structures.
- **Alternative Education Systems**: Creating **schools and workshops** that promote radical critical thinking and self-management.

B. Expanding Confederal Structures

Individual collectives must **federate into larger structures**, as seen in:

- **The Zapatista Caracoles** (local communities linked into a larger network).
- **Rojava's Council System** (local assemblies connected into regional and confederal councils).

· The historical example of the Spanish anarchist communes (CNT-FAI), which coordinated thousands of self-managed communities.

C. Emphasizing Women's Liberation and Ecological Sustainability

No real self-governance is possible **without addressing patriarchy and environmental destruction**.

- **Women's assemblies and self-defense structures** (as in Rojava).
- **Decentralized, regenerative food systems** that ensure independence from capitalist

D. Defending Our Spaces and Movements

As history has shown, autonomous zones will always be attacked. Self-defense is not just military—it is ideological, economic, and cultural.

- **Countering state repression** through strong community
- **Rejecting co-optation by NGOs and liberal politics**.
- **Building long-term resilience rather than short-term activism**.

A Call to Action

The fight for self-governance is not about **resistance**—it is about **creation**. The task before us is to build, sustain, and expand these liberated spaces. We must challenge capitalism not just in rhetoric but in **material, everyday practice**.

Autonomy is not something we wait for—it is something we do.

From worker-run factories to digital commons, from grassroots ecological initiatives to neighborhood assemblies, self-governance is already emerging. Our role is to **defend, refine, and expand it**—not in the future, but **now**.

The task before us is to:

- **Expand autonomous zones and free social**
- **Build infrastructures of self-**
- **Develop strong ideological foundations against state co-**
- **Unite struggles through confederal structures, ensuring strength in This is not just resistance—it is creation.**

Let us **build a world beyond capitalism and the state, not as a distant dream but as an immediate, practical reality.**

Autonomy is not something we wait for—it is something we do. Now.

The world we seek **will not be given to us—it has to, and it will be made by us.**

##

Attempting to Answer the 3 Questions from the Workshop of “Building Autonomy” :

(1) What suggestions do we have for the existing organisations?

1. Strengthen Internal Democracy →

- Move beyond representative leadership models and ensure direct
- Implement **rotational leadership structures** to prevent bureaucratic
- Develop mechanisms that ensure all members can actively shape the movement’s direction.

2. **Strengthen horizontal networks** across movements to avoid **Create Stronger Networks to Avoid Isolation**

   - Establish a **network of self-defense and solidarity across Europe**, connecting

◦ **Form a logistical and financial support network to overcome economic dependency.**

   - Expand mutual aid structures that **connect neighborhoods, workplaces, and feminist struggles**.

3. Develop Confederal Structures →

   - Link local initiatives into federated networks for greater strength and a united front against state repression.
   - Ensure that local assemblies and projects **have autonomy while remaining interconnected**.

4. Establish **training and educational spaces** to deepen political and organiɔational knowledge →

   - Establish **training and educational spaces** to deepen **political and organizational**
   - Share and develop different **techniques for self-organization and direct**
   - Encourage **study groups and reading circles** to strengthen ideological

4. **Embed Anti-Patriarchal Practices** → Encourage education over gender inequalities, feminist movements to minimise gender stereotyping, and establish autonomous women's spaces:

   - Establish **autonomous women's structures** within
   - Ensure movements **do not reproduce patriarchal dynamics** in leadership and decision-making.
   - Dismantle **gendered divisions of labor** in organizing

6. Increase Economic Autonomy →

- Develop worker-run cooperatives and commons-based goods production to break dependency on external funding.

○ Encourage collective financial strategies, such as community-based crowdfunding, solidarity funds, and cooperative economies.

- Use **profits from community-run projects** for political work (e.g., Swedish commons model).

7. **Expand Mutual Aid Networks** → Strengthen community ties by ensuring access to (basic needs) food, housing, and healthcare.
8. **Develop Confederal Structures** → Link local initiatives into federated networks for greater strength and a united front against the system. **Develop defense Strategies Against Co- Optation:**

- **Resist state and institutional co-optation**, particularly from NGOs, political parties, and academia.
- ◦ Build independent communication networks to avoid reliance on corporate social media platforms.

9. Implement **rotational leadership structures** (where needed) to prevent bureaucratic stagnation. Every role is **revocable** (inspired by Zapatistas Good Government Councils (Juntas de Buen Gobierno)).

(2) What can we learn from European Praxis? How can we create a brain of praxis and action?

Lessons from European Struggles[1]:

1. **Self-governance is possible when rooted in local**

- **Example:** *Neighborhood Councils* in Italy, Greece, and

Germany have shown that self- managed community structures can effectively **govern and sustain local needs**, from food distribution to public safety.

2. Occupation and communal living build long-term resilience.

- **Example:** *Prosfygika (Greece)*—a self-organized, multi-ethnic squat that has resisted state eviction for decades, demonstrating the power of **occupation as a political strategy** against state violence.

3. Direct democracy strengthens resistance against hierarchical and bureaucratic co-optation.

- **Example:** *IDK (Germany)* has implemented democratic confederalism at a local level, showing how **council-based governance and consensus decision-making** can function beyond the state model.

4. Expropriation and reclaiming of abandoned spaces provide essential infrastructure for autonomy.

- **Example:** *Self-Organized Housing Projects* in Italy and Spain have transformed occupied buildings into **permanent, self-managed community spaces**, providing housing, cultural spaces, and public services outside the state and market

5. Anti-fascist networks provide crucial defense against far-right and state repression.

- **Example:** Anti-fascist groups across Europe have created **decentralized, rapid- response networks** to counter growing right-wing violence, while **integrating self-defense strategies** into broader community organizing.

6. Linking struggles internationally enhances movement resilience and knowledge- sharing.

- **Example:** *La Saó (Catalonia)* and *Comité Valenciano de Solidaridad con el Rojava* have developed **transnational solidarity strategies**, linking **European struggles with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements worldwide**.

7. Migrant and refugee solidarity must be an integral part of self-governance efforts.

[1] *This list includes only a few examples from a handful of organizations. We strongly encourage further research into all the participating organizations and their remarkable praxis, strategies, and contributions to autonomous self- governance across Europe and beyond.*

- **Example:** *Catania Solidale Col Popolo Curdo* and *Dunja Social Center* in Macedonia are key examples of how movements **center refugee and migrant-led initiatives** while rejecting borders and state violence.

8. Feminist and anti-patriarchal organizing must be a structural part of self-governance, not a secondary issue.

- **Example:** *Feministisches Bündnis Heidelberg* and *Non Una Di Meno Torino* have demonstrated how **self-managed feminist spaces and assemblies** play a fundamental role in ensuring gender liberation is central to all autonomous organizing.

9. Self-sufficiency in resources and finances

increases autonomy from capitalist structures.

- **Example:** *RiseUp Wien* and *Centri Sociali del Nord-Est* have implemented **cooperative economic structures** to fund their activism outside of state and corporate control, while fostering **solidarity economies and mutual aid networks**.

10. Education and political formation are critical for sustaining long-term autonomy.

- **Example:** *Platform C (Netherlands)* and *Ya Basta! Êdî Bese!* have prioritized **political education, skill-sharing, and ideological training** to ensure movements remain self- aware, adaptable, and resistant to state co-optation.

11. Self-defense against repression must be embedded in autonomous organizing.

- **Example:** *Ararat Collective (Berlin)* and *Internationalist Youth Commune of Turin* have helped integrate **self-defense strategies, legal support, and security culture** into radical organizing to **protect movements from state surveillance, police violence, and far-right attacks**.

12. Developing federated structures prevents isolation and fragmentation.

- **Example:** *Spazio Antagonista Newroz (Pisa)* + *CUA* are working toward creating **regional and transnational confederations** that enable local struggles to coordinate beyond their immediate environment, strengthening **collective decision-making and direct democracy at scale**.

13. Reclaiming land and food production is key to

breaking capitalist dependence.

- **Example:** *Coscienza Verde (Italy)* and *Social Center Solidaria* have engaged in **land occupation, cooperative agriculture, and sustainable food production**, creating **alternatives to capitalist food systems**.

14. Building the infrastructure of resistance requires constant adaptation.

- **Example:** *Non Una Di Meno Torino* and *Dunja Social Center* have shown the importance of **continuously developing methods, structures, and networks** that **respond to repression, changing political conditions, and movement needs**.

AK's Praxis & Activism:

A key example of **free social spaces, squats, and migrant solidarity initiatives**. AK and similar groups have:

- Hosted and supported **undocumented migrants** with shelter, food, and legal
- Created **self-managed free social spaces** that function as **cultural, political, and educational hubs**.
- Organized **direct action movements** against police violence, gender oppression, and the privatization of public spaces.
- Implemented **anti-patriarchal frameworks**, ensuring the **active participation of women and gender minorities in decision-making.**

Building the Brain of Praxis:

1. **Cross-Movement Coordination:**

- Build **stronger ties** and connect feminist, environmental, anti-racist, and communal struggles into **a shared strategy**.
- Form a **European-wide organizational structure** that

facilitates real-time

communication, resource-sharing, and collective strategy development.

2. **Political Education & Popular Assemblies:**

- Create **a shared ideological framework** that unites different struggles without enforcing rigid dogma.
- Use community-led **workshops, world cafés, and skill-sharing events** to continuously refine tactics and strategies and **expand political education**.
- Establish **popular assemblies** in occupied and free social spaces, using them as hubs for theoretical reflection and collective decision-making.
- Avoid ideological rigidity while ensuring **a strong anti-capitalist, anti-statist foundation** for movements.

3. Resisting State Mentality & Bureaucracy:

- Avoid structures that **replicate the hierarchical logic of the state**.
- Ensure leadership roles remain **temporary, revocable, and directly accountable to** assemblies.
- Maintain horizontal structures **without defaulting to ineffective liberal consensus models** that paralyze decision-making.

4. Resilience Against Co-Optation:

- Develop **alternative media platforms** and **secure communication networks** for coordination across borders.
- Strengthen **autonomous media platforms** to resist the **co-optation of radical struggles by NGOs and institutional funding** and to **counter legal and physical repression**.

Key Takeaway: To create a "brain of praxis," **we must integrate**

theoretical understanding with hands-on organizing, learning from existing models while developing new strategies tailored to local conditions. We must combine historical lessons, existing autonomous practices, and ongoing struggles into a unified yet decentralized counterpower. Our movements must remain flexible, avoiding dogmatic stagnation, bureaucratic centralisation, and ideological purism. They must be rooted in lived struggles, adapting to evolving conditions while staying committed to revolutionary transformation.

(3) What forms of organisation, initiatives, and methods can we use after the platform?

1. **Federated Assemblies** →Establish **horizontal local councils** that make decisions collectively and are linked through **confederalism**.

- Avoid **centralized authority** by ensuring **rotational leadership and accountability** within assemblies.

- Base organizing on **direct democracy**, where every member has an equal say in
- Link these assemblies across different **regions and struggles**, creating

interconnected autonomous networks similar to Rojava's system of councils.

- Ensure that **autonomous regions** can function independently while still maintaining solidarity and mutual aid agreements.
    2. **Federation of Autonomous Zones** → Connecting local struggles into larger confederations, following the model of Rojava's system of councils.
- Connect different **liberated spaces, occupations, and cooperative projects** into a

broader **European confederal network**.

▪ Ensure continuous exchange of knowledge, resources, and tactical support

between different self-governing zones.

- Develop a **mutual aid system** where food, healthcare, and housing are collectively shared and managed.
- Establish a **network of self-defense to protect liberated zones** from state and far- right violence.

3. **Communal Land Projects** → Developing community-owned food, housing, and energy resources for self-sustainability and self-sufficiency.

- Establish **cooperative agricultural projects**, urban gardens, and decentralized food networks.

- Reclaim **abandoned land and buildings** for collective housing and self-sufficient
- Integrate **eco-industrial methods** that promote local sustainability rather than industrial exploitation.
- Learn from models such as **Zapatista agro-ecology and Kurdish communal production** to ensure food sovereignty.

4. **Commons-Based Economic Networks** → Expanding community-owned resources and peer-to-peer production as a counterweight to capitalist dependency.

- Promote **solidarity economies** where goods and services are produced for communal well-being, not profit.

