Federico Venturini

PhD student

School of Geography, University of Leeds - UK

Contact:

ml10fv@leeds.ac.uk

Title: Urban Struggles and Urban Social Movements: a Social Ecology Perspective

Abstract

Cities, where a majority of the world population lives, are at the forefront of environmental and social crisis.

Since the battle of Seattle in 1999 (or even back to the May 1968 in French), we are seeing cyclical series of urban uprising all around the world, not limited to global north countries. In this context, urban social movements are achieving a key role in anti-capitalistic struggles.

Far from idealizing these moments of insurrection and assuming that urban social movements are the only actors of social change, researchers and activists are facing three important tasks: understand how and why these movements and moments develop, to elaborate the means of intervention during these events and to propose ways to stabilize these experiences once the wave is passed.

As Katsiaficas (2013) well identified, the waves of protests that we are seeing have all common traits: autonomy, direct democracy, solidarity and direct action. These concepts are key points in the Anarchist tradition but also in social ecology despite not having been able to gain any specific presence inside these contemporary movements and to speak to them. Moreover, Libertarian Municipalism represents an invaluable tool: it represents a coherent and complete project which

suggests a path to follow for social liberation. Of course, it is not a magic receipt or a monolithic doctrine and we have to adapt it to specific times and spaces.

Despite the fact that social ecology offers invaluable tools to understand the current social and economic crises and the development of the cities, authors from this tradition so far have not fully explored urban social movements, their demands, principles and practices.

The aim of this work is to open a debate on the ability of social ecology to become a tool to analyse and work with urban social movements, with the aim to stimulate a debate and to bridge the latest expression of social movement and the social ecology perspective.

This work draws from qualitative research with urban social movements in the Global North but mainly from the experiences on the ground with the Brazilian movement during and after the June 2013 uprising.

Key words: social ecology, urban social movement, urban struggle, Brazil

> "Memory and imagination are the only forces that can bring about real change. Remember and imagine!" (Chodorkoff 2011: 338)

Introduction

In a global context of growing social and environmental crisis, the agenda of Social Ecology still represents a promising pathway to build better futures. However, this theory, fascinating and possibly unique in its explanatory potential of the current crisis, has remained under-explored, especially for its possible connection with the current urban social movements and the connected recent urban insurrections (Wallerstein 2012).

In a context in which they represent one of the mayor actors trying to propose different models of development, we are facing three important tasks: understanding how and why these movements and moments develop, elaborating way of intervention during these events, proposing ways to solidify these experiences when the wave is passed. This should be done remaining far from idealizing these moments of insurrection and assuming that they are the only actors of social change, but also recognising the importance of their prefigurative politics and of their specific characteristics of organizing, deciding and building change. Social ecology[1], put in dialogue with these practice, could become a valuable tool to help and support them; at the same time these practices could enhance the bulk of theory of Social Ecology, making it more and more suitable for a concrete change.

In this paper it will presented an attempt to build this dialogue, also opening the possibility to use social ecology in a non-Western context, exploring two case studies from the June 2013 upraise in Brazil.

To reach this aim and specify the theoretical content in which it developed, this work has been divided in three main parts. In the first part I will explore the importance of cities, the continuous circles of uprising that are sprouting all around the world and the concept of urban social movement. In the second I will outline some of the literature of social ecology in analysing cities and social movements. Then, in the third part, I will explore some common traits of recent struggles, focusing on the recent uprising in Brazil. Finally, in the fourth part I will propose a reflection on social ecology and Libertarian Municipalism, drawing from the experience previously analysed.

1

Cities, where the majority of the world population is living (United Nations 2008), are at the forefront of the current environmental and social crisis, in a world of global inequalities and poverty

---

1   As Heller (2011) points out, the present work is based on the conception of Social Ecology mainly constructed by Murray Bookchin

(HDR 2005; HDR 2010).They represent not only the main source of environmental and social problems (Klein and Tremblay 2010; Low and Gleeson 2006), but also the frontier of the capitalist model of development, being fundamental for capital reproduction (Harvey 2008).

At the same time, cities can also be understood as major sites for re-imagining a more ecological and social sustainable future (Hern 2010): "Cities are the world's greatest assets for pursuing sustainable development. How we plan, build and manage our cities today will determine our future" (World Urban Campaign 2012: 3).

Is this possibly the project and objective of the movements?

Since the battle of Seattle in 1999 (or even dating back to the May 1968 in French), there have been cyclical series of urban uprising all around the world, not limited to Western Europe or North America. The Occupy movement, the 15-M, the Arab spring, can be indeed included in a series of worldwide mobilizations started at the beginning of the new century that reached scaling dimensions. Described and to some extent predicted by the Invisible Committee (2009) and Mason (2012, 2013), they develop (and fade away) continuously world-wide, possibly surpassing the same instantaneous dimension of insurrection that these authors depicted[2].

Clearly the line that links all these events is their discontent with the current model of capitalist development. This discontent assumes the same global scale of the system they contest (Wallerstein 2012). At the same time, it is built on a very small scale. Behind all these expressions of dissent, with similar characteristics on a global scale, there are the overlapping effects of a local scale grassroots work that, like the work of ants, piece by piece, make big things possible. All the movements emerging since the '90s around the globe have this element inside and can be interpreted as the

---

2   I am tempted to use metaphors like explosion, eruption, waves, etc. to define these events. However, all these terms, exactly for the nature of metaphors, gives particular connotations that could be problematic. In my case, I only want to qualify these mobilizations as rapid events where a big number of people is mobilized and fall apart also in a rapid time.

results of the slow-small scale grassroots work that, in certain moments and places, assumes wider scale.

Moreover the major common trait is certainly the context of development of these movements: if their starting point is local and their demands local, their centre of development is always the urban context. As Maricato (2013) stress, the continuous recent movements are clearly an answer to the urban crisis: "is the urban question, stupid!"[3] (19).

