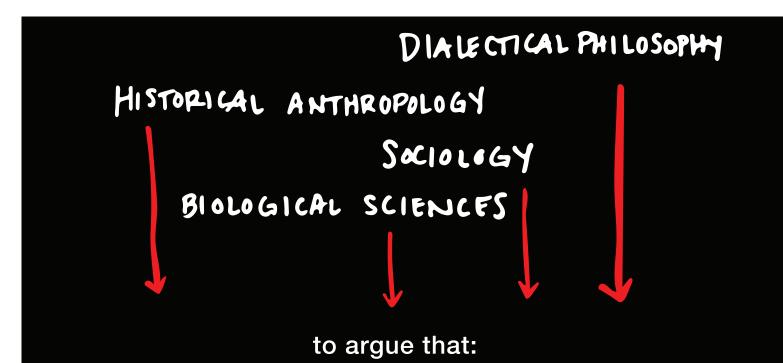# SOCIAL ECOLOGY

EMILY McGUIRE
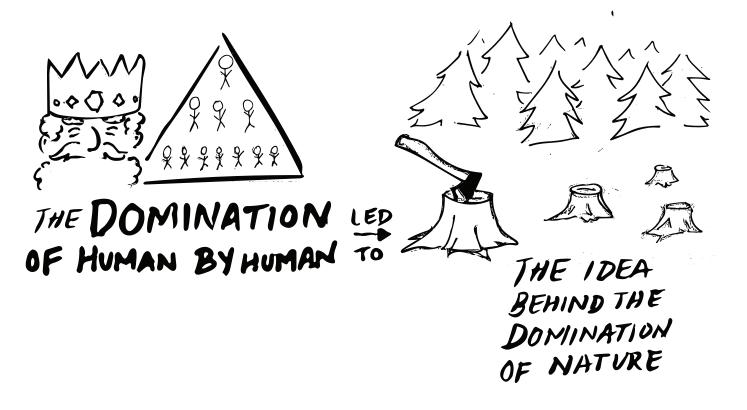
SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Social ecology is a theory developed by **MURRAY BOOKCHIN**, co-founder of the Institute for Social Ecology, over the span of twenty-five or so books over his lifetime.

BOOKCHIN DESCRIBES SOCIAL ECOLOGY AS AN APPEAL FOR SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION ALONG ECOLOGICAL LINES

Bookchin's argument is

INTERDISCIPLINARY,

drawing from

DIALECTICAL PHILOSOPHY

HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

to argue that:

THE DOMINATION OF HUMAN BY HUMAN LED TO THE IDEA BEHIND THE DOMINATION OF NATURE
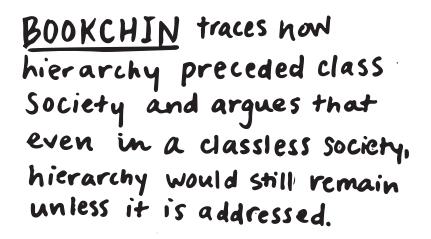
In *The Ecology of Freedom,* Bookchin's magnum opus, he writes, "our environmental dislocations are deeply rooted in an irrational, anti-ecological society…" he continues, "these problems originate in a hierarchical, class, and today, competitive capitalist system that nourishes a view of the natural world as a mere agglomeration of "resources" for human production and consumption." Social ecologists seek a deeper analysis that unmasks the roots of environmental degradation, which has its origin in human hierarchies.

■ ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

■ SOCIAL PROBLEMS

■ POLITICAL PROBLEMS

"ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY SOCIAL and POLITICAL IN NATURE AND ARE ROOTED IN THE HISTORICAL LEGACIES OF DOMINATION and SOCIAL HIERARCHY."

—BRIAN TOKAR in ROAR MAGAZINE 2017

What is HIERARCHY?