- Create **worker-run cooperatives** where labor is collectively organized, removing the power of bosses and capitalists.
- Develop **alternative trade systems**, such as time-banks, barter networks, and mutual credit cooperatives, to move beyond the capitalist financial system.
- Encourage **community-led funding initiatives**, including **crowdfunding and cooperative financial structures**, to sustain autonomous projects.

- Establish **self-organized social security systems** to provide healthcare, education, and housing outside of state institutions.

5. **Autonomous Women's and Femininities' Structures** → Parallel organising spaces to dismantle patriarchal control, gender violence, sexuality Get rid of misogynistic, LGBTQ+-phobic behaviours that exist inside our movements and initiatives. We must break free from internalised patriarchal practices and mentalities.

- Build **autonomous spaces** where women, queer, and non-binary people can organize **independently,** .

- Ensure movements **do not reproduce patriarchal dynamics** in leadership and decision-making.
- Implement **feminist self-defense groups** and anti-patriarchal training to **combat gender-based violence**.
- Challenge **gendered divisions of labor** and ensure that women and marginalized groups have equal access to resources and organizing spaces.
- Dismantle **misogynistic, LGBTQ+-phobic, and patriarchal behaviors** within all our movements.
- Strengthen **international feminist solidarity networks** between autonomous

6. **Worker Self-Management** → Expanding cooperative production to sustain self-governing economies

- Expand **self-managed workplaces** where workers control production, wages, and organization.

- Encourage **cross-sectoral cooperation** between worker-controlled industries, farms, and services.
- Develop **autonomous labor unions** that fight against exploitation while building alternative economic structures.
- Build **cooperative supply chains** that function outside of capitalist markets, ensuring fair and collective trade.

7. **Self-Defense Networks** → Developing mutual defense

strategies against state repression, gender-based violence and far-right violence. Instant communication and awareness of struggles in Europe can lead to **multi-faceted** and **widespread** resistance against the suppression of our movements, initiatives and endeavours.

- Establish **collective defense strategies** against state crackdowns and other

▪ Form rapid-response networks to coordinate resistance across multiple regions.

- Use **secure communication tools and digital security protocols** to protect movements from surveillance and safely coordinate synchronised actions and activism (e.g. simultaneous protests, boycotts etc).
- Strengthen **legal and political support structures** for arrested and persecuted
- Encourage **militant yet community-oriented defense models** that do not fall into authoritarianism and isolationism.

8. Set up networks for **Communication, Media, and Counter-Hegemony →**

- Create **independent media networks** to break away from corporate social media
- Develop **digital platforms, encrypted channels, and radical news outlets** to amplify struggles and counter state narratives.
- Strengthen **inter-movement communication strategies** to prevent isolation and
- Establish **a network of alternative publishing, research, and historical documentation** to preserve and transmit radical knowledge.

9. **Popular Assemblies, Political Education & Collective Learning Spaces**→ Creating ideological clarity through political education and community participation.

- Set up **popular assemblies** as permanent spaces for **education, discussion, and decision-making**.
- Make **political education a daily practice**—teach people how to organize, resist, and sustain autonomy.

▪ Promote self-managed schools, radical pedagogy, and anti-authoritarian education models.

- Develop **workshops, reading circles, and skill-sharing programs** to train new organizers and prevent ideological stagnation.
- Use **non-hierarchical education** to break the state's monopoly on knowledge

10. **Avoiding Authoritarianism & State Mentalities in Organization**→ One of the **greatest dangers** in building self-governing structures is the **unconscious adoption of state-like behaviors**, even in radical movements. To counter this:

- **Reject the "seizure of power" mindset**—focus on dismantling power structures, not taking control of them.
- Ensure **leadership is always collective, temporary, and revocable** to avoid bureaucratic stagnation.
- Avoid **ideological dogmatism**—encourage **critical thinking, debate, and adaptability** in movements.

▪ Resist the professionalisation of activism—keep organizing rooted in everyday people and their struggles.

- Ensure that **movements do not replicate the rigid structures of the state** under the guise of efficiency or discipline.
- Maintain **open and public assemblies** as the foundation of decision-

The concept of **Free Social Spaces** are at the heart of this approach, from our perspective. These are self-organized

spaces that encompass all of the above; spaces where individuals and groups can come together to share ideas, resources, and support without interference from external authorities.

These are not just physical locations but arenas for collaboration, experimentation, and resistance. They embody direct democracy and mutual aid, serving as environments where individuals can come together to reimagine and reshape their lives without external domination. Managed collectively and free from commercial or institutional interference, these spaces foster a spirit of inclusivity and solidarity. They are cultural hubs where workshops, discussions, and skill-sharing sessions take place, creating a fertile ground for building a better society. For us, Free Social Spaces are catalysts for wider societal transformation rather than secluded havens, and the challenge lies in avoiding the pitfalls of isolationism that have plagued similar movements in the past. We advocate transcending “safe spaces” by actively engaging with societal concerns, creating alliances across communities, and embedding self-organized initiatives into the fabric of everyday life. To overcome isolation, the focus must be on inclusivity and the amplification of voices from marginalised communities, ensuring that autonomy is a shared and expanding reality rather than a secluded experiment.

Recognizing Different Realities, Contexts, and Capabilities in Self-Governance

As we work toward building autonomous and self-governing structures, it is **crucial to acknowledge the vastly different political, social, and historical contexts** in which movements operate across Europe and the world. The struggles faced in one region may differ significantly from those in another, and our approach must be **adaptable, sensitive, and non-**

universalizing.

For example, in **Western European countries**, a central aspect of radical movements is the fight against their governments' **historical and ongoing imperialist policies**, corporate globalism, and the deep entrenchment of **liberalism as a form of pacified oppression**. In contrast, in **Balkan and Eastern European countries**, the focus often shifts toward struggles against **economic neocolonialism, ethnic-nationalist tensions, and the ongoing consequences of post-socialist privatization** that devastated working-class and communal structures. These historical distinctions shape **how self-organization emerges**—what is feasible in one place might be impractical or even dangerous in another.

Beyond regional differences, we must also recognize the **varying capacities and risks individuals face** within our own movements. A **migrant without legal papers** engaging in a protest or direct action risks **immediate deportation, imprisonment, or even death**—a risk far greater than that faced by a citizen of the same country[2]. Similarly, women, LGBTQ+ people, and racialized individuals often bear the brunt of **state repression and fascist violence**, requiring different strategies for self-defense and engagement. This is why our organizing must **always be intersectional and adaptive**, never forcing individuals into actions that disproportionately endanger them.

Understanding these layers of context—historical, political, geographical, and personal—is key to developing a flexible and truly liberatory and non-authoritarian (anti-authoritarian)

framework for self-governance, one that does not impose rigid models but instead adapts to the

struggles, capacities, and realities of those involve

[2] *Here we must emphasise that we have to reject the nation-state's concept of* ***"citizens"*** *and* ***"non-citizens / foreigners"****—a framework designed by the state to justify oppression and violence against those it deems disposable. Borders, nationalities, and legal statuses are artificial tools of control, and our self-governing structures must actively dismantle these divisions rather than reproduce them. True self-governance must be rooted in radical solidarity, where no one is excluded or forced into invisibility for the sake of strategy or convenience.*

Conclusion: Toward a Coordinated Common Struggle for True Autonomy

Because of the **varied realities, struggles, and capabilities** that exist across different regions and communities, our movements **must embrace openness, communication, and the constant exchange of tools, narratives, and strategies**. While each local movement may focus on a different aspect of **combating transnational capital, state oppression, and the nation-state's suppressive structures**, in truth, these struggles are **not separate but interconnected facets of a shared fight for autonomy and self-governance**. The repression faced by a landless farmer resisting corporate extraction in Latin America is intrinsically linked to the struggles of migrants facing brutal border regimes in Europe or factory workers fighting exploitation in the heart of capitalist metropoles.

To **truly dismantle the power structures that oppress us**, we must **coordinate and weave our seemingly distinct struggles into a common front**. This does not mean enforcing a single

ideological model or rigid blueprint, but rather **creating a flexible and evolving network of resistance and self-organization**—a **living, breathing infrastructure of autonomy** that is **constantly learning from itself**.

On this **theoretical basis**, all self-organized movements and initiatives must also **document, articulate, and share their paradigms and experiences**—how they have **applied the brain of self-governance** within their own **unique social, political, and historical environments**. By doing so, we create **a repository of collective knowledge**, making it easier for others to **analyze, reflect upon, and adapt** these ideas to their own conditions. Future and current movements facing **similar sociopolitical conditions** will **not have to start from zero**—they can **stand on the shoulders of past struggles, immediately applying solutions and accelerating their ability to resist, organize, and grow**.

If we truly wish to **build autonomy and self-governance beyond the state and capitalism**, we must ensure that **our struggles are not fragmented, but interconnected**. By actively organizing and coordinating beyond borders, **we strengthen the resilience of every autonomous initiative**, making it harder for oppressive forces to isolate and crush them. Our future lies in the **continuous exchange of ideas, the deepening of strategic coordination, and the unwavering commitment to collective liberation**.

Photos from the *People's Platform Europe Conference* in Vienna


OSSERVATORIO
NAZIONALE
FEMMINICIDI
LESBICIDI
TRANS*CIDI
NON UNA DI MENO


Sjoerd Heeger (Buran Sason)
Andrea Nin





Hands off the Botanical

Garden Squat

THE CHEESE AND THE MOUSETRAP

On the occasion of the announcement by the Municipality of Petroupoli of a contest for contractors for "**ERECTION OF NEW TOWN HALL BUILDINGS WITHIN THE OUTLINE OF THE FORMER BOTANICAL GARDEN**", we have to say the following:

The cheese is the City Hall in the Botanical Garden and the mousetrap is the fall of the grove of Ag. Dimitriou, its declassification and then its shredding.

When the decision to build a Town Hall on the site of the Botanical Garden was made public, we knew that this decision was purely IDEOLOGICAL. The exclusive goal was and is the seizure of the Botanical Garden. The bearer of this decision is the party executive of New Democracy and permanent candidate of the right wing in the Municipality of Petroupoli, Th. Skalistiras. This guy has been speculating for years to push every free public and social space in Petroupoli to the vice of profiteering and privatisation. In other words, to cut it into pieces and deliver a dead, right-wing city. Of course, he wouldn't be able to achieve his goals by addressing society itself but he would have to rely on the force of the state and repression. He finally found the opportunities he was seeking to reach his antisocial goals. The first opportunity was the municipality elections and his collaboration with the political opportunist Vlachos during which the right-wing party took for the first time command of the municipality. The second is the rise to power of New democracy, the party of repression, wire tapping and corruption. Through the mechanism of the party and the cooperation with the environmental hazard Hatzidakis, they managed to pass in the Parliament, within the framework of the environmental bill (Article 132), a decision for a construction of the Town Hall in the Botanical Garden.

They had tried to pass several laws in order to legitimize this environmental crime and since the Botanical Garden is characterised as a forest they enacted continuous declassifications of forest areas to reach the forest (grove) of the squat. So as long as these people who adore authority and hate the environment are in power, the next declassification will concern the grove itself which undoubtedly, sooner or later, will be offered to speculators and greedy investors.

The occupied BOTANICAL GARDEN in its 13th year of existence continues to address society, managing that way to produce political, cultural and social work very visible and acknowledged, through self-organization, solidarity and dignity and away from the gray zones of parties or financial interests.

The enemies of the public space and the commons, are preparing to attack Botanical Garden. They want a society dissolved and individualized in the mire of mediocrity and resignation so they can float by controlling and imposing through authority and commands.

We appeal to every thinking person, to everyone who wants to take life into their own hands, to join us in preventing the destruction of nature and society.

– Hands off the Botanical Garden. Hands off the squats

– Let’s fight with all means for a free and social public space

– Resistance now

– EKX Botanical garden of Petroupoli

Raoul Vaneigem: The State is Nothing – Let's Be Everything

Raoul Vaneigem

An essay written by Raoul Vaneigem for the Greek antiauthoritarian movement during his participation in Thessaloniki's Direct Democracy Fest in 2010.

It's not by chance that Greece, where the idea of democracy was born, has become the first to blaze a trail in the battle that must be waged against the democratic corruption that everywhere is heightening the pressure applied by the multinationals and financial mafias. In Greece, we have seen the demonstration of a resistance that contrasts sharply with the lethargy of the European proletariat, which for decades now has lain dormant, anesthetized in the grip of consumerism and by impostures of emancipation.