In order to understand these expressions of dissent, we might consider the concept of urban social movement. Building on a growing literature developed since the '70, these movements can be defined generally as "social organization with a territorial based identity, which strives emancipation by way of collective action" (Schuurman 1989: 9), even if it is impossible to find a univocal definition (Schuurman 1989). Together to that, it is necessary to stress that social movements have a public and lasting dimension, aiming at social change (Souza 2006a: 278). In that sense it is interesting the Souza's (2006a) distinction between urban social movement in weak sense and strong sense: the first mainly uses the urban context as a stage and "referring only indirectly for the urban spatiality" (281); the second is more linked at the concept of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1968). This distinction, however, is often fleeting: we are seeing in recent times that urban social movements are a mix of these two senses, where the struggle for different cities are bound with a profound social critique.

2

If urban social movements have been able to assume a key role in anti-capitalistic struggles, it is due a comparison of them with social ecology.

---

3   All quotations from texts in languages other than English were translated by the author.

Social ecology assumes a privileged role in understanding the current urban crisis, giving back centrality to the concept of domination, fundamental as also recognised by Marxist authors as Zibechi (2012) and Holloway (2002). As well summarised by Milstein (2010) "Bookchin pointed to the city or neighbourhood as the site of struggle, radicalization, dual power, and finally revolution, with con federations of free citizens' assemblies replacing state and capital" (84). Social ecology could thus be a major theoretical tool to understand the new and current urban social movements.

In order to fulfil this objective, in this section I will explore the works of some scholars associated with social ecology that have been engaged firstly with research on cities and then with social movements, also critically considering the gaps in the literature.

The importance of the urban environment for social ecology, as a space in which environmental and social problem are constantly connected, emerges in some fundamental works of Bookchin, that constitute also a first important example on how analysing cities from a socio ecology prospective. Bookchin (1965) focusses mainly on environmental damages and health problems caused by human development; Bookchin (1986, 1995a) are a historical account of cities' development, mainly focussed on the relation between cities spatial evolution and political-social organization. In this works the city is defined "as a space a place in which we work and engage in everyday consociation [...] [and] as a public arena" (Bookchin 1995a: 4). Cities are humanity's core, the place where culture and human beings are developed, where the living and political domains fuse together to form the truly social life (Bookchin 1995a).

Following this tradition Hern (1997) analyses the regional, the neighbourhood and the institutional contexts of self-determination movements, focussing on Vancouver and his neighbourhood. Despite the stated analytical purpose, however, this work present a recurrent problem that will emerge also in the future social ecologist works: the interesting descriptive and speculative perspective lacks a substantial and meaningful methodological elaboration. Hern (2010) is an ethnographic journey

6

through different cities, with a main focus on Vancouver that throughout the entire book is compared with other cities (Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Montreal, Fort Good Hope, Las Vegas, Portland, New York City, Diyarbakir and Kaunakakai). Each chapter of the book is dedicated to a particular city that suggests to the author a theme that is relevant in the Vancouver analysis; using that structure, he is able to stress most of the social ecology core themes (e.g. community, environmental and social issues, technology, urban planning, etc.).

Further than analysing cities, social ecology has been attempting also to approach social movements, without however developing a solid theoretical framework or even a specific definition of social movement form its perspective. The social movements have been simplistically intended to be Left-tradition, anti-capitalist movements, key actors of social change. To open this tradition, Bookchin wrote extensively on social movements, in his tetralogy *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era,* aimed to revive the history in modern times of the revolutions (from the late medieval peasants uprising to the Spanish civil war) in European and American history, from a libertarian perspective, trying to find the continuing of struggles for self-management, direct democracy and self-governance (White 2008). Moreover, in the essay "New Social movements: the anarchist dimension", Bookchin (1989) analyses the new (at that time) social movements that are working on ecology, feminism, municipalism and anti-militarism; he considers how in them are present anarchist concepts like utopia, decentralism, anti-hierarchical, participation, mutual aid[4]. At the same time he warns from the exaggeration in consensus commitment or lack of structure. Despite its brevity, this work offers an invaluable example of how links can be made between social movements and anarchist thought, with the benefit of both.

---

4   This optimistic view of new social movement was later dismissed (Bookchin 1994).

Other researchers that have worked from a Social Ecology prospective on social movements are Daniel Chodorkoff, Chaia Heller and Brian Tokar[5].

Chodorkoff (1980) represents the first work using Social Ecology in a case study context in anthropology, where the Lower East Side neighbourhood in New York is analysed, focussing on some neighbourhood grassroots group.

Heller, another anthropologist, has recently worked (2005; 2013) with social movements in France on the struggle of the Confédération Paysanne (France farmers union) against genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Moreover, Heller (1999) is concerned with ecology, feminism and desire, focused on the later as a driving force for action. With the aim to be "both critical and reconstructive", she critiques popular modes of ecological thinking and attempts to transcend those constraints by "creating a more radical understanding of both nature and desire" (8-9). She devotes her analysis to the feminist movement and new social movements. It represents an instance social-ecology being used as an analytical and reconstructive tool and has yet to be fully explored and assessed.

Tokar, whose works are concentrated on environmental issues on the scientific side (Tokar 1997, 2001; Magdoff, Tokar 2010), had done a research on Green political groups (1992) (elaborating on specific key Social-Ecology topic) and more recently on Climate Justice Movement (2010), explaining how Social Ecology could offer to the movement strategies for a better development.

All these authors developed an analysis that is permeated at different level with Social Ecology principles and concerns, but, except few references, they do not develop a theory of social movement, or a research methodology, or a clearly identifiable Social Ecology analysis (except to a certain extent Tokar (1992) and Heller (1999)).