"...an institutionalized relationship of command and control that ultimately has recourse in PHYSICAL COERCION." — DAN CHODORKOFF
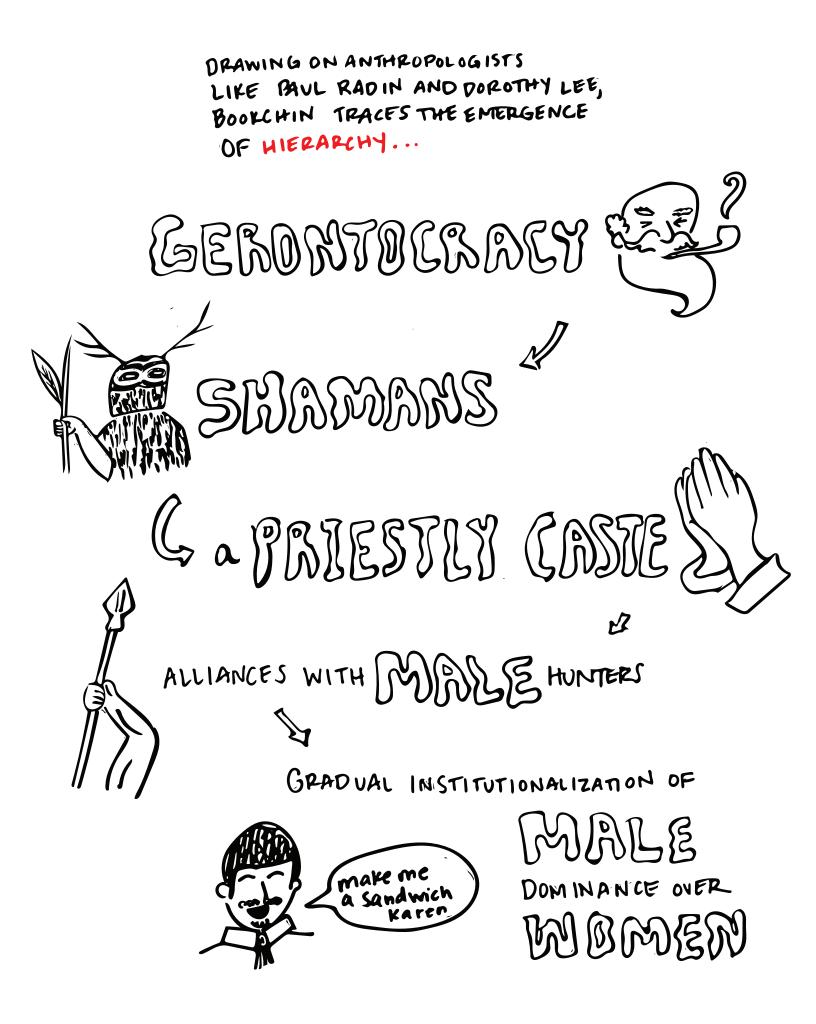
- Cultural anthropologist
- Co-founder of the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE)

BOOKCHIN traces how hierarchy preceded class society and argues that even in a classless society, hierarchy would still remain unless it is addressed.

(CLASSLESS ≠ HIERARCHY-LESS)

BOOKCHIN POSITS THAT HIERARCHIES HAVE ROOTS IN INSECURITY AND FEAR.

DRAWING ON ANTHROPOLOGISTS LIKE PAUL RADIN AND DOROTHY LEE, BOOKCHIN TRACES THE EMERGENCE OF HIERARCHY...

GERONTOCRACY

SHAMANS

& a PRIESTLY CASTE

ALLIANCES WITH MALE HUNTERS

GRADUAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF MALE DOMINANCE OVER WOMEN

make me a sandwich karen

GERONTOCRACY

In *Remaking Society*, Bookchin looks at how "the earliest social examples of status based on biological differences were essentially the age-groups to which one belonged." The elderly, whose physical strength had increasingly diminished, were the most vulnerable and dependent on the goodwill of their tribe/community. They were also the first to be abandoned in times of material want and need. According to Bookchin, it is was the loss of biological power that elucidated the need for hierarchical social power.

