Σύγχρονες Ριζοσπαστικές Συλλογικότητες: Ρόλος και Προοπτικές

Yavor Tarinski
Μετάφραση: Ιωάννα Μαραβελίδη

Η επανάσταση δεν «δείχνει» τη ζωή στους ανθρώπους αλλά τους κάνει να ζουν. Μια επαναστατική οργάνωση πρέπει πάντα να θυμάται πως το αντικείμενό της δεν είναι το να βάζει τους υποστηρικτές της να ακούνε πειστικούς λόγους από ειδικούς αρχηγούς αλλά το να βάζει τους ίδιους να μιλήσουν για τον εαυτό τους, έτσι ώστε να επιτύχουν ή τουλάχιστον να πλησιάσουν έναν ίσο βαθμό συμμετοχής.
Γκυ Ντεμπόρ[1]

Σήμερα παρατηρούμε μία εμβάθυνση της κρίσης της αντιπροσώπευσης, που αντανακλάται από τα υψηλά επίπεδα αποχής στις εκλογές ακόμα και σε χώρες με παραδοσιακά υψηλό δείκτη συμμετοχής όπως η Ελλάδα[2]. Τα κόμματα που κέρδιζουν εκλογές στην Ευρώπη σπάνια καταφέρνουν να μαζέψουν ένα αρκετό ποσοστό ψήφων ώστε να κυβερνήσουν μόνα τους και αναγκάζονται να συμμετάσχουν σε ασταθείς συνασπισμούς για να σχηματίσουν κυβέρνηση. Ακόμα και τα επονομαζόμενα *ριζοσπαστικά* κόμματα που ισχυρίζονται πως αντιπροσωπεύουν τα μαζικά κοινωνικά κινήματα των τελευταίων χρόνων, δεν φαίνεται να μπορούν να αυξήσουν αισθητά τη βάση των μελών τους, ούτε να προκαλέσουν από μόνα τους διαρκείς κοινωνικές κινητοποιήσεις ευρείας κλίμακας.

Μαζί με τα κόμματα, μπορούμε να αναγνωρίσουμε πως και το παραδοσιακό κίνημα βρίσκεται σε κρίση. Οι παραδοσιακές ιδεολογικές οργανώσεις όχι μόνο αδυνατούν να αυξήσουν τη βάση των μελών τους αλλά χάνουν και ένα κομμάτι αυτής[3]. Επίσης, οι προτάσεις που διατυπώνουν σπάνια είναι κάτι το διαφορετικό πέρα από μία αναπαραγωγή παλιών μοτίβων σκέψης και δράσης και

επομένως δεν είναι σε θέση να αλληλεπιδράσουν ικανοποιητικά με τη σύγχρονη πραγματικότητα.

Αντί αυτού, οι σύγχρονες ριζοσπαστικές συλλογικότητες που αγωνίζονται για την κοινωνική χειραφέτηση χρειάζεται να υιοθετήσουν νέους συμπεριφορικούς τρόπους σκέψης και δράσης οι οποίοι βρίσκονται σε πλήρη αντίθεση με τους παραδοσιακούς. Εδώ ο όρος «*ριζοσπαστικές*» χρησιμοποιείται για να εκφράσει τη ριζική αλλαγή των κυρίαρχων μορφών της πολιτικής και την αντικατάσταση ενός συνόλου φαντασιακών σημασιών με ένα άλλο, και όχι ως ένα σημείο αναφοράς για χείμαρρους αίματος ή βίας ως αυτοσκοπό. Μπορούμε να διακρίνουμε τρία τουλάχιστον χαρακτηριστικά που μπορούν να κάνουν τη συμπεριφορά τους πιο επαρκή στις σημερινές συνθήκες: 1^{ον}) η χαρτογράφηση και η ενδυνάμωση των κοινωνικών αντεξουσιών, 2^{ον}) η υιοθέτηση αποϊδεολογικοποιημένου λόγου, 3^{ον}) η αντιμετώπιση της δύσκολης ερώτησης διαχείρισης εξουσίας με αντι-ιεραρχικό τρόπο.

Χαρτογράφηση και ενδυνάμωση των κοινωνικών αντεξουσιών

Οι παραδοσιακές ριζοσπαστικές οργανώσεις χρησιμοποιούν, για διάφορους λόγους, την *αντίσταση* ενάντια στην κυρίαρχη τάξη, ως βασική μορφή της δραστηριότητά τους. Για παράδειγμα, με το ξέσπασμα της οικονομικής κρίσης στην Ευρώπη πολλές παραδοσιακές οργανώσεις όπως συνδικάτα και κόμματα, κάλεσαν σε απεργίες και πορείες διεκδικώντας υψηλότερους μισθούς, περισσότερες θέσεις εργασίας, κ.τ.λ. Τακτικές που αδιαμφισβήτητα έδωσαν πολύτιμα αποτελέσματα στο παρελθόν αλλά δεν λειτούργησαν τόσο επιτυχημένα αυτή τη φορά.

Ταυτόχρονα, κομμάτια της κοινωνίας υιοθέτησαν μια αρκετά καινοτόμα και νέα προσέγγιση: επιχείρησαν να παρακάμψουν τους καπιταλιστές μεσάζοντες και τους κρατικούς γραφειοκράτες, ανοίγοντας χώρους κοινωνικής αλληλεπίδρασης που μπορούν να δώσουν πρακτικές λύσεις σε καθημερινά προβλήματα, όπως η απευθείας επαφή παραγωγών και καταναλωτών, τα κοινωνικά δίκτυα κ.α. Ετσι, αναδύθηκαν πολλές δομές βασισμένες στην αλληλεγγύη,

τη συμμετοχή και τη δημιουργία. Παρόμοια ήταν η κατάσταση με τις διαβουλευτικές συνελεύσεις που εμφανίστηκαν στις πλατείες κάθε μεγάλης πόλης σε όλο τον κόσμο κατά τις διάρκεια των μαζικών κινητοποιήσεων του 2011-12. Παρότι η αρχική δυναμική χάθηκε τελικά, οι πρακτικές αυτές έδειξαν την ανθρώπινη δημιουργικότητα η οποία δεν μπορούσε να περιβληθεί από καμμία παραδοσιακή ιδεολογία, που βασίζεται κυρίως στην αντίσταση.

Σε ένα σύστημα που συνθλίβει ραγδαία την κοινωνία και τον εαυτό του, η έμφαση των αγώνων που τα κοινωνικά κινήματα διεξάγουν θα έπρεπε να δίνεται στην οικοδόμηση και στην πρόταση βιώσιμων εναλλακτικών δομών, οι οποίες μπορούν να αλλάξουν στην πράξη την καθημερινή ζωή των ανθρώπων παρά στην αντίσταση πολιτικών που επιβάλλονται από τις άρχουσες ελίτ (χωρίς να εγκαταλείπεται εντελώς η αντίσταση ως μία σημαντική τακτική).

Μια σύγχρονη ριζοσπαστική συλλογικότητα, ενώ δεν παύει να αντιστέκεται σε άδικες πολιτικές, χρειάζεται να δίνει έμφαση στη δημιουργία και τον εντοπισμό τέτοιων δομών που έχουν ήδη αναδυθεί από τα σπλάχνα της κοινωνίας και να ενδυναμώνει τον αμεσοδημοκρατικό τους χαρακτήρα, την αλληλεγγύη και τη δημιουργικότητα. Ακόμα παραπέρα, πρέπει να τις συνδέει με άλλες ήδη υπάρχουσες κοινωνικές πρωτοβουλίες ώστε αφενός να αποτρέπει την τυχόν συντριβή τους μέσα σε ένα περιβάλλον άγριου κοινωνικού κανιβαλισμού και αφετέρου να χτίζει συνεκτικές αντεξουσίες. Με την εγκαθίδρυση τέτοιων δικτύων δομών κοινής διαχείρισης, ένας αυξανόμενος αριθμός ανθρώπινων αναγκών μπορεί να ικανοποιηθεί ενώ ο ριζοσπαστικά δημοκρατικός τους χαρακτήρας και η βασισμένη στην αλληλεγγύη λογική τους ενθαρρύνονται απ΄την στήριξη ενός πολιτικού κινήματος. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο, γίνεται μια προσπάθεια ριζοσπαστικού μετασχηματισμού του εργασιακού χρόνου των συμμετεχόντων, θολώνοντας τα όρια μεταξύ αυτού και του ελεύθερου χρόνου εντάσσοντάς τους σε έναν *ελεύθερο δημόσιο χρόνο.*

Μια τέτοια προσέγγιση δεν απομονώνει αυτές τις προσπάθειες απ΄την κοινωνία αλλά αντιθέτως, αφού αυτές αναδύθηκαν μέσα

απ΄την ίδια την κοινωνία παραμένουν σε στενή σχέση με αυτήν. Αυτό έρχεται σε αντίθεση με δομές όπου η δημιουργία και η διαχείρισή τους γίνεται από ιδεολογικά φορτισμένες παραδοσιακές οργανώσεις, οι οποίες βλέπουν την κοινωνία σαν αμαθή πληθυσμό και τους εαυτούς τους σαν επίδοξους δασκάλους, αναπαράγοντας ασυναίσθητα τον ίδιο διαχωρισμό «ειδικού – μη ειδικού».

Υιοθέτηση αποϊδεολογικοποιημένου λόγου

Εξαιτίας του ιδεολογικού τους χαρακτήρα, τον οποίο υπογράμμισα προηγουμένως, οι παραδοσιακές ριζοσπαστικές οργανώσεις τείνουν να υιοθετούν τις δικές τους αφηγήσεις που είναι ασύμβατες και συχνά ακόμα και εχθρικές απέναντι στην υπόλοιπη κοινωνία. Οπως έχω εξηγήσει αλλού[4], αυτό έχει ως αποτέλεσμα την εγκαθίδρυση ενός τρόπου σκέψης και δράσης χωρίς κανένα σημασιακό πλαίσιο, ο οποίος εμποδίζει ή τουλάχιστον κάνει πολύ δύσκολο την αλληλεπίδραση των ριζοσπαστικών πολιτικών οργανώσεων με τον κόσμο και οδηγεί στον σεχταρισμό τους.

Για να αποφευχθούν τέτοιες συνέπειες είναι αναγκαία μία νέα προσέγγιση για μία άλλη αφήγηση. Μία αφήγηση πέρα απ΄την ιδεολογία, δηλαδή πέρα από δόγματα και ταυτότητες. Αυτό βοηθάει διττά:

1. Απ΄τη μία, επιτρέπει σε τέτοιου είδους οργανώσεις να αλληλεπιδράσουν με ευρύτερα τμήματα της κοινωνίας.
2. Επιτρέπει την καλύτερη κατανόηση του σύγχρονου κόσμου αφού οι παραδοσιακές ιδεολογίες ήταν βασισμένες σε απλουστευτικούς προσδιορισμούς «υποκειμένου – αντικειμένου» (προλεταριάτο – κομμουνισμός ή μπουρζουαζία – καπιταλισμός), οι οποίοι δεν ανταποκρίνονται στις σημερινές πολυπλοκότητες.

Αρκετοί ακτιβιστές εκφράζουν τον φόβο πως χωρίς ιδεολογικές ταυτότητες οι πολιτικές τους ομάδες θα χάσουν τη συνοχή τους και επομένως θα μείνουν απροστάτευτες από τις προσπάθειες της καθεστηκυίας τάξης για αφομοίωσή τους. Αυτό θα μπορούσε να

ισχύει στην περίπτωση που η ιδεολογία έβγαινε απ΄την εξίσωση και τίποτα άλλο δεν την αντικαθιστούσε. Παρ' όλα αυτά, δεν είναι απαραίτητο να συμβεί αυτό: με τον όρο *αποϊδεολογικοποίηση* δεν εννοούμε την αφαίρεση των πολιτικών αρχών και ιδεών αλλά την απομάκρυνση των ιδεολογικά επιβεβλημένων ταυτοτήτων και δογμάτων που υψώνουν φανταστικούς τοίχους μεταξύ πολιτικών κινημάτων και κοινωνίας. Για να επιτευχθεί κάτι τέτοιο χρειάζεται η δημιουργία μιας ριζοσπαστικής κουλτούρας, βασισμένης σε πολιτικές αρχές και ανοιχτής σε ένα ευρύ φάσμα κοινωνικής αλληλεπίδρασης. Σε τελική ανάλυση, αν είναι να υπάρξει κάποτε η κοινωνική χειραφέτηση, αυτή θα σύμβει μόνο με τη συναίνεση της πλειοψηφίας και επομένως η επαφή με την τελευταία θα έπρεπε να είναι απ΄τις πρώτες προτεραιότητες κάθε συλλογικότητας που αγωνίζεται για μία ριζική ρήξη με την κυριαρχία. Ετσι, μία ριζοσπαστική οργάνωση δεν μπορεί να είναι κάτι άλλο πέρα από αμεσοδημοκρατική.

Το ερώτημα της εξουσίας

Το τρίτο στοιχείο που θα πρέπει να ληφθεί υπόψιν από μια σύγχρονη ριζοσπαστική οργάνωση είναι ο ρόλος της εξουσίας. Τα παραδοσιακά ριζοσπαστικά κινήματα έβλεπαν αυτή την ερώτηση με τουλάχιστον δύο υπεραπλουστευμένους τρόπους: 1^{ον}) η εξουσία πρέπει να καταληφθεί αρπάζοντας τον κρατικό μηχανισμό και εγκαθιδρύοντας την δικτατορία του προλεταριάτου, 2^{ον}) η εξουσία πρέπει να καταργηθεί εντελώς -κάτι το οποίο συχνά καταλήγει σε απόρριψη κάθε μορφής νόρμας και κανόνων. Επομένως, όσοι θέλουν να ενασχοληθούν με την πολιτική συχνά έρχονται αντιμέτωποι με την επιλογή του να συμμετέχουν είτε σε ολοκληρωτικού είτε σε χαοτικού τύπου οργάνωση.

Σήμερα, βλέπουμε την ανάγκη για ένα νέο είδος *αυτ-εξουσίας* να γίνεται όλο και πιο εμφανές μέσα από διαφορετικές εκφράσεις λαϊκής δημιουργικότητας. Η περίπτωση των Κοινών αποτελεί ένα καλό παράδειγμα: ενώ απορρίπτουν τον γραφειοκρατικό συγκεντρωτισμό του κράτους και την αδίστακτη βαρβαρότητα της

καπιταλιστικής αγοράς, τα Κοινά τονίζουν επίμονα τη σπουδαιότητα που έχουν οι κανόνες, οι κανονισμοί και οι ποινικοί κώδικες που αποτελούν μία *αυτ-εξουσία*, αφού δεν μπορούν να παραβλεφθούν από ένα άτομο ή μια ομάδα ανθρώπων. Αυτό το είδος εξουσίας όμως πηγάζει *από τα κάτω* και άρα είναι μία διαφορετική μορφή *αυτ-εξουσίας*, που καθορίζεται συνειδητά απ΄τα εμπλεκόμενα άτομα μέσω δημοκρατικών διαδικασιών όπως οι γενικές συνελεύσεις, τα online forums, οι διάφορες πλατφόρμες κ.τ.λ., και ισχύει για όλους. Κατά μία έννοια πρόκειται για μία μορφή αυτοπεριορισμού.

Οι σύγχρονες ριζοσπαστικές συλλογικότητες πρέπει να αποδεχτούν αυτή την πρόκληση τόσο σε πρακτικό όσο και σε θεωρητικό επίπεδο. Απ΄τη μία, να αγωνιστούν για τη διαρκή αυτοθέσμιση, δηλαδή να διανθίσουν τις δομές και τις διαδικασίες τους με χαρακτηριστικά *θεσμίσεων*. Για παράδειγμα, το σώμα λήψης αποφάσεων, όπως οι γενικές συνελεύσεις, έχει τον ρόλο μίας *θέσμισης*, μέσω της οποίας η ομάδα εκφράζει τη συλλογική της θέληση στην πράξη και όχι απλά τον ρόλο ενός χαλαρού, ημιεπίσημου συντονιστικού μηχανισμού μεταξύ εθελοντών με πολύ ελεύθερο χρόνο.

