

Network for an Alternative Quest

Challenging Capitalist Modernity III

**Uncovering Democratic Modernity—
Resistance, Rebellion and Building the New**

Documentation of the 2017 Conference



International Initiative Edition

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Uncovering Democratic Modernity — Resistance, Rebellion and Building the New

Network for an Alternative Quest

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International Initiative Edition

International Initiative

“Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan — Peace in Kurdistan”

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Editorial Note

The third *Challenging Capitalist Modernity* conference took place at the University of Hamburg on 14–16 April 2017 under the title *Uncovering Democratic Modernity: Resistance, Rebellion and Building the New*. We are once again happy to present a volume of texts to document all the speeches made during the conference.

It is impossible to document everything that happened during the conferences. Not only the discussions and preparations in the run up to the conference go undocumented, but also the friendships formed, feelings and creativity as well as the political events that inspire and make the conference finally what it is when all these different components come together.

So lots of things indeed go undocumented, the whole bunch of beautiful people who made it possible for people to understand one another with ease, in six different languages. And the people who opened their homes to 700 participants of the conference, to care for one another, not previously knowing one another — the strength of ideas and the quest for an alternative or free life.

Or the beautiful start we had, with dancing that depicted that quest for truth by the Mesopotamia Dance Society, or the music that not only rested our souls with the beats of *dengbej* women (Narîn Şêxê, Tawê Efrînî, Ayda Riha) and spiritchild who took us to different worlds but were telling us the same things. And all of these brought us together the next morning, having left two days of the conference behind but feeling miraculously refreshed.

The workshops this time around allowed for more in depth discussions of many important topics from criminalizing societies to self-defense in Rojava, from *jineolojî* to health and to many more important topics. This, too, we could not document as there were more than 13 workshops.

And all along, those who were unable to be there, those struggling in many different places, resisting out of prisons or on their land, in their forests, mountains or urban neighborhoods were in our midst.

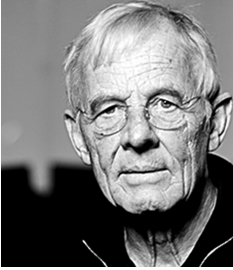
We, thus, present to you the work of countless people who have contributed both in the realization of the conference and the making of this

book. It is truly impossible to name them one by one, but most of us know who they are and that without their work, solidarity and support neither the conference itself nor this book would have been possible. So we are pleased to present the fruit of all your contributions as a timeless document. Thank you all!

Network for an Alternative Quest: International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan — Peace in Kurdistan” • KURD-AKAD Network of Kurdish Academics • YXK/JXK – Association of Students from Kurdistan • Kurdistan Report • ISKU – Informationstelle Kurdistan e.V. • Cenî – Kurdish Women’s Office for Peace • Civaka Azad – Kurdish Center for Public Relations

Welcoming Speeches and Messages

0.1 Rolf Becker Welcoming Words



A heartfelt good morning to everybody; it's great that you are here. Thank you for allowing me to participate and to contribute a few welcoming words.

In one of the announcements, there is a reference to thinking the unthinkable and asking oneself: "What is the unthinkable and what is the thing to be thought?" Each one of us will have a different answer to the question of what they deem unthinkable and what they deem thinkable. Each one, a different answer. How do we find a common answer?

In my view, we do so only by standing up, whether individually or in smaller and maybe even larger collectives, for what we have found out. By concretely standing up for it, acting practically, whether it be at the job, in the union, or in the neighborhood, and whether it be for pensioners, old people, children, or whoever and wherever. A truth we do not stand up for is not really a truth at all.

As some of you may know, last year I was in Sûr, in Diyarbakir. There, they had an assembly of mothers, mothers who were on a hunger strike. Our question was: "What are you striking for?" The answer was obvious from many pictures, reproduced in big photos, on the walls of the room. There were around 60 to 70 mothers there. Striking for the release of their children? That would have been comprehensible. No, it was a hunger strike for release of the dead bodies of their murdered children. What response do we give these mothers, what explanation? How do we motivate them to do the right thing together with us? How do we motivate ourselves to fight together with them for all that which prevents monstrosities, injustice, and suffering such as these from happening?

Why all those wars?

I am a child of the last great war, World War II, myself and have unfortunately had to experience many other wars since then.

“The capitalists don’t want war,” Bertolt Brecht has said, “the capitalists don’t want war, they have to want it.”¹ Which raises the question: Why? I can only give you food for thought. To the extent that the capitalists become embroiled in crisis — that is how the previous World Wars developed and that is how the threatening new one is emerging, a question that is moving all of us right now. The ever-deepening crisis of capital forces them to look for ways out, and there are only two.

Let me quote a sentence from the Communist Manifesto: “And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces.” That is, the destruction of production centers, closing down Opel and other factories. “On the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.”²

The more thorough exploitation of existing markets, old markets, we experience on a daily basis. Here, the people in Greece can give even clearer answers than we can.

The conquest of new markets: This is what is beginning to show itself in the wars in North Africa, particularly in the Middle East. It is the dangerous factor lurking behind the dispute between the US and Russia, the dispute between the US and China.

We do not want to speculate; I do not want to speculate what this will end up in. But we must confront the decisive question of the pervasive political development to the right. Why the AfD here in Germany, why Trump in the US, why Erdogan in Turkey, why the advance of Le Pen in France and of Wilders in the Netherlands? Why? Where does this development to the right come from? This deception of the people, and once again, an attempt to answer this with Brecht.

“The great truth of our era, the realization of which does not yet help but without whose realization no other truth of any interest can be found,

1 Bertolt Brecht, 1954.

2 Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx & Engels, *Collected Works* Vol. 6, Lawrence & Wishart Electric Book 2010, 477-519, here 490. <http://www.koorosh-modaresi.com/MarxEngels/V6.pdf>.

is that our part of the world is sinking into barbarity because the property relations with regard to the means of production are maintained by force.” This thought evoked two sentences in me: We do not want to rack our brains with the question why Mr. Trump acts like Mr. Trump and the Erdogans act like the Erdogans. Rather, we have to ask why they act in that manner as, so to speak, representatives of their classes?

Brecht continues: “What does it help then to write something courageous telling us that the situation in which we are drowning is a barbaric one, which is true, if it is not clear why we become embroiled in this situation?” And now comes the crunch: „We must say that torture is practiced because the existing property relations are to be maintained. Admittedly, if we say this, we will lose many friends who are against torture because they believe that the property relations can also be maintained without torture, which is untrue. We must tell the truth about the barbaric conditions in our country. And that it is possible to do the things that will make them disappear, namely, the things that bring about a change in the property relations.”³

That, indeed, is the question I posed at the beginning, the question concerning the thing to be thought, the question concerning the unthought. To steer this answer from the individual to the collective, to joint action — that, I think, is the task we are facing. Only an answer we stand up for can turn into the truth.

At the end, another quote which is a bit more encouraging. It is my conviction, with Brecht:

*The world's always changing. However enormous,
The plans of the mighty, when dawn comes are through.
And though they run wild, like hens with no beads on
The world's always changing, there's nothing they can do
There's nothing they can do.*

And we all know the last verse:

*On the bed of the Moldau the pebbles are stirring
In Prague three emperors lie dead*

3 Bertolt Brecht, 1935, „Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit.“ <https://www.gleichsatz.de/b-u-t/spdk/brecht2.html>.

*The big will not stay big the little won't stay little
The black night has twelve hours, the red dawn is red
The red dawn is red.*⁴

I wish you a wonderful conference. Thank you for being here!

Rolf Becker (b. 1935) is an actor and trade unionist. He has been active in the solidarity campaign for Nicaragua in 1979 and for Greece since 2012. He stayed in Yugoslavia for a week when it was bombed by NATO in 1999. He visited Mumia Abu Jamal on death row in 2009 and travelled to Amed/Diyarbakir (Kurdish part of Turkey) during the clashes in the Sur district in 2016.

⁴ Bertolt Brecht, 1953, "The Song of the Moldau," translated from German by Eric Bentley. See https://folkways-media.si.edu/liner_notes/folkways/FW05433.pdf.

0.2 Hamburg Rojbîn Women's Assembly and Civaka Azad Assembly



Hatice Kaya

Distinguished guests, I welcome you on behalf of the Rojbîn Women's Assembly in Hamburg. We are also honored to welcome our esteemed guests in Hamburg.

Before I begin my speech, I salute the hunger strike resistance in Turkey's prisons which entered its 59th day today. I say our heart beats for them. Let's be the voice of this honorable resistance. As Kurdish people and Kurdish women, we came to this stage by paying many prices and we still continue to pay. But today, this conference shows that we, as the Kurdish people, are standing upright against all oppression and assimilation, despite the genocides. Our struggle continues as we grow and become universal. We have achieved this universality with the democratic, ecological and women's liberation paradigm developed by our leadership. And here we are discussing this paradigm with you. Especially as a woman I feel very lucky. Because this paradigm is a women-oriented paradigm and there are women at every stage of our struggle. Here, in Hamburg, as women's assembly, we are trying to organize on the axis of this paradigm. Last but not least, we, particularly the Kurdish women resisting will never bow to the female massacre of the system. We will raise our struggle and organization against the systematic massacres against women and the backwardness within us. We say that the freedom of our leadership is the freedom of women. I welcome you all, we are honored to host you.

Jin Jiyan Azadi. Biji Serok Apo.



Abuzer Bilenler

Have a nice day. On behalf of the Civaka Azad [Free Society] Hamburg Assembly, I salute you all and welcome you all. Dear Guests, the preparations for this conference have been continuing with enthusiasm and heavy responsibility for nearly eight months.

We hope you are happy by our welcoming you. Today we are gathered here because of the ideas and opinions of Rêber Apo. We have dozens of international martyrs, and those who struggle in Rojava are gathered around the views of Rêber Apo. However, Rêber Apo has been held in İmralı Prison for years. He lives under heavy isolation. Resisting for the peoples. For this reason, the dictator Turkish State and Erdogan have increased their attacks on the Kurds and have prevented negotiations with Rêber Apo. For this reason, we, as the Assembly of Hamburg, call on all democrats who want freedom and peace to raise their efforts and support his freedom. I hope that the next conference will be attended by Rêber Apo himself and his thoughts are legally recognized.

Once again, I salute you all, greetings and respects. Long live Rêber Apo. Wish you success.

Hamburg Rojbin Women's and Civaka Azad Assembly — represented by co-chairs Hatice Kaya and Abuzer Bilenler: The very first women only and people's assemblies were founded in Hamburg in 2005. There are now two of each in Hamburg, with 8 different committees dealing with the day-to-day needs of society.

0.3 Frank Adloff

Real Utopias



Dear conference participants,

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to welcome you to the auditorium of the University of Hamburg today. My name is Frank Adloff and I welcome you, of course not as the host of this institution but as a professor of sociology at the Department of Socioeconomics of this university.

To discuss the topic of this conference “Capitalist Modernity” and to look for alternatives in the form of a truly democratic modernity, should be of interest to universities. And I think the University of Hamburg is indeed a good place to do so. In its mission statement, it has emphasized that it stands for cosmopolitanism and tolerance and is committed to international cooperation. The university wants to “contribute to the development of a humane, democratic and just society” and sees itself as a mediator between theory and practice. In doing so, it is guided by the principles of socio-ecological and economic sustainable development. In addition, and I would like to emphasize this particularly, the academic senate of the University of Hamburg has approved the appeal of the AStA with the title “Not in our name — Science for Peace in Kurdistan”. The appeal is directed against the war of the Turkish government in the Kurdish areas and is in favor of a peace movement. In addition, the academic senate strongly criticizes the restriction of freedom of science in Turkey. I quote: “The Academic Senate calls on the Hamburg Senate and the Federal Government to work towards an immediate end to the war in Turkey and to protect the freedom of science”. I am delighted that you have chosen Hamburg University as your conference venue and I think that all of you here will breathe life into the university’s philosophy of cultural and social and political debate in the coming days. And I think it is extremely important that there is an exchange between scientists and activists. Because there can

be no social change without people who want to try out something new in practice, and no sustainable social change without theoretical reflection on the foundations of one's own actions.

For a few years now, especially since 2008, we have been observing a reawakened interest in analyses and critiques of capitalism. Of course, this interest comes particularly from the social and cultural sciences. The question of what could take the place of capitalism is being discussed more intensively worldwide than it has been for a long time. This gives cause for hope and indeed neoliberal financial capitalism has come to its end. But what we can currently observe, what is coming up, is by no means pleasing, in my opinion. Some people are talking about the end of so-called progressive neo-liberalism, which, after all, has been interested in gender equality and minority powers in recent years. Some now see new fascisms emerging. At the very least, as has appeared in a recent publication, one can speak of a great regression worldwide. No doubt, we are in multiple crises. A crisis of capitalism, a crisis of democracies, the ecological crisis of course, which is caused by the plundering of the planet, wars within societies, wars between societies, terrorism, hunger is still not eliminated, social inequalities, especially in the area of private wealth, are growing worldwide. Systematic tax evasion; just think of the Oxfam study of large companies and wealthy people, which has just been published. Capitalism has already taken various forms in its history: as Manchester capitalism, as socially pacified capitalism in post-war decades in Western societies, and now perhaps as authoritarian-nationalist and neoliberal capitalism under Trump's leadership. Or let's just think of capitalist authoritarianism in China or Russia these days, or let's think of Erdogan's constitutional referendum this Sunday. But what has united capitalism in all its phases, what has been common to it, is this: It required things that were almost free and that it needed for reproduction. These are things, components to be mentioned: Colonial and post-colonial exploitation, the exploitation of women and, thirdly, the exploitation of nature.

Let us briefly take up the sustainability vision of the University of Hamburg for a moment: What does sustainability actually mean? The above-mentioned crises and risks are essentially due to the fact that contemporary societies are confronted with the exhaustion of resources that are fundamental to their survival: These are the natural resources of the ecosystem, the economic resources of social prosperity, or the social resources

of care and solidarity. Thus, the notion of sustainability encompasses first and foremost the moral norm that the needs of the present should not be satisfied at the expense of those who want to meet their needs in the future. Which now means that in this sense capitalism is not and cannot be sustainable at all. It is only a taker, not a giver. After all, sustainability strives for a balance between resource consumption and reproduction and relies on the potentiality of future development opportunities in the sense of a stockpile of possible future opportunities for action. The social counter-concept to such a concept as sustainability is that of closure, or more precisely, of a closed future. This means that if we want to take this concept seriously, it should also mean that a post-capitalist sustainable society must also be an open society. One that keeps itself open to developments that none of us can yet anticipate. There is one thing: That is, openness to the future, openness to future horizons. Nevertheless, I believe we need to reflect on what is to come. On concrete or real utopias. In my view, a “ban on images”, i.e. the strict refusal to think about what a democratic, post-capitalist modernity could look like, does not make sense. So, it is not only a matter of overcoming capitalism and property relations. We also need an idea of what should take its place. And here, in my view, lies a significant difference from older Marxist traditions, which primarily tried to either analyze capitalism or then, in a second step, to anticipate the collapse that has so often been predicted. But the world that was to come after capitalism one could not or did not want to be firmly in its favor.

I think we need real utopias; this is a concept of the post-Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright. He speaks of a positive program of transformation, of a vision of an alternative to capitalism. But how to get there? Wright thinks, and here I agree with him, that the two classical strategies are exhausted. These are the strategy of reforming the state and the strategy of revolution in the sense of a radical break.

Instead, Wright suggests that emancipatory alternatives should be built up today within the available spaces and cracks of capitalism, and that a struggle should then be fought to expand these spaces. So, it's about practices that can be implemented or developed now, but which anticipate the future world and move us forward in that direction. Such a project needs concrete experiments, which can already be observed in a multitude of civil society initiatives worldwide. It needs, and here I would like to take up a particular term as coined by the American philosopher John Dewey, the

spirit of democratic experimentalism. And it needs affective-positive guiding concepts that indicate what one is advocating.

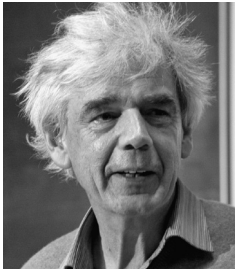
I personally am fascinated and involved in a loose network of so far primarily Finnish-speaking scientists and intellectuals, the so-called convivialists. A few years ago, in 2013, this group wrote a text collectively: The Convivialist Manifesto, which advocates a fundamental transformation of capitalist societies. It tries to build a positive vision of living together, of conviviality. It is about democratization, above all about turning away from the growth paradigm of capitalism. It is about conviviality of people among themselves and especially with nature. Basically, however, in this text, too, it is about a different image of humankind. Because we are not just the utility maximizers or homo oeconomicus, as economic theory has mostly claimed to this day. People live in mutual dependence to one another and stand up for one another. Working on a non-utilitarian, an anti-utilitarian paradigm of human action is therefore, in my view, just as much a part of such a transformation strategy, and this is, of course, mainly the task of science, as are concrete projects, such as solidarity-based economy and the welcome movement. The purpose should be a society that recognizes people and non-humans, that is, life as a whole in their lives, and does not exploit life.

So, if we work here and now on the society of tomorrow and try to realize a successful coexistence already now in niches, then I wish for the coming days a discussion culture of learning and good relations, a productive dissent in the spirit of conviviality. Thank you very much.

Prof. Frank Adloff is Professor of Sociology at the Department of Socio-economics at the University of Hamburg. His work focuses on the gift theory, on civil society, affects and convivialism.

0.4 John Holloway

You are not Alone



Good morning. It is a pleasure and an honour to be there with you. Very many thanks to Havin and to the other organisers for the invitation.

Of course, I am not really there. I am thousands of kilometres away in Puebla, Mexico, and I am also a week away: this is Friday 7 April, not Friday 14 April. But it is still a pleasure and a very great honour to be with you.

However, I cannot help wondering why I am there or what I can contribute to the discussions. I am sitting comfortably at a desk, but my mind, and all our minds, are on people who are in the middle of a war situation, risking their lives, giving their lives to create a different world, a world based on the mutual recognition of the dignity of all. Faced with that, I want to fall silent, in admiration and respect for what they are doing, for what they are fighting for. I am overwhelmed.

But I cannot ask you to watch a video of me sitting in silence for two hours. So, what can I say? Perhaps the most important thing I can say is “You are not alone”.

You are not alone in your pain. To live in Kurdistan or any part of the Middle East must be a profound and intense pain, that I cannot even imagine. But the whole world, as it is currently constructed, is built on pain. Or perhaps I should say “suffering”, but “suffering” in English suggests that we are passive victims, and that is not what I want to say. We are attacked, but that does not make us passive victims: it makes us spit back, in dignity, in a dignity that goes far beyond the attack. It is not just that we are attacked by ISIS, or Assad, or the dreadful Turkish government: behind their violence stands the violence of a system that is destroying us and destroying the world. Capitalism is a constant attack on humanity: an attack on what we want to do with our lives, an attack on the way we want to live, an attack that for many, many millions of people endangers their ability from one day

to the next. And not just on humanity: capitalism is a devastating attack by humans on all other forms of life.

You are not alone in your rage. A world of systematic aggression against us is a world of rage. Rage that our homes are being destroyed, sometimes by bombs, sometimes by the bulldozers of urban development, sometimes by the invasion of mining companies that destroy communities, or increasingly the invasions of drug gangs, or for millions of people it is the repossession of their homes by the banks. Rage because we are unemployed, rage very often because we are employed and have to spend our lives dedicating our lives to producing profits for others. Capitalism is a system built on anger, and capitalism in crisis is a system of growing anger. This is our anger, our rage, rage against a form of social organisation that denies our humanity. But when there seems to be no alternative, no perspective of a different society, when hope is strangled, then that rage slips away from us and turns into something horrible, something bitter: it becomes divisive, racist, builds walls. This is what is happening in all the world: rage is turning against us. Perhaps we have to say: No, that rage is ours. Do not turn our anger away and turn it against us. Probably the best way of making that real is to show in practice that we can break the logic of the system that is destroying us, that we can do it and are doing it, in Rojava, in Chiapas, in a million other places on smaller scale. Rojava shines, the Zapatistas shine in the dark sky of the world because they/ we are walking in the wrong direction, because they/ we are creating here and now a different world, opening up other channels for the rage of humanity.

You are not alone in your determination to change the world, even when so much tells us that the world cannot be changed. It often seems that we are in an aeroplane falling in a downward spiral and that there is no way out. But we cannot accept that. We have to break capitalism before it annihilates us all. We do not know how to do it, but we have learnt from experience and reflection that it cannot be through the state. The best way of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Russian revolution and the heroic struggles of the millions who took part is to say “we love and respect you for what you tried to do, but you were wrong: it could not be done through the state”. And once we say that, then time changes: revolution is not in the future, it is here and now. It is the worlds we create here and now, walking in the wrong direction, against the logic of capital, asking our way, creating our ways by walking on them, never creating or following a model, always

experimenting, never creating a dogma, always knowing that what we are doing is crucial but not enough. And in this walking through a dark night the fireworks that light up the sky with the bright colours of hope are just so very important. Rojava is such a bright light and for that I and we thank all of those who are fighting in one way or another to create it.

And now I will do what I should have done at the very beginning. I send my warmest greetings from Puebla, to you Havin with many thanks, to my friends Azize, Dawn and Lars, to Reimar and Raúl and Silke and David and to all. And with that I fall silent in respect and admiration.

John Holloway is a Professor of Sociology at the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades in the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, Mexico and Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of Rhodes, South Africa. He has published widely on Marxist theory, on the Zapatista movement and on the new forms of anti-capitalist struggle. His books "Change the World without taking Power" (new edition 2010) and "Crack Capitalism" (2010), have stirred international debate and have each been translated into eleven languages.

0.5 Message from Ekojin

As Ekojin Amed Cooperative, one of the Ekojin cooperatives, we greet the participants and participants of the III. Challenging Capitalist Modernity conference and wish you success.

Ekojin Cooperatives is a network of women's co-operatives operating in Bakure Kurdistan (Northern Kurdistan) established 4 years ago by women who wanted to create their own alternative, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal economies, Congress of Jinên Azad (KJA) economic committees and commissions and DBP local government women's units who came together and organized on a common basis.

The basic principle is to organize an ecological, democratic, subsistence, solidarity and social economy in which women are subject and emancipated. The last four years have been a challenging process in which many women have first sought and discussed the answer to the question "What is the economy?" "What kind of economy works for women?" and responded by establishing Ekojin Cooperatives. This challenging process builds upon the Kurdish Women's Movement's years of experience and accumulation and enriches the movement by providing alternative and unique women's economic experiences for the first time.

These experiences which began to emerge in the dialogue process between the Republic of Turkey and the Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan are intended to be discarded by the re-engagement of war and political genocide operations, and in particular by the trustees appointed to the district municipalities. We know that this attack on women in every field is an attack on what women have accomplished and will continue to accomplish. It is the expression of the patriarchal state system's fear of the conscious, organized and action-oriented woman subject. Knowing this, strengthens our commitment to the struggle.

In this direction, we women continue to produce, to create, to keep our cooperatives alive and to establish economic self-management for a free life under all these attacks. We want you to know that any kind of solidarity in this process will strengthen us. We wish we were there to be a part of the

discussion, but we tried to compensate for not being there by producing conference bags, sending you a reward for your efforts. In addition, in the form of small colorful bags we have made for you, we offer you our hopes, resistance and greetings from another world that favors women.

With solidarity and comradely feelings

0.6 Havin Gunesser

Opening Speech: Becoming Aware



Being enlightened is to become aware of the truth — in relation to a certain thing, anything. Truth on the other hand is not something one can attain in the absence of a struggle. Truth is not a mere reality but a reality that has awakened. A reality with no truth is a sleeping reality. And such a reality poses no problem. Truth on the other is the awakening of this sleeping reality. And this itself makes the struggle for the truth complex and difficult — but not impossible.

On the contrary, the value of the historical moment we pass through is immense although they would like us to believe otherwise. The extraordinary state violence and terror is used exactly to this end so that we may not make the best of this historical moment. These are also intellectually productive times both in terms of new and different methods and in terms of construction of truth.

One of our practical responsibilities today is to make sure that our ideals of freedom and equality are materialised by building these ideals into social structures. To obtain this, we need to realise the scientific importance of the chosen path and the strength of will to obtain freedom. Here I must quote from Öcalan. He says: “We have arrived at a time where the love for truth is the only guarantee of free life.” Our epigram then becomes, “Truth is love; love is free life!” Thus, if we are not filled with love for a free life — which is both the method to obtain truth and the regime of truth — then we can neither attain the necessary knowledge nor can we create new premises and build our desired social world.

Dear Friends, hevalino, I have the joy and honour of welcoming you all to this third conference: Challenging Capitalist Modernity. Today here, we will not talk about Erdogan nor Trump — for they are mere and temporary faces of the regime of truth that we struggle against — but what we will talk about is how to build the new while we resist and rebel.

When we started our discussions back in 2010 we had some general and vague ideas in mind. We wanted to share the discussions within the Kurdish freedom movement, and in particular that of Abdullah Öcalan because we held the belief that it offered universal aspects to the quest for truth. Secondly, we felt there was a need for a platform where movements, intellectuals, activists, feminists and everyone else with alternative theory and practice should get together and strengthen their dialogue, networking and exchange ideas.

And this is proving to be more and more important as well as necessary during such a transitional period in human history. In 2012 when we started with our first conference we had emphasized that capitalist modernity is going through a structural change, and that the result of such a change will not necessarily be more positive and progressive. Our struggles will determine the result. We wanted to contribute to this outcome with the discussions held here.

In 2012 we introduced concepts such as democratic autonomy into discussions; in 2015 there was a huge further interest to our second conference with the developments in Rojava. Democratic modernity, democratic confederalism were introduced. In the second conference we talked more about alternative economy and women's freedom; as these were seen to be very important pillars of democratic modernity.

Just like our symbol, the triskelion, suggests we believed in open ended processes because nothing is independent from the other; thus we approached the conference as such. At each conference — more than the previous one — the preparation period turned more and more into a process. We, all those involved in discussions of the conference, learned as we went along. We did not have preconceived ideas as to what to do we wanted this to be a truly dynamic process where our knowledge and experiences when converged led us to new conclusions and thus doings more so since June 2016.

We have discussed not only the strengths of the past conferences but also their weaknesses and how to do things better. To this end we came together with so many different people and organizations and discussed what we actually needed. We came to the conclusion that the most dire need of the times was to be organized and to be in solidarity. Thus, we tried to compose the program according to this. In this conference we will be discussing issues that were slightly or not at all talked about in the previous conferences as well as discussing more extensively issues already dealt with.

The Call for Papers that we had introduced in the previous conference to disperse the seeming hierarchy we thought was a great idea because we got to know so many great people and given the opportunity to a person completely unknown to us to present their views. We want to encourage and facilitate discussions, and we saw that this serves this purpose.

We determined two weaknesses of our conferences: One was that there was not enough time for everyone to take part in discussions, and during our discussion since July 2016 we looked for ways to overcome this. That is why we have workshops, and many of them, where topics and issues can be discussed in depth tomorrow after lunch. We have more than three hours for these discussions.

The second issue was that we wanted to find a way to discuss topics that were of much importance like education, the task of intellectuals in the building of the new, jineoloji and a whole other issues and move forward in joint discussions. To this end we have thought of working groups. Now, these groups are important and they have also been especially invited to explore what exactly can be done in the identified areas. How can we bring together our knowledge and experiences to be able to support the peoples, women, and the youth who are trying to build an alternative. Thus, we thought our conference can have practical results in this sense. And in return the input of these working groups will make the conferences more relevant to us all.

There are so many people who contributed to this, I do not know where to begin. And because often these are understated we have decided to show you the material and immaterial labor, care, and everything else that has gone into the making of this conference. You will see the posters outside indicating all of this. But again I would like to thank the translators who will do an immense work to make sure that we understand and feel one another and communicate to strengthen our ties, the people who have opened their homes to us, those who did many of the organizational aspects, the collectives who are cooking and making coffee, the speakers, all of you; all of us who have decided to drop everything else and come talk about things that matter the most our life, our freedom and how to attain it.

We know that this conference will be successful, not only because we prepared everything to the best of our ability but also because when all this preparation converges with your knowledge, input and participation it will be much more than what we envisaged in your absence.

So, on a closing note let me say a few words about someone all of us mentioned in the last conference; and that person is Abdullah Öcalan. The person who did not only write about all the questions we will discuss but acted upon them. He is under aggravated isolation conditions, and we have no news of him since April 2015. With his renewed total isolation whole of Kurdistan and Turkey have been put under severe oppression. Neither he nor the Kurdish people are victims but are rather freedom fighters, those seeking the truth, daring to awaken the sleeping reality.

Havin Guneser is an engineer, journalist, and a women's rights activist. She is one of the spokespersons of the International Initiative "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan — Peace in Kurdistan" and translator of Öcalan's books.

0.7 Asrın Law Office

Free Society, Free Human and Free Humanity

As Asrın Law Office, the lawyers of Abdullah Öcalan, we salute all of the people who gave effort to prepare and participate in the III. Challenging Capitalist Modernity Conference, organized with a subtitle of “Uncovering Democratic Modernity: Resistance, Rebellion and Building the New”

We would have preferred to send this greeting via an introduction and greeting speech written by directly Abdullah Öcalan himself, as it was the case in the other conferences. Unfortunately, due to the total isolation enforced on our client by disregarding legal principles and moral values, we cannot do that.

We would like to call attention to the total aggravated isolation implemented on Abdullah Öcalan via this conference one more time. Since the visit of his brother Mehmet Öcalan on 11 September 2016, we have no news from him and cannot communicate with him at all. This visit which took place on 11 September 2016 is the one and only meeting with him since the last delegation¹ meeting on the 5th of April, 2015. And this visit was only possible because of public concern on Abdullah Öcalan’s life after the military coup attempt of 15th July and due to the hunger strikes initiated by the representatives of democratic political institutions, family members and his lawyers. The way this consultation took place is a striking example that shows how the legal rights of our client is sacrificed for political ends. Since 27 July 2011, he is not given the right to meet his lawyers, us, whom he should discuss his legal situation with so that we can run the procedures through the use of his rights. Today, the hunger strikes protesting the total isolation on Abdullah Öcalan, the guide for Democratic Modernity, have been initiated again, starting with the political prisoners, as well as in different places in Turkey and in Europe. We

1 Delegation that were involved in the talks between the Turkish State, PKK and Abdullah Öcalan

would like to salute the hunger strike resisters protesting the isolation of Abdullah Öcalan from here.

With no doubt, the main reason of this unlawfulness implemented on Abdullah Öcalan is his being a symbol for liberation and freedom for the Kurdish people on one hand, and his creating practical political conditions of possibility of realizing a democratic civilization, suggesting the democratic modernity against the capitalist modernity, as you, dear conference participants have been already focusing on, on the other hand.

In fact, Kurdistan and Middle East Revolution whose impact increases more and more every day is the biggest reflection of this situation. The total isolation of İmralı is sometimes associated with a *coffin*, it is also described as *being nailed to the rocks of İmralı* with its climatic effect that corrodes the body and its weariness in the minds. The isolation conditions of İmralı which could be also likened to the story of Prophet Joseph, the future savior of his people, thrown into a well, was not able to stop the emergence of “Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization”, like a sun shining through an eye of a needle.

Abdullah Öcalan wrote these texts that he named “Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization” on İmralı island as ‘defense’, where he is being kept as a hostage during his domestic and international trial, after the international plot which took place between 9 October 1998 to 15 February 1999. These defenses are texts where a *free society* and a *free humanity* was defended in the person of a *free human*, and also where capitalist modernity was judged together with all its institutions and an alternative to it was clearly presented.

This situation could be seen also through the names and content of all of his ‘defenses’. Those defenses are respectively; “Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question” and “The Solution and Non-solution Dilemma in the Kurdish Question”, “Free Human Defense”, “We are the Contemporary Abrahamic Movement” (the Urfa Defense), “From the Sumerian Priest State towards a Democratic Republic”, “In Defense of a People” and as the latest books with the main title of “Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization — The Question in Overcoming Capitalist Modernity and Democratic Modernity”, which are five volumes: “The Civilization (The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings)”, “Capitalist Civilization (The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings)”, “Sociology of Freedom”, “The Civilizational Crisis in the Middle East and the Solu-

tion of Democratic Civilization”, “Kurdish Question and the Solution of Democratic Nation”.²

All these defenses are prepared by him alone in his cell, under the constant conditions of isolation and solitude, and without being allowed to have books that would be helpful. Especially when he was preparing the draft of the last five volumes, he was punished by cell confinement. Cell confinement meant he could not have pens and papers, therefore he had to prepare the drafts in his head. Those defenses, prepared under these conditions, were all hand-written and are over 10.000 pages all together.

Briefly as we share the situation, texts, conditions of preparing those texts and the truth those texts reveal, we can clearly say what is happening with this trial is, embodiment of time and history in the *moment*, and embodiment of the society and humanity in *a person*, and that embodiment is an important stage of historical journey that the struggle of the humanity takes in the main river of the struggle of humanity. Abdullah Öcalan expresses this embodiment and this journey with these words:

“Social struggles are always historical. There is no social struggle without deep historical roots. Moreover, we have shown the historical-social ground that we are based upon in this defense, which is the truth itself. In short, we have flowed as a branch of the main river of historical-social flow. What I am trying to say is, our condition of war, which started after 1980 at the foothills of Cebel Şeyh, is a struggle based upon a historical- social ground and has a notably significant meaning. It has deep traces of the struggles of Abraham in El Halil, Moses in Sina, Jesus in Jerusalem and Muhammad in Medina. Beyond these, it is also influenced from the influences of Bruno, Erasmus, Babeuf, Bakunin, Marx, Lenin and Mao. It does not deprive itself from the impact of Zarathustra, Buddha, Confucius and Socrates. It does not neglect benefiting from the influences that come from the Goddess Star, to Inanna, Cybele, and to Mary, Fatima till Rosa. As much as it can, it benefits from all realities of social truth.”

In conclusion, during the process of building a free humanity, the history of humanity is awaiting a way out in Kurdistan and in Middle East, where the chaos is at its deepest. The revolution of democratic modernity, revealed through the paradigm of Abdullah Öcalan, coincides with this im-

2 Not all these books have yet been translated to English, but a comprehensive list of those translated can be found at www.ocalan-books.com

portant stage of this historical way out. So we are greeting the Conference, as an important discussion of the intellectual revolution of this historical way out, with the hope and belief of holding it in a 'free geography' where Abdullah Öcalan himself participates under free conditions.

Asrın Law Office founded to represent Abdullah Öcalan in legal proceedings after the international plot to abduct him and hand him over to Turkish authorities. Ever since the very first trial held at Imrali the lawyers at the Law Office have been subjected to oppression and intimidation. They have been lynched, forced into exile, imprisoned without trial (some five years others two and a half years), and there are many more cases pending against them. They have not been able to see their client, Abdullah Öcalan, since 2011 but despite this and other difficulties they continue to represent them.

Session I — Breaking Down the Mindset of Capitalist Civilization



Moderation: **Rahila Gupta** is a freelance writer and activist, and a long standing member of Southall Black Sisters. Her articles are widely published including in *The Guardian* and on *Open Democracy*. She visited Rojava in 2016 as part of her research for a new book, *Why Doesn't the Patriarchy Die*.

1.1 Fabian Scheidler

Cracks in the Global Megamachine



Many thanks for the Invitation and the introduction by Rahila Gupta. I want to take you with me on a 20-minute journey through 5,000 years of history, because capitalist modernity and the challenges that this conference is about did not begin just 500 years ago with the birth of the capitalist system. Their roots reach back far further, in fact, 5,000 years and back to the time when the first social formations which we now call “civilizations” emerged. 5,000 years looks like a very long time but we should be aware of the fact that exemplars of homo sapiens, that is, human beings, have been living on this earth for at least 200,000 years. These 5,000 years which we call “history” are actually only a small sample. For the largest amount of time, humans have lived in cooperatives, in relatively small associations, and not in hierarchical structures.

What happened 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia and a little later in Egypt and in China? I describe what happened then, the creation of hierarchical societies, as the birth of tyranny of the four or of the four tyrannies. Four tyrannies, four different forms of power and domination.

The first one is physical power. Physical force exists, to a greater or lesser extent, in all societies. Physical power, however, means that the holders of this power use or threaten physical violence to permanently force other people to behave in the fashion desired by the power holders. The institution which is most exemplary for this process is the military. The first military institutions were born in Uruk and other city states in Mesopotamia approximately 5,000 years ago. Other forms of physical force such as the patriarchal family also emanated from there. It took a very long time, in fact, hundreds and thousands of years for this development to reach its climax in the form of the extreme patriarchy of the Roman Empire which gave the father of the family all but absolute power over the family, and which

was accompanied by the Roman Empire's military machine of 600,000 to 700,000 soldiers.

The second form of power, the second tyranny, is what the peace researcher Johan Galtung has called "structural violence." It is often not so palpable as it frequently appears in forms that are invisible to us. If, in a city such as Hamburg or Berlin, a tiny bunch of people own thousands of apartments, and the big owners even own hundreds of thousands of flats, and other people own no property at all and can be expelled from their homes once they are unable to pay the rents, the result is a grotesque amount of force. Once you don't pay your rent, at some time the police will come to your place and drag you out of your home should you be unwilling to leave on your own. And this whole thing is structural violence, which is propped up by the physical violence that stands behind it. But often we don't recognize it for what it is and thus consider it normal. One part of the people has "made it" and owns thousands of tenements; they have exerted themselves while the others haven't made it and are therefore losers who have only themselves to blame. That is structural violence and we can retrospectively see it in many structures that appeared for the first time 5,000 years ago. Property relations and the privatization of land began at that time. Or debt, a topic that David Graeber, who will speak tomorrow, has written a lot about. Debt relations are part of this structural violence, as well as asymmetrical legal systems.

The third form of power that emerged at this time vis ideological power. Every system of rule needs a form of legitimization, particularly if it is based on injustice and violence. As we can see, the form of ideological power begins with the invention of writing 5,000 years ago. Writing was at first nothing but a logistical technique for recording goods, but that also included slaves. The scribes were in the possession of a particular form of knowledge; they formed the educated elite. Over time, they also laid down the mythology and the ideology of the ruling class in written form, durably enhancing the latter's power thereby. Part of this ideology of rulership was the emergence of the first authoritarian religions, with a male ruling good in heaven who rules over his creations like a king rules over his empire. It is quite obvious that it is a projection of the dominance relations on earth into heaven. Correspondingly, the population only reluctantly came to believe in this projection, but the inscription in writing of this ideology thoroughly solidified it and has given us the Holy Books. Expertocracy, the control of

the rulers over the media, and much more belong to this particular realm to this very day.

The fourth form of power is the result of the first two forms. I call it the tyranny of linear thought. It is the idea that the world behaves according to the pattern of order and obedience. A ruler gives orders and his subjects obey. The omnipotent god gives his orders and exerts control over his creation. It is this model that has led, from the beginnings of modernity in the 16th century, to the idea that humans in the form of the male engineer control nature and will, from now on, rule over God's creation. It is always the same thinking, even though it is constantly transforming itself from its beginnings in authoritarian religion to today's stage in the technological era.

In the first three millennia before Christ, the result of this unfolding of power and domination also led to an enormous intensification of the feeling of powerlessness among most of the people. Each increase in power on the part of the rulers is also an increase in powerlessness on the part of the ruled. This is the origin of apocalyptic thought in antiquity. In the Roman Empire, power appeared to be so unassailable that the only way out of this despair seemed to be a destruction of the cosmos itself and its reconstruction in accord with celestial law. This apocalyptic thought has also had a shaping influence on capitalist civilization. When it came about, after the decline of the Roman Empire there was, in the realm of the Mediterranean, in Europe, a phase during which these powers were relatively limited: the phase we call the Medieval Age. I don't want to idealize this period, but military power and the control over property, over private property, were fairly limited.

Then, from the 13th and the 14th century on and emanating from Italy, a new power formation emerged, namely, what we call the Modern World System or the Megamachine: the capitalist system. It emerged as a re-formation of these four tyrannies as a system, but as one that has new characteristics that have never existed before. Let me sketch this very briefly. This system is essentially based on three pillars.

The first pillar is the accumulation of capital, that is, turning money into more money by means of investment, the creation of surplus value, reinvestment. These capitalist institutions couldn't develop all by themselves. They needed a second pillar. This pillar was the modern state. The modern territorial state and later, the national state, have emerged together with the institutions of capital accumulation in a coevolutionary fashion.

How did this work? The souverains, the territorial lords needed money for their own needs and in order to procure armaments. Who gave them that money? It was the traders and the bankers of the big enterprises. As return on their investment, they demanded the spoils from the predatory attacks engineered with this new territorial military machine, as in the *conquista* in South America with its brutal robbery, subjugation, and genocide. The return on the investment into these enterprises went to the merchants in Augsburg, Genoa, and Antwerp as well as to the bankers. Since that time, the states compete for mobile capital in order to support their armaments. The state that can attract the largest amount of capital will be the most powerful one in the world system. For that reason, this system has become the most aggressive system in the history of humanity. It was accompanied by an arms race that began in the 14th century and which has intensified right into the atomic era and until this very day.

It is a sequence of ever larger wars, and a sequence of genocides which began with the *conquista*, went on through colonial times and have continued until today, with a sequence of destructions on nature as well. The reason for all this is that this system must continue to grow and to expand in order to continue to exist and that it turns nature into abstract numbers, into money. It is unable to stop because this is the condition of its existence.

The third pillar of this modern system is what I call the mythology of modernity, the mythology of the West. The West is presented as a savior, first in the form of religion as the West has the best religion and therefore the right to literally collar everything. Religion was of course criticized during the enlightenment, but the terms and notions of the enlightenment were also misused in order to justify even further expansion of the West. Thus, the notion of “civilization” was a central idea. We, the West, have “civilization”; all the others are barbarians. Later on, the notion of “progress” was added. We represent progress, the others are just backward or stagnant. We are the “developed” ones, the others are the underdeveloped ones. It is always the same pattern. Today, the basic tool is to talk about Western values. We have Western values and the others are the barbarians, despite all historical facts, for this Western system has been destroying the earth for five-hundred years, even this does not prevent our politicians from constantly referring to the Western values.

Yet another aspect of the ideological power of this system is the image according to which the world is a machine, and according to which we

humans ourselves are also machines. This picture was very powerful in the 17th century when the modern sciences, the natural sciences were born. Scientifically, it has actually come to nothing: The world is not a machine; we've known this for a long time. But this is still a powerful ideology. This ideology is nurtured to make us believe that we are nothing but cogs in a big world machinery which is by and large without a spirit and a soul, and to ideologically lead us into the machinery of capital valorization and to integrate us into its military machines. As has already been remarked several times today, this system is in the midst of an enormous crisis.