In a preliterate society, the elderly were the repositories of wisdom and held the most social knowledge. This made them "the architects par excellence of social life, of social power, and of its institutionalization along hierarchical lines." Bookchin argues that in a harsh and insecure world of pre-literate societies, the community elders had "the most to gain from the institutionalization of society and the emergence of hierarchy."

SHAMANS

Bookchin posits that tribal elders created the role of the shaman as a way to make themselves indispensable, as the shaman "professionalizes power." According to Bookchin, "if the male hunter is a specialist in violence, and the woman food-gatherer a specialist in nature, the shaman is a specialist in fear. As magician and divinatory combined in one, he mediates between the suprahuman power of the environment and the fears of the community…(and) is the incipient State personified."

a PRIESTLY CASTE

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin theorizes that in response to the challenges of unpredictable shamanic power (magic was unreliable for consistently providing healing), the priesthood was formed. Better to be a priest or prophet functioning as a mouthpiece for the gods, than a shaman containing magic and spirits within their very body. This disembodiment of the spiritual allowed the priest to place blame on the community for their moral failings that displease the gods, rather than blame resting on a faulty shaman who struggles to channel spirits bodily. Natural disasters and physical ailment became moral problems rather than magical ones.

ALLIANCES WITH MALE HUNTERS

Because of the inherent insecurity of the Shaman, who could be assassinated or attacked if his techniques fail, he forged mutually beneficial alliances with the elderly (to enhance their authority in their community) as well as the young warriors (infusing a magical, political aura into their own physical prowess).

make me a sandwich karen

MALE DOMINANCE OVER WOMEN

Bookchin theorized that due to childbirth and child-rearing, women in organic societies were confined to more sedentary lifestyles than the men. Men assumed responsibilities of hunting and defense (defense moreso as bands grew to become clans and tribes that went to war with each other); physical strength, aggression, and violence defined their roles in society. Women specialized in nurturance, gardening, and motherhood. Bookchin's thought is that over time, men used their strength and aggressiveness to redefine the virtues of feminine work as weakness, elevating themselves.

The usefulness of Bookchin's theory is that it frees us from blindly accepting other theories that tell us that patriarchy, domination and war are written into our DNA, leaving us with no alternatives.
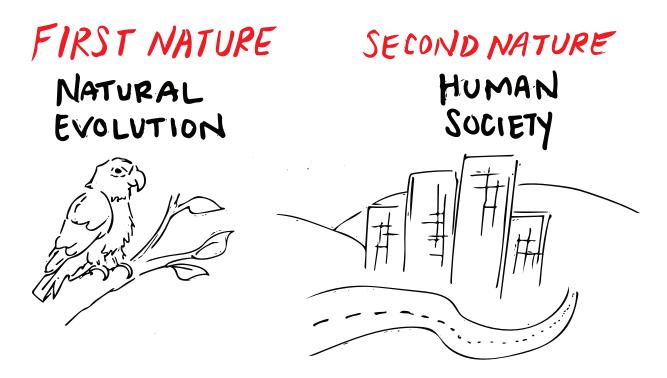
SOCIAL ECOLOGY AND NATURE

"Social ecology tries to examine nature and understand it not as a static entity, but as natural history. . . . Social ecology really does not see nature as a thing, as an external object, but rather as a DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS; and we are one of the results of that environmental and developmental process. WE ARE THE RESULT OF NATURAL HISTORY."