Ταυτοχρόνως, η ίδια πρόκληση χρειάζεται να διατυπωθεί και σε ένα πιο θεωρητικό επίπεδο ώστε να γεννήσει σκέψεις για την επίλυση σύγχρονων ερωτημάτων ζωτικής σημασίας, που θα μπορούσαν να βοηθήσουν τις ριζοσπαστικές συλλογικότητες να ξεπεράσουν τον ιδεολογικό τους αφαιρετισμό και να αναπτύξουν πιο συγκεκριμένες και εκσυχρονισμένες προτάσεις. Για παράδειγμα, διάφορα ζητήματα όπως η επιθυμητή κράτηση των ρυπογόνων ορυκτών καυσίμων μέσα στο έδαφος απαιτούν κάτι παραπάνω από μία εθελοντική συγκατάθεση και μία υπόσχεση όλων μας. Επομένως, η δύσκολη ερώτηση για τις σύγχρονες ριζοσπαστικές συλλογικότητες είναι να σχηματίσουν προτάσεις για το πώς δεν θα μπορεί ένα άτομο ή μία ομάδα ατόμων να παραβιάζουν τις συμφωνίες που έχουν συναφθεί απ΄την πλειοψηφία της κοινωνίας ενώ ταυτόχρονα να μην χάνεται το συμμετοχικό στοιχείο και η ατομική αυτονομία, καταλήγοντας σε

ολοκληρωτισμό.

Συμπερασματικά

Μολονότι τα τελευταία χρόνια είδαμε μία αυξημένη κοινωνική κινητικότητα, αυτή δεν κατάφερε να παράγει σταθερές και μακράς διαρκείας μορφές αντεξουσίας. Τα μαζικά κοινωνικά κινήματα όμως θα μπορούσαν να αποκομίσουν πολλά παραπάνω από τους έμπειρους σε θεωρία και πράξη ριζοσπάστες, αν οι τελευταίοι αποφασίσουν να εγκαταλείψουν την «ασφάλεια» της ιδεολογικής παράδοσης και κάνουν μία γενναία βουτιά στις δημόσιες υποθέσεις.

Αν θέλουμε να κερδίσουμε όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερα απ΄το επόμενο κύμα της κοινωνικής αναταραχής που πιθανόν θα προέρχεται από νέα μέτρα λιτότητας, νέες αθετημένες υποσχέσεις των αντιπροσωπευτικών κυβερνήσεων, από τη δημόσια δυσαρέσκεια για τον σύγχρονο και αποκλειστικά καταναλωνικό τρόπο ζωής, ή ακόμα και από την ανικανότητα της Αριστεράς να ξεπεράσει τον παραδοσιακό της τρόπο σκέψης και να αντιμετωπίσει επαρκώς τις προκλήσεις της εποχής, θα πρέπει οι ριζοσπαστικές συλλογικότητες να υιοθετήσουν πρακτικές που κάνουν τον λόγο τους και τη δράση τους πιο κατανοητές και προσιτές. Ακόμα παραπέρα, κάτι τέτοιο πιθανόν να ανοίξει ορίζοντες για τη δημιουργία νέων συνόλων σημασιών που θα αντικαταστήσουν τα σαπισμένα σημερινά, τα οποία όλο και περισσότερο αδυνατούν να κρατήσουν την κοινωνία μακριά απ΄την απόλυτη αποσύνθεση.

Σημειώσεις:
[1] Debord, Guy. *For a Revolutionary Judgment of Art* (1961)
[2] Voter Turnout in Greek Elections Drops to New Historic Low: Infographic
[3] Towards a New Anti-Capitalist Politics
[4] Πέρα απ’ την Ιδεολογία: Επανεξετάζοντας το Σημασιακό Πλαίσιο

Αρχικό κείμενο στα αγγλικά: Radical Organizing for the 21st Century

Η Κοινότητα μέσω του Αστικού Σχεδιασμού

Yavor Tarinski

Για να επιτευχθεί η κοινωνική αλλαγή σε μια πιο συμμετοχική και συνεργατική κατεύθυνση, οι σύγχρονες πόλεις πρέπει να μετασχηματιστούν ριζικά. Αυτό μπορεί να συμβεί μέσα από την αλλαγή του αστικού σχεδιασμού και τη δημιουργία αμεσοδημοκρατικών θεσμών που θα ενθαρρύνουν την ιδιότητα του πολίτη και θα ενισχύουν τις κοινοτικές σχέσεις.

Η κοινωνική αλλαγή είναι ένα σύνθετο ζήτημα. Προϋποθέτει τη ριζική αλλαγή των βασικών κοινωνικών θεσμών και φαντασιακών σημασιών. Η επίτευξη του στόχου αυτού έχει πολλές εναλλακτικές στρατηγικών προσεγγίσεων: κάποιοι έχουν εκφράσει την άποψη ότι θα πρέπει να γίνει μέσω του κράτους και, συνεπώς, η κύρια πρόκληση είναι ποιος θα κάθεται στις καρέκλες της εξουσίας. Άλλοι υποστηρίζουν την αρνητική αντίσταση, δηλαδή την καταστροφή των σημερινών δομών, και στην βάση της καλής φύσης των ανθρώπων να ξεκινήσει κάτι εκ νέου.

Αλλά υπάρχει και η άποψη που λέει πως για να επιτευχθεί μία ολοκληρωμένη χειραφετητική κοινωνική αλλαγή υπάρχει ανάγκη για μία ολιστική αλλαγή όλων των σφαιρών της ανθρώπινης ζωής. Αυτό συνεπάγεται την εισαγωγή νέων πολιτικών, οικονομικών και κοινωνικών σχέσεων, του πολιτισμού και ακόμη και πραγμάτων όπως η αρχιτεκτονική, που έχουν παραμεληθεί από τα παραδοσιακά επαναστατικά κινήματα.

Η καθεστηκυία τάξη αναπαράγεται σε πολλά μέτωπα. Η αντιπροσωπευτική πολιτική στο επίκεντρο της είναι σχεδιασμένη ώστε να διατηρεί τα ίδια μοτίβα σκέψης, χωρίς να έχει σημασία ποιο είναι το τελικό εκλογικό αποτέλεσμα. Το ίδιο ισχύει και

για τις καπιταλιστικές οικονομικές σχέσεις, τη γραφειοκρατία κλπ. Οι ίδιες οι μεγαλουπόλεις, στις οποίες σήμερα ζει το μεγαλύτερο μέρος της ανθρωπότητας, έχουν σχεδιαστεί σύμφωνα με τις κυρίαρχες αξίες και αντιλήψεις. Βρίσκονται διασκορπισμένες, οι κάτοικοί τους ζουν σε απομονωμένες ιδιωτικές πολυκατοικίες, σε μακρινή απόσταση από τους χώρους εργασίας και τις περιοχές της αγοράς, κάνοντας βόλτες μόνοι τους στα ιδιωτικά τους αυτοκίνητα. Αυτό το μοντέλο της αστικής επέκτασης εξαπλώνεται γοργά σε όλο τον κόσμο[1]. Οι πόλεις οργανώνονται με τέτοιους τρόπους που η ανθρώπινη επαφή μειώνεται δραματικά. Έτσι, η επίτευξη της κοινωνικής αλλαγής προς μία πιο συμμετοχική και συνεργατική κατεύθυνση, θα ήταν ένα υπερβολικά δύσκολο έργο αν δεν λάβουμε υπόψιν τα παραπάνω.

Κοινότητα μέσω του σχεδιασμού

Για την αναδιοργάνωση της κοινωνίας στη βάση της άμεσης δημοκρατίας, μεταξύ των πολλών προϋποθέσεων που φαίνεται να απαιτούνται, είναι το σπάσιμο της αποξένωσης και η δημιουργία κοινοτικών σχέσεων. Η πόλη που ενθαρρύνει και ενισχύει το αίσθημα της κοινότητας αντιπροσωπεύει ένα μείγμα χώρων κατοικιών, δημόσιου χώρου, χώρων εργασίας, αγορών, πρασίνου, αθλητισμού και άλλων, το σύνολο των οποίων βρίσκονται σε κοντινή απόσταση με τα πόδια ή προσβάσιμοι με τα μέσα μαζικής μεταφοράς, σε αντίθεση με τη σύγχρονη επικρατούσα τάση αστικού σχεδιασμού η οποία βασίζεται στην τοποθέτηση σταθερών ζωνών σε τεράστιες αποστάσεις.

Μια μικτή αρχιτεκτονική αποτελούμενη από μεσαίου μεγέθους συνεταιρισμούς κατοικιών με κοινόχρηστους κήπους σε κοντινή απόσταση από τα σχολεία, τις πλατείες, την αγορά και τους χώρους πρασίνου επιτρέπει την εμπειρία των τυχαίων αλληλεπιδράσεων μεταξύ των γειτόνων. Το στοιχείο του βαδίσματος θα μπορούσε να οικοδομήσει το αίσθημα του ανήκειν στην πόλη, με τους πολίτες να αναπτύσουν ισχυρούς δεσμούς με το τοπικό, κοινωνικό και αστικό τους περιβάλλον, ενώ, όπως σημειώνει ο συγγραφέας Jay Walljasper[2], συμβάλλει στη

μεγαλύτερη οικονομική ισότητα, επιτρέποντας σε όλους το δικαίωμα να κυκλοφορούν ελεύθερα σε όλη την πόλη, χωρίς την ανάγκη αυτοκινήτου.

Η στροφή προς τις *πόλεις που περπατιούνται* θα σήμαινε τη ριζική επανεξέταση και ανακατασκευή των δρόμων και των οδών, που σήμερα έχουν σχεδιαστεί κυρίως ως αρτηρίες υψηλής ταχύτητας και συνδέουν τις ζώνες κατοικίας με τις ζώνες εργασίας-χώρους γραφείων, ενθαρρύνοντας την οδήγηση εις βάρος του βαδίσματος. Όπως καταδεικνύει η διάσημη μελέτη του Donald Appleyard του 1972[3], όσο μεγαλύτερη είναι η κυκλοφορία των αυτοκινήτων σε ένα δρόμο, τόσο λιγότεροι είναι οι περιπατητές και οι καθημερινές κοινοτικές εμπειρίες. Αυτό, εκτός από τις προφανείς επιπτώσεις στην υγεία του ανθρώπου (που οδηγεί σε παχυσαρκία, καρδιακά νοσήματα κλπ), συμβάλλει στα ήδη υψηλά επίπεδα αποξένωσης στις αστικές περιοχές.

Μια προσέγγιση που θα μπορούσε να αλλάξει αυτό το αποξενωτικό αποτέλεσμα, ενθαρρύνοντας αντ' αυτού τους ανθρώπους να περπατούν στους δρόμους και την δυνητική παραγωγή ενός κοινοτικού αισθήματος, είναι το να στενεύσουν οι δρόμοι μέσα στις αστικές περιοχές, η επέκταση των χώρων των πεζών, η εισαγωγή πλατύτερων ποδηλατοδρόμων κλπ. Οπως εξηγεί ο πολεοδόμος και συγγραφέας Jeff Speck[4], οι άνθρωποι οδηγούν πιο γρήγορα όταν έχουν λιγότερο φόβο να βρεθούν εκτός πορείας, οπότε μεγαλύτερες λωρίδες προκαλούν υψηλότερες ταχύτητες με συνέπεια αυτοκινητιστικά ατυχήματα και λιγότερους πεζούς να κάνουν βόλτα. Τα παραπάνω, σε συνδυασμό με ένα μεγάλο δίκτυο δωρεάν δημόσιων αστικών μεταφορών, θα επιτρέψει τις καθημερινές κοινωνικές αλληλεπιδράσεις μεταξύ πεζών και επιβατών. Οι καθημερινές κοινωνικές εμπειρίες όπως τα νεύματα, τα χαμόγελα και η τυχαία κουβέντα με συμπολίτες μπορούν δυνητικά να μας κάνουν να νιώθουμε πιο άνετα στους δρόμους μας.

Αυτό με τη σειρά του, φέρνει μαζί του και άλλα θετικά αποτελέσματα, όπως τη δραστική μείωση των προβλημάτων υγείας που προαναφέρθηκαν, αλλά και τη μείωση της ταχύτητας των

αυτοκινήτων, που ευθύνεται για το θάνατο ενός τεράστιου αριθμού ανθρώπων σε όλο τον κόσμο, καθώς και τη μείωση της ρύπανσης του αέρα στις σύγχρονες μητροπόλεις που βρίσκονται υπό την κυριαρχία των ιδιωτικών αυτοκινήτων.

Οι χώροι πρασίνου είναι άλλη μία βασική πτυχή του αστικού περιβάλλοντος. Σύμφωνα με τον Bob Lalasz, τέτοιοι χώροι έχουν την τάση να κάνουν τους ανθρώπους πιο ευτυχισμένους[5]. Επιπλέον, οι χώροι πρασίνου φέρνουν τους ανθρώπους πιο κοντά. Επομένως, σε ένα αστικό έργο που προωθεί την κοινότητα, η φύση θα πρέπει να αποτελεί ένα απαραίτητο μέρος του αστικού τοπίου. Οι κήποι, μέρος των συνεταιρισμών κατοικιών, δίνουν από κοινού τον χρόνο για κηπουρική στους γείτονες, *δένοντάς τους*. Επίσης, ενθαρρύνεται δυνητικά η ανάπτυξη της κοινοτικής/αλληλέγγυας οικονομίας από τους γείτονες, παράγοντας τα δικά τους τρόφιμα και ανταλλάσσοντάς τα ή μοιράζοντάς τα με άλλους αστικούς κηπουρούς.

Πάρκα και δημόσιοι κήποι πρέπει να ανακατεύονται μέσα σε όλη τη μικτή αστική αρχιτεκτονική. Υπάρχει μια ορισμένη τάση στις σύγχρονες μητροπολιτικές πόλεις για μεγάλης κλίμακας πάρκα φτιαγμένα σε ζώνες μακριά από τις οικιστικές περιοχές και τους χώρους εργασίας, καθιστώντας την ανθρώπινη αλληλεπίδραση με τη φύση μια σπάνια ευκαιρία. Σε αντίθεση με αυτή τη λογική, η μικτή πόλη, όπως περιγράφεται εδώ, θα μπορούσε να περιλαμβάνει χώρους πρασίνου που βρίσκονται διάσπαρτοι σε διάφορες τοποθεσίες σε όλη την πόλη. Όπως αναφέρει ο Charles Montgomery[6], αυτό δεν αποκλείει την ύπαρξη πάρκων μεγάλης κλίμακας, αλλά το αστικό πράσινο δεν θα πρέπει να περιορίζεται σε αυτά. Αυτό σημαίνει οι άνθρωποι να έχουν την ευκαιρία να έρχονται σε επαφή με μικροσκοπικούς κήπους και πάρκα στον δρόμο τους προς την δουλειά για παράδειγμα, καθώς και να βιώνουν την αίσθηση *«μέσα στο δάσος»* μπαίνοντας στα τεράστια τοπικά πάρκα.

Οι δημόσιες πλατείες παίζουν καίριο ρόλο σε μια πόλη που ενθαρρύνει τον κοινοτικό πολιτισμό και την «έννοια του πολίτη», καθώς λειτουργούν ως χώροι για κοινωνικές

αλληλεπιδράσεις και ως φόρουμ για την έκφραση πολιτικών απόψεων. Έτσι, θα πρέπει να διατίθενται ελεύθερα για λαϊκή διαβούλευση, σε αντίθεση με το σήμερα, όπου γραφειοκράτες αποφασίζουν ποιος, πότε και γιατί θα πρέπει να τις χρησιμοποιεί.