Allow me to recall a few banalities. Consumerism has generalized a supermarket democracy where citizens have the greatest possible freedom of choice on the express condition that they pay the price for it on their way out.

The old political ideologies have lost their substance and have become little more than the advertising brochures that the elected officials use to increase their audience and their power. Politics, whether it calls itself left or right, is no longer any more than a pandering patronage relationship where the elected officials look out for their own interests instead of those of the citizens they're supposed to represent.

And once again Greece has found itself in a good position to restore the original meaning to the word "politics": the art of governing the city.

The second banality is that the world's States have lost the

privilege they arrogated to themselves of managing the public good. Of course, the traditional state has always taken tribute from citizens by force with taxes and duties; but in compensation, then, they ensured the proper operation of public services, teaching, healthcare, mail, transportation, unemployment benefits, and pensions… Now the world's States are no more than the servants of the bankers and the multinational corporations. Now the latter have had to face that the bubble formed by the insane amounts of money invested in financial speculation instead of in the development of priority industries and socially useful sectors is doomed to pop, with a financial crash. We have fallen prey to the managers of this bankruptcy, who are greedily scraping out the last short-term profits by super-exploiting the citizens, who are invited to fill the bottomless gap of a deficit created by bank embezzlement, at the price of an ever more precarious life.

Not only is the State no longer able to fulfill its obligations under the social contract, it is eating away at the budgets for public services, scrapping everything that guaranteed even its own survival, rather than simply letting everyone live a real life. And they're doing it in the name of that gigantic swindle baptized as "the public debt."

The State has only one function left: police repression.

Its only safeguard is the spread of fear and despair. And it ensures that spread rather effectively by lending weight to an apocalyptic way of seeing the world. It spreads the rumor that tomorrow will be worse than today. According to the state, good behavior means consumerism – hurry and spend, before you go bankrupt; try to profit off everything that can be made profitable; even if it means sacrificing your very existence and the whole planet itself to keep the generalized rip-off going.

Nihilism is the true philosophy of business. When money is all

that matters, all values disappear except commodity value. We have watched as consumerism has undermined all the supposedly eternal “truths” of the past: paternal authority, patriarchal power, religions, ideologies, the prestige of the army and police, respect for bosses, the sanctity of sacrifice, the virtue of hard work, scorn for women, children, and nature… But at the same time it has killed consciousness, which today we must lead back from the dead, using as our guide the truly human values that have so many times been at the heart of riots, revolts and revolutions.

We know that a new alliance is now being formed with what nature offers us free of charge, an alliance that will put an end to the covetous exploitation of the earth and of human beings. It will be up to us to rescue from the aggressive grip of capitalism seeking new profits, these free energies that it’s trying to make us pay such high prices for. In this sense, our era, which is currently being disrupted not by an economic crisis but by a crisis of the economy of exploitation, is also the right moment for people to become truly human beings. And becoming human means refusing to be a slave to work and power, and affirming our right to create our own destiny and situations that favor the wellbeing of all.

The course of events currently unfolding may risk accentuating the urgency with which several questions are now being posed. I will refrain from supplying any answers, since to do so outside of the practical conditions and communities where those questions will be raised would be all too abstract – and abstraction, as a kind of thinking cut off from real life, always only gives rise to the old monsters of power. I am content to merely cast some light on those questions.

1. What are we willing to do to compensate for the failure of a State that not only no longer serves the citizens, but sucks their blood to feed the octopus of international banking?

We are up against forces of inertia. Family, social, political, economic, religious, and ideological traditions have from one generation to the next constantly perpetuated the voluntary servitude that La Boétie denounced long ago. On the other hand, we can try to make the most of the shock caused by the collapse of the system and the disintegration of the State, and make good use of the temptation to look beyond the small-minded limitations of the commodity. A reversal of perspective is to be expected. Beyond the eventual pillage of supermarkets that the accelerated pauperization now underway will probably give rise to, lots of consumers threatened by exclusion won't fail to notice that survival is not life, that it's not worth it to trade off an existence where the discovery of the energies and goods lavished upon us by nature harmonizes with the attractions of desire for an accumulation of adulterated, useless products. That life is here, now, and that it only asks to be built and propagated, in the hands of the vast majority of people.

Let us cease feeling sorry for ourselves about the failed attempts at emancipation which punctuate our history, not so as to instead celebrate our occasional successes – since after all, the very notion of "success and defeat" has a bad stench of commodity limitations, tactics and strategy, and predatory competition about it – but rather so as to give thrust to experiences which, emerging in joy and audacity, are waiting for us to pursue them by implementing a project of self-organization, and assemblies operating in direct democracy.

The Zapatista collectives in Chiapas are perhaps the only groups today that are truly applying direct democracy.

Communizing the land gets rid of the conflicts associated with its private appropriation right away. Everyone has the right to participate in the assemblies, to speak up, and to tell what their choice is, even children. There are no majority-elected representatives in the proper sense. Individuals showing an interest in certain areas (teaching, healthcare,

mechanical work, coffee, organizing festivals, organic agriculture styles, external relations, etc.) are simply offered the opportunity to become officials for the collective for a limited period of time. They then enter a "good governance council" and regularly report on their task, for the duration of their mandate. The women, who at first were skeptical, because of the patriarchal customs of the Mayan people, now have a paramount role in the "good governance councils." The Zapatistas have a slogan that defines their intent to establish a more human society, which emphasizes the need for constant vigilance: **"we are not an example, but an experiment".**

2. Money is not only becoming more and more devalued, it is on its way toward disappearing. During the Spanish revolution, the communities of Andalusia, Aragon, and Catalonia established a distribution system that made no use of any currency (though some others did continue to use the peseta, and others invented new currencies of their own, all of them worked quite well together). Today, it is up to us to study ways of replacing relationships of exploitation, where the commercial trade in things determines the commercial trading of people, with human relationships based on gift rather than exchange.

We have become slaves to economic operations, the establishment of which signed the birth certificate of commodity civilization, altering individual and social behaviors, and setting up a permanent merging of comfort and denaturing, progress and regression, human aspirations and barbarism.

Certainly, the concrete and virtual mode of finance today still constitutes a coherent system – an absurd coherence, of course, but one which is able to go on governing people's behaviors. On the other hand, think what might happen because of this when the financial crash strips money of its value and

utility!

Those who refuse to allow it to tyrannize their everyday lives will doubtless welcome its disappearance as a kind of liberation. The fetishism of money, however, is so deeply anchored in our morals that many people, still subjugated under its thousand year old yoke, will come up against an erratic emotional confusion, where the law of the social jungle reigns, where blind violence in search of scapegoats and the struggle of all against all rage on.

We mustn’t neglect the tentacles of the octopus, cornered in its last entrenchments, because the collapse of money doesn’t imply the end of predation, power and the appropriation of things and beings. When chaos, so profitable to the state and mafia organizations, is exacerbated, it propagates a virus of self-destruction, with which resurgent nationalisms, genocidal eruptions, religious confrontations, and resurgences of the fascist, bolshevik or fundamentalist plague can poison minds if the sensitive intelligence of living beings doesn’t put the question of happiness and the joy of life back at the focus of our concerns.

There has always existed a kind of fascination with abjectness that after some preliminary hesitation begins to cut its secret path and expects that by winning over all the layers of the population it will guarantee impunity and legitimacy for a banalized barbarism (the rise of Nazism in Germany showed quite well how an abstract humanism can eventually transform into an explosion of total savagery).

On the other hand, the inhumanity of the past doesn’t have to obscure the memory of what was most radical about the great movements of emancipation: the desire to liberate alienated man and give rise in him to the true humanity that reemerges in every generation.

The society to come has no choice but to recover and develop

history’s projects of self-organization, which, from the Paris Commune to the anarchist collectives of revolutionary Spain, rooted their quest for harmony in the autonomy of individuals, with the happiness of all standing in solidarity with the happiness of each.

3. The bankruptcy of the State will force local communities to organize for the public good in a manner better adapted to the vital interests of individuals. It would be an illusion to think that it will be possible without conflict to liberate territories from the grip of the commodity and set up zones where human rights will eradicate the rights of commerce and profit. How can we protect the enclaves of free sharing we will attempt to establish within a sectioned off, policed world, controlled by a universal system of predation and greed?

From this perspective, a question that was raised by a Persian friend of mine seems particularly significant. In light of the repressive violence of the Islamist dictatorship in Iran, he brought up the problems encountered by an opposition that simultaneously came to be aware of its strength in numbers and its tragic powerlessness in the face of the brutal attacks carried out by the army, the police, and the “revolutionary guards,” those gangs of paramilitary thugs whose religious power legitimates their violent acts. The thoughts that follow were written on his request.

NEITHER WARRIORS NOR MARTYRS

“If you can run a marathon, you can surely walk a block” [qui peut le plus peut le moins] is a pertinent principle for the kind of thinking that demands that action be taken, whether violent or non-violent, to resist repression by a State, party, class, mafia organization, religion, or ideology wherever it impedes the freedom of existence and expression of individuals. By examining the problem where that repression is at its most ferocious, at its most pitiless, we can draw the

consequences for countries whose democratic formalism limits the excesses of their barbarism. Oppressive conditions obviously differ greatly among countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, France, Italy, Russia, China, the USA, or Colombia…

To look at this issue while keeping in mind the examples of Iran, North Korea or Burma seems to me conducive to responses that would be appropriate for other countries less accustomed to the use of savagery.

Up to today, we have been faced with two alternatives: either those who made a decision to put an end to repressive violence ended up on the enemy turf and set themselves up in its place, by using against their enemies a violence that is of the same nature but in the opposite direction – or the opposition to tyranny has taken recourse to passive resistance, based on the pacifism preached by Gandhi with such unquestionable success.

Nevertheless, though Gandhism did triumph over English occupation, it was dealing with an adversary which, pitiless as it may have been, was caught off guard and saw its ability to react paralyzed by its own philanthropic formalism, residual ethics and its deontology of war, all of which tended to condemn the massacre of a hostile but unarmed population.

In spite of its hypocrisy, a kind of military fair-play felt the pinch of the tactical decision that had been made to nip the rebel movement in the bud with no delay. It is well known that lord Mountbatten’s diplomatic wisdom did not entirely fail to lend support to the victory of popular demands. But when Gandhism was used to attack power structures with less ethical concerns, such as the apartheid regime in South Africa, it proved inoperative. The Burmese junta, likewise, didn’t hesitate to machine-gun down peacefully demonstrating opposition crowds. Iran follows a similar logic of repression.

What response is proposed by guerrilla war? Every time it has

won, it’s been for the worse. An armed triumph always leads to a bitter human defeat.

The fundamental error of armed struggle is to give priority to military objectives rather than to the creation of a better life for all. To advance into the enemy’s terrain to destroy it is to betray the will to live for the will to power. The communards got hold of some cannons, but they neglected the money in the Bank of France and the use that they could have made of it, so they ended up trumped by the troops from Versailles. It’s well known how militarized bolshevism crushed the first soviets, the Kronstadt sailors, the makhnovists, and, later, the Spanish anarchist collectives, all in the name of revolution. Relatively speaking, it was the same so-called communist party and the Stalinist spirit that ended up hollowing out the substance from the May 1968 movement (and this isn’t about guerrilla fighting, but about the depressing persistence of the idea of power, which ended up perverting the insurrectional upsurge).

Does anyone still need to be reminded that wherever guerrilla war has triumphed – whether in Mao’s China, Vietnam, Cambodia, or in Cuba – armed ideology has ended up constituting the ideological armies that have crushed freedom while claiming to be fighting for it? The repugnant slogan “power grows from the barrel of a gun” targets first of all those who resist all forms of authority. It has had fewer victims among counter-revolutionaries than among actual revolutionaries, enemies of tyranny.

Neither do we want, on the other hand, any more of what happened in Frankenhausen, where in 1535 the German peasants in revolt abstained from any resistance and let themselves be massacred by the princes’ army, counting on God’s help; they had forgotten the words of Bussy-Rabutin, who said that “God always marches on the side of the biggest batallions.” And for a more recent example: On December 22, 1997, forty-five people, mostly women and children, were massacred in Acteal, a

small town in Mexico, by Indian paramilitaries, in a church where they were praying. They were part of the Abejas (Bees) movement, a group of pacifist Christians who, while closely associated with the Zapatistas, demanded absolute nonviolence. The reason behind this cruelty was that the Abejas had set up in land coveted by other Indians, members of that party of corruption called the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Aside from the disgust that such atrocities cause, can we really protest against the torturers without also incriminating the Christian inclination towards martyrdom and renunciation, which gives the cowardly such a thrill and gives the weakest such arrogant cruelty? The worst coward knows that there's no risk at all when his victims refuse to defend themselves, and even stretch their necks out toward the knife.