- Dan Chodorkoff

Social ecologists differentiate between "first nature" and "second nature." First nature is evolutionary and biological nature that includes humans, but is unaffected by human society/culture. Second nature is nature that has been impacted or altered by human cultural development and technology. Second nature, while transcending first nature, retains everything in first nature. Simply put, **first nature is natural evolution while second nature is human society.**

FIRST NATURE
NATURAL EVOLUTION

SECOND NATURE
HUMAN SOCIETY

Social ecology claims that society is an extension of nature--it is not pitted against nature in any deterministic way. The common trope that says selfishness is "just human nature" while interdependence and cooperation go "against human nature" is, in fact, irrational. Social ecologists draw from anthropological evidence which recognizes that mutual aid, cooperation, and empathy were present in early human groups, that these values were reinforced by their communities, and contributed heavily to their survival. Though our current societal plight (a social world predicated on exploitation, individualism, and competition) is unsustainable, we are not necessarily doomed to a future characterized by this irrationality. Bookchin describes humanity's relationship to nature in *Nature, First and Second*: **"Social life does not necessarily face nature as a combatant in an unrelenting war. The emergence of society is a natural fact that has its origins in the biology of human socialization."**

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin attempted to ground an "ecological sensibility" in an ethics centered in tangible reality. He concluded that the basis for ethics "lay in nature itself," a philosophy he called *dialectical naturalism*. Bookchin highlighted the participation and symbiosis in evolution, as opposed to struggle and competition for survival. He argued that human beings had the potentiality for increasingly greater freedom because they are a continuation of natural evolution (first nature). By locating the biological development of the human mind within natural evolution, Bookchin was able to find objective ethical footing.

CAPITALIŠM

Peter Staudenmaier, social ecologist, faculty member at the ISE, and history professor at Marquette University, describes capitalism as more than an economic system; it is "*A FORM OF SOCIETY.*"

Bookchin wrote in 1991:
"Perhaps the most compelling real fact that radicals in our era have not adequately faced is the fact that *Capitalism* today has become a *SOCIETY*, not only an economy."

According to sociologist and world-systems analyst Immanuel Wallerstein:

" *CAPITALIŠM* is first and foremost a historical social system. To understand its origins, its workings, or its current prospects, we have to look at its existing reality. We may of course attempt to summarize that reality in a set of abstract statements, but it would be foolish to use such abstractions to judge and classify the reality. I propose therefore instead to try to describe what capitalism has actually been like in practice, how it has functioned as a system, why it has developed in the ways it has, and where it is presently heading."

COMMODITY PRODUCTION

MARKETS

PRIVATE PROPERTY

EXPLOITED LABOR

In his essay *What is Capitalism*, Staudenmaier describes four core features of capitalism:
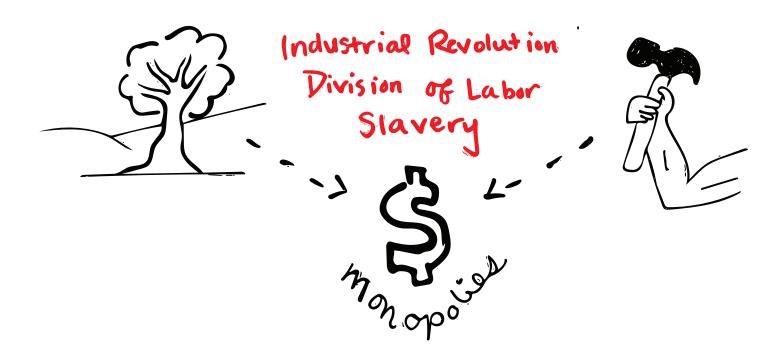
This is the smallest, most basic unit of a capitalist society, sometimes referred to as "goods and services." What makes an item, idea, or action a commodity is not some intrinsic quality of the object itself, but its ability to be exchanged. A commodity can be almost anything, tangible or intangible. Its value is based upon how much of another commodity the object can be exchanged for.

Markets are not only found in capitalism, but the outsized role that markets have in capitalism is unique. According to Bookchin, "market relations shape the totality of social life." They provide the context and meaning that give commodities value. Under capitalism, markets influence all of our social relationships, often causing excessive rivalry and competition.