---

5   Like Hern, they are all associated with the Institute of Social Ecology that was founded in 1974 by Bookchin and
     Chodorkoff, dedicated to the study of social ecology

An exception is the work of the sociologist Eryilmaz[6] (2011) that analyses the environmental movements against the construction of Hydroelectric Power Plants in Turkey, relying totally on Social Ecology. The author develops a classification table that is "an analytical tool" (84) "to analyse environmental activities according to social ecology" (1). This table should help "to develop an environmentalism classification model based on critiques and the alternative program of social ecology" (12): environmental ideology and environmental movements are analysed in various categories and various subcategories. In this way the researcher is able to describe various environmental groups categorizing them and trying to understand the link and differences with social ecology, especially with the political project of Libertarian Municipalism.

The research is permeated by two strong political positions: that "Social Ecology is inevitable in order to analyse this difference through environment/nature and environmentalism/ecology dualities" and "only the critique of liberal environmentalism and radical proposal of Libertarian Municipalism can uncover and analysis the significance of rising environmental grassroots in Turkey" (134). This different approach is the first praiseworthy attempt to use social ecology to concretely analyse social movement. However, the rigidity of this framework, that projects the prescriptive ideas of social ecology on reality, loses the richness and complexity of the analysed case studies that on their own, developed not obligatorily following a social ecology 'recipe'.

If on one side, within Eryilmaz's approach, the use social ecology as a framework is interesting and fruitful, on the other side in his attempt there is a lack of an exchange relation between social movement experience and the theory: the case studies are not able to, in a dual relationship, influencing and enhancing the same social ecology perspective. This happens when social ecology still lacks a methodology for incorporating and learning from the new practices and ideas developed by social movements.

---

6   Member of the Transnational Institute of social ecology that is a recent Europe based network of activists and researchers focused on cities issues mainly from a social ecology perspective.

Given these gaps, and having introduced the concept of urban social movements it is interesting to understand how social ecology could interact with it and being an explanatory tool to deeper understand their nature. This will be the aim of the following chapter.

3

As showed in the previous chapter, social ecology represents a promising body of literature to interpret the current urban struggles. Firstly, it is important to follow the example of Hern to analyze cities using the social ecology, sedimenting a clearer methodology: different thematic could be identified that can be related to core social ecology concepts.

Secondly, it is necessary to create a dialogue between the existing social ecological theories and the practices developed on the same streams within urban social movements, overcoming the problems highlighted in the existing literature.

In this chapter I will focus on this second objective, starting from an analysis of the common characteristics of urban social movements and how they relate with existing S social ecological principles.

A first important point is the scale dimension of the movement to be analyzed: in their production Bookchin and other social ecologists remain, unfortunately, concentrated on European or USA experiences and point of views, denying an open to a global scale that, as stressed in chapter 1, is the real current scale of the struggle. If we want to develop a meaningful explanation of these struggles, a worldwide sight is necessary, as well a surpass of a Western-centered set of mind[7].

---

7 Bookchin states clearly: "I am more knowledgeable about this country [USA] than I am about other parts of the world" (Biehl 1998, 151). This approach is fully understandable and we cannot blame Bookchin for that. However, I believe that is now our duty to develop and enlarge his analysis, including even just in the analysis of single movements, its interrelations on a global scale.

To avoid certain shortcomings in dividing the countries in First-Third World, Developed-Developing, Global-South, etc., concepts core-semi-periphery-periphery countries (Wallerstein 2000, 2004) can enrich the explanation of the complicated power-economic relations between countries[8].

Secondly, is it important to outline the common aspects of this global upraises: Katsiaficas (2013) identified them in the concepts of autonomy, direct democracy, solidarity and direct action. Further than the cases in Asia already analyzed by Katsiaficas (2013), these elements are clearly visible also in the 15-M and Occupy, or the Arab spring.

In my personal experience I had the ability to consider the same aspects in the context of the 2013 upraise in Brazil. I will thus analyze this specific case, considering how social ecology could learn from it and thus giving an example on how it could generally more fruitful dialogue with urban social movements.

I stayed in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) slightly less than one year between March 2013 and July 2014[9], carrying out a militant research (inspired by Chatterton et al. 2010) with the variegated movement that filled the street of all the country with millions of people in June 2013 and it is still ongoing[10]. Zibechi (2014) well outline the situation of contemporary Brazil and the recent events and preliminary results of my work can be found in Venturini (2014). To start with, it is important to outline key features common for all the movement: widespread use of direct actions (in all different forms), encampments in Occupy style, alternative media, importance of assemblies, rejection of traditional political parties, importance of 'minority' struggles (e.g. native people), horizontality and (to a certain extend) consensus decision making process. To condense in few worlds the complex

---

8   These concepts remain still valid even if not agreeing fully with Wallerstein's World Economy Theory, as pointed out by Souza (2003).
9   "The fieldwork has been developed under the research project "CONTESTED_CITIES – Contested Spatialities of Urban Neoliberalism: Dialogues between Emerging Spaces of Citizenship in Europe and Latin America", funded by the European Commission (Grant Agreement: PIRSES-GA-2012-318944).
10 Movements do not spring during an overnight and also the June 2013 days in Brazil are fuelled by groups working years 'beyond the scene' (Zibechi 2014)

demands of a variegate movement, the development of modern Brazilian cities is contested and thus all the capitalistic system, new form of resistance and transformation are developed.

In the specific case of Rio de Janeiro the mobilization was firstly pushed by urban social movements and in less than a month reached the magnitude of millions of people in the streets. Why did this happen? Why the initial mobilizations did not lead to the usual script of small mobilizations result-less so often seen? Which was the role of urban social movements in this process?

Explaining the reason of the protests is complicated and certainly there is a serious of concomitant factors that summed on what has been called the 'drop that broke the camel's back', the increased bus ticket fares. The reasons of the protests are multiple and diverse, the new technologies played a new role in alternative communication and new actors come to the front; however, it is clear that urban social movements' plans to mobilize people were fundamental to build the upraise and maintain it through all the time.