Ωστόσο, ακούμε επίσης διάφορες κριτικές όσον αφορά τον υπερπληθυσμό των σύγχρονων πόλεων, που οδηγεί σε περαιτέρω αποξένωση και απόσυρση στην παθητικότητα. Αν αυτό είναι αλήθεια, μήπως θα έπρεπε να εγκαταλείψουμε τη ζωή της πόλης εντελώς και να επιστρέψουμε στη ζωή του χωριού; Σύμφωνα με τη μελέτη του ψυχολόγου Andrew Baum[7], η αίσθηση του υπερπληθυσμού τροφοδοτείται από τον πολεοδομικό σχεδιασμό που δεν επιτρέπει στους ανθρώπους να ελέγχουν την ένταση των αυθόρμητων κοινωνικών αλληλεπιδράσεων. Ο Baum συγκρίνοντας τη συμπεριφορά των κατοίκων σε δύο πολύ διαφορετικούς κοιτώνες κολεγίου, κατέληξε στο συμπέρασμα ότι οι μαθητές των οποίων το περιβάλλον τους επέτρεπε να ελέγχουν τις κοινωνικές τους αλληλεπιδράσεις είχαν λιγότερο άγχος και έχτισαν περισσότερες φιλίες από ότι οι φοιτητές που ζούσαν σε μακρείς και γεμάτους από κόσμο διαδρόμους.

Ως εκ τούτου, η απάντηση στο πρόβλημα του υπερπληθυσμού θα μπορούσε να βρεθεί στη δημιουργία ημι-δημόσιων / κοινόχρηστων χώρων, οι οποίοι αντιπροσωπεύουν μια μέση λύση μεταξύ του ιδιωτικού και του δημόσιου. Αυτό θα σήμαινε την εγκατάλειψη των γιγάντιων στεγαστικών σχεδίων στα οποία μεγάλος αριθμός ανθρώπων ζουν μαζί (όπως οι γιγάντιοι εργατικοί “στρατώνες” της σοσιαλιστικής εποχής), χωρίς ποτέ να αισθάνονται αρκετά μόνοι. Αντ’ αυτού, μπορεί να δοθεί χώρος σε μικρομεσαίους συνεταιρισμούς κατοικιών με κοινόχρηστους χώρους στη διάθεσή όλων των γειτόνων. Με τον τρόπο αυτό, δημιουργούνται τρία επίπεδα κοινωνικών πεδίων – το ιδιωτικό, το κοινοτικό και το δημόσιο – επιτρέποντας στους πολίτες να ρυθμίζουν την κοινωνική τους αλληλεπίδραση, δίνοντάς τους έτσι την αίσθηση της άνεσης και την ενθάρρυνση της ισονομίας.

Αστικός σχεδιασμός και άμεση δημοκρατία

Πολλά πράγματα μπορούν να γίνουν μέσω του αστικού σχεδιασμού για την ενθάρρυνση του κοινοτικού αισθήματος μεταξύ των πολιτών. Αλλά υπάρχει επίσης η ανάγκη για τη δημιουργία θεσμών δημόσιας διαβούλευσης που θα επιτρέπουν στους συν-κατοίκους να καθορίζουν συλλογικά τη μοίρα των πόλεών τους, καθώς και των ίδιων. Είναι δύσκολο να φανταστεί κανείς τι άλλο θα μπορούσε να φέρει τους ανθρώπους πιο κοντά ως κοινότητα από το αίσθημα της κοινής ευθύνης για την πόλη τους.

Έτσι, μια πόλη πρέπει πάντα να προσπαθεί για τη διαχείρισή της μέσω της άμεσης δημοκρατίας. Αυτό απαιτεί τη δημιουργία δημόσιων χώρων, κατάλληλων για τη στέγαση αμεσοδημοκρατικών θεσμών, όπως είναι οι γενικές συνελεύσεις. Τέτοιοι χώροι, όπως δημόσιες πλατείες, αίθουσες ή αμφιθέατρα, χρειάζονται τον κατάλληλο τεχνικό εξοπλισμό, επιτρέποντας στον ομιλητή να ακούγεται ανάμεσα σε συγκεντρώσεις αρκετών χιλιάδων πολιτών, καθώς και να μεταδίδεται ζωντανά έτσι ώστε όποιο μέλος της κοινότητας επιθυμεί να μπορεί να παρακολουθήσει τη συνέλευση και από απόσταση.

Ο Murray Bookchin αναφέρεται[8] στις πόλεις του παρελθόντος, πριν από την εμφάνιση της κρατικής διαχείρισης. Σε αυτές οι πολίτες συμμετείχαν ενεργά στη διαμόρφωση της πόλης τους, βαθιά και ηθικά αφοσιωμένοι σε αυτές. Αλλά με την εμφάνιση του κοινοβουλευτισμού και του καπιταλισμού, οι πολίτες αντικαταστάθηκαν από παθητικούς καταναλωτές, που απλώς διέρχονται από το αστικό τους περιβάλλον, χωρίς καμία δέσμευση σε αυτό.

Τέτοιο βήμα προς την επανασχεδίαση του ρόλου της πόλης ως εμψυχώτρια της κοινότητας και των πολιτών είναι, κατά μία έννοια, η επανα-ανακάλυψη εκ νέου της λογικής της *πόλεως*, όπως ήταν κατανοητή από τους αρχαίους Αθηναίους. Φυσικά, το μέγεθος της πόλης της εποχής τους και της δικής μας είναι ασύγκριτο, αλλά η λογική πάνω στην οποία χτίστηκε η πόλη τους μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί ως *«σπέρμα»* από εμάς σήμερα, όπως προτείνει ο

Κορνήλιος Καστοριάδης[9]. Η αρχαία Αθήνα ενθάρρυνε το αίσθημα της κοινότητας, καθώς και τους ενεργούς πολίτες, γεννώντας μία από τις πλέον σημαίνουσες περιόδους της ανθρώπινης δημιουργικότητας εώς τώρα. Στην καρδιά της αθηναϊκής αστικής ζωής βρίσκονταν η *Αγορά* και η *Εκκλησία του Δήμου (γενική συνέλευση).* Η *Αγορά* ήταν τοποθετημένη σε ένα προσβάσιμο και κεντρικό σημείο της πόλης, όπου οι Αθηναίοι περνούσαν ένα μεγάλο μέρος του χρόνου τους ανταλλάσσοντας αγαθά, πληροφορίες και απόψεις, ή με άλλα λόγια – κοινωνικοποιούνταν – ενώ στη συνέλευση συνδέονταν μεταξύ τους καθώς και με την πόλη τους μοιραζόμενοι την ευθύνη για τη μοίρα της.

Τα κοινωνικά κινήματα για την πόλη

Τα τελευταία χρόνια γινόμαστε μάρτυρες ενός αυξανόμενου ενδιαφέροντος των κοινωνικών κινημάτων για το αστικό ζήτημα. Όλο και περισσότεροι άνθρωποι αρχίζουν να παρατηρούν την επίδραση που έχουν οι πόλεις μας πάνω μας. Διαφορετικά κινήματα, επικεντρωμένα στο αστικό ζήτημα εμφανίζονται, κάποια εστιάζοντας στις δημοτικές εκλογές και άλλα στον πολεοδομικό σχεδιασμό. Ωστόσο, φαίνεται ότι τα περισσότερα από αυτά δεν βλέπουν αυτό το ζήτημα με έναν ολιστικό πολιτικό τρόπο.

Από τη μία πλευρά, η εισαγωγή αλλαγών, όσο σημαντικές κι αν είναι αυτές, στον τρόπο που οι τοπικές εκλογές διεξάγονται, δεν θα δώσει τις πόλεις πίσω στους πολίτες της. Αυτό μπορεί να γίνει μόνο με την εισαγωγή νέων διαβουλευτικών θεσμών, όπως γενικών συνελεύσεων, οι οποίοι θα επιτρέψουν σε κάθε πολίτη να αποφασίζει άμεσα τον καθορισμό της μοίρας της πόλης του. Ο ρόλος των υφιστάμενων τοπικών αρχών πρέπει να αρκεστεί στην εποπτεία και την εκτέλεση των αποφάσεων που έχουν ήδη ληφθεί από τους νέους αυτούς θεσμούς, και ως εκ τούτου να υπόκεινται σε αυτούς μέσω της ανάκλησης, της κλήρωσης και της κυκλικής εναλλαγής.

Από την άλλη πλευρά, τα κοινωνικά κινήματα που ασχολούνται με τα θέματα της πόλης συχνά τείνουν να περιορίζουν την ενασχόλησή τους αποκλειστικά στον αστικό σχεδιασμό,

περιμένοντας από τις τοπικές αρχές να εφαρμόσουν τις προτάσεις τους. Το έργο τους παραμένει στα μισά του δρόμου, δεδομένου ότι μία πόλη δεν αποτελείται μόνο από κτήρια, δρόμους και πλατείες, αλλά και από ανθρώπους, και ως εκ τούτου, από κοινωνικές σχέσεις και μορφές οργάνωσης. Όπως αναφέρει ο Henri Lefebvre: *Το δικαίωμα στην πόλη δεν μπορεί να νοείται ως απλό δικαίωμα επίσκεψής της ή ως μία επιστροφή στις παραδοσιακές πόλεις. Μπορεί να διατυπωθεί μόνο ως ένα μετασχηματισμένο και ανανεωμένο δικαίωμα στην αστική ζωή.* [10]

Έτσι, η προσέγγισή μας πρέπει να επικεντρώνει στη σύνδεση του αστικού σχεδιασμού με την πολιτική και τη λήψη αποφάσεων, ειδικότερα. Όπως είδαμε παραπάνω, η ριζική αλλαγή στη μία πλευρά δύσκολα μπορεί να υλοποιηθεί, χωρίς μία αντίστοιχη ριζική αλλαγή να συμβαίνει και στην άλλη. Αλλά αυτό που φαίνεται ως μια πολύ καλή αρχή, είναι το γεγονός ότι όλο και περισσότεροι άνθρωποι δίνουν προσοχή στον ρόλο που το αστικό μας περιβάλλον επηρεάζει εμάς, τις κοινωνικές μας σχέσεις και τα πολιτικά μας έργα εν γένει.

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙΣ:

[1] https://journalistsresource.org/studies/environment/cities/global-urban-expansion-impact-biodiversity-carbon-2030
[2] https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/10/23/good-place-everyone-walk
[3] Donald Appleyard and Mark Lintell. “The environmental quality of streets (1972): the resident’s view point” in Journal of the American Planning Association. pp. 84-101
[4] https://www.citylab.com/design/2014/10/why-12-foot-traffic-lanes-are-disastrous-for-safety-and-must-be-replaced-now/381117/
[5] https://blog.nature.org/science/2015/05/22/science-nature-emotion-affect-feel-better/
[6] Charles Montgomery (2013). Happy City, Penguin Books.

p.110
[7] Stuar Valins and Andrew Baum (1973). “Residential Group Size, Social Interaction, and Crowding”, in Environment and Behavior.
[8] https://new-compass.net/articles/toward-communalist-approach
[9] Castoriadis, Cornelius (1983): The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy (1983)
[10] Henri Lefebvre (1996): Writings on Cities. Blackwell, p.158

Μετάφραση από Rebelian

Το αρχικό κείμενο στα αγγλικά εδώ

Πέρα από την Ιδεολογία: Επανεξετάζοντας το Σημασιακό Πλαίσιο

Yavor Tarinski
Μετάφραση: Ιωάννα Μαραβελίδη

Πράγματι, εξαρτόμαστε απ’ τα περιβάλλοντα μέσα στα οποία ζούμε όμως είμαστε και οι δημιουργοί των πολιτικών και κοινωνικών μας κατασκευών και άρα μπορούμε να τα αλλάξουμε αν είμαστε τόσο αποφασισμένοι.
Mary Dietz[1]

Στον διάλογο[2] μεταξύ Simon Springer και David Harvey πάνω στο ποιο ιδεολογικό πλαίσιο θα έπρεπε να υιοθετήσει η ριζοσπαστική γεωγραφία, η πρόταση του Harvey του να *αφήσουμε τη ριζοσπαστική γεωγραφία ελεύθερη από οποιονδήποτε «-ισμό»*

φαίνεται πολύ εύλογη. Και παρότι η πολεμική των κειμένων τους φαίνεται αρχικά να εξετάζει το ζήτημα της ριζοσπαστικής γεωγραφίας, έχει κατά τη γνώμη μου μία ευρύτερη σημασία αναφορικά με τον ρόλο της ιδεολογίας στον δρόμο για την κοινωνική απελευθέρωση και χειραφέτηση. Με μικρές εξαιρέσεις, η πρόταση του να ελευθερώσουμε τους εαυτούς μας απ' την ιδεολογία φαίνεται εξαιρετικά παραμελημένη από τα χειραφετικά κινήματα, κάτι το οποίο θεωρώ λάθος αν θέλουμε να εμπλέξουμε κόσμο σε αυτά και να δράσουμε εποικοδομητικά.

Βλέπουμε ακτιβιστές και θεωρητικούς, απασχολημένους με το να κρατήσουν την ιδεολογική/ταυτοτική τους «καθαρότητα», να συμμετέχουν συχνά σε ατέρμονες συζητήσεις για το τι είναι «αναρχικό», «μαρξιστικό», κ.τ.λ. Προς αποφυγή παρεξηγήσεων, δεν εννοώ να εγκαταλείψουμε τη θεωρία για χάριν της άμεσης δράσης. Αντιθέτως, η θεωρητική έρευνα και η κριτική σκέψη είναι απαραίτητες για μία αποτελεσματική δράση. **Αλλά η Ιδεολογία δεν πρέπει να συγχέεται με τη θεωρία.**

Ιδεολογία και μη-σημασιακό πλαίσιο

Η Καταστασιακή Διεθνής ορίζει την Ιδεολογία ως ένα δόγμα ερμηνείας της υφιστάμενης πραγματικότητας[3], το οποίο μπορεί γίνει κατανοητό ως μία σκέψη που δεν λαμβάνει υπόψη το εκάστοτε σημασιακό πλαίσιο. Αυτό σημαίνει πως ο *idéologue* δημιουργεί έναν συγκεκριμένο τύπο ανάλυσης, επηρεασμένο απ' το δικό του τοπικό περιβάλλον (κοινωνικό πλαίσιο, οικονομική ανάπτυξη, κουλτούρα, κ.τ.λ.) και προσπαθεί συνεχώς να ταιριάξει μέσα σε αυτό πραγματικότητες που γεννιούνται σε διαφορετικά περιβάλλοντα, κάτι που συχνά οδηγεί σε παρανοήσεις. Βλέπουμε καθαρά κάτι τέτοιο, για παράδειγμα, στις αντιδράσεις ορισμένων αναρχικών και μαρξιστών (που έχουν «καθαρή» ταξική ανάλυση βασισμένη αποκλειστικά στις πραγματικότητες της βιομηχανικής Ευρώπης του 19^{ου} αιώνα), οι οποίοι κρίνουν τα γεγονότα στη Ροζάβα, ψάχνοντας εκεί για ένα «προλεταριάτο» που δεν υφίσταται με την κλασική Δυτική έννοια[4].

Με αυτή την έννοια, η Ιδεολογία «ευνουχίζει» τις ιδέες κάποιου, μετατρέποντάς τες σε αποστειρωμένα/ταριχευμένα δόγματα, τα οποία δεν μπορούν να υπάρξουν πέρα απ' την αρχική τους φόρμα. Οι «ιδεολογικοποιημένες» ιδέες γίνονται ασύμβατες με πραγματικότητες/περιβάλλοντα που διαφέρουν απ' αυτά που τις γέννησαν και έτσι αχρηστεύονται. Η Ιδεολογία εμποδίζει τόσο τη θεωρητική έρευνα όσο και τη μετέπειτα από αυτήν δραστηριότητα. Δημιουργεί μία δογματική αντίληψη της ουτοπίας και αποκλείει οτιδήποτε «παρεκκλίνει», ακόμα και όταν υπάρχουν κάποιες κοινές αρχές (όπως είδαμε παραπάνω στην περίπτωση της Ροζάβα), φτιάχνοντας ένα είδος αυτο-αποξενωτικής ελιτίστικης υποκουλτούρας.