According to Staudenmaier, "Wealth comes from the earth and its creatures and from the work of human hands and minds, and there are countless forms in which it can be created, discovered, and shared." In capitalism, societies' shared wealth is privatized. This is not the same as personal possessions. Personal possessions can be things like a hair dryer or socks. Private property means ownership of huge, important portions of society's shared wealth, like factories or land; this generally becomes wildly exploitative.

The definition here is wider than just wage labor; chattel slavery, for example, is an important example of exploited labor in North America. While a division of labor between groups of people is not only seen in capitalism, the combination of these elements is key: the previous three features (**commodity production**, the predominance of the **market**, and **private ownership** of economic resources), when *combined* with the **exploitation of labor**, means that the workers (who produce the commodities that are sold to keep the system running) have very little or no say in how the products they create are made and distributed. This results in their alienation.

HOW DID CAPITALISM EMERGE?

Industrial Revolution
Division of Labor
Slavery

$

Monopolies

Capitalism emerged out of technological advances in which the exploitation of the land (in the form of the Industrial Revolution) as well as people (in the form of an international division of labor, i.e. slavery), led to an increase in wealth. This caused increased centralization, in the form of monopolies.

WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE THEN?

Capitalism's ever-increasing need for accumulation has brought about both great innovation and great destruction. One of the most significant changes in the historical system of capitalism was the shift in the 1970s from the post-World War II affluence of Fordism towards an economy characterized by increasing debt, and the neoliberal "freeing" of the market.

WHO HAS CHALLENGED CAPITALISM?

These are just a few examples; it's important to note that indigenous peoples and decolonial movements have been on the front lines of the anti-capitalist struggle for centuries.

MARXISTS / ANARCHISTS

↓ (((synthesis))) ↓

→ **ANARCHO-COMMUNISTS**

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED

→ **ANARCHO-SYNDICALISTS**
WORKER-ORIENTED

→ **LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISTS**
+
AUTONOMY MOVEMENTS

like

- Zapatistas (EZLN)
- Rojava (DFNS)
- Cooperation Jackson
- The Catalan Integral Cooperative

ALSO WORKER-ORIENTED:
→ GUILD SOCIALISM
→ COUNCIL COMMUNISM
→ PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

A few others that don't necessarily fit these catagories:

→ WORKING CLASS MOVEMENTS

→ POPULISTS + FASCISTS

→ ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLES

→ UNIONS

→ PAN-NATIONAL STRUGGLES

LIMITS

One limitation in challenging capitalism's dominance is that the conditions are vastly different from the turn of the 20th century. Capitalism is extremely adaptable and increasingly digital. Alan Greenspan once responded, when asked which Presidential candidate he was supporting:

"[We] are fortunate that thanks to globalization, policy decisions in the US have been largely replaced by global market forces. National security aside, it hardly makes any difference who will be the next president.

The world is governed by market forces."

POWER

IS IT GOOD OR BAD?

It can be, and has been, both; but is inherently neither. Humanity has the potential and the ability to innovate social solutions in ways that are liberatory, ways that reflect the richness of human potential contained within first nature, and revealed within second nature.

Conversely, humanity also has the potentiality and the ability to devolve into barbarism.

In *What is Social Ecology*, Bookchin writes:

> **"Power will always belong to elite and commanding strata if it is not institutionalized in face-to-face democracies, among people who are fully empowered as social beings to make decisions in new communal assemblies . . . Power that does not belong to the people invariably belongs to the state and the exploitative interests it represents."**

Bookchin's most decisive reflections on power come from his writings on the Spanish Anarchists (the event which eventually led to his parting ways with anarchism). In talking about the CNT in Revolutionary Spain, Bookchin writes:

> "…power cannot be abolished--it is always a feature of social and political life. Power that is not in the hands of the masses must inevitably fall into the hands of their oppressors. There is no closet in which it can be tucked away…and no simplistic ideology that can make it disappear with moral and mystical incantations. Self-styled radicals may try to ignore it, as the CNT leaders did in July 1936, but it will remain hidden at every meeting, lie concealed in public activities, and appear and reappear at every rally. At the risk of repetition, allow me to emphasize that the truly pertinent issue that confronts anarchism is not whether power will exist but whether it will rest in the hands of an elite or in the hands of the people…"

The politics of social ecology seeks to better understand *how radicals might give power a material, institutional, and truly liberating form.*

WHAT IS THE STATE?