To this element should be added the effect on the movement of a serious of variegated moral shocks (like police violence and seeing a continuous large mobilization) (Jasper, Poulsen 1995) that determined in various way both the development and the decline of the movement itself.

Since the '80 social movements in Brazil have been considered in decline (Souza 2006a) but despite this analysis, they still maintain a presence in society that could not even be compared to the one of their reciprocal in core countries. It is clear that the millions of people in the streets in June 2013 were not just coming from the base of the social movements that used to work in the city before June. A large part of people in the streets was there for the first time and also expressed in some episodes intolerance with regards to Left political parties (usually at the forefront of mobilizations) or social movements. However, urban social movements were in the street from the beginning, they started and had a role thought all the process.

Among the others it is worth focalizing on two groups: the Fórum the Lutas and the Frente Independente Popular - RJ.

The Fórum the Lutas (Forum of Struggles) (initially Fórum de Lutas Contra o Aumento da Passagem, Forum of Struggle Against the Increase in Travel prize)[11] was born in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 with the key objective to fight for a better public transport system and continued working through the years. In June 2013 it organized the first demonstrations in the city and it maintained a key role until August 2013. It became the reference for all the people in the streets, it leaded the marches with millions in the streets, its assembly were the places where key decision for the mobilization where taken. Participation in assemblies was massive, to reach 3000 people at one time. Soon arose the necessity develop a different form of direct democracy (decisions were made in simple majority vote and managed with a chairing system): decentralization of the Fórum the Lutas by neighbourhood and thematic area was started.

Around mid-July the requests of the Fórum the Lutas were: 1. better and cheaper transport system, 2. against the military police and the repression, 3. money not for mega-events but for education and health systems, 4. no to favelas' evictions, 5. for a democratization of the media; later on it was added the right to the city.

However, the decentralization process took a long time and resulted in a fragmentation of the participants, often confused by a not clear neither linear decision making process.

At the same time, the major problem resulted to be the presence, within the Fórum the Lutas, of Left political parties that, interested only in their campaign, did not put any effort in actions not part of their agenda and manipulated the assembly with various tactics: for example monopolizing the chairing moderators roles, reformulating proposal of the agenda, voting in block. With the time passing the Fórum the Lutas stopped to be a crowded locus of decisions, till when, under decision of

---

11 More information at https://www.facebook.com/forumcontraoaumento or http://forumdelutasrj.blogspot.com.br/

political parties, no more assemblies were called. In 2014 the Fórum the Lutas formally stopped to exist.

While the Fórum the Lutas was struggling to survive, in August 2013 a new group was formed: the Frente Independente Popular - Rio de Janeiro (Popular Independent Front)[12], a front composed by anti-capitalistic groups, with 3 main common traits: classism, combactivity and rejection of the electoral method.

Its assemblies, differently from the Fórum the Lutas, are a space for political debates and have mainly pragmatic outcomes to set the lines for next actions, that are operativized by smaller and open commissions. Despite consensus decision making has not been adopted, votes in meeting are the last possibility if a consensus process does not work. Moreover, votes with a small margin usually required new discussions. As happened in the Forum, but on a minor scale, the individuals that do not belong to any group that compose the Front experience less decision power compared with the members of structured groups.

The Frente Independente Popular- RJ has been one of the few groups able to push an effective campaign against the FIFA World Cup and is experiencing a strong and violent police repression and mediatic criminalization. Despite these attacks, its role is growing thanks to the grassroots work done every day in favelas and in syndicates. It represents an incredible example of how united radical left can achieve its goals.

These two examples can be clearly associated with the worldwide anti-capitalistic movements that we mentioned: the Forum and the Frente share indeed with them aims and practices, as also the broad Brazilian movements that are developing in recent years (Gohn 2012a, 2012b; Harvey et al. 2012). At the same time their offer an interesting perspective for social ecology, having rediscovered the importance of affinity groups (tactic/concept (re) introduced by Bookchin in the '70's (2004)), the

---

12 More information at https://www.facebook.com/FIPRJ or http://frenteindependentepopular.wordpress.com/

importance of internal organization and decision making process in a movement, the importance of grassroots work and initiatives.

4

I start from a position that social ecology is a key tool for social change: it is an analytical tool to understand the current social-environmental crises and it sets the key area where to intervene, proposing valid alternatives.

First of all, key concepts of social ecology like community, citification/urbanization, urban sprawl, use of resources and technology, relations with institutions, role of the city planners and so on, can be fundamental to analyse cities (Souza 2012). From the analysis of the case studies proposed, we can reinvigorate this aspect introducing a new point of view: dealing with a city from the semi-periphery can help to develop a more organic social ecology view that so far has been mainly based on the analyses of cities from the core. Moreover, a more articulated analysis of the experiences of periphery and semi-periphery countries is needed, especially considering forms of oppression of neo-colonialism(Njrumah 1965). This despite the Bookchin decision of concentrating his work on revolution only in Europe and North America because modern revolutions in other part of the world "tended to be deeply self-oriented, and their ideological impact upon the world has been very limited" (Bookchin 1996: 17), and "their ideologies lingered on mainly as echoes of the older European revolution" (Bookchin 1996: 18). The importance of any anti-colonial struggles or other forms of struggles in not-core countries is severely downplayed, while they are in reality demonstrating a special aliveness fighting against the various forms of domination. Lewis (2012:7) that has "identified a gap within anarchist theory and practice that has largely failed to account for colonialism and our [, as anarchists,] participation in it". For example the Brazilian scholar José Cavalcanti (2010) points out that: "the main criticism to Bookchin could be, from our point of view,

the little attention that he devoted to problems of social ecology in Third World countries" (15). In this context it is relevant the position of Ramnath (2011:1) who, "see [s] anarchism as one instance of a polymorphous engagement with certain key questions and issues, as one manifestation of a larger family of egalitarian and emancipatory principles" (1), with the aim of decolonizing the knowledge.