There have already been many capitalist crises, but it is possible that that the system cannot survive the crisis of the 21st century, because today we are talking about, not just an internal economic crisis, but also about the limits of the biosphere. No system in human history has ever reached these limits in a way even close to this. We have initiated the fastest species extinction in the history of the planet. We are losing one percent of our fertile soil per year. Climate change is in the process of making large parts of the earth uninhabitable. Studies have just been published that say that large parts of the Middle East and North Africa will become uninhabitable if climate change continues the way it does now. At the same time, the system has reached certain limits within its own logic. This is due to the fact that capitalism has, in a way, won itself to death in the course of the past decades. It was very successful in pushing people into precarious working conditions, in shifting jobs to low-wage countries, and in transferring profits to tax havens. All of this served to push the profits of certain corporations, which had suffered a bump in the 1970s, once more in the opposite direction. But at the same time, this has led to an enormous social divide. Today, eight people own as much wealth as the poorer half of the world's population. But it is not only that. There is also an inherent problem in the logic of the system. The poorer people simply don't have the money to buy all those products whose amount has to continue to grow by the logic of the system, and at prices that yield the necessary profits.

For that very reason, we have a systemic crisis as well as debt bubbles, because after all someone has to go into debt in order to keep the whole machinery running. Once these bubbles burst, the costs are foisted off on the broad population, as in Greece and many other cases. The consequence of this is, in turn, that the political systems implode. The political center, social democracy and the conservatives of the center implode in many parts

of the world. The result is political chaos. In some parts of the world, we also have crumbling national states, which is in part a consequence of climate change, in part a consequence of the economic distortions. I really believe that we are moving to a transitional phase, into a chaotic transitional phase whose outcome is completely open. Perhaps in a couple of decades, there will be a completely different system or a multiplicity of other systems. And we can actually influence this outcome. I do not need to sketch out the dangers here. We all know that the fascistic movements are also on the rise. We all are able to imagine apocalyptic scenarios only too well; for that, we only need to go to the next video store. Therefore, I want to say something now about the positive possibilities and chances.

I believe that we need to drop out of the Megamachine and that the chances to do that are perhaps better than during the last decade. That means that social-political movements on all the four levels of tyranny that I've sketched are extremely important.

On the level of political tyranny, the task is to shrink the military machines. Here in Germany, we're just having a discussion over whether we need to increase the military budgets to two percent of the gross domestic product. We have to fight against this with all our might, and also against the arms exports that go into the Middle East and many other regions. On the level of structural violence which has already been addressed several times today, we need to occupy ourselves with the property relations. The property relations we have generate violence. And we must —and this conference and this panel are also a contribution to this— we must occupy ourselves with the myths of modernity; we must demystify them and reveal the violence and brutality which are an intrinsic part of this system. We must overcome the tyranny of linear thinking, the idea that we can rule over nature in a linear fashion. We must come to a form of cooperation with nature and we must give up the idea of dominating it.

In concrete terms, this means, as Frank Adloff has already said, that we should not simply think in terms of the notions of “reform” and “revolution,” but also in terms of territorial shifts and gains. In Rojava, we see that alternatives are emerging, right in the midst of this brutal war. If you will, these are practical, concrete gains in territory. As John Holloway rightly said, the Zapatistas in Mexico are another example. But these territorial gains and shifts are also present here in Germany. Let's, for example, ask, to whom does the city belong? In Hamburg or Berlin, where I come from,

capital takes over larger and larger parts of the city, and the people resist this process. This is a very decisive battle. Even today, 50 percent of the people already live in cities. And that percentage is increasing globally. The question to whom the city belongs is of decisive importance. Here, social movements can shift and move the territory an enormous lot. A further point where we can shift the limits are the migrant movements and the movements of refugees. These are social movements in a very physical sense, because they are overcoming the invisible borders set by the national states with their capitalist systems and thereby are also moving the political map. They also shift and move the political thinking of us all. Of course, there is a backlash, there is a racist backlash, but in countries such as Germany, there is also an enormous amount of support for and solidarity with the refugees. This is a very important aspect, not least seen from the angle of climate change, because due to climate change, we will have, not just ten million or sixty million refugees, but many, many more. We must begin to clearly understand that Europe is an immigration continent. We must lead this discourse against the racist discourses that are proliferating everywhere.

A further question, and here I'm already coming to an end in a moment, is to whom the atmosphere belongs. Here, too, there are territorial shifts, for example with the movement "Ende Gelände" ("end of territory"), which occupies coal mines in order to put an end to brown coal strip mining and to promote climate protection thereby. These are physical movements. The people actually go into these enormous pits, where the huge earthmovers stand ready to do their work. By their physical presence, they try to prevent these fossil fuels from continuing to be excavated from the earth. These, too, are territorial shifts.

My last point has also already been hinted at and I'm glad that this is a topic at the conference; it is the question of who controls the public space. The public space is heavily occupied by advertisement and our media landscape is strongly determined for one thing, by private media and for another, by the media under public law which are, in their turn, strongly connected to the state. I think alternative media are a very important factor in making another world possible. In Germany, eight billionaire families own the largest fraction of all newspapers. For that reason, we can read almost nothing about any systemic change in these papers. Therefore, we need alternative media which turn this into a topic and which bring the

many good, smart ideas and thoughts that are expressed at conferences such as this one to a broader public. Here, I have arrived at the end of my speech.

Many thanks.

Fabian Scheidler works and lives in Berlin. He is a writer for the print media, television, theater and opera. In 2009 he co-founded the independent newscast Kontext TV, producing broadcasts on global justice issues. In 2015 his book “The End of the Megamachine. The History of a Failing Civilization” was published in German. The Robert Jungk Library for Future Studies elected the book as being among the TOP 10 of future publications.

1.2 Ebru Günay

A continuous State of War



First of all, I am happy to be present at this third conference. The discussions since 2012 are of great importance and vital. At the conference in 2015, it was hoped that Öcalan would be among us. I repeat this hope at this conference once more and wish that he would be among us at next year's conference. It is a great loss that he is not among us. The fact that he is not among us is an implementation of the capitalist system that we are currently discussing and presently challenging. In my speech, I will try to explain the state of war of the capitalist system to which we are all victims. This state of war is a tangible and a visible war as well as an ideological attack that cannot be seen in more abstract terms. As a matter of fact, it is easier to protect ourselves and society against a war that we can see with our eyes and perceive with our five senses. Then we would take our guard and challenge it. It is easy to win in such a battle. What is difficult is to challenge and win an abstract and subtle war.

I think it is useful to look at the historical processes briefly. Because it is always useful to examine historical codes in order to understand today. It is worth mentioning in the beginning of my speech that it is an illusion to see the capitalist system, capitalist society as a necessity. Treating something that does not exist in society as if it was necessary is contradictory to sociality.

Natural society, the first social form of humanity, refers to the process of class and state structuring. In fact, the end of natural society, the transition to class and state society begins to lay the foundations of capitalist society. Equality and freedom are dominant in women-centered social structures in natural society. There is a balance and harmony between nature and people. In particular, the culture of women's gathering has helped her to recognize nature and establish a friendly relationship with her. However, with the exit from natural society, the motto that still remains prevalent today is

to seize and exploit the resources of the nature inexorably. Thus, war and killing began to spread. Every non-system structure or form or shape and living being has been subjected to annihilation, domination and exploitation. Killing and destruction became a culture that has become widespread until today. Öcalan refers to this as the culture of killing:

“The culture of killing is not only material, but also has grave moral consequences. Apart from compulsory defence, a community that cultures the killing of animals and fellow animals as a lifestyle will now be based on developing all kinds of tools and institutional order to develop the war machine. While the state is preparing as the most basic power institution, war arrows, spears and axes will be invented and developed as the most valuable tools. The development of the patriarchal society from the natural mother-society as the most dangerous deviation of history is also the essence of the terrible forms of killing and exploitation of history to date.”

As the natural social worlds of women and then of young people and children collapse, a new society based on hierarchy and power becomes dominant. Of course, the process of going against nature and plundering of nature develops together. For the system to come into existence nature, society, and women must be internalized within the system. Otherwise, the system cannot bring itself into existence. The system, which tries to dominate the society so much, approaches nature even more destructively. As a matter of fact, when we look at the savagery of nature or the causes of its disasters, it is obvious that there is a contradiction with nature and taking it under control. In particular, the system designed to see nature as a source of information and to control nature has brought nothing but destruction and disaster to nature. Even today, the earthquakes, environmental pollution and fires caused by the many experiments disrupt the balance of nature are not negligible. Again, greenhouse gas effects, ozone layer perforation, air and water pollution, and extinction of species are symbols. The real danger is that the relationship between nature and society, an ecological phenomenon, turns into an abyss. If this abyss is not closed as soon as possible, the result is disaster.

Natural society, the birth of society, the first memory, is the basis of the development of basic concepts of consciousness and belief. It is the fact that a healthy society inherited from, is based on the natural environment and women’s power; that humanity’s mode of existence is realized in itself by strong solidarity without exploitation and oppression. This expresses the

principles of a free and equal society. I will not pass without underlining that even though that a transition to the capitalist society has been made, the core and essence of natural society has always existed in society. Just as something that happens in nature doesn't disappear, neither does something in society. It is rendered invisible, but it is indestructible. It reappears in the right time and in the right place, which is often the time when crisis and chaos are deepened.

Öcalan has a simple but remarkable definition of capitalism. He says; "Capitalism is not just any system of a society; it is a kind of cancerous system of the society. It is of great importance to examine civilization as a class society in general and capitalist civilization in particular, as a social disease and approach it on this basis. Cancer is not a congenital disease. It is a disease that manifests itself by the wear of the body and the loss of its immune ability. The social phenomenon is similar."

I think it is one of the best metaphors for the capitalist system. Cancer is the uncontrolled proliferation of malignant and diseased cells that destroy the body. The capitalist system grows uncontrollably, destroying society, nature and women. And this process is so systematic, step by step that in fact most of the time it is not even noticed. Just like cancer cells sneaking into the body.

One of the time periods when the cornerstones of the capitalist system were strengthened was the medieval period, especially through the process of witch-hunting, where the last science pieces were taken away from women. After the industrial revolution, with the sharp separation of public and private spheres, the disease deepened and the woman was turned back home and turned into a reproductive machine. As S. Federici said:

"By witch-hunting the capitalist system deepened the distinction between men and women by teaching men to fear women's powers, and destroying the world of paths, beliefs and social subjects that do not coincide with capitalist cooperation; it has redefined the principles of social reproduction."

In this way, those who agree with the capitalist system, that is, the West becomes the center, while those who take discordant attitudes become the others of society and are separated from society and colonized. As a matter of fact, the capitalist system found the conditions of power in Western societies and made the West the center and established colonial relations with the rest of the people and places of the world.

After her sociality was taken away, the woman who was shut inside the home and turned into a reproductive machine was transformed into a mother who trained workers and warriors for the continuation of the system. It was also essential for the survival of the system that the nation state identified the ‘the holy homeland’ with the mother and turned them both into men’s honor that engaged in wars and destruction. Because the manpower required for the continuation of the system is only possible with women giving birth, which is thus attributed with a holiness in some way. However, uncontrolled fertility means rapid population increase and pillage of nature. In addition, in the capitalist system, with the understanding that the more people multiply, the more they become worthless, the uncontrolled growth of the population has been encouraged.

Even today, to counter the women’s quest for freedom that is getting stronger every day, the capitalist system emphasizes this to be the main role of women and recommends giving birth to children. Not too far, my own country where I live, Turkey, government officials discuss how many children are best to have; ‘we want 3 children — 5 children’. Widespread incidents of rape in the Middle East and in Turkey is not a coincidence. These are the last moves of the capitalist system. Indeed, we all know that the liberation of women and women recapturing sociality means the liberation of society and the destruction of the capitalist system.

It should not be forgotten that the capitalist system does not bring freedom for anybody or to any structure. The introduction of freedom is contrary to the essence of the system. In particular, it cannot be expected to bring freedom to women. The claim that “capitalism has shattered the chains around the woman because it tears down traditions” is a highly deceptive statement. It is, in short, a distortion. As stated by Öcalan on this subject:

“What is interesting is that the woman is completely evacuated as a soul and formally transformed into an overly feminine, fancy-voiced ‘bird in a cage’. The voice and make-up system present a situation that kills her personality, based on the overwhelming denial of self-identity, far beyond the natural woman. Kadincilik=Femininity is the private impersonation of women, the invention and imposition of men. Even so, he does not fail to blame her as if it were her natural posture. Although the system is personally responsible for the use of all advertisements as an instrument and display material, this is approached to the natural essence of women. Women’s

dignity is at the bottom with capitalism. It is also the values of communal society that hit bottom in the identity of women.”

Here, Öcalan draws attention both to the illusion of freedom imposed on women and to the distinction not drawn between the values of women's identity and communal society. Because in the enslavement and in the commodification of women they fear the free women, because free women are equivalent to a free society.

Another method in which the capitalist system destroys social values is to isolate and problematize the individual against the system. Creating a group of individuals who find themselves unsuccessful or even problematic in the face of the problems and structural crises of the system is one of the necessary methods for the continuation of the system. As a matter of fact, the individual cannot problematize the capitalist system and declares himself guilty by embodying the mistakes of the system. Dwarfed in the face of the system, individuals continue their lives in illusions of happiness and freedom in the small areas of power created for them. Men establish power over women at home and in the family, and women over children and children are forced to abide by this system as they grow up.

Undoubtedly, nationalism, religionism, scientism and sexism that make up the capitalist system are the states of war that must be dealt with separately. Especially in these days when the system is in crisis, they are spreading again like a wave. Capitalist system applies these *states of war* to overcome its crisis and to sustain itself. However, one thing ignored is that *state of war* does not solve the crisis but rather deepens it. As a matter of fact, let's look at the state structures, every government that speaks about restoration and reforms and even takes steps in this regard. But these steps cannot go beyond deepening the crisis.

As I stated at the beginning, whatever exists in society and nature does not disappear. With the developing system crisis in the Middle East, we are closer to an equal and free society than ever before. As Öcalan says:

“Today, the concepts of equality and freedom are still the most basic concepts, owing it to the reality of the clan life. Equality and freedom are concealed in the clan's lifestyle in its natural state, without conception in consciousness. When equality and freedom are lost, these concepts, which are hidden in social memory, will express themselves at an ever-increasing pace and impose them as the basic principles of a highly developed society. As society evolves into hierarchy and state institutions, equality and free-

dom will follow these institutions relentlessly. Subsequently, it is the clan society itself.”

All we have to do is stick to our utopias of freedom and equality. Otherwise, the capitalist system again suppresses our dreams of freedom and equality, which means the loss of sociality and humanity. Women’s balance of nature and society means life, and in fact life itself means politics. Politics is also society’s ability to solve its own problems. This *state of war*, capitalism, is to leave society without politics by taking the ability of society to solve its problems. As Öcalan expresses, the way to overcome this is;

“We can only overcome a system that is fed by war in and out of society by embracing our utopias of freedom and by creating meaningful focal points of resistance and justice against the abuses and power everywhere.”

Ebru Günay is a practicing lawyer since 2008. She was arrested in 2009 for defending Abdullah Öcalan legally. She was released after 5 years in custody. She has written an article on Jineoloji in the book “Jineoloji tartışmaları” (Discussions on Jineoloji). She completed her postgraduate studies in the area of human rights law at Istanbul Bilgi University. She continues to be a practicing lawyer at the Asrın Law Office.

1.3 Dawn Paley

Construction of Fear and “Human Surplus”



My name is Dawn Paley. I'm a journalist, I've been based in Mexico for the last 7 years, and I'm going to talk today about the war on drugs. I'm going to talk about drugs and the language around policing drugs, and how that is an extension of some of what we've been talking about; a continuous state of war.

I wanted to start with a story; I'm a journalist by training and I like to root things in concrete experiences as well. I wanted to share the story of a massacre that happened in a nightclub in the North of Mexico, in a city called Torreón, in the state of Coahuila, which is a border state. It borders Texas in the United States. On the last day of January in 2010, a whole bunch of young people were hanging out at the bar; they were dancing, drinking, and the music was loud. At around one o'clock in the morning, a group of people showed up dressed in black; they looked like police officers. They opened fire at the crowd at the bar. They were firing AR-15's, automatic weapons, and they killed a dozen of the young people who there partying at the bar. And they were able to get away before the police showed up.

There would be three more massacres that year just in this one city of Torreón, which is a city of about 600,000 people. Three more large massacres in bars and in social centers; in places where people gather. There was never any official statement about these killings. The local mayor didn't say anything about it, the governor didn't come and offer his condolences, and the president of Mexico, much less, obviously did not recognize or acknowledge that young people were being massacred in this way in the city.

There was a call out, circulated around Facebook, after the massacre at the Ferrie bar for people to show up and demonstrate against the violence in the city. Apparently, thousands of people had responded to the call out, but on the day about 50 people showed up. So, there is also a huge inability to get a response to this kind of violence, because instead of outrage at the

death of these youth, there was a lot of blaming the victims. Things like “people shouldn’t be going out, they shouldn’t be staying out so late; these youths are going to bars where they know it’s unsafe.”

In this case, unlike most cases in Mexico — because this is just one concrete example of the kind of violence that’s happening all the time — they actually did find out who the killers were, who the people were that showed up and opened fire at the bar. They were actually prisoners who had been released upon the orders of the head of the prison, armed by the prison guards, and told to go massacre these youth. It was prisoners working for the state who repeated the same action 4 times in a single year, 2010, in one city. So we know it was the state doing this. Regardless of that, there still wasn’t a widespread response; there still wasn’t a rising up, or a massive amount of demonstrations about this violence.

I wanted to bring that sketch in because it gives us a very dramatic example of how the violence of the drug war works in Mexico; the same applies for Central America, Colombia, and other places. It happens in ways that are very de-politicized. We’re supposed to believe that it was random, or there was some kind of score being settled, and we’re encouraged to talk about this in a certain language, which de-politicizes what is in fact a war against youth, against young people, which I think is occurring around the world.

Probably the most famous case in Mexico of massacred forced disappearance in the last few years is the case of Ayotzinapa. I’m just curious, by a show of hands, who is familiar with the case of Ayotzinapa? So relatively quite a few people, compared to the thousands of other equivalent styles of massacres. For those of you who don’t know, Ayotzinapa is a teacher training college, and on September 26, 2014, the students from this college were preparing to attend a protest in Mexico City commemorating October 2, 1968, which is a very important day of struggle in Mexico; it’s the day that students were massacred in the Tlatelolco massacre. So the students in Guerrero, they were preparing to go to this commemoration in resistance to the killing of students. 6 of them were killed that evening by police, their bodies left on the streets, and 43 of them were forcibly disappeared. They were arrested by municipal police, and according to the official discourse, the students were handed off to “organized crime.” It’s now been 2 and a half years since that day, and only one of the remains of one of the students has been identified; the other 42 are still disappeared.

The case of Ayotzinapa is the most famous case by far in Mexico, it's the most well-investigated and the most talked about. But I always remember the voice of one mother, whose son was disappeared, who stood up and said, "Every state of Mexico (Mexico has 32 states) has one or more Ayotzinapa." One or more of these massacres of massive acts of forced disappearance. So one of the big slogans in the protest that came out of Ayotzinapa is "*fue el estado*", which means "it was the state." So what Ayotzinapa did, it caused hundreds of thousands of people to protest really militantly for almost a full year, and in almost every major city in the country there was protests.

Unfortunately, most of the other Ayotzinapa's, most of the other massacres like the one I mentioned, Torreón, as egregious as they are, really don't revoke the same level of outrage. And Mexico has now been involved in a drug war for the last 10 years, and it's proved to be a very effective vehicle for which to make war, because of how de-politicized it is. So Ayotzinapa represents a kind of breaking through of that official discourse.

Just to give some context, because I know that we're very far away from Mexico here where we sit; in 2014, Mexico ranked behind only Syria and Iraq as the third country in the world with the most civilian casualties in war. It's become common in the last 10 years for there to be different kinds of displaying of bodies, different kinds of massacres that involve people being hung publicly, or displaying their corpses, displaying these acts of terror against the population. Forced disappearance has taken on a huge quantity of people; officially 30,000 people have been forcibly disappeared in Mexico in the last 10 years. However, unofficially that number is much higher, I would estimate between 3 and 5 times higher. The life span of Mexican men has actually fallen in the last 10 years because of the homicide rate, which has doubled during this drug war.

As I mentioned, the official discourse or language of the war in Mexico is that there is a war between drug cartels, or that there is a war of federal police fighting against drug traffickers. This language is key to the de-politicization of this drug war; we're told that this is a war that is just about dollars and it's about drugs; it's about greed, it's about good vs. evil, etc. The good government saving the people from the evil drug lords. But when we scratch just a little bit below the surface, we find something that is difficult to talk about and difficult to acknowledge, but I actually think it's not that difficult to understand, which is that the war on drugs in Mexico, in Colombia, and Central America, are actually US-funded wars against the

people of those countries, and they should be understood within a spectrum of wars globally that are funded and backed by the United States, furthering the interests of the capitalist system.

I think the only way to understand the war on drugs in Mexico, or elsewhere, is while thinking at the same time of US economic policy and US foreign policy. We need to think about things for example like the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, and how that links with the drug war. I'm going to talk about something called the *Mérida* Initiative, which may or may not be familiar to people here, but I think it's important we can't just stay on Mexico, we really need to always look at the US role behind the situation. The *Mérida* Initiative, like Plan Colombia, is a big, billion-dollar US plan to militarize — in their words, they say it's about controlling the flow of narcotics — to militarize production, to prevent people from producing, from growing cocoa, from moving cocaine, using tanks, using semi-automatic weapons, automatic weapons, helicopters, and so on.

The *Mérida* Initiative is a militaristic program that started in Mexico in 2008, and basically, you can trace the massive increase in homicides in Mexico and the massive increase in forced disappearance to how much money the US is giving; there's pretty much a direct correlation. So we're always encouraged to think about, and we're told in the media, that what's happening in Mexico is because the drug dealers and the drug traffickers are being out of control, but really an honest journalist who's doing their work, who's going to the sources, will see that it's a way of masking what is an incredibly violent state attack on young people.

I know the theme of the conference is challenging capitalist modernity, and I'm really excited to be at the future panels where there's solutions and different proposals and ways of discussing alternate scenarios, but I also think that just acknowledging and talking about the discourse of drugs, the drug war, the moral panics that are provoked by that, is important because it's something that we need to start breaking down and talking about in a different language in order to build solidarities between people who are experiencing war, and I think in order to change the system which is so violent.

One of the words in the title of my talk is about "surplus humanity." I think that in this drug war, you can really see how it targets what an economist or what a capitalist might call "surplus humanity." Those are the people, working people, poor people, students, in cities, who are targeted, and are the main, direct victims of this war. But I think it's also important

to note that we don't need to use the word "surplus humanity." I think that what they're targeting when they're going after "surplus humanity" is our social relations with each other, and you can see that really clearly in the way the war on drugs happens in Mexico; they split people, they split neighborhoods, people who always party together and live together now have an unofficial curfew, they're afraid to leave their house, they're afraid to talk to their neighbor, and that happens through terror and through militarization.

As I mentioned, the US has spent billions of dollars funding this war just in Mexico alone, and in the last 10 years, Washington has said over and over again that it's been the closest relationship ever that Mexico has had with the United States. So, the United States is very happy with this state of affairs in Mexico, where you have the Mexican government essentially provoking a militarization of society, and that leads to a para-militarization.

So, I'm just going to talk about three ideas from the book *Drug War Capitalism*, and there's a lot more that hopefully we can discuss in the working groups and elsewhere. Basically, in terms of thinking critically about the drug war, I suggest three main elements. The first is the fact that, while they say it's always about drugs, there's actually a really important policy component. The second is the policing component, and the third is a paramilitary component.

In terms of policy, we first saw it in Plan Colombia, which went from 2000 to 2006, and now we're seeing it in Mexico, which comes on the heels of Plan Colombia, starting in 2008 through to today. The policy piece is that at the same time as they're doing this drug war—which makes the people very distracted, and rightly so, by experiencing huge increases in violence and acts of terror in their own communities—they go for hard privatization. In both Colombia and Mexico, the state oil companies were privatized during the period, the most violent period of the drug war. The legal systems of both countries were changed from their own legal system to an oral trial system, or exactly the same legal system that the United States has.

They talk about these things within the idea of generating prosperity and the rule of law, but this is part of the war that they're doing; it's actually part of the funds of the drug war. And these policy issues obviously don't make the headlines; if there's violence and there's bodies on the street, that decontextualized violence is on the front page, and for policy coverage you have to dig back through to the economic section. But when you actually

put it all together, you can see this comprehensive thrust to change the entire society and the economic framework.

Policing is the formal and the biggest part of plans like Plan Colombia and the *Mérida* Initiative; in Mexico, it's taken the form of the federal police. When President Felipe *Calderón*, *who started the drug war*, started his presidency, there were 4,000 federal police, now there's 40,000; they're all receiving military training, and they're armed to the teeth. I mean these are essentially soldiers with masks, wearing police uniforms and patrolling. That militarization in so many ways, which are probably very intuitive to people here, obviously favors transnational corporations; they have better access to better-armed police forces that are supposedly there to fight drugs, but as we see, an example which I've documented in *Drug War Capitalism*, these police end up defending corporate interests.

The third is paramilitarism. One of the challenges that we have with the drug war is that we're trapped in a language. I think this happens to us a lot in talking about capitalism in general; we're trapped in their language, and their words are sometimes the only words that we have. In Mexico, we're told that the bad guys are called "drug cartels." Hilary Clinton visited Mexico in 2010 when she was Secretary of State, and she suggested that drug cartels were similar to an insurgent group; this is to suggest that a drug cartel wants to overthrow or fight the state. This is completely false, and this is state language. What I suggest in *Drug War Capitalism*, and what I suggest among us, is that we think about those groups who are armed through finances connected to the prohibition economy, the trading in forbidden and prohibited substances. Again, we need to think about prohibition as being a heavily regulated way of managing controlled substances, it's not a de-regulation; prohibition has always favored reactionary groups and right-wing groups to arm themselves. And if we talk about drug cartels in Mexico as being paramilitary groups instead, it makes that link between how these drug cartels, or so-called "drug cartels," actually often work with the state. They work with state police, with the army, and with high officials to keep the people down, and to massacre students.

In the case of Ayotzinapa, the 43 students that were arrested by municipal police, the official line is that they were handed off to a "drug gang" called "*Guerrero Unidos*." This is just one example, but I think it's more productive to think of that "drug gang" as a paramilitary group, with tight links to state forces. If they weren't paramilitaries, how else would the local

police pass the students to them? How would they arrange their meeting place? Furthermore, we know that many of the members of what they call "*Guerrero Unidos*" are actually active or former police officers. So this is to re-think the drug war as a neoliberal attack, as a form of militarization and an attempt to justify militarization and create an increasingly paramilitarized state, in order to wage a war on the people.

In closing, I would just like to say that Mexico is a place of many resistances, for instance John Holloway mentioned Chiapas, but there's many more resistances, at the community-level and the neighborhood level. There's so many exciting things that people are doing to organize, and the weight of this war is falling on them and on their organizations. So I think that it's our responsibility to think about the drug war politically, to politicize what's taking place, and not say, "Well, it was a bunch of young people at a bar." Well yes, but over and over and over again, you just don't have all of these accidents; in fact, this is a war on young people and we need to keep that at the front of our minds. Thank you.

Dawn Paley is a journalist and the author of "Drug War Capitalism" (AK Press, 2014). Her ongoing research is focused on autonomous organizing against forced disappearances in the northern state of Coahuila, Mexico.

1.4 Ferda Çetin

Society of the Spectacle: Arts, Sports, Sex and Media



Freedom; It is the state of human awareness and awakening in the face of being taken captive, away from society and nature, and the narrowing of the field of existence. This awareness becomes possible with thought and knowledge.

Antonio Gramsci, “Knowledge is not monopolized by anyone and everyone has the ability to think. Philosophy is not a set of experts, or not a study of mind exclusive to philosophers. Every human being is a philosopher” and adds, “The moment the people become conscious of starting to speak and act in their own name, the representation mechanisms of power disappear.”

Paul-Michel Foucault reduces Gramsci’s determination for the individual to society. According to him, the masses do not need anyone to learn and know the truth. Society sees everything clearly and can analyze its results. However, there is a power system that prevents, prohibits and manipulates information.

Gramsci and Foucault tell us that every person has the power to distinguish between right and wrong and to see the truth, unless interventions and curtains, which prevent us from seeing the truth, are created.

The Kurdish people’s leader Öcalan, states that the mind cannot develop until society develops, and that from past to present the rulers first build ideological slavery;

“In the Sumerian society, the upper floor of the ziggurat is considered to be the place of god that rules the minds. The middle floors are the political headquarters of the priests. The ground floor is prepared as the floor of the artisans and agricultural workers who are engaged in all kinds of production. This model has not changed in essence to the present day, it has only attained an enormous position that has widened-grown. ”

Left-socialist thinkers agree that today's sovereign systems are governed by worldly, "Secret Gods." Because the capitalist mind, which carries the label of "modern science" legitimizes its domination of society and nature as globalization, free market and globalism.

Globalization is presented as a universal system of equality and justice; it is transformed into a baptism ritual in which capitalism and modern colonialism are free from all negative historical, ideological and political sins.

Globalization and the "global village" discourse are told before sleep; it creates a fairy-tale effect in which everyone is equalized, everyone wins and everyone is happy. However, globalization is the name of the system in which the richest and the poorest may want the same things, but only the rich can have what they want.

On the one hand, they say the world is a global village, on the other hand they spend billions of dollars to protect the borders of villages with nuclear weapons. On the one hand, they explain with the data and figures that the pollution created by plastic bags in the markets threatens the world but on the other hand, they open nuclear power plants and consume forests.

While all this is happening, millions of poor people from different countries around the world are watching with the enthusiasm and happiness of NASA's discovery of the new planet suitable for human life and the excitement of an alternative place they will soon be able to visit.

As a result, a handful of people who make the world uninhabitable and monopolize prosperity and wealth; blame the problems of nature and the environment, economic crises, wars and the depletion of resources on the entire society, the poor and the oppressed and get rid of responsibility.

If people do not realize what is really happening, if they agree to what the ruling system gives, they do not need to change the system. In this case, they only have the "freedom to choose" between what the system offers. "We have no choice but to choose", Giddens says. Because we are faced with a "complex variety of options."

Capitalism provides this diversity by creating new needs for consumption. For capitalism, creating new needs means dynamism and renewing itself. The need to enter the world of thought and demand of people must be made. At this point, TVs, newspapers, magazines, billboards, cinema, sex, fashion sector, community engineers, dieticians, culture and art world comes into play.

Considering this process as “capitalization of science, power and alienation from society”, Öcalan tackles the process of dissolution of society and the development of the monopoly of science as parts of the same process.

“...Today’s highly debated and real dominant powers global corporations and monopolies who made their realization of the greatest capital boom in history in this period is closely linked to the demise of society. Monetization could not be achieved without the society being degraded and distributed, in such a virtual way, that is to say, without any means of production.” Problem solving science headquarters — shrines has now become the centers of creation of problems, alienation and ideological hegemony.

The degeneration of the academy and the university and the scientific crisis stem from these conditions. Therefore, the tyrants, dominant powers, cunning, who perceive the society as a source of exploitation, have the main duty to undermine the wisdom and thinking opportunities of the society as a first job and to develop the first monopoly as a monopoly of mentality, that is, a temple as the main task. The temple actually serves two functions. First, mental dominance is extremely important as a hegemonic instrument. Second, it is very convenient to take society from its core mental values.

There is no problem with repetition: if you shake the icons of nationalism, religionism, sexism, sports, and art, you can carry the society to any target. The conquest of the mind is the basis of development that makes society more open to today’s global financial capital than any challenge can achieve.”

Don’t ordinary people and society see this great contradiction and deep injustices?

Unfortunately, they don’t, because they’re blocked.

Arundhati Roy says that people wear filters in their eyes.

People are taught not to see poverty. They wear filter lenses to prevent them from seeing exploitation, massacres, murders, sexism, injustice and destruction of nature. So they filter out the contradictions.

Those who seize the monopoly of knowledge intervene in the language we use in everyday life while capturing minds; they create a new language and a new literature which legitimize exploitation, plunder, massacres, genocide, sexism, ownership, individualism.

Globalization is presented as a system where everyone is equalized and everyone wins. Globalization and globalism are being used instead of imperialism and colonialism. Instead of capitalism, they prefer to call it a free

market economy. Capitalism gives rise to an awakening because it evokes capital owners and exploitation. But “freeness” is a good thing, and the free market evokes “freedom”.

Those who commit genocide and those who remain silent in this crime are trying to cover their crimes with words. Instead of genocide, there is a more elegant word; they say, “Ethnic cleansing”.

They justify the occupation of other countries with the lie of preventive “war against terrorism”.

They translated the cliché “needs are endless, resources are limited” into all languages of the world. However, the opposite is true. Needs are limited and resources are abundant for the whole world.

Regardless of the language and the subject they always use the line “it’s your problem” in every movie. This line, which everyone uses freely against each other, is the eternal reaction of the capitalist system to the social, the idea of sharing and solidarity.

But what is done to people who oppose this situation and object to the inhuman conditions of life and the capitalist system?

First, they get sent to therapists. Therapists do not prescribe revolutionary medicine. According to them, the problem is not in the system and living conditions, but in this system, the individual who does not want to live in harmony, is in therapy.

The main priority in nursery schools and primary schools is education of adaptation. Children are trained to adapt to the capitalist system, the oppressor-oppressed relationship. Children who want to live autonomously, object to adaptation education, ask questions are mischievous and unsuccessful, and those eager to commodify themselves are considered successful.

George Orwell, in his book “Nineteen-Eighty-Four” that he wrote in 1949, mentioned that they would leave us uninformed and examined the frightening consequences of this situation. Aldous Huxley, in his book in 1932, “The Brave New World”, feared those who would shower information enough to lead people to passivity and selfishness.

In Nineteen-Eighty-Four, people were taken under control by being threatened with suffering; In the Brave New World, they were seduced, drowned in joyful pleasures with heartbreaking entertainment ...

Eduardo Galeano says; “Waste, exhibitionism and remorselessness do not cause internal nausea, it is admirable: everything including the soul can be bought, sold, rented, consumed... We are all residents of this multina-

tional program and satellite broadcasting world. Everything on the planet is translated into centers of power, translated into an international system of lies”, confirms Orwell and Huxley.

So, what to do in this pessimistic picture? How to do?

Not to pay much attention to what is taught in schools and universities, newspaper news, TV programs, community engineers and experts; to know that information from websites is not innocent; questioning and activating our own reasoning power is half the solution.

Objection, rejection and action will follow. Because action is the greatest virtue of free people.

Rejection, objection and questioning means that individuals and society begin to act on their behalf by producing the necessary information for themselves. The knowledge produced with this consciousness becomes the struggle against power. It emerges, develops and defeats power where power thinks it is the most powerful and unshakable.

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1.5 Carlos Pazmiño

Öcalan and Bakunin: an incomplete discussion

Call for Papers — Genealogy of the State



The present paper will discuss revolutionary tactics and state origin theoretical similarities and differences between Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Kurdish Freedom Movement, and Mikhail Bakunin, one of the most important anarchist theorists and leftist leader. Similarities and differences which provide in our days some important ideas to understand the state, revolutionary tactics against the state, political organization and revolutionary subject role, with special emphasis in women's liberation. Therefore, this contribution raises important questions -most forgotten or thought weakly by the leftist theorists and movements- to think the revolution in the 21st century (Pazmiño 2017a).

As is known, Bakunin after his expulsion in the I. International Workers Association was forgotten, he and his ideas was condemned as “pure ideology”. However, before and after of the USSR's fall, Bakunin returned one and other time with his criticism about the state origins and Marxist statism. His predictions were confirmed, from the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution, a socialist state were not the solution to create a libertarian and democratic society (Price [2007] 2012). Öcalan, before undergoing an evolution of his paradigm from Marxism-Leninism to Democratic Confederalism, had similar criticisms as Bakunin about the state (Pazmiño 2017b). Both, Bakunin and Öcalan (2016a), at different times developed a very similar theory about the state origin, arguing that the origin wasn't economic, but “ideological”, and that the state is a “religious institution”, authoritarian, dominant and patriarchal.

However, Öcalan went even further than Bakunin, putting the discussion about the origin of the state in women's domination, in this way it's

possible to say the Kurdish leader completes and surpasses Bakunin's state theory (Pazmiño 2017b). His analysis of the origin of the state leads Öcalan to elaborate a new tactic, Democratic Confederalism (Öcalan 2012b). Meanwhile Marxism calls to take the state and anarchism to abolish it, Öcalan invokes to dismantle it from the base to the top, little by little, until "power" finishes in the hands of the organized society. The revolutionary subject is not the proletariat, but women, not fulfilling a "revolutionary role", they are the revolution (Bi Battista 2016). As will be seen, apparently Öcalan's work finished the great discussion about state origin and revolutionary tactics after more than 150 years after the foundation of the I. International Workers Association.

The state, a religious institution.

Bakunin argued the state appear when in the "primitive communities", warlocks or "god man's", like Öcalan says, start to influence the society from a mythical conception that explains the unknown, breaking the "natural solidarity" of the communitary life. "The transcendental spirit" of human beings tries to explain the phenomena of nature, attributing them, divine characteristics. Warlocks thus acquire an earthly divine dimension, becoming gradually the architects of society, for they are the revelation of the divine and the channel of communication with God.

In this way, the state will organize itself as the sacrifice of community life, the denial of freedom and the oppression-exploitation of society, based on a divine argument: the omnipotence of the state over society, whose apparent aim is "to ensure by society". As social relations throughout history become more complex, the State and the belief of its necessity, has acquired characteristics even more religious than those thought the "God men" of antiquity.

The theoretical proposal of Öcalan goes much further than that of Bakunin, although the Kurdish leader shares the idea of the religious origin of the state, he adds one more element, the domination of women by men on an ideological-religious basis.¹ It is not only the emergence of "cult so-

1 Öcalan may be criticized as an essentialist for attributing to women in the Neolithics a preponderant role in the community societies that inhabited the "Fertile Crescent," however, this role was also found in cultures that existed in the Andes (South America) prior to the Inca and Spanish invasion. Therefore, the ideas of Öcalan, can be useful to understand how in certain regions of the Andes the state as

cities”, in the abstract, which makes possible the appearance of the state, is the domination and domestic reduction of women in the community, consequently, the state is a patriarchal institution. This is undoubtedly the most important contribution of Öcalan with respect to Bakunin, it theorizes a subject on whose domination the state appeared — the women —, it is not the society as a whole as Bakunin would say. The society will be dominated and exploited, because the woman was first dominated and exploited according to Öcalan, which elevates the woman like the subject antithesis of the State, as we will see later.

The antithesis of the state and the revolution flame: women’s liberation.

In the classical socialist tradition, from Bakunin to Marx, and even in the orthodox Marxist stage of Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), the revolutionary subject was the proletariat. For these classical authors, this subject encompassed all the contradictions and antagonism of the product class of capitalism, putting the economic struggle above any other. They assumed that the globalization of capitalism would globalize the proletariat in all countries of the world²; however, capitalism has not been reproduced equally in all countries, like the proletariat.

The increasingly precarious proletariat lost its power as a self-identified universal subject, while at the same time evidencing the serious theoretical problems that were surely seen in this, the revolutionary subject par excellence. At this point, I wish to mention that Bakunin and Marx’s theory of class has not lost its validity at all, must land in today’s “working world,” and understand class as a complex system of formal and non-formal labor relations, ideological, economic, gender, etc., but probably difficult to be

an institution did not finish appearing, while in others, like the present Peru itself, the Inca state and its expansionism is a sample of it.

- 2 The debate on the relevance of the proletariat as a revolutionary subject is in an apparent crisis if this subject is considered as an “industrial working class”, without contextualizing the concept of the working class in “dependent” and postcolonial regions, such as Kurdistan or America Latina. Capitalism in its neoliberal phase has even increased this crisis, reaching to seriously touch the central countries and their working class, forcing the “factories and capitals” to return to their countries of origin.

universalized in the present moment, with respect to individual and collective identities.

The merit of Öcalan is to have thought that women, as a particular subject, have embodied since time immemorial the contradictions and antagonism of organized societies about violence, exploitation and domination. According to Öcalan, the domination of women inaugurated not only their misfortune, but the misfortune of all humanity, thus Öcalan attributes greater potential than the proletariat.

At this point I would like to talk about three important ideas about Öcalan's theory. First, Öcalan knowing it or not, creates a theory from a feminine perspective to understand the emergence of the state. Second, as the domination of women is the fact that originated the state, then entrenched in capitalism, women become the antithesis of the state, the revolutionary subject. Third, the tactical dimension of Democratic confederalism, in seeking the liberation of women as a necessary condition for the liberation of society, cannot bet on creating a new state, since it would be a theoretical and ideological contradiction. Therefore, Democratic confederalism can be classified as a paradigm-practical and tactical also female.

In this way, Öcalan not only provides an alternative³ to the leftist discussion on the historical subject, but also discusses the patriarchy that persists in the left historically and has put the liberation of women in the background.

Revolutionary party or political social movement?

Unlike orthodox Marxism, Bakunin attributed to the revolutionary party the role of “midwife of the revolution”. The party according to Bakunin did not lead the revolution but accompanied the people, who was the main actor. While in Marxism the party was the one who led and at the same time, was a small proto state, once conquered power, this was who was taken charge of the rising proletarian state.

3 Öcalan's proposal also criticizes Western liberal feminism, pacifist and conciliatory conceptions, proposing that the women's movement must build its own structures, its own social and political organizations. Öcalan calls on women to be militants and to act on reality in an effective way. It is for this reason that one can not reduce Öcalan's ideas about the liberation of women only to him, for now the Kurdish women have appropriated these ideas, surpassing the figure of the leader, becoming the protagonists of the Kurdish politics in every sense

The transformation of the ideas of Öcalan and the PKK, with respect to the party structure, enter into dialogue with Bakunin's ideas. The PKK has gone from being a classic marxist leninist apparatus to a transnational and cross-border social movement⁴, although its political structure has remained, it has enabled the emergence of a strong social political movement of great proportions. By not betting on the creation of a Kurdish state, the PKK breaks with the classic prototypical behavior of the Leninist Marxist parties, becoming what I have mentioned. When thousands of Kurds take to the streets in Turkey and shout “the PKK is the people, and the people are here,” you can understand this phenomenon even better.

As it has been observed, the similarities and differences between Bakunin and Öcalan are important, they touch upon issues on the leftist world, to this day unresolved. The proposal of Öcalan on the rise of the State, the liberation of women and the role of the party, bring brilliant elements to think revolutionary theory and revolution in the twenty-first century. Their study must involve both theoretical and militant efforts.

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4 For this to happen, I think three elements have been important. a) The maturation of Öcalan's thinking, b) his capture, which forced the Kurdish liberation movement to rethink itself in the absence of the leader in every sense, c) the increase of the protagonism of the woman.

Session II —
Beyond State: Thinking and
Building Alternatives

2.0 Debbie Bookchin

Introduction



For many years when I was young, my father, the American social theorist Murray Bookchin, carried around a quotation in his wallet buried between dollar bills and old receipts.

It consisted of 44 words, that he had carefully typewritten on a small scrap of paper, from his favorite utopian, the British polymath William Morris. If you'll pardon the gender failings representative of the period during which Morris composed it, here is what it said:

“Men fight and lose the battle and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat and when it comes, turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.”