We will need to be more attentive to those aspects of our behavior that serve as an invitation and incite them to attack, because – even without being aware of it – we have all too often opened the door for the enemy.

How do our adversaries achieve their goals? Most often by instilling in us the absurd belief that they are all-powerful. They stimulate the fear reflex that builds up belief in the invincibility of the old world, while in fact it is crumbling everywhere. The disastrous effects of such dogma give rise not only to resignation and fatalism among the masses, but also cause the desperate courage that drives people to mount attacks with the feeling that they're going to their death in a battle as glorious as it is vain.

But what can those attacks do against the whole repressive arsenal, whose sophistication seems to suggest its ability to mount lightning-fast and unstoppable counterattacks? Omnipresent technological surveillance couldn't prevent the destruction of those towers in New York by rough and ready homemade means. Likewise, long ago, the "invincible" Maginot Line was made to look ridiculous by a German offensive that

quite simply ignored it.

If the surveillance networks have such yawning gaps in the struggle against permanently threatening destructive forces, how will they be effective against actions that do not aim to annihilate them but instead intend only to create a radically different society that would render obsolete and pathetic the gussied-up specter of Kalashnikovs and nuclear missiles?

The question remains: what do we do if we want to refuse to be defenseless against the guns of oppression and at the same time refuse to use against the dominant powers the same weapons it uses against us?

The discussion is open. I have no peremptory response to propose. I only wish to clarify the debate by making a few remarks.

The best safeguard is to not enter into the terrain where the enemy expects and awaits us. It knows all the most miniscule nooks and crannies of the territory delimited by the commodity and by the behavioral habits that it imposes (predation, competition, authoritarianism, fear, guilt, money-fetishism, greed, pandering). On the other hand, however, it knows nothing about life and its innumerable creative resources.

A preliminary precaution, then, would be to eradicate from our groups and assemblies all forms and traces of power and authoritarian organization. The practice of individual autonomy is a prerequisite for cooperative self-organization. This is what the VOCAL movement in Oaxaca is working on setting up, with its rank and file assemblies at the base transmitting its decisions to its delegates, rejecting all intrusion by parties, unions, political factions, and pandering demagogues.

True coherence can only emerge based on a project of individual and social life. The future will belong to local communities capable of thinking globally, i.e., to those that

rely on their radical approach and their broad distribution to lay the foundations for an International Union of the Human Race. This is the only way to avoid the traps of communitarianism, that product of State Jacobinism.

The neighborhood committees idea that took hold in Oaxaca, deserves an examination as a possible path. Mexico is not Iran; far from it, but it lacks the conditions we have in Europe. In Oaxaca, the paramilitaries kill people with the blessing of a despotic governor. He needs spokespeople, in whom he can find the germs of corruption inherent in power, whatever they may be. He needs parties, unions, factions. He finds them easily. And with them he feels like he's on familiar terrain again, and can crush them or negotiate with them, as the case may be.

On the other hand, neighborhood committees, in grasping things and beings by the roots, have no agenda other than to defend the interests of the local population; thus what is undertaken in the interest of a few is also beneficial to the many (such is, again, the principle that the local is inseparable from the global). The neighborhood committees are not an armed threat; so they're not a danger that power can identify. They constitute a poorly identified terrain, dealing with things like food, water and energy supplies. A kind of solidarity develops from that which, operating around apparently anodyne themes, makes mentalities change and opens them up to consciousness and inventiveness. And so the practice of equality between men and women, of the right to happiness, of improving everyday life and the environment, start to lose their abstract character and modify behavior. Treating the questions raised by everyday life as the first priority gradually renders obsolete the problems traditionally harped on by ideologues, religions, and the old politics – the politics of the old world. And so we come back to the traditional meaning of the word "politics": the art of managing the city, improving the social and psychological

space where a population aspires to live according to its desires.

We have everything to gain by attacking the system and not the men that have become simultaneously its managers and its slaves. Giving in to the emotional plague, to revenge, to pressure-releasing explosions, means participating in the blind violence and chaos that the State and its repressive bodies need to go on existing. I don't underestimate the furious relief that a mob gets out of burning down a bank or pillaging a supermarket. But we know that transgression is actually just a kind of homage to interdiction; it supplies safety valves for oppression – it does not really destroy it, it just restores it. Oppression needs blind revolts.

On the other hand, I can't see any more effective ways of promoting the destruction of the commodity system than propagating the notion and practice of freeness (this is timidly sketched out here and there already with the sabotage of parking meters, to the great displeasure of the corporations trying to rob us of our space and our time).

Are we so unimaginative, so uncreative, that we can't eradicate the constraints on us by the state and private lobbying racket? What recourse would they really have against a great collective movement that could simply declare free public transit, refuse to pay taxes and fines to the Robber Baron State, and could instead invest them for the benefit of all by providing regional areas with renewable energy equipment, and restoring the quality of healthcare, teaching, food, and environmental stewardship? Wouldn't a self-organized society need to be based on a restoration of a true politics of proximity? Instead of all these train, bus, and metro worker strikes, which block citizens from circulating, why not run them for free? That would kill four birds with one stone: it would damage the transport companies' profitability, reduce the profits of the oil lobbies, break the bureaucratic control over the unions, and above all it would bring about massive

support and solidarity from users.

We are submerged in false problems that hide the real ones. Political views – which can always be manipulated – in fact themselves manipulate what should be the basis for individual activity: the random whim of everyday desires, what experiences they urge us into, and their means of smashing whatever shackles them. What good are all the political speeches that avoid discussing the crisis that we must get out of by not turning away from it, compared to the despair of having to go to work all the time, having to become bored of consuming products, to give up our passions, to simply possess more and more, losing all the joys of simple Being to the benefit of Having, which is slated to collapse anyway?

Together with its variants of imposed emancipation (liberalism, socialism, communism), the consumerism and clientelism of the so-called democratic regimes have shrink-wrapped the class consciousness that once won social gains from capitalism. We've been dragged through blood and mud by abstract ideas. The people's Cause has fallen atop them and broken their back.

Returning to the base, the rank and file – that's the only radical approach. It eliminates the false issue mongering that feeds emotional chaos to the detriment of consciousness-raising. In this regard, the "Islamic veil debate" shows the workings of the spectacular function that recuperates and falsifies our right to an authentic life. The polemic, where justifications and curses, puritanism and laxity, oppression and freedom, interdiction and transgression are bandied back and forth, conceals a lived reality: the conditions imposed on women. The spectacle gives us a whole slew of bread and circuses with endless debates about a little trinket: symbol of voluntary servitude; deliberate provocation; folkloric manifestation; community membership; religious choice; reaction against the scorn of women shown in advertising; the erotic innuendo of hidden charms; alliance between flirting

and propriety; expression of a certain sacredness; a convenient way of preventing sexual harassment by males authorized by the patriarchal tradition to get their rocks off with the drooling stares of frustration.

But the real battle is not there – it is at the base, in the joint emancipation of men and women together; it is in the refusal of apartheid, of exclusion, of misogynistic and homophobic behavior. Enough false debates, enough ideologies! In my book "Nothing is sacred, everything can be said," I defended the principle: tolerance for all ideas, intolerance for all barbaric acts. Our only criteria must be human progress, generous behavior, the enrichment of everyday existence.

The right to Life guarantees our legitimacy.

Power plays on people's emotions. The irrational fear it spreads everywhere is a source of blind violence that it excels in profiting from. The advantage that local communities who want to decide their own fate have is that by giving priority to the construction of an authentically human life, their practice implies the transcendence of raw emotion and awakens poetic consciousness.

In the same way as boycotts of adulterated products from the petrochemical and agricultural mafias become inoperative without access to quality food, the will to do away with consumerism, where Having supplants Being, will not follow ethical injunction so much as it will the attraction of a free life.

Taking up the enemy's arms means foreseeable defeat; but the opposite approach just as surely leads to another kind of obvious fact: the more the feeling that life and human solidarity are the only possible leavening for an existence worthy of the name, the more malaise and uncertainty will undermine the determination and fanaticism that drive the

mercenaries of the party of corruption and death.

There are many people who have talked about the uncertainty gnawing at a growing number of authorized killers, whether it's the Iranian "revolutionary guard," the thugs recruited by Hamas, the Israeli soldiers whose barbarism has been denounced in the Gaza Strip, the assassins in north and South Sudan, Somali looters, etc. This observation is not a tactical argument, and doesn't fall within any kind of military perspective from which to insinuate, a bit facilely, perhaps, that the enemy is digging its own grave. It's just about a probability: that we're seeing an approaching financial crash that will destroy all currency, and in the same way there is a devaluation threatening the suicidal determination that the bureaucrats of crime, the mafias of profitable barbarism, are counting on to sign up more troops (i.e., as the old religious or ideological pretexts lose credibility and the fanatics start to doubt that they're backed by some murderous God).

It is in this sense that I throw in my lot with the proliferation of a life reaction capable of fertilizing the territories desertified and sterilized by the economy of exploitation and its Mafioso bureaucracy. Our rich creativity has it in itself to discover the secret of organizing spaces and times in social and individual life at last liberated from commodity oppression. Only poetry can escape the steely gaze of power. Only the passion for life can drive back death.

TWO FOOTNOTES ABOUT SELF-DEFENSE

1. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) is comprised of some thousands of fighters in the Mexican jungle. The women proposed and obtained, in direct democracy assemblies, that it not intervene offensively and instead limit itself to playing a defensive role. However, when paramilitary groups threatened the Zapatista villages, the EZLN kept out of it; instead, the "councils of good government" set up a human ring

around the village, formed of hundreds of partisans and sympathizers, who flooded in from everywhere. The journalists and television cameramen covered the event, making use of the spectacle to get the whole world informed about what was happening. That was enough to repel the aggressors.

2. In a story from India, the villagers went to complain to a wise man about the cruelty of a giant snake that was biting and killing them. The whistling sound it made as it approached was enough to spread terror throughout the village. The wise man went and found the snake and managed to convince it to leave the villagers in peace. But then, the villagers immediately set about mocking the snake, who had become peaceful, making fun of his weakness, and gaily provoking him; weary of their scorn, the snake slithered over to see the wise man and confessed his confusion: how am I supposed to react to this? The wise man thought about it, and said “I told you not to bite them, but no one said you couldn’t whistle at them anymore.”

ADDRESS TO GREEK REVOLUTIONARIES

Comrades – I have never despaired of seeing the self-organization revolution as a revolution of everyday life. Now less than ever.

I am fully convinced that by taking to the barricades of resistance and self-defense, the living forces of the whole world are awakening from a long sleep. Their irresistible, peaceful offensive will knock down any obstacle set up against the immense desire to live that nourishes the innumerable beings born and reborn every day. The creative violence of a new world’s growing pains will supplant the destructive violence of the suicidal old world.

Until today, we have been little more than hybrid beings, half-human, half-wild beasts. Our societies have been vast

warehouses, where people, reduced to commodity status and considered equally precious and vile, are treated as universally interchangeable and beaten into submission. We are now inaugurating the new era, where Mankind will face up to its destiny as a creator and a thinker, becoming something, it has never been before: fully human beings.

I am not asking for anything impossible. I'm not asking for anything, in fact. I have no need for hope or despair. I only wish to see the concrete realization, in your hands and in the hands of the people of the whole world, of an International Union of the Human Race, which will bury in the past today's moribund commodity civilization and the Party of Death frantically trying to keep it up on its last legs.

A Coffee with Kristin Ross: On the continuations of May '68 (pdf)

A Coffee with Kristin Ross: On the continuations of May '68, Political journal Babylonia, Athens, June 2019.

The brochure of Babylonia "A Coffee with Kristin Ross: On the continuations of May '68" is now available for download in English. It contains the dialogue between Babylonia's editorial team and Ross, during B-Fest 7 2018, on democracy, social movements, social change, what remains alive from May '68 and much more. Originally published in Greek in December 2018.

We met Kristin Ross in the morning of 27 May 2018 for a Sunday coffee at the historic center of Athens. The previous night

she had given her keynote speech entitled “May ’68 & its continuation”, at the international antiauthoritarian festival B-Fest 7. Her talk raised our interest in the questions and cracks that were opened worldwide by the May events, and thus we decided on the following day to recreate the space and time for the continuation of this exchange.