Secondly, how it has been shown in the second chapter, despite social ecology offers invaluable tools to understand the current social and economic crises, authors from this tradition have so far not fully explored urban social movements, their demands, principles and practices. The potential of the presented case studies is thus to open a debate on the ability of social ecology to become a tool to analyse and work with urban social movements, with the aim to stimulate a debate and to bridge the latest expression of social movement and the social ecology perspective (as Bookchin 1989).

For example, Clark (2013) gives interesting points in advancing social ecology[13], stressing the importance of eco-communitarian anarchism and the role of grassroots organizations. The Left in core countries has, indeed, totally forget its tradition of grassroots works and building relation with its 'base', while being too many times entrenched in dogmatic discussion or specific campaign (Blaire 2014). The development of grassroots projects seems to be left i the hands of right wing or religious organizations (Clark 2013). It is interesting to point out how Bookchin himself emphasized the importance of grassroots initiatives (2004), but later dismissed it (1995a, 1995b[14]). The Brazil case studies demonstrated how this position should be reconsidered. For example, before the June 2013 upraise, a march with 300 people would have been seen as great success even in a metropolis as Rio de Janeiro. At the same time an articulated undergrowth of grassroots initiatives was taking place, from community centres, schools in favelas, courses, land or house occupations, etc. When the

---

13 Clark/Max Cafard seems to have abandoned more violent and ad-personam previous critiques toward Bookchin, making a good effort to revitalize the Social Ecology tradition. An account of the mistreatment that Bookchin suffered can be found in Bookchin (Bookchin 1999)
14 For a reassessment of this work see Price 2012.

protests exploded, this network was mobilized to be the core of the protests, giving structure and progressive contents. This is firstly a lesson for movements in core countries and also social ecology: being constantly in the society gives the possibility to mobilize the bases and create a 'climate' in society favourable for radical social change. Moreover, 'concrete' alternative projects represent an example for the society and gives the possibility to put in practices social ecology ideas, learn and modify them[15]. At the same time social ecology could furnish social movement with a blueprint for the 'after-insurrection' period; for example, as said by Chodorkoff, "solidify occupy" (2012: np) is going toward this direction: try to solidify, ground these experiences of social discontent eruption. And, as Graber (2009) said, anarchism is an "ethics of practice" (106).

Anarchism, after all, represent also a critical aspect of current movements to be reconsidered for Social Ecology: as Castell pointed out in an important interview, nowadays "anarchist themes resonate with current social movements" (Occupied London 2009: np)[16]; while some authors preconceive anarchism as the revolutionary movement of the twenty-first century (Graeber, Grubacic 2004). Among these themes there is also a clear rejection of traditional political parties and representative democracy that might however clash with the Libertarian Municipalism agenda: how is possible to speak about participation in even local election when the movements are exactly against them?

For example within the proposed case studies, the instances of native people were completely integrated in the movement and with them their own principles really close to traditional anarchist principles of direct action, refuse of the state authority, self-defense and self-demarcation of land. Libertarian Municipalism represents an invaluable tool: it represents a coherent and complete project toward which aim and it suggests a path to follow for social liberation (Harvey 2012). Of course, it is

---

15 On the importance of prefigurative politics in social movements see (Milstein 2010; Maeckelbergh 2011; Clark 2013; Chodorkoff 2012, 2013).
16 Castell speaks about neo-anarchism, but a bit suspicious to use this term: despite attempts to characterize a new anarchism (Roussopoulos 2012; Blair 2013), I find that there are not big news introduced for changing a name. Indeed, Graber (2002) speaks about new anarchists, new people, not a new doctrine.

not a magic receipt or a monolithic doctrine and we have to adapt it to specific times and spaces: a laic approach to evaluate the electoral tactic in Libertarian Municipalism, the most controversial aspect of it (Biehl 2007), is needed.

On one side this project has been in some specific context, like in Kurdistan (Biehl 2012; TATORT Kurdistan 2013; Taylor 2014)[17], Burlington (Biehl 1997), Montreal (Bookchin 1989; Roussopoulos 2012), Scandinavia (New Compass 2012, 2013), participation in municipal election could the winning choice. On the other side, positive experiences like of Spezzano Albanese (FEDERAçãO Municipal de Base 2003) and of the Gruppo dell'Ecologia Sociale in Friuli[18] represent a tangible examples of how anarchists groups permeated by Social Ecology principles can decline Libertarian Municipalism in an anarchist way, using dual power in a moral way. Giving the fact of the necessity to deal somehow with the State (Souza 2006b), it seems that cultural-historical background and legal framework concur to determine its feasibility and/or necessity but Libertarian Municipalism cannot be seen as a doctrine to be applied everywhere in the same way[19]. Indeed, "the Libertarian Municipalism as that, is not an immutable theory, but a mechanism in dynamic and constant evolution" (Alfaro 2014: 24).