Social ecologists argue from a historical anthropological approach that the State is a 6000-year-old institution. This corresponds with Robert Carneiro's 1970 work, *A Theory of the Origin of the State*, which notes that for two million years, humankind lived in completely autonomous bands and villages until "perhaps 5000 B.C. [where] villages began to aggregate into larger political units…[which] continued at a progressively faster pace and led, around 4000 B.C., to the formation of the first state in history."

There are many theories on the emergence of the state. They tend to fall into two types: *voluntaristic* and *coercive*. Voluntaristic theories claim that otherwise self-determined people groups collectively, and of their own volition, gave up their autonomy by joining with other communities as a large political unit. Coercive theories posit that force--rather than rational self interest--was used to gradually coerce autonomous peoples into a state. These theories do all agree on the decisive role of warfare and some form of coercion in the emergence of the state. Quoting Edward Jenks on the Germanic kingdoms of northern Europe, Carneiro writes of states:

"Historically speaking, there is not the slightest difficulty in proving that all political communities of the modern type owe their existence to successful WARFARE."

Carneiro traces the trajectory of the state from "Neolithic villages which were succeeded by chiefdoms, chiefdoms by kingdoms, and kingdoms by empires…the logical culmination of the process," drawing on studies in Peru, the Amazon basin, the Valley of Mexico, Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, and the Indus Valley.

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL VISION AND PROGRAM OF

SOCIAL ECOLOGY/LIBERTARIAN MUNICIPALISM?

HOW IS BOOKCHIN'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT REFLECTED IN IT?

The political vision and program of Social Ecology/Libertarian Municipalism (also called *Communalism*) calls for a restructuring of the current political system along ecological and rational lines.

Social ecologists draw upon classical Athenian democracy (direct democracy). Policies are formed within directly democratic popular assemblies administered by recallable delegates. In *The Meaning of Confederalism,* Bookchin explains:

"What, then, is confederalism? It is above all a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in the various villages, towns, and even neighborhoods of large cities. The members of these confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policy making one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government... Administration and coordination are the responsibility of confederal councils, which become the means for interlinking villages, towns, neighborhoods, and cities into confederal networks. Power thus flows from the bottom up instead of from the top down, and in confederations."

Social ecologists have developed an inside/outside approach to implementing Libertarian Municipalism. There's the inside strategy of participating in electoral politics at the municipal level by running a municipal candidate. The outside strategy centers around creating extra-legal popular assemblies. The assemblies would form an alternative government, where citizens look at the same issues, showing what the people want in opposition. This serves to illustrate the anemic expression of democracy in our current system. Both inside and outside components have the same aim--to create a directly democratic, self-managed society based on a concentric network of directly democratic popular assemblies.

Taking into account the failure during the twentieth century of seizing state power through the vanguardism of a "dictatorship of the proletariat," the tendency of emancipatory organizing to be co-opted by the democratic party and electoral politics, and the temporary quality of street protests, Libertarian Municipalism seeks instead to build dual power institutions rooted in direct democracy. Rather than attempting to seize or smash the state, this would cultivate societal self-governing capacities through face-to-face assemblies (what Hannah Arendt called "the lost treasure of democracy"). Instead of withdrawing from the State and power, as is the platform of many anarchist movements, Libertarian Municipalism seeks to build the institutional capacity to repurpose power into an organized liberatory force.

Bookchin

Bookchin's political development is a fascinating journey, sweeping from