For my father, this quote not only summed up the dialectic between theory and practice, but also described the courage — the revolutionary verve — that those who believe in a better world must summon to press forward. In history, there is no straight path to true emancipation. If we believe in the power of ideas to transform society, if we dare to imagine a different world, we do so with the awareness that even when the vision we strived so hard to bring into being arrives, it might not look like what we had in mind. Subject as it is to historical forces beyond our control, the vision must be renewed and refined — elaborated in an ongoing struggle between what “is” and what “could be.”

In retrospect, it is remarkable how much that William Morris quotation sums up the trajectory of my father's own social theory — he started in the 1930s from one revolutionary impulse, traditional Marxism, and by the 1960s had defined a completely new one: an idea that he called “social ecology,” with its political practice of libertarian municipalism, or communalism.

For decades my father elaborated these ideas, urging the activists he taught and worked with, to strive to re-envision notions of freedom,

democracy, technology and the way we interact with the natural world. Importantly, he believed that his ideas should evolve — not be treated as immutable declarations — but as guideposts that would be expanded and further developed as part of the dialectical process of the unfolding of history.

Many of his ideas influenced the New Left in the U.S. and Europe, as we see in the adoption by the anti-nuclear and alterglobalization movements of concepts that he pioneered: the use of affinity groups, face to face democracy in general assemblies, the sensitivity to hierarchy and power dynamics in political organizations — in short, what we now call prefigurative politics: the idea that we have to begin to live the values that we want to embody in our future society.

My father believed that by engaging these concepts we could literally remake society from the inside out, transcending the crippling social relations that had, for so long dominated western political structures, robbing us of our humanity and reducing us to mere instruments in service of capital accumulation. But ultimately, his utopian vision wasn't destined to flower in the West — at least not in his lifetime.

Instead, almost half way around the world, in a vastly different landscape, with different social mores, political institutions and a different history from that of the U.S. where my father lived his entire life, his ideas have been rediscovered, absorbed and enhanced, and fought for under a different name — democratic confederalism — the philosophy that underlies political life in Rojava and Bakur. Abdullah Öcalan is the person who breathed new life into these ideas and made them a reality — guiding the Kurdish people to an understanding that political structures must be transformed from the ground up in order for people to achieve their potential as free citizens in an ecologically harmonious society.

Both Bookchin and Öcalan stress that the recovery of politics takes its point of departure from the empowered citizen in the community, in local assemblies where ordinary people gather together face-to-face and discuss, debate and decide on equal footing the issues facing their collective future.

This idea of direct democracy gives political expression to a philosophy that is grounded on a critique of hierarchy and domination. In *The Ecology of Freedom*, first published in English in 1982 and in Turkish in 1994, Bookchin traces the emergence of hierarchy from prehistoric times to the present. He examines the dialectic between the legacy of domination and the legacy of freedom, arguing against Marx that capitalism was not an inevitable

by-product of human development and that early societies manifested rich examples of egalitarianism such as the irreducible minimum, usufruct, and extensive kinship ties that fostered mutual aid.

These insights into the historical construction of hierarchy animate the core of an argument that he made half a century ago: that ecological devastation, which he warned would become the great crisis of our time, could not be solved without changing human relationships. Because human relationships based on domination and hierarchy inevitably give rise to the notion of the domination and instrumentalization of nature and an ever-greater degradation of the natural world.

Öcalan too has written extensively on hierarchy as destructive of the egalitarian bonds that preceded capitalist society. In many of his own books, he has traced the history of Kurdish tribal formations and the transition to capitalism. Celebrating the formation of early communities in Mesopotamia, Öcalan reminds us that the powerful kinship ties that remain a fixture of Kurdish family life, the folkways and traditional relationships of extended families, provide a foundation for a new ethical society that can meld the best aspects of Enlightenment values with the communal and ecological sensibilities we must recover to live in harmony with the natural world and with each other. And he too acknowledges the limitations of traditional Marxist analysis.

In his book *In Defence of the People*, Öcalan writes: “The development of authority and hierarchy even before the class society emerged is a significant turning point in history. No law of nature requires natural societies to develop into hierarchical state-based societies. At most we might say there might be a tendency. The Marxist belief that class society is an inevitability is a big mistake.”

Both Bookchin and Öcalan believe that we will only achieve freedom when we eliminate not only class distinctions but *all* forms of domination and hierarchy. Both thinkers assert, moreover, that we will never solve the ecological crisis, which has become so pronounced in the past few decades, until we solve the social crisis.

Öcalan illuminated this argument even further, explicitly theorizing its feminist implications by identifying human liberation so inextricably with women’s liberation. He observes that women — who for millennia have been at the receiving end of patriarchal systems of rule — are a uniquely exploited and abused class of people in society. A women’s revolution is

the fundamental core of the socialist project and determines the extent to which society as a whole can consider itself liberated.

It is impossible to overestimate how important this idea — this critique of hierarchy — has been in informing the shift of the Kurdish movement. Öcalan has articulated this shift by abandoning the demand for a separate Kurdish state in favor of Kurdish “autonomy” — an extraordinary development among a people that has been denied statehood and basic human rights for centuries. It represents a clean break with previous ideologies of self-determination based on establishment of a separate centralized state and its concomitant bureaucratic apparatus. It recognizes that just as capitalism is an outmoded economic system, the state is an outmoded social construct. And it demands a fundamental reimagining of what it means to be a political human being, indeed a human being *per se*.

Yet, there seems to be an international blind spot when it comes to this deeply democratic aspect of social relations in Rojava and Bakur. Few policy-makers and journalists, have been willing to articulate this project’s goals on its own terms, much less accept them as valid. Instead, a surprisingly large number of analysts, writers, and leftist activists, have found the remarkable success of democratic confederalism in Rojava to be problematic, even unsettling. They appear unable or unwilling to fully understand the concept, refusing to acknowledge the democratic principles it embodies. They maintain a vested interest in the status quo that leads them to distort and undermine this form of social organization regardless of the successes it has demonstrated in practice.

Instead of transparent and honest reporting, we are subjected to a formulaic narrative that casts the Kurdish movement as separatist at best, and terrorist at worst, and in any case violent — despite its repeated efforts to initiate peace negotiations and despite the fact that Turkey has been the aggressor in virtually every interaction with the Kurdish people during the last 18 months. As the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented, Turkey has engaged in massive human rights violations in Bakur in southeastern Turkey, displacing up to 500,000 people, razing entire neighborhoods and slaughtering hundreds of innocent civilians, many in their homes. Yet, little attention has been paid to this gross violation of human dignity. Indeed when it is discussed at all, it is presented in a context of ongoing “disputes” or “hostilities” between the Kurdish people and the Turkish state — rather than labeled

for what it is: a brutal and heinous war being waged by Turkey against its own Kurdish citizens.

The ruling Justice and Development Party [AKP] in Turkey has, in effect, successfully deployed PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party] history to degrade the entire Kurdish project. The U.S. and E.U. contribute to this false narrative by maintaining their designation of the PKK as a terrorist organization, effectively tarnishing legitimate Kurdish claims for autonomy with a label that delegitimizes *prima facie* not only the *demands* by the Kurdish freedom movement, but its very *existence*.

Thus the Kurdish movement is caught in what theorists Shannon Brincat and Damian Gerber have called a “crisis of labeling.”¹ Despite the PKK’s efforts to transition to a political organization in the form of the Union of Kurdistan Communities in 2005, with its explicit embrace of Democratic Confederalism, rejection of state-separation and violence against Turkey, the PKK and is dismissed *de facto* as an illegitimate negotiating partner. The Kurdish social and political model is either ignored, or delegitimized along with the organization that promotes it. The impact of the shift by Öcalan in favor of working within existing state borders has completely reoriented the Kurdish autonomy movement, and yet over and over in news reports we see references to the Kurdish “separatist” movement or Kurdish aspirations for a “state of their own.” In Western media especially, the Kurdish ideology of democratic confederalism is rarely distinguished from the consumer-capitalist, neo-liberal ideology of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.

This ideological mischaracterization — often perpetrated by members of the left who should know better — has obscured the authentic goals of democratic confederalism and made it difficult for the Kurdish autonomy movement to contest the longstanding tropes that enshroud it. As supporters of this movement and its goals, we must find a way to reclaim the narrative and explain this reorientation of the Kurdish movement away from direct confrontation with the state. We must emphasize over and over the theoretical shift that places democratic confederalism at the forefront of a new politics of social transformation — not only for the Kurdish

1 Shannon Brincat and Damian Gerber, (2016). “When Öcalan met Bookchin: Democratic Confederalism and the Kurds,” under R&R at *Geopolitics*, (forthcoming).

regions — but for all those who aspire to a better future that aims for an ecological, gender-equal, and democratic society.

One way to support Kurdish aspirations is to continue to press for the delisting of the PKK as a terrorist organization and of course, for the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan. But another way is to link Kurdish autonomy efforts with the same kind of political aspirations elsewhere in the world. This means that we continue to fight for and explain the democratic ideals of a communalist, municipalist politics everywhere it's expressed, whether in the villages of Chiapas, Mexico, or the streets of Barcelona or in the communities of Europe and North America where a municipalist politics is slowly growing in strength. Even if they don't know it, many of the activists in these cities and towns share the same fundamentally democratic ideals as the efforts long underway in the municipalities of Bakur and Rojava. Where the Barcelona en Comú platform is reinventing and reclaiming the idea of politics not as a detested thing done to us by professional politicians who operate in their own elite bubble of exclusivity and deal-making but as an expression of the power of people in their communities to preserve affordable housing, reclaim the electric power grid, and take other measures that enable them to chart a shared future that addresses human needs — there you find the spirit of Rojava and Bakur. Where the city council candidates of the Citizens Power movement in Burlington, Vermont demand that the so-called Progressive Party that currently runs the city in cooperation with the Democratic party stop rampant development of shopping malls, sky scrapers, and even F-35 fighter jet deployment in the nearby airport and runs candidates for office who are committed to functioning not as representatives but as delegates of the people, from neighborhood assemblies — there too you find the spirit of Rojava and Bakur. And where community activists across the United States, from the Portland Assembly in Oregon, to the Jackson Cooperation in Mississippi are working to educate and develop an active and empowered citizenry -- the spirit of Rojava and Bakur is alive and well. The fact that the Kurdish people are leading the way, is something that needs to be worked into every statement uttered by those of us who support local control and direct democracy. Whether we quote Öcalan, or Bookchin or neither of them — in favor of our own language of inclusivity and municipalist, democratic values — we must continue to link the freedom movement of the Kurdish people with similar demands for democracy in other parts of the world.

My father spent his entire life — 85 years — fighting for these ideas, but never lived to see them actualized. Öcalan and the Kurdish people have realized them under a different name. We must take inspiration from Öcalan's remarkable intellectual journey, but also from his stamina and commitment — and that of the Kurdish people — and increase our efforts to put these ideas into practice. There will be mistakes, failures, and the formidable weight of neoliberal ideology and institutions standing in opposition. But underlying it all is this simple fact: today, right now, Kurds are in the process of implementing the most democratic, egalitarian society on the planet — perhaps in all of human history. The so-called liberal West remains trapped in ideologies of the past. Rojava is the ideology of the future. And the ideas that inspire the Kurdish project are not just integral to realizing our freedom as human beings, they are intimately bound to the future inhabitability of the planet. The world must wake up and take notice. It's our job to make that happen.

Thank you.

Debbie Bookchin is an author, journalist and editor. She co-edited the recently released book "The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy" (Verso), essays by her father, Murray Bookchin.

2.1 Özlem Ekinbaş

Acknowledging the history of *now* and understanding it and building *tomorrow*

Call for Papers — Philosophy of History



Summary

As the Capitalist System is draining each of our and ultimately the society's vital veins from every angle, it is the responsibility of every individual to develop an alternative solution. Whether the systems are democratic or dictatorial, the source they feed on is human and therefore society. So, the solution of the problem is again human and society. The social sciences, nourished on Cartesian-Newtonian understanding, make a categorical distinction between mind and body. They see time as a divisible and measurable object and create binaries between culture and nature, giving rise to fragmented postures in the system of thought. From this point of view, historical writings have been presented to the society in many theoretical ways. However, according to the definitions developed by positivist understanding, the person who tried to understand their own history started to weave 'the way of knowing and understanding' in short, the way of truth with the wrong stones. As Abdullah Öcalan states, *'It was not even desirable to understand that the social now is largely social history.'* History is beyond what is known, but also exists in the 'moment'. To separate people, place and moment from history and explain it only with documents is incomplete and misleading; to evaluate history in a linear framework by reducing it to certain time periods and compressing it into a shallow form. Because 'yesterday' has developed various methods to carry itself to this day. The transition between historical processes is again the natural methodology of history. Every interpretation of history that has not been philosophical, that has been deprived of nature, time, place, human being, and society as

a whole is devoid of description with the principle of totality. Therefore, the methods of determining the date which fixes the cultural materials at a certain point in time should be revised, the relationship between time and space of cultural surpluses should be examined in depth, and the epistemology of knowledge created from a philosophical background for the historical society should be revealed. In this way, it is possible to overcome the problem of awakening historical cognition which is one of the indicators of free society.

I. An Overview of Philosophy of History in Theoretical Framework

'Philosophy of History as a concept must have gained a certain shape according to the two meanings of the word 'history'. History both refers to the lived past, that is, the community of social events, as well as the science that deals with the present experience, that is the science of history. Most of the philosophers used concept of *historia* (history) according to these two meanings. Therefore, two things can be understood from the Philosophy of History; Philosophy of History as the philosophy of the past and the Philosophy of the science of history. Philosophy of History as the philosophy of the lived past starts from questioning the meaning of the events of the past and all of humanity's past, which is seen as a philosophy of science that is directed to the history of the world. On the other hand, the philosophy of history science is a kind of criticism of historical knowledge that criticizes the principles and methods on which the science of history is based.¹

II. Some Key Settlements Before and After Official Civilization in Mesopotamia

The first people, before moving to settled life, were in a very difficult life struggle. In order to survive, they pursued prey and emigrated. They needed tools and weapons to hunt, fire to warm up and cook, and shelter for protection. They had used their intelligence for thousands of years to find out and invent new methods. Their intelligence and emotions developed with each new discovery. They began to watch their environment and question

1 Ozlem D. 'Tarih Felsefesi' 200, p19

the cycle of nature and the phenomenon of creation for their generation. The idea of death gave birth to burial rituals. As Braidwood reports, the burial awareness probably was first thought to have appeared 200,000 years ago by some anthropologists in the time of *Homo Neanderthal* and by other anthropologists in the time of *Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis*. It is accepted that Neanderthals bury some, if not all, of their dead, and that they support each other socially, such as the care of others who are incapacitated or disabled, and that they are cognitively different.² In this long cycle, the human of the past opened a door to his fellow citizens living in the temporal and spatial 'now' that could associate the past with the present at the level of imagination.

With the end of the last glacial age, climatic warming led to the proliferation of living plant and animal species, which has created the basis for 'civilization'. We can say that these great developments led to the transition of livelihoods from hunting and gathering to agriculture and animal husbandry. This change in the mode of subsistence brought about serious changes in the way of life, and human beings, conceptualized as the 'Neolithic Revolution' by Australian archaeologist Gordon Childe, experienced, in other words, the Agricultural Revolution process.

The evaluation of the Neolithic Revolution or the Agricultural Revolution in terms of time is considered a good example of the very rare fundamental changes that Wallerstein calls 'transformational time-space'. These times of change can be expressed as the moments of transition from one historical system to another or from one mode of social organization to another. There are too many places to focus on in this large photograph of prehistoric settlements. However, a number of settlements will be taken from this great photograph of Mesopotamia, an important geography where these developments are experienced in the historical process, and the discussion will be concentrated on this axis. In the second section, we will try to conduct a discussion on Göbekli Tepe, Nevalı Çori, Halaf Culture-Period and Hassek Höyük. While each prehistoric or protohistoric settlement is evaluated under a separate heading, why these settlements are preferred will be explained in the Evaluation and Conclusion section.

2 Braidwood 1995, 40-43; Esin 2004, 25.

II.1. Göbekli Tepe

Göbekli Tepe³, which is a cult center created by hunter gatherers dating back 12,000 years ago, is an archaeological site⁴ near the village of Örencik in Urfa. Geomagnetic and geo-radar surveys on Göbekli Tepe reveal a circular space with a diameter of 20 to 30 meters surrounded by 20 T-shaped obelisks, which were thought to be used for worship purposes.⁵ The twelve thousand year history of Göbekli Tepe, which is also stable with the results of many aqua-botanical specimens with radiocarbon dating⁶, has opened a new gate for human history. The ‘T’ shaped obelisks are decorated with various animal motifs, some of which are depicted as 51. According to archaeologist Klaus Schmidt; esoteric interpretations should be avoided, as more material, observation and interpretation are needed to develop our thoughts about the combined lives and souls of our ancestors from 10,000 BC based on archaeological findings. Öcalan expresses the following in this regard: “We see the first letters and pre-hieroglyphic writing examples on the obelisks at Göbekli Tepe. 12,000 years ago, chiseling those stones and transforming the hieroglyphic symbolic language into writing is a major stage in historical value.”⁷

II.2. Nevali Çori (8000 BC)

Nevali Çori reflects a period in which people began to live in settlements, engage in intense hunting as well as domestication of plants and animals.⁸ The temple, which was unearthed in Nevali Çori, was covered with a kind of terrazzo prepared with lime plaster and channels were opened into the floor.⁹ There were piers extending along the walls and 12 obelisks placed at regular intervals on these piers. Among the finds are a statue of a bird’s head with top ends and a human sculpture¹⁰ in actual dimensions with a relief of a snake over its head.

3 Klaus Schmidt Göbekli Tepe Excavation 2012 Report p. 328

4 Picture 1: Surroundings of Site: Göbekli Tepe Newsletter 2014

5 Picture 2: Circular Building

6 Schmidt K. 2007; Mysterious Sanctuary of Stone Age Hunters

7 Öcalan A. 2010 Kürdistan Devrim Manifestosu

8 Museum Rescue Excavations Seminar 1991 Ankara

9 Picture 5: Nevali Çori Temple

10 Picture 6: A statue of a human in actual dimensions with a relief of a snake over his head; Nevali Çori

II.3. Halaf Culture (6000–3000 BC)

The Halaf period reflects the earliest period of the pioneering city-civilizations of the Chalcolithic Age. In this pioneering urban civilization, society can be structurally called ‘Regular Social Society.’¹¹ Thanks to this social organization, Halaf culture spread to a wide area.¹² According to the relatively ordinary village system, there is an organizational understanding like the developed tribe which reinforces these conditions by an administrative administration.¹³ For this reason, the archaeologists who research on Halaf culture have considered “Advanced Agricultural Village Society”¹⁴, “Tribal Society”¹⁵ and “Chief Regular Society”¹⁶. We can say that Halaf period as a society is based on tribal system. Halaf community plays a key role in the structuring of Ubaid and Uruk societies in the development of urbanization and urban culture.¹⁷

II.4. Late Uruk Period Colony; Hassek Höyük

Before being flooded by Atatürk Dam Lake, Urfa was located in Siverek, south of the Euphrates.¹⁸ Now we are talking about the Extramural cemetery area,¹⁹ the inscription, the Uruk Period Colony, which is surrounded by walls²⁰ and has serious commercial ties with Southern Mesopotamia. I don’t know if my colleagues would agree with me, but maybe we could call it the core structure of imperialism.

11 Map 1 (Catherine Breniquet 1996 Paris; La Disparition De La Culture De Halaf)

12 Countryman, 2007, p. 57-58

13 Maisels 1987, p. 335

14 Redman, 1978, p202

15 Hijara, 1980a, p237-250

16 Ozan, 2009, p2

17 Stein, 1994, p. 40

18 Picture 7: Aerial photo of Hassek Höyük Excavation Area

19 Picture 8: Hassek Höyük Extramural Cemetery area

20 Picture 9: Hassek Höyük Reconstruction

III. The Error of Capitalist Perception in the Methodology of History and Suggestions to Approach Social History with the Spirit of the Democratic Nation

In the second part, we talked about Göbekli Tepe, Nevali Çori, Halaf Culture-Period and Hassek Höyük. While interpreting history, capitalist perception removes people, space and moment from history and explains it only with documents, reducing history to discreet time periods, compressing it into a shallow form, and evaluating in a linear frame. This solidifies the energy of people to make the philosophy of history and their analysis therefore cannot escape being incomplete and misleading. Thus, in the time-space of our mind's world, how to evaluate these settlements dated to before *now* and in the light of which indicators should *tomorrow* be organized. At this point, it is necessary to refer to the names who have a serious focus on this. Öcalan tries to understand history in a universal dimension and connects it to the view that local history cannot find meaning without universal history. Even the history of the weakest societies can be enlightened in the light of universal history. In addition, at the level of principle, Öcalan emphasizes that history is now. He continues by adding an important point and reiterates that he shares these two important principles of history: 'The local present state does not repeat history as a mere repetition, as a tradition. It surely plays an important role in historical accumulation by adding its own contribution, differences and originalities. So, history is not just a repetition; it repeats by accumulating the contribution of each space and time.'

When we look at the chronology of Göbekli Tepe, Nevali Çori, Halaf cultural settlements and Hassek Höyük in the same geography, we are talking about a journey of 9 thousand years 12 thousand years ago extending to 3000 BC. In this journey, variables such as geography, climate and culture emphasize originality. While Göbekli Tepe emits a masculine scent around it, Nevali Çori, which is one day walking distance, shows an ecological social feature. The colorful world of Halaf culture, which exhibits round, oval architectural features, has penetrated to the polychrome ceramics²¹ and the people living in the same geography 'now' are bound to the essence in this form of social organization. Due to the vitality of history, it is seen that the

21 Picture 10: Halaf Culture Polychrome Ceramic Samples

motifs on the Halafian ceramics have found a way of carrying itself to this day on the bodies of women and men of the region.²²

The nation-state mentality of capitalist modernity and its ideology — nationalism — has brought serious problems to the people in many dimensions. One of these dimensions is cultural problems. The relationship between culture, history, individual and society has demonstrated its social necessity from the past to the present. Therefore, it is a question of how to reveal the dimension of historical culture within the democratic nation model which is the soul of the alternative to capitalist modernity: democratic modernity. Öcalan stated that the model of a democratic nation is an analytic model that re-democratizes the social relations that were torn apart by state nationalism; it makes different identities conciliatory, peaceful and tolerant. Öcalan also states that there have always been democratic, libertarian and socialist experiences throughout the history against the centralized civilization system from which the capitalist hegemony originates, and that these experiences can differentiate and make alternative as democratic modernity in the current plan that real socialist experience reveals. When national and international institutions (and historiographies) are rebuilt according to the basic mentality and institutional structure of the democratic nation, it will be seen that the results of a new modernity, namely democratic modernity, are not only theoretical, but also practical in the sense of a Renaissance.

IV. Evaluation and Conclusion

The flourishing of craft and trade activities with the start of agriculture led to the creation of a crowded population with agricultural producers, clergymen, temple servants, craftsmen, traders and soldiers in the centers where social surplus was collected and distributed. Thus, rural settlements developed from village to town and from town to city in the plains irrigated by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers during 4,000 and 3,000 B.C. as their populations increased and their economic and social structures became more complex. The villages that turned into cities were probably places where conquering ruling class settled and soon enough village altars were turned into temples. Thus, Neolithic village units were replaced by city

22 Picture 11 a-b-c: Ethnoarchaeological Evaluation of Halaf Culture

states.²³ The expansion of the boundaries of political control along with the cities may have meant creating an integrating system between the various segments of society. In this sense, historical social movements may be involved.²⁴ About this context, Öcalan says that history is essentially the history of the struggle between the state civilization and the pre-state villages and agricultural communities. If history was written in the language of the oppressed and pillaged, we would no doubt encounter a very different past than the one presented to us today. It is perhaps not the history of these movements that has brought capitalism to crisis from the ground up today, but the creation of a hieroglyph or cuneiform can at least transfer 'now' to the next millennium, providing concrete nourishment for the future generations of today's resistance movements. Each interpretation of history without a philosophy is devoid of describing the nature, time, place, human being, society as a whole through the principle of totality. Therefore, the methods of determining dates which fix cultural materials at a certain point in time should be reviewed, experimental archaeology methods should be tried, and the ethnological context should be examined. The relationship between time and space of cultural surpluses should be examined in depth and the epistemology of the philosophical background of the information in terms of historical society should be revealed. In this way, it is possible to overcome the problem of awakening historical cognition which is one of the indicators of a free society.

Özlem Ekinbaş born in 1984 in Urfa, Sivere, she was imprisoned for two years at Urfa E-Type Prison for political reasons. Abdullah Öcalan's "Sociology of Freedom" led her to focus on archeology. Thus, she worked at Göbekli Tepe excavations for 3 seasons and at Harran excavations for 2 years. She worked in local governance on women's policies for 18 months. Having finished her degree in Archeology, she is doing her masters at the University of Kocaeli.

23 Şenel 1982, p. 220

24 Schema1: Development Scheme of Civilization

2.2 Haskar Kırmızıgül

The Geist of Democratic Civilization



This presentation is an important opportunity for the realization of intertwined concepts. Because this is what the system we call capitalist modernity achieves best; to provide continuity through mental blur created by concepts. Modernity is one of these concepts. Modernity is what Öcalan calls an ambiguous concept. According to Jurgen Habermas, concept of modernity (modernus in Latin) was first used as an expression of the transition from old to new in the 5th century to distinguish between the Pagan period and the Christian period. But is modernity a concept used only to reveal a temporal difference? Or does temporal difference entail superiority? In the contrast between the old and the new, can it be said that the positive meaning has always found itself in the new, or that the new has a more advanced or developed content in relation to the old, so that the new is superior to the old? The main problematic is that positive meanings, advanced, and developed based on the new or the current time frame. Therefore, not only it is not enough to conceptualize modernity within the time frame in which it is present, but also the scope. Indeed, there have been conceptualizations towards this. Marx explained the reason for the institutional change to modernity as capitalism, Émile Durkheim as industrialization, and Weber as technology and rationalization. But this conceptualization is not enough. In addition to its temporal aspect, it is more appropriate to make a definition of modernity by taking into account the cultural change it has caused, the reference points it provides to social life, and the characteristics of its social nature; that is, the totality of its measure. Weber was right when he described modernity as an 'iron cage' that abolished moral political society. Representatives of the Frankfurt School have also said that modernity's institutions and structures abolish human relations and communication. However, one of these determinations led us to despair, and the other

(Frankfurt School) failed to create an alternative to combat social destruction. Post-modernity, which considered itself outside modernity, to the contrary served capitalism. The struggle against capitalism with its ambiguity and skepticism, which it put forward as philosophical, could not provide the basis.

Öcalan criticized these analyses of modernity and their inadequate aspects. He developed the concept of democratic modernity by absorbing and synthesizing, in his own words, 'the intellectual twinkle and revolutions of civilization', that is the positive characteristics of the anti-modernist intellectual outlets. He said that it is not the system established by the powers, but it is the opposing groups' ideals, structures and their struggle and levels of success that will give the color of modernity. He also criticized the detractions of social science from time and history, saying that democratic modernity is a dilemma wherever and whenever an official civilization occurs.

These criticisms are spot on. Because the modernist social sciences did not include women in the definition of civilization or they distorted her existence. Economically, socially, politically, mentally and culturally, the first attack on sociality was directed towards women, and civilization. The modernist social sciences did not see that the river flow was bifurcating in this process. It could not see, in the most optimistic terms, that women were the dominant force of sociality and that the colonization of women was at the root of all slaves. In the most realistic sense, it has deliberately distorted this truth and made his way to the state, class civilization. However, all slavery started with the 'housewifization' of society and this process is aimed to be completed with capitalism. So power and sexist society are essential. In terms of developing the definition and alternative of modernity, it is important to determine where and when and which methodology the deviation starts. Jineology will do that. In fact, the definition of Jineology is in this context. It is a social science that investigates women, the culture they create, and the reflections of this culture on the historical society based on the identification of life-woman, nature-woman, social-nature-woman. It will redefine women and explore the causes, sources, and consequences of the transformation of all the institutions, structures and concepts that have formed around it. What does it want to reach with this? It wants to solve the most fundamental contradiction in history. Now it looks thin, but it wants to strengthen the river flow of history. Because throughout history, this flow is far superior to capitalism in terms of time (98% of human his-

tory) and scope (culturally, economically and socially). It has penetrated to the social fabric. So we are not condemned to capitalist modernity, which claims to be the product of a state, class, power-based history, or even the end of history. The value of democratic modernity are still alive, next to us.

Democratic Modernity is women's civilization

Women's nature, identity, resistance, and tradition of struggle have been very influential and decisive in this flow for thousands of years despite capitalist-hegemonic modernities. If the social life and identities established around women could not survive, there would be one modernity, and history would not flow in the form of two civilizations. The greatest proof of this is that capitalist modernity considers women as the primary and fundamental target and always directs multiple massacres against them. Because all alternative modernities, currents and civilizations are women-centered, women-spirited, and shaped around women from the moments it first emerged to the present; and it is the origin of the river flowing beside us.

So how do we turn this flow into a social system? The construction of democratic modernity is not a process of destruction and construction, but a process of return to essence. Revolutions are the work of cleansing society from excessive capital and power. This purification process will be most influenced by the nature of women, their social position, their connection with life, and the steps on the basis of women's liberation. The values of natural society which the state, class and power triad tried to eradicate have been carried to the present day thanks to the existence of women despite the attacks by all means (material and spiritual structures) of capitalist modernity. Thus, as long as the woman is 'xwebun' ('of herself' or autonomous) she will be able to realize the construction of democratic modernity. This will be possible as long as we can make women the subjects of politics, economic life, cultural movements, moral and political society, and the self-defense system.

For example, the Mala Jins (Women's Houses) include the moral dimension, hundreds of women's assemblies, communes, co-presidency in Bakur (North) and elsewhere are practicing the equal representation of women in democratic politics and the place of women in political life. There are sixteen in Rojava and ten in the liberated areas are in the process of being established. 80% of the social problems in Rojava are solved there. The

communal women's economy, alternative medical centers, and women's academics in dozens of different fields, the social contract of women written in the 2000s (which was the source material for the social contract in Rojava), and the training undertaken in 2002 in PJA within the scope of the 'transformation of man' project, and the preservation of women's aesthetics in the reality of war are just some of the dozens of examples we cannot enumerate all here.

We said that we didn't create something out of nothing. It is also important to make the forces of democratic modernity visible. When the resistance and revolutionary processes of the social, cultural, ecological and national movements that Öcalan defines as the forces of democratic modernity are examined, it is seen that mostly women have participated in the ideas of a free life and an alternative world. The forces of democratic modernity see the human as the real value and the more women are taken as a basic social focus, the more it has achieved the chance of success.

When Öcalan says that 'despite all efforts, the ideology of sexist society is not institutionalized', he means this. He points to the enormous potential of women in the construction of democratic modernity. Jineology is undertaking the work of uncovering this potential. By illuminating the fact that the most fabricated lies about the reality of women 'as a subject-object as the essence, not the residue of society'. Jineology can contribute to the construction of social sciences, ethics-aesthetics, politics, health, economics, ecology, health, demography and education. As a first step, it will bring out women's truth in these fields in a holistic way. For this purpose, it will examine mythology, religion and philosophy, which it considers as a structuring of knowledge and produces scientific data. It will deliver the unseen, usurped labor and creations of women in these areas to their real owner. It will form theories with the results of these investigations. Only in this way will we be able to achieve a transformation of mentality and institutionalization. So, we can say this; it is not necessary for us to achieve woman's knowledge simply as remembering a memory. We must institutionalize the dynamics, paths, methods and means of the aforementioned second women's revolution, thus making it permanent.

Then we can say that woman is the fundamental force and constructor of democratic modernity. Why do we call her a constructor? Because not only the liberation of women as a sex is targeted. A democracy, ecology, and

economy based on women's nature and ethics and aesthetics are necessary for all society. This means that the dimensions of democratic modernity, the moral and political society, the eco-industrial dimension and the confederal dimension are vitalized.

Democratic modernity is capable of transforming the fluidity of energy in women into the social system on the axis of being, consciousness and form, transforming the formal form of man into a fluid energy. Two thousand years of resistance to the power, class, and state trio, by goddesses, religions that make her look like a mute and healers who pursue knowledge even in the darkness of the Middle Ages. There has been a continuous war of existence by women's resistance from the Paris Commune and the revolutionary socialist movements, to the fight for abortion right in Poland in 2016, struggles against violence against women in Argentina, and developing actions against marry-the rapist law in Turkey. At the beginning of this year, there were actions against Trump by millions of women in 57 countries. The YPJ fighters resisting against ISIS and Kurdish women's movement militants are the leaders of the women's revolution. Every one of them is a drop in this river. It is the job of jineology to make these resistances and creations that has been covered up in history, become visible. Jineology exists to prove that the fragmented truth of woman is holistic. The revival of the goddess culture and these examples are not purely propaganda. It is actually the revival of history.

Another point that needs to be corrected is to consider jineology as an organization and an ideological outlet. As the Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement, we have different organizations spreading in the social sphere. There is the leading party PAJK and the confederal system of women — KJK. Again, there is the Ideology of Women's Liberation declared in 1998. So, there is no such need. The need arises from the grave consequences of power-based information structures. In the words of Öcalan, to save social science from the hands of the power, to break the patterns of 'being shaped in the same ideological workshop' as Wallerstein puts it. The aim is to present a new understanding of social science to the revolutionary and social movements that set out in the name of freedom instead of a science which is devoid of meaning and identified with power and not with society.

With his definition of the sociology of freedom, Öcalan intervened mainly in the modernist social sciences in terms of philosophy and methodology.

Relation between Sociology of Freedom and Jineology

Öcalan's finding that 'the distance between ideology and sociology has been shortened' along with Fernand Braudel's conclusion that 'history should be sociological and sociology should be historical' show us that by being devoid of meaning from science, sociology cannot be a solution to social problems. Jineological outlook on the long-term, structural, and positive sociology has revealed, does and will reveal this. The woman is the social subject in all these times. It's a density on the periphery, not the center. A flow of intellectual and operational energy that determines the future of the forces of democratic modernity. History is full of thousands of examples of this. Jineology will try to remove this veil from history. In this sense, we are uncovering the history of women's unwritten freedom not only by adding women to history, but by writing history from a female perspective we will strengthen the ground for democratic modernity. Living values of the culture of goddess in the context of long-term sociology, together with structural sociology will make the fate-determining role of women's thought, action, and resistance within the context of positive sociology more visible.

Öcalan's conceptualization of the sociology of freedom is a micro-time that is referred to as the 'shortest of short'. We can call it moments of creation. It reaches out to reveal potential tendencies of freedom in the time period called chaos interval (when the old has lost its function and the new has not yet formed). When we say what sociology of liberty means in terms of time, it is the moment in which sociality seen outside of history is subjectivized, most of all, women are considered to be outside of history. The sociology of freedom is the moment when the ties of women's freedom to society and the historical development of women's freedom and resistance are revealed and vitalized. There is a symbiotic relationship between jineology and sociology of freedom. In this sense, all kinds of sociality and relationship are the subject of the relationship of freedom.

The place where the sociology of freedom seeks the potential for freedom hidden in chaos and crisis is the female identity that capitalist modernity has broken down through various operations. As a result of these attacks, the female has been used as a house slave, as a free laborer, sex tool and fine commodity. Woman has been broken up into identities; the mother of all labor, the owner of unpaid labor, the lowest paid worker,

the most unemployed, the man's unlimited appetite and pressure source, the child-bearing machine of the system, breeding midwife, advertising tool, sex-porn vehicle, etc. The transformation of women into so many crisis-ridden identities proves that there is as much freedom. As a matter of fact, the number of fighters of YPJ, which reached twenty-five thousand, increased with the liberation of Manbij and Raqqa. If we add to this other self-defense organizations and social organizations, the scope of sociology of freedom is expanded. No comprehensive investigation has been done yet, which is what jineology should do. Such a comprehensive sociological analysis has not yet been made, but it is being implemented as a methodology in hundreds of academies within the PKK.

The thesis that 'history should be sociological and sociology should be historical' is applied in these academies. According to this during classes called analysis, persons evaluate themselves in detail, the social structure they come from, and its influence on their method and participation. This is in fact a sociological analysis and is applied in every field as a basic method in the education of the PKK. How a person represents himself in history and society.

Relations between men and women in the PKK is another area where freedom is strengthened and are worth examining in this context. This relationship established beyond sexuality has changed the definition of love. As Öcalan puts it, love is the passion for the liberation of the human, the respect for beauty, the integrity of behavior, and passion for the power of human beings. Zeryan Deniz Amed (Ayse Kacar), who was martyred during the self-governance resistance in Şırnax, wrote in her diary of his comrades who lost their lives as 'I am Adule, how many Dervishes have I lost in my arms?' I will tell the Derviş u Adule saga. She explained the connection of love to freedom.

The free co-partnership theory, which we discuss a lot nowadays, is based on this definition of love.

The obsession of the sociology of modernity is that it considers the economy and the state as the basic relationship. However, the relationship that develops through co-partnership can better explain the universality and all social ties. The hypocrisy of modernity limits this relationship to the private sphere, where sociological knowledge becomes worthless and useless. Free co-partnership is a very important theory to form the mindset of democratic modernity. In a sense, sociological knowledge becomes

functional. The jineology courses in Rojava are based on the extension of the philosophy of free co-partnership to society.

Free co-partnership is a philosophy of how the sexes can be linked beyond the property relations through unity of meaning and social construction. It is connected with science, ethics and aesthetics. It is important to dissolve an association based on property and extended beyond biological reproduction to the whole society. For this, it is necessary to overcome the deeply slave morality in women and men and the social relations that capitalism reduces to sexuality. Democratic modernity also speaks of alternative reproduction among women to maintain the free human lineage. Reproduction with women in the PKK is beyond biological reproduction. There is a sociality shaped around the question of how to live with woman.

The sociality created by the PKK extends beyond the power-based sexist relations. The hierarchy in the relationship between parents and children, men and women, of the same sexes have been broken down. Concepts such as respect, morality, honor have now changed according to the distance they achieve in securing a free life. It is not about the roles of masculinity and femininity that determine these measures but about emancipation. We also surpass the observed and the observer method of social science. Staying in a family every day, being involved in their lives becomes the basis for such a sociological analysis.

Our personalities are a reflection of society. I believe that we will multiply these moments of creation that appear in the moment and in the person.

Haskar Kırmızıgül was born in 1975 in Dersim. She completed her education at the Marmara University in the Department of History. For the past twenty years she has been an activist in the Kurdish freedom movement. She worked as a journalist at the Sorgul women's journal in Lebanon for two years and Roj TV for 4 years. She is now interested in Jineology and is doing research and activism in this area.

2.3 Reimar Heider

Democratic Nation: Defining “nation” beyond the borders of patriarchy



In Kurdistan, nationalism (in the form of the nationalism of the ruling nation) especially that of the Turkish, Persian and Arab nations, has always been connected with severe forms of oppression and the annihilation of different identities. In a sense, this is the starting point of the Kurds there. In turn, against this multifold oppression, which has taken a variety of forms — i. e., not just national oppression, but also the oppression of different religious groups or the patriarchal oppression of women — it was difficult to imagine a Kurdish nation or to claim the existence of a Kurdish nation, precisely because the historic experiences in those countries differed greatly, in addition to the massive class contradictions in Kurdistan. People did not all share the same interests. The population was religiously fragmented. Such differences were heavily exploited by the ruling powers. What I am trying to say is that it was difficult to even claim a uniform Kurdish nation. This is a starting point of the search for alternatives to the classical concept of nation.

On one hand, this concept of the nation-state enjoys popularity at the moment. On the other hand, Kurdistan faces challenges from different sides, including from reactionary concepts different from progressives ones. In the Islamic State, we can recognize a form of dissolution of the nation-state as it was imported to the Middle East. However, this is only in favor of an even more extremely uniform system that has much in common with fascism: everything that thinks, looks, or believes differently is to be annihilated. It is *one* way of overcoming the nation-state. Of course, the concept of the Kurdish movement is the complete opposite of this. At the same time, we see a strengthening of indigenous movements, such as

in Latin America, some of which have been mentioned at this or previous conferences. Bolivia is an example of a state that by now defines itself not only in terms of two or multiple ethnicities, but straightforwardly as “plurinational”, as many nations. This somewhat resembles the direction of the discussions in Kurdistan. Öcalan deconstructs this classical concept of nation, which was also propagated and defended by the PKK for quite some time, into multiple different directions. One of these for instance is to define women as a nation, as mentioned earlier by Haskar as well. It is of course totally contrary to the classical notion of the nation to claim that the women are a nation. The definition of nation or the origin of the nation, also previously mentioned here, is sought deep inside history, namely within the religious imaginaries with which the rulers tried to legitimize their rule firstly when building hierarchical statist societies. A connection is being made between the idols that were created around 5,000 years ago and the importance of these idols in order to maintain order, that is, what we have as a state, how it was created then, and how much of it still exists today in current, present states. This is all part of this analysis of the state. Fabian Scheidler also mentioned this when speaking about proevolution. If I understood him correctly, he said that capitalism in its current form became possible only through the modern territorial state and later the nation-state. Öcalan formulated this relatively similarly. He understands the nation-state as the form into which power had to be poured, in order for capitalism to even be possible as a system.

If we are to take this thesis seriously, then we cannot begin conceptualizing or thinking about overcoming capitalism without simultaneously overcoming nation-statist thinking as well. That is why Öcalan searched for an alternative proposal, which led him to the notion of the democratic nation. This is, as I noted with the example of women, subversive on one hand, as it works in a way that undermines the common notion of the nation. On the other hand, it is also constructive, because it offers an opportunity: the democratic nation as a way to organize different groups in a society, to think of society as consisting of groups, rather than primarily as individuals; instead of considering many individuals as constituting a society, the idea is that different individuals are part of different groups, which have specific identities, which should all find expression through organization. The individual with the different identities and the different identities as groups make up a nation, can build a nation consisting of dif-

ferent ethnicities, different religious beliefs, different societal groups, for example professional groups, different genders, different age groups, and youth as a separately-organized group. This plurality, this diversity as a counterpole to what I described in relation to the Islamic State or fascism, a counterpole, another extreme from a transition, that there are transitions from very different nations and that the democratic nation model presents the one extreme, and that is extremely democratic.

As I mentioned earlier, this requires two conditions: One is organization, as one cannot simply lean back and leave everything to the bureaucrats or to professional political administrations and think of this as constituting a democracy. It does not work like that. Society must be organized and be able to take care of its own affairs. Of course, this is easier in places that are undergoing crisis or that need to overcome their difficulties very acutely or immediately. That is why such revolutionary situations constitute good nourishing ground to build new structures. At the same time, a measure of tolerance must be created for the different groups. One group cannot just come up and say: “There are rights for you, minorities, but we are the genuine component of this nation or the real owners of this land, or the only ones to have a say on the experiences with the nation-state in the Middle East”.