Another aspect to be considered is the role of class struggle, that both Bookchin (1995a, 2005) and also Castell (1983) downplayed in their work and that has instead strongly emerged from the analysis of the case studies proposed: in a semi-peripheric country like Brazil with deep social inequality, it has been very clear to which class the people in the streets belonged and which were their demands. A reframe is necessary, recognising the role of class in social struggles that, even not privileging one or another class for a revolution, are still crucial. In that social ecology could also represent a

---

17 On the ambiguity of the role of the PKK see the recent comment of ISE member Finely E., at: http://www.social-ecology.org/2014/08/confederalism-north-kurdistan/

18 More information at www.ecologiasociale.org or info-action.org

19 As Bookchin remember us, "Communalism is not a fixed electoral dogma that depends upon the state, in whatever form, to initiate municipal institutional changes. In practice, it will obviously vary from locality to locality and country to country" (1995: 12).

vanguard in the theorization of the class component in social movement analysis. Several theories of social movements have been indeed developed in the last decades, for example, Marxist (or non-orthodox Marxist) theories, that analyse social movements under the lens of class theory, recognise that the struggles of social movement are based on class struggle. While these theories have been able to comprehend social movements, with the development of the new social movement theories, it has been clear how the class concept is unable to comprehend and analyse the variety of social movements. Environmental, gender as well as right struggles are clearly assuming an inter-class typology that overcomes the original class distinction, especially in core countries (Gohn 2012a). These two theories appear to be in contrast and each of them is able to only describe partially the complex reality of social movement that globally assume different manifestations, but show also substantially and significant characteristics in critiques, contents, practices, etc.. The motor of social ecology (Price 2012) is able to provide a new framework to synthesize these two theories and attempt to build a theory of social movements able to explain the struggles of social movements across space and history. Centring the analysis on the concept of domination permits indeed to see that all social movement primarily act against all forms of dominations, differently declined in different context. Class struggle is against forms domination as well as the environmental movement or the feminist one. Social movements act in opposition of the most evident form of domination present in their territory. These forms seem to be attacked accordingly with a 'scale of priority' wherein the struggle for survival comes before any other struggle. This is evident in the evolution of social movements' objectives in the core countries: where minimal work rights and leaving conditions are guaranteed and the poverty line is low, movement start to concentrate more on environmental problems and other rights. However, in periferic and semi-periferic countries, where class distinction is still highly evident and survival is not guaranteed for several groups, priority of social movement is clearly a fight against class domination.

Finally, an aspect that should be explored is the multiplicity of tactics for a social revolution: Bookchin (2005) excluded the possibility and feasibility of the revival of past armed revolution/insurrection: "modern weapons have rendered military style insurrections ever more irrelevant" (263). The state has a huge arsenal of sophisticated guns and high trained military corps that could stop easily every attempt of armed struggle. If we want a social chance, "the most crucial task for a revolutionary movement today is to win over to its views the great majority of the population" (263): we have to achieve a critical mass that can change the balance of power in the struggle. However, asserting that "we [cannot] afford today the myth that barricades are more than a symbol" (Bookchin 1995a: 244) has proved dramatically wrong: Tahir square, Euromaidan, the streets and squares of Rio de Janeiro or all around the world have proved that barricades have not yet totally left the necessary repertoire of civil resistance.

To conclude, the radical Left in core countries must to reframe itself:

> "The Left cannot fetishize either the state or the street but must rather engage in a variety of struggles for power where tactics emerge from a broader strategy that moves us toward a clearly articulated vision of a different society. [...] it can experiment with alternative institutions, like worker cooperatives, to practice self-management, while also recognizing limits imposed by present realities. It must address existing social inequalities of race, class, and gender both in the movement and society, without becoming paralysed by their intransigence or individualizing deep-seated social problems" (Blair 2014: np).

And social ecology has all the potentiality to be key in this process, thanks to its coherent and comprehensive analyses (Marshall 2008).

At the same time we have to bear in mind that "is difficult to provide a "handbook" for achieving a successful revolution. No schematic formulas or laws can apply to all revolutionary developments, although parallel events are strikingly present" (Bookchin 2005: 261). The importance to adapt ideas and practice to each historical and geographical contexts are crucial and "anarchists can celebrate the fact that their non-hierarchical ideals have taken different forms over the course of history because they voiced the demands of genuine social movements, not fossilized ideologies" (Bookchin 1989: 274). We should continuously work linking with social movement and "hopefully [they] will embrace and continue to expand and elaborate the revolutionary and reconstructive social and political vision of social ecology" (Tokar 2010: 124). As twenty-five years ago Bookchin pointed out, "if there is to be *any* Left today or in the future, it will have to come from various forms of eco-anarchism in conjunction with the new social movements" (1989: 274).

As the character Catherine from the recent novel on Chodorkoff puts in words in the quote that open this work, memory and imagination are key. On one side we have to remember and analyse the past, what we did, what 'they' did, if it works and not. On the other, be able to use our imagination to find new and alternative forms for a human and ecology liberation. Social ecology is then an invaluable tool in these crisis times.

References

ALFARO, A. 2013. Bookchin y la Ecologia Social. Barcelona: Libélula Verde Ediciones.

BIEHL, J. 1997. The Politics of Social Ecology : Libertarian Municipalism. Montreal ; London: Black Rose Books.

BIEHL, J. 2007. Bookchin breaks with anarchism. Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society, 12, 1-20 [online]. [Accessed: 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/janet-biehl-bookchin-breaks-with-anarchism.pdf

BIEHL, J. 2012. Bookchin, Öcalan, and the Dialectics of Democracy. New Compass [online]. [Accessed 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://new-compass.net/articles/bookchin-öcalan-and-dialectics-democracy

BLAIR, T. 2013. From alterglobalization to Occupy Wall Street: Neoanarchism and the New Spirit of the Left, City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action, 17:6, 729-747

BLAIR, T. 2014. To Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible: Toward a Visionary Left. Tikkun [online]. [Accessed 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/to-be-realistic-demand-the-impossible-toward-a-visionary-left

BOOKCHIN, M. et al. eds. 2003. O Bairro, a Comuna, a Cidade… Espaços Libertários!. São Paulo : Editoria Imaginária.

BOOKCHIN, M. (HERBER L.) 1965. Crisis in Our Cities. Englewood Cliffs : Prentice-Hall.

BOOKCHIN, M. 1986 (1973). The Limits of the City. Montreal ; Buffalo : Black Rose Books.