During our dialogue with Kristin Ross, which is being presented below, we speak about the continuations of May ’68 and the future of real democracy. She detects the pieces of what remains alive from the ’68 beyond the official constructs of memory and commemorations. Which are the invisible aspects of the period and when they become socially visible? Which is the democratic thread that can connect the Paris Commune of 1871, May ’68 and the contemporary movements like zad and the squares? How could all of them be situated in the criticism towards the bureaucratic fragmentation of everyday life, with the aim of emancipation? These are some of the questions we explored together with Ross.

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Ideology and the Saturation of Time and Space

Yavor Tarinski

“Time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we live”
Albert Einstein[1]

One of the first political groups that initiated a more complex **critique on ideology** was the Situationist International. They defined it as a doctrine of interpretation of existing facts[2], i.e. certain type of analysis, developed in specific politico-historic context, that have internalized the latter's temporal and spatial characteristics completely. In this way ideologies are meant to present every other contextual reality (no matter how different) in the light of their initial environment.

Thus cultural and racial superiority (based on pseudo-scientific theories from the past) remains as relevant as ever for heavily ideologized fascist trends, despite the immense scientific body of proofs that disband their theories. The **industrial proletarian worker** (of the 18th and 19th century industrial Western Europe) remains the main actor for genuine social change for many of the first-world leftists, despite the fact that their societies have long entered into a post-industrialist era of service-oriented economies. Space and time are thus being saturated by ideology, which prevents the recognition of alterations in temporality and spatiality.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in his work *Dawn of Day*, notes the similarities between Christianity and the radical ideologies of his period, regarding their attitude towards time[3]. According to him many on the Left, just like priests, preach among the oppressed for a future without oppressors. But like the mythical for Christians "day of judgment", socialist and other "revolutionary" utopias are eternally delayed. Nietzsche concludes that these ideologies ask you to be prepared and nothing more, waiting for something external, but otherwise you continue to live in the same way as you had lived before.

In similar manner, the situationists proclaimed ideologies to have long been dead[4], since their effect saturates time and space, lacking essentially any vibrancy. The Situationist International maintained a philosophical opposition to every

ideology, because it serves to **sterilize everyday life.** For them, ideologies are the despotism of a social fragment imposing itself as pseudo-knowledge of a frozen totality, as a totalitarian worldview.

> *Every ideology, regardless of its philosophical base, tends, like everything else in capitalist society, to rigidify, become fetishised and turn into one more thing to be passively consumed.*

In order for real life activity to continually experiment and correct itself, i.e. to remain vibrant, it must not be ideologized, otherwise it will only have an illusory character that pushes the past and present into a cycle of *déjà vu,* making the notion of future meaningless. In other words, ideology tends to sterilize the present, subordinating it to the past, while excluding the future. This illusory character is evident from Guy Debord's magnum opus *The Society of the Spectacle*, where he argues that ideology is being *legitimated in modern society by universal abstraction and by the effective dictatorship of illusion*.[5]

Levels of Ideology

There are several levels on which ideology affects social and collective perceptions of space and time. According to the analysis of Cornelius Castoriadis, developed in his critique of Marxism, we can detect two such levels: of the established power and of the political sect. In both of them he detects problems that arise when one tries to gauge real activities after the mythical standards of a certain ideology:

1. When ideology serves as the official dogma of an established power in a country, it is a tool for this authority to conceal reality and to justify its policies, no matter what its actions are. Socialist states from the past, for example, claimed that they strive towards social equality and classless society,

while simultaneously creating an all-powerful class of party functionaries and strengthening the authority of the already existing state bureaucracy. Signs and symbols were placed around public spaces, as a reference to supposedly ongoing Revolution, at a time when authoritarian counterrevolution was actually raging, with temporality and spatiality having been saturated artificially by the socialist ideology of the state.

The same is happening today with the capitalist system. Its ideological veil presents it as the kingdom of diversity, individuality and freedom, while in practice we witness uniformity on a global scale and the merger of state and private sector. Ideological phrases such as "global village"[6] (neoliberal globalization) and "end of history" (Fukuyama) indicate, in the former case, that all space has become known to us and there is nothing new to be discovered since all has come under the same order, while the latter refers to the inalterable temporal character of the current situation.

2. Ideology, as the doctrine of a multitude of political sects, is the self-evident, self-justifying reason for small groups to act in a certain way. By abiding to a certain ideological purity, such sectarian collectivities voluntarily abdicate from public affairs, as a result of the conception of space and time they have adopted. Their temporality and spatiality has been saturated by their ideology, and new developments in society are being faced with hostility as they appear foreign to their non-contextual analysis. Due to this, groups that claim to be fighting for social emancipation disconnect their political activity from the ongoing social processes, entrapping themselves instead in a past-without-a-future, thus ceasing to be essentially revolutionary. The attempts to gauge real activities after the mythical standards of a certain ideology most often leads to political inaction.

Direct democracy versus Ideology

French philosopher Claude Lefort argues that *[w]hile ideology emerges from within the social order, ideology dissimulates and conceals the conflicts that ensue from the internal divisions of the social. The discourse on the social can maintain its position of being external to its object only by presenting itself as the guarantor of the rule which attests, by its very existence, to the embodiment of the idea in the social relation.*[7]

Direct democracy on the other hand, as a non-hierarchical project that is antithetic to the oligarchic order of political representation, breaks with the symbolic closure that is typical of modern ideologies (which seek to incarnate rationality and appear to be immanent in the social order) and pre-modern religions (that present the social order as deriving from some extra-social source, or as german-american historian Ernst Kantorowicz puts it – monarchies were *the embodiment of two orders of reality: the transcendent (or divine) and the immanent, that is, the king 'gave society a social body*[8]).

Direct democracy is a political form that creates public space and time, since it allows for **constant interrogation and self-instituting** to take place. Instead of concealing internal clashes within society, as ideologies do, direct democracy is based on what Jacques Ranciere calls *dissensus* – an activity that cuts across forms of cultural and identity belonging and hierarchies between discourses and genres, working to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous objects into the field of perception.[9] This does not mean that such democratic project is nihilistic or institutionless; on the contrary, it is essentially the constant self-institution of society itself which allows to wide deliberation and exchange of ideas and opinions to be constantly taking place.

In other words, direct democracy is the creation of a

different relation of society with its past, present and future, a new relation with its traditions based on critical reflection and re-creation, and, as Castoriadis suggests, *the emergence of a dimension where the collectivity can inspect its own past as the result of its own actions, and where an indeterminate future opens up as domain for its activities*. [10] It creates a new public space of social deliberation and political decision-making, where power belongs to all, while also establishes a temporality that is grounded in the present, but also directed at the collective creation of the future, without metaphysical reassurances of a religious or ideological eternity.

Direct democracy is incompatible with ideology, since the social order and the conflicts that may emerge from the grassroots of society are interlinked. There is not a separated source of power that can conceal itself. This is due to the democratic contradiction observed by Lefort, according to which democracy is the power of the people and the 'power of nobody', because power cannot be identical or 'consubstantial' with a particular individual or group.[11]

Conclusion

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard has said that:

A revolutionary age is an age of action; ours is the age of advertisement and publicity. *Nothing ever happens but there is immediate publicity everywhere. In the present age a rebellion is, of all things, the most unthinkable. Such an expression of strength would seem ridiculous to the calculating intelligence of our times. On the other hand a political virtuoso might bring off a feat almost as remarkable. He might write a manifesto suggesting a general assembly at which people should decide upon a rebellion, and it would be so carefully worded that even the censor would let it pass. At the meeting itself he would be able to create the impression that his audience had rebelled, after which they would all go quietly*

home—having spent a very pleasant evening.[12]

His words are, more than ever, abreast with our times. Populist ideologies have created the illusion for whole nations that they are rebelling through their vote for far-right or far-left parties and leaders: from Trump in the USA, through Victor Orban in Hungary, until the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece. Such new governments dress the **old normality** in certain ideological mantle, leading in turn to increased popular cynicism. Unfortunately, among the enemies of the current capitalist nation-states there is still the tendency of embracing ideologies. The groups they form tend to prefer to relive historical events instead of daring to attempt to alter the future and rethink the past.

For the renewal of a truly revolutionary project, there is the need to rethink our perception of time and space: to not be afraid to live in the present and participate in the formation of the future, but also drawing on the lessons from (and rethinking) the past. For this reason the project of direct democracy appears to be truly revolutionary, unlike the pseudo post-ideological discourse of neoliberalism, which still draws heavily on ideological concealment of boiling social conflicts. Only by incorporating the project of direct democracy into our struggles and visions we can go beyond the current saturation of time and space.

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A Conversation between Sergio

Benvenuto & Cornelius Castoriadis: Autonomy, Politics, Psychoanalysis

This conversation took place in Castoriadis' apartment in Paris, on May 7, 1994. It was registered and filmed for the Multi-Media Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences of the RAI – Radiotelevisione Italiana. First published in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis,* No 6, Winter 1998. Translated from the French by Joan Tambureno.

Benvenuto: You are a philosopher of politics, but you are also a practicing psychoanalyst. Does your profession of analysis have an influence on your philosophical concepts?

Castoriadis: There is a very strong bond between my concept of psychoanalysis and my concept of politics. The aim of both is human autonomy, albeit via different processes. Politics aims at freeing the human being, making it possible for him to accede to his own autonomy through collective action. The prevailing concept during the 18th and 19th centuries (including that of Marx), according to which the object of politics was happiness, is a mistaken, even catastrophic, one. The object of politics is freedom. And politics is collective-conscious and considered-action, aimed at transforming institutions into institutions of freedom and autonomy.

Benvenuto: The American Declaration of Independence does not proclaim that the aim of the state is happiness, but it ensures everyone has the freedom to pursue happiness. That individual quest for happiness has gradually been identified in America with the criteria of 'problem solving'. However, does the quest for happiness for every man not imply also the

autonomy of every man? The idea that society must permit everyone to search for his own happiness implies a certain liberal concept of autonomy. Is it in that American sense that you intend 'autonomy'?

Castoriadis: No, not in the American sense. The American Declaration states, "We believe that all men are created free and equal for the pursuit of happiness". But I do not believe that God created all human beings free and equal.

In the first place, God created nothing at all because he does not exist. Secondly, since human beings came into existence, they have practically never been free and equal. Therefore, it is necessary that they act in order to become free and equal. And once they have become free and equal, there will doubtlessly be demands regarding the Common Good, and that is the contrary of the liberal concept according to which each and everyone must pursue his individual happiness which would imply, at the same time, the maximum happiness for all. There are certain kinds of social services which are not exclusively directed to the interests of individual happiness and which are the object of political action-for example, museums, or roads-and all the same it is in the interest of my own autonomy that others are autonomous.

However, if society interferes with my happiness, the result is totalitarianism. In that case, society will tell me: "it is the opinion of the majority that you should not buy records of Bach's music, but those of Madonna. That is the will of the majority, and so much for your happiness!" I believe that happiness can and must be pursued by each individual on his own. It is up to each individual either to know or not know what his own happiness is made of. At certain moments, he will find it here and at others elsewhere.

The very notion of happiness is a fairly complex one, both psychologically and philosophically.

However, the object of politics is freedom and autonomy, and that will only be possible within an institutional, collective framework, which permits freedom and autonomy. The object of psychoanalysis is the same. And there is the response to the question as to the fin of psychoanalysis (to which Freud returned often), in the two senses of the word fin (aim/end): the termination in time and the objective of the analysis. It is the aim of analysis that the individual become as autonomous as possible.

This does not mean autonomous in the Kantian sense, that is to say complying with moral dictates, established in the same way, once and for all. The truly autonomous individual is one who has transformed his relationship with his unconscious to such a point that he can - to the extent that it is possible in the human universe - know his own desires and at the same time succeed in mastering the acting out of those desires. Being autonomous does not imply, for example, that I am moral because I do not covet my neighbor's wife. I have not mastered this desire for my neighbor's wife, besides which each one of us began life desiring the wife of a fellow human being, since each desired his own mother. If one has not begun life thus, one is not a human being but a monster.