Επομένως, η Ιδεολογία γίνεται πιο πολύ αυτο-εκφραστική παρά εργαλειακή. Μεταμορφώνεται σε συγκεκριμένη *ταυτότητα*, που συχνά χρησιμεύει ως δικαιολογία για παραίτηση από τις ευρείες κοινωνικές υποθέσεις. Δημιουργεί έναν δικό της κύκλο ιδιοτέλειας, ανοιχτό κυρίως σε ομοϊδεάτες (που μοιράζονται την ίδια ιδεολογία), οι οποίοι απομακρύνουν εκουσίως τον εαυτό τους από θεσμίσεις και κοινωνικά δίκτυα που θα μπορούσαν ενδεχομένως να επηρεάσουν[5]. Όπως υπογραμμίζει ο Jonathan Matthew Smucker:

[…] όταν δεν αμφισβητούμε τις κουλτούρες, τα πιστεύω, τα σύμβολα, τις αφηγήσεις κ.τ.λ. των υφιστάμενων θεσμίσεων και κοινωνικών δικτύων στα οποία ανήκουμε, απομακρυνόμαστε από την πηγή και τη δύναμη που ενυπάρχει σε αυτά. Για χάρη ενός άθλιου μικρού κλαμπ ακτιβιστών χαρίζουμε ολόκληρο χωράφι. Αφήνουμε στους αντιπάλους μας τα πάντα.

Εξαιτίας του μη-σημασιακού πλαισίου, η Ιδεολογία μπορεί να ιδωθεί ως κομμάτι του σημερινού κυρίαρχου φαντασιακού, που βασίζεται στη γραφειοκρατική λογική και έχει ανάγκη να χωρίζει τα πάντα σε «βολικά» και τακτοποιημένα κουτάκια, δηλαδή σε αυστηρούς κοινωνικούς και πολιτικούς ρόλους, δημιουργώντας και ενδυναμώνοντας έτσι τις *ταυτότητες*, παρά τις *ιδέες*. Στο βιβλίο της *«Η ανάδυση του κοινωνικού χώρου»*, η Kristin Ross περιγράφει πώς κατά τη διάρκεια της Παρισινής Κομμούνας, ο

Catulle Mendès (αντιπροσωπεύοντας την προ-κομμούνας εποχή) δεν λυπάται πραγματικά για την πτώση της παραγωγής αλλά αντίθετα το άγχος του πηγάζει απ' την επίθεση στην ταυτότητα, *αφού οι υποδηματοποιοί άρχισαν να φτιάχνουν, αντί για παπούτσια, οδοφράγματα*[6]. Εντοπίζει αυτή τη γραφειοκρατική λογική της στενής ταυτότητας πίσω στον Πλάτωνα, σύμφωνα με τον οποίο σε ένα καλά συγκροτημένο κράτος μία συγκεκριμένη δουλειά αποδίδεται σε κάθε άτομο· ο υποδηματοποιός είναι πάνω απ' όλα κάποιος που δεν μπορεί να είναι και πολεμιστής[7].

Ένα χαρακτηριστικό της γραφειοκρατικής λογικής είναι η εγγενής προδιάθεση προς την ιεραρχία αφού κάποιες δουλειές και ρόλοι είναι πιο σημαντικοί από άλλους. Ο David Graeber, σε συνέντευξή του για το Περιοδικό «Βαβυλωνία», ορίζει την Ιδεολογία ως *την ιδέα για την οποία κάποιος πρέπει να δημιουργήσει μία παγκόσμια ανάλυση πριν να αναλάβει δράση*, κάτι που προϋποθέτει ότι η σημασία της πνευματικής πρωτοπορίας (των στενών *ideologues*-ειδικών) θα πρέπει να διαδραματίζει ηγετικό ρόλο σε κάθε κοινωνικό-πολιτικό κίνημα[8].

Πέρα απ' την Ιδεολογία: Το σημασιακό πλαίσιο είναι το παν

Προκειμένου τα σύγχρονα κοινωνικά κινήματα να καταφέρουν να αμφισβητήσουν το υπάρχον σύστημα, θα πρέπει να ξεπεράσουν τα όρια του σημερινού φαντασιακού το οποίο βασίζεται στη γραφειοκρατική λογική και τους ξεχωριστούς πολιτικούς ρόλους. Στην πράξη, αυτό σημαίνει να προχωρήσουν πέρα απ' την Ιδεολογία, εντοπίζοντας δηλαδή τις επιθυμητές αρχές και τα αποτελέσματα και καταβάλλοντας ταυτόχρονα προσπάθειες για την προσαρμογή τους στις εκάστοτε τοπικές συνθήκες. Αυτό δεν σημαίνει να αφήσουμε κατά μέρος τα ιδανικά μας και να «πάμε με το ρεύμα» αλλά αντιθέτως να προσπαθήσουμε να τα μοιραστούμε με όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερο κόσμο, που πιθανότατα δεν μοιράζεται την ίδια (ή και καμία) Ιδεολογία/δόγμα/πολιτικό lifestyle. Κάνοντας αυτό, ερωτήσεις όπως «Είναι ο EZLN αναρχική οργάνωση ή όχι;»[9] γίνονται παρωχημένες και

αντικαθιστούνται από άλλες όπως «Τι προτείνουν, πάνω σε ποια βάση και ποιες αρχές, συμφωνούμε και πώς με ό,τι κάνουν;» κ.α.

Τέλος, εξαρτάται απ' τους στόχους που θέτουμε με τους αγώνες μας. Αν αγωνιζόμαστε για κοινωνική απελευθέρωση και αμεσοδημοκρατική συμμετοχή, δεν μπορούμε παρά να προσπαθήσουμε να συνδέουμε διάφορους αγώνες, κινήματα και όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερους ανθρώπους, και για να γίνει κάτι τέτοιο, πρέπει να είμαστε ευέλικτοι στον τρόπο που εκφράζουμε τις ιδέες μας ανάλογα με το συνομιλητή που έχουμε μπροστά μας. Όπως προτείνει ο Aki Orr: *Μία κοινωνία μπορεί να λειτουργήσει με Άμεση Δημοκρατία μόνο αν οι περισσότεροι απ' τους πολίτες της θέλουν να αποφασίζουν οι ίδιοι για την πολιτική, αφού καμία μειοψηφία, όσο θετικές και να είναι οι προθέσεις της, δεν μπορεί να την επιβάλλει στην κοινωνία*[10].

Βήματα προς αυτή την κατεύθυνση έγιναν απ' τον Larry Giddings, ο οποίος αντικατέστησε τον ιδεολογικό όρο «αναρχικό» με τον ευρύτερο «αντιεξουσιαστικό»[11]. Έπραξε έτσι αφού συνειδητοποίησε πως είτε αναγνωρίζει τους μη-αναρχικούς αγώνες είτε όχι, αυτοί εξακολουθούν να υπάρχουν, και αδιαφορώντας για αυτούς, επειδή δεν αντικατοπτρίζουν τη δική του θεωρία για ένα «χωρίς έθνη-κράτη μέλλον», αδιαφορεί επί της ουσίας για την ίδια του την επιθυμία για ένα τέτοιο μέλλον. Κατέληξε στο συμπέρασμα πως τα αποκεντρωμένα κοινωνικά και οικονομικά συστήματα, οργανωμένα με δημοκρατικό, μη-κρατικό τρόπο, θα έρθουν μόνο μέσα από κοινούς αγώνες διαφόρων κινημάτων και ευρείας κοινωνικής συμμετοχής.

Επομένως, αντί μιας συνεχούς προσπάθειας ορισμού του τι είναι «πραγματικός» αναρχισμός, αποφάσισε να δοκιμάσει μια άλλη προσέγγιση: να εντοπίσει τα αντιεξουσιαστικά χαρακτηριστικά των ήδη υπαρκτών και ποικίλων κοινωνικών κινημάτων και να προσδιορίσει τους κοινούς τους εχθρούς (καταπιεστές) και έτσι να τα ενώσει. Για να επιτύχει μια τέτοια σύνδεση, οι στενά ιδεολογικές αφηγήσεις έπρεπε να εγκαταλειφθούν και να αντικατασταθούν από μία γενικότερη αντιεξουσιαστική κουλτούρα, η οποία μπορεί ταυτόχρονα να καθορίζεται και να καθορίζει το

περιβάλλον στο οποίο δημιουργήθηκε.

Συμπερασματικά

Προχωρώντας πέρα απ' την Ιδεολογία, δεν σημαίνει παραίτηση απ' τις ιδέες και τις αρχές μας αλλά συνεχής επανεκτίμηση και εξέλιξή τους. Στον φόβο του ότι χωρίς ιδεολογικές ταυτότητες θα απορροφηθούμε απ' την κυρίαρχη κουλτούρα της πολιτικής απάθειας και του αλόγιστου καταναλωτισμού μπορούμε να απαντήσουμε με τη δημιουργία μιας ευρείας πολιτικής κουλτούρας αυτεξούσιων ατόμων που είναι, πρώτα απ' όλα, *λέκτορες των λέξεων και πράττοντες των πράξεων*[12]. Ένα τέτοιο ευρύ σχέδιο βασισμένο, όπως προτείνεται απ' την Mary Dietz, στην αξία του αλληλοσεβασμού και της «θετικής ελευθερίας» της αυτοκυβέρνησης (και όχι απλώς την «αρνητική ελευθερία» της μη-παρέμβασης), διατηρεί το αντιεξουσιαστικό πνεύμα ενώ επιτρέπει ταυτόχρονα την αλληλεπίδραση με μεγάλα κομμάτια της κοινωνίας και την εφαρμογή στην πράξη των ιδεών μας σε διαφορετικά περιβάλλοντα και σημασιακά πλαίσια.

Μόνο μια τέτοια προσέγγιση θα μας βοηθήσει να ξεφύγουμε απ' τον «σεκταρισμό» (με όλον τον σεπαρατισμό και το lifestyle που απορρέει από αυτόν) των πολιτικών κινημάτων που τα στοιχειώνει απ' τις αρχές του 20ου αιώνα μέχρι τις μέρες μας.

ΣΗΜΕΙΩΣΕΙΣ:

[1] Mary Dietz, Context is All: Feminism and Theories of Citizenship. in Dimensions of Radical Democracy. edited by Chantall Mouffe.1992. Verso Books. p79

[2] "Listen, Anarchist!" by David Harvey: https://davidharvey.org/2015/06/listen-anarchist-by-david-harvey/

[3] "There is no such thing as situationism, which would mean a doctrine of interpretation of existing facts." (Situationist International) from Internationale Situationniste #1, Knabb, p45

[4] Mr. Anarchist, we need to have a chat about colonialism: https://roarmag.org/essays/zapatistas-rojava-anarchist-revolution/
[5] Why We Can’t Depend On Activists To Create Change: https://www.alternet.org/visions/why-we-cant-depend-activists-create-change
[6] Ross, Kristin. The Emergence of social space. Verso 2008 p14
[7] Ibid. p13
[8] Against Ideology? https://www.crimethinc.com/texts/recentfeatures/ideology.php
[9] Πίσω στο 2002, το αμερικάνικο περιοδικό Green Anarchy δημοσίευσε ένα επικριτικό άρθρο για το κίνημα των Ζαπατίστας με τίτλο «Οι EZLN δεν είναι αναρχικοί!» : https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-willful-disobedience-volume-2-number-7
[10] “Abolish Power: Politics Without Politicians”: https://www.abolish-power.org/
[11] “Why Anti-Authoritarian?” an essay by Larry Giddings: https://www.spunk.org/texts/misc/sp000124.txt
[12] Mary Dietz, Context is All: Feminism and Theories of Citizenship. in Dimensions of Radical Democracy. edited by Chantall Mouffe. Verso Books. 1992. p75

Μετάφραση απ’ το αρχικό αγγλικό κείμενο που βρίσκεται εδώ: Beyond Ideology: Rethinking contextuality

Το παρόν κείμενο δημοσιεύεται στο Περιοδικό Βαβυλωνία #Τεύχος 18

Reflections on Castoriadis and Bookchin

Yavor Tarinski

The primary threat to nature and people today comes from centralizing and monopolizing power and control.
Vandana Shiva[1]

Nowadays constantly we are being told “from above” that we don’t have a choice but to conform to the status quo. The dominant power institutions are doing everything they can to convince us that the solution to our social and environmental problems is going to be found in the very same policies that have created them in the first place. The T.I.N.A. narrative continues to dominate the mainstream discourse and the widespread consumerist culture, in combination with the long-lasting representative crisis, is infecting people’s imaginary with cynicism, general conformism and apathy.

But germs of other ways of thinking and living are trying to break their way through the passivity of present day logic. New significations that are going beyond the contemporary bureaucratic capitalist discourse, offering new sets of reasons and values, which to navigate societal life away from the destructiveness of constant economic growth and cynical apathy.

With popular dissatisfaction of the present order of things on the rise we can distinguish two significations that offer radical break with the present normality:

On the one hand, there is growing interest in political participation and direct democracy. Nowadays it is becoming almost unthinkable to think of popular unrest outside of the general frame of democracy: first, the demands almost always revolve around more citizen involvement in one form or

another; second, the way of organizing popular struggle for a long time have overpassed the centralism of the traditional political organizations, insisting instead on self-organization and collaboration.

On the other hand, ecology is emerging as major concern and as an answer to the contemporary growth-based politico-economic model that is responsible for the creation of tangible environmental crisis and rapidly unfolding climate change. It is being expressed in the form of popular struggles against capitalist extractivist projects, harmful to the environment, human health, as well as to local autonomy. It also takes the form of resistance to consumerist culture, both of whom boost innovative new theories like de-growth.

Amongst the diverse spectrum of thinkers that nowadays are developing these new significations we can distinguish Cornelius Castoriadis and Murray Bookchin as two of the most influential. Both emerged from the Left and through their thought, as well as activist practices, managed to overpass the ideological dogmas and to develop their own political projects, incorporating and advancing further direct democracy and ecology. It's not surprising that they collaborated in the journal *Society & Nature*, and later in its successor *Democracy & Nature*, until 1996, when a bitter conflict between the two emerged[2].

Nowadays their legacy is being carried on by social movements and struggles that place these two significations at the heart of their political activities. Castoriadis's thought was revitalized with the popular uprisings across Europe of the last years and especially with the so called "Movement of the Squares" (also known as The Indignados), that was driven not by "pure" ideologies but by passion for political action and critical thinking, while Bookchin's project is being partially implemented in practice by the kurdish liberation movement in the heart of the Middle East (most notably in Rojava), influencing it to such a degree that it completely abandoned

its marxist-leninist orientation.

It must be noted that the target of the present text is not the development of a deep comparative analysis between the works of both of them, but instead an effort at underlying two elements of their thought that are especially actual for our current context and are charged with huge potential for change.

Direct Democracy

Both Castoriadis and Bookchin saw great liberatory potential in direct democracy and placed it at the heart of their political projects. They devoted great part of their writings on that matter, developing this notion beyond the frames set by traditional ideologies. In stark difference with authoritarian views, mistrusting society and thus calling to its subjection to hierarchical, extra-social mechanisms, on the one hand, and on the other, with such views that reject every form of laws and institutions, the two thinkers proposed the establishment of structures and institutions that will allow direct public interaction, while maintaining social cohesion through horizontal flow of power.

According to Castoriadis, the majority of human societies were established on the basis of heteronomy, which he describes as a situation in which the society's rules are being set by some extra-social source (such as the party, god, historic necessity etc.). The institutions of the heteronomous societies are conceived as given/self-evident and thus, unquestionable, i.e. incompatible with popular interaction. For him the organizational structure of the modern western world, while usually characterized as "democracy", is actually a liberal oligarchy, with some liberties for the people, but the general management of social life is being situated in the hands of tiny elites (Castoriadis. 1989).