BOOKCHIN, M. 1989. New Social Movements: the Anarchic Dimension. In GOODWAY, D. ed. 1989. For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice, London: Routledge. Pp. 259-274

BOOKCHIN, M. 1995a (1992). From Urbanization to Cities : Toward a New Politics of Citizenship. London : Cassell.

BOOKCHIN, M. 1995b. Social anarchism or lifestyle anarchism : the unbridgeable chasm. Edinburgh : AK Press.

BOOKCHIN, M. 1999. Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left: Interviews and Essays, 1993–1998. Edinburgh and San Francisco: AK Press.

BOOKCHIN, M. 2004 (1970). Post-Scarcity Anarchism. Edinburgh ; Oakland : AK press.

BOOKCHIN, M. 2005. The third revolution: popular movements in the revolutionary era (Vol. 4). New York, London: Continuum.

CASTELLS, M. 1985. The city and the grassroots: a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements. Oakland: University of California Press.

CHATTERTON, P. et al. 2010. Beyond Scholar Activism: Making Strategic Interventions Inside and Outside the Neoliberal University. Acme: An international e-journal for critical geographies, 9(2).

CHODORKOFF, D. 1980. Un milagro de Loisaida : alternative technology and grassroots efforts for neighborhood reconstruction on New York's Lower East Side. Ph. D. thesis. New School for Social Research, New York.

CHODORKOFF, D. 2012. Occupy Your Neighborhood. Institute for Social Ecology blog, 08.10.2012 [online]. [Accessed: 20.09.2012]. Available from: http://www.social-ecology.org/2012/10/occupy-your-neighborhood-by-dan-chodorkoff/

CHODORKOFF, D. 2013 (1988). Education for Social Change. Institute for Social Ecology blog, 26.11.2013 [online]. [Accessed: 20.09.2014]. Available from: http://www.social-ecology.org/2013/11/education-social-change/

CHODORKOFF, D. 2011. Loisaida : a Novel. Burlington: Fomite.

CLARK, J. P. 2013. The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

ERYILMAZ, Ç. 2012. Social Ecology Challenges Environmental Participation: HES Opposition Sases in Turkey. Ph.D. thesis, Middle East Technical University.

FEDERAÇÃO MUNICIPAL DE BASE 2003. Spezzano Albanese : A Experiência Comunalista. In BOOKCHIN, M. et al. eds. 2003. O Bairro, a Comuna, a Cidade… Espaços Libertários!. São Paulo : Editoria Imaginária. Pp. 73-87

GOHN, M. da G. 2012a (1997). Teorias dos Movimentos Sociais : Paradigmas Clássicos e Contemporâneos. São Paulo : Edições Loyola.

GOHN, M. da G. 2012b. Sociologia dos Movimentos Sociais. São Paulo : Cortez Editora.

GOODWAY, D. ed. 1989. For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice, London: Routledge

GRAEBER, D. and GRUBACIC, A. 2004. Anarchism, or the Revolutionary Movement of the Twenty-first Century [online]. [Accessed 20 March 2014]. Available from http://zinelibrary.info/files/anarchism-graebergrubacic.pdf

GRAEBER, D. 2002. The new anarchists. New left review, 13(6), 61-73.

GRABER, D. 2009. Anarchism, Academia, and the Avant-garde. In Randall, A.et al. eds. 2009, Contemporary Anarchist Studies. Oxon: Routledge. Pp. 103-112

GRAHAM, R. 2012. Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, v. 3. Montreal : Black Rose Books.

HDR (2005), Human Development Report 2005. Wellington, New Zeland: UNDP.

HDR. (2010), Human Development Report 2010. Wellington, New Zeland: UNDP.

HARVEY, D. Et al. 2012. Occupy: movimento de protesto que tomaram as ruas. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial.

HARVEY, D. 2008. The right to the city, in New Left Review 53: 23–40.

HARVEY, D. 2012. Rebel cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution. London: Verso Books.

HELLER, C. L. 2005. From scientific risk to paysan savoir-faire: Divergent rationalities of science and society in the French debate over GM crops. Ph.D. thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

HELLER C. 2011. A reply to "Social Ecology Needs Development, Dissent, Dynamism". Institute of Social Ecology Blog, 24.01.2011 [online]. [Accessed: 20.11.2012] Available from: http://www.social-ecology.org/2011/01/social-ecology-needs-development-dissent- dynamism/

HELLER, C., 1999. The Ecology of Everyday Life: Rethinking the Desire for

Nature. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

HELLER, C. L. 2013. Food, Farms, and Solidarity: French Farmers Challenge Industrial Agriculture and Genetically Modified Crops. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

HERN, M. 1997. Making space: Radical democracy in the megalopolis. An investigation into social ecology and the creation of participatory, self-designing and self-reliant neighbourhoods within major urban entities. Ph.D. thesis, Union Institute Graduate School.

HERN, M. 2010. Common Ground in a Liquid City: Essays in Defense of an Urban Future. Edinburgh; Oakland: AK Press.

HOLLOWAY, J. 2002. Changing the World without Taking Power. London: Pluto.

JASPER, J. M. and POULSEN, J. D. 1995. Recruiting strangers and friends: Moral shocks and social networks in animal rights and anti-nuclear protests. Soc. Probs., 42, 493-512.

JOSÉ CAVALCANTI, M. 2010. Ecologia Social e Outros Ensaios. Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé.

KATSIAFICAS, G. 2013. Asia's Unknown Uprisings Volume 2: People Power in the Philippines, Burma, Tibet, China, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, and Indonesia, 1947–2009. Oakland: PM Press.

KHATIB, K. et al. eds. 2012. We are many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation. Edinburgh: AK Press.