However, it is quite another thing to put that desire into action. Individuals of fifty or sixty can still have incestuous dreams, which proves that that desire remains. An individual who at least once a year has not wished the death of someone because that someone has in some way wronged him is a seriously pathological individual. This does not mean that he must necessarily kill that person, but it is necessary to realize that "in that moment I was so furious with that person that if I could have made him disappear from the face of the earth, I would have. But then, I wouldn't have, even if I could". That is what I call autonomy.

Benvenuto: You speak of autonomy. Other analysts who, like you, tend towards the Left prefer to speak of psychoanalysis

as an instrument for emancipation. Is this the same thing?

Castoriadis: It is; however, autonomy is more precise. Psychoanalysis cannot be an instrument for social emancipation, it cannot free us from our money-dominated society or the immense power wielded by the state. Psychoanalysis does not have the capacity to make revolutionaries of patients, but it can help them to overcome their inhibitions, rendering them more lucid, more active citizens.

However, the problem of psychoanalysis is the relationship of the patient to himself. There is Freud's famous comment in the New Lectures on Psychoanalysis: "Wo es war, soll ich werden", "where it has been, I must become", that is to say, substitute the It (or Id) with the I. That phrase is more than ambiguous, even if its ambiguity is removed by what follows in the paragraph: that is an effort of drying out, similar to the Dutch efforts to drain the sea of the Zuyderzee. The intent of psychoanalysis is not to drain the unconscious; that would be an absurd, as well as impossible, undertaking. What it does intend is to attempt to transform the relationship of the I instance, of the subject more or less conscious, more or less reflected, with his drives, his unconscious. The definition of autonomy on the individual plane is: knowing what one desires, knowing what one would really like to do and why, and knowing what one knows and what one does not.

Benvenuto: Today a sort of official ideology of autonomy prevails. It is enough to look, for example, at the advertisements in the media to realize that there is an ideological sale of a pagan song to happiness pursued by autonomous men and women. Isn't your ideal of autonomy close to the ideas dominant today? You wrote that Marx was anti-capitalist, but that in reality he shared the same prejudices and the same assumptions of the capitalist society. You could be accused of the same thing, because you propose as an alternative an ideal which is today altogether dominant, even

banal.

Castoriadis: There is clearly, on the part of contemporary society, an extraordinary force of assimilation and recuperation. However, I began speaking of creation, the imaginary and autonomy approximately thirty years ago. At that time, it was anything but an advertisement slogan. Gradually, the ad-men appropriated my words because they became the ideas of May ’68. However, the mystification of these ad-men becomes apparent when they speak of creativity. “If you really want to be creative, come and work for IBM” - that is a publicity slogan. But at IBM, you are neither more or less creative than you are elsewhere. The creativity I speak of is of human beings who must be freed, which is quite a different thing.

In France, one does not speak so much of autonomy as of individualism. Now, individualism as it is referred to in publicity, in the official ideologies, or in politics, has nothing to do with what I call the autonomy of the individual.

> ***In the first place, individualism is: “I do what I wish”, while autonomy is: “I do what I believe it is right to do, after reflecting; I do not deprive myself of doing what pleases me, but I do not do something simply because it pleases me”.***

In a society in which each one does what he pleases, there will be murder and rape. And then, that publicity and ideology are deceptive, because the alleged individualism, the narcissism with which we are inundated, is a pseudo-individualism. The current form of individualism is that at 8:30, every evening in every French household the same dials are tuned to receive the same television programs, which propagate the same rubbish. Forty million individuals, as though obeying a military command, do the same thing, and that is called individualism! By “individual” I intend someone who attempts to become autonomous, who is conscious of the fact

that, as a human being, he is absolutely unique and attempts to develop his singularity in a reflected way. Consequently, there is no relationship between the ideology of publicity and what I have said.

Benvenuto: Apparently, your idea of the aim (fin) of psychoanalysis is virtually opposite to the one proposed by Lacan. He strongly criticized the idea that that aim was to create an autonomous ego, calling that theory an "American ideology". Do you consider Lacan's criticism to be fair?

Castoriadis: Partially so. For, in it there were two potential-perhaps even real-deviations. The first was the absolute over-estimation of the Ego and consciousness. Freud's expression, "where It was, I must become", should be completed by the symmetrical: "there where I am, the It must be able to appear". We must succeed in making our desires speak. Letting them pass into reality, allowing them to be translated into action, is obviously quite another thing. Therefore, it is necessary to let drives rise; it is necessary to know even the most bizarre, monstrous, and abject drives which could appear in our everyday, conscious life. On the other hand, the autonomous Ego referred to by certain Americans was in fact the socially constructed individual: the Ego was constructed by society; that is, an individual knew that he had to work to live and that if he opposed his boss it was because he had not resolved his Oedipus complex. There have been job application questionnaires in American companies in which, if the candidate responds to the question "when you where a child, did you love your mother or your father more?" by "I loved my mother more", he earns a negative point. Because, clearly, if he opposed his father, he could be a potential troublemaker in the company. That is an ideological utilization of psychoanalysis for the purpose of adaptation.

In 1940, when there were 15 million unemployed in the United States, an article appeared in the International Journal for Psychoanalysis by American psychoanalysts interpreting the

psychoanalytical roots of unemployment: one is unemployed because of an unconscious desire to be unemployed. This is an aberration, as well as idiotic, since unemployment is clearly an economy-related phenomenon.

However, Lacan's criticism of that tendency was somewhat in bad faith. In the first place, because he chose an easy target, in the second place because he wished to propose an ideology of desire. Now, that Lacanian ideology of desire is monstrous, because desire is murder, incest and rape. For Lacan, there is the Law, but that Law - as he is incapable of putting it in a social-historical context - perhaps could be any law. There was law at Auschwitz; there was law in the Gulag; and there is law in Iran today.

Benvenuto: But Lacan spoke of symbolic law, constituted by language, and with a universal structure. It is not a question of just any law, imposed by any regime.

Castoriadis: Of course, with language we can say anything we please. But what exactly does he mean by symbolic law? The word "symbolic" for Lacan is a skeleton key, a word to conceal the fact that one is speaking of the institution and the instituted. However, in saying that it is symbolic, what he wants is to endow the institution and the instituted with a pseudo-transcendental dimension, as Kant would say. But the symbolic is quite another thing. Language belongs to the symbolic, in the sense that all signs are symbols of a referent, or that there are symbols of another order. But we must put an end to that Lacanian mystification of the symbolic.

There is no "symbolic" as independent domain; there is a symbolic as part and function of the imaginary. Otherwise, there are institutions, and there is a question of the validity of the institutions. However, the question is not symbolic. Is then the institution valid by right? It will always be valid de facto, as long as it is sanctioned. But it

was valid de facto at Auschwitz and is so also in Iran today. Is it valid by right? Now, there is nothing in the concept of Lacan to lead us to make a distinction between the law of Auschwitz and the law of ancient Athens, or the present laws in the United States. Thus, the famous expression of Lacan to the effect that the master relinquishes nothing of his desire. Now, it is the master who knows what his desire is, and if his desire is like the desire of Lacan - i.e., to transform his followers into slaves - then his desire is realized. But that is basically opposed to the scope of psychoanalysis, which is not that the desire of the master, or of everyone, be realized - particularly if one is aware of what desire implies in psychoanalysis - because that would be incompatible with real, social life. And I do not intend here the actual American society, but also the most ideal society conceivable. So, Lacan comes back to the most utopian aspects of the ideology of the young Marx and the Anarchists, although he would have laughed sarcastically at the consideration of these ideologies. The young Marx and the Anarchists conceived of a society in which there would be neither law nor institution.

Benvenuto: That accusation directed at Lacan as anarchist surprises me. His left-wing critics usually accused him of being repressive, due to his insistence on Law and castration. For Lacan remaining faithful to one’s desire means castration, i.e., renouncing the putting into action of one’s own fantasies.

Castoriadis: Not so, because the assumption of castration in Lacan is extremely ambiguous. It is the renouncing of desire directed at the mother, but that is the condition of realizing desire. For Lacan, there is neurosis because the individual has not succeeded in assuming his castration, and if he does assume it, then his desire is liberated, with the exception that he obviously no longer directs it towards the mother but towards other women.

Benvenuto: But for Lacan, assuming one’s own desire does not

imply enjoying that which one demands in reality. He makes a distinction between desire, demand and enjoyment which occurs in reality.

Castoriadis: All this is very ambiguous. Lacan is, theoretically, all that which is most banal, most suspect, similar to one of those Parisian vogues which appear and then disappear after five, ten, twenty years.
But coming back to the history of psychoanalysis, the particular problem of the human being is to succeed in creating a relationship with the unconscious which is not simply a repression of the unconscious, or its suppression according to a given social dictate and, in particular, the social heteronomy. Here we have once more a point at which psychoanalysis and politics meet. To what extent might I call the social law also my law and not a law which has been imposed on me in a heteronomous fashion? It is my law only if I have been concretely active in the formation of the law. Only in these conditions can I be truly autonomous, given the fact that I am obliged to live in a society which has laws. Thus, we have a second point of conjunction between the sense of autonomy in psychoanalysis and the sense of autonomy in politics.

Benvenuto: The left-wing culture has often criticized analysis as a practice particular to a bourgeois society, because it is essentially based on a private contract of sorts. Above all, during the 1960s and 1970s, a certain sector of the left proposed substituting psychoanalysis with a social treatment of personal problems, reducing psychopathological disturbances to social alienation. What is your opinion of this left-wing, Marxist criticism of the psychoanalytical ethic?

Castoriadis: That was a radical leftist exaggeration of the 1960s and 70s, which found motivation in certain aspects of establishment psychoanalysis. Every psychoanalytical process necessarily involves two persons: an analysand and an analyst. There cannot be a transference and a working through of the

transference outside this relationship between analysand and analyst. There is, however, an aspect which is extremely difficult to resolve and to which no one has yet provided a solution: the financial aspect. On the one hand, the psychoanalyst has to make a living. On the other, as experience proves, even for the analysand an unpaid analysis is not psychically tolerable (because the debt he contracts with the analyst is enormous), and it will inevitably be ineffectual since the analysand can prattle on interminably, because the time of the session costs him nothing.

> ***There is in any event a problem: the enormous inequality of the distribution of wealth in today's society places psychoanalysis out of the reach of most of those who need it, unless they are reimbursed by the National Health System. This could be resolved effectively only within the framework of a general social transformation.***

Benvenuto: What then are your practical, political suggestions for countering the classic criticism against analysts: that they only treat the idle rich, and usually too few patients in ratio to the average population?

Castoriadis: This is not necessarily true. Of the dozens of patients I have treated up to the present, practically none have been rich. Some have made enormous sacrifices in order to go into analysis. I adapt my fee to the patient's economic possibilities. There are also those who cannot pay anything. But practically no one has come to me for analysis in order to be able to say at a fancy dinner party "I am in analysis".

The financial question is however a real problem, and it would be good to attempt to eliminate this great inequality of income in today's society. However, from a theoretical point of view, we cannot remain blocked at the Freudian theory as it was formulated initially. Freud was an incomparable genius, and to him goes the credit for a wealth of ideas. But there is

a blind point in Freud: the imagination.
There is a considerable paradox in Freud's works, in that everything recounted by him is formations of the radical imagination of the subject, of fantasies. However Freud, who was formed in the Positivist spirit of the 19th century, as a student of Brücke in Vienna, neither sees, nor wants to see, these formations. For this reason, initially, for some time he believed in the reality of the scenes of infantile seduction his hysterical patients described. He believed that the subject was ill because of something which had created trauma.

Benvenuto: For more or less the past ten years, there has been in the US the tendency to return to Freud's initial belief in the real seduction on the part of adults.

Castoriadis: These are political idiocies created by the politically correct vogue. The patient, when he says that his mother, father, nurse or neighbor seduced him when he was a child, is always necessarily right. But that is not the problem, because the basic response is that for any traumatic event, the event is real in that it is an event, while it is imaginary in that it is traumatic. There can be no trauma if the imagination of the subject does not give a certain meaning to what has occurred, and that meaning is not politically correct but is the meaning given to the fantasy of the subject and his radical imagination. Now, Freud does not want to acknowledge that basic concept.

Currently, in the US, there is the attempt to go back in time. It is touching and funny to see that during the analysis of the Wolf Man, Freud long believed in the reality of the primitive scene which the Wolf Man described to him-that is, the fact that he saw his parents making love from behind; and that it was not until the end of the analysis that he said-in a footnote-that perhaps, in a final analysis, the primitive scene was only the patient's fantasy. However, the matter is of little importance. Freud did not account for the role played by the imagination in what he called fantasmatisation.