For Castoriadis democracy is an essential element of the

social and individual autonomy (the people to set their own rules and institutions), which is the opposite of heteronomy. What he called project of autonomy entailed direct-democratic self-instituting by the society, consisted of conscious citizens, who realize that they draw their own destiny and not some extra-social force, either natural or metaphysical (Castoriadis. 1992). I.e. in the hands of society lies the highest power that is: to give itself the laws and institutions under which it lives.

Castoriadis derives his understanding of democracy from the classical meaning of the term, originating from Ancient Athens (demos/people and kratos/power). Thus on the basis of this he denotes the today's liberal regimes as non-democratic, since they are based on the election of representatives and not on direct citizen participation. According to him democracy can be only direct, thus incompatible with bureaucracy, expertism, economic inequality and other features of our modern political system (Castoriadis. 1989).

On more concrete level he suggested the establishment of territorial units with population of up to 100.000 people, which to self-manage themselves through general assemblies. For coordination between different such units he proposed the establishment of councils and committees to whom the local decision-making bodies to send revocable short-term delegates (Castoriadis. 2013, pp.42-43). Thus the power remains in the hands of the demos, while allowing non-statist coordination on larger scale.

For Bookchin too, the characterization of the today's system as a democracy was a mistake, an oxymoron. He reminds us that two centuries ago the term democracy was depicted by rulers as "mob rule", a prelude to chaos, while nowadays is being used to mask one representative regime, which in its essence is republican oligarchy since a tiny clique of chosen few rules over the powerless many (Bookchin. 1996).

Bookchin, like Castoriadis, based his understanding of democracy on the experience of the ancient Athenian politia. That is one of the reasons he placed so much attention on the role of the city (Bookchin. 1964). He describes how with the rise of what he called statecraft, the active citizens, deeply and morally committed to their cities, were replaced by subjected to parliamentarian rule passive consumers, whose free time is spent shopping in retail stores and mega malls.

After many years of involvement in different political movements, Bookchin developed his own political project, called Communalism. Based on direct democracy, it revolves extensively around the question of power, rejecting escapist and lifestyle practices. Communalism focuses instead on a center of power, that could potentially be subjected to the will of the people – the municipal council – through which to create and coordinate local assembles. He emphasized on the antagonistic character, towards the state apparatus, that these institutions have and the possibility of them to become the exclusive sources of power in their villages, towns and cities. The democratized municipalities, Bookchin suggested, would confederate with each other by sending revocable delegates to popular assemblies and confederal councils, thus challenging the need of centralized statist power. This concrete model Bookchin called libertarian municipalism (Bookchin. 1996), which have influenced to a big degree Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdish struggle for social liberation.

A distinguishing feature of Bookchin’s vision of direct democracy in his communalism was the element of majority voting, which he considered it as the only equitable way for a large number of people to make decisions (Bookchin. 2002). According to him consensus, in which a single person can veto every decision, presents a danger for society to be dismantled. However, according to him, all members of society possess knowledge and memory, and thus the social collectivity

does not have interest in depriving “minorities” of their rights. For him the views of a minority are potential source of new insights and nascent truths, which are great sources of creativity and progress for society as a whole.

Ecology

Ecology played major role in the thought of the two big philosophers. Both of them however viewed it in stark contrast from most of the environmentalists of their time (and of today as well). Unlike the widespread understanding of nature as a commodity, as something separated from society, Castoriadis and Bookchin viewed it in direct link with social life, relationships and values, thus incorporating it in their political projects.

Castoriadis argues that ecology is, in its essence, a political matter. It is about political choices for setting certain limits and goals in the relationship between humanity and nature (Castoriadis. 1993). It has nothing to do with science, since the latter is about exploring possibilities and giving answers to specific questions and not about self-limitation. However, Castoriadis urges for mobilizing science’s resources for exploring nature and our impact on it, but he remains firm that the choice that will be made in the end will be in its essence a political one.

Therefore the solutions that should be given to every ecological crisis should be political. Castoriadis remains critical of the green parties and the parliamentary system in general, since through the electoral processes it strives at “liberating” the people from politics, giving it instead solely in the hands of professional “representatives”. As a result of this the people are left to view nature in de-politicized manner, only as a commodity, because of which many contemporary ecological movements deal almost exclusively with questions about the environment, disconcerned with social and political matters.

Following this line of thought it comes as no surprise that Castoriadis remains critical towards the rear occasions when big green movements and parties are coming up with proposals of political nature for resolving the environmental crisis (Castoriadis. 1981). This is so, because most of the time, although their political proposals revolve around more popular participation – for example green parties that have come up with proposals for sortition and rotation of their M.P.'s, more referendums etc. – they are still embedded in the contemporary parliamentary regime. Being advocate of direct democracy, Castoriadis believes, that single elements of it, being embedded in the representative system, will loose their meaning.

Similarly to him, Bookchin also links the ecological sphere with the social one and politics in general. For him nearly all of the present ecological problems result from problems deeply rooted in the social order – because of which he spoke about social ecology (Bookchin. 1993). Ecological crises couldn't be neither understood nor much less resolved if not linked to society, since economic, cultural, gender and other conflicts in it were the source of serious ecological dislocations.

Bookchin, like Castoriadis, strongly disagreed with environmentalists who looked to disconnect ecology from politics and society, identifying it instead with preservation of wildlife, wilderness or malthusian deep ecology etc (Bookchin. 1988). He insisted on the impact on nature that our capitalist hierarchical society is causing (with its large scale, profit-driven, extractivist projects), thus making it clear that unless we resolve our social problems we cannot save the planet.

For Murray Bookchin the hierarchical mentality and economic inequality that have permeated society today are the main sources of the very idea that man should dominate over nature. Thus the ecological struggle cannot hope for any success

unless it integrates itself into a holistic political project that challenges the very source of the present environmental and social crisis, that is, to challenge hierarchy and inequality (Bookchin. 1993).

Conclusion

Despite the differences and disagreements between them, Castoriadis and Bookchin shared a lot in common – especially the way they viewed direct democracy and ecology. Their contributions in these fields provided very fertile soil for further theoretical and practical advance. It is not by chance that in a period in which the questions of democracy and ecology are attracting growing attention, we listen ever more often about the two of them.

These concepts are proving to be of great interest for increasing number of people in an age of continuous deprivation of rights, fierce substitution of the *citizen* by the *consumer*, growing economic inequalities and devastation of the natural world. Direct democracy and ecology contain the germs of another possible world. They seem as two of the best significations that the grassroots have managed to create and articulate as potential substitute to the rotting ones of hierarchy and commodification which dominate and destroy our world today.

Bibliography:

Bookchin-Öcalan correspondence
Bookchin, Murray. Ecology and Revolutionary Thought (1964)
Bookchin, Murray. The Communalist Project (2002)
Bookchin, Murray. The Crisis in the Ecology Movement (1988)
Bookchin, Murray. What is Communalism? (1996)
Bookchin, Murray. What is Social Ecology (1993)
Castoriadis, Cornelius. Democracy and Relativism (2013)
Castoriadis, Cornelius. From Ecology to Autonomy (1981)
Castoriadis, Cornelius. The Project of Autonomy is not Utopia (1992)

Castoriadis, Cornelius. The Problem of Democracy Today (1989)
Castoriadis, Cornelius. The Revolutionary Force of Ecology (1993)
Castoriadis, Cornelius. Worker Councils and the Economy of the Self-managed Society (1972)

Notes:
[1] Stephen Spencer, Race and Ethnicity: Culture, Identity, and Representation (2014). Routledge p.204
[2] https://www.democracynature.org/vol3/biehl_bookchin.htm

Η ελληνική μετάφραση του κειμένου δημοσιεύεται στο **Ουλαλούμ**.

The limits of syndicalism and the institution of popular assemblies

Grigoris Tsilimantos
Translation: Yavor Tarinski

(Το κείμενο στα ελληνικά εδώ)

Syndicalism as a product of the class struggle and as organizational structure of workers came to manage or to reverse labor relations, developed in conditions of competition within the workplaces. The primary grassroots organization of the workers, explicitly emphasizing on the working conditions and remuneration, gave birth to many expectations throughout all of society, insofar as and to the extent that, together with farmers, they formed the vast majority of the population.

But because capitalism based itself on the new subject of

exploitation -the worker- it transferred him to its locomotive, enslaved and leader simultaneously, in a direction that, as was demonstrated, had neither logic nor boundaries and barriers. And wherever all these were appearing, they were not spared neither blood nor terror.

However capitalism didn't rely on brute force but on its ability to incorporate and assimilate its own cracks. The brute force did not show its strength but instead its weakness to integration and assimilation. Behind the curtain of violence is hidden its own imaginary that have loaded two ideological weights on the backs of the workers:

The first weight was the ideology of messianism, with all the religious characteristics and "laws", historic and economic, and what they entailed. The main mentor of this messianism was Marx and Marxism which replaced metaphysics of religion with earthly scientific "truth" of communism.

The second weight and more durable, since the first one nowadays has went bankrupt, was and still is the ideology of economy. That is, how through it capitalism somehow discovered the *BEING* of human relationships and human history. The organization of production and the produced product themselves formed values as physical ends of the realization of this *BEING*. What this means can be seen in the manuscripts of Marx from '45 where he briefly concludes that the workers, and thus revolutionaries, should not waste time for thinking of better organization of production because this has been discovered by capitalism itself.

The practical realization of this thesis was done by Lenin, who introduced fordism and the production chain in the factories of his newly established dictatorship.

Apart from Marx and the Marxists, what is being situated as a central objective of the class struggle of the workers is the issue of ownership of the means of production and of produced

wealth. However the growth of the productive forces was the only way as for capitalism so as for the worker. Let’s not forget the often repeated position of Bakunin who agreed completely with the economic program of Marx but disagreed with his political one. It was the epoch when scientific discoveries and industrial development – the early stage of technoscience – seemed to be the main pillars for the passage from the era of scarcity into the times of abundance. Clothing, communication, transportation, diet with new products along with mechanization were major pillars of capitalist growth and its first wide spread campaign.

In that moment, the revolutionary aspect of syndicalism directly raised the issue of control and ownership of factories and land and the produced wealth to which capitalists predatory aspired.

All uprisings and revolutions led to the gates of the factory. From inside the boss was defending himself and from outside the worker was trying to take it over. The last revolution before the 50s, the Spanish one, having as a battering ram the anarcho-syndicalism, was the final one about labor claims for self-management of production on behalf of the entire society.

After the war, capitalism was faced with the necessity to fix the huge damages that he himself had caused signing a new social contract with real increases, social security, pensions, collective agreements, etc., looking for other ways to address labor demands. What it couldn’t do inside the working place it did outside of it. I.e. whatever it couldn’t achieve with machines in order to reduce the power of the labor force, it did achieve through trade, opening new cycles and jobs to meet the technical needs that capitalism itself created. The worker transforms into a consumer and the intensity of services that is involved with the disposal of goods increases.

The consumer frenzy has three essential consequences. Firstly,

it is the integration of the entire population into the logic of the commodity which creates ephemeral and alternate lifestyles. The peculiarity of this logic is that the product ceases to support the needs of human and the human is called upon to support the needs of the commodities. Secondly, it is the over-exploitation of natural resources for the needs of a supposed growth, achieved at huge ecological disasters, energy wastage and accumulation of improbable amounts of garbage. That's why today we don't know what to do with the melting of ice caps and the ozone hole, that's why landfills flood, areas around energy plants turn into deserts and water resources are depleted at an exponential rate. If we add the destruction of agriculture and food nightmare that followed, the picture becomes even more apocalyptic. Thirdly, it is the growing individualization, as necessary and sufficient condition for the proliferation of commodities that in an individual level led to personal nests of things, most of them useless and in a collective level led to a widespread corporatization, degradation of social solidarity and in the workplace to a stagnation of the solidarity of workers between each other.

To say just that responsible for all this, as far as it is concerned, is the sold out bureaucratic leadership of the trade union movement, is a banality, an aphorism without to perceive the great upheavals of the last fifty years.

The two versions of syndicalism (reformist-revolutionary) are based on the same two basic pillars that have to do with the participation of the workers in the production process and in the final product. The reformists negotiate for the minimum, thus reproducing exploitation, while the revolutionaries want everything for everyone, abolishing exploitation.

What both of these tendencies couldn't understand, and especially the second one, was the fact that the problems within the workplace were being transferred, even stronger, out of it. In other words they couldn't understand that the problem was not just the working conditions, remuneration,

participation and seizure of the means of production, but the problem became, more and more intensively, the work itself, the product of which had enormous social consequences.

Whoever insists on syndicalism must answer to two key questions. What means for the workers to take control of the factories and what means expropriation of the produced wealth? Today we don’t have to do with this. The production and the final product face a strong questioning. The harshest criticism against capitalism does not come from inside the workplace but outside of it, from citizen movements that are not based on work but on the basis of its dubious or destructive consequences. The very “growth” is under criticism along with barricades. The produced wealth is increasingly becoming a produced junk and its corresponding industrial units are not anymore a breath of air for their areas but suffocating stench. So what kind of self-management can be done in fertilizer factories, in combustion plants at landfills, in gold mines in Chalkidiki, in the Acheloos gigantic dam, in nuclear power plants or in coal plants? What kind of wealth are the products of agricultural and livestock production that must be appropriated when food scandals succeed one another? Today the production units and their products are not possessions and usable objects but social consultation objects for their usefulness. And when the decision is negative, there are two commonly and permanently absentees: the bosses and the workers. Is it by chance that in all the movements against the results of work the unions are absent? Or is it by chance that the Movement of the Squares didn’t want the presence of the syndicates at all? For what was happening with the recycling in Tagarades (region south of Thessaloniki, Greece) so many years, the employees of OTA knew better than anyone else, but the protests came out from residents of the surrounding areas, including the collected information, gathered outside the workplace, not through it.

Today the questioning of syndicalism follows the same path,

not with the questioning of its obsolescent bureaucrats, but by something much deeper, with the questioning of labor itself. Now is required its redefinition not as a worker-employer relationship, but as an overall social relationship. If the produced wealth is social then the questions can't be posed nor solved by anyone else except from society itself.

Syndicalism today cannot be the engine of social transformation, not only because it's dominated by reformism, bureaucracy, corruption and attachment to "positions", but because it cannot respond and solve on its own, the big issues raised by work and the product itself. For example, in the health, all trade unionists, radical or not, agree for more hospitals, more doctors and nurses for better health services. But especially in the western world the already existing hospitals will appear too many if the quality of food and environment change. This requires a radical change in agriculture, radical change in transportation and radical change in the installation of industrial units. This means transition towards real prevention rather than regular check-ups and diets. We will answer the question of health either as society or we will syndicalize its spiral circle.

The Movement of the Squares paved the road for great social deliberation, which without direct democracy would be just a distasteful repetition of the syndicalist, party and parliamentary farce. We can cross it if we decide to walk it.

Source:
https://www.babylonia.gr/2011/10/22/ta-oria-tou-sindikalismou-ke-o-thesmos-ton-laikon-sinelefseon/#sthash.P4AAF9rH.dpuf

Democratic Energy and Climate Change

Thoughts on the book "This changes everything" by Naomi Klein

Yavor Tarinski

Today, man is still, or more than ever, man's enemy, not only because he continues as much as ever to give himself over to massacres of his fellow kind, but also because he is sawing off the branch on which he is sitting: the environment.
Cornelius Castoriadis[1]

Climate change, caused by human activity, is forcing itself to the center of public debates. And that shouldn't surprise us since the crisis it's about to cause is of much bigger magnitude than any other economic or refugee crisis we have experienced by now. If such a crisis occurs it is possible that it will change the face of the planet entirely, possibly making it uninhabitable for humans as well as for most animal species. This gives new strength and importance to the debate about how we will continue the development of our societies, without endangering our very existence.

The carbon emissions being released into the atmosphere as a result of burning fossil fuels are amongst the main factors responsible for global warming. And the fact that the energy of our highly technological societies is being delivered mainly through these non-renewable and polluting resources raises further questions about what could replace them and what would it take for such a change to occur.