And now, I want to engage with the following question: Why did the Kurdish movement arrive at this concept? Why did Öcalan get there? I think the PKK has a tradition of very clearly analyzing the societal conditions of one’s own society, in this case, Kurdish society, and the societies that surrounds it. If we consult the first publications of the PKK from the mid-1970s, we will find nuanced analysis in this regard as early as then. Instead of generalizing statements that paint the Kurds with a broad brush, the PKK offered a very nuanced analysis of different societal groups and the existing class interests. I would say that it is in good materialist, Marxist tradition to analyze things in such a manner. That way, if viewed retrospectively, it becomes obvious that the PKK was able to organize millions of people from completely different backgrounds, such as sections of society that, 40 years ago, usually would not have gotten along due to their hostilities, Sunnis and Ezidis being one concrete example. Both groups the PKK managed to organize and understand the reasons for the state’s construction, support, and exploitation of contradictions, which is counterproductive for a common struggle for democracy. Thus, it was possible to get to know first

within Kurdish society all the many differences inside society. Although surely weaker in some regions than in others, the PKK is everywhere, and thus knows all regions of Kurdistan from its own viewpoint and experience of visiting the villages. In other words, the movement continued to get to know the concrete conditions in all of the regions and tried to involve all these diversities.

To mention the second condition before I conclude, the movement managed over and over again to propose political projects to very different people and to encourage these people to struggle and fight for these political projects. I enjoy citing a generally unlikeable person, a well-known Turkish general, who, in an interview, asked the interviewer about what he thinks the PKK succeeds in. He then went on to tell the befuddled interviewer: "Arithmetically, we have killed the entire membership of the PKK multiple times over, and yet they continue to exist." This means that the PKK over and over again managed and continues to manage to motivate people to join the political struggle. I believe that this is the decisive point. The democratic nation project proposed by the PKK is appropriate to take one step further to the outside, to once again widen the sphere of the political struggle. We see this quite concretely in Rojava. I hope that we will have more chance to speak about this, since there are speakers from Rojava present here. Rojava consisted of three cantons, whose populations were made up mostly of Kurds, but recently, Manbij, a clearly majority-Arab area, was declared as a fourth canton. This shows that it is indeed possible to include different groups, to excite them about this system and these political projects. I think this is the main thing that we can learn from the movement in Rojava and elsewhere in Kurdistan, from attempts to encourage people to think, participate, ask questions and join discussions, just like we try to do here on a small scale at the conference. I also think that this is something that we can learn from and that many leftists in Europe fail to achieve. Perhaps they don't even confront such questions at all, namely, how can we be hope for others, how can we excite other people? How can we organize people and arouse enthusiasm for political projects among people, who are very different from us, and not only those that resemble us, i.e. those in our age group, socio-cultural background, etc.? When it comes to Rojava, I don't think that anyone should travel there to learn how to handle a weapon. Weapons are merely a necessary means of self-defence. We can learn completely different things over there. Weapons, I think, don't have

splendor. Splendor is in the smiles of the people, such as the comrade we have just seen via skype, who learn about their own strength and the power of solidarity through the struggle. And that is at the core of the democratic nation project.

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2.4 Xanim Engizek

Self-Defense: Deconstructing How Society is Left Defenseless



I would like to thank all the friends who made this conference possible for all of us to meet here, also to meet Zeynep Cudi on behalf of YJS. In the meantime, I would also like to thank all the friends who made translations. Before I start with my presentation, I would like to very briefly express my situation. As you know the prisons in Turkey and Kurdistan have a large number of political prisoners in indefinite and irreversible hunger strike. Especially, 10 political prisoners in Sakran Prison have been on hunger strike for the last 59 days are in critical condition. This hunger strike is especially against all tendencies developed by the AKP fascism and again this is an indefinite and irreversible hunger strike especially to emphasize the conditions of Mr. Öcalan, who has been held in isolation for the past 17 years in the İmralı island Prison, and whose views and thoughts will be discussed in the conference. In order to support this hunger strike and raise awareness about their agenda, especially with the Council of Europe and its institutions so that they can carry out their duties, as well as to create an agenda and to create pressure, a group of 33 people began a hunger strike indefinitely in Europe as of yesterday. I am one of them. In fact, as a rule I should not leave the place of action, but with the approval of my friends, I came because I wanted to be here with you. I wanted to be here to convey the resistance of our friends to you here, and to give them strength. On behalf of all my friends, I greet you with respect.

Self-defense: The structural analysis of how the society is left defenseless — Mind and body

What is self-defense in general?

The model of a democratic society is an alternative to the uniformized model of society which the nation state mentality advocates and creates. It is the principle of self-defense that a democratic society must have against all ideological attacks by capitalist modernity.

There is a defense mechanism in the world of all beings. Biologically, self-defense is carried out by innate defense motives in every living being. Because of their self-defense system, existence becomes possible and life continues. This is a fact that lives from single-celled organisms to advanced living things. The rose's thorn, the bad smell that the skunk emits in the immediate vicinity of danger, the hedgehog's arrows are the truth itself. Şilan, a type flower that grows in Kurdistan, can also be given as an example.

In order to continue with their lives, human beings with a high level of intelligence and flexibility also need a self-defense system. Since the first day of their life, the need to protect themselves both against nature and from their own kind, they feel the need for a versatile and powerful defense. In the clan-tribal organization phase, which was the first social organization of humanity, communal societies faced the deadly dangers of nature as well as the contradictions they experienced among themselves and considered self-defense as the primary duty in every moment and every place of life.

The defenses that exist in humans are social as well as biological.

Sociality is in essence the power of meaning that one has created within. The power of meaning as self-consciousness requires self-awareness. This is the metaphysical world that develops in humans. Self-consciousness does not develop outside of collective life, production and existence of sociality. It also requires the accumulation of historical memory and its transference, all of which are the self-defense truth of the individual and the community. The main function of the community, defense, is the guarantee of survival and has a direct effect on the population of the community and the way it is organized, since it is carried out jointly by the members of the community.

Self-defense as the power of sociality is a life that is labored, meaningful and identified. In essence it brings socialization, behavior, thought, language and emotion. In this sense, the individual's participation in the

society and to accumulate the society's accumulation in itself, to be able to express this and become its dynamic means the individual's self-defense. There is no dominance and colonization. Ecological harmony continues in the relationship between society and nature.

Development of the concept of self-defense for lower and upper society

The accumulation of surplus product has gradually increased and the development of hunting has made man's power to fight more distinct. Obtaining the surplus product also played a major role in transforming the ability for self-defense into a means of sovereignty and exploitation. The offensive and defensive tools and tactics that started to develop with the hunter cunning male replaced the common defense in which the society participated as a whole with the private military organizations that broke away from the society and under the pressure of this power, the sociality was put in the process of disintegration.

In this process, society was divided into lower and upper society. Slavery is first built in ideology. The ziggurat center where knowledge was produced and the city-centered state of the upper society destroyed all the values of natural society and gave rise to class divisions, exploitation, attacks, sexism and inequality. History is also the history of how woman lost and how she disappeared. This is the history in which the male-dominated personality is reinforced by the gods and rules, the rulers and subjects and the economy, science and art. It is the beginning of women's loss of social self-defense. Apart from the mythological narratives that women are making their own self-defense in this struggle, we have no data. It is not difficult to estimate that the loss was not that easy if we consider the examples of the presence of mass graves in archaeological excavations in this period of history and the presence of large numbers of women in the graves of the kings and top executives. It is the truth that society loses when women lose. Women and society are being left defenseless both physically and culturally.

Struggle of the two self-defense concepts

The history of the centralized dominant civilization, in essence, has reached us today as a history of power-centered mentalities and their practices, where a state is destroyed and it is replaced by a new state. Within this period, during the times of classed civilizations, democratic societies and its free individuals faced great problems in defending themselves. Through-

out this history, forces and institutions have been created for the defense of societies and societies have been pushed to the position of waiting for others to defend them.

In this course of historical development, two different concepts of security and self-defense have emerged. The first is the defense, or the war concept developed by the dominant central mentality, which the upper society expresses as a security concept. Throughout the history of central civilization, chaos, which constantly serves to protect the interests of the rulers, creates the perception that war and offensives are imperative by creating crisis and deepening the opposition to society. Society is constantly being stimulated against them.

Secondly, the concept of self-defense, which belongs to societies, protects the social values against exploitation and develops their institutionalization to advance them. It is based on the communal living to be experienced more strongly and developed on the principles of life that rests on plurality and unity.

The need for the self-defense of the society and the concept of security that belongs to the state system has always been a matter of contradiction and conflict that is present to this day. In the geographies dominated by slave-owning states or centralized empires known for the bloody wars of history, the oppressed throughout history have developed their own self-defense in great resistance with their social values.

Within the self-defense system, where differences expressed themselves freely, the struggles developed by the forces of democratic society throughout history have also influenced the laws of the statist society.

As a new state model emerged with the French Revolution, centralism was imposed even more against societies and all focal points of resistance. The culmination of nation-state organization and its ideology — nationalism — has been fascism. The scope of the security concept of ‘one nation’, ‘one homeland’, ‘one state’ mentality, can be understood by the level of genocide that emerged as a result of the two great world wars. Resistance and revolutions emerged from the fronts of democratic societies as a result of the development of reactions to fascism which developed as a movement for genocide. The rights and freedoms of individuals, economic, cultural and social rights and solidarity rights have been redefined under the notion of “Three generations Theory of Human Rights” due to great developments and resistance which advocated democratic society values on the basis of

class and nation. As a result, the national and social structures that have diversity within them are protected in terms of constitutional rights, their struggles for their natural rights have been legitimized and at the same time the monist structure of the nation state had started to take a blow.

The genocide caused by the nation-state structure on society has shown us that no force based on the state can realize the self-defense of society. The state cannot be considered as a defense and security mechanism for the society in any way and it is not correct to consider the self-defense developed by the societies as only the armed forces opposing the state forces. This perception and the perception of "terror" and "terrorism" can be made justification of the attacks on the society by the states.

Points to consider for the self-defense organization of a society

Self-defense for a society is the volition, the will and to this end the struggle of the society to organize itself against all kinds of cultural and physical genocide by colonialism. To create their own organizations such as assemblies, communes, cooperatives, education and health organizations and economic enterprises in all vital areas is to struggle against the political genocidal policies that capitalist modernity carries out against societies and to guarantee the security of the society.

Self-defense is not only developed against open physical attacks developed by colonialism. The society whose self-defense is prevented is open to all kinds of abuse, slavery and alienation to itself. Throughout history, circles of power have developed the ideologies of sexism, nationalism and religionism to expand their area of control and have by putting the societies through the assimilation process aimed at leaving societies defenseless. Societies without self-defense are societies that have surrendered themselves to the circles of capital and power. Society will either dissolve or resist. To survive and to live freely is to insist on being morally and politically oneself and to have the power to make decisions concerning their own destiny by preserving their own existence with the possibility of self-defense and the creation of their own institutions. On the other hand, societies that become conscious by developing the meaning of sociality within themselves, by becoming organized and by developing their level of activity based on their own strength and will power, succeed to survive.

The basic social organizations such as assemblies, councils and congresses that the society will establish in order to practice politics which is

its main business are the centers of self-defense. For a democratic society, the meaning of self-defense can only be possible if politics is taken out of the hands of power and interest groups. It is the field in which democratic politics and philosophy will be put into practice. In addition, all the organizations developed such as political parties, non-governmental organizations, or referendum boycotts and civil disobedience actions are also within the framework of self-defense.

Legitimate defense in self-defense

When all kinds of attacks of the capitalist modernity world on societies are taken into consideration including their military organizations and technique and wars, it is not possible to ensure the security of society only through civilian organizations. It is also a legitimate right to organize militarily when for the self-defense of the society. In this case, military organization cannot be considered as a purely military organization since it serves the protection and reorganization of social life. The function of the military forces in the service of society plays a role in the acceleration and protection of the struggle for democratic society as basic self-defense forces. Societies that have managed to come up with defense forces based on self-governance have had the opportunity to experience freedom. This is a society's self-realization and attainment of its self-identity. Therefore, the security units that have to be organized have to be under the control of the social sphere, and not independent. There are examples of this in history. In the Middle East, the pre-state tribal and *aşiret* structures formed confederal organizations and in the military and legal arrangements in the 17th, 18th and 19th century communes and confederal organizations, it is the communes and city councils that are fully authorized. In antiquity Athenian democracy, which is the center of Western civilization, the army and commanders pass parliamentary approval. Although the Athenians did not have a regular army, they were able to demonstrate the power to protect their democracies against regular armies. The essence of democracy is to move away from the state and to base itself on the social sphere.

Today, the experiences of Rojava and Shengal, which emerged in terms of democratic society struggles, are examples of hope and resistance and self-defense to all societies around the world. It is a self-defense struggle, which is literally a right for societies such as Kurdish society facing economic, political, cultural, physical and social genocide, to head towards organizations that will protect themselves against these genocides.

Democratic society's areas of self-defense

The only way to prevent genocide, which is a crime against humanity, and all kinds of attacks against the society, is to create a self-defense organization that will make the society self-sufficient. They also have the opportunity to improve the level they have attained by means of continuous improvement through the institutions they have. In terms of this institutionalization, academies aiming at raising awareness of the society come first.

Languages and cultures: A society can be physically destroyed, subjected to genocide, but the destruction of the cultural existence can only be achieved through an exploitation that is spread over time. In today's world, it is possible to see that results have been attained through these policies spread over time. There are now languages and cultures that have become extinct. According to research, half of the 6700 existing languages are in danger of extinction before the completion of this century. It is estimated that once a week, a language is destroyed. All forms of struggle against cultural genocide, organized by all diversities with their uniqueness, and all forms of struggle against genocidal dominant culture, fall within the scope of self-defense.

The principle of democracy within the scope of self-defense in society: Participation and formation do not take place in a community that cannot structure itself politically and morally. Participation is democracy. The individual's participation in social life with all their intellectual, emotional and physical power is democracy, which requires a large capacity for internalization and a basis for freedom. The sum of all fields of expression, forms and mechanisms for internalization and freedom are the subjects of social self-defense. To develop all kinds of solidarity, cooperation and organization and the power to have a will and to organize with this object and gain consciousness will be one of the most valuable forms of self-defense against genocidal policies aiming to corrupt the society.

Economics: Nutrition, housing and protection problems are at the highest level in today's societies. The economic structure of capitalist modernity, which is based on theft, extortion, and plunder, leaves societies defenseless. Unemployment problems, hunger and poverty levels are quite high. Given this situation, self-defense needs to be developed in the economic field and thus is vitally important. Organizing the understanding of communal economy and developing cooperatives aiming at the development of collective-solidarity life in society means the attainment of an important self-defense

mechanism. Collective-labor based production-consumption organizations developed against economic genocide are actions of a democratic character and express the economic dimension of self-defense.

There should be special areas developed for women in response to the attacks of the male-dominated system and its representative the men. In the person of women, the society is the most oppressed and suppressed, so the need for self-defense of women shows the level of the danger of the society's future and its existence. Women whose rights are seized under the patriarchal system can only overcome the policies of humiliation, harassment, rape and crime that they are subjected to by creating their own self-defense mechanisms. Today, they should be organized like YJA-Star, the unique military organization of Kurdistan women, YPJ in Rojava and YJS in Shengal, creating unique women's military forces, if necessary, to create their own organizations and institutions, regardless of geography, to make room for themselves in all areas of life. The examples developed in India against domestic violence and all attacks against women are striking. There are public courts and self-defense units among the self-defense mechanisms developed against harassment and rape or all kinds of domestic problems.

The struggle and victory against the ISIS gangs that have afflicted humanity in the Middle East are successful examples of the self-defense system of the Kurdish people and the peoples of the Middle East, consisting of all segments of society with different beliefs and cultures. The resistance and leadership displayed by women in this struggle are epic. Rojava, the democratic structuring of Syria, and Shengal, especially Kobani are examples that have shown that democratic society can be realized with the principle of self-defense on the basis of democratic civilization that Abdullah Öcalan developed in a special type of prison on İmralı island where he has been incarcerated for 17 years. Before I finish my speech, I commemorate all the resistance fighters who lost their lives in the struggle for self-defense and resisted heroically.

Xanim Engizek is a Kurdish human rights and women's activist. She was imprisoned for many years in Turkey because of her political thoughts. She took part in women's media and worked with Kurdish women in Europe to raise awareness and strengthen their organization. She continues to work with Kurdish women in Europe and is a member of the Kurdish women's freedom movement in Europe.

Session III —
Ways of Building and
Defending the New

3.0 Simon Dubbins

Introduction



My name is Simon Dubbins, I work for Unite the Union, which is the largest trade union in the UK with 1.4 million members, and I look after our international department and our international work. I just want to start by, as many others have said, expressing my thanks to Reimar and to Havin and everybody else who has organized such a great event. It's great to be here, and it's an honor and privilege to share the platform with the quality of speakers that are going to be making their interventions.

My union has got a long history of solidarity work internationally. We are unashamedly a very left and progressive trade union; we have stood in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and sent many delegations over the years. We've also done a great deal of work with Cuba, in defense of the Cuban revolution. And more recently supporting, since a number of years, our comrades in their struggle in Colombia, and adding and supporting their efforts in the peace process that has taken place there, particularly with support of our members and officials from the Irish region, where they've had experience of that type of thing.

Last year, in 2016, I took part in a delegation to Diyarbakir, in the middle of what was happening in the Sur district. I can honestly say, having been to Palestine, Colombia, and many other areas, I have never first-hand seen the level of violence dished out by the state in the way in which it was being done in Sur district, Cizre, and many of the other Kurdish cities in southeast Turkey. On the back of that, we galvanized some of our support, and we launched in the UK a Freedom for *Öcalan* campaign in April last year, and we already have a number of major unions signed up, and the indication is the second-largest union is on the verge of also supporting the campaign now.

We had the first fringe meeting at our conference. It was a packed-out fringe with a couple of hundred people, and comrades from the region coming to address it. We passed our first motion calling for solidarity with Kurdish people, and indeed all progressive forces in Turkey. We called for the release of all political prisoners, and Abdullah *Öcalan* as well. At the Labor party conference last year, we also organized the first ever fringe meeting, which was very well attended, with over 200 people being present, and Feleknaş Uca from Diyarbakir came and addressed the meeting. I'm really pleased to say that the TUC, the union confederation in the UK, which is not really known for its revolutionary politics, last year also passed an emergency motion in solidarity with all progressive forces in Turkey and the Kurdish people, but most importantly, expressly calling for the release of Abdullah *Öcalan* as well.

We also went to witness the trial last year of Kamuran *Yüksek*, the leader of the DBP, who was arrested after helping us launch the Freedom for *Öcalan* Campaign. He was released, and only two weeks ago, in his absence, he has now been sentenced to 28 years in prison on trumped up charges. So we're well aware. The message I want to get to you is the UK trade union movement, the issue of Turkey, and the Kurds, and the struggle for freedom, is going up and up the agenda; it's becoming more important, and we are using every link that we have to build solidarity with sister trade unions in Europe in an attempt to help this become very much a grass-roots campaign that spans the whole of this continent, and further afield.

So I'm really pleased to be moderating the session that's coming. I think the issue of ways of building and defending the new is absolutely relevant. We heard it in the intervention on the video this morning. I'm always stunned at the level of ideology and the level of debate and understanding at these meetings. Having read a number of the books of *Öcalan*, I think his intellect is absolutely remarkable, and what he has managed to analyze, write, and put forward as new ideas and new ways of taking our struggle forward in this difficult time are stunning, when one considers the conditions under which he is trying to write and develop the ideas that we are here discussing today.

I'll close on this particular note, and then go into the panel. Yesterday, coming from the country that has just gone through the trauma of Brexit, and unashamedly having campaigned to remain, despite all the problems of the EU. We understood very clearly what this means, and there is an upsurge

of nationalism in the UK of the likes I've never seen. We see it in France at the moment, we see it in the Netherlands, and we see it everywhere else. I think if one thing is absolutely clear from the discussions yesterday, it's the limitations of nation and state as a way in which to try and take things forward. And if there is one thing that we have got, and is constantly echoed here, it's that we don't have borders. We need to develop our international solidarity to become more effective, and fight the menace that devastated this continent in the last 100 years, twice in the massive conflicts that it created, and that leads to so much oppression in the region and the issues that we're talking about today.

So without further ado, we'll go into the panel.

Simon Dubbins is Director of International for UNITE the Union, the largest UK union with 1.4 million members. Simon began working with the Graphical Paper and Media Union in 1997 and then became head of International for AMICUS in 2004. He was then appointed Director of International for UNITE in 2007. He now coordinates the European and international work of UNITE across all its sectors, and also directs the unions extensive solidarity work in relation to Colombia, Palestine, Kurdistan, and other areas.

3.1 Zilan Yagmur

Resist, Revolt and Build the New



To begin with, I want to salute all the revolutionary youth that heroically resist against the existing system as well as all those who have not lost their youthful spirit and thus continue to sustain their hope. Likewise, I want to commemorate all the fallen comrades internationally, as well as our fallen friends, who have lost their lives last year in Sur, Cizir, Nisebin, and Rojava in the struggle for a better world. I also want to greet all participants of this conference once again on behalf of the YXK and JXK.

The title of this year's conference is "resistance, rebellion and building the new", which is also the topic of my speech today. At this point, I want to join others in stressing the importance of this conference and draw attention to all that we have already reached with this third conference. Today, not only people from Europe, but from around the world have gathered here. This is how we show rebellion, resistance, the building of the new, by leading a struggle in common. Hundreds of Kurdish families open their doors over this weekend, symbolizing that we lead this struggle together. Kurdish society has understood very clearly that if we want to win against the existing system, we must fight together. The enemy is the same one after all.

Every year, the capitalist system approaches the peak of its existential crisis. The end of this crisis will decide once again whether the existing system will renew itself or whether the democratic-socialist values will manage to finally turn this system into a thing of the past. This year, and with this conference, we will collectively write yet another chapter in our book of democratic civilization.

Berxwedan jîyan e — these words, meaning "resistance is life", have been uttered by the Kurdish people for decades now. These couple of words encompass a history that could fill hundreds of books. It holds an expressive

power that lends wings to all of us, all the time. From the prison resistance in Amed in 1982 up until the urban warfare in Cizir, this movement has been resisting for 34 years. This resistance culture carries the spirit of the fallen friends, and that is why I also want to appeal to emotions at this conference here. Too often, we lose sight of things, when focusing on scientific analyses and theories. That way, we often lose the feelings that otherwise carry such high importance for revolution. What we lack is the ability to conceive human feelings. The human is an incredible being, having taken its existence to a new dimension, one in which it wants to control the entire world around it by declaring the people and nature as objects, while nominating itself as subject. But is mere existence the same as life/living? In this sense, I want to take up a philosophical question in my speech, one that many of us will be familiar with, namely the question of the meaning of life.

Surely every person has, at least once in their life, but probably more frequently, thought about the following question: What is the meaning of my life? A much more important philosophical question has historically been less considered however, namely: "Do we live, when do we live or how do we live?" Lenin wanted to explore this question and thus wrote detailed analyses on political practice. Rêber Apo refined and simplified the question to "How to live, what to do, where to start?" In capitalist modernity, we see how unbearable life has become to us today. Only the struggle against the existing, predominant system allows us to stay alive, as it shows us on a daily basis that a better world is possible. Only resistance against all bonds of the system enables us to even remember that we are alive. Already a hundred years ago, Rosa Luxemburg tried to tell us this. We can also shorten comrade Rosa's words to the words: Berxwedan jîyan e. These words that have obtained much attention due to the Kurdish movement host the entire history of resistance within them. That is why we don't see ourselves as separate from other struggles or revolutionary processes but are conscious of the fact that we are a continuation of all these struggles, which are connected to each other. Because the enemy has many new faces, no longer classifying humans alone, but is poisoning every inhabited cell of this earth.

The contradictions between labor and capital, in other words between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, dominated the confrontation of the 19th century. These contradictions became generalized in the second half of the 20th century, taking on new forms. They became more comprehensive. The nature of exploitation and domination is incredibly refined and perfected.

Today, one percent of the world population owns more than 99% of all wealth. Here in Germany, every fifth person faces poverty. Environmental destruction, climate change and population growth lead to a collapse of the eco-system. The chaos interval of capitalist modernity is coming to a head with every passing day, destroying humans, nature, and society. Capitalist modernity has divided society into individuals and thus extinguished the power source of its life. It tied all individuals to itself and created a homogenized society, which can no longer defend itself. Society was robbed off its self-defense in a way. The consequences of capitalism are omnipresent. We can see them everywhere, when walking down the street or in the empty looks in people's eyes. If we see the people, fleeing from war in their countries, who no longer have shelter and are therefore forced to sleep in front of train stations in Europe, then this is yet another direct reference to the system and capitalist modernity. It goes to show just how deeply entrenched the system is, if we no longer even care about the fact that people are forced to live in such conditions.

In this sense, we have no other choice than to resist, rebel, and build the new. However, all of this requires a consciousness, because only if consciousness is at hand, resistance can follow. The one who is conscious of evil, but does not act, is guilty, guilty in the face of the history of humanity, guilty in the face of started revolutionary processes. In this sense, resistance and rebellion are inseparably intertwined. We can imagine them in the form of two interlocking twigs. A plant, which really is a revolutionary plant, but requires a soil that is nourishing, in order to express its quality. This nourishing soil on which the plant can grow is the building of the new. Because building is at the same time the mental revolution inside society, as overcoming the system is not merely a structural issue, but rather a question of mentality. We can only successfully fight and overcome capitalism by rebelling on all levels, by organizing ourselves, and by living and offering an alternative. Therefore, there must be alternatives to all existing institutions of the state. Everywhere, it must be possible to bring democratic modernity to life and to let it live. If we assume that democracy is essentially a non-statist, communal life form opposed to statization, then we must demand a democracy that gets established through society. We therefore need a societal system that recognizes all identities, acknowledges diversity, and can defend and protect it. All people's dependency on the state and predominant system must be broken and reduced. They must be able to decide over their

own spheres of life. They must become a power of creation and solution at the same time, the subject of the revolution. Only then the determining strength and demanding character of the state can really be suffocated. The state pulls and bonds everything within its borders to itself. There have been many protests, fights, and resistance struggles, but they have all been absorbed by capitalism and patriarchy. This happened precisely because the new was not built; people did not succeed in establishing a societal system that also lends itself to a mentality revolution.

Only if we succeed in also creating structures that embody democratic values, parallel to the system and statist structures, we can poke holes into the existing system. If we have the strength to do so, these holes can extend and thus weaken the capitalist structure, while strengthening our system. We can see these victories in Rojava and Bakur today as well. With great resistance and determined belief, a revolution, a transformation is possible. But we must also accept that without our own transformation, without the transformation of each individual, no revolution is possible. We need to start with ourselves and ask: "To what extent am I genuinely fighting against the system within myself?"

In this sense, I want to refer to the person, who displays this transformation and lives this paradigm most powerfully, a person that millions of people are connected to and whose work is read by thousands of people today. A person, who, for the freedom of humanity, turned from individual into a collective spirit. A person, who enables the alternative in Rojava. This person is Abdullah Öcalan, who has been imprisoned on Imrali Prison Island since 1999. When we think of this revolution, these ideas, of utopia, it is evident that our first revolutionary duty is to demand his freedom. They can ban his photos, they can ban slogans, but they will never be able to forbid these ideas. Because ideas continue to live, and they are in this room today. We may have a poster of Rêber Apo here today, but his ideas are very much alive here today. They cannot ban these ideas. They cannot ban this revolutionary process. The Kurdish movement is a universal movement, which again and again extends itself through new perspectives and discussions, implementing things in practice. This is also the reason why the Kurdish movement does not fall into dogmatism, but rather stays alive. It is also the reason why the movement viewed it as necessary to question the old paradigm and to seek and discuss new perspectives. Because our understanding of life and society is neither rigid, nor homogeneous.

Just as spring drives away the cold after winter and makes the world flourish in its colors, society, too, requires a driving force that constantly drives away backward mentalities and behaviors from society. This force is the youth. The state targets youth the most, because it knows that youth is dynamic and open to change, a driving force, the motor of revolutions. The youth has always managed to drive revolutionary processes forward. Youth has always questioned everything, criticized the existing and searched for new life forms. That is why youth is an attribute that we can describe as democratic by nature. There are many examples of this. For instance, at a young age, youths try to question the existing system through the creation of cliques and gangs. They search for a collective attribute, for collective values and norms. They in fact realize that this is the phase in which people realize that it is crucial to question the existing, because they cannot live individually otherwise. That is the age in which the system manages to push these cliques, these gangs to wrong directions. But what the capitalist system can't forget is that the human being is a social being, always in the quest for truth and freedom. One can show wrong images of the truth to these people, plant wrong truths in their minds, but one can never deceive *hakikat*, a word that we can define as freedom and truth. Because truth will always surface at some point. The human being will never be able to truly forget its desire for a collective life. Its entire strength is the society with its values and norms.

To answer the question on the meaning of life: The meaning of our lives is perfection through realization. This realization is the pursuit of freedom and truth, which revolutionizes and betters society with the aim of contributing to its development. This pursuit is a never-ending struggle to enable paths towards freedom and truth. That is why the Kurdish movement is also a youth movement. It is not only a youth movement, but also a movement of women. Woman, too, is an identity under attack for 5,000 years, and human history reveals the ways in which capitalism is accounted for by patriarchy. Woman, too, holds societal, democratic values, ecological values that she continues to carry within herself since natural society. That is a threat to this system. Until this day, it continues to be the antidote to patriarchy and capitalism. After all, capitalism and patriarchy are two tightly intertwined twigs that always act in unison. That is why women and youth are attacked the most. Latent ideas of freedom are imposed on both identities with the aim to distort their truth. We are robbed off our societal

power through immense individualization. We are robbed off our history, and simultaneously we lose our faith and conviction. Truth and freedom are replaced by statist definitions. The new truth is the history of capitalist modernity, which only tells the history of the winners and men. The new freedom is the lonely human, who cannot trust anyone but the state. And this state takes legitimization away from people to lead self-determined lives, appropriating their will power entirely. The youth feels this wrongly-staged life most profoundly and tries to break out of its prison.

Statist thinking has broken people's self-confidence. They can no longer be courageous. They can no longer believe in utopias. They can no longer create themselves. They can no longer fight. This wrong unfolding of personality can suppress the human pursuit of freedom and happiness for a while, but it can never completely remove or replace it. Because "*hakikat*", which we can translate as "truth", is a glowing love that turns into burning fire with every flame of resistance. This fire of resistance is a culture of uprisings. We must therefore ignite the passionate love that we carry in our hearts and pursue our revolutionary duties. We need to reject the existing, reject it completely, and start a life separated from the system — we need to live and let live the alternative that we always speak about. And that is precisely where we start. Youth and women therefore have a great revolutionary duty. So, let us start talking about how we live, what we do and where we start.

Lastly, I want to salute the resistance of our comrades in prison, who have started a hunger strike on February 15th.

Berxwedan jiyan e.

Bijî berxwedana zindanan.

Bijî PKK. Bijî PKK. Bijî Serok Apo.

Zilan Yagmur studied political science at Marburg University. At the university and in life she is focusing on the importance of women's freedom and youth's struggle. For the past three years she has been active in YXX and JXX.

3.2 David Graeber

Re-Thinking Resistance: Smashing Bureaucracies and Classes



I will be talking about bureaucracy and class, and dangers threatening the revolution in Rojava. I think this is very, very important, because if we're talking about beacons of historical hope, the revolution in Rojava is probably the most important thing that's happened on this planet since Spain in the 1930's. This is a magnificent opportunity, and in fact the revolution in Rojava has now lasted

longer than the Spanish revolution; it's managed to maintain itself. I think that as the embargo is lifted, certain problems are going to occur that have to be dealt with, and I think people are thinking about this, but I think it's really important for us to understand exactly what the danger that we're facing is, or its most insidious forms.

My own experience with the Global Justice Movement and then Occupy Wall Street was marked by a gradual realization that both of these things were movements against bureaucracy; that capitalism itself has increasingly taken on more and more bureaucratic forms. We first began to realize this with the protests against what was then called "globalization." The so-called "anti-globalization movement" was, of course, not an anti-globalization movement; we called ourselves the "globalization movement." We saw ourselves as calling for a real effacement of borders, and human solidarity against a system which masked itself as globalization, but was actually creating stronger and stronger borders against the movement of people and ideas, so as to allow capital to flow freely and exploit those borders.

Over time we realized that, in fact, what we were really dealing with was the first global administrative bureaucracy. That is to say, there are all these institutions that most people, in America at least, don't even know actually exist, things like the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank, and furthermore, that there is a sort of seamless web between them; transnational corpora-

tions, international finance, including NGOs. Essentially, for the first time in human history, there was a planetary administrative bureaucracy, which was completely lacking in democratic accountability. What we were trying to do was expose the workings of that system. That's why we had those giant festivals against capitalism every time the IMF met, or the World Bank met; it was partly just to point to the existence of the people who were really administering the world. And we tried to fight that by creating our own model of what genuine bottom-up democracy could be like.

When we fast-forward 10 years to Occupy Wall Street, in fact in a way it was kind of the same thing. And once again we didn't really think of it that way when we first began the movement, but over time it became increasingly clear that we were fighting something very, very similar; the idea of the 1%. Basically, the 1% were both that group of people who had reaped all of the profits from economic growth; it all went to 1% of the population. But they were also the people who made all of the political contributions; something like 99% of the political contributions came from 1% of the population. Essentially these people had bought the political system. The American political system in particular is just a system of institutionalized bribery. These people had managed to turn their wealth into power, and their power back into wealth. They were continually creating situations where they could use the government as an apparatus to extract wealth, so that capitalism itself was operating differently. The profits from the major Wall Street corporations were less and less derived from commerce, let alone production, and more and more simply from finance, but what 'finance' means is other people's debts. And debts had to be created through policy, very intentional policies; so essentially bureaucracy was being used as the mode for extracting capitalist surplus. So you have this global system which creates and maintains debt, and other means of extracting resources, and it's completely outside any kind of democratic accountability.

It struck me that this is all very important when I visited Rojava 2 years ago, because there are similar bureaucracies there working. Essentially, it rapidly became clear to me that there's a kind of a game that one plays in this region, and this game is mediated by corporate bureaucracies; it's mediated by military bureaucracies, and it's also mediated by humanitarian bureaucracies, which are part of that same web. Essentially the game is that you create images of both terror and human suffering, so there's this sort of marketing of images, scary images and heart-breaking images, that are then

circulated. And you exploit them to essentially get weapons, patronage, money, and control resources, mainly oil. So the entire thing was a series of top-down redistributive hierarchies. The entire game is very, very clear if you go to Başûr in Iraq — Daesh was playing it, the various governments were playing it in different ways — they're all playing to the media. It's very clear for example that people in Daesh have seen a lot of Hollywood movies; they were going off and trying to create the image that westerners have in their mind of what the most evil people possible look like. But it was all part of a game of manipulation of images, and what really struck me when I talked to people in the Kurdish freedom movement was that their basic question was “how do we create a different game? How do we break out of these constraints?”

I remember a conversation with *Nilüfer Koç* of the KNK, and she was talking about oil. There's a lot of oil in Rojava, and at the moment they can't export it because there's an embargo. Ms. *Koç* was saying “well, we could sell the oil, we could get into the networks that everyone else is practicing, but maybe there's some way to do something else with oil; could we just give it as a gift?” And that kind of creativity that's trying to break out of the terms of the game is essentially what the revolution is all about. It allowed me to see what was happening in Rojava in a different way, because oddly enough, there are a lot of people there who felt that in a way the blockade, while it's terrible in terms of humanitarian effects, is also in certain ways an advantage.

So in thinking about this, I realized that in a way this is one of the greatest problems that revolutionary movements face, and it allowed me to rethink my own experience, and re-evaluate it in this light. Essentially, how to integrate with these larger bureaucratic institutions, which are based on course of force, and are essentially the life-blood or very fabric of capitalism at this point. You have to integrate with them to get resources, but at the same time you have to create structures which ensure that their logic doesn't capture you and take you over. I realized that that's exactly what they were trying to do.

In Rojava, you had essentially two structures of power: you had the self-administration, which looks just like a government; it's got a parliament, it's got ministers, it's sort of all the formal apparatus of government, and then you have the bottom-up structures; the various structures of democratic confederalism, with 3 different layers of delegation, from lower-level

councils to higher. At first a lot of us, when we looked at the constitution, we did not think it looked particularly anti-state; it looks just like a state, and a lot of people were very critical of it. But when you got there, you realize there's two structures, and that top structure is essentially necessary to deal with outsiders. At the same time, people would insist this is not a state project, and the reason why it was not a state project is because anybody with a gun, anybody who's actually got course of force, is answerable to the bottom-up structures and not to the top-down ones.

I think this is the key to the Rojava Revolution, and this might be unique in history; it's essentially a dual-power situation, where the same people have set up both parts. It came home to me most of all when I was in Qamişlo, because in Qamişlo one part is still controlled by the government, and there's a street with a post office, which I think was their centre, but principally they controlled the airstrip. I wondered about this for a while, and I realized "that makes perfect sense," because what are you going to do with an airport if you've only got one? If there's two airports, you can fly back and forth between them, but if you've only got one airport, you can't fly anywhere, because if you want to fly some place, you have to sign on to all these international agreements; you have to have security agreements, you have to have safety agreements, you have commercial agreements of various kinds, but you can't actually do that unless you're a state. So it shows how these sort of bureaucratic mechanisms, which on surface are very benevolent and necessary — for instance, you don't want your airplane to crash, and people in Rojava have definite security concerns; if they were flying planes people would try to blow them up — but nonetheless, all those international agreements assume a certain form, they assume that you're a state, and they won't deal with you unless you do actually assume that form.

So basically you have to create a membrane, some sort of structure between all the organizational forms that can integrate with international institutions, which will impose a state form on you, and the bottom-up directly-democratic experiment, which is the very life-blood of what makes Rojava so brilliant and historically hopeful. Most of the quarrels that I saw, when I looked for points of tension, or what were people arguing about, always had to do with that. I'll just mention two that very much struck me at the time. One was when we went to talk to the economic minister, or the people who were coordinating economic affairs, and they were talking about the terrible effects of the embargo; the need to get access to technol-

ogy, the desire to create various relationships internationally, and so on. They all made perfect sense, saying, “We’re in a very desperate economic situation.” But afterwards, Nazan, a member of our delegation who had been there a year earlier and talked to similar people, said “wow, that’s a completely different line than what we heard last time, because last time we were here, people were saying ‘in a way, the embargo is a blessing in disguise, because it allows us to create autonomous institutions who become self-sufficient.’” And realize that this is a point of tension; there are people, very well-educated, sophisticated people that had been around the world, who saw Rojava as sort of inside a network of social relations of different types of economic, political and social relations with the outside world. They made a case that there’s things that were desperately needed, for instance the infrastructure was going to fall apart unless they got replacement parts for certain things. At the same time, however, there were other groups who were saying, “That’s a reasonable price to pay for having the freedom to create an autonomous experiment.”

The second point where I saw people really arguing about something was during one of the assemblies we went to. And you could tell these assemblies were the real thing, and not staged democracy, because often people got very angry and started shouting at each other. The thing which people got most excited about was about the *Asayiş*, the roughly-translated “police,” or the internal security of Rojava. There was one case where they had to call them in — I can’t remember what the problem was, I think it was somebody who was thought to be hoarding sugar — and they wanted to bring some people to look in someone’s house. According to the local security committee of the local directly-democratic assembly, when the member of the *Asayiş* showed up, the first thing he said was, “Okay, I can’t do that unless I check with my commanding officer for authorization,” and they became very upset; they said, “What? No! What are you talking about? That’s top-down hierarchy. You’re answerable to us, we’re the local group.” And they were debating “what do we do?” Maybe we should make up a hat, or a badge or something; maybe that will impress them, to remind them that we’re actually the actual authority they’re supposed to be answering to.

So there’s already a deep awareness of the danger of the sort of top-down logic, and something like the state would happen unless you’re constantly vigilant about making sure that doesn’t occur. I thought that was extremely important, because it shows what’s really at stake here. There is intense

pressure from above to integrate into larger systems; you have to have international relations, but at the same time they're going to constantly encourage a sort of logic, which is going to assume that things go top-down rather than bottom-up.

Another thing. When I left, I was looking over human rights reports in Rojava, and I noticed that Human Rights Watch wrote a fairly critical report, but one of the things they complained about was that, "The system in Rojava doesn't meet the world standards of trials." And I thought that was very telling, because in fact they are trying to create a radically different, bottom-up type of justice system, which is based on consensus principles, restorative justice, and eliminating the notion of revenge and retribution. This is all very beautiful and it's an incredibly important historical experiment, but again, from world standards, that's a human rights abuse, because what human rights organizations are doing is trying to create safe-guards against state power, but those safe-guards against state power assume the existence of state power. So not having state power at all, from their point of view, is just as much a human rights abuse as untrammelled direct state power.

So I think it shows, as in the case of the economic ministers, that extremely well-meaning people can be complicit in allowing a state-logic to re-enter and endanger the entire project. So at the end of the delegation, after we had been there for only 10 days, they said to us "Offer us some criticisms; what can we do better, what should we watch out for?" We conferred on this and we came up with a list. First, the danger of the emergence of politicians; when you have a system of delegates, it's very time-consuming, and not everyone can do it, so how do you guarantee that certain people don't become basically political specialists and emerge as a political class? That was one question.

Another one was what I discussed above; how do you create a membrane between the bottom-up structures and the top-down structures to ensure that this kind of very well-meaning but very dangerous creeping bureaucratization doesn't enter in? And finally, the question of social class. Now, with the people we talked to in Rojava, when you mention class, a lot of the reaction was like, "Oh no, not that again. I don't really want to have another argument about whether peasants are actually proletarians," or, essentially that these old Marxist debates are very tired and irrelevant, and I agree on that. But, if you drop the question of social class entirely,

I think that's equally dangerous, because if you take, for instance, the approach of someone like Pierre Bourdieu, there's different forms of capital; there's economic capital, which you can very much monitor. But there's also social and cultural capital; there are certain people who have international connections and also know how to deal with certain types of situations and people, who will, for the best of reasons, end up re-creating hierarchies through their relations with the outside world. I think that one of the most important things is to figure out how to prevent that from happening.

We had exactly the same problem in both the movements I was talking about, in the Global Justice Movement and in Occupy Wall Street. There was a tendency for internal bureaucratization; people started treating processes and principles as if they were rules and you had to go by the rule-book. And the more that happened, we noticed, the more people of relatively upper-middle class professional backgrounds started feeling much more comfortable, and people of less elite backgrounds much more uncomfortable and ultimately leaving the meetings. This is a constant danger in any social movement unless you're very deeply self-conscious about it. Paradoxically, I think in Rojava the embargo has allowed a new type of society to emerge, but the real challenges, I think, are going to be faced as things open up, and they have to figure out a way to maintain the beautiful bottom-up energy without creeping bureaucracy taking over. So I just wanted to throw that out as a problem that I think is very important to think about.

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3.3 Raúl Zibechi

Dispersing Power: How to Prevent the Monopolization of Power



If we are here today, it is because the Kurdish struggle, their resistance and their creation of something new is a light that shines today all over the world, and, where I live, in Latin America, the social movements have heard about this struggle, they know about it, it has been incorporated into a common sense that marks points of reference around the world.

I met Havin in Chiapas, Mexico, which means we are weaving bridges, building something that goes beyond solidarity: brotherhood, sisterhood, we're becoming brothers and sisters who fight against capitalism and who feel the need in our hearts to build something new. And that is what brings us here; that is what fills us with hope that this conference will be a step in that direction. So, thank you very much.