He attempted to attribute philogenetic origins to these fantasies, and he attempted to find them in the initial myth of Totem and Taboo, which is absurd.

To explain the origin of society, Freud created a myth.

At the outset, he posed the problem of the origin of society as simply negative-that is, the problem of the origin of the two major interdictions: that of incest and that of intra-tribal murder. Not murder in principle, because nowhere is murder forbidden in principle; if you kill the enemies of Italy or France, you have done well and are decorated-but one must not kill within. You can kill within only if you are an executioner, or a policeman on duty. Freud did not see that the problem of the origin of society is not exclusively the problem of the creation of two interdictions. It is the problem of the creation of positive institutions: the creation of language, norms of behavior, religions, meanings, and so on. Freud's myth explains the creation of the two major prohibitions during the course of history of the primitive horde, where a father had all the women and castrated or drove out his sons in order to continue to reign over his harem. One day, the brothers killed the father and divided the women of the tribe. Then the brothers concluded a pact stipulating that on no one would attempt to take the woman of another or to commit murder. And so they portrayed their father as the tribe's totem animal. And every year they would prepare a sacrificial meal, during which an animal was sacrificed and eaten, thus repeating symbolically-in the true sense of the term-the murder of the father.

From an anthropological point of view, this myth does not hold, although it is a very significant mythical construction not only because of the fashion in which Freud and the thought of his time functioned, but also from the psychoanalytical point of view, in that it is in fact an Oedipus complex-the tendency to murder the father and eliminate brothers/rivals. But all this was already known through psychoanalysis without

the myth of Totem and Taboo. The myth represents that which it should explain, because it represents the brothers' capacity for socialization on the day they joined forces to kill their father. That is already a social action, which presupposes the existence of language. Therefore, to explain the origin of society, Freud presupposes that society is already there, that is, that the brothers could converse among themselves, conspire and maintain a secret. Animals have never been seen to conspire.

However, because Freud totally dismisses the **creative role of the radical imagination**, of the fantasmatization, he is something of a reductionist or determinist; he tends to always attempt to find the connection of causes and effects in the subject's psychic life, which created in that subject that symptom, neurosis or particular evolution.

This is carried to the extreme in stories such as *A Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci*, in which he attempts to explain one of Leonardo's paintings and his creative life on the basis of a childhood incident, which is here also supposed as mythical, and which, even supposing it all held together, fails to explain the painting of Leonardo, why that painting is great, or why we experience pleasure in looking at it. Also when it is a question of explaining the evolution of a singular subject-demonstrating the reasons for a certain neurosis and not another-Freud finally admits that it is impossible to know, and he calls it "the choice of the neurosis". An individual chooses his neurosis, and by two or three years of age she has already embarked upon the road to obsession rather than, say, hysteria.

Benvenuto: But is not the expression "choice of neurosis" contradictory to you assume to be his determinism? Because, evidently, to speak of choice is in itself to repudiate determinism, and consequently to admit that there is no relation of cause and effect between the history of a person and his psychopathology.

Castoriadis: That is what I said. Freud inevitably attempts to find a connection between cause and effect. For example, in the Rat Man's Analysis or in the Wolf Man's Analysis, he says that a certain symptom exists because a given thing has occurred at a given moment.

However, in the first place, he does not see that the thing which has occurred at that moment has played this role only because the patient attributed to it that fantastic meaning. And secondly, Freud does not explain that which has occurred, and is consequently forced in the end to say that there is a choice of neurosis that he cannot explain.

He often refers to constitutional factors, but constitutional factors are like histories (heredity) in old medicine, or the soporific virtues of opium, as Molière said. Saying that there are constitutional factors does not constitute an answer. Here, once more one must be fair: when Freud spoke of constitutional factors he was not completely mistaken; for example, with infants, from the outset there is a considerable difference in their tolerance of frustration. Some infants, given the breast or the baby's bottle, remain calm for six hours until they are once more hungry, while others very quickly begin to cry, scream, demand the breast or the bottle, or do not accept the mother's going away. Then, constitution implies something innate. However, any effort at psychoanalytical determinism fails.

Freud said the same thing in the texts of 1936-30, as regards female homosexuality, when he stated that a girl, during adolescence, has three alternative ways. She can become a woman who loves men and who wishes to have children, she can become a dried-up old maid who detests sex and anything related to it, or she can become a tomboy in whom, even if it remains latent, there will be a tendency towards homosexuality. Why does she choose one alternative rather than another? One could point to factors which have led to a given choice or inclination, but ultimately it can never be

determined.

Benvenuto: Are not the problems Freud poses on “choice” of neuroses or ways of being a woman tied to problems inherent in all historical reconstitution, since a historian reconstitutes processes over time? There has always been this oscillation between determinism and in-determinism in historical reconstructions.

Castoriadis: Yes. It is precisely for that reason that determinist and scientist reductionism is false; one can never demonstrate the totality of necessary and sufficient conditions. That does not necessarily mean that there is an absence of any form of determinism; there are certain connections of cause and effect, but not always and not essentially. It is a question of domains.

Benvenuto: But in analytical treatment, does one act on the causes or something else?

Castoriadis: That is the most important and the most difficult question. Psychoanalysis attempts to transform the way the patient sees his world. In the first place, it attempts to make him see his world of fantasies. That is, it attempts to make him understand that the way in which he sees the world is a way which, for the most part, depends on his own psychic constructions and fantasies. Secondly, it attempts to lead him to an adequate relationship with his fantastic constructions. If you are dealing, for example, with someone who is on the paranoiac side, first of all he must be made to understand-not by logical persuasion, but through the analytical work-that it is not true that everyone wants to persecute him, but that, essentially, his view is his own fantasmatization, and that one might even say that when he actually does encounter persons really intent on persecuting him, it is he who has chosen them.

He chooses the woman who will persecute him.

I have chosen an extreme example, because with a delirious paranoiac there is practically nothing to be done; it is necessary to take a borderline case. However, it is more convincing than when you take a neurotic and attempt to lead him to overcome that way of fantasmatization. There are other cases where it is a question of leading the patient to live more or less peacefully and reasonably with his fantasy world, as well with his new fantastic productions. The way in which that occurs is also one of the mysteries of analysis. Freud never succeeded in explaining why a real interpretation has an effect. And I cannot explain why a true interpretation at times produces an effect and at other times produces none. A dyed-in-the-wool analyst will tell you: "if an interpretation does not produce any effect, this is because it is not true". That is not exact.

Benvenuto: Apropos of the effects of analysis, in recent years there has been considerable criticism by a certain epistemology of the validity, the scientific truthfulness, of psychoanalysis. For example, Popper, Grünbaum and Eysenck have criticized the scientific plausibility of psychoanalysis. Grünbaum in particular has said that analysis sometimes simply creates placebo effects. What is your opinion of these criticisms which consider the effects of analysis as being no different than the effects of magic cures? Because, at times, a magician can also cure.

Castoriadis: But how does he do it? Mr. Grünbaum, Mr. Popper, and even Mr. Lévi-Strauss have no explanation for that. Lévi-Strauss says that psychoanalysts are the shamans of modern times, and shamans the psychoanalysts of primitive societies. But why experiences in double blind (1)? Why is there a placebo effect? Because there is suggestion. But why is there suggestion? Psychoanalysis responds that all suggestion is the result of transference. The patient to whom the physician gives a medicine is very likely to believe that that medicine will be beneficial, and for that reason there is a placebo

effect and that faith can produce effects on the psyche. Secondly, it is for that reason that one makes experiments in double blind, and to say that the fact that someone goes to a psychoanalyst three times a week and that that is beneficial due to a placebo effect, is saying nothing at all. Why is there a placebo effect?

Benvenuto: Yes, but you say that epistemology and analysis both admit the existence of suggestion. I cannot believe that any analyst would be content to admit that the effects that he produces are due to suggestion, even if suggestion is explained in a psychoanalytic way.

Castoriadis: Psychoanalysis can explain suggestion, but suggestion cannot explain psychoanalysis. Because psychoanalysis is essentially-I do not say exclusively-the work of the analysand himself. These philosophers, perhaps because they often live in America, have in mind a psychoanalyst who says to the patient: "If you think that, it is because your mother did that". However, other psychoanalysts worthy of the name would never say anything of the kind. Now, one has more sophisticated forms: one says that the patient who knows what the analyst thinks attempts to say to him that he knows what the analyst will think, and so on. But if one is experienced in analysis, nothing of the sort holds. It is a question of authority, but in the end I have an experience which Grünbaum has not. If one wishes to, one believes me, and if one wishes to, one does not. One sees how a patient changes in the course of a treatment, and one sees that he resists. How Mr. Grünbaum can explain why a resistance at a certain point gives way? Why does a patient for two years make no progress and then suddenly something moves and he shifts to another speed?

All these criticisms, beginning with Popper, compare psychoanalysis to an idea of science identified with positive sciences [sciences positives]. But anyone who expects psychoanalysis to be a positive science is a fool. Popper

struggles against that fool. By Popper's own reasoning, one could say that there exists no history, because there is no possibility of falsifying in history. That is possible only as regards concrete facts. If someone says "there is no Parthenon in Athens", there is a falsifiable aspect of that thing because one can take him to Athens and show him the Parthenon. But if someone says, as Burckhardt did, that for the ancient Greeks the athletic element-that is, competition and the struggle against the opponent-was very important, that is an interpretation and not refutable in Popper's sense. Popper, with his would-be criterion, says that there are positive sciences in which there is experience, measure, etc., and all the rest is literature. That may be so, but this literature is more important, perhaps, than the positive sciences.

History, society, the psyche, our lives, are at least as important as molecules and atoms.

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(1) A "double-blind" experiment in medicine is when some patients in a control group are given actual medicine, while others receive a placebo, but without either the doctor or the patients knowing who has been given which. [Note of the editor].

Nation-State, Nationalism and the Need for Roots

Yavor Tarinski

> *The State is a cold concern which cannot inspire love, but itself kills, suppresses everything that might be loved; so one is forced to love it, because there is nothing else. That is the moral torment to which all of us today are exposed.*
>
> *Simone Weil[1]*

The influence nationalism has today can be attributed to the sense of uprootedness people experience in the contemporary neoliberal globalization. The human need for feeling part of a community within familiar territorial and temporal environment remains heavily neglected by the dominant heteronomous paradigm of individualism and exploitation.

Rootedness appears as one of the most important, but overlooked, human needs. People are rooted when they, not only feel protected by, but actively and organically participate in the life of their community, preserving in this way alive certain traits of the past and expectations for the future. When brought to life, every human being is connected to a certain place of birth, cultural traditions and social environment. As Simone Weil writes: *Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw well-nigh the whole of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a natural part*.[2]

In the current state of uprootedness, however, The Nation-State, and eventually nationalism, appears as the last remnant of human collectivity related to actual geographical territory and historicity amidst digitalized global flows of authority and capital.

The contemporary pseudo-rational paradigm that places consumption and individual success as the main target of life has come to degrade all social links and bonding imaginary significations. As Castoriadis explains in his article *The Crisis of Modern Society*, these processes have come to produce

a crisis of insignificance in the so-called developed liberal societies that is slowly spreading to all their satellites in the developing world[3]. In this crisis social bonds are being diminished even on family level and the only entity that remains to provide any sort of identity, both on social and individual level, which links the future, the present and the past, appears to be the Nation-State.

The reality, however, is much different. There has been, and to some extent there still are, many other levels of human collectivities related to common ground on much smaller, decentralized and humane scale like the municipality, the city, the town, the village, the province etc. The nation or in other words – the State – has come to replace all of these, homogenizing the various cultures and traditions within its borders in its effort at establishing its authority as the only legitimate one. **Thus the national identity has come to replace or dominate every other bond of attachment.** As philosopher Simone Weil suggests: *[m]an has placed his most valuable possession in the world of temporal affairs, namely, his continuity in time, beyond the limits set by human existence in either direction, entirely in the hands of the State*.[4]

The Emergence of Nation-State

Nations are a recent invention, if we take into account the time span it occupies within the whole human history. It is tightly related to the logic of *etatism* and the emergence of the Nation-State. But before its domination over social imaginary, people's continuity in space and time was expressed, for example, through their shared experiences in medieval cities and towns. There was still **a sense of belonging**, but it was of a more fluid nature; without being exclusively set within strict territorial borders, specific language or narrow cultural traits.