In her book *This Changes Everything* Naomi Klein investigates in depth these urgent questions. She demonstrates the limitations and disadvantages of centralized energy sources such as nuclear energy and natural gases, both embedded in the contemporary corporatist, top-down model. She argues for

transition towards localized, democratically managed renewables that will prioritize human and environmental needs before profits and autocratic interests – i.e. they will be turned into commons. The proposal of commons-based system beyond the dogma of constant economic growth is being shared by a growing number of thinkers, social movements and communities (see also: The Commons as paradigm beyond state and market).

Business, state and ecologic crisis

However for such a transition to be initiated we can't rely on the business community, as Klein demonstrates at length in *This Changes Everything,* reviewing the fruitless, often even harmful to the ecologic cause, collaborations between the big green organizations and the corporate sector[2]. No private company will dedicate its resources to a developementalist model that prioritize human lives and nature before profits. By design these entities are based on growth through profiteering and expanding markets by all means necessary. For example, even when they do engage with renewables they use them in the frames of the capitalist growth doctrine, creating environmentally harmful and community excluding but highly profitable in capitalist terms, gigantic, centralized solar or wind parks etc. Furthermore, the energy sector, she notes, is contemporarily constrained from turning to renewables on larger scale because of the exponential growth it is currently enjoying amidst the shale gas boom[3].

The state, on the other hand, is traditionally seen as the sole alternative to the private sector, thus a potential ally against the polluting multinationals. But statist entities have proven to tend towards centralization, bureaucracy and unacountability, and thus disconnected from local needs and experiences. These very states are deeply embedded in the growth based extractivist imaginary of capitalist globalization, as Naomi Klein points out, state-owned companies, ranging from Scandinavian 'social democracies' to

‘pink tide’ governments, like the one of Ecuador[4], that wreck nature by extracting resources to trade in global markets[5]. The top-down socialist states of the past, with their five-year plans, were equally destructive of nature, as well as remote from the societies whom they were supposedly ‘developing’. This is ever more evident from today’s China, whose Communist Party is easily and eagerly adjusting its policies to the extractivist agenda, sacrificing even the air its subjects breathe in the name of economic growth.

Instead, a new approach is needed for such a crisis to be tackled efficiently. It cannot be resolved by mere reforms – as we saw, the capitalist economic model and the statist top-down decision-making processes are essentially predisposed towards enforcing, not preventing the ecologic crisis. This poses the need of a holistic systemic alternative, compelling us to think outside the dominant institutions and come up with new ones that already exist in the margins of society.

Towards a new energy paradigm

One such proposal is the creation of democratically managed utilities, like energy cooperatives or commons, that are managed by the communities that use them. Such a model strives at local sustainability and satisfaction of human needs (reflected by its participatory character) instead at profiteering and growth. This will enable communities to have control over their energy sources, in contrast with other ones managed privately or by the state, thus directing them away from dirty fossil fuels and towards much needed renewables. Naomi Klein notes that such types of commons-based renewables can be cheaper than dirtier alternatives. One of the reasons is they can be a source of income for their communities when unused power is being fed back to the grid[6].

Decentralization and communal participation are of great importance for the successful acceptance of renewables by society. Klein speaks[7] of many reasons why communities would

rebel against large-scale, privately or state owned ones – from the noise of densely positioned wind turbines to the threat of inflicting damage to wild life and ecosystems posed by gigantic solar parks. In contrast, communally owned, locally based renewables are hugely accepted by local residents due to their smaller, human and environmentally friendly scale, the energetic autarchy they provide for their communities, revenues from selling back to the grid and so on.

Germany's energy sector has long been examplary for the establishment of many such utilities[8]. Nearly half of its renewable energy is coming from such sources in the hands of farmers and citizen groups. Amongst them are many energy cooperatives, which amount close to a staggering nine hundred. These utilities play a dual role: simultaneously they produce clean power and generate revenue for their communities by selling back to the grid.

Germany's predecessor in this field however is Denmark[9]. In the 1970s and 1980s, more than 40% of the country's electricity was coming from renewables – mostly wind. And roughly 85% of them were owned by farmers and cooperatives. As in Germany, Denmark's most commited actors to sustainable energy were not statist entities or privately owned companies but local communities. In the last few years many multinationals have entered the energy sector of the country, creating difficulties for the communal renewable utilities.

Transitional strategy

As we observed above we can't overcome the ecologic crisis through the private sector and the nation-state. Dimitrios Roussopoulos, coming from the tradition of social ecology, emphasises firmly that the overcoming of the ecological crisis can be done in a stateless and directly-democratic manner[10]. In a way Naomi Klein's thought intersects this logic by emphasizing the potential grassroots social movements and communities have to resist and initiate bottom-up solutions to

the climate crisis[11].

History shows us that the main enforcer of emancipatory social changes was not artificial managerial mechanisms like the nation-states but society itself. The abolition of slavery, the introduction of universal suffrage rights, the eight hour work day and many more were all product of struggles waged and won by social movements over governments and authorities. The environmental cause is no different; however, as Klein and Roussopoulos also suggest, it has to be understood as part of a wider emancipatory struggle in order to overcome the weaknesses that it currently suffers from, such as the messianism it often embraces, the neglecting of other causes and the elitist attitude it sometimes has.

One way to approach these and many more weaknesses is for the ecological movements to be radically democratized. Thus professional "negotiators" will be replaced by assemblies of rank-and-file activists and concerned citizens, creating healthy human relationships and linking these movements with society – i.e. emphasizing the public squares rather than the luxurious corporate or government offices and dimming the separation between "activists" and "ordinary people". With no top-down "professional" leadership to collaborate with political and economic elites, the messianism and elitism couldn't easily find fertile soil to grow. And since the environmental matters are interlinked, the social movements that deal with them should have an intertwined character. This would imply the establishment of networks of groups, each leading its fight, but collaborating on a global level with other ones.

The interaction of the ecological movements with other social movements is of crucial importance. One of the reasons is that all spheres of human life are interconnected, and this includes humanity's relationship with nature. As we have seen above capitalist economics, mixed with top-down bureaucracy, influences our health as well as that of the planet and so on.

Thus anti-capitalists, ecologists and direct democracy movements should all collaborate with one another, transfusing from one struggle into another.

Such collaboration could prove very fertile especially for the ecological movements. For example the growing number of municipal platforms participating in local elections, like the recently established in Spain *Network of Cities for the Common Good*[12], could provide friendlier environment for communally owned and managed renewable co-ops. The *Olympia for All* municipal platform in Olympia, Washington (USA), for instance, has made environmental commitments in its platform[13], showing an ecologically friendly face. In a globalized system, hostile towards grassroots initiatives, as we saw from the Denmark's experience where the liberalization of the market gave hard a time to energy co-ops, the radicalization of municipalities could provide much needed breathing space for collaborative experiments.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is quickly unfolding and we hear about it more all the time from scientists, journalists and even Hollywood blockbusters. We see its signs in the form of natural disasters that appear with greater frequency and destructiveness. But the dominant institutions are unable to tackle it successfully. It's not without reason to suggest that it is not because of lack of political will, but a consequence of the growth-based top-down politico-economic system which nowadays squeezes all of the Earth. The resistance takes a global shape: activists from the US, experienced in the anti-shale gas struggle, share their experience with Canadian communities resisting fracking, who on their part share their know-how with French movements struggling against shale gas extraction and so on[14], leading to some major victories in the form of bans on fracking in municipalities across Canada and USA and in all of France.

However, for the effective tackling of the climate crisis, a more holistic approach is needed. This struggle has to be integrated into a political, direct-democratic project, one that goes beyond “ecology” alone. Otherwise, as Cornelius Castoriadis warns us, a focus on ecology alone can potentially give rise to neo-fascist, messianic ideologies and the establishment of authoritarian regimes, who then impose draconian restrictions on a panic-stricken and apathetic population[15].

---

[1] Castoriadis, Cornelius. *The Rising Tide of Insignificancy (The Big Sleep).* (2003). p.122

[2] Klein, Naomi. Magical Thinking. In *This Changes Everything* (pp. 191-290). Penguin Books 2015

[3] Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*. Penguin Books 2015. p130

[4] See also: https://www.ecuadorreview.com/e-news-ecuador/international-press/tudayme-a-village-convicted-to-disappear/

[5] Ibid, pp.176-182

[6] Ibid, p.133

[7] Ibid, p.132

[8] Ibid, p.131

[9] Ibid, p.131

[10] https://new-compass.net/articles/interview-dimitri-roussopoulos

[11] Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*. Penguin Books 2015. p.459

[12] https://roarmag.org/magazine/anti-capitalist-politics-21st-century/

[13] https://olympiaforall.org/index.php/platform/

[14] Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*. Penguin Books 2015. pp.303-304

[15] Castoriadis, Cornelius. The Rising Tide of Insignificancy (The Big Sleep). (2003). p.116.

The Commons as paradigm beyond state and market

Yavor Tarinski

People called commons those parts of the environment for which customary law exacted specific forms of community respect. People called commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognized claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households.

Ivan Illich [1]

Introduction

In their book *The Economic Order & Religion (1945)* Frank H. Knight and Thomas H. Merriam argue that *social life in a large*

group with thoroughgoing ownership in common is impossible.[2] William F. Lloyd and later Garret Hardin, in the same spirit, promoted the neo-malthusian[3] term "Tragedy of the commons"[4] arguing that individuals acting independently and rationally according to their self-interest behave contrary to the best interests of the whole group by depleting some common-pool resource. Since then, the thesis that people are incapable of managing collectively, without control and supervision by institutions and authorities separated from the society, have succesfuly infiltrated the social imaginary.

Even for big sections of the Left the resource management in common is being viewed as utopian and therefore they prefer to leave it for the distant future, lingering instead today between variations of private and statist forms of property[5]. Thus is being maintained the dilemma private-state management of common-pool resources which leads to the marginalization of other alternative forms.

But great many voices, trying to break with this dipole, were always present and currently growing in numbers. For the autonomists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri this is a false dilemma. According to them[6] *the seemingly exclusive alternative between the private and the public corresponds to an equally pernicious political alternative between capitalism and socialism. It is often assumed that the only cure for the ills of capitalist society is public regulation and Keynesian and/or socialist economic management; and, conversely, socialist maladies are presumed to be treatable only by private property and capitalist control. Socialism and capitalism, however, even though they have at times been mingled together and at others occasioned bitter conflicts, are both regimes of property that excluded the common. The political project of instituting the common … cuts diagonally across these false alternatives.*

The falsity of the dilemma state-private can also be seen from the symbiotic-like relationship between the two supposedly

“alternatives”. Author and activist David Bollier points at the historic partnership between the two[7]. According to him, the markets have benefited from state’s provisioning of infrastructure and oversight of investment and market activity, as well as state’s providing of free and discounted access to public forests, minerals, airwaves, research and other public resources. On the other hand, the state depends upon markets as a vital source of tax revenue and jobs for people – and as a way to avoid dealing with inequalities of wealth and social opportunity, two politically explosive challenges.

At first sight it seems like we are left without an real option, since the two “alternatives” we are being told “from above” that are possible, are pretty much leading to the same degree of enclosure as we saw earlier, from which beneficiaries are tiny elites. But during the last years the paradigm of the “commons” emerged from the grassroots as a powerful and practicle solution to the contemporary crisis and a step beyond the dominant dilemma. This alternative is emerging as a third way, since it goes beyond the state and the “free” market and has been tested in practice by communities from the past and the present.

The logic of the commons

The logic of the commons goes beyond the ontology of the nation-state and the “free” market. In a sense it presupposes that we live in a common world that can be shared by all of society without some bureaucratic or market mechanisms to enclose it. Thus, with no enclosure exercised by external managers (competing with society and between each other), the resources stop being scarce since there is no more interest in their quick depletion. Ivan Illich notes that *when people spoke about commons, iriai, they designated an aspect of the environment that was limited, that was necessary for the community’s survival, that was necessary for different groups in different ways, but which, in a strictly economic sense,*

was not perceived as scarce.[8] The logic of the commons is ever evolving and rejects the bureaucratization of rights and essences, though it includes forms of communal self-control and individual self-limitation. Because of this it manages to synthesize the *social* with the *individual*.

The commons can be found all around the world in different forms: from indigenous communities resisting the cutting of rainforests and Indian farmers fighting GMO crops to open source software and movements for digital rights over the internet. Main characteristics that are being found in each one of them are the direct-democratic procedures of their management, the open design and manufacturing, accessibility, constant evolvement etc.

The commons have their roots deep in the antiquity but through constant renewal are exploding nowadays, adding to the indigenous communal agricultural practices new 'solidarity economic' forms as well as high-tech FabLabs, alternative currencies and many more. The absence of strict ideological frame enhances this constant evolvement.

The logic of the commons is deeply rooted in the experience of Ancient Athens. The greek-french philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis describes it as a period, during which a free public space appeared[9]. Castoriadis depicts it as *a political domain which 'belongs to all' (τα κοινα* – the commons in Greek*).* The 'public' ceased to be a 'private' affair – i.e. an affair of the king, the priests, the bureaucracy, the politicians, or/and the experts. Instead decisions on common affairs had to be made by the community.

The logic of the commons, according to the anthropologist Harry Walker[10], could also be found in the communities of Peruvian-Amazonia, for whom the most desirable goods were not viewed as rival goods in contrast with modern economics which assume that if goods are enjoyed by one person can't be enjoyed by another. The Peruvian-amazonian culture was focused

on sharing, on the enjoyment of what can be shared rather than privately consumed.

The swiss villages are a classic example for sustainable commoning. Light on this is being shed by Elinor Ostrom and her field research in one of them[11]. In the swiss village in question local farmers tend private plots for crops but share a communal meadow for herd grazing. Ostrom discovered that in this case an eventual tragedy of the commons (hypothetical overgrazing) is being prevented by villagers reaching to a common agreement that one is allowed to graze as much cattle as they can take care for during the winter. And this practice dates back to 1517. Other practicle and sustainable examples of effective communal management of commons Ostrom discovered in the US, Guatemala, Kenya, Turkey, Nepal and elsewhere.

Elinor Ostrom visited Nepal in 1988 to research the many farmer-governed irrigation systems[12]. The management of these systems was done through annual assemblies between local farmers and informally on a regular basis. Thus agreements for using the system, its monitoring and sanctions for transgression were all done on grassroots level. Ostrom noticed that farmer-governed irrigation systems were more likely to produce not in favor of markets, but for the needs of local communities: they grow more rice and distribute water more equitably. She concluded that althou the systems in question vary in performance, few of them perform as poorly as the ones provided and managed by the state.

One of the brightest contemporary examples for reclaiming the commons is the Zapatista movement. It revolted in 1994 against the NAFTA agreement that was seeking the complete enclosure of common-pool resources and goods, vital for the livelihood of indigenous communities. Through the Zapatista uprising the locals reclaimed back their land and resources, and successfully manage them through participatory system based on direct democracy for more than 20 years.

The digital commons, on the other hand, include wikis, such as Wikipedia, open licensing organizations, such as the Creative Commons and many others. The social movement researcher Mayo Fuster Morell defines them as "*information and knowledge resources that are collectively created and owned or shared between or among a community and that tend to be non-exclusivedible, that is, be (generally freely) available to third parties. Thus, they are oriented to favor use and reuse, rather than to exchange as a commodity. Additionally, the community of people building them can intervene in the governing of their interaction processes and of their shared resources.*" [13]

In other words, the logic of the commons is the strive towards inclusiveness and collective access to resources, knowledge and other sources of collective wealth, which necessarily requires the creation of anthropological type of socially active and devoted stewards of these commons. This means radical break with the dominant nowadays imaginary of economism, which views all human beings simply as rational materialists, always striving at maximizing their utilitarian self-interest. Instead it implies radical self-instituting of society which to allow its citizens directly to manage their own commons.