I'm going to try to combine in these few minutes, three different perspectives. First, I'm going to apply a micro perspective; then, a more general glance, that is: from the microscope to the telescope, very quickly; and then I am going to try to combine both perspectives.

And at the starting point is this idea of "*dispersing power*", which is a widespread, common, usual practice, born in the Aymara and Quechua communities of the Andes, in what today is Peru, Bolivia and other countries, from Ecuador to Argentina and Chile. These are communities that live on 1,000-1,500 and 3,000-3,500 meters high mountains. And where life conditions are therefore very hard. Survival is very hard. The only way to survive is collectively, and one of the central issues is the use of water. How to make sure that water reaches all communities and that no conflict or war develops over the appropriation of it.

The central theme is what we call here *usos y costumbres*, or “common law”, which is the rotation of the use of water. So, on the first days of the month, for example, the water can be used by certain communities. The following week or days there is a rotation and it is other communities’ turn to use the water. And so on, until it is the turn again of the first communities. In other words, the key element is rotation, taking turns, in the use of water. This is important, because rotation has been assumed as common sense, not only for the use of water, but also in politics. In other words, the community establishes the rotation of its authorities to ensure that the whole community, that is, all the families –because the community, as you know, is based on families, and not on individuals– will take their turn, so that the whole community exercises authority and, in that way, there is no separate power from the community. Every year the authorities are elected, thus, the family that will represent the community. The man represents the community outside, dealing with the relations with other communities and such, and the woman assumes the rituals and the internal issues of the community. And there are also other types of authorities, who are responsible for crops, education, religion, etc.

Every year they rotate. And the person elected is not the one who speaks best or the most capable one. You are elected simply because it is your turn, because you have not yet occupied a position of authority. So, over the course of a lifetime, virtually every family in the community has had to exercise authority over something.

And the question is: what if the person who is chosen is not capable enough? Then the community will give him/her support. And if the person who is chosen becomes corrupt, the community controls him/her, and can even kick her/him out of the community.

Sometimes, the family that has accumulated more money in recent years is chosen, because the family representing the community has to pay the festivities and other community expenses themselves. And holding office is a way of redistributing wealth, which has been unevenly accumulated. And it is important to consider that, in the indigenous communities throughout Latin America, I’d say, the position, or what *we* would call “to have power”, is considered a service. A service to the community. Something you do out of obligation, that is: you are elected and thus obliged to exercise that office, because the concept is “service”.

This is something similar to what an anthropologist, who doesn't matter much now, called Pierre Clastres, said. He lived for a year in nomadic communities in Paraguay (Guayaqui, Guarani) and wrote "all the energy of the community is dedicated to having bosses without power". Powerless bosses. And some of us think this is some kind of social machine. The idea of "machinery" is very capitalist, but it can be useful. A social machine that prevents the formation of bureaucracies.

If the state is (following Weber) a permanent, non-eligible, non-revocable, civil and military bureaucracy that reproduces itself, well, here in the community we don't find a divided body. The division of labour is one of the key elements. Sexual division and the division of labor are key elements in the emergence of the state. But here we find a way of doing things, an oral, unwritten *common law*, transmitted through oral tradition, by which the community prevents the emergence of a separate body from within.

Even when the community goes to war, when it is militarized -because sometimes there is war and the warrior is usually male, traditionally- the warrior has no power in the community. Power is granted. You have seen that there are communities that grant the baton of command, in the case of the Zapatists, for example, to Marcos or recently Galeano, and then take it back when the time of conflict is over. The power he is granted with is conditioned to the defense of the community, it is not something permanent. The great virtue of the Zapatistas, in my opinion, is that they have taken this logic of rotation, which, I insist, is the way communities are organized in general (though, of course there are communities that aren't) and elevated it from the community to the municipality, (which includes dozens or hundreds of communities) and from the municipality to the region.

So, they have 200,000, 300,000 people in five regions functioning in those 3 levels of autonomy based on rotation. And this, in my view, is one of the best examples of how rotation can work, not only at the grassroot level of the community, but at higher levels, to avoid the formation of bureaucracies. And, for the last twenty years, the Zapatist communities are organised through the Good Government Councils, which are organs of power -power exists- but organs of power that have not generated a bureaucracy. These rotative councils change their government team completely over the course of a week or 10 days, and another government team comes in, half made up of women, and half made up of men. Of course, this does not work perfectly, it has to bear with many problems, sometimes there are

not enough women, other times there are not enough people that want to assume these positions, this responsibility, service, and that is a fundamental part of the struggle.

It is also used for one of the main forms of fighting, especially among the Aymara and Quechua people, which is the cutting off, blocking a route. Here, rotation takes place both between the different communities that support the action and within each community itself. As they are communities living in mountain regions, there is a top and a bottom part, and they take turns to go to the blockade. And within the family, there's also rotation. In the first shift, the father goes with two sons or two daughters; and in the next one, it is the the mother's turn with the other sons or daughters. This is to illustrate how rotation is integrated as a form, as common sense -which seems to me the best definition- that defines the way of using, rotating, in the use of water, in the forms of struggle, in the way of choosing and sustaining power. This way we don't generate the bureaucracy that is so common among us.

Here comes the second perspective, the more general one. Many of us believe that we are living a crisis of civilization, of Western capitalist civilization. This goes beyond talking about an economic crisis, an environmental one, or a health crisis. You know that the World Health Organization has defined that antibiotics are close to no longer being effective? That would create tremendous health chaos, etc.

Even the idea of a civilization crisis is a bit inappropriate, because the idea of crisis almost always alludes to economy and, moreover, to something transitory, doesn't it? My health falls into crisis, I recover and carry on, as a person. Or in economy, the crises Marx described of overproduction. I think it's more appropriate to talk about a civilizational collapse. Civilization is collapsing. Our civilization. And it is necessary to build a non-capitalist civilization. And this crisis of civilization, this collapse of civilization, what the Zapatists call 'the storm', includes all the crises I have mentioned: economic, environmental, etc. But it's something much more comprehensive. And it means, deep down, that humanity, that modern capitalist Western civilization has generated a series of problems that make it impossible to continue to exist as such, and, furthermore, it no longer has the resources as a civilization to resolve it. That's why Öcalan talks about cancer and such. So, in order to rebuild ourselves as a civilization, we need, not only the resources we already have, but other knowledge,

other resources. And these are necessarily not the ones capitalism has bequeathed to us.

I would say that, if someone were to think about building the new world, let's call it socialism, the democratic society, or the "other world" which the Zapatists talk about -the name is not the most important thing, there are various ones-, if I were to think about building the new world on the basis of patriarchy, they'd say I'm crazy, however, it seems common sense for many militants that the state can be used to build the new world. And the state, the nation state, is a creation of capitalism, and the new world cannot be built with those tools bequeathed by capitalism.

So, we need new resources. And here is where the third part comes up, in which I try to put into dialogue the micro sphere with the macro one. To build a civilization, a new world, socialism, requires different knowledge and practices to those we already have. And this is where the idea of rotation and *dispersing power*, in my opinion, can be, not a single, but an important contribution.

We in Latin America, just as you in the Middle East and Kurdistan, have a long, very rich history, and have the enormous fortune of having two civilizations coexisting for five centuries. Of course, one on top of the other, but the Eastern civilization, what an Egyptian called... well, it doesn't matter, we don't want to fill this with names. The Eastern civilization, the civilization of Asian origin, which is embodied today by the originary peoples, gives us the possibility to have among us practices, philosophies, ways of seeing the world, different from the legacies of Western capitalist modernity. This thing I mentioned is one of them. The circular concept of time is another. A philosophy based, not on the struggle between opposites, which basically implies the elimination of one of the opposites, the triumph of one over the other, but on the contrary, the idea of complementarity between the opposites. In my opinion, they are fundamental contributions from the original cultures of Latin America. That are alive, that exist, and that are at the base of some of the constructions, like those of the Zapatists.

To conclude, I would like to say that (this is very complex and critical, well, not critical, but destabilizing perhaps), that one of the problems, one of the legacies of Western capitalist modernity in crisis is critical thinking. I was trained in critical thinking, in Marxism, and today we need to review all that. Through which light? Through these practices that have been

brought to us by the originary peoples and that today are collected by many movements in Latin America.

The idea of rotation is practiced not only by indigenous peoples, or by movements with indigenous roots. It is practiced by peasant movements, urban movements, and it is slowly becoming or has become already, common sense, like other practices linked to popular education, to liberation theology, in our movements in Latin America.

I think it is through these new knowledge that we are practicing and learning, that we can establish a dialogue from Latin America with you. Not through the old critical thinking, but from the new practices where women and young people play a fundamental role. And it is through that dialogue, and because of it, that we are meeting and becoming brothers and sisters. And to unite as peoples and as fighters for a new world is perhaps one of the most wonderful and beautiful things we can have in our lives as human beings.

Thank you very much.

Raul Zibechi is a journalist and researcher in social movements, and a militant in Uruguay. He supports and works with movements in several Latin American countries. He publishes in the newspapers *La Jornada* (Mexico), *Gara* (Euskadi) and *Brecha* (Uruguay). His latest books are *Decolonizing Critical Thinking and Rebelliousness* and *The Other World in Motion*.

3.4 Fuat Kav

How to Move Ahead: Extraordinary State Violence and Terror While Making Revolution



Before starting my speech I salute you with respect and with the consciousness that there is a possible world without state and exploitation, where a right kind of life can be lived, which we could call a golden age.

Since its emergence of five thousand years ago, the state structure has been a topic of debate. Whether the state is social or dictatorial, class- or people-based, cruel or performs the function of mediation among different interests has been an issue of reflection. However, at the current conjuncture the form, which we call the state, revealed itself in all its dimensions:

One of the leading figures that would be taken as reference in this conference will be Abdullah Öcalan. This will also be the case for me. Naturally, it would be right for me to also start my discussion on the definition of the state and the possibility to overcome it with his words. Abdullah Öcalan describes the state as follows:

„...the state has always tried to prove its existence with a theological and godlike mask. By combining the power of money and the divine, it declared itself to be an unapproachable, indestructible and unbeatable force..“

This statement by Abdullah Öcalan also shows that the state is the representative of God on earth. According to him the state is God's earthly form:

He says that „to the extent that God is rendered strong, owner of all that is positive, inaccessible and incomprehensible, you will make the mask of civilization behind which the state hides equally strong, fearsome, incomprehensible and inaccessible,“ and adds: „the state is a tumor formed in the labyrinths of Sumerian temples and eventually placed in social memory. Concomitantly, it is and absolutely theological, spiritual empire of fear produced by politics of war, violence and repression.

Based on these assertions, the following can be stated:

It is a fact that the state, which was formed during humanity's evolution and against the essence of humans, is an apparatus whose constitutive features are force and violence. Although legitimizing itself with a discourse of security and well-being, the point has come where it reveals itself as an apparatus of murder that kills life and truth. Almost all wars are caused by the state. Moreover, in all evil in the world we see its naked face. There is no single world war or so-called global war that does not have the signature of this apparatus. This apparatus is also the reason for the current third world unfolding in the Middle East.

According to Öcalan, all forms of the state are the same. Irrespective of their different names they are essentially the same phenomena. It doesn't matter whether they are called fascist, oligarchic, republic or democratic, the result is the same. We know very well that they are structured by the same rationale even when they are presented with different names depending on their social, political and historical contexts and conditions. This apparatus, which legitimizes repression and violence, operates in the framework of a constitution that reflects the spirit of the given system and sustains its life indefinitely with the force of law, military and police, is at the same time the hitting power of a handful of sovereigns who performs the main exploitation in society.

With laws composed of countless clauses, if they don't work then with emergency rule, if they also don't work then with fascist or military coups, this handful of sovereigns manage to act as they wish.

This is how the society with the state, which some have called "civilization" has been operating for five thousand years. The owners of this system might be Christian in some places, Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist in others. But the real religion and belief of states is money and there is nothing they would not do for money. They are so much without principle that they will dress themselves in any garment, defend any belief or religion, and refer to any ideology. According to Öcalan the state applies violence to all but a handful of monopolies.

The state is not an apparatus that secures the oppression one class by another. This apparatus of violence which organizes itself to the smallest cells of society, does not only repress a class, it represses every one, all sections of society, all beliefs and communities, children, youth, men and women, in short all society except a handful of monopolizing sovereigns.

According to the state there is no good society, human being or regime that develops without state's making and initiative. On the other hand,

the state preaches that it doesn't want to harm anyone, provides rights and justice to everyone and performs the godly role of arbitration. Just like God who takes no sides and represents justice, the state claims to be the God on earth taking no sides and representing justice.

For Öcalan the alternative to state-society systems is democratic confederalism.

Abdullah Öcalan has formulated a new paradigm and a new society based on the meanings he attributes to the state and his general ideas. The formulation is as follows: "A moral and political society but a society without state, bureaucracy, army and police..."

He calls this society "democratic confederalism as the social form of democratic civilization."

Democratic confederalism is a democratic form of governance that consists of the unity of the separation of forces which should be built on the refusal of the nation-state, which provides no other chance than an anti-democratic denial that leads to looking at society in terms of black and white.

According to Öcalan overcoming the state can be accomplished by taking the following steps;

1. Overcoming the state necessitates the achievement of a theoretical and ideological clarity and power

- Without any doubt of the main ways to overcome capitalist modernity where society becomes state and state is internalized as the soul and life of society, is to achieve the power to theoretically and ideologically analyze the state form.

First, one needs to separate the society from the state at the level and thought and understand that the state is in no ways its soul and life. The antidote to state is to become very clear in mind and in thought.

2. Overcoming the state necessitates a consciousness of living without state.

- The awareness of the fact that the state is now a big problem for humanity and involves permanent crises, destruction and catastrophe must be achieved. Consequently, the consciousness of thinking and living without the state and the capacity to do politics without the state and construct the economy and culture without the state must be obtained.

3. Overcoming the state necessitates a break down of the state model that has shaped our mental world

- A mental revolution must be made and overcome the feeling of fear that has affected society to its smallest cells by harvesting in our minds the idea that there is no life without the state. We need to radically tear apart the patterns that have been limed in our soul, thoughts, emotions and inner world for 5 thousand years.

When we dismantle lies such as “there can not be life without state, paternal state, the state provides our security or society cannot survive without a state” which are five thousand years old, we will realize that it is this very state that exploits us, deceives us, wages a war against us and makes us enemies to each other. Consequently it will dawn to us that living with the state is meaningless, unnecessary and wrong. We will understand that this body with which we are in love is constantly on the wake of killing us. In that case it will be much easier to fight it.

Abdullah Öcalan says the following: “...when we overcome the mentality which makes us think that the state is godly and the earthly version of the God, we will see the truth that the state sustains itself for five thousand years by cultivating in our mentality a meaningless theology of fear. We will realize that the state is like a rotten walnut with nothing inside and that will make it much easier to wage a war against it.”

4. Overcoming the state by resilience, persistence and the power to radicalize democracy

- Abdullah Öcalan states that resilience, persistence and being radical in terms of democracy is equally important for overcoming the state as theoretical clarity and dismantling mental patterns.
- Abdullah Öcalan’s opinion is that the real issue is to persistently and resiliently actualize and apply the moral and institutional options that can develop the system of democratic modernity. He also adds that both systems of modernity (capitalist and democratic) might have to live together for years. Therefore it is necessary to come up with democratic constitutional solutions and to create the material and spiritual grounds that will facilitates the overcoming of the conflicts that will arise form their simultaneous existence.

5. Overcoming the state by overcoming the empire of fear it creates.

The main principle that transforms a power structure into a state is the fear it spreads. The more one can resist that fear the more one will overcome the state. Overcoming fear is going halfway in overcoming the state.

Kurdish people, the people of Cizre, Nusaybin, Silopi and Şırnak have shown such a huge resistance because they were able to overcome their fear. At the moment when the fear from the state is overcome, huge resistances always emerge.

Fear itself is overcome with resistance.

The violence and horror of the state is felt most intensely in prison because it is in prisons that the state becomes a naked force that aims at breaking the human will. I want to commemorate here the Kurdish prisoners who have materialized the fact that the state can even be overcome in the context of imprisonment.

Since the Diyarbakır dungeons have such a monumental place in our collective memory, it will be meaningful to give the practices that emerged there as an example. In Diyarbakır dungeons, the “humongous” Turkish state could not beat a handful of prisoners but on the contrary, they beat it.

- ✓ Because the prisoners had resolved the dilemma of the state ideologically
- ✓ They knew what the state is theoretically
- ✓ They had to a great extent overcome the 5000 years old mental patterns that were cultivated in their mentality
- ✓ They were resilient, persistent, clear in their goals and in what they wanted to achieve
- ✓ They had defeated the fear of the state

6. Overcoming the state necessitate that the individualist economy the state supports and is supported by the state is also overcome.

- The economy is one of the most important supporters of the state. In order to overcome this relationship is to build an alternative economy in the heart of the existing society. This will be a democratic, collective economy that aims at creating commons.

7. To overcome the state a strong and invincible ORGANIZATION must be built.

- It is obvious that for all these processes to take place there is a need for a strong formation and an organization backed by a powerful will. You can analyze the state theoretically, dismantle it ideologically and partially succeed in breaking your old mental patterns. However, you cannot accomplish anything as long as you don't form an alternative force with

a determined will that brings together all of this under an order and discipline.

- In other words, creating an invincible organization is inevitable for achieving results against this humongous power, this wild structure and this monster with seven heads.

Instead of a conclusion:

I would like to finish my talk by giving a rather long reference to Abdullah Öcalan:

Öcalan says: “I believe with all my heart that it is possible to have a world without state, a society without state, a system without state.

And I also know very well that it is possible to overcome this state system, which claims to be “the civilization” as long as we can develop the thought and organization that will fight against it.

Everyone must know that this is the war Kurds are waging. The geography of Kurds, which has been the cradle of civilization at its time of dawn, is now becoming the cradle of democratic confederalism and radical and real democracy at its time of dawn. These lands and mountains that have long lost their power of autonomous governance and their capacity to be a moral and political society can once again witness the walk of Kurds once they get out of this cradle.

Real democracy, democratic autonomy, democratic confederalism and democratic modernity, which is the systematic reflection of all these terms have grown in the cradle of civilization at the dawn of Kurdistan and started to play a role as strong alternative against capitalist modernity. Democratic modernity is a rising star against this system which proves its bankruptcy every day with exemplary lessons...”

Fuat Kav was born in Siverek, Urfa in 1959. In 1976 he became active in the struggle for Kurdish people's freedom. He was arrested in 1980, severely tortured and placed at the infamous Diyarbakir Prison No. 5. He received a death sentence and was imprisoned for 20 years and 6 months. His articles have been published in different newspapers and websites. He has written the award-winning book *Mavi Ring*, which was filmed. He was forced into exile in March 2003 due to threats against his life. He works with various democratic and civil society organisations in Europe.

3.5 Miguel Juaquin

Stages of Liberation: Fanon's Concept of the Anticolonial Revolution

Call for Papers — Moral and Political Society



Introduction

In this article, I will compare Frantz Fanon's theory of "real liberation" — the result of an anticolonial, national liberation struggle and a subsequent social revolution — with the historical, ideological, and organizational development of the Kurdish liberation movement and the revolution in Rojava. My focus lies on nationalism and the state, their historically specific functions and dangers. I will reflect on the dialectical process of anticolonial liberation at the intersections of colonial, nation-state realities and ideologies, making an attempt to extend the Marxian concepts of political and human emancipation to the colonial context.

1. Frantz Fanon: The Wretched of the Earth

The Martinican psychiatrist and theorist Frantz Fanon is known as a radical antiracist and anticolonial thinker. An active participant in the Algerian War of Independence, he wrote the book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), drawing general conclusions about the process of decolonization from the experiences of the rebellious Algerian people. For Fanon, the colonized human being was not a conscious human being, but a human being mystified by colonial culture and assimilation. As such, colonized people are alienated from their own selves.¹ Fanon sees anticolonial violence as the stage of decolonization that puts an end to the colonial relationship through national

1 Wright, "National Liberation, Consciousness, Freedom and Frantz Fanon," pp. 428-429.

liberation. He identifies different stages of decolonization and considers them necessary, yet preliminary; they must not be mistaken for *liberation itself*, which is the result of a long process.²

a) Decolonization and National Liberation Struggle

In order to understand Fanon's concept of national liberation we need a clearer understanding of nationalism in the colonial context. The colonial relationship is characterized by military, political, and economic oppression and exploitation of a territory and its population by a foreign state. Sometimes, this includes a settler population. Colonial history shows that aggressive nationalism — and the racism of the colonial master attached to it — cause an anticolonial nationalism to emerge in self-defense.³ We must therefore distinguish between two forms of nationalism. On the one hand, we have an ideology justifying patterns of state oppression; on the other hand, we have a liberatory nationalism espoused by movements rebelling against the colonial order. History shows us that liberatory, anticolonial nationalism can turn into oppressive nationalism once the goal of establishing an independent nation-state has been achieved.

The violence of colonialism causes anticolonial counterviolence. According to Fanon, this counterviolence has historically been rooted in universalist demands. In his opinion, however, the struggle against oppression will not be successful before it leaves the “universalist, neoliberal confusion to arrive at a demand for nationhood” behind.⁴ Fanon foresaw that nationalist political parties in the colonies would prioritize national oppression over class oppression. His hope was that violent revolutionary decolonization would lead to the end of colonialism — the destruction of both “colonist” and “colonized” — and give way to a “new human being” and a “new nation.”

b) Social Revolution

In the chapter *The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness*, Fanon calls national consciousness “nothing but a crude, empty, fragile shell.”⁵ He

2 Fanon-Mendes and Fhunyi, “The Contribution of Frantz Fanon to the Process of the Liberation of the People,” p. 10-11.

3 Harris, *National Liberation*, p. 22, 50.

4 Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, p. 97.

5 Ibid.

goes on to contend that national consciousness is of little use beyond the anticolonial struggle and that “for 95 percent of the population in developing countries, independence has not brought any immediate change.”⁶ Fanon considers it the task of the revolutionary forces in the national liberation struggle to make the population aware of the contradictions of national independence and nationalism (national consciousness). This is done by organizing and politicizing, a process in which national consciousness will be replaced by “social and political consciousness,”⁷ with a shift of focus on economic oppression. When national independence has been reached and the creation of the new nation gotten on its way, both consciousness and the material violence of the liberation struggle will, according to Fanon, inevitably enter the “unrelenting struggle that pits capitalism against socialism.”⁸ This requires, concretely, the politicization of the masses⁹ as well as the decentralization of the revolutionary movement through transparency between leadership and base. It requires, furthermore, “not only an economic program but also a policy in the distribution of wealth and social relations.”¹⁰

Building political consciousness goes hand in hand with the mobilization of the masses, since “the living expression of the nation is the collective consciousness in motion of the entire people.” In the representation of a new vibrant and dynamic nation, the “enlightened and coherent praxis of the men and women” is far more important than a flag or pompous government buildings. “The collective forging of a destiny implies undertaking responsibility on a truly historical scale.”¹¹

Essentially, Fanon follows the young Marx here, who, in his essay *On the Jewish Question*, described the stages of political emancipation within the state and bourgeois society toward true liberation as follows:

“Political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, to an *egoistic, independent* individual, and, on the

6 Ibid., p. 35.

7 Ibid., p. 144. Fanon also refers to this as “humanism” (ibid.). Furthermore, he stresses the need “to replace an undifferentiated nationalism with a social and economic consciousness” (ibid., p. 93).

8 Ibid., p. 38.

9 Fanon speaks of “the need to shed light on the people’s effort, to rehabilitate work, and rid it of its historical opacity” (ibid., p. 138).

10 Ibid., p. 143.

11 Ibid., p. 144.

other hand, to a *citizen*, a juridical person. Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his ‘own powers’ as *social* powers [...], only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.”¹²

Decolonization as a process of political liberation within the framework of capital and the state must therefore be replaced by class struggle. Only then can, in the words of Fanon, “human emancipation” be realized through social revolution.

Kurdistan and the PKK

The decades of assimilation policies, the violent crushing of uprisings, and, not least, the massacres¹³ that Kurds had to endure made political organizing inevitable. Kurdish political organizing took a revolutionary turn in the 1970s, when, in the context of a strong communist movement in Turkey, a group named “Kurdistan Revolutionaries” was founded at the University of Ankara. Its chairman was Abdullah Öcalan. In 1979, the group became a Marxist-Leninist party named Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK. The PKK, for which Kurdistan is an international colony, fought for a united socialist Kurdish state and, together with allied groups, for revolutionary change in Turkey. The PKK employed guerrilla tactics and the use of counterviolence against the Turkish state, Turkish fascists, and assimilated Kurdish capitalists. For PKK cadres, the Kurdish question was directly connected to the struggle against the global capitalist system.¹⁴

a) The PKK: From Ankara to Rojava

The PKK criticized the embrace of Kemalism within the Turkish revolutionary Left. While Kemalism denied that Kurds were an oppressed, colo-

12 Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, originally published 1844, quoted from www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/.

13 Kurdish Human Rights Project in Gabbay, “State Borders vs. Cultural Historical and Religious Social Networks,” p. 14.

14 See Akkaya and Jongerden, “The PKK in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?,” and “Born from the Left: The Making of the PKK.”

nized minority, the PKK stressed the importance of national liberation.¹⁵ A process of creative destruction was to destroy colonialism and pave the way for an independent, socialist Kurdish state. Cemil Bayık explained national consciousness in this context as follows: “We gained national consciousness through socialism, not the other way round. First, we became familiar with socialism, and then, with its help, we understood the significance of the national question.”¹⁶ For the PKK, the national question has always been tied to liberating all of Turkish society.

In the early 1990s, the goal of an independent Kurdish state was for the first time questioned within the organization. The collapse of real socialism caused a general critique of statism, and the stalemate between the Kurdish guerrilla and the Turkish military demanded new strategic approaches. In the late 1990s, the PKK increased organizing efforts in the Kurdish territories of Syria and Iran; before that, it had fought exclusively for the liberation of Northern Kurdistan (Eastern Turkey).

The PKK has always been developing ideologically and organizationally. Of particular importance was the paradigm shift after Öcalan’s arrest in 1999. In the territories of Rojava and Sinjar, liberated since 2012, the new ideology of liberation has been put into practice. It champions the concepts of a “democratic republic,” a “democratic nation,” “democratic autonomy,” and “democratic confederalism” as radical democratic alternatives to nationalism and the nation-state.

b) Abandoning the Nation-State Paradigm

In his prison writings, Öcalan based the idea of a radical democracy beyond the nation and the state on a new understanding of Kurdish history. In *Democratic Confederalism*, he writes: “The system of the United Nations that is based on nation-states has remained inefficient. Meanwhile, nation-states have become serious obstacles for any social development.”¹⁷ Öcalan contends that the state facilitates capitalist oppression through wars and civil wars, and that representative democracy stands in contradiction

15 See Akkaya and Jongerden, “The PKK in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?,” and Cansız, *Mein ganzes Leben war ein Kampf*.

16 Flach, Ayboğa, and Knapp, *Revolution in Rojava*, p. 140. Translation from the German original by G.K. English edition: Anja Flach, Ercan Ayboğa and Michael C. Knapp, eds., *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women’s Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan* (London: Pluto, 2016).

17 Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism*, p. 30.

to real democracy. He also criticizes the state for monopolizing all social relationships and oppressing diversity and plurality. Cultural homogeneity, a requirement for the modern nation-state, has indeed been a breeding ground for assimilation, displacement, political oppression, and genocide.¹⁸ Against this background, the establishment of a Kurdish nation-state was now seen by Öcalan as counterproductive, since it would “replace the old chains with new ones or even enhance the repression.”¹⁹

Öcalan suggests that any alternative strategy for liberation can “only be accomplished within a democratic-confederate dynamic process,”²⁰ which includes the organization and participation of everyone. Democratic confederalism is a form of direct self-government transferring decision-making powers from state institutions to open council structures: village and town councils, local parliaments, supra-regional congresses. In Öcalan’s words, democratic confederalism is a “non-state political administration [...] open towards other political groups and factions. It is flexible, multicultural, anti-monopolistic and consensus-oriented.”²¹ Democratic confederalism enables people to deal with social problems collectively.

c) Democratic Nation and Political Society

The rejection of the state within the Kurdish liberation movement implies the rejection of a “mentality characterized by statism and oppression.”²² In Rojava, different communities — including Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Turkmen, and Christians — have built their own autonomous institutions. These are integral parts of Rojava’s administration. Accordingly, the concept of the “democratic nation” is multinational and multicultural — an alternative to traditional concepts of the “nation,” which were based on a common race, culture, religion, or language. In Rojava, the focus lies on a common ethical and political culture of collaboration in a confederal system, as expressed in Rojava’s “Social Contract.”²³ The freedom of the individual can only be realized through self-management and democratic communal life.

18 Gellner in Akkaya and Jongerden, “The PKK in the 2000s: Continuity through Breaks?,” pp.152-153.

19 Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism*, p. 19.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

22 Flach, Ayboğa, and Knapp, *Revolution in Rojava*, p. 14. Translation G.K.

23 *Charter of the Social Contract: Self-Rule in Rojava*.

Öcalan writes: “It is a natural right to express one’s cultural, ethnic or national identity with the help of political associations. However, this right needs a moral and political society.”²⁴ A political society, or, put differently, a society politicized by the ideology of liberation and people’s active participation in self-management, is the condition for the liberation of society, but also the result of years of revolutionary organizing, dating back to the PKK’s origins. When Syrian colonialism was overcome in Rojava and replaced by democratic confederalism, the politicization of all parts of society could be extended further, for example to the fight against patriarchy or the introduction of an ecological economy no longer based on the capitalist logic of profit. Even if these aspects have been part of the PKK platform for a long time, their implementation in Rojava signals a new chapter in the development of the Kurdish liberation movement.

Comparing Fanon’s Theory and PKK History

The Kurds in Turkey and Syria, with the exception of Rojava since 2012, are a colonized minority that was forced to assimilate into dominant national culture. According to Fanon, both colonized people and their colonizers are alienated human beings. At the time of its founding, the PKK regarded the use of revolutionary, anticolonial violence as necessary in the struggle against colonialism, capitalism, and the alienated identities they breed. The colonial system should be replaced by a free Kurdistan through a process of creative destruction.

Frantz Fanon saw the annihilation of colonialism — of colonist and colonized — as a requirement for the creation of a new human being and a new nation. Akin to the positions of the PKK, decolonization for Fanon was the first step toward *real liberation*; it was necessary but not to be confused with the goal itself. The PKK’s use of national identity, its relationship to the Turkish revolutionary Left, and its critique of Kemalism were reminiscent of Fanon’s observation that national oppression taking priority over class contradictions within political parties of the colonies came from their on-the-ground experiences.

National consciousness and national liberation mobilize people to this day, and the PKK still benefits from this. But, on the ideological level,

²⁴ Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism*. p. 22

women's liberation, radical participatory democracy, and ecological awareness have replaced national liberation. This becomes ever more apparent on the organizational-practical level as well, at least in Rojava. (To assess the situation in other parts of Kurdistan, special studies are needed.) It confirms Fanon's view that national consciousness does not have much use beyond the anticolonial struggle. In other words, Fanon's understanding of a necessary transition from national consciousness to social and political consciousness is reflected in the development of the PKK since 1999. Fanon and Öcalan share a dialectical understanding of the liberation struggle, as decolonization knows different stages, determined by the interaction between material conditions and consciousness, both of which are constantly changing. Both stress politicization and social and political consciousness. This explains why so much emphasis is put on political education in Rojava. Democratic confederalism also reflects the decentralization of the revolutionary movement that Fanon considered a requirement for the social revolution. Furthermore, there are clear similarities between Öcalan's concept of a "democratic nation" (and the practical attempts of implementing it in Rojava) and Fanon's concept of a "new nation," which was to follow, and deepen, the anticolonial revolution and pose an alternative to the bourgeois nationalism prevalent in most nation-states, former colonies included. What Öcalan means by a "moral and political society" implies Fanon's vision of national consciousness being replaced by "social and political consciousness." It indicates a stage of social development in which economic, statist, and patriarchal domination can, for the first time, be effectively fought through organized collective efforts.

The biggest difference between Fanon's theory and the history of the Kurdish liberation movement probably concerns educating people about the contradictions of national independence, or, more precisely, the timing of the education. For Fanon, it can only follow a successful independence struggle; the PKK introduced it while still caught up in a violent conflict with Turkey and military victory far off. We need to consider, however, that the creation of a political society encounters different conditions in the different parts of Kurdistan. In Rojava, organized forces of the Kurdish liberation movement have been on the ground for years, which made it possible to expand the revolution as soon as the Syrian state retreated from the region in 2012. In the Kurdish provinces in Turkey, on the other hand, the creation of a political society — and the

“democratic autonomy” declared in 2015 — are still under constant attack by the Turkish military.²⁵

There remain also questions about the concept of a “moral and political society” and the “democratic civilization” Öcalan speaks of. Both are seen as preconditions for liberation, but it is unclear how to respond to the different expressions of class contradictions across Kurdistan. For Fanon, the social revolution requires an economic program to overcome capitalism’s class society. But since the paradigm shift in the Kurdish liberation movement, this has not been a priority.

Still, the course that the Kurdish liberation movement has taken, especially the revolution in Rojava, confirms Fanon’s reflections on decolonization as expressed in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The future will show if and how the deepening of the revolution — of the democratic nation and of democratic confederalism — will help overcome the social antagonisms that remain. One thing is clear: the “Project Rojava” is more than just the end result of anti-national and anti-state mobilization in Northern Syria; it is a social revolution that has held its ground since 2012, with roots in decades of struggling for national and anticolonial liberation in Turkey and Syria.

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25 See Knapp, “Kurdischer Widerstand.”

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Video Messages

Video 1 Zeynep Cûdî, YJŞ– Will to Truth

We salute this conference, Rêber Öcalan, resisting Shengal and those resisting all around the world. We salute it from the historical Shengal. This conference will be historical for Kurdish people. Because we are living through these times we have to fight against capitalism. Capitalism pursues its impact on society with its structure which ignores the values and cultures in its essence. When Öcalan made evaluations about capitalism, he stated that society should learn about themselves, and their own will and he therefore put the society through education. At the moment his philosophy is spread all around the world. Thanks to him, democratic societies are being built. Everybody can make use of his thoughts and get to know themselves. We can also say that people of Shengal also embarked upon Öcalan's philosophy.

We are really glad to participate in this conference organized to discuss the ideas of Öcalan and his freedom. His philosophy has been a solution, a truth and a belief for the Ezidi society. Therefore we also established our self-organizations for the defense of our own society. As the Ezidi society we established our self-defense forces because we needed to defend ourselves. We don't want any other force to defend Ezidis apart from ourselves. As Shengal Resistance Units (YBŞ) and Şengal Women Units (YJŞ) we have established our own forces. Among the Ezidi women, our units carry great importance.

At the moment, the role of YJŞ is sacred in Shengal. As YJŞ we want to introduce our own identity with Öcalan's philosophy. It was highly required for Ezidi women in Shengal to organize themselves. Because of the 2014 Edict * (massacre), many women were massacred, and sold on the market. Now we declare that, Ezidi women have their own power to defend themselves. Despite all the massacres, it was proved that women have power to defend themselves and do whatever they want. Women need to make their own decisions.

Ezidi society have experienced many edicts. During the latest edict in 2014, Iraqi army and peshmerga were located nearby Shengal. Yet, as soon as the attacks started, peshmerga run away instead of defending us and Iraqi army did not defend our society too. South Kurdistan should acknowledge the will of Ezidi society and accept us. Because at the moment here we have our self-defence units, councils, and local structures. All of our institutions should take part in these structures. Apart from that, we have plans for Shengal. We demand to open the roads to Shengal again. This way, we will create a free society. We and the Ezidi society are like mind and body. We are the children of this society. Our goal is to defend our people. There will be no one who can destroy Ezidis from now on.

We will organize Ezidi people with the philosophy of Abdullah Öcalan. We will create a democratic society with freedom. This will of ours is a truth.

We participated in this conference as the women units of Shengal. It gives us happiness to participate in this. We celebrate the conference and the ones who made it possible. We emphasize that resistance will win and this conference will be the assurance for the people.

Video 2 Mustafa Karasu

Building Democratic Modernity



I respectfully greet the valuable participants of the conference where the thought and paradigm of Rêber Apo is discussed. The ideas discussed at this conference are very valuable. Especially at a time when humanity is in deep crisis and depression, discussing Rêber Apo's thoughts that will be a solution to this chaos and crisis will be guiding in terms of finding solutions to the problems of capitalism in the world, especially in Europe in the coming period. I believe it will play a very important role in this direction.

As you all know, the main problems of humanity today stem from capitalism, the capitalist modernity. Today, not only the capitalist modernity, but the nation-state, but the crisis of the 5000-thousand-year-old statist system is being experienced. Now the social problems created by the statist system and the exploitative system have become the problems that people can't bear. In this respect, humanity is longing and struggling to eliminate the problems of the 5000-year-old statist system, including the nation-state, and the problems created by capitalism. However, in order to fight against capitalist modernity, first of all it is necessary to take an ideologically correct approach and accept it. All modernities or new thoughts and new structures in history have gained with the power of thought, the power of structuring. In this respect, democratic modernity will ideologically win against capitalist modernity. For this, it is essential to look at the history as a whole. Because there is a history on which capitalist modernity is based: State, class, power, exploitation. These are continuous. It has continuity. Capitalism has become a consequence of them. Capitalist modernity is based on these. These have a history. Democratic modernity also has a history. Democratic modernity is also based on democratic civilization, which has been fighting against the statist system from the first primitive communal society to date. The history of capitalist modernity is also the

history of democratic civilization. In this respect, it is very important to look at history as a whole, to deal with democratic modernity as a whole, and to fight against capitalist modernity in this context.

The real socialism made a mistake in the past. It was not against capitalist modernity. It was against capitalism but not against its modernity. Even the basic components, arguments, and core values of its modernity were based on the nation-state. It was based on industrialism. So much so that at the beginning of the October revolution, the Soviets, which emerged strongly, resided the state. Electrification and industry, these are really dealt with on a religious level, on a sacred level. In this respect, nature has been destroyed, the destruction of nature has brought its negative approach to society. For this reason, real socialism has collapsed. The collapse of real socialism was not due to the lack of opposition to capitalism. Real socialism has really been the opposite of capitalism, it has been opposed to capitalism. But capitalist anti-modernity has not been made. Even without an anti-capitalist anti-modernity, no anti-capitalism can be made, and no fight against capitalism can be fought. For this reason, real socialism has collapsed.

In this respect, while democratic modernity will fight against capitalism and capitalist modernity in the coming period, ideological integrity should be based on the total struggle against capitalist modernity. This is really important. In fact, anarchists have been against the state, they have been against capitalism, but they are individualistic. However, capitalism is anti-social. It mainly disintegrates society and lives by disintegrating society. But anarchists opposed the state, opposed capitalism, but they could not defend the society, which the state and capitalism were most opposed to, could not be socialists. Therefore, they lost. Ecologists thought that they would defend nature without being against the state or against capitalism. However, the various currents defending this ecology and the arguments they defend were actually produced in the centers of capitalism. In this respect, they have not been able to fight strongly against industrialism, and have not been effective. Because they are not anti-capitalist, they are not anti-statist. It is not possible to protect nature and to be a protector without being against them. Feminists have opposed power, they have opposed patriarchy, but they have not been able to oppose the female creation, women's reality and women's typology created by capitalism as much as they have opposed patriarchy. In their opposition, they could not create their own ideology, its organization, its structures. In this respect, they have been helpless and

weak in the face of capitalism. Yes, they are against patriarchy but without a consistent opposition to capitalism and no consistent opposition to the female reality created by capitalism feminists have also been ineffective. Now there are religious currents in the Middle East, which says that it is mostly against the west, capitalism and imperialism. In fact, they are not in a consistent struggle against capitalism, capitalist modernity. They even say that 'what modernists say and modern scientists say are all in our sources'. As these have been said before and 'we have said them better', they are in an approach that defends and accepts the values of that modernism. After all, they all want to keep the values of capitalist modernity alive by dimensioning nation-state, industrialism and capitalism to new discourses. It is like a version of capitalist modernity. They oppose Orientalism, but look at the approach of sociologists produced in capitalist modernity centers to all events and phenomena. They are not so anti-modernist.

In this respect, the total struggle against capitalist modernity is very important. It is not enough just to say that I oppose capitalism. First of all, it is necessary to propose an alternative. When you do not propose an alternative, one would dissolve within the capitalist modernity, that is, it is inevitable. In this respect, democratic modernity must propose its alternatives against capitalist modernity. This is very important. In other words, if it does not establish its economic society, industrial society, democratic confederalism, moral and political society, and it does not bring about its structural institutions, it is not enough to be against capitalism. Now everyone says that I am against capitalism, but when it comes to opposing the institutions of capitalism, to create the institutions of democratic modernity, then it is seen that they can not break away from capitalism when necessary, it is seen how dependent one has become on capitalism. Indeed, capitalism is like that, capitalist modernity is such a system that it has binded so many people with individualism that it even holds those who oppose capitalism within itself. In this respect, while opposing capitalist modernity, it is necessary to put forward its alternative, but it is important to put it holistically. It is not only enough to oppose capitalism, it is necessary to oppose the nation-state, and to strengthen democratic confederalism, which is an alternative to the nation-state, to strengthen the moral society. It is important not to glorify industrialism. Industrialism is glorified, technique is glorified, yes, scientific technical revolution is good. But industrialism is not a good thing. After destroying nature, that technique, that industry has no mean-

ing. Nature, society is a whole. It is the first nature; the society is the second nature. In this respect, it is very important to defend society in the fight against capitalism. Society should be taken as the basis. Now, for example, there are many opponents of capitalism, there are multi-class approaches. There are, of course, classes. But how do classes emerge; they emerged by fragmenting the society. This state, the ruling and the exploitative section do not oppose the class, states did not become the ruling power by opposing the class, they became the ruling power and the state by fragmenting the society and dividing the society into classes. In this respect, the main value is society, society should be defended. You cannot really defend democratic modernity without defending society. This has to be seen very well.

In this respect, it is really essential to defend society. If we defend society, defend social values, advocate society, then we will be against capitalist modernity. I would especially like to emphasize that democracy can only exist if there is a democratic society. Capitalism is anti-democracy. There is no democracy under the conditions of capitalism. Because capitalism shatters the society. Disbanding society is anti-democracy. Democracy is a phenomenon intertwined with society. Real democracy happens with a democratic society. In this respect, defending democratic society, defending democracy is the most important way of struggle against capitalism. Here, it should be emphasized that; democratic society is equal to socialism. Socialism and democracy, and socialism and democratic society should not be seen as separate things. Real democracy, democracy based on democratic society is equal to socialism, socialism is equal to real democracy. Socialism means societism. In this respect, it is necessary to see the connection between democracy and socialism very well. In fact, we should not put any distance between democracy and socialism. You have to see it equally. Communal conditions democracy. When you are communal, you have to be democratic, you have to create democracy. You cannot protect the communal without democracy. Communal can only be protected by democracy. Nobody can think that there will be socialism without democracy and that there will be communism without democracy. In this respect, it is necessary to see democratic modernity identical with democratic society and socialism. This is very important. Of course, the main difference is between capitalism and democratic modernity. Capitalism, capitalist modernity means material civilization. It means the destruction of all immaterial values. Because the immaterial values are social values. Immaterialism is socialism. Society

is immaterialism. Society and immaterialism are intertwined. Society has immaterial values. The materialist does not have immaterial values; Even in the old world, in the old society, materialists were cursed centuries ago, they were seen as out of society. In this respect, democratic modernity must emphasize immateriality, emphasize immaterial values. This happens with owning society, with socializing values. Without socialist values, that is, without the emphasis on society, without the individual and everyone not giving society a priority, sacrificing themselves for society, saying society comes before me, saying that I exist if society does there can be no true democratic modernity. In democratic modernity, work cannot be done with material thinking. Democratic modernity cannot be built with the material culture of capitalism and the material culture of the west. In this respect, it is necessary to break from the material culture. It is necessary to embrace the immaterial world. Justice, conscience, morality, equality, neighborhood, friendship, companionship should be embraced. Without them there can be no democratic modernity. Democratic modernity cannot be created with today's individualist culture. It has to be a spiritualist, socialist culture. Again, in connection with these, democratic modernity cannot be created without a women's freedom line. Women's freedom is life itself. Woman is related to life. In this regard, without giving value to life, without making sense of women's freedom democratic modernity cannot be created.

In this regard, Rêber Apo called his paradigm a woman-libertarian, democratic and ecological society. He placed woman-libertarian on top of his paradigm. Because, in a historical aspect of democratic modernity, it is a history of women's freedom or women's democratic character. The history of democratic modernity is not the history of capitalist modernity, because capitalist modernity is the deterioration of life, fragmentation of life, meaninglessness of life by that began first by the domination of the woman. In this respect, the women's freedom line of Rêber Apo is seen as valuable and meaningful by everyone today. But it is valuable not only because it is about women, but also because life is the main element and the basic descriptor of democratic modernity. In this respect, while democratic modernity is an alternative, immaterial values, moral values, social values and values of conscious should be cared for. In this respect, Rêber Apo has presented a very important concept. This is really important. It needs to be emphasized and given meaning. He said moral and political society. He said, society is essentially moral and political. He said there is no non-

moral and non-political society. Capitalism dissolved the moral political society. Capitalism has put worthlessness instead of morality, power and bureaucracy instead of politics. In this respect, it is important to create a moral and political society. It is like the theory of morality, that is, values. All the values created by society are moral. Politics, on the other hand, is its implementation, that is, the realization of that morality, those values in social life. Politics is their implementation. Indeed, if democratic modernity will make sense of itself in the future, if it will be an alternative, if it is to create excitement for humanity, this can only be done with moral and political values. It cannot be done with dry theoretical discourses. We can not just say I am against capitalism, and that I will create such a society. We need to create excitement in people, in society. This certainly happens by keeping moral political values alive. While creating an organized society, organizing society, we organize democratic confederalism, we organize women, we organize youth, we organize laborers. While organizing each of them, it is necessary to establish these moral political values. Those communities and their organizations must transform themselves into a moral political society. When this happens, what would all these communities be of democratic modernity? It becomes the basis. And they can become an alternative society against capitalist modernity. From this point of view, what the democratic modernity should do in the future is the most fundamentally integrated approach. It should not be fragmented. It needs to be based on society. And, of course, to make democratic confederalism as the alternative of the state, it is necessary to be a moral and political society. Democratic confederalism and moral and political society are nested things. Democratic confederalism cannot be achieved without moral and political values. Or it is pointless to create democratic confederalism without relying on moral and political society. It does not mean becoming an alternative. In this respect, I see these basic parameters very important.

On this basis, I emphasize that democratic modernity advocates and democratic modernity institutions should pay attention to these basic points in the coming period. On this basis, I greet you all respectfully and wish you success in your work.

Video 3 Ronahî Serhat “Women of Fire and the Sun”



I greet the conference participants and valuable guests on behalf of all my female comrades from the beautiful mountains of Kurdistan, despite its nature being destroyed by the bombardments of the fascist Turkish state every day, knows how to renew itself every spring.

I am honored to be among you and share the same atmosphere on the occasion of such a conference. Before I start, when he first started the freedom struggle, he who made woman his comrade, who endeavored uniquely for the struggle for women's freedom, -applying this theoretically and practically-, who addressed the women issue primarily from the problem of nation and class and who always approached strategically in this sense, our comrade who share the best companionship with women, our source of freedom; I salute our leader Abdullah Öcalan with deepest love and respect.

Now, of course, there is a nation-state impasse. A thoroughly intensified nationalism embedded with nation statism, sexism and religionism is the cause of serious violence. Therefore, existing capitalism with a nation-state logic and a nation-state mentality constantly releases sexism and nationalism. It does this for the sake of global interests, for the sake of regional interests. In that respect, there is no method left that capitalism has not applied. It wasted everyone and everything. This is such that there are both cultural and physical massacres, nature massacres and women massacres. And the point reached is actually a massacre of society. Capitalism is at war against social values, against human values. Of course, the main source of these problems is actually the women's problem. No model will be valid before the women's problem is solved and include a solution to the women's problem. For centuries, in fact, life and struggle have confirmed this and has revealed the signs of it. That is why combating sexism

is essential. It cannot be argued that any party and power that does not address sexism, gender mainstreaming in the context of women's freedom are truly libertarian. It is known that all power and oppression devices made their first operation on women. It is for this reason, that the Middle East is experiencing such complicated chaos and a grave silence, although it has a multicultural and rich historical background and heritage since it did not realize its main renaissance in the field of mentality — in the field of woman, in the current situation, the grave silence of the woman is an expression of life. And no solution will find its real place unless the woman is rescued from captivity. Of course, the price of the third world war in the Middle East is mostly paid by us, the women, the poor and the children. Our struggle against this cruel male-dominant system, in which women is swallowed and stoned, recognized neither a human, nor a citizen nor a woman, is pillaged in wars, raped, and whose will and honor is swallowed, will continue. And more, capitalism has commodified women. Therefore, struggling with capitalism is mostly the problem of women's freedom movements, it is our problem.

In the Middle East culture, the problem of women is essentially the same as the woman in the west, even though it contains some differences, it is essentially the same. In this respect, the women's problem is a global problem. It is not a problem that concerns only one nation, or the Middle East, or only a country in the world. The main source of social problems is related to the women's problem. It is necessary to emphasize with special emphasis that no social problem will be solved before this freedom problem is solved and to start the solution of all problems from this point. In this sense, it is necessary to insist that the question of women is a principal, central question, to insist on this and place it in the solution model is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, many wars were fought for the sake of women's freedom, equality, and socialism. Ultimately, the status of women in society has not changed. We try to carry out our solution projects with keeping the past experiences in mind, especially with this awareness so that women will not experience the same fate again. And nowadays, in the 21st century, there are various women's organizations that are fighting effectively. At the same time, there are many valuable female academics and writers who work on women, focus on intensive conscious activities and strive to enlighten the mentality in this sense. We can evaluate the 5000-year-old civilization, which has been accepted as a data so far, as a male paradigm. Now the

paradigm that confronts this as whole is our democratic, ecological women's freedom paradigm, as a woman's paradigm. In this sense, we also consider this to be the rebirth of women. As the Kurdish women's movement, we are now a side of this conflict, a will and an identity in Kurdistan and the Middle East. On this basis, we put our suggestions of solution on top of the agenda. We also look at the presented models and policies from this perspective. No power can view women from now on as a reserve power in terms of power interests, nor can they view us in a pragmatic manner. We, the women are the primary subject of life and sociality. Therefore, the problem of women is not a question of rights, it is a problem of existence. In this sense, the problem of democracy and freedom and women is a whole and are identical. Just as we cannot address the problem of democracy and freedom independently from women, we cannot deal with the problem of women independently from them either. It has surpassed being a problem of rights long ago. A new social lifestyle and action are required again. It is a question of being a system in the sense that there is a need to renew the organization of this mentality. Unless our democratic ecological women libertarian social system is built autonomously with democratic nation culture, there will always be a question of women's freedom. In other words, unless a new social system is built from top to bottom with women's perspective and women's values — the question of women is not a sub-topic — so the democratic women-based construction of the system will truly reveal the solution. For this, it requires working very intensely with its mentality and institutional structures. Since a womanless life cannot be considered, the woman expresses the essence of life. Again, in the sense, the essence of this life, the pristine nature of human and the return to human, the woman's issue must have a systematic solution as a question of humanity. Therefore, it is necessary to focus deeply to understand the women's question correctly. This is how we can get out of the madness created by the mind of the current male-dominated mentality.

In this sense, the women's problem does not only concern women, we need to address it systematically as a social problem. Sustaining life is also related to this. As long as woman takes part in her life as a woman with her will, developments in this sense may emerge. As far as woman's perspective, woman's action, discourse, and look touches life, life will also be beautiful and liberated. For this, we are calling for a new life that is placed on the axis of woman and the construction of the social system around it. Capitalism is

in the last phase of the five-thousand-year-old system of exploitation. The struggle of women against exploitation in this sense requires radicalization today. Because this system has also first sacrificed woman and commodified her. At the same time, the approach of despotic states in the Middle East is the caging of women. This tradition will change with the cultivation of the living woman's freedom awakening. In this sense, we say to the capitalist system that those seeking a solution outside of the system are the ones who can establish the real solution. So now the issue has already exceeded the search for solutions within the system. A strong and radical struggle against the system is required outside the system. Because all the in-system solutions have expired. We live in a century where women's movements can play its role as the most radical and powerful. On the one hand, while women are attacked and exploited on many fronts, on the other, women are in developing immensely. We get a great morale and strength from these developments.

That is why we find the solution not in other places, but in ourselves. We, the primary and leading force of democratic modernity, are reckoning with the forces of classed civilization through women's values. Again, militarism and fascism intensified their attacks on women. For this reason, as can be seen with women, quite concretely especially with Kurdish women, in fact, all Middle Eastern women have begun to focus on self-defense movements and there is a great improvement in this sense. This is a great resistance and opposition against fascism. In this sense, women are no longer alone. They are in great international solidarity. At the same time, they are aware that self-defense is the most basic legitimate right and thus are in such organization. Again, developing solution programs and we are going through such a process. Now a basic criticism point is on the mentality field. So far, male stamped sciences have always substituted the wrongs in the place of the truth. In this respect, they always hidden the facts. It is a revolutionary issue for us to realize gineology as a rebirth of women's science and take steps in the field of gineology. No longer will others describe women in all sciences in history, philosophy, religion. And we ourselves, by developing our own social science, we will realize this. We welcome this century with such a development. This is at the same time a significant struggle against the capitalist system, and it is a revolutionary development in the field of mentality. The capitalist system is also experiencing a great bankruptcy in the field of mentality. All this war

waged is the declaration of this bankruptcy. The alternative paradigm, as a priority, should be institutionalized in the field of mentality, and end its dominance of the information power, will pave the way for a new world of freedom. We will do this with the science of jineology. Now the most basic and invisible need in the Middle East is the acquisition of democratic ecological and women's libertarian mentality. Both the successfully accomplished struggle in the field of mentality and the actions taken in the field will be decisive in the struggle. As the women's party leading the social movement and change, we will continue the struggle for freedom. We carry out important work with women in Kurdistan, the Middle East and around the world. Our solidarity in struggle is developed. We are experiencing the excitement and pride of this development. And again, the whole world witnessed this development. While the Arab women burned the black veil of Daish, they were actually burning not only Daish but also the dark mind of men. This was a strong opposition to those who put her in hell and turned the world into hell. It was a source of happiness for us when we have reached Shengal women and mothers who were losing their hopes and to give them back the vitality of life. As a solution, the organization of Shengal women both in the field of legitimate defense, establishing their assemblies and in the field of education, health and culture are quite remarkable developments. As the Kurdish women's movement, we have established strong ties with Arab, Syriac, Armenian, Persian, Turkish and Turkmen women in the Middle East. This is an important development. Together, we carry out the works of knitting and building our system and our future. This is our biggest revolutionary achievement. In this sense, we can comfortably say that despite all the obstacles, the male barrier and mind, attacks and war, the women are developing themselves and coming out from under oppression. They open their eyes to life again and thus become our source of morale and strength. As women all over the world, we suffer greatly. As women, as much as we grow our struggle together and as long as we have a common struggle against the capitalist system, we will be reckoning with the male ruling system. This will definitely happen. It is the women's revolution that will make its mark on this age and we are in such an era. We say: We should work more, organize more and fight more to make the 21st century a century of women's freedom. This time however we know and say that the strong will not win, the just and the righteous will win. That's why our strength is in our righteousness. Our

vehicles are clean, our methods are clean. Our goal is as clear as the sun. For us Mesopotamians, they say, children of fire and sun. And as women of the fire and the sun, our journey to the sun will continue in the form of crowning the social revolution with the women's revolution. On this basis, I salute all delegates and participants attending the conference with my sincere feelings and thank you for sharing your time with us. Hope to share the honor, pride and happiness of living together again in a world where women will be free. Thank you.

Ronahî Serhat spoke as a representative of Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistanê (PAJK), the Kurdistan Woman's Freedom Party.

Video 4 Internationalists

Lydia Gottschalk

We would also like to say hello to you from the liberated areas of Rojava, best greetings are sent to you straight out of the centre of the revolution in northern Syria. We would like to make clear that this kind of internationalism — the conference in Hamburg as well as we here in Rojava — is the result of very long struggle. It is the result of much labor, much commitment, much revolutionary power — it took especially a lot of labor and commitment of the people, who gave their lives in this struggle; People who fought side by side with us; all the people, whose thoughts inspire the revolution and carried the ideas of this revolution to your conference. To some people Kurdistan maybe was unknown until they first heard of Kobane, while others have been studying the Kurdish cause since a long time. But this revolution has been a result of international struggle earlier. It's not only the struggle of Kurds for Kurdistan. It's about the struggle of all the people who live here side by side in peace create a completely new society. It's not only about dreaming; it's about living these dreams.

That's the reason why we can say, that this revolution is the rain that's falling after a long drought and makes the green grow again. We can see this kind of green, when we live here nowadays and fight and organize together — on all the different levels of course. E. g. we could say that Rojava on the one side has institutions, that are organized completely different than the institutions of the state. On the other side there is still a war going on, especially in Raqqa. Both, the revolution and the war are going on at the same time. Every time, when areas are liberated, the society immediately starts to reorganize itself. The best — and most beautiful — proof for this is when women throw their burqas away and say: "enough already, no more oppression by ISIS, no more oppression by the state."

That's the reason why we see a whole different streetscape when we walk through the streets of Rojava today. We see people living fearlessly, organizing fearlessly. We see people organizing every aspect of their lives on a regional level — and while doing so, women are a huge part of it. Again, and again it is the women who are paradigmatic for the revolution. Just take

the fight for Kobane: the women of the YPJ were standing at the sharp end and leading the fight.

Today we can witness that this applies to every aspect here. And this surely is the best an internationalist can learn. Because Rojava was the proof that virtual out of nothing (there was hardly any kind of self-organization, but the complete power of the state) a society was able to grow, that reinvented itself in every aspect: the cultural aspect, the social aspect, and even the military aspect. Now this is something we want to give to you to Europe as a symbol of hope for your upcoming fights. This fight here showed, that people — for example Kurds and Arabs, who presumably would never have said hello to each other — now can live hand in hand and fight and organize together.

This fight gives us hope for Europe, because it shows the possibility to not fight each other inside of state-run conditions, it shows the possibility of living side by side in peace. The revolution of Rojava achieved the establishing of broad women's movement in the whole society. Things like religion, ethnicity, the place we came from do not count, because we fight here together as women. And this is also a symbol of hope for Europe. When we're able to organize ourselves like we did here, the revolution will finally reach the point, where it not only inspires a conference in Hamburg to think about the thoughts of Rêber Apo, but where it inspires all women, all people in Europe to organize themselves. Then the revolution will have finally left the borders of Rojava and will be carried out into the world, especially by the internationalists.

We want to tell every woman: join our fight and understand, that the revolution in Rojava created a new form of women's organization. We want to tell everybody: get to know the thoughts of Serokatis. We want to tell everybody: get to know the women's movements in all four parts of Kurdistan. Because for us it is the key to create a worldwide women's movement, that learns from mistakes that have been made in the past, that knows no borders, that doesn't accept the state or the patriarchy.

Shoresh

The question we'd like to ask you now is: is there really a lack of outlooks? Is there really a lack of alternatives? I don't think so. Because the thing that restrains the left, socialist, progressive movements from questioning the

system and changing it for the better, is a matter of mind and faith. You now have been discussing for three days and are a part of those who discuss outlooks for the future. As we hinted at the beginning, we surely think that your work over the last three days — and especially the work of those who have been organizing this conference for months — is a very honourable one. In Kurdish they would say Piroz! (Congratulations). Nonetheless it is now very important to look for ways to organize ourselves, to take some steps forward.

At this point I'd like to mention the Zapatistas. One of their sayings is: "asking we walk". I really think it is like this. No matter how much we discuss and try to create our alternatives in theory to make even the last doubt go away: in the end the alternative will create itself in practice, that is: in our lives, where we implement what we preach. The alternative will create itself when we start to live for this new society 24\7 and question everything else; when we start to question the way interact with each other, the way we organize, the way we fight and when we create a new way of fighting.

The reason why this movement and Rêber Apos philosophy and ideas created an outlook for all the oppressed peoples in the world and mankind itself, is what the Kurdish liberation movement created in Rojava and the rest of Kurdistan. We believe — and this is also Rêber Apo's outlook — that Rojava with its revolution and fight and spirit will be to the 21st century what Palestine meant for the 20th century. By saying this we want to express that basically Rojava is developing to an ideological centre of the internationalist revolution for the freedom of mankind. This is not some sort of utopia. The outlook is there, right in front of us. The outlook is in Kurdistan, the outlook is that this way of living, that we implement — at the frontline and in society, in cities and villages, in the valleys and the mountains, will spread around the whole world. This is the outlook.

No doubt, we have to think about how we want to create an alternative system in theory as good as we can. But the basis for the revolution is the strong faith in what we believe in, in what we fight for — believing that another world is possible. This is the spirit that influenced young people in 1968 all over the world. This is the spirit that made the peoples of this time want to get rid of colonialism, to stand up against imperialism and fight. And this is the spirit that is still alive in Kurdistan and Rojava today, we just have to find this spirit and spread it all over the world. I think this

is the outlook — the hope lies in the hands of the international, revolutionary youth. With this in mind we want to say to you internationalist youths, who don't want to obey borders, who no longer want to kneel in front of the system, who are ready smash the chains of the system, who are keen to fight for a new live and know the risks: come to Rojava, come to Kurdistan and join the revolution. Whether you want to work in a social field or want to defend the revolution with a rifle in your hand — come to Rojava! Witness how the revolution and the spirit you've been discussing for three days is practised. Because this is the solution for getting rid of the self-created borders in our minds, the solution for overcoming the powerlessness, that the system created in our minds, the solution for breaking the chains and emancipating ourselves from this system, to fight for a free world, for a free mankind, for the independence of all peoples. Against this background we once again want to greet you and send our revolutionary and respectful regards to the conference in Hamburg. And we want to say: Biji Serok Apo, شهید نامیرین، بێجێ بەرخۆدەنا رۆجاوا یەن کوردستانە (long live Rêber Apo, Martyrs never die, long live resistance in western Kurdistan, in Rojava)!

Jinda

Hasta la victoria siempre! Un pueblo unido jamas sera vencido!

Long live the international fight and the international solidarity!

Agit Avasin

I think the title of this conference is in fact ahead of this talk, if we want to answer how do we go forward, I think the most important question to ask is: "Why have the movements in the past failed and what are we doing differently?" I think there's been a great struggle against state power and slavery from instance it began to impose itself, especially in the 20th century with Marxist and anarchist attempts to build a new society. But all these efforts failed to revolutionize the world. I believe, the reason why these experiments failed and the Kurdish liberation movement has a better chance of success than any of them, is that it recognizes that the basis of slavery, the basis of power in our society is based upon the slavery of women, upon housewifization, the most profound of slaveries.

Within revolutionary movements the problem of collaborators is always a vital one. Collaborators are those whose identity falls into the categories

that the movement seeks to liberate, but who work with the enemy. I will say this clearly: every patriarchal man is a collaborator of the dominant system. Every man who exploits the physical and emotional labor of women is in essence petty bourgeois and a most dire threat to the revolution. The man who fails to free himself from patriarchal perspective always has something that the society power offers to him. It was probably most clearly illustrated to me when one of the hevals who teaches here, expressed how the Barzani government attempts to make male kadro from the Kurdish liberation movement defect. Kadro are those who swear their lives to the movement. They forgo private property and so on, when an important part of this there is a rejection of heterosexual relations, at least for the time that patriarchy exists. This may seem an extreme method to western eyes but it's one that is effective in disrupting the exploitative relation that exists between men and women throughout revolutionary movements worldwide.

So, what is offered to male Kurdish liberation fighters? A wife. If we ask how it is that a person who is once free can return themselves to the system of slavery, then we can clearly see the difference between male and female revolutionaries. For the male the answer is obvious, he can always be offered a wife. But the system has nothing to offer to the free woman, even if granted wealth, she will more likely not be a servant of a man, and this is what makes her so dangerous to the system of power. This is the reason that revolutions which do not recognize women slavery as the basis of the system of power, of this system of exploitation, have failed to revolutionize the world. A revolutionary man who does not discard the patriarchal self that he has been molded into, a process which is not done easily and will probably continue throughout his life, always has something to gain from the system of power: the wife slave. Some in the West may say that this perspective is not one that applies there. But rather than the system of patriarchy disappearing in these countries, it has changed form and become more dispersed.

The Marxist parties have seized power over and over again throughout the world, but they have always left this relation, the family relation, essentially untouched. In this way they have failed to make a true break with 5000 years of slavery. When Abdullah Öcalan said: "My life's work is the creation of the free woman", this is not a flight of fancy or guilt from an old, imprisoned man. Rather, it is a recognition that if in the 21st century there is to be a revolutionary subject, as so searched after by the theologians of the left, then it is the free woman who is this person.

The battle of Kobanê was fought and won on a knife edge and I'm of the certain belief that if it was not for women, the battle would have been lost. And with this loss the collapse of Rojava would be more likely than not. This is why the Rojava revolution is a women's revolution. Not only because it scents women, but because it was won and defended by women. Perhaps if parts of the Spanish revolution had scented women in the same way the Rojava revolution has, Madrid would be a more fitting companion to Stalingrad and Kobanê in a common slogan. The notion of free women embodied in the character of the martyr Sakine Cansız and first coming into solid form in the formation of the women's army in the PKK in the nineties has reached its maturity in Rojava, and I do not think the world will ever be the same again. Even if tomorrow Turkey, Barzani, the Regime, the Americans, the Russians and whoever else came to drown Rojava in a river of their own and our blood, it will not destroy the notion of free women. For women across the world see YPJ, the first women's army that fights for women, they take note, and they make their own plans.

One of the prompts given to me by the heval who asked me to speak here was: "Why are you here?" My answer is that I see the revolution here as fundamentally different from all of those who have come before. And it is because of this we have a great chance to success that we've never had before.

For those reasons I've stated above, the lack of internationalist women who come here is especially bitter for me. This is a women's revolution; I think it has the most to offer to women. So I encourage all revolutionary women, if it is legal in your country, to come to Rojava, serve and defend the revolution which offers our best hope of defeating the patriarchy, state and capital and allow yourself to be revolutionized in the process because someone who could never take a step back in the process of their own liberation becomes someone who can never take a step back in the liberation of themselves and the liberation of the society.

Long live internationalism, biji berxwedana YPJ, and serkeftin!

Session V — Capitalism Can be Overcome: Imagine the “Unimaginable”



Moderator **Silke Helfrich** is a freelance author and scholar, co-founder of Commons Strategies Group and of Commons Institute e. V., for many years representative for Central America, Mexico and Cuba of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Editor of *Wem gehört die Welt?* (2009), *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State* (2012) and *Patterns of Commoning* (2015), a topic she is currently researching.

5.1 Cora Roelofs

Agriculture and Food: Contradictions and Solutions

Call for Papers: Ecological Economy, city and countryside



The food we put into our bodies to nourish and delight is generally a product of global capitalist destruction, dislocation, and death.[1], [2] In 1952, Murray Bookchin warned of these contradictions in his article “The Problem of Chemicals in Food” and in his first book, *Our Synthetic Environment*, published 10 years later.[3] In the lead essay in the collection *Radical Agriculture*, Bookchin

describes the transition from traditional agriculture to capitalist agriculture, not only as a change in methods of food production, but as a shift in social ecological process.[4] In place of a process wherein collective meaning was made out of an essential task of survival, capitalist agriculture made food into money, commodified land as real estate, and turned soil into a natural resource for exploitation. Food and farm labor became exchange va-e-a process “divorced from its roots in the totality of nature.” Bookchin reminds us that “land is neither a resource nor a tool, but the *oikos* (home)” to ecological life. This perspective is the starting point of a combined project of liberatory food production and restoring the ecological basis of our existence and economies.

However, Bookchin’s critique is not only of capitalism, but of civilization itself. Modern civilization denigrates nature, labor, women, peasants, collective culture, and wildness,7avouravor of cities, urbanity, technology, commodities, control, fossil-fuel dependence, competition, and the individual. This is what Abdullah Öcalan calls the “disease of modernity,” that must be re-balanced in the transition to a liberatory society.[5] Öcalan suggests that “The only way that cities can become fit for human dwelling is to transform them into ecological villages.” He cites his own personal positive

experience of country life and values, and calls for the building of ecological consciousness necessary to construct a liberatory society. These ideas echo Bookchin’s proposals for self-managed, “human scale”, voluntarist communities that rely on decentralized eco-technology and “traditional wisdom,” so as to avoid “the social distortions that have pitted town against country, mind against work, and humanity against itself and the natural world.”[4] In considering food and agriculture, we have an outstanding opportunity to holistically address many of these issues in the context of practical demands.

In this real world of today, how can Rojava, now the Democratic Federation of North Syria, achieve food sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and security, in a non-extractivist manner that feeds all the many and diverse people in a just and liberatory society? How can Rojava functionally address the root causes of hierarchy, exploitation, unfreedom, and ecological destruction embedded in agriculture itself?[6] Can Rojava make real the South American dream of “buen vivir,” or “collective well-being in harmony with nature”?[7] The solutions are not only about reducing scale, going organic, growing vegetables, and forming cooperatives. The revolutionaries must resolve many more issues simultaneously: food-related labor (particularly women’s); the requirements of “modern agriculture:” fossil fuels, chemicals, and genetically-modified seeds; food imports and exports; water and irrigation; diet; trade; development of cities and agricultural villages; and the attitudes of the people to nature and toward the changes necessary for a social ecological existence.

Much can be learned from both the food-related successes and mistakes of other revolutionary and reform movements. Cuba offers many relevant lessons in its successes in large-scale agroecology, a urban gardening, and reduction of dependence on fossil fuels while assuring food security.[8], [9] The mobilization of agroecology knowledge and people during the “special period,” shifted Cubans to a more vegetable-based diet and increased physical activity. A renewed labor intensity in both food production and transport and a healthier diet resulted in a globally-unique phenomenon: population-wide reduction in chronic disease. Unfortunately, some of these gains have been reversed by the restoration of the flow of oil from Venezuela and increasing food imports from the globalized food trade.[10]

In a Mexico chained by neoliberalism, militarism and soda, there endures a food sovereignty resistance. It survives in the indigenous communal land ownership system (ejido) and the land reforms resulting from Zapata’s call

for “Land and Freedom” more than 100 years ago. It is evident in the growing agroecology practice among peasant farmers and the on-going rebellion against the ravages of the North American Free Trade Agreement which are too many to mention here.[11]–[13] In the face of the insane U.S.-Mexico food dystopia, the beautiful feminist permaculture vision of the Zapatistas asserts “The cure for the femicide machine is the forest garden.”[14]

Land reform is the obvious goal of the peoples’ revolutions.[15], [16] However, according Knapp et al., land transfer from the Syrian state and some large landowners has already taken place in Rojava and has resulted in a variety of ownership and usufructuary arrangements.[17] Of more concern, then, is the current and projected future reliance on dam-fed irrigation, oil, and wheat which present a challenge to the building of a liberatory ecological society in North Syria.[17], [18] In the historic meeting of the Mesopotamian Ecology Movement in April 2016 in Bakur, the participants not only rejected capitalism, they opposed dams, the treatment of natural resources as commodities, “unhealthy nourishment” such as industrial food products and GMO’s, and use of fossil fuels -- all of which represent “the move away and alienation of people [from] their original nature and life.”[19]

I would argue that, just as women’s liberation is the revolution, liberation from environmentally destructive energy, chemical and biotechnology products *is* the revolution. The philosophical and the practical could be united in plans to plant fields of sunflowers and invest, not in a new diesel refinery, but in biodiesel processing.[20]) With or without a resolution of this issue, Rojava can immediately benefit from both what Bookchin called the inherited wealth of “traditional knowledge” and the ever-evolving decentralized ecological design and technology on offer from the global agroecology and permaculture movements.[21]–[24]

Human biological nature directs us toward hoarding, excessive consumption of high-energy foods, and convenience.[25] Recognition of these tendencies suggests intentional development of more liberatory social practices around food such as collective consumption and preference for less processed foods, as well as frequent community celebrations of the source of all wealth: labor and nature. Rojava is blessed with perennial food crops to celebrate (olives, nuts, grapes and dates) which can serve a significant role in an ecologically sound diet. Development of ecological consciousness can support a culture that rejects the extruded snacks, soda, excessive meat,

polished rice and wheat, sugar, alcohol, soy and corn oils, and the resulting global chronic disease epidemic that follows from the global capitalist “nutrition transition.”[26]

The commitment to the sharing of food inherent in Kurdish and other cultures of the region is the building block for the ecological solidarity and gift economy which is the basis of a liberatory society.[27] Capitalism, endless war, and neoliberalism have created both the niche-organic foods desired by the winners, and the desperate labor required to supply them.[28] In order to liberate society from fossil fuels and to liberate the global migrant peasant and servant class from a life of endless toil, more people must be involved in food growing and meal production. Not only would this shift in the division of labor facilitate consciousness of where and how food is produced among the “urbane,” but it would also better assure the rights of country folk to education, leisure, art, and the excitement of the city. Such a commitment also gives value to and expands what Braudel called the immense “volume of basic activity” of material life, or the infra-economy that is outside of market relations which has been sustained traditionally by women’s unpaid labor.[29], [30]

Climate change, in particular the increased temperatures and reduced precipitation that directly threaten the region, is the crisis that is the opportunity that can be addressed through agriculture and other related ecological restoration projects that support food production.[31]–[33] In the documentary film about the Sadhana Forest permaculture community in Haiti *One Day Everything Will be Free*, it is clear that enormous good can be done with the resources you already have, even if you currently regard them as “waste.”[34] And, as radical as this suggestion is, I draw special attention to the potential of “humanure” to grow food and reduce water consumption.[35] As Marx anticipated in his analysis of the ecological crisis caused by division of city and country...to sustain the fertility necessary for a liberatory society, it is necessary to return the city people’s waste to the country and compost their wastes with agricultural waste.[36]

Destruction of the commons and the wild, and the people’s displacement from these common and wild lands has made people poor and dependent. This did not begin with the European enclosure of the commons. It is inherent in the agriculture and the division of labor which arose out of necessity to support the temple building projects of the Neolithic revolution.[6] In the story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis, all the trappings of

hierarchy, militarism, and patriarchy are on display in the state's control of a storable surplus. In the modern state, the use of "pauper relief" is a main tool of enslavement.[37]

James C. Scott argues for the importance of the wild and "wild people" (or non- bureaucratically controlled people such as pastoralists, nomads, gypsies, and hunter/gatherers), as a bulwark against the collapse of any society.[38], [39] He observes that improvisation, informal processes, practical knowledge that are the stuff of people who live outside of "civilization," are essential tools for surviving unpredicted social and ecological crises, and also the unintended consequences of "big schemes" that societies tend to undertake to solve their food problems, such as dams and irrigation for agriculture. Thus, the "re-wilding" of tamed lands that can support both wild nature and "wild" people is a Bookchinian "form of freedom." [40]: an essential condition for both personal and collective autonomy both within and outside of our best efforts at ecological modernity. While important for both "escape" and as a source of free food, wild and cultivated nature also facilitate both ecological and cooperative consciousness. In park, garden, meadow, forest, orchard, lake and desert, even the tamed "moderns" may nurture connection and appreciation for nature and collective-wellbeing in the sharing of its gifts.

Radical confederal democracy is a pre-condition but may not be sufficient for a liberatory society which ends the war between humans and nature, city and country, and bodies and minds. Long-term perspectives are hard to integrate into human decision-making, especially in societies in crisis. Conscious of our tendency toward short-sightedness, we must challenge capitalist modernity, but also we must "build the new" ecological consciousness into the development of a moral society. Both the contradictions and the solutions lie in the food on the table.

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5.2 Friederike Habermann Commoning and Self-Sustenance



Thanks to Silke for this nice introduction.

I have decided to forego PowerPoint and to trust your imagination instead. The picture which I would like to ask you to create in your imagination is an iceberg, and you can see that iceberg both above and beneath the water. And you may perhaps know that the part above the water is much smaller than the part beneath the surface that normally remains invisible. This is an image which is very often used in feminist economy. The part we can see stands for the market economy, for what we are used to call “the economy.” And the part beneath the water consists of all the things that flow into this market economy, that lead to its profits, but that are not salaried according to the capitalist logic. Beneath the water, we find caring activities; those, of course, we also find above the water: nursing activities, care, nurturing activity. These are generally paid less than the “productive” activities, because they are harder to streamline. It is harder to extract profit from them. Furthermore, beneath the water we find the “services of nature,” as the economic sciences really call them, that is, what we extract and incorporate from nature. Equally under the water are all activities which are not paid for with money. This is called subsistence.

A while ago, I had a discussion with a woman from Oikocredit. That is an institution sponsored by churches that say, we don't want to just give money, we want to contribute aid to self-help in the global South, and that's why we give these credits. One has to read in these papers for a long time to find out that almost all these credits are microcredits, which almost all go to women, and that the average rate of interest of these credits is 37 percent. Confronted with this, the reaction of the woman was, “That's simply how things are in the global South. The interest rates of the other credits are even higher.” What is being absorbed here are exactly the unpaid activities

of these women. One might thus say that two thirds of all labor takes place under water, is not seen, and is not paid in accordance with capitalist logic.

On the other hand, it is actually wrong to talk about “labor.” The concept of labor only came into the world when alienated forms of labor, wage labor forms, came into being. If we look at the European languages, it is possible to trace back how this expression came about, and in all of them it is clear that it is loaded with hardship, suffering, and dependency. In Russian, the word originates from the word for “slave”; in French and Spanish, it comes from *trabajo*, an instrument of torture. In English, “labor” essentially means wage labor, in South Germany and Austria, one “labors” from illnesses because being ill also means having to carry a heavy burden. And labor also goes back to *travail* and the image of an orphaned child that is forced into doing hard labor.

In feminist discussion, there is often talk about the “whole of life.” Ina Pretorius, a feminist living in Switzerland, talks about the rediscovery of the self-evident, that is, we have yet to rediscover that we labor because we are forced to do so, because we get money for becoming active, because something has to be done. Of course, there had been expressions for activities in these languages even earlier, but not abstractly, as labor. The *Whole of Life* is also the title of a book by the commons specialist Brigitte Kratzwald from Austria, and the sub-title is *Self-Organization between Pleasure and Necessity*.¹ Thus, we become active because we like to do something, but also because it is necessary. The archetype in the feminist discussion is the mother-child relation: The baby cries and the mother and of course also maybe someone else takes care of the child. I want to quote something that David Graeber said in this regard in his speech here in 2015. He said that money decides what counts as labor. Money determines the value of an activity and even determines whether this activity has any value at all. And he added that in a society without money, all activities can possess value because this measuring tool no longer exists. He also pointed to the fact that even in capitalism, actually even in structures determined by wage labor, at the ground level all activities unfold in a communist fashion inasmuch even two wage laborers who are standing next to each other will never say: “Give me that hammer and I’ll give you this, that or the other thing in exchange.”

1 Brigitte Kratzwald, *Das Ganze des Lebens: Selbstorganisation zwischen Lust und Notwendigkeit*, Ulrike Helmer Verlag, Sulzbach 2014.

This means that this very efficient way to simply contribute without immediately thinking of an exchange still remains the taken-for-granted form in which we become active in everyday life.

I always quote David Graeber extensively in my lectures when it comes to destroying the myth according to which humans, individual humans have bartered in societies before there was money. He hilariously makes fun of the fact that each economic science book says right at the beginning, one person, the shoemaker, has the shoe, and the baker has the bread, and how can they now solve the riddle of how to exchange these things. It is all a totally complicated mess, in particular if the baker doesn't want the shoe but a potato instead. And David Graeber say, how stupid do you need to be to try to set up a shoe shop in a place where there is no money. Rather, the fact is that no society has ever been detected where there was individual barter before there was money.

There have been very different systems as to how contributions were made, very egalitarian and very hierarchical ones, but there was never any individual barter within a society. Already more than 100 years ago, Rosa Luxemburg talked about this discovery, but all the same the myth continues to be circulated that at one time, this was the order of the day. Behind this is the attempt to prevent us from questioning things and to get us to regard many of the things in our society as simply natural. And of course, this was another point that David Graeber warned against when he said that this kind of naturalization is dangerous because it leads us to stop calling things into question.

I've already had to denaturalize labor and to denaturalize exchange and barter here, and now I want to do the same thing with property. The opposite of property are commons, and in this regard, I also talk about communing. How did property come into the world, Rosa Luxemburg asked, when everywhere in the world up until the beginning of modernity, there had been "communist structures," as she called them. That is, there was no land ownership, but rather, in the villages the land was divided up according to various systems which were of course different from one another. But the land was under the control of those who cultivated it. But then came the enclosure, meaning that the nobility privatized the land in order to conduct long-distance trade with sheep. The dispossessed people had to move to the cities and became proletarians. Marx has talked about the "doubly free laborer"; different from slaves, he is free and therefore also free

to sell his labor power. But he also has to sell it, because he is free of any means of production, actually meaning that he is “free” of the commons. This is because the people were driven from the land and deprived of their means of subsistence.

But one can also add that the wage laborers must be triply free, because they must also be free from caring activities, because otherwise they wouldn’t even have the time to sell their labor activity. One could say that they have to be multiply free. They must also be free of being needy, in need of caring activities. This means that the image behind all of this is exactly the one of the “performer,” the *Leistungsmensch*, the person who can do all this.

How did property come into this world? With regard to this, many thinkers turn to John Locke and his famous 1689 work *Two Treatises on Government*. Here, he begins § 27 of his “Second Treatise” with the words: “Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men...” That means that even as late as some 300 years ago, this was his natural presupposition. Furthermore, he argues that each human has the ownership of “his own person,” and furthermore, that “whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in,” he can rightfully call his property on account of the labor he has invested. In this way, property is the result of labor. But the last sentence of this one paragraph once again reads “at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others.”² That is, one could actually say that he isn’t arguing for ownership but says that possession is defined by what satisfies our need, or what we need, while the others still have enough to do likewise. Property relations like the ones we have today, where eight men have as much wealth as half of the rest of humanity, cannot be legitimized by this.

Beyond these thoughts, three feminists have pointed to the fact that for John Locke, it is a quite peculiar kind of work that legitimizes ownership. Adelheid Biesecker, Christa Wichterich, and Uta von Winterfeld write: “The water belongs to the one who scoops it, and not to the one who nurtures and maintains the source.” The pears belong to the one who gathers or plucks them, not to the one who cares for the thriving of the tree. Caring- and nurturing activities of all sorts which by their very definition do not lead to the appropriation or conquest of a good but to its maintenance and

2 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, edited and with an Introduction by Ian Shapiro, Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, 111-112.

flourishing do not legitimize ownership. To this very day, it is overwhelmingly activities by women that do not legitimize ownership.

But in colonization, too, this was the decisive argument for stripping the colonized people of their land. At the end of the 19th century a Canadian so-called "Indian official" argued: "Since the indigenous people have failed to live up to the divine commandment to subdue the earth, their claims to ownership are untenable." John Locke also writes that "the turfs my servant has cut [...] become my property, without the assignation or consent of anybody."³ In his Treatise, there are already people who are not capable to own property: the servants, the women, the people in the colonies. He explicitly says that they cannot be part of civil society because the purpose of civil society is the conservation of property.

So, what were the proceedings applied to deprive the people of their land? We all know what the practices were. But how were they pushed into starting to do labor? With the exact same procedure of taking their land away from them. Earl Grey, who we know today mainly as a kind of tea, said: "In order to make people work, one first needs to take their land away, and second, one must levy taxes." Thus, people needed money to pay taxes. In order to live, they actually didn't really need any money. This argument according to which there are people who are capable of ownership and other people who are not is closely connected to enlightenment. Accompanying the call for freedom, equality, and fraternity, we find "scientifically" bolstered legitimizing discourses that purport to show that women are "of course" totally different, that black people are likewise totally different from white male citizens and are thus mentally and physically unable to be free citizens of the nation.

Different from what may have come across from the abstract and announcement of this talk, our task does thus not consist in standing the iceberg to its feet or in turning it around by an angle of 90 degrees, but rather, in melting it down. We must overcome the logic of exchange that is over and over again telling us what is labor and what is not.

Right now, in Germany a young movement is unfolding in which various reservoirs of people merge who have already for years been talking about "living utopia," about living free from money, about living free from the logic of exchange, about unconditional sharing. And these reservoirs are

3 Ibid., 112.

right now uniting into “Move Utopia,” where the German subtitle is, “For a World According to Abilities and Needs” — that is, it is meant to be collective, open, trusting, emancipatory. A big get-together for a world according to needs and abilities is planned for June 21 to June 25 and is to take place in Eastern Germany, on the river Müritz on the “Kulturkosmos” premises. See the website www.move-utopia.de.⁴ With this, the old demand of a society in accord with the needs and abilities of its members is to be brought back to the stage of history. Let me read from the self-conception of the organizers:

“We share the vision about future conditions, a vision which aims at overcoming human isolation and building new forms of living together. If we share our needs and talents, a new kind of relations can emerge which recognizes individuality as the basis of our togetherness and builds on it in order to enjoy our differences from each other.” I will skip the rest and will instead just quote the last sentence: “We are celebrating the experiment of lived utopia in order to face the global problems of our time in a way that goes beyond nations.”

What we see here are practices in social movements that I have already tried to articulate a couple of years ago by the word “ecommoning.” This is a word-play combining the English word economy and another English word, commons. The principle, the first main principle that that defines the commons is possession (Besitz) instead of ownership. In German, we have the official definition of ownership as something that I can sell and from which I can exclude people without any good reason. Possession is what I need and use. Thus, the land lady is the owner whereas the tenant is the possessor. During the subprime crisis in 2008, situations arose in which people had to move out of their homes and had to camp in front of their empty houses because there wasn’t even any demand for them. In Cuba, until 2011 “ownership” of houses didn’t even exist. You couldn’t sell a house — but it could also not be taken away from you.

One can think about land in the same way. I’ve often spoken about the commons as land, in the way that Tashunka Witko, better known under the name of Crazy Horse, expressed it: “You don’t sell the land on which people tread.” You can apply the same though to objects, and just a while ago, we heard the joke by Cora about libraries as ecommoning: the principle

⁴ For what happened, see <https://move-utopia.de/de/r%C3%BCckblick/2017>. A new meeting will take place from July 15 to July 19, 2020 in Harzgerode.

of a library where things, where books are shared can also be extended to many other objects.

Another phenomenon are the so-called give-away shops where people can bring what has “fallen out” of their possession because they simply don’t need it anymore. One can say it has fallen out of their possession. The bring it to a redistribution point, and others can take it, without money, without any logic of barter, without having to give anything in return. We can also think about infrastructure in this way. On the one hand, there are things that are not in rivalry, such as music; it can be copied and multiplied. Then people say that there are goods that are in rivalry, as, for example, our toilets here. But we are of course not going to use them all the time simply because they are for free. The same thoughts thus also apply to goods like this.

Thus, as they say, all you can eat, not all you want to eat; what we can eat is, after all, limited. Our needs are limited. And with regard to the means of production, there are now many economists who are telling us that they are rapidly becoming so decentralized that any central(-ized) production becomes increasingly unimportant. And as a second principle on the side of our activities, the Whole also means contributing instead of exchanging or bartering: Our desire to become active, to liberate.

And at the root, these two principles: contributing instead of exchanging, possession instead of ownership are nothing but the old demand that said: From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. At the beginning, there are our needs, because we always come into this world as needy creatures, and then we feel the need to play a part in this world.

All of this boils down to lived practices, and Move Utopia is designed to be built into a movement beyond this particular meeting. All the maxims that we see here in the room, “Capitalism Can Be Overcome,” “Beyond the States,” and the thorough reanalysis of our old logical binarities between labor and laziness, egotism and altruism — all of this is central in this movement. With all of this, we are actually moving the already existing practices of other social movements to the center, just as we see right here at this conference that we are not excluded from it if we are unable to pay the conference fee. This is the practice that is increasingly adopted by all movements: Contributing instead of exchanging. What we want to achieve by “Move Utopia” is to move this to the center instead of saying, whenever we begin to talk about economic things, we once again think in terms of

money and the logic of exchange. Instead of this, the center is what we experience in our movements and how we can contribute in a way that is motivated from within to the trust in our ability to build a world in accord with each person’s needs and abilities. This is something we should do all across our movements. Thank you.

Dr. Friederike Habermann, economist, historian, and author. Having been in Chiapas in 1996, she became active in the global resistance movement. Today, she lives in a commons based project. She developed the ‘subject based hegemony theory’, arguing that identity categories are re/constructed within the struggle for hegemony. Her recent book: *Ecomonomy* (2016).

5.3 Eleanor Finley

Local decisions and regional democratic confederalism (breaking with the logic of nation-state)

From Here to There: Global Revolution to Transcend Capitalism and the State



We are today at a historic moment when people are questioning the hegemony of the state and exploring grassroots democracy as a primary and most legitimate means of political action. The task at hand is not simply to create marginal “alternatives,” but to leverage a coherent, coordinated assault on capitalism and the state, exploring our commonalities and our differences. For such an assault, it is

key to map out the organizations and peoples in this network. In the following comments, I would like to discuss this family of social and political movements in regard to their proximity and historical location to the state. In doing so, my hope is to arrive at a better understanding of ourselves, a movement of movements, and what this historical moment.

First, let me define more clearly what I mean by ‘a politics of democratic confederalism’. By ‘politics’, I do not mean the mechanisms of bureaucratic control which drive state power. Nor do I mean the Shakespearean dramas of manipulation and intrigue which unfold in the gilded state houses and parliaments of nation-states. By ‘politics’ I mean a set of institutions and practices that enable ordinary people to collectively administer their everyday lives. I invoke the traditional sense of the word as management of the *polis*. This kind of entity — the polis — is far more than a piece of land or territory. The polis is the streets we walk on, the water we drink, the birds we hear in the morning. It is our neighbors, our children, our principles, and way of life. The polis is a community, and thus ‘*politics*’ are the means the institutions by which we collectively manage such a community in a free and ethical way.

Democratic confederalism has arisen to describe this arrangement of institutions. Yet in reality it has two meanings: On the one hand, democratic confederalism refers to the actual existing project of stateless democracy in the Middle East. Mr. Ocalan, seeking an answer to the Kurdish question, arrived at democratic confederalism for a multi-cultural, feminist, and ecological paradigm for the region. And of course, this paradigm being practiced in Rojava. On the other, democratic confederalism refers to a structure or model that associates popular assemblies through delegated councils and a shared set of principles. The most basic institution here is the civic assembly. These are regular communal gatherings open all adults within a given municipality (such as a town, village, or city borough) for the purpose of discussing, debating, and making decisions about the community as a whole. There is a crucial distinction here between power and administration. *Power* means the authority to actually make policy and major decisions; power rests with the assembly. *Administration* refers to the daily tasks and plans necessary to execute those decisions. On a confederal model, administration of a particular project within smaller mandated councils.

Confederation is how we scale up this arrangement of shared power and transcend the dichotomy of individualism (autonomy) and collectivism (dependence). It differs from representative democracy because it is based on *recallable delegates* — not representatives. Delegates cannot make decisions on behalf of a community. Rather, they bring proposals *back to the community*. In Volume 1 of *Politics*, Aristotle speaks of a “partnership of several villages,” that unite for the sake of “the good life.” Just as all organisms are socially and ecologically interdependent, a truly democratic political system this uses this “bottom-up” mechanism to create webs of interdependence. This mechanism could be used, I would argue, to a global scale.

While I will continue to use the phrase “democratic confederalism,” one should point out that these politics exist — and perhaps must necessarily exist — through multiple vocabularies. For instance, the term ‘confederalism’ receives quite a bit of resistance in the U.S. where it has strong associations with our Civil War and the mass slavery of African peoples. This why, when political philosopher Murray Bookchin was developed his concept of municipal confederation in the 1980s and 1990s, he offered the terms *libertarian municipalism* and later *communalism*. In Latin America, indigenous groups also practice forms of confederation by many different

names; the Zapatistas meet at 5 central “*caracoles*” — snail shells — whose spiral represents that communal partnership.

This politics I am describing is completely incompatible with the state. And here we run into with a very serious problem because we live under a global state society. Not only that, we live in global state *capitalist* society which dictates our material conditions and the terms of life and death. Worse yet, through climate change, this global state-capitalist society is quite literally destroying the Earth we need to survive. Human beings are at a historical juncture when either we dismantle the historical institutions that oppress us — or we allow the last 60,000 years of natural evolution to unravel.

What does it mean for humanity to dismantle the state? Here, I want to explore a kind of variation in the groups struggling for democratic confederalism. Set aside ideas about “the West” for a moment, and instead consider those peoples who live marginal to or central to some state or another. The last 500 years — and especially the last 100 years — has seen a great deal of shift in the proportion of people living under the control of states — and this has implications for the strategies available for those seeking to make *democratic confederalism* a global reality.

The institution of the state first emerged some 5,000 years ago in the Mesopotamian city of Uruk. It is also said to have appeared independently in Egypt and later in the central Andean highlands and the Pacific coast of South America (1,300 B.C.), as well as Northern China (1,700 B.C.). Without over-simplifying things too much, it is not inaccurate to say that as soon as the last glaciers receded, human beings immediately set to work advancing complex forms of social and technological development. This is not to say the emergence of the state was inevitable. The emergence of the state is counter-acted by the emergence of another, far more heterogeneous and resilient kind of society: stateless society. By virtue of their very existence, “indigenous” and supposedly “small scale” peoples such as Kurds challenge the hegemony of the state and market-driven ways of life. They are mobile, flexible, and often loosely networked into tribal federations. It has taken several thousands of years for the state to get a grasp on the majority of humanity — and it is not until the last two centuries that the majority of humanity has lived in sustained contact with the state.

For a very long time, written records have reproduced the civilizational narrative that these people are backward, primitive, and reflecting a “lower”

stage of humanity. However, today this is changing. In his books, “The Art of Not Being Governed,” political scientist James Scott makes a very important argument that cultural forms such as oral history and nomadism are in fact technologies developed over the course of millennia to avoid the state. People do not want to become subjects of states — as the invention of democratic confederalism attests. Yet this goes against every impulse and hegemonic assumption of our political-economic system today.

Ecology is very central within this historical drama. In Kurdistan there is a folk saying — I am sure many of you are familiar with it — “Kurds have no friends but mountains.” This is an incredibly insightful phrase. If the technology of the state is militarism and warfare, the technology of the stateless has been nature and the terrain difficult natural environments, especially mountains.

Unfortunately, over the past 100 years, the power and influence of the state have coalesced. In just the last 50 years, it has become virtually impossible to live beyond the control of one state or another. As a result, a new type of movement has emerged: stateless peoples who share a common history, culture, ethnic lineage, and language who existed prior to or outside of the state. In the 20th century, these groups have interfaced with Marxism at particular historical junctures and evolved into national liberation movements. This kind of movement has had many successes but is often discursively limited to specific territories. They are primarily looking for independence or “autonomy” from the machines of capitalism and civilization yet are subject extreme and intense forms of violence.

The Kurdish Freedom Movement fits this type but has also been distinct because of their awareness of the state as a historical problem. Kurds and their ancestors have been dealing with the state since Marduk defeated Tiamat and Gilgamesh ventured into the great Northern forests. This historical proximity to the state and its origins has enabled many cultural, ecological, and economic preconditions which make the legitimacy of non-state politics in Kurdistan possible — including forms of tribal assemblies and inter-tribal confederation.

In other words, alternatives to the state and capitalism have always existed. The challenge is thus not so much to invent ‘alternatives’, but to cultivate a dual power that can erode the legitimacy of capitalism and the state from within. The Rojava Revolution was possible because the Kurdish Freedom Movement (the PKK) spent decades among ordinary

people, dedicating countless hours to talking to farmers and villagers. As I understand it, Mr. Ocalan would get up at 6 or 7 AM, spend one hour with his doves, and then take the entirety of the rest of his day talking to and educating people. He believes very strongly in his fellows as the agents of historical change, and for good reason — building a dual power in this context meant reviving ways of being and practices that already had a strong place within people’s historical memory. When the strength of the Syrian state came to an all-time low, the movement was poised to leverage that popular legitimacy into popular control.

What does that mean for the rest of us? Down in the lowland valleys, we have become bloated with individualistic fantasies and aimless longings. Stripped of our traditions of self-governance and means of subsistence, we are not only political subjects to the state — we are also its cultural, psychological, and emotional subjects. In this context, the autonomy sought by tribal and other stateless peoples has little meaning. Consider for a moment the extra-legal assemblies of Occupy Wall Street or *Nuit Debout* (and I can say this as someone who was present for a good many assemblies of Occupy Wall Street). They were noble, but absurd. This was so not because they lacked clear demands or because their decision-making processes were wrong, but because they possessed no clear path to achieve actual power. Our fundamental struggle is not to fortify ourselves against state-capitalist society — but to engage the far more difficult task of transforming it from within.

Murray Bookchin was very conscious of this when developing his theory of *libertarian municipalism*. In order to create a crisis of legitimacy with the state, Bookchin argued that social radicals must enter the realm of municipal governance and present an explicit, “unyielding” program to formulate popular assemblies and confederate them. Local political institutions — with their investment of power and rootedness within pre-state political forms — hold the potential to house a dual power system. Many people hear this and think participation in municipal elections involves participation in state machinery. However, this is not true, “any more than establishing an anarcho-syndicalist union in a privately-owned factory involves participation in capitalist forms of production.” Existing bodies of municipal governance must be wrested from the hands of the state and used not only to govern, but to isolate and expose the state for the parasitic anachronism that it really is.

We too once had politics. The peasant uprisings of medieval Europe are often portrayed as unstructured, spontaneous revolts (that is if they are portrayed in Western culture at all). But a more careful reading of these events (such as studies done by leftist historians E.P. Thompson or Sylvia Federici) reveal that these events in fact represent well-coordinated, communitarian responses to the encroachment of state power. Here, in Northern Germany and the Baltic region, the Hanseatic League functioned from the mid-1300s until the 1500s. This is just one of countless communitarian political forms that contested the power and legitimacy of the nation-state in Europe. All over the world you can find histories of popular governance like subterranean roots. Now is the time to unearth and cultivate them.

To conclude, let me say that of democratic confederalism must become an international movement or it will perish. The revolutionary task at hand is not simply to present alternatives — that is, to create marginal, isolated movements for regional autonomy. Rather, it is to create a coherent, interdependent movement for global liberation from capitalism and the state. In *Manifesto for a Democratic Society*, Mr. Ocalan evaluates the fragmented nature of feminist, ecological, and cultural movements in the U.S. and Europe, writing, “They resemble the nestling partridges that have just escaped modernity’s iron cage — We are continuously worried about when and where they will be hunted down. But they are important movements up hope. They will have much to contribute when the main alternative movement has developed.”

We must become that main alternative movement. A humanity split and divided by capitalism and the state must today act as two great waves crashing together. Although the politics of democratic confederalism will go by many names, in the *long durée* there is little separation between the Kurdish Movement or other nationalist movements or the little partridges just escaping iron cages. There is only humanity coming to terms with itself. Today, we engage in a process of collective authorship over our interdependent future, an expansion of the human capacity to transform and enhance the world we share.

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5.4 Halime Kurt

Matriarchy: Breaking the Logic of Patriarchy



In order to understand the many creatures, phenomenon or objects on this earth, humans have felt the necessity to define them. Every phenomenon, creature, object or issue that can be defined is easier to solve. For this reason, concepts are important. Concepts constitute half of the work in the definition, identification and resolution of the problem or the phenomenon. There are multiple ways and methods to do this. Kurdish People's leader Abdullah Öcalan's basic method is based on four main phenomena; mythology, religion, philosophy and science.

When we take a dialectic approach to phenomena from these four basic perspectives, we also open up our minds to what is impossible. Once we open our minds to what is impossible, we get closer to the truth. It is important to underline this; humans have always struggled to find the reality or, in other words, the truth. The truth or reality has yet been concealed by man mind by the 'impossible' way of thinking. When we consider our lives, many things have been said to be 'impossible'. For example, on issues such as, freedom and balance of equality between man and woman, societal transformations of human, socialism and communal life, we often come across with the concept of 'impossible'. On one hand, it is said that 'the modern world's people are egoist, they don't think of other people but themselves'. On the other hand, the capitalist system blames the person who thinks about and shares with another person as being stupid and primitive. Therefore, rather than being defined as 'primitive' and 'stupid', the individual prefers to be egoist and selfish and of 'the modern world'. It's because, here, being 'modern' has been accepted as equivalent to being progressive. In other words, the truth of being human is concealed by the creation of the male mind. The worst part is that we believe this. We believed and lost our reality and our truth.

Today, we are pushing our limits to reveal this truth — ‘the impossible’ and define ourselves by the pursuit of the truth. If we weren’t already, we wouldn’t be able to challenge capitalist modernity. At the beginning of this challenge is the struggle against the patriarchal mentality and the system created by it.

The patriarchal mentality is the origin, cause and the result of all hierarchical systems. It is the reason for all societal crises, wars and chaos we have today. Kurdish people’s leader Abdullah Öcalan, emphasizes that nothing can be analyzed independently from the past by stating, “History is hidden in today, and we are hidden at the beginning of history”. In other words, the events and phenomena we encounter daily are current as much as they are historical, they are historical as much as they are current. Such as the ongoing crises of capitalism and chaos. The Capitalist Modernity which is created by patriarchal mentality is the most terrible system that has plagued humanity and if it cannot be overcome it will bring about the end of humanity.

In the history it’s mentioned that the humanity sought and longed for an era. It is expressed that in this age people lead a free, equal and a happy life. In this era, where creativity, partnership and communal values considered sacred, has been called the ‘golden age’ and as far as it’s known it is the Neolithic Age. The social model of the Neolithic was shaped around mother-woman culture. In other words, the creator of this era is the woman. This period is also called natural society or the matriarchal order.

This era’s social values people longed for have been destroyed by the male mind as much as it can be destroyed, the remaining has been denigrated and its sacredness is discredited. The downgrading of social values brought about discrediting of the woman. Transition to patriarchal order as a result of the seizure, plundering of social values belonging to woman, breaking up and destruction of mother-woman culture has been defined by the masculine mentality as a progressive stage that must be experienced. Later, in the historical flow written by the patriarchal mentality, each social stage was described as an age and each age was made superior to another. In other words, slavery was defined as a stage twice as “humane” and more progressive than the Neolithic society. This is where the tragedy of humanity lies.

The biggest revolution that made human to become human is village and agricultural revolution.

Even today, humanity is making use of the inventions of Neolithic and continue their lives. It is not understandable to compare Neolithic where incomparable precious developments, inventions and societal developments took place for humanity to a slave society shackled by the chain. How is it possible that Neolithic is seen as backward, 'primitive,' 'barbaric' than the slave-owning society? What is progressive about being chained up? Which is barbarism? Forcefully working in the fields in a chained way or being in the nature and taking up as much food as you need to eat? Now many of us will immediately talk about social progression, the surplus product and the social division of labor and the class division it has created. We will say that we have to experience these phases. Because that's what we were taught. But how true is that?

The patriarchal mentality that created the order of exploitation, directed its hunting experiences against woman and started exploiting woman after exploiting the nature for the first time. The reason for this given to be the biological difference of woman. The woman was seen weak and crushed. Patriarchy is a system fed by bullying. It first usurped the woman later woman's labour and shaped itself over that.

It should not be forgotten that patriarchal system forms the basis of classification. Patriarchy is built on the culture of mother-women, which was scattered, plundered and usurped as a result of the strong man shaped by hunting, meeting the old experienced man and cooperation with shamans.

Therefore, comparing a life in touch with nature and wattle with communal values with a chained, shackled life is a great distortion. This is the biggest trick man mind has played on humanity and the humanity has been going through self-estrangement for the last five thousand years.

When the social alienation and blindness created by masculine mind is expressed by woman the response is, "You disparage manpower but what you want is woman power instead. Where is equality and democracy here?" Even the most progressive man mentality says, "Societies don't flow backward. Demanding matriarchy is demanding primitive life. You are insisting on backwardness. What are we supposed to do, live naked like they did in Neolithic? Shouldn't the kids have a father? Let immorality be knee-high?" Such most fusty ideas can be put forward by the masculine mentality. This distorts the reality of woman and mother-woman culture that has been shaped around woman. Also saying, "When woman is in the power, won't she oppress? Is there anyone in the power that does not oppress? ", is to

conceal the reality and bloke any possible thoughts in advance. The male mind puts this idea into our subconscious almost on daily basis.

Of course, when we say matriarchal system or Neolithic Age, what we are talking about is not “let woman be in power, exploit and let women oppress for a while.” This is does not allow us to understand the truth of the woman’s thoughts. As a matter of fact, this truth is not understood until now and patriarchal mentality has been trying to prevent this truth from being revealed. Why? Because it wants to convince us that the patriarchal mentality and logic cannot be eliminated. According to this logic, exploitation exists in nature and big fish eats small fish and the strong one lives. The weak one serves the strong. And the male mind tells us that this is “the law of nature”. Is this the reality? Is nature really like this?

We know the destructiveness of the logic that the patriarchal system has created. However, we learn the creativeness and constructiveness of matriarchal system though indirectly and partly through the archaeological excavations. Therefore, there is not even adequate data to understand and comprehend the systems correctly. Even if we take this as our starting point, we can see how the patriarchal mentality buried woman alive together with her history and erased her from memory. This explains why woman was condemned to an unwritten history and darkness. Therefore, what we mean by matriarchal system is not, “let the woman be the power now and let her oppress man”. What we mean are the social values. The perception created by the values of mother-woman is a model of social organization. To give an example, no one is useless in the culture of mother-woman. There is neither a work to the death nor a retirement and expulsion from the society after a certain age. To work to the death and live the last few years of your life outside of society and think that this is a reward is the worst thing patriarchal mentality has done to society and this is best applied by the capitalist system.

Now the question is this; Can patriarchal society be overcome? Is it possible to break away from the logic of this mentality which has been engraved in our genes for the last five thousand years and shaped our thinking? If possible, how?

What we will express here may seem simple to us, but fighting the masculine mindset is not easy. It needs a rational approach, belief, patience and perseverance. Let me tell you, at first, you shouldn’t give up. If you give up, they will crush you so much that you wish you were never born. That

is indeed what is done to women. Many women in the world wished they had never been born in the face of masculine mentality. Many preferred to be a stone rather than being born a woman. This is a tragedy for women. Being the creator of humanity, being the creator of bread, it is the greatest pain for women to be reduced to a point where her humanity is questioned, and she is disciplined by hunger and poverty by the patriarchal mentality. If being the founder of society established around mother-woman culture and then being excluded from society and being trapped in a house is not a tragedy, what is? This is the dimension of the tragedy; that the patriarchal mentality thinks the women deserve. What about the dimensions that start with women and attract other structures of society? There is no need to go too far to see this. The current environmental disasters, the nature's distress signals, wars, migration, social collapse in humanity, moral-political destruction, population problems, hunger-thirst, the gap between the poor and the rich, the gap and imbalance between people and society, people and nature-- all of these accelerate the collapse of our world. And the reason for all of this is patriarchal logic. In other words, humanity creates its own end through the patriarchal logic and mentality.

The Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan says, "Whatever is human made can be resolved by humans". All the phenomena mentioned so far — social problems, chaos and crises, destruction and so forth — are human made and therefore can be solved. For a man to see woman as biologically weak and to make his physical power a means of bullying and colonizing her, means there is no connection with nature. Nature has an inner balance, but human nature has no such inner balance. From the moment woman was colonized, the social balance of human was lost. When we talk, we say that society consists of two genders. But there is only one gender, not the other. Society is halved and disabled. For this reason, one needs to know, why one should first get rid of patriarchal logic. Do we really know why we should get rid of patriarchal logic? Do those that have been expressed so far convince us? Do we believe it should be overcome? What did the patriarchal mentality make us lose? The first phase to break away from the patriarchal logic is questioning, the second is the suspicion of everything we hear and see and the third is the road to follow to the end.

Firstly, it must be understood that the biological phenomenon in the woman/man dilemma is not a weakness but a difference. Without differences, existence cannot be realized. This applies to different societies,

beliefs and cultures. Differences are our justification for life. Once we understand or accept that the phenomena between woman and man is not a weakness, we begin to solve our social blind points. And our social blind spot is woman. It is the relationship networks woven around woman. Phenomena such as exploitation, despotism, inequality, fascism and militarism are the result of a network of relationships around women. But at the same time, freedom, equality, democracy and socialism are also all around this network. Therefore, the key role in overcoming the sexist society is men. Transgression of the sexist, hierarchical and ruling logic of man requires not only the struggle of woman but also the struggle of man.

At this point, man does not want to see the problem in himself and he does not. In the past, we have stated that many problems are women's problems and that women should struggle to change them. This includes changing and transformation of men. But now we can state that the problem is not unilateral. One's freedom does not free the other. Just as it is not possible for a woman to feel free besides a man who thinks himself free, it is not possible for a man who thinks himself free to actually be free besides a slave woman. This is a bilateral struggle. But in this struggle, man is far behind than woman. A man cannot make sense of what he has experienced. He is unable to understand how he has been condemned to slavery while in an eternal 'freedom'. Our goal is to raise to awareness of this. When this awareness occurs in men, the solution develops. In other words, emotional and analytical intelligence must form a synthesis from woman's perspective. Because both of them cannot respond to the social problems and problems of our time. But partnership of the two will lead to a great social transformation.

Halime Kurt is an activist in the Kurdish freedom movement and was imprisoned in Turkey for 10 years for her political views. She is also an activist in the Kurdish women's freedom movement in Europe. She was a journalist and a women's news presenter on the now closed MedNüçe TV channel. She continues to work as a journalist.

5.5 Salih Muslim Muhammad

Breaking with the Logic of Militarism — Self-Defence and Legitimate Defence



Self-defense is an existential function of every organism, including primitive organisms and plants, which also have mechanisms of self-protection. The weaker the means of self-defense, the more likely the organism is to be destroyed. Some plants protect themselves by thorns, while others secrete chemicals. The human body protects itself through the immune system and the production of some defensive cells or bodily secretions. Since human societies are living beings, they also require specific means and mechanisms of self-defense.

Prior to Neolithic society, human groups practiced self-defense in the face of nature and its disasters, perhaps by moving to safe areas or highlands or sheltering in caves to avoid flood or predators. Similarly, with the development of Neolithic society, when there was an abundant livelihood and equality, there was a collective protection system for a stable society in the face of those dangers. However, with the emergence of the monopoly of power and wealth, the forms of risks and conflicts between the ruler and the ruled, the looter and the looted, also developed. So, the looted needed a means of defense to protect their values, whereas the ruled needed means of defense to protect their freedom and independence. Here, the concept of legitimate defense emerged as a natural response to confront the aggressor of material and moral values. The other side had the means of violence to expand their monopolies. Therefore, their actions cannot be described as defense or legitimate. However, the means of defense and aggression remained the same, which meant equal chances of victory or loss, and the determining factors were physical strength and talent.

With the development of class society, i.e. a ruling class monopolizing power and wealth and a governed oppressed class, the defense of monopolies as well as the legitimate defense took a more organized form. Here, the

ruling class search for an ideological mask to legitimize its practices. The concepts of divinity and sacredness emerged and societies were divided into slaves and masters or gods, different from the masses by their blood and ancestry. The Sumerian ziggurats, and later the majestic temples, are the prominent example in human history.

As the class society developed, there were changes in the meaning of self-defense as well. There was a difference between the democratic society and the ruling class. On the one hand, the democratic society represented the vast majority of the population and the concept of self-defense or legitimate defense meant the protection of society against the monopolies of power and wealth. This type of self-defense was used in a passive manner and remained limited, individualistic and responsive to direct attacks. On the other hand, the other form of self-defense was exercised by the ruling class to defend itself against other groups, trying to attack the groups to which they belong or control. This situation was apparent with the establishment of city-state in the Sumerian era. Each city had its own ruling class, which monopolized power and wealth and tried to attack other neighboring cities to expand its influence. In other words, one city was the aggressor and the other was practicing the legitimate self-defense of its monopolies or system. This model was further developed and continued in various forms to this day in accordance with the development of means and methods of warfare.

The democratic society, which represents the majority, has throughout history practiced legitimate defense by organizing its ranks and educating its members. If society was compelled to use violence as legitimate defense, its means of defense (arms) were very poor and were the remnant of the ruling powers' arms. Therefore, democratic society remained oppressed by the forces exercised by the ruling power, especially after the ruling powers armed themselves with ideologies that legitimized their practices, both in terms of repressing society through religion or through invasions of other territories to expand their influence and seize the wealth and power of others. The leaders of democratic society were forced to seek refuge in caves or remote places as a mean of self-protection from the brutality and aggression of the ruling powers.

Thus, there was a great deal of confusion about the concept of legitimate defense. Do the ruling powers in a society represent the democratic society? Is the self-defense, exercised by the ruling powers, legitimate? When the ruling powers use violence internally, do they defend society and its

values? In their wars, do the ruling powers exercise legitimate defense of their societies? Or are they engaged in wars to expand their monopolies?

On the other hand, the ruling powers strengthened their position and control and developed means of repression and war after they had the reasons to do so. After the reliance on purely physical forces and the use of equal means by the aggressor and the defender, the ruling powers developed swords in the Bronze Age, and then came the invention of iron, so swords became available to both the ruler and the ruled. Then, the means of war and defense evolved to transcend the capacity of the democratic society and became monopolized by the ruling powers. That is, the manufacturing of weapons and military and defense equipment turned into a monopolized industrial sector to the extent of financing some conflicts and fabricating wars to expand the industry and investments to achieve more profits.

These wars and conflicts between the monopolizing forces of global and regional power and wealth have brought disasters to the democratic society, which became the victim, paying the highest price in all wars. This trend must be brought to an end. After two devastating world wars in the 20th century, the world realised the dangerous direction that humanity has reached. The world became threatened with extinction. With the development of human awareness and mentality, they began to put restrictions on the use of weapons and established institutions such as the United Nations. They also encouraged civil society institutions and the promotion of democracy to give voice to the communities that need protection and legitimate defense. However, all efforts have not yet reached the desired level.

Based on the above and the recent developments, we can summarise the legitimate self-defense in the following:

1. The legitimate defense starts from deterring and weakening the aggressor in all aspects. In other words, undermining the aggressor's foundations. This begins with the mentality and ideology that the aggressor relies upon. Whether the ideology or mentality is to maximize profit regardless of the means, or to utilize their organized tools such as terrorist organizations, which they believe that they fight for the sake of God.
2. At the level of the communal system and the consolidation of democracy, we believe that grassroots democracy must permeate societies. As democracy is a cumulative culture, it must be systematically taught in society and citizens must be trained on how to exercise it. When the

democratic society is the decision-maker, the decision to wage wars and invade other societies cannot be made.

3. To take the necessary measures to prevent the occurrence of wealth monopolization. This is attainable through a communal economy, which by nature does not resort to militaristic industries. Instead, it is concerned with developing and improving the living conditions and welfare of society rather than wars.
4. To make legitimate defense a task of society (i.e. remove it from the private sector) and prepare society so that it can defend itself against any attack.

Perhaps what we have suggested are ideas to achieve a peaceful and democratic society in the long term. However, we believe that this is the only way to rid of the complication that humanity is currently experiencing as a result of the practices of the ruling powers in the 21st century. The most important thing is that the above-mentioned can be achieved gradually and systematically.

The Rojava Experience

In Al Qamishli uprising (Serhildan Qamishlo) during 2004, We had the experience that the Syrian regime’s forces directly attacked the Kurdish people, forcing them to organize their ranks as a measure of self-defense to counter attacks. Over the years, these attacks continued, the last large attack was during Newroz in 2010 in Al Raqqa, when the regime’s security forces attacked civilians. The people organized themselves and established defense units, which formed the nucleus of the People’s Protection Units (YPG) and the Women’s Protection Units (YPJ), officially declared as defense forces following the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution in 2011.

On the ground, there was a greater need for multiple self-defense systems. We can define them as follows:

1. The YPG and YPJ are well-trained units both ideologically and professionally. They work as small units and groups in each town and cities of Rojava and are directly linked to the Rojava Military Council. They have their own headquarters and training centers far from populated areas. Unlike regular armies, they do not have a traditional hierarchical structure or salary. Joining the YPG and YPJ is voluntary.

2. Self-Protection Units (conscription) are local units of local people in each canton. Members receive 9-month military training and then return back to their villages and towns. The aim of these units is to train locals and enable them to defend themselves when necessary. They receive salaries during training and service. They are associated with the Defense Authority of each canton.
3. Society Protection Units are small units of local men and women in each village and neighborhood in cities and towns. They are supervised by the communes they belong to and are responsible for the protection of their local community. They co-ordinate their activities with the Defense Authority of each canton and do not receive any salary for their duties.
4. Asayish (police) are units associated with the Interior Authority of each canton. They also receive professional and ideological training and are concerned with the security of society, which is somewhat still traditional. They are paid and receive their salaries from the Administration.

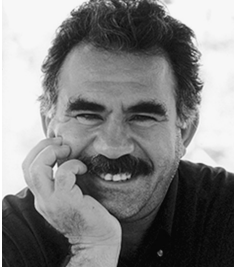
What is important in all of the above-mentioned units is that members work in the self-defense system and receive ideological training. They also feel as active members in society, charged with the duty of protection. In other words, they are members of an integrated system.

Salih Muslim Muhammad was born in 1951 in a small village called Sheran (Arslan Tash) just outside of Kobani. He graduated with a BA in Chemical Engineering at Istanbul Technical University in 1977. He has been active in politics and as a result was frequently imprisoned and tortured by Bashar Assad's intelligence services both in Damascus and Aleppo. He was one of the founders fo the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in 2003. In 2012, he was re-elected co-president of the PYD, together with Asya Abdullah.

Session VI —
Democratic Modernity:
Perspectives Ahead

6.1 Abdullah Öcalan (Kurdistan)

Democratic Modernity: A Perspective for Today



I have great respect and attachment to the positive democratic heritage of history and believe that creating the now through history has an indispensable methodological value. I do not have the same respect and attachment to the thought and action — no matter what the value and consequences — that does not grasp history to be now and now to be history. Because I do not believe in such thought and action, I also am aware that the future passes through now, and that those who cannot analyze and unravel the now, cannot have a future. I say this to emphasize that democratic civilization is neither a “Golden Age” fantasy lived in the past nor a utopia envisaged for the future. I interpret it as something that we need in our thoughts and actions daily, or even at every moment of our life.

A special feature of democratic modernity is that it is a system that keeps the door open for legitimate ways of change. Every member of the society can contribute to this change wherever and whenever they want. What is important is to be aware that change in democratic modernity will not be possible without an all-comprising effort of the historical society. It will be useful and strengthening for the explanation and the praxis, to describe democratic modernity in three basic dimensions.

a — The Dimension of Moral and Political Society (or in other terms, democratic society)

Democratic society is moral and political society’s state of contemporary modernity. It is a society that experiences diversities in its widest form. In democratic society, without being confined to a uniform culture and citizenship, each social group can live together on the basis of differences

formed around its own culture and identity. Under such conditions one can attain a lot more freedom and equality.

The bourgeoisie as a class has done away with morals and imposes its class sovereignty on the society in the name of law down to the finest detail. Moral society is substituted with a society based on laws. No doubt there is room for law within society, provided that it is fair; in this sense law is indispensable. But what is being imposed on the society by the state in the name of positive law is not impartial law but the dominant class and nation monopolization and nation-state normativity embodied in that law. Destruction of morals is synonymous with the destruction of society.

When the nation-state's gigantic bureaucratic administration replaces politics, the democratic functioning of societies is destroyed. A society where nation-statist administration has infiltrated even the finest pores of the society is a society that has been paralyzed. A society that has abandoned all its common affairs to the bureaucracy is under a serious paralysis mentally and in terms of will-power.

Modern democratic society is the society that thinks and discusses on all its social affairs and through decision-making implements what it says. It therefore proves its superiority by materializing diversity, multiculturalism and equality on this basis. Thus, democratic modernity does not only wage class struggle in the correct manner but at the same time (not following into the tragic historical mistake of real socialism) it does not suffocate its own society by creating a new power or state. In this manner, it shan't fall into this historical trap. It is aware that the more it becomes the power and state itself, stratification develops at the same rate. Therefore, the class struggle is lost. This awareness must be identified to be one of the fundamental features of democratic modernity.

b — Dimension of Ecological-Industrial Society

The basis of the economic and industrial dimension of democratic modernity is ecological. The industrial and ecological unity of use value and exchange values are essential for the economic dimension of democratic modernity. The limits of industry are two-fold, ecology and basic needs: it does not exceed these limitations. This situation will give rise to an industry which is ecological industry. An industry that is not ecological is an unecological industry. Due to these reasons ecological industry is a main principle.

Thousands of eco-communities can organize themselves as an economic unit as required. The agricultural land, that has lost its character of being a unit due to being divided into pieces, needs to be reorganized keeping in mind the eco-industry principle. The creation of eco-communities is one of the most fundamental economic principles of democratic modernity. The village or the modern village, as an eco-community, can regain its existence as economic units at an ecological scale. In cities, too, similar eco-communities can be formed. Democratic modernity is in the position to replace community-based ownership, that has never lost its communal existence throughout history, in the foundation of moral and political society under modern conditions. Thus, play its historical role successfully.

c — The Dimension of Democratic Confederalist Society

Democratic modernity has the democratic confederalist system. One can define it as a non-state political governance. This is the characteristic that defines the uniqueness of this system. The reason why state continuously tends towards centralism is due to giving priority to and basing itself on the interests of the power monopolies. In confederalism the opposite is the case. Democratic confederalism gives priority and bases itself on the society, not on monopolies. This is why it should avoid centralization as much as possible.

Democratic confederalism as well as having the potential to overcome the problems stemming from the nation-state systematic it is also the most appropriate tool to politicize the society. All communities, ethnicity, culture, religious community, intellectual movement, economic unit etc. can configure and express themselves autonomously as a political unit. Each self-hood has the chance to create a confederation from local to the global. Each self-hood or federal unit is unique in that it gives participatory democracy or direct democracy a chance to be implemented. It takes its strength from the ability to apply direct democracy. Just as nation-state is the negation of direct democracy, democratic confederalism, on the contrary, is the format with which democratic modernity is formed and made functional.

The nation-state is essentially a military system. All nation-states are the product of very cruel, numerous and long-term wars that have been waged on the inside and outside in many different forms. A nation-state that is not a product of wars is unthinkable. Not only during its establishment

phase, more so during its institutionalization and disintegration periods the nation-state covers the whole society both from the inside and outside with a militarist armor. The institutions of power and state — called the civilian administration — are essentially a veil that cover this military armor.

Democratic confederalism can only stop this militarization originating from nation-state through employing the tool of self-defense. Therefore, the self-defense dimension is not a simple case of military defense for societies. It is intertwined with protection of their identity, attaining politicization and democratization. We are living under the global hegemonic era of monopolies where the whole society is militarized in the form of nation-state. Thus, democratic modernity can only respond to this hegemony by encompassing the whole society on the basis of self-defense and democratic politics at all times and places and through its own self-systematic consisting of confederal networks.

Tasks in re-building democratic modernity

During the age of finance capital, capitalist modernity has its most profound crisis which has attained permanency and can only be sustained through crisis management. In order to ensure that democratic modernity comes out of this crisis successfully, it is vital that intellectual, political and moral tasks are successfully realized in re-building democratic modernity.

1. Intellectual Tasks

Intellectual and scientific contribution is vital to the re-building of units of democratic modernity. This vital need cannot be met by the intellectual capital of the market. This need can only be met through those who base themselves on a new understanding of academia and science. The conditions of crisis can only be overcome through new intellectual and scientific endeavors. When we consider that this crisis is global, systematic and structural, it becomes clear that the way out of it must involve global, systematic and structural interventions.

An institutional revolution for social sciences, in other words: restructuring is essential. One can learn from the numerous revolutionary experience that we cannot get anywhere by imitating the former patterns, institutions and sciences or through employing eclecticism. One of the foremost lessons to be learned from the past is that democratic modernity must build itself together with a radical enlightenment revolution. The four hundred

years old ideological hegemony of modernity does not have the capability to overcome its crisis which is as profound and persisting as its material cultural hegemony. Without the intervention of democratic modernity in terms of its content and format, it is inevitable that the crisis shall play a more corrosive and dispersive role. Democratic modernity has to make its own intellectual and scientific revolution on the basis of absorbing the positive aspects of the intellectual sparkles and revolutions from the civilization period as well as the anti-modernist intellectual initiatives.

One of the conditions of this revolution is to create institutions. For a global scale success of the intellectual revolution there is a need for a new institutional centre on the basis of lessons learned from the historical experiences we have counted. In order to address such a need, a World Confederation of Culture and Academies can be built. Such a confederation should be built in a free geography and should not be dependent on any nation-state and ruling power. Additionally, it must be against the capital monopolies. Its independence and autonomy are essential. The participation can take place from each local and regional-national academies on voluntary basis and in accordance with its program, organization and activities. The confederation can have institutions with tasks based on local, regional, national and continental levels. Women's academies may also be beneficial so that together with a similar content, the unique aspects of women's reality can be analyzed scientifically.

2. Moral Tasks

The task to reconstruct morals is not only a question of whether the century or modernity can be maintained, but also whether the society can be sustained as well. It has become quite clear that the global crisis cannot be overcome with the power of law's might. Going back to religiousness is also a lost cause. We should understand well that if the moral fabric of social nature is not made functional once again, there is no way for modernity to come out of this global crisis.

It is within this framework that we should renew the way we understand the social role of morals and the fundamental moral teachings should come together against the attacks of the capitalist modernity for success. Against the monsters of the civilization and modernity that are trying to engulf all sanctities and moral teachings it a requirement to establish a Confederation of Global Sanctities and Moral Studies.

3. Political Tasks

During capitalist modernity, power besieges the society internally and externally and turns it into a kind of internal colony. Power and nation-state, which is the fundamental state form, is in constant battle with the society. The politics of resistance stem from this reality. This state of capitalist modernity's all-out war makes the democratic modernity alternative more urgent and necessary.

The struggles against the system for the last two hundred years have either failed or are at an impasse due to their perspective on power or because they left political arena empty and idle. Although they have left behind a precious legacy, due to their mindsets and structures they can not offer an alternative, neither to the modernity itself nor to the systemic crises. Being an alternative can only be possible through developing one's own system against the three pillars of modernity: capitalism, industrialism and nation-state. As the opposing system, one can propose democratic society, ecological industry and democratic confederalism under the general name of democratic modernity. If the legacy of democratic civilization and the opponents of the system come together within the new system, its chances of success shall increase.

Democratic confederalism offers the democratic nation as an alternative. It is a fundamental tool in the solution of ethnic, religious, urban, local, regional and national problems arising from modernity's monolithic, homogeneous and single-color fascist society model which is implemented through the nation-state. All ethnicity, religious understandings, urban, local, regional and national realities are entitled to exist with their own identity and democratic federate structure. The democratic nation model democratizes the social relations that have been fragmented by the nation-statism. It makes them re-conciliatory, peaceful and tolerant.

The Kurdistan revolution has been re-formulated through the concept and theory of democratic modernity. If this revolution is continued thoroughly, it will not only attain a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. It will also mean that the local solution that this revolution offers, shall become the most sound compound of a universal solution. Each revolution is at the same time a summary of all the past revolutions; but it also means to surpass them. The Kurdistan revolution, both in terms of its potential and the powers that it struggles against, requires to settle accounts with both history and modernity. If this is done successfully, it will make the

most important contribution to universality. Middle East is a strategic stop on the way to universality. It has become more than clear that the Middle East cannot be ruled by the present understandings of nation and power. In the resolution of national and regional problems the Democratic Nations Union awaits to be formed.

Just as there is a need for Regional Democratic Nations Unions there is also a vital need for World Democratic Nations Union. These should surpass the nation-states and should replace the UN.

Democratic Modernity and Women's Freedom

We continue to emphasize that if *jin* and *jiyan* cease to mean woman and life, this reflects the disintegration and collapse of the society. In the absence of an analysis of this reality and a mobilization of everyone for freedom, the constituents of the revolution cannot play their role properly. The fundamental argument of democratic modernity is that the liberation of society can only be attained through the analysis, liberation and freedom of the phenomenon of women. During the process of becoming a democratic nation, women's freedom is of immense importance. Freedom of women is the freedom of society. And a society that becomes free is a democratic nation. The essence of it all is the woman-based democratic nation, and its ability to maintain itself through its own strength as well as forming its ideological and organizational strength and to have its own political authority. It is a *sine qua non* of democratic construction that women generate themselves ideologically and politically as well as strengthen themselves mentally and psychologically.

In conclusion, analyzing both myself and the civilization divinities that have been disguised in many different ways also meant the unraveling of the difficult conditions. The capitalist civilization forces do not have any political or moral limits as they try to crush us. I questioned the capitalist civilization through the paradigm of democratic modernity. Under this passionate, feast-like atmosphere I got to meet myself, the people I belong to, humanity and the universe. This at the same time is to become aware. This in turn means to fearlessly live life in all its richness and to strongly defend it.

Abdullah Öcalan is the founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Since his abduction in 1999, and under severe conditions of isolation at İmralı Island Prison, he has authored more than 10 books which have revolutionized Kurdish politics. He has written extensively on history, philosophy and politics and is regarded as a key figure for a political solution of the Kurdish issue. He has contributed to the discussions on the quest for freedom and has coined democratic confederalism as a non-state political system. He is also the theorist of democratic modernity. His writings have been translated into 20 languages.

6.2 Sonia López, People's Congress (Colombia)



Good afternoon everyone, welcome all women and men who have gathered here before this stage because we share the desire to change this economic system and the suffering it causes humanity.

We send a very special greeting to all political prisoners who are imprisoned today all over the world for thinking differently and for daring to act against this system, against capitalism.

And of course, we also honor all the social leaders who have been assassinated by the regime, to all those women and men around the world who are doing their part to build a better world.

We thank you for the invitation to share in this event. During this conference we have spoken about what capitalism has done to humanity. We have been asked to share the experiences we have lived through in Colombia, particularly in the central eastern region, the department of Arauca, where we have not only resisted, but also built creative alternatives for life in the midst of this war that capitalism has imposed on us. This is an experience we are humbly building and living as youth, women, indigenous peoples, peasants, the LGBTI community. We are committed to this construction, born in the heat of the struggle, as an alternative form of life for the transformation of society into a different world. We are not academics nor theoreticians. We have had to learn through our work day by day. Our goal, then, is to share this experience, hoping it can be useful to strengthen other processes in other parts of the world and that it may help to unify the struggles of peoples for their liberation.

The people's social and political mass movement in central eastern Colombia is part of the congress of the peoples, and it is a way in which the Colombian people have been organizing themselves to build a world where exploitation, social class division, marginalization and exclusion can be overcome once and for all. Yesterday, a comrade presented on the current context in Mexico, and we had a chance to share many aspects of the social

and political context in Colombia. In Mexico, the pretext for war is to fight against drugs. In Colombia, the pretext for war is the fight against insurgents, against terrorism... but the reality is that it is a war against the people, it is a war for the control of territories, through militarization, paramilitarization, it is a war against the people, against the social movement, through assassinations, through prosecutions, forced exile and threats. And this war has a goal, which is precisely to protect the interest of capitalism in our territories. These interests, based on plundering and the dispossession of our lands, the plundering and dispossession of natural goods and the commodification of public services: of the right to health, the right to an education, to housing ... Today there is talk of peace and, at the international level, it is said that we are living in a post-conflict stage, that the last day of war was last year in October. However, the reality in our territories is completely different. There is talk of peace and that an agreement has been reached with the insurgent organization Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, by its initials in Spanish), that they are currently conducting a process of dialogue with the National Liberation Army (ELN). However, at the same time they are publicly calling for aggression against other peoples, with declarations in support of aggression against Syria, against Venezuela, against different peoples who have been resisting oppression and exploitation. They talk of peace, but in our territories people who dare to organize are repressed and the people in general suffer under oppressive public policies passed at the expense of the fundamental rights of the Colombian people, with a tax reform and a the law of ZIDRES (Areas of Interest for Rural, Social and Economic Development, by its initials in Spanish). The process of militarization and paramilitarization continues; the legal attacks on social leaders continue. Last year we counted more than 120 assassinations of social leaders and human rights defenders, this year we have already 30 deaths. That is why this conference is very important. It allows us to share our fears, but also our hopes; to share our dreams and the efforts that each and every one of us is involved in to overcome these conditions. Our history as a social organization is closely linked to all the struggles of the peoples since the European invasion to our American territory, here in Colombia. Struggles that allowed them to overcome and build alternatives day to day, in freedom and autonomy. We have great ancestors connected to this territory, connected to the peasant struggle, during the years of political violence in Colombia, peasants were

expelled from these lands at gunpoint, relegated and expelled towards the mountains, forced to colonize the eastern plains in order to save their lives. These same peasant men and women had leaders who took up arms such as Dumar Aljure and Guadalupe Salcedo, who became role models in the defense of dignity, peasantry and the people. It was an era of State directed colonization in our territory, a colonization which had a goal and that goal was to protect the large landowners so that peasants could not recover their lands. This displacement of peasants towards the east of Colombia was facilitated by the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA by its initials in Spanish). One of the first organizational experiences of peasants was the agricultural cooperative of Sarare, which today has over five thousand peasant men and women associates and provides support not only in the commercialization of agricultural products from associates' harvests, but also helps cover basic needs and the supply of products not available locally. This cooperative was created by the people and exists at the service of their interests. It was one of the first local organizations. But it has also been an organizational struggle that has taken place through major mobilization efforts, such as the agricultural strike of 1972, then later in 1982 and 1986, as well as in the following years and in a permanent campaign against plundering, against exploitation and in favor of the permanence of life in the territory. This experience, or struggle itself, has not only been about presenting demands. It has grown progressively in terms of political content; through organization and struggle. We have acquired class consciousness, we started to self-identify as the exploited and oppressed class, we started to identify as the antagonistic class and we identified our role in the struggle for transformation, in the struggle of exploited and oppressed peoples, in the transformation of society and the current productive relations. Along these lines, then, our everyday work is not limited to fighting for representation within state power. We propose an alternative paradigm to organize the people to exercise direct democracy, through a conscious organization and leadership, qualified and clear as defined by Che. Who explained leaders should be the best, the most honest and well-rounded, but above all, they should be human. It is with these leadership qualities and guided by a collectively decided political proposal, one can take on the responsibility of leading this struggle openly and with determination for the construction of a new society, for the construction of socialism and ensuring sovereignty and national autonomy. Our organizational experi-

ence is based on the plan for life, in which we have organized ourselves in five large social sectors: young students, Afro and indigenous people, peasants, unionized and non-unionized workers, and the civil popular sector that includes women organizations, victims organizations, organizations for the defense of human rights, and the communal sector (which is one of the largest ones we have as organization). We have created a plan for life, which functions as the guide through which we build our projects and enact social, political and economic transformations. This plan for life has been a product of the direct involvement of the community in forums, assemblies, and open city councils -a kind of public stage for denunciations- in the marches and peaceful occupations. In Colombia, peaceful occupations are when a large number of peasants and community members take a stand in spaces held by institutions and make an impact by communicating their position. On the basis of this plan for life we have created what we call embryos of popular power; in which we have been able to create or realize small businesses and a solidarity economy with the aim of ensuring the right to public services and managed directly by the community. One of them is an example at the national and international level, a water supply, sewage and sanitation community enterprise by the name of Saravena Ecaas. This company is not only a leader in terms of quality drinking water and community management, but has an organizational process that exceeds the service provided. There are cooperatives that solve not only the necessities of production but also the commercialization needs for the peasants in the territories, such as Coagro, Sarare, or the cooperative for cocoa bean processing, Corprocor, another example of power. We have managed to build alternative communication projects through the corporation “Trochando sin fronteras” (Walking firmly without borders) and community radio stations such as Sarare FM Stereo or Arauquita Stereo. There are also examples of community organizing to manage pricing of services or unskilled labor through construction unions or through service providers such as Asoenser. In short, there is a wide variety of examples that show us we are able to build something new, that we are able to create alternatives in the midst of a system that oppresses and invades us. But in order to achieve this it has been important and necessary to build our social movement from the grassroots with the active and resolute involvement of the people. Without them, resistance would not have been easy, nor the construction of an alternative. However, as I mentioned before, this vision of self-man-

agement and self-administration has been stigmatized and persecuted. There are well-known examples because we have also mentioned them in the different instances of dialogue with the Colombian State, where we have said that we have not only complaints, but also proposals, proposals for life. Today, in this scenario of peace, we present two new proposals. Firstly, the social table for peace, so that through these strategies for direct involvement people may decide and say what kind of peace they want to build, because the peace we want is not the peace touted by the government or the insurgency. It is a peace with quality of life, with dignified life in the territories and we call on each and every man and woman to become involved in its construction. And today, in this stage, we also present the proposal of an alternative to the policies of extractivism and plundering of natural resources. We propose a great national mining and energy dialogue so that the people in the territories are also able to decide on what they want to see happening or not see happening with the common resources and all the implications this has, not only for nature itself but also for all living beings. And I conclude my presentation saying that today we ratify the need to strengthen the social fabric, to coordinate these plans for life of every one of the organizations in the different territories, the need to enact the mandates that we have been building in these democratic instances and the need to grow into a national agenda for a dignified life; a national and worldwide agenda, of every man and women for a dignified life. Today more than ever it becomes necessary to live out Marx's slogan, who called on the proletarians of the world to unite, to confront this capitalist globalization. Thank you very much.

Sonia López is a member of the Political Movement of Social and Popular Masses, a grass-roots organization in Arauca, Colombia, and represents the Congress of the Peoples (CdP). The CdP aims to build popular power, encouraging organisational political processes that contribute to the strengthening of the popular bloc and committed to the defence of Human Rights. As well as participating in the conference, her aim is to meet and contact other organisations and exchange experiences of struggle, organisation and popular resistance.

6.3 Fawza Yusuf (North Syrian Federation)



For the first time in centuries, on the land of Mesopotamia, peoples have come together to write their social contract and determine their own future. At a time when everywhere is destroyed, the components of North Syria are being constructed. On the one hand, they defend themselves against inhumane forces like ISIS, Jabhat Elnusra, the Turkish occupation and the Syrian regime and try to liberate places like Raqqa. On the other hand, day by day, they are laying the foundation for a democratic and free system. On 21 January, it was the first anniversary of the founding of democratic autonomy. Three years ago, with the leadership of the Kurds, there were areas liberated from the Syrian regime, ISIS and Jabhat Elnusra. We built our own vision. Despite all forms of embargo, military and political attacks, this administration was able to make a big difference. It would be not to wrong to say that it was excavated by a needle. Because of these great efforts several great works were done. Thousands of teachers were trained until every one could be educated in their language and mother tongue. The University of Rojava was opened and, moreover, dozens of courses and academies were organized. There are special laws for women, the co-presidency system has taken over all institutions so that women are not only fighting in the battlefield against ISIS. Women have roles in all areas. She takes her place in the most important positions in politics. More than 70% of women work in the field of development.

In addition, in the field of justice, women have organized themselves. Women have now for the first time in thousands of years have rights with which to defend themselves and have removed the obstacles before their freedom. A process of renaissance has begun in western Kurdistan and northern Syria. Today, based on the experience of three years, the regions of western Kurdistan and northern Syria are moving towards the establishment of a democratic federation system in North Syria. And after eight months

of discussions, the social contract was drafted and approved during the meetings of the constituent assembly that took place on 27-29 December 2016. The social contract rests on an ecological and democratic life based on women's freedom. The Articles of the social contract complement each other. To protect human rights, women's rights and the rights of minorities. In the social contract of the democratic federation of northern Syria, all languages are learned, all faiths freely and equally represent themselves, all have the equal rights. Democracy based on reconciliation is based on decisions. Death penalty is prohibited. The economy serves the community and caters to the needs of society and provides a fair distribution for all citizens to ensure the inclusion of all sections of society. The voter turnout rate is 60% for the general election. More than 40% of the quota is fixed and all constituencies elect their representatives and run for parliament. In order for young people to be effective in the system, the voting age is 18 years. The same is true for becoming a candidate for election. Thus, for Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen, Circassians, Chechens, it is the first time that a free and independent movement has decided on a shared life and this is a major revolution against the nationalist culture of the nation-state. It is possible that some other areas will be liberated and they may also want to join the federation, so we did not find it proper to determine any limits so far.

There are many questions whether this project is the partition of Syria. We openly say that this project does not divide Syria, but instead guarantees the unity of Syria. If unity can be built on freedom, democracy and mutual recognition, such a unity can be continuous. But if unity is enforced against our will, and based on nationalism, religionism and scienticism, it becomes a fake unity and will face the danger of being destroyed every day. The turmoil in the Middle Eastern states is the result of nationalism and anti-democratic applications. We say that Syria is a multicultural country, with many faiths, languages and cultures. Therefore, it needs an internal system that can handle all these diversities, and it is the system of democratic federation. So, if Syria falls apart it will not be the result of this project, but it will be the result of racist, chauvinistic and anti-democratic ideas. If there is freedom, equality, justice, and peace, in such a place why would there be a fragmentation?

The democratic federation of northern Syria is establishing itself on the basis of democratic autonomy, which is in its 4th year. Also, the federation

is not damaging this system, on the contrary, it allows for local administrations to work in a more efficient and a cooperative manner. The most important thing is that the social contract is based on the people's will. The basis of the democratic system of northern Syria has exposed the free, democratic, and equal will of the society. Thus, federation does not weaken democracy; this step was taken to strengthen it.

We want to develop a cooperative system in the economy. In a way that all parts of society benefit from existing products. We do not see the monopoly on goods to be right. So, the system we want to build is based on the social economy. In a way that prevents the exploitation of labor and resources. Also, financial projects that need to be developed. It must lay the foundations for ecological, human rights and socialization. That is to say, actions by which few would intervene in any way would be prevented by law. As well as the water and the land of this country, it is not to buy or sell. Anyone wishing to come forward with a project here must comply with the terms and conditions set forth by the council and submit it to the people's councils.

In a social context, because we are developing a social revolution, social organization is a major issue. Therefore, the communes are the smallest unit of the society. For some time now village and town communes are being organized. Wherever there is a liberated space, there will also be communes. So that in this manner, the people of that area can continue with the necessary activities to sustain their life, and to this end there is some progress made. However, due to being newly established institution, there are still many aspects to be improved and implemented. We are largely focused on community education due to all our problems being linked to problems with our mentalities. And we need to make sure that the content of education is deep. Every individual must know their role, their duty and their rights. This also requires time, effort and knowledge.

We are now preparing for the elections. We must first prepare and improve the election law and start the elections procedure from local elections. Because of the situation in our region, we have not identified a date yet. But we are trying not to be late.

I would like to give some thought to the situation of refugees.

There are two types of refugees. Refugees from Iraq after the liberation of Mosul. And refugees fleeing Syrian cities. The number of refugees from Iraq is about 10,000. But those from places like Aleppo, Deir al-Zour, Idlib,

Raqqa have around 150,000. Of course, this is a huge burden on our shoulders. Due to the economic embargo placed by Turkey and the southern Kurdistan region, our ability to help them is affected by this situation. The United Nations, until now has operated under the influence of the Syrian regime, or are operating under the influence of the other powers fighting in the region. So, their help is very much insufficient. In this sense, there is a humanitarian tragedy. The winter conditions make things a lot worse of course. Some children in Raqqa lost their lives due to cold weather and now even after the liberation of the villages around Raqqa, thousands of people are hungry and thirsty and waiting for help. Despite all this, there is a great deal of effort by the institutions from Rojava to help and there is a great deal that they have done.

Lastly, I can say that we are making several revolutions at the same time, the social revolution, the revolution of democratic nation, the women's freedom revolution and the revolution of self-defense. This is certainly not easy. It is not easy for women and men, who have for hundreds of years have been estranged to their own culture, language and being and for whom the relationship between men and women have collapsed terribly, have been drowned in slavery and oppression, and for the society, who have been left destitute of the need to defend themselves, to re-create itself. In addition the economic, diplomatic and military attacks from the outside complicate the situation. But as peoples from this sacred land we shall build our free, equal and democratic life no matter what the price we must pay shall be.

Fawza Yusuf is the co-president of Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. She is also a member of the committee that wrote the social contract. She has been actively struggling within the Kurdish freedom movement as well as Kurdish women's freedom movement. She has a book written in Arabic called "An Opinion on Jineoloji".

6.4 Quincy Saul — Eco-Socialist Horizons (USA)



Thank you!

I'd like to begin by remembering the indigenous Germans, who over 2000 years ago defeated the Roman empire, at the height of its powers, in the battle of Teutoburg forest, outmanoeuvring and destroying 3 legions of soldiers, and keeping the empire forever to the west of the Rhine. Here Germans all have ancestors who led the fight against western and capitalist modernity.

This story begins when I heard a story about a man who was a leader of a revolutionary nationalist organization, who was captured and imprisoned, who in prison undertook focused and concentrated study. As a result of this study he changed his worldview and politics, and began to advocate for matriarchy, ecological politics, and a rejection of the nation-state. What was doubly amazing about this story is that I had heard it before.

See in the United States we also have an Apo. His name is Russell Maroon Shoatz. When I first heard about Öcalan I had been working for years on a campaign to get Russell Shoatz released from solitary confinement, where he had been held for 30 years. He was a leader of the black panther party and the black liberation army. After being captured, he undertook dozens of escape attempts, on two occasions successfully breaking out of high security prisons. Around this time, he began to call himself "Maroon," the name most commonly used to describe the Africans throughout the Americas who escaped from plantation slavery and built communities of resistance in the mountains and swamps. Maroon studied the history of maroons for decades — it is a powerful history, full of amazing achievements, with all kinds of lessons for today. In 2013 I was honored to be able to co-edit a book of his writings. After a big international campaign, we had a victory and Maroon was released from solitary confinement. It was around this time that I first heard the story of Öcalan. Amazed by the coincidence of politics and experience, I was able to send a book by Öcalan to Maroon,

who follows the situation from Rojava as closely as he can from his cell in Pennsylvania. During a visit with Maroon I asked him what he thought about Öcalan and Maroon grinned and said, “he’s the most dangerous mind in the Middle East!” I got in touch with the International Initiative and sent them a copy of Maroon’s book. They sent me copies of all of Öcalan’s books! And I started reading, and that’s how I got here today.

I will say about Öcalan what I say about Maroon — you can measure the power of ideas by the energy spent repressing them. The power of Öcalan ideas are such that they must confine him on an island all by himself, like a Napoleon!

The historian Lewis Mumford writes “Without a long running start in history, we shall not have the momentum needed, in our own consciousness, to take a sufficiently bold leap into the future ...”

This is what Öcalan has done. He takes us deep back to the origins of civilization, back where humanity first deviated, where it stopped being indigenous, where we turned away from Mother Earth. Then he leads us through the history of this civilization, from Sumer to the US empire, from the ziggurat to NATO, to build this running start, so that by the time we arrive at the precipice of the 21st century, we have enough momentum to leap over the abyss of war and extinction into a new dawn for free life.

In this way Öcalan writes in the prophetic tradition. His vision is a dialectical negation of empire and modernity; a peace plan to stop a world war; a program to rescue the free life from the clutches of slavery and death; and a plan to reverse thousands of years of patriarchal civilization; to reclaim humanity in the very place where it first went wrong from five to six thousand years ago.

This is not a utopia because it is really happening in a real place with the actions of real people. These ideas did not emerge from Öcalan — Öcalan is the result of centuries of struggle of the Kurdish people. Today these people are fighting for all of us. When the YPJ confronts ISIS, we are all on the battlefield. “There are no seats outside the ring,” as Subcommandante Marcos of the Zapatistas has said. They are fighting for the meaning of humanity and history. It is not just the Kurdish women against ISIS, it is Innana against Marduk, it is Gullveig versus Odin, Kali versus Shiva, the Pachamama versus the Pope. This fight the people of Rojava are making a stand against the whole world, their struggle is the culmination of an ancient war between free life and slavery.

Russell Maroon Shoatz writes: “*Only by establishing core of professionally trained, matriarchal, ecosocialist, conscious and fully committed individuals, can an effective foundation be laid to reinvent the commons in a world where the potential for overwhelming violence on the part of others is ever-present.*” or was it Abdullah Öcalan? In solitary confinement across the ocean and a thousand walls, these two men have reached the same conclusions. Few people can survive solitary with their minds intact, and the examples of Maroon and Öcalan are bear witness to the miracle of the strength of the human spirit.

Öcalan takes social science and academic work very seriously. So does Maroon. There’s something I’ve been pondering which I’d like to share with you. The most brilliant and insightful social scientists I’ve ever read both were writing from solitary confinement — Öcalan and Maroon. What does that mean?

On the one hand it says something about the power of their ideas, so great that the state represses them. But on the other hand, it also says something about us, us social scientists on the outside. We have greater and easier access to more information than any previous generation in history. Yet these two men with difficult access to information and books, surpass us all by leaps and bounds. I’m not suggesting that we should try solitary confinement to improve our academic work. It’s that there is something profoundly wrong with the whole set-up of academia.

I think it’s worth reflecting here in Germany where the modern school system was founded. The Prussian model developed by Humboldt and others has been extremely effective and therefore influential. But as Öcalan says, positivism has been responsible for far more death and destruction than mythical thinking. This model of education based on the research seminar, clearly there’s something wrong with it. Like Öcalan seeks to rescue human civilization back where it first went wrong, perhaps here in Germany we can help to rescue the lost soul of our educational institutions by examining their origins here and prefiguring an antithesis to the academy as we know it, a negation of imperial epistemology, an alternative to the forms of knowledge which have been complicit and coterminous with western imperialism.

But my real mission here today, is to bring all of you a message. A communique, if you will allow me the expression, from the mountains of the Venezuelan northwest. I have been traveling to Venezuela since

2009. Now I know you probably have heard only terrible things about Venezuela. The ruling class makes sure that we only hear terrible things, because there is a very important revolution taking place there, a revolution which has in its hands the greatest oil reserves in the world. So, it is necessary for the priests and kings of our times to demonize this revolution, to make us fear it and identify against it... I am here to tell a different story about Venezuela...

Since 2013 the government officially made the construction of an ecosocialist mode of production a goal. This government commitment, along with actions in many ministries, has been joined with a grassroots movement of farmers who are building communes. This movement of ecosocialist communes has been fighting against GMOs for decades. In the last five years, this movement of farmers wrote their own seed law, which is both anti-GMO and anti-patent. It is a law for free life! It was passed in 2015, the first of its kind in the world.

The reason that Venezuela is so embattled and full of contradictions, is the same reason Rojava is so complex and conflicted: They are on the frontiers of a new world.

A year ago, I was there again, along with delegates from 10 countries, 3 continents and 12 states of Venezuela, where we had been invited by the grassroots movement of ecosocialist communes to a gathering titled "Calling of the Spirits, for the convocation of the First Ecosocialist International."

Öcalan lamented that "the Third International could not transcend modernism."¹ His feelings are shared by the Guardians of the Seeds and others who in 2016 dared to "imagine the Convocation of the First Ecosocialist International as... a grand social framework which fosters an exodus from capitalist modernity, a migration toward the ecosocialist horizon"²

The subtitle of this call, "to re-weave Pangaea," may be understood as a maximum expression of democratic confederalism. An Ecosocialist International to coordinate an exodus from capitalist modernity may serve the purpose which Öcalan has identified as, "the most strategic task": "to unify not only all system opponents but also the flow of historical-society... to develop a programme and structures for organisation and action."

I would like to read you some excerpts from this convocation:

The Cry of Mother Earth!
CALL TO THE FIRST ECOSOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL!
REWEAVING PANGAEA

*for the ancestors who, with their lives and struggles, ploughed the spirit
 and the strength of what we now call ecosocialism ... Sanare, Lara, The
 Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela October 31 — November 3, 2017*

The mourning of Mother Earth calls us. Her cry resounds within us. It is ours. This call echoes her cry. We accept our responsibility. We call respectfully on her behalf because we understand and feel the pain: the voice and the cry of Mother Earth. How can we not respond, when we know that her destruction is our own, of all humanity, of all life?

A social relation imposes the domination of a few over the many, and over life as a whole. It is based on greed, on dispossession, on patriarchy and racism, on the generation and accumulation of profits. The few who dominate obey the illusory fantasy of their power and their insatiable, egotistical consumerism. Theirs is the history of progress, which demands and justifies expansive cycles of exploration, exploitation, exclusion and extermination. It is suicidal course of uncontrollable destruction, which occupies and encompasses our bodies and imaginations.

Ecosocialism is one of the voices which responds to the cry of Mother Earth, one among many convocations which emerge from our territories. Ecosocialism is a calling in which many others are evoked and resound; one of the many ways to name the pain of Mother Earth, which claims us, names us, and challenges us to change.

Thus, we call upon ourselves: to liberate Mother Earth and to liberate ourselves: to resist and overcome the social relations that deny and destroy us. ...

Here we share our collective criteria to call upon those who will take part in the First Ecosocialist International. In doing so, we also establish criteria for those who will not take part in it...

We are aware that the few who will take part in the convocation of First Ecosocialist International will not be all of us; indeed, that most of us will not be there. Those who will meet in the first encounter of the Ecosocialist International must humbly realize this great limitation and assume an enormous responsibility: to weave a process between and beyond themselves; to carry it on all the required paths towards the liberation of Mother Earth. Although not replaced nor represented, the many absent may count on the commitment and experience of those present to consciously contribute to a movement

of movements and a spiral of spirals. We seek neither answers nor leaders, but the weaving of many ways to free ourselves with Mother Earth...

We call upon those who are braiding theory and practice to come and share their struggles: for freedom from oppression, dispossession and death; for freedom to live, to weave ourselves to life and to Mother Earth...

We have decided to make the most of four days, between the 31st of October and the 3rd of November 2017, to be moved, and to lay the foundations for a short, medium and long-term plan of collective action...This initial plan of action will be presented both humbly and firmly as the axis of a spiral whose vocation and commitment is to contribute to compose word and action word in harmony, until all are free from project of death that overwhelms us, until all are interwoven again with Mother Earth...

We are in a world war. The strategy of the ruling class is world war. The only way for them to overcome the global crisis of capitalism is to make a world war. But they hope to keep it away from the centres of power, and so the walls will be built higher as the wars grow wider.

In this context, I am inspired to remember the words and the example of the young German woman: Sophie Scholl:

Sophie Scholl: "It's the reductionist approach to life: if you keep it small, you'll keep it under control. If you don't make any noise, the bogeyman won't find you. But it's all an illusion, because they die too, those people who roll up their spirits into tiny little balls so as to be safe. Safe?! From what? Life is always on the edge of death; narrow streets lead to the same place as wide avenues, and a little candle burns itself out just like a flaming torch does. I choose my own way to burn."

(conclusion — return to mother earth as the only alternative to world war)

Quincy Saul is the author of "Truth and Dare: A Comic Book Curriculum for the End and the Beginning of the World," and editor of "Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Schoatz." His articles have been published by Telesur, Truthout, and Counterpunch, among others. He is a co-founder of Ecosocialist Horizons.

6.5 Cassia Figueiredo Bechara, MST (Brazil)



Good afternoon comrades. On behalf of all 600,000 families organized with the MST, I would like to thank the organization of the conference for inviting us. It's a pleasure and an honour to be here. But most of all, I would like to thank the Kurdish people and the Kurdish movement for being such an example and an inspiration to all of us who are struggling and fighting all over the world. Thank you for giving us hope, and to strengthen our belief that no matter the circumstance; we must keep fighting, and we will keep fighting. Thank you.

Before I start my presentation, I would like to give a very brief overview of what the Landless Workers Movement is, for the ones who are not familiar with our struggles, and I find it important because the ideas I'm going to present here are not my own personal ideas, but they are a collective construction built over more than 30 years of struggle and organization. The Landless Workers Movement is a peasant movement that organized landless peasants all over Brazil over three main objectives: The first one is to struggle for land. As you know, Brazil has the second-highest land concentration in the world. The large estates that we call '*latifundios*', the plantations, the monoculture for export, and slave labour were the foundations of the Brazilian state and of Brazilian capitalism. So, to democratize the land in Brazil means a structural change in the system, and the main tactic we've been using over more than 30 years to struggle for land is the occupation of privately-owned land by the landless families. In doing that, we confront the basic foundation of capitalism, which is private property.

The second objective of MST is to fight for agrarian reform, which is much broader than the distribution of land; it includes a change in the mode of production and the creation of new social relations. And the third goal is to struggle for radical change in society. We understand that the socialization of land and the construction of true peoples' agrarian reform is

not possible under capitalism. It has to be part of a broader political project that includes all of society. That's where our struggle goes beyond the economic struggle and takes the form of a political struggle. So, it is through all those struggles that we've been trying to build new models of society that I think can help us to show the path for the new society. As MST, we strongly believe that this new society must be based on socialist ideals; principles that guide our revolutionary project. The first of those ideals is the socialization of the means of production and of the wealth produced by the people, and in this sense, the struggle for land and of agrarian reform must take the form of the struggle against capitalism.

When we occupy a land, and take from the hands of the capital, and of the large states to give it to the control of the people, this land cannot have the same function it used to have when it was under the control of capital, which was to produce commodities for export, exploiting nature, and exploiting the labour of others. When we take it under our control, the land must have a different function, a social function, which means to be at the service of people. In our liberated territories — and when I say “liberated territories,” I mean liberated from agri-business, liberated from the *latifundio*, and under control of the people — we are implementing alternative forms of production and social relations based on cooperative work. And when I say “cooperative work,” I don't mean only to build cooperative structures of production and commercialization — this also, we have many cooperatives in our settlements, but it's more than that — it's to build production groups based on collective work, based on the cooperation amongst each other, such as women's groups, and different kinds of associations.

The second idea that guides us in the pursuit of our revolutionary project is the relationship between human beings and nature. We've been talking a lot during these last three days about how the destruction of nature is inherent to the capitalist mode of production and consumption. Thus, to develop a new socialist society, it's not only a matter of changing hands, passing over the control of production from the capital to the workers, or to the people; it's a matter of changing paradigms of production and of life. In this sense we see that argiculture, as a mode of production that promotes structural change regarding how we use our natural resources, and producing healthy food for all, directly opposes and confronts the capitalist mode of production.

So when, in our territories, we organized agricultural production based on cooperation, and collective work, and on agriculture, it means 1.5 million people in Brazil are living in our settlements and in our camps, concretely showing to the Brazilian society that yes, it is possible to have a different mode of production. Yes, it is possible to have an agricultural model that prioritizes people and nature and not profit. We are doing it in our territories, and together with all the people we can do it everywhere.

The third idea that guides us is what we call “humanist values.” Capitalism is built upon ‘anti-values’; greed, individualism, consumerism, racism, patriarchy. The new society can only be built on a revolutionary humanism; what Che Guevara used to call “the build of the new man and the new woman. The man and the woman who regard the problems of humanity as their own personal problems. People who feel very deeply troubled every time someone is killed or oppressed anywhere in the world and are filled with great joy whenever the flag of freedom unfolds anywhere in the world.” And I’m quoting Che. This is not an easy process, I remember one day, in one of our first settlements in the south of Brazil, a comrade that was visiting the settlement was asking a family, “what was the most difficult time in the beginning of the struggle? When you were in the camps, when you were with no structure at all, what was most difficult? Was it the risk of being expelled at any time, was it the risk of the violence from the police or from the militias, was it not having water and not having infrastructure, what was the most difficult part of the beginning of the struggle?” And this woman said, “The most difficult part for me was to change my way of thinking from the ‘I’ to the ‘we.’” This is not an easy process, but it is a necessary process to build a new society.

And the first socialist idea that guides us is to build peoples’ power. Our new society will only be built through true participation of all people in the whole process and the decision-making of all spheres of life. There are historical experiences that we can learn from, such as the Soviets and the Paris Commune, as well as current experience, such as what is being done in Rojava, that we need to learn from. In MST, we have an organizational structure that promotes the participation of all people from the family groups to several collectives, such as education, health, and women; the collectives think and implement all the aspects of life in the territories. Those are the structures that allow the participation of all people, not only

in the organization of the territory, but as well as in the political decisions of the movement.

We don't have time to deeply explain how this organizational structure works, but I would like to give an example. We had our last national congress in in 2014 — we have our national congress every 5 or 6 years — and we had 17,000 peasants representing all settlements and camps in Brazil in the congress. But the idea of the congress wasn't to, with the 17,000 people, make any decision. Actually, 2 years before the congress, we started a broad process of discussion in every camp, and every family, and every settlement, about three points main we believed we need to have a unified definition for the perspective of the struggle for the next period. One was our organizational structure; what do we need to change, what do we need to keep, what is working well, what we need to abolish, how can we improve this organizational structure so that we can more and more have the participation of everybody in the decision-making.

The second question was about our relationship, or non-relationship, with the state structures; should we have any kind of relationship with the state, should we not have one, how should we have this relationship or not? And the third question was what kind of agrarian reform do we want in this period of development of capitalism and agriculture? So, we spent two years discussing these three topics with every single family in the settlements and in the camps. And after two years, before the congress, we found out that we still had to keep the discussions of the first two topics, but the third topic about what kind of agrarian reform we wanted resulted in our program of agrarian reform that we call now "People's Agrarian Reform." So, this program was discussed for two years with every single family that participates in MST and is what guides us today in terms of our project of agrarian reform.

So, when we come to these four elements that guide us in our revolutionary project, they bring us a few challenges or tasks that we need to take up now. One is political education; in order to build a new society that opposes capitalism, we, all the people, need to deeply understand how capitalism works, what are its contradictions, and understand our reality in order to be able to change it. And when I speak about political education, I'm not speaking only about political education for militants or for cadres; we need to raise the awareness of all people so that they mobilize for change. Only knowing how we are living, only knowing

that it is possible for change; people will mobilize for that. And this theoretical-political education cannot be separated from the struggle, from the concrete struggle; the struggle teaches in practice, and the theory improves our practice. So, when a family decides to join a land occupation, and when together with other families they break the fence and occupy “privately-owned family” land, they learn in practice that private property is not sacred, that it can and must be abolished. But it is the political education, the theory, that helps them move forward this economic struggle — I mean, to occupy a land to solve my personal problem of having land to produce and to live, to move forward to a political struggle, which is to struggle for the whole society to have a better place to live and to develop.

We have political education schools in all our settlements, in all our camps, from the base political education in the camps to militant and cadres’ political education. In 2005, we inaugurated our national political education school that we are happy to say that today became a house of knowledge for the working class of the world. We hold political education courses for Latin American movements, we have an international political education course in English for militants of political and social movements of all over the world, and we had some comrades from the Kurdish movement in our course.

The second task or challenge we have is to organize the people. Our historical mission as revolutionary movements is to organize the people. And organize people not only in the workplace, but in all spheres of life; in the communities, in the schools, in the cultural areas, the students, the women, the youth, everybody. The revolution will not be the work of a few illuminated people; it will be the work of the people, and only then we will have true people’s power. And the third task and challenge is to build international solidarity. The struggle against capitalism must be an international struggle, and our enemy is the same; it is capital. So, class and peoples’ international solidarity is not only a moral principle, but it’s also a necessity of the struggle. We need to create and strengthen international networks and platforms that bring us together. In our diversity, we need to find what unifies us. We need to find spaces to exchange experiences and learn from each other.

We would love to have the opportunity to bring a few MST militants to learn with the Rojava experience, and we are open and welcome any time

you want, for our comrades from the Kurdish movement to come and stay with us in our settlements and in our camps whenever you want. But we also must build common political platforms that lead us to a unified plan of action and struggles. In the rural and peasant movements, we have *La Via Campesina*, which is an international coalition of more than 170 peasants, indigenous and rural workers organizations from 80 countries, with a common platform of fighting capitalism in agriculture. Actually tomorrow, 17th of April 2017, is the International Day of Peasant's Struggles and we have mobilizations all over the world against capital in agriculture, and tomorrow we will wake up in Brazil with hundreds of new land occupations by the peasants of MST. We are going to occupy land all over Brazil by the end of this week.

To conclude, I would like to raise three points that I find very important, very, very briefly. One is that we all agree that capitalism is going through a structural crisis, there is no way out within the system, but we are also sure, we can be certain, that capitalism is not going to die on its own; we must bring it down. So, in this sense, we need to fight capitalism in all its structures; we need to fight the state, that is the bureaucratic structures that keeps capitalism alive, but we also need to fight capital in all its forms, as the transnational companies and financial capital. Because in today's capitalism, capital is the one that controls the state, so in this sense, every and all anti-capitalist struggles are important and necessary and must be supported. As our comrade Zilan said earlier, we need to resist, revolt, and build the new, and we need to do all that at the same time, which is not easy at all.

The second point I would like to raise is that we must not romanticize any struggle. Revolution is a permanent process, and it's not going to be made without mistakes and contradictions; it's only through recognizing our mistakes and facing our contradictions that we will be able to advance in the direction of human emancipation. And the last point is that there are no manuals for building the new socialist society. Each people must have the creativity to invent the way according to each reality, and objective and subjective conditions of each society. As *José María Arteaga* said about socialism in America, "it can neither be copy, nor imitation, but here our creation." So let's create the new. One thing that I can assure you is that from our camps and settlements, we will keep struggling, resisting, producing and organizing, for together with you, and the working class of

the world, build a better world, where property and profit will not come before life and nature, where there will be no exploited or exploiter, where power will be in the hands of people, where we will all be truly free and emancipated.

Thank you very much.

Cassia Figueiredo Bechara is a member of MST National Board of Direction. She started her life with MST in 2001, through a land occupation in Sao Paulo State. In 2005, she became an organic militant of MST, in the state of Pernambuco, Northeast Brazil. Among her several tasks in the Movement she has been a member of MST State Direction Board in Pernambuco, organizing camps, land occupations, political education courses. She has also been part of the National Coordination of MST Communication Sector. Today she coordinates MST International Relations Collective.

Hêvîn Tekin, YXK

Closing Speech



First, I would like to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to make some closing remarks at this special conference. But the thanks go to many more people. I would like to start with the friends from Hamburg, who have been essential for the local work for this conference and who have taken over the coordination of many important tasks such as providing food and headphones for the participants. With much work, love and willpower they created three days of intense discussions and moments of encounters. But also, gratitude is due to the speakers, whose analyses and inputs provided an exchange of ideas. At this point, the translators should be mentioned in particular, who have tirelessly translated the last three days in many different languages.

Another important aspect are the musicians, dancers, who with their contribution to the conference have demonstrated an act of self-defence. For as Heval Hanim has already underlined with her contribution: the self-preservation of one's own culture is essential for self-defence.

The fact that this conference went beyond the university premises and theoretical discussions was shown by the practical attitude of the families who made their home our home and we were one big family this weekend.

The road from the first conference to the present one was marked by a lot of strength and initiative from many different friends.

Heval Mehdi and Heval Ellen, who passed away last year, were also bearers of this initiative and strength.

Heval Mehdi had an extraordinary personality, who was loving, warm and helpful. Because of his open and friendly nature, Heval Mehdi was well known and very popular in many circles.

Through her open-minded nature, Heval Ellen brought a lot of positive energy to the activities. She always had a powerful morale and filled the room with her smile. You two will always remain part of our path. Your fight is our fight too.

Part of the struggle is also the theoretical examination of the capitalist modernity that confronts us every day with new challenges and which we have tried to analyse in the last three days in workshops and various lectures.

In this context we have approached the concept of democratic confederalism and democratic nation and presented it as an alternative to capitalist modernity.

The theoretical reflections of the various speakers have shown that there are certainly discrepancies between theory and practice, but that these discrepancies are part of the process of revolution. David Graeber recalled his visit to Rojava and differentiated between the basic structures and the current reality of war that exists there.

Wars are excesses of capitalist modernity, as was made clear by numerous discussions held during the conference. At this point I would like to take up once again the quote from Bertolt Brecht with which the conference began: “Capitalists don’t want war, they must want it.”

But if they want war, they also want the ever-deepening chaos. Beginning with the exploitation and destruction of nature, the foundation was laid for the enslavement of women and thus of the entire society.

What followed was a mentality of seizure, exploitation and destruction. In short, colonialism, which is still present today in the circumstances of many communities.

What followed is the greatest genocide of humankind — the Holocaust. What followed is the cold war between East and West.

What followed are wars for raw resources, such as water, oil and coal. What followed is the recorded 73rd genocide of the Yezidis and the attempted extermination of the Kurdish population and their culture.

The first targets of these wars are always women and the youth. The youth, the intellectual youth always forms the section of the society that points out social problems, analyses them, brings them to the fore and offers an alternative. Every attack on the youth is therefore also an attack on the whole society.

“A liberated society is only possible with the liberation of women” as Abdullah Öcalan once put it. For 5000 years our society has been under the rule of the patriarchy. It is especially important to emphasize the oppression of women at this point.

Women’s knowledge of nature, which has advanced society in health and beyond, has been misused by men for their own benefit. With the

appropriation of her qualities as a provider, the woman was robbed of her abilities, condemned as an “evil witch” and burned. This resulted in a 5000-year unwritten history of the woman.

Quote: (But) “We are the daughters of witches that you could not burn.”

We have reached a point in human history where unwritten stories must be written. We have reached a point where communities are rebelling against the oppression of the system. We are in a phase where existence or non-existence is at stake.

As the Rojava example shows, organization is essential for existence.

But let us go beyond a solidarity with Rojava. Let us also make the struggle in Rojava our own struggle.

Let the three-day theoretical discussion at this conference become practical. In concrete terms this means to collectivise and socialise the knowledge gained here, i.e. to build up basic structures, to establish working groups and commissions.

Let our struggle become universal. May the spirit of Ivana Hoffmann, Sakine Cansiz, Arin Mirkan, Viyan, Zilan, Beritan, Leyla, Fidan and many other friends be embraced in our struggle.

Apart from remembering all the fallen people who gave their lives in the struggle for a liberated society, I would like to pay special attention to the person whose idea brought us all together here. Although Abdullah Öcalan has been in solitary confinement on the prison island Imrali for 18 years, the enemy has not managed to take away his freedom. Although Abdullah Öcalan is physically trapped, his spirit is young and free. His work and also his theory have paved the way for society to fight for freedom. Now it is up to us to fight for his freedom.

I would like to end my speech with a quote from Nazim Hikmet. “If I don’t burn, if you don’t burn, if we all don’t burn, who will light up the darkness?” In this spirit, let’s light up the darkness together.

Biji berxwedana zîndana

Jin Jiyan Azadi

Biji Serok Apo

Serkeftin, Serkeftin û Serkeftin!

Hevin Tekin, JJK finished high school in Berlin in 2016 and has been active in YXK/JJK for two years.

This book brings together the speeches held at the conference “*Challenging Capitalist Modernity III: Uncovering Democratic Modernity — Resistance, Rebellion and Building the New*” in 2017 at the University of Hamburg.

This conference took place after the liberation of Shengal and before the liberation of Raqqa, so Rojava was again a focus of interest. In addition, intellectuals, activists, and movements from many parts of the world met to discuss the deeper causes of the crisis and concepts for overcoming it — whether non-state society, democratic confederalism or eco-socialist and feminist perspectives.

The following people have contributed to this book with their texts:

Rolf Becker, Frank Adloff, John Holloway, Havin Guneser, Asrin Law Office, Fabian Scheidler, Ebru Günay, Dawn Paley, Ferda Çetin, Carlos Pazmiño, Debbie Bookchin, Özlem Ekinbaş, Haskar Kırmızıgül, Reimar Heider, Xanim Engizek, Simon Dubbins, Zilan Yağmur, David Graeber, Raúl Zibechi, Fuat Kav, Miguel Juaquin, Zeynep Cûdî, Mustafa Karasu, Ronahî Serhat, Cora Roelofs, Friederike Habermann, Eleanor Finley, Halime Kurt, Salih Muslim Muhammad, Abdullah Öcalan, Sonia López, Fawza Yusuf, Quincy Saul, Cassia Figueiredo Bechara, Lydia Gottschalk, Şoreş Ronahî, Agit Avaşın and Hêvîn Tekin.