What did not exist prior to the emergence of the Nation-State

was that permanent, strictly-defined patriotic devotion, on a mass scale, to a single object. Feelings of belonging and loyalty were much more diffusive and dispersed, constantly varying according to shared similarities and changing threats. Their character used to be far more complicated as they varied between interconnected groups and territories: belonging to certain professional guild, town, region, community, leader, religion or philosophical tendency. There was not one single extra-social national identity above all other intra-social interactions.

All this has changed with the emergence of Nation-States.

By shifting the role of sovereign from the vibrant public life to the lifeless bureaucratic body of the state, nationalism (as the absolute internalization of national identity by society) attempts at summing the total of people who recognize the authority of one and the same statist formation. Thus, as Weil suggests, when one talks about national sovereignty, he really means the sovereignty of certain Nation-State.[5] In statecraft, i.e. the art of making statist politics, the authority does not lay in the collective disposal of the people but it is being absorbed completely by the inhumane, merciless and bureaucratic *etatist* mechanism.

The latter's complete hold on power, exercised through constant policing of everyday life, provokes on the one hand, popular feelings of mistrust, hatred and fear, while on the other, the national element demands absolute devotion and sacrifice to the very same structure, strengthening its total domination on material and cognitive level. These seemingly paradoxical characteristics complement logically each other. Total concentration of power in the hands of one extra-social bureaucratic entity requires for it to appear before its subjects as an absolute value, as a loveless idolatry, to which Weil adds the rhetoric question – *what could be more monstrous, more heartrending.*[6]

> ***Unlike absolute monarchies of the past, in which the kings were being presented as direct descendants of God, modern nation-states present themselves as desacralized. But they are still embedded in a metaphysical imaginary: one that is not related to religion or God, but on hobbesian fears of the people and weberian bureaucratic rationalism.***

State is not a sacral idol, but a material object which serves "self-evident", nationally determined purpose, that must be forced above everything else. It allocates, as Kurdish revolutionary Abdullah Ocalan suggests, a number of attributes whose task is to replace older religiously rooted attributes like: nation, fatherland, national flag, national anthem and many others.[7] The notion of national unity comes to reminiscent and goes even further than religious concepts such as the "Unity with God". It becomes divine in an absolute manner.

In order to achieve this total absorption of all social life, it strives at systematically destroying all organized and spontaneous forms of public interaction, so as to remain the only link between the past and the present, as well as the only social and individual signification. This antagonism between State and society, that takes the form of the former's efforts to constantly degrade public space and time, has low but ceaseless intensity. This process is invisible for the social conscience, because of the cautiousness that is required for the statecraft to not lose its supremacy that nationalism provides. The outcome of this national bureaucratization of everyday life is the infliction of traits of servility, passivity and conformity into people's imaginary, so as to make social interaction beyond Nation-State hardly imaginable.

Nation-State and Borders

The dynamics of State and nationalism enclose those that are

situated within their frontiers, both on territorial and temporal level. On the one hand it encloses through its territorial borders, while on the other, through the subordination of people's imaginaries to patriotic identities. Thus the social flow of ideas through space and time is being obstructed. These national compartments restrain human creativity, and although not dulling it completely, they still seriously limit it's potentials by placing on its way border check ups, bureaucratic formalities, patriotic dogmas and national antagonisms. Simone Weil suggests that a closer examination of history will reveal the striking difference between flow of ideas and cultures in pre-national periods and the modern age of statecraft and capitalism.[8] Without romanticizing the Antiquity and the Middle Ages, one can see in those periods the fluid, creative, curious relationship inhabitants of cities and regions from different cultural and territorial backgrounds had with each other, as well as with their history, present and future.

Today on the contrary, when (while) we are supposedly connected globally with each other, and the planet has become, as the popular saying goes, one "giant village", we see more suspicion to the foreign, more fear from the unknown, than our access to knowledge, science and technology should suggest. One of the main reasons for this is the deepening enclosure of public space and time by statecraft and nationalism. Similar processes have been observed by other thinkers like David Graeber, who in his book *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity and the Secret Joy of Bureaucracy*[9] observed the unfulfilled promises of the highly scientific, technological age we have already entered. These failed expectations he attributes to the civilizational shift from the real to the simulational, which is a direct result of the capitalist and bureaucratic dynamics that have uprooted our societies from organic experience of and intervention with public space and time.

The National Sense of Injustice and Loyalty

In the national context of statecraft, every notion of justice is being expropriated by and submitted to the expansionist nature of the State. As being an entity aimed at concentrating authority, it is always in antagonistic relationship with other similar formations, as well as with social uprisings for power redistribution. States always present themselves to be in position of injustice regarding their national mission for complete domination.

According to Hannah Arendt: *tribal nationalism [patriotism] always insists that its own people are surrounded by 'a world of enemies' – 'one against all' – and that a fundamental difference exists between this people and all others*.[10]

Justice loses its meaning and from a matter of public deliberation it is being absorbed by the patriotic discourse. It is being turned into a tool through which the Nation-State processes and condemns its opponents on geopolitical and on inner/structural level (as national threat and as national traitors, respectively). This inflicted sense of national injustice is used to fill the gap left by the uprooted imaginary significations that relate people and their communities to actual territorial environments and vibrant cultures. It attempts at turning acts, done in the name of homeland, into struggle against universal injustice.

But since this feeling of national injustice is of simulative rather than of organic character, it often leads to extreme attitudes like xenophobia, racism, discrimination etc. Thus it comes as no surprise when Weil concludes that *fascism is always intimately connected with a certain variety of patriotic feeling.*[11]

By breaking all organic bonds of public life and replacing them with patriotic justice, the state becomes the only entity

to which one can **pledge loyalty**. In such way monstrosities that are being conducted by national bureaucracies are being often adopted by the common folk as just. As radical geographer David Harvey explains, national identity *is the primary means by which the state acquires legitimacy and consent for its actions*.[12]

This is the reason why people willingly engage in wars that will cost them much, if not even their lives, while empowering, without to place in danger, their rulers, which have provoked the conflict in the first place. It is because of this imaginary signification of national loyalty against the ultimate injustice that has led societies to massacre each other. It is also most certainly the engine of the current rise of xenophobia and racism among people in the developed countries. Nationalism leads them to view themselves as victims of those that seek refuge from the rubbles of the Third World, neglecting the fact that it was the pillage and exploited conducted by their own nations that have provoked these current migratory waves.

Reproduction of Hierarchies

The sense of uprootedness slowly penetrates the social imaginary. The long tentacles of the dominant bureaucratic mechanisms embed themselves within the everyday life of people, making it almost impossible to not view everything in terms of nations, states and capitalist relations. Thus the current heteronomous worldview is often being recreated by those who rebel against it. Social mobilizations that rise against authoritarian regimes or exploitative/parasitic capitalist systems tend to slowly replace the initial democratic traits with erection of hierarchies and leadership cults that mimic the patriotic loyalty to the Nation-State. This is especially true for, but unfortunately not limited to, movements that strive at achieving social change on representational level since, as Max Weber correctly

concludes, *no party, whatever its program, can assume the effective direction of the state without becoming national*.[13]

By being uprooted from their physical and temporal environment, with only the lifeless bureaucratic machinery of the State as a linkage between the human being and the world, people are compelled to embrace leaders, whose role resembles that of the statist Leviathan. We can see this logic in pop culture, and particularly in cinema, where manufactured stars play characters that resemble contemporary popular perceptions of the state: either the flawless superheroes and top agents from the Cold War era, or the cynical and vulgar, but effective, antiheroes that have sprang during the ongoing crisis of political representation.

Thus uprootedness breeds further uprootedness, or better yet – it expands itself, constantly securing the continuation of dominating bureaucratic organisms and power relations. The dangers of these processes have been examined by thinkers like Hannah Arendt, for whom the loyalty to religious or national groups and identities always leads to the abdication of individual thought.[14] But we are not doomed to remain uprooted and thus easily controlled and manipulated. Possibilities for rooting can be found all around us that lay beyond the ideological mystifications of the contemporary heteronomous system.

Putting Down Roots

Putting down roots means restoring the sense of belonging that one feels towards his social and cultural environment, through shared responsibility. There is the need to make, as Andre Gorz suggests, “one’s territory” livable again.[15] People should be linked to their cities, towns and villages, through grassroots direct participation in their management and shape them according to actual social needs in the constantly changing world, instead of following predetermined and sterile

bureaucratic planning. As Gorz puts it, *[t]he neighborhood or community must once again become a microcosm shaped by and for all human activities, where people can work, live, relax, learn, communicate, and knock about, and which they manage together as the place of their life in common*.[16] Democratic confederations, instead of Nation-States, can ultimately coordinate the activities of such emancipated and rooted communities, allowing them to reclaim their public space and time from the nationalist supremacy.

This requires for the constant creative activity of the public to once again be irritated. The Ancient Greek notion of Astynomos Orgè[17], i.e. the passion for institution-making, must become vital social and individual signification that gives meaning to life, so as to allow for the responsible participation to replace the irresponsible consumption propagated by capitalism.

Such rooting cannot be "ordered" from above by "artificial" (i.e. extra-social) structures like electoral parties or powerful leaders, for reasons that we already explored above. Instead they should be guided by democratic organizations that emerge in ecological manner in the midst of everyday life by day-to-day necessities. Germs of such organizational type already exist on embryonic level in our contemporary surroundings in the form of neighborhood assemblies during urban insurrections, markets without intermediates during economic crises, and even the regular meetings between neighbors that live in the same condominium. Political activists and organized groups should encourage and nurture the political element in such occurrences and spontaneous social movements, since politics is what allows societies to reclaim their space and determine their temporality.

An example of such rooting can be observed in the **Paris Commune** and how this was indicated by certain changes in the language. By taking direct control of their city, Parisians' reclamation of public space and time could be observed through

the replacement of the terms *mesdames* and *messieurs* (ladies and gentlemen) by ***citoyen*** and ***citoyenne*** (female and male for citizen). As Kristin Ross observes, the former formula, used mainly by the French bourgeoisie, indicated **the saturated time of Nation**.[18] It confirmed and inscribed the existing then social divisions (i.e. the superiority of the bourgeoisie over the working class) and the continuation of a certain politico-historical tradition of statecraft and hierarchical stratification.

The introduction of *citoyen* and *citoyenne* by the communards, according to Ross, indicated a break with the national belonging. Instead we can suggest that it addressed revolutionary withdrawal from the artificial/extra-social national collectivity and heading toward popular rooting in another politico-historical tradition, dating back to the emergence of the Athenian *Polis*. It indicated new politicized relationship that people obtained with their surrounding and temporality and the way they linked themselves to their city and history: On the one hand, they began viewing themselves as **stewards of their city**, managing it collectively; on the other, they began conceiving of history as **creation**, in which they take an active part. *Citoyen* and *citoyenne* was not a reference to a certain social strata, part of national entity, but an expression of equality and shared passion for political participation in public affairs. We could only imagine how this new democratic culture could have developed in the long run if the Commune was not brutally suppressed by the French army after only three months of existence.

Conclusion

Today we see how our society of uprooted people willingly embraces narratives like nationalism that provoke hatred and fear, which ultimately leads to social degradation and cannibalism. The pseudo-dilemma before the modern individual is either to stick up with the Big Brother, i.e. the Nation-

State, which to offer him a sense of belonging, or to become a kind of neoliberal “space cowboy” that wonders the world on his own in search of things and experiences to consume without any sense of self-limitation or ethical boundaries. But both these options strengthen each other and create a vicious cycle.

What seems to be hidden from the “naked” eye is the third option of rooting people through the recreation of public space and political time on the basis of direct democratic self-emancipation. This means detaching history from the sterilization of the Nation-State and linking it instead to the organic experience of life in our cities, towns and villages. Historic facts should not be distilled by the means of statecraft but by the imaginary context of each epoch and society, allowing communities to determine their temporality. This would also mean that the spaces we inhabit become truly public, i.e. controlled and managed directly by those that inhabit and depend on them, and not by bureaucrats or capitalist markets.

This approach will not solve all our problems, neither will put an end to history, but it will get us closer to the paradigm of social and individual autonomy, which in its essence can provide people with the freedom to determine their past, present and future. The historic popular efforts at self-emancipation have shown the potential of such paradigm shift, offering us germs for us to use in our efforts today. It is in our hands to determine how our societies will move on.

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