The commons as model for the future

A main characteristic shared between the different cases of commons is the grassroots interactivity. The broad acessability of such resources and their ownership being held in common by society, presupposes that their management is done by society itself. Thus a state involvement is incompatible with such a broad popular self-management, since statist forms are implaying the establishment of bureaucratic managerial layers separated from society. That is, the commons go beyond (and often even detrimential to) the various projects for nationalization.

The same goes for the constant neoliberal efforts of enclosing what's still not privatized, against which during the last couple of years social movements across the globe rose up, and their alternative proposals included in one form or another a wide project of direct democracy. It inevitably includes every sphere of social life, and that goes for the commons as well.

A holistic alternative to the contemporary system, that incorporates the project of direct democracy and the commons, can be drawn from the writings of great libertarian theorists like Cornelius Castoriadis and Murray Bookchin. The proposals developed by the two thinkers offer indispensible glimps at how society can directly manage itself without and against external managerial mechanisms.

As we saw in the cases presented above, the commons require coordination between the commoners so eventual "tragedies" could be avoided. But for many, Knight and Merriam alike, this could possibly work only in small scale cases. This have led many leftists to support different forms of state bureaucracy instead, which to manage the commons in the name of society, as the lesser, but possible, evil.

In his writings Castoriadis repeatedly repudiated this hypothesis, claiming instead that large scale collective decision-making is possible with suitable set of tools and procedures. Rejecting the idea of one "correct" model, his ideas were heavily influenced by the experience of Ancient Athens. Drawing upon the Athenian *polis,* he claimed that direct citizen participation was possible in communities up to 40.000 people[14]. On this level communities can decide on matters that directly affect them on face-to-face meetings (general assemblies). For other ones, that affect other communities as well, revocable, short term, delegates are being elected by the local assemblies, to join regional councils. Through such horizontal flow of collective power common agreements and legal frameworks could be drawn to regulate and control the usage of commons.

Similar is the proposal, made by Murray Bookchin. Also influenced by the ancient Athenian experience, he proposes the establishment of municipal face-to-face assemblies, connected together in democratic confederations, making the state apparatus obsolete. According to Bookchin, in such case *the control of the economy is not in the hands of the state, but under the custudy of "confederal councils", and thus, neither collectivized nor privatized, it is common.* [15]

Such a "nestednes" does not necessarily translate into hierarchy, as suggested by Elinor Ostrom and David Harvey. [16] At least if certain requirements are being met. As is the case in many of the practicle examples of direct democracy around the world, the role of the delegates is of vital importance, but often is being neglected. Thus their subordination to the assemblies (as main source of power) has to be asserted through various mechanisms, such as: short term mandates, rotation, choosing by lot etc. All of these mechanisms have been tested in different times and contexts and have proven to be effective antidote to oligarchization of the political system.

Through such networking and self-instituting can be done the establishment and direct control of commons by many communities that depend on them. Another element that could supplement the propositions, described above, is the so called "solidarity economy". Spreading as mushrooms, different collective entities in different forms are rapidly spreading across Europe and other crisis striken areas (like South America) allowing communities to directly manage their economic activities in their favour.

One such merging will allow society to collectively draw the set of rules which to regulate the usage of commons, while solidarity economic entities, such as cooperatives and collectives, will deal with commons's direct management. These entities are being managed direct democratically by the people working in them, who will be rewarded in dignified manner for

their services by the attended communities. On the other hand, the public deliberative institutions should have mechanisms for supervision and control over the solidarity economic entities, responsible for the management of commons, in order to prevent them from enclosing them.

One example for such merging has occured in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz, where the water management is organized in the form of consumer cooperative[17]. It has been functioning for more than 20 years, and continues to enjoy reputation as one of the best-managed utilities in Latin America. It is being governed by a General Delegate Assembly, elected by the users. The assembly appoints senior management, over whom the users have veto rights, thus perpetuating stability. This model has drastically reduced corruption, making the water system working for the consumers.

The emergence of such a merger between the commons and the co-operative production of value, as Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Kostakis suggests[18], integrate externalities, practice economic democracy, produce commons for the common good, and socialize its knowledge. The circulation of the commons would be combined with the process of co-operative accumulation, on behalf of the commons and its contributors. In such a model the logic of free contribution and universal use for everyone would co-exist with a direct-democratic networking and co-operative mode of physical production, based on reciprocity.

Conclusion

The need of recreating the commons is an urgent one. With global instability still on the horizon and deepening, the question of how we will share our common world is the thin line separating, on the one side, the dichotomous world of market barbarity and bureaucratic heteronomy, and on the other, a possible world, based on collective and individual autonomy. As Hannah Arendt suggests[19]:

The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them. The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.

The paradigm of the commons, as part of the wider project of direct democracy, could play the role of the trick that manages to vanish the table, separating us, but simultaneously creating strong human relationships, based on solidarity and participation. And for this to happen, social movements and communities have to reclaim, through the establishment of networks and the strengthening of already existing ones, the public space and the commons, thus constituting coherent counterpower and creating real possibilities of instituting in practice new forms of social organization beyond state and market.

Notes:

[1] Ivan Illich. *Silence is a Commons*, first published in *CoEvolution Quarterly*, 1983
[2] Deirdre N. McCloskey. *The Bourgeois Virtues*, The University of Chicago Press, 2006. p. 465
[3] Malthusianism originates from Thomas Malthus, a nineteenth-century clergyman, for whom the poor would always tend to use up their resources and remain in misery because of their fertility. (Derek Wall. *Economics After Capitalism,* Pluto Press, 2015. p.125)
[4] The concept was based upon an essay written in 1833 by Lloyd, the Victorian economist, on the effects of unregulated

grazing on common land and made widely-known by an article written by Hardin in 1968.
[5] As Theodoros Karyotis demonstrates in his article *Chronicles of a Defeat Foretold*, published in ROAR magazine, Issue #0 (2015), pp 32-63
[6] Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*, The Bleknap Press of Harvard University press, 2011. p. ix
[7] David Bollier & Silke Helfrich. *The Wealth of the Commons*, The Commons Strategy Group, 2012. In *Introduction: The Commons as a Transformative Vision*
[8] Ivan Illich. *Silence is a Commons*, first published in *CoEvolution Quarterly*, 1983
[9] Cornelius Castoriadis in "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy" *(1983), The Castoriadis Reader* (1997), Ed. David A. Curtis. p. 280
[10] https://bollier.org/blog/anthropologist-harry-walker-lessons-amazonian-commons
[11] https://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/elinor-ostroms-8-principles-managing-commmons
[12] Elinor Ostrom in Nobel Prize lecture *Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems* (2009)
[13] https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/digital-commons
[14] Cornelius Castoriadis in "Democracy and Relativism", 2013. p.41
[15] Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlioglu in "The Kurdish Question in Turkey", Routledge, 2014. p.191
[16] For example Ostrom in *Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems* (2009) and Harvey in *Rebel Cities* (2012. p.69)
[17] https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWSS/Resources/WN5cooperatives.pdf
[18] https://peerproduction.net/issues/issue-7-policies-for-the-com

mons/peer-reviewed-papers/towards-a-new-reconfiguration-among-the-state-civil-society-and-the-market/
[19] Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago, second edition, 1998, p.53.

Free Social Spaces: Small autonomous communities in the urban space

Grigoris Tsilimandos
Translation: Yavor Tarinski

Within the current context, the free social spaces can be the core cellular example of a small autonomous community. They offer great potential for the creation of new formations on the material basis of the reproduction of the social fabric, in the direction of a radical liberatory transformation. To enable such a community to be a point of reference and a hub of resistance and new ideas, certain conditions must be met.

First: There must be a territory, a place and a radius of action for the development of the community's operations. Free social spaces in fact meet these three requirements. Their territory can be occupied or rented. This is neither a question of value nor a contradiction, because what matters today is the liberating effect of the expropriation of buildings (usually unused buildings) that establishes the conditions for the radical transformation of social relations dovetailed in them.

Second: The community must guarantee the stability of the means (structures) and its reproductive relations. In order

the free social spaces to be able to reproduce as a community, they must overcome the political and cultural weight that has created them, not of course by strangling or eliminating it, but spreading it over the areas of production, availability of products and services, including labor relations arising through this activity.

Guaranteeing the stable reproduction of the community requires that free spaces embody structures of production and distribution of products/services. Depending on the size of the building, these structures may be located inside or outside or both inside and outside the confines of a building.

Labor relations, closely intertwined with horizontality, equality and solidarity can grow proportionally, synthetically and simultaneously, in three possible ways (combined or each separately):

a) payment with money;
b) product exchange;
c) donations.

Money can be in the form of alternative currency, time bank credits or euro. The fee should be between a minimum and a maximum threshold, the same for everybody each time. This is to assure that structures are not deprived of their key purpose on the one hand and to prevent money becoming the only incentive for participation in the community's structures on the other. The red line, beyond which accumulation begins that can dissolve the essence of the autonomous community, must be assessed and auto-regulated whenever necessary.

Free social spaces, as the place where community structures meet, discuss and exist, have opened up new ways to address the matters that concern them. Their grouping together, on a horizontal and direct democratic basis, produces a comprehensive dialogue on many different issues and creates the terms and conditions for more comprehensive solutions than

what we knew collectives could do so far. As these spaces fill with new structures, new projects are led to leaving the boundaries of the territory of the buildings, covering more needs and creating a larger context for networking and security. This does not mean that people participating in these structures will make more money, but that they will have broader and free access to goods and services.

Finally, the free social space as a community needs at least one product/service to start with and a respective structure. Could any kind of work/product/service be the basis for engagement in the structure in question, as long as the necessary conditions on labor equality, horizontality and solidarity are met? Certainly no. If it were so, what would prevent us from creating a structure for bouncers or one that would produce pesticides?

These start-up structures that will boost the community must respond to actual social needs, setting the limits between true and false, between what is socially beneficial and what is socially harmful. Some products can be directly integrated into the production plan for liberation and some require a transition plan (e.g. traditional seeds and toxic soil).

Therefore, if an autonomous community wishes to preserve its purpose, it must not address how the products will competitively penetrate the market, but how the community will respond to actual human needs. These have a name: back to basics, not as a form of punishment but as a choice to live an austere life in dignity, one that would be worth living.

Third: The structures of the community have to set the rules and terms for participation in its reproduction. Together with the direct-democratic context, horizontality, equality, solidarity, rotation, and the participation of all in making the decisions and implementing them, the first and foremost question raised is who the one to make the decisions is. That is, who is a member to be more exact, a part of the structures

(a term that would best express what we call a collective being), who is not a part of it or who ceases to be part of it. This cannot be formalized, considering that relationships in an autonomous community are not static but dynamic. At the same time, not anybody can be a part of the community. Free social spaces create a reality that the community relies on. In other words, the parts of the community can be no other that the ones who participate in the free social space. This, as we know, is reflected in the common obligations regarding the space, the activities, shifts, caretaking, in respecting the framework (racism, parties, sexism, theft, violence, etc.) and of course in the assemblies. Thus, free social spaces define the mark of who will be, who will not be and who is no longer a part of the community's structures.

Fourth: The autonomous community has to set the boundaries of its growth. Free social spaces must always take into account the boundaries of their growth or, as said in the beginning, the limits of their radius of action. The danger of strangling and restricting the structures is equal if not greater than the risk of its atrophy or lack of participation. The autonomous community has to be small in size in order to be able to function, which means that as its structures grow in terms of participation, the question arises regarding setting examples that will be reproduced. That is, the question of creating another small autonomous community in new territory with new or similar structures, especially with other people. The boundaries of the development of one free social space as a community are set by the space itself, summed up in two versions. Either too many participants are involved disproportionately in the structures for the production or supply of products, or there are disproportionately too many users interested in the structure's products. The first case entails the risk of the collapse of the structures and the second, the danger of concentration.

Fifth: The community must constantly create inside of it, but

also primarily outside of it, federal networks of interdependence and reciprocity. Networking and federal relations make the role of the redundant and this is one of the main reasons for its existence. Otherwise, it will transform into an island, incarcerating the idea of the community, which sooner or later will shrink and die.

Considering that we are taking about structures for the reproduction of the community, networking can only entail specific products or services, to guarantee consistency, durability and stability. Federal relations among the structures cannot rely on abstract promises of friendship and solidarity. This is clearly seen in the structures that dealing with nutrition and offering products of the primary sector. Depending on the distance between free social spaces, networking can be expressed through specific structures and choices for their complementary interdependence and support, i.e. one can produce flour, the other – the bread.

This opens a new dimension of networking, which arises from the stages, the composition and the horizontality of the relations of the production and distribution of products. Major drive in this process is the food, from “the farm” to the table. The quality, price, mode of production, redistribution, the working relations that regulate the whole cycle of production and consumption of the product, the direct connection between producers and users, all these matters are at the heart of the community. It is an endeavor for liberation of land that starts from the field and ends in the free social spaces. Urban gardening can be one of the steps towards the connection of the occupied land with the urban fabric, to which usually the free social spaces belong. The same can be done on a larger scale, through cooperatives and small producers, who are entering in this transition plan step-by-step, for the liberation of land from destroying the soil and the products in the name of increasing profit and maximizing performance in terms of money at the lowest

possible cost, including state funding.

Sixth: Free social spaces as a community must intervene in the public sphere both as a hub of resistance and as a potential for exit. Therefore, there should be an organizational institution for the coordination and mutual support between structures of free social spaces. At the same time, as cells for radical social transformation, they can link their structures with the building and the neighborhood as core examples of cracks of subversion within the urban fabric, in which basic needs are being monopolized, corrupted and alienated by business chains.

Original source in Greek: https://www.babylonia.gr/2012/09/19/eleftheri-kinoniki-chori-mikres-aftonomes-kinotites-ston-astiko-isto/

Reclaiming the urban space

Yavor Tarinski

Change life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space.

Henri Lefebvre [1]

The importance of the city nowadays is increasing since, for first time in history, the bigger part of the human population lives in urban spaces and the city's economic role is at its peak. As Antonio Negri suggests: *"the city is itself a source of production: the organized, inhabited, and traversed territory has become a productive element just as worked land once was. Increasingly, the inhabitant of a metropolis is the true center of the world…"* [2]. That's why it has been referred

to over and over again in debates over political, economic, social and other strategies for the future.

Modern urban landscape is often being depicted as “dark” place [3]: as a place of alienation, of gray and repetitive architecture, with high suicide rates, expanding psychological disorders and widespread metropolitan violence. It is being presented as prison and its inhabitants as prisoners, deprived by the state and capital from the right to intervene in its creation and development. This is actually true for most contemporary cities. Reshaping of urban landscape is taking place, which sometimes leads to the violent displacement of people from areas, whose value has risen, to others with lower one (such as the infamous *slums*)[4]. And this “game” with real human lives is being played in favor of capital and power accumulation – in the “cleared” lands are being erected shopping malls, office spaces etc. in the name of economic growth. Henri Lefebvre calls this type of city an oligarchy, managed for its inhabitants by an elite few state experts and corporate managers, thus ceasing to be a public space [5].

The common people, who become victims in these “schemes”, on their part, are powerless to resist these processes, at least through the officially recognized legal procedures – neither through the judicial system, nor through the so-called political representatives, all of whom in position of authority and thus intertwined with capital. So amongst the grassroots are appearing different forms of resisting, reclaiming and recreating the urban public space. A colourful palette ranging from urban rioting to self-organized market spaces for product exchange without intermediates and neighborhood deliberative institutions (assemblies, committees etc.).

The loss of “meaning”

Big obstacle for people taking back their cities is the contemporary societal imaginary, viewing, as Richard Sennett suggests, the public space as ‘meaningless’ [6]. Sennett points at the nineteenth-century, a period of rapid urbanization and economic growth, during which the outcome of the crisis of public culture was that people lost a sense of themselves as an active force, as a “public” (Sennett, 1992:261). Sennett suggests that during this period an important role in the process of depriving the public space from meaning was the adoption of more uniform dress and behavior codes, more passive demeanor and less sociability, all of which can be seen as byproducts of the emerging consumerist culture and logic of representativity of that period. As Peter G. Goheen says: “*The street became the place for illusion rather than exposure to the truth*” [7]. In a sense, the public man was supplanted by the spectator who did not so much participate in the public life of the city as he observed it.