KLEINl, J. L. and TREMBLAY, D. G. 2010. Cultural creation and social innovation as the basis for building a cohesive city, Social Platform on Cities and Social Cohesion [online text], //www.socialpolis.eu/uploads/tx_sp/EF10_Paper.pdf, accessed 12 December 2012.

LEFEBVRE, H. 1968. Le Droit à la Ville. Paris : Anthopos.

LOW, N. and GLEESON, B. 2006. If Sustainability Is Everything, Maybe It's Nothing?, in Environment, 1, 1.

MAECKELBERGH, M. 2011. Doing is Believing: Prefiguration as Strategic Practice in the Alterglobalization Movement, Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest, 10:01, 1-20

MAGDOFF, F. and TOKAR, B. (2010). Agriculture and food in crisis: Conflict, resistance, and renewal. New York: NYU Press.

MASON, P. 2012. Why it's kicking off everywhere. London: Verso Books.

MASON, P. 2013. Why It's Still Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions. London: Verso Books.

MARICATO, E. ed. 2013. Cidades rebeldes: passe livre e as manifestações que tomaram as ruas do Brasil. São Paulo: Boitempo/Carta Maior.

MARICATO, E. 2013. É a questão urbana, estúpido!. In MARICATO, E. (ed.) 2013. Cidades rebeldes: passe livre e as manifestações que tomaram as ruas do Brasil. São Paulo: Boitempo/Carta Maior. Pp. 19-26

MARSHALL, P. 2008. Demanding the Impossible : A History of Anarchism. London, New York, Toronto and Sydney : HARPER PERENNIAL

MILSTEIN, C. 2010. Anarchism and Its Aspiration. Oakland: AK Press and the Institute for Anarchist Studies.

NJRUMAH, K. 1965. Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism. London: Panaf Books Ltd.

New Compass, 2012. Communalist in Finnish Local Elections. New Compass [online]. Available at: http://new-compass.net/news/municipalist-programme-mid-1990s. [Accessed 11 September 2014]

New Compass, 2013. Municipalist Programme from the mid 1990. New Compass [online]. Available at: http://new-compass.net/news/municipalist-programme-mid-1990s. [Accessed 11 September 2014]

OCCUPIED LONDON 2009. Of Walls and Flows: an Interview with Manuel Castells in 'Occupied London, an Anarchist Journal of Theory and Action', issue 4, 28.07.2009 [online]. [Accessed: 18.03.2014]. From: http://www.occupiedlondon.org/castells/

PRICE, A. 2012. Recovering Bookchin: Social Ecology and the Crisis of Our Time. Porsgrunn: Communalism Press.

RANDALL, A.et al. eds. 2009, Contemporary Anarchist Studies. Oxon: Routledge.

ROUSSOPOULOS, D. 2012. The Politics of Neo-Anarchism. In GRAHAM, R. 2012. Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, v. 3. Montreal : Black Rose Books. Pp. xxx

SCHUURMAN, F. and Van NAERSSEN, T. eds. 1989. Urban social movements in the Third World. London, New York: Routledge.

SCHUURMAN, F., 1989. Urban Social Movements. In: SCHUURMAN, F. and Van

NAERSSEN, T. eds. 1989. Urban Social Movements in the Third World. London, New York: Routledge. pp. 1-18.

SOUZA, de, M. L. 2003. ABC do Desenvolvimento Urbano. Rio de Janeiro : Bertrand Brasil.

SOUZA, M. J. L. 2006a. A prisão ea ágora: reflexões em torno da democratização do planejamento e da gestão das cidades. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.

SOUZA, M. L. de 2006b. "Together with the state, despite the state, against the state: Social movements as 'critical urban planning' agents". City, v. 10, p. 327-342, 2006.

SOUZA, M. L. de 2012. The city in libertarian thought, City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action, 16:1-2, 4-33

TAYLOR, R. 2014. The new PKK: unleashing a social revolution in Kurdistan. ROAR Magazine [online]. [Accessed: 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://roarmag.org/2014/08/pkk-kurdish-struggle-autonomy/

TATORT Kurdistan 2013. Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan. Porsgrunn : Communalism Press.

THE INVISIBLE COMMITTEE 2009. The Coming Insurrection. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

TOKAR, B. 1997. Earth for sale: Reclaiming ecology in the age of corporate greenwash. Cambridge: South End Press.

TOKAR, B., ed. 2001. Redesigning life?: the Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

TOKAR, B. 2010. Toward Climate Justice: Perspectives on the Climate Crisis and Social Change. Porsgrunn : Communalism Press.

UNITED NATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS/POPULATION DIVISION, 2008. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision [online]. [Accessed: 14.06.2012]. Available from: http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007WUP_Highlights_web.pdf

VENTURINI, F. 2014. Le Proteste Popolari a Rio de Janeiro a Partire da Giugno 2013: uno Studio Preliminare. XIII Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica El control del espacio y los espacios de control, 5-10 de mayo de 2014, Barcelona [online]. [Accessed 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/coloquio2014/Federico%20Venturini.pdf

WALLERSTEIN, I. M. 2000. The Essential Wallerstein (p. 324). New York: New Press.

WALLERSTEIN, I. M. 2004. World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

WALLERSTEIN, I. M. 2012. In KHATIB, K. et al. eds. 2012. We are many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation. Edinburgh: AK Press. Pp. 105-112

WHITE, D. 2008. Bookchin A Critical Appraisal. London : Pluto Press.

WORLD URBAN CAMPAIGN 2012. MANIFESTO FOR CITIES: The Urban Future We Want [online]. [Accessed: 10.09.2014]. Available from: http://www.worldurbancampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Manifesto_For_Cities_with_PDF.pdf

ZIBECHI, R. 2012. Territories in Resistance: A Cartography of Latin American Social Movements. Oakland : AK Press.

ZIBECHI, R. 2014. The New Brazil : Regional Imperialism and the New Democracy. Oakland : AK Press.