In order to overcome this point of view we are in need of new significations, which to give back meaning to the public space. And such can emerge only through practices of collectivities of citizens (i.e. the public), that would have positive and practical effect in the everyday life of society. Such processes already are taking place in the countryside and the village. Because of the crisis many are leaving the city life behind, returning to the villages, that once their parents and grandparents fled [8]. In the countryside the city youth rediscovers communal ways of life, sharing of common resources, traditional and ecological agricultural practices etc. But for the majority of those, who undertake such steps, the village is an escape route from the uncertainty of the city, a form of escapism rather than part of political project for social change.

As for those who remain in the cities, living under conditions of growing precarity, unemployment and stress, the future does not seem so bright, with harsh austerity measures still on the horizon. This discontent is producing uprisings and mass mobilizations in urban areas, ranging from the Istanbul's Gezi Park, Ferguson's uprisings against police brutality, the anti-World Cup riots in the Brazilian cities and the Occupy and Indignados movements in the squares of every major city around the World. In all of these cases, in one way or another, the question with urban planning is being posed: can the city square obtain the role of main cell of public deliberation, i.e. simultaneously *agora* (meeting and exchange point) and basic decision-making body; should a global festival of consumerism, such as the World Cup, have the right to reshape urban landscape, regardless of the 'human' cost; and who should decide if an urban green space (such as Gezi Park) is to be covered with concrete and transformed completely.

For cities of interaction

We can detect a direct link between these attempts of citizens at intervening in the urban landscape and the broader project of direct democracy (i.e. broad public self-management beyond state and capital). Actually in many of these uprisings and movements, the demands for participating in city planning and for participating in political decision-making in general were highly intertwined, because of the broad mistrust of authority, so typical for our times, and the rising interest in authentic democratic practices. According to Henri Lefebvre:

Revolution was long defined […] in terms of a political change at the level of the state [and] the collective or state ownership of the means of production […]. Today such limited definitions will no longer suffice. The transformation of society presupposes a collective ownership and management of space founded on the permanent participation of 'the

interested parties' [the inhabitants or users of space] [9].

The demand for broad public intervention in the creation and recreation of the urban landscape can easily be positioned at the heart of the project of direct democracy, since as David Harvey describes it: "*The right to the city is […] a collective rather than an individual right, since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization.*" [10]

Already social movements are engaging in endeavors aiming at intervening in the reshaping of urban landscape. In the center of the city of Athens (Greece), on Notara Street [11], different individuals decided not just to propose, but to practically initiate alternative solution to the refugee crisis. For years now arriving migrants were forced to seek shelter in open spaces such as parks and squares, exposed to police and fascist violence, rain, cold, etc.[12] What this group of activists decided to do was to reclaim their right to the city. They occupied an abandoned office building, previously used by state bureaucracy, and turn it into housing space for migrants. And they did that through democratic procedures: the building is being managed through general assembly, open for both Greek activists, maintaining the space, and migrants, living in it, and through various working groups, subordinated to it. And this very project is being designed as exemplary for the possibility of reshaping urban landscape according to human needs and desires.

Something similar is taking place in the city of Manchester, where an empty office building was occupied by activists for housing rights and redesigned for being able to accommodate homeless people[13].This is their answer to the contemporary housing crisis in England, which left on the street 280 000 people so far [14].

Another example is the so called *Guerilla Gardening* [15].This is the act of people reclaiming unutilized urban space and turning it into botanical gardens in which they grow food. The term *guerilla gardening* was used for first time in the case of the Liz Chirsty Garden [16] but as practice can be traced back to the Diggers [17]. Nowadays such gardens exist in many cities around the world (London, New York etc.). Usually the produced food is being distributed equally amongst the gardeners and their families and the gardens are being managed democratically. It is another case of people directly transforming urban landscape for the satisfaction of real human needs, beyond and often detrimental to state bureaucracy and market profiteering.

The right to the city is the right of citizens directly to manage their urban environment in ways that differ in scale and manner: from general assemblies being held on public squares to switches on the street lamps, so lighting could be placed under direct public control [18]. However, it is not just the right to place the city in service of physical human needs but to make it reflect the very mindset of its inhabitants, i.e. the citizen’s interaction to penetrate every sphere of urban space: such as the architecture, as was the case in the free city-states of medieval Italy where the citizens were participating in the urban planning through deliberative committees [19].

In conclusion, we can say that the urban issue is really becoming a central question today and the qualities of urban life are moving to the forefront of what contemporary protests are about. But in order the city to acquire again meaning as public space, it have to be linked with the project of direct democracy, since in it there is a real public, i.e. society consisted of active citizens. The greek-french philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis points at two stages in the pre-history of modern society in which such a public space was created:

the Athenian *polis* and the medieval city-states [20]. We can also see the seeds of it in the Paris Commune, Barcelona of 1936-39, the New England Town Meetings and many more. Only by linking, both in theory and in practice, struggles for the right to the city with the broader project of direct democracy, the modern city can acquire a truly public meaning, instead of the one it has today as temple of economic growth, consumerism, alienation and oligarchy.

Notes:

[1] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, Blackwell, 1991. p. 59.
[2] Negri, Antonio. *Goodbye Mr. Socialism,* Seven Stories Press, 2006. p. 35.
[3] For example in Bifo's book *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (Verso, 2015) and Proyas's movie *Dark City* (1998)
[4] See Mike Davis. *Planet of Slums*, Verso, 2006.
[5] Mark Purcell on Deleuze, Guattari and Lefebvre
[6] Sennett, Richard. *The fall of public man,* 1976
[7] Goheen, Peter G. *Public space and the geography of the modern city.* p. 482.
[8] Spain is good example for this "Neo-ruralisation"
[9] Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, Blackwell, 1991. p. 422.
[10] Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities,* Verso, 2012. p.4
[11] New occupations in solidarity with the refugees
[12] The Battle For Attica Square – Greece
[13] Homeless rights activists occupy empty city centre office block
[14] The homelessness minority: England 2015, p.vii
[15] Guerrilla gardening, examples
[16] The Liz Christy Garden is a community garden in New York, USA, started on 1973.
[17] The **Diggers** were protestant radicals in England, often viewed as predecessors of modern anarchism (see Nicolas Walter. Anarchism and Religion, 1991. p.3). They were aiming

at social change through the creation of small egalitarian rural communities.
[18] Simon Sadler. The Situationist City, The MIT Press 1999 p.110
[19] During his service in the Florentine Committee, Dante participated in the preparation and planning of the widening of the street San Procolo (Christopher Alexander, The Oregon Experiment , Oxford University Press, 1975. pp.45, 46).
[20] See for example The Greek Polis and the creation of Democracy (1983) and Complexity, Magmas, History: The Example of the Medieval Town (1993)

Towards Autonomy: The Social Experiment in Rojava

Michalis Koulouthros, Yavor Tarinski

The autonomous region of Rojava, as it exists today, is one of few bright spots – albeit a very bright one – to emerge from the tragedy of the Syrian revolution.
David Graeber[1]

In the last decades the Kurdish struggle for freedom was not only a firm voice of resistance against the dominant social and political order, but also managed to formulate and initiate practical steps towards the realization of a liberated society. After many years of oppression, the Kurdish forces began to regroup, forming armed units of self-defense. During the period in which the leftist Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) was quickly turning into a regional political power, a new antagonistic example appeared in the

midst of the Kurdish liberation movement, based on the values of democratic confederalism and autonomy.

Already before the beginning of the uprising in Syria, residents of Rojava had created the first self-organized councils and committees, and hence had begun to establish a radical democratic organization for the majority of the population in the region. Since June 19th, 2012 the cities Kobane, Afrin, Derik and many other places were liberated from the control of the Syrian regime, revealing the power and the influence of the Kurdish struggle. Military bases were occupied and the overwhelmed government troops chose to surrender.

Nowadays this new paradigm of autonomy and self-organization is being threatened both by the Turkish army from the North and by fundamentalist theological forces from the South, like ISIS and al-Nusra – organizations who traditionally are aiming at imposing heteronomy, centralization, patriarchy, theological violence and exploitation. Principles which the communities in Rojava strongly and actively oppose. In one of the most difficult geopolitical environments, they are laying the foundations of a new world based on democratic confederalism, gender and ethnic equality and community economy.

Democratic confederalism

In Rojava, we believe, genuinely democratic structures have indeed been established. Not only is the system of government accountable to the people, but it springs out of new structures that make direct democracy possible: popular assemblies and democratic councils.
Joint statement of the academic delegation to Rojava [2]

Despite the widespread belief that the contemporary social conditions are too complex and self-organized forms of social organization are doomed to work only on a small and embryonic

level, the radical political organization of the communities in Rojava gives a modern example of autonomous self-institutionalizing and direct democracy. This is being achieved through the processes of the democratic confederalism.

The core of this system are the communes [3]. The communes, established in each province of 300 people, are general assemblies, allowing broad public participation. In the communes are being discussed issues concerning all aspects of social life, starting from the technical and administrative issues up to the political ones. Issues such as energy, food distribution, patriarchic violence and family tensions are being tested at the table of the political debate. Each commune set up local single-issue committees with the task to discuss more specific topics in order to avoid bureaucracy and ease the operation of the general meetings. It is important to note that it is required each commune to be consisted at least of 40% women.

Each commune elects 2 revocable delegates to participate in the regional councils, in which is done the coordination between different communes which make up each region. There again are being elected delegates to take part in the city council, and then according to population criteria are being established the cantons. The cantons are the broadest and most central form of political organization in Rojava and basically they function as coordinating body between the different cities.

Gender Equality

Before the revolution women had no ability to speak or make a decision. Now we have such an ability. We are active in every sphere.
Jina Zekioğlu [4]

One of the most interesting parts of the social experiment

that is currently taking place in Rojava is the role of women and the goals set up by local communities to achieve isomeric relations between the sexes. In a region such as the Middle East, which we are used to identify with the fundamentalist oppression of women and sexuality, the self-organized communities of Rojava provide a pioneering example of equality. The conscious political effort to equalize the relationship between men and women is reflected both institutionally, and socially. In the midst of an ongoing military conflict, usually favoring social automation, militarism and patriarchal imposition, the communities of Rojava are real proof that the political will and choice can overcome that which seems as necessity.

One characteristic example for this political goal are the women councils, formed by the communes. These are councils, within which no decisions on general issues are done, but are dedicated to the discussion of issues related to gender relations, violence against women and in general all questions concerning the relationship between the sexes. Of course this did not happen overnight. Already in 2003 was established the Free Democratic Women's Movement (DÖKH) [5], a grassroots organization fighting from back then sexism and patriarchy, but also more generally nationalism, militarism, environmental destruction, economic exploitation etc.

Internationalist character of the struggle



The fundamental basis of this "Social Contract" is the equality and rights of all ethnic, racial and religious groups

in Syrian Kurdistan, direct democracy and the rejection of the concept of the nation-state.
Evangelos Aretaios [6]

A common misunderstanding is that when discussing the issue of Rojava it is usually being identified purely as national liberation struggle. In contrast however with the traditional national liberation movements, which usually are targeting the creation of nation-states and national consciousness, the communities of Rozava are aiming at self-institutionalization from below, promoting a new paradigm of territorial claim [7]. The core of the social organization ceases to be the national identity of each person, and its place is being taken by the form of politicized citizen participating in social affairs. It's not by chance that in these communes participate people from all ethnic and religious groups of the area (Kurds, Syrians, Yazidis, Christians, Muslims etc.) with the only condition to respect the political principles of equality and horizontality.

Furthermore, in support with the resistance of Rojava have been established political forms of solidarity such as the Lions of Rojava [8], formed by volunteers from all around the world, fighting alongside the YPJ / YPG, reminding us for forms of solidarity, that we can see from the days of the Spanish Civil War. It should be added also that international missions of academics [9] are visiting Rojava in order to come in contact with the social experiment there and learn from the actual forms of enlarged self-institutioning.

Community economy

Though only just beginning, this economic model has, with great determination and in spite of the war, been realised in praxis by many in Rojava.
Michael Knapp [10]

Another main characteristic of the struggle of Rojava,

completing and deepening the above mentioned elements, is the alternative economic management it practically proposes. The economic organization of Rojava is a reflection of its political project. The communities themselves call it “community economy” [11] and all parts of the population participate in it through production and trade cooperatives. The main goal of its economic activity is not growth, but the creation of local autarchy. Except necessity (since Rojava is being isolated and surrounded by hostile environment), this is a political choice in the direction of social ecology and liberation from capitalist exploitation.

For couple of years now they are trying to develop these forms of community economy through the establishment of academies, promoting the cooperative spirit and organizing seminars and discussions on the benefits of collaborative production.

Through these economic structures they are trying to meet the needs of their communities and simultaneously to keep the “war economy” going, which they need since the constant military conflict.

Self-defense

In nature, living organisms such as roses with thorns develop their systems of self-defense not to attack, but to protect life.
Dilar Dirik [12]

The defense forces in Rojava resemble the principles of direct democracy and equality, embraced by the Kurdish communities. Men and women fight as equals since YPG (People’s Defense Units) and YPJ (Women’s Protection Units) military structures and battalions are separated, but there is no hierarchical relationship between them and the main barracks and the work systems are the same. Also military commanders are being elected by the battalion soldiers [13], based on their experience, commitment, and willingness to take

responsibility. Dedicated to enlightenment and political consciousness, the Rojavan defense forces have established academies which to provide ethical-political education to the fighters of the various units (YPG, YPJ, Asayish etc.). The provided education is mainly focused on gender equality, anti-militarism, dialectic resolving of disputes, the values of democratic confederalism etc.

Conclusion

We are not fortunetellers; we can't possibly know what will happen in Rojava a month or a year from now. But we […] can't just sit aside, watch what's happening and comment…
DAF [14]

Because of these characteristics the struggle of the communities in Rojava can be viewed as integral part of the grassroots projects and radical endeavors, starting with the Zapatistas in Mexico, spreading to every corner of the Earth and culminating in global effort for social liberation, against both statist and capitalist management, theological obscurantism, exploitation, patriarchy and every form of oppression.

The positive aspects of the social experiment, taking place nowadays in Rojava, shouldn't be neglected in the name of ideological/dogmatic "purity", as we saw different libertarian organizations [15] taking stance against the events going on there, because of the historical background of some of the main characters in the Kurdish resistance movement (Öcalan, PKK etc.). Surely we have to keep in mind its authoritarian background but our attention should also be focused on the willingness of the Rojavan communities to open spaces of emancipation and participation, and how we could help them strengthen their democratic structures, become more self-sustainable and antagonistic to the dominant statist and capitalist forms, thus providing us with one more contemporary practical example for another society.

Notes:

[1]https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/08/why-world-ignoring-revolutionary-kurds-syria-isis

[2]https://roarmag.org/2015/01/statement-academic-delegation-rojava/

[3]https://new-compass.net/articles/rojavas-communes-and-councils

[4]https://rojavareport.wordpress.com/2014/02/16/the-women-of-rojava-have-broken-their-chains-part-ii/

[5]https://new-compass.net/articles/democratic-confederalism-and-feminism

[6]https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/evangelos-aretaios/rojava-revolution

[7]https://roarmag.org/2014/08/pkk-kurdish-struggle-autonomy/

[8]https://thelionsofrojava.com/

[9]https://new-compass.net/articles/statement-academic-delegation-rojava

[10]https://peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/2015/02/06/rojava-the-formation-of-an-economic-alternative-private-property-in-the-service-of-all/

[11]https://new-compass.net/articles/rojavas-threefold-economy

[12]https://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Kurdish-Womens-Radical-Self-Defense-Armed-and-Political-20150707-0002.html

[13]https://towardfreedom.com/38-archives/women/4017-the-women-s-revolution-in-rojava

[14]https://www.anarkismo.net/article/27779

[15]https://libcom.org/news/anarchist-federation-statement-rojava-december-2014-02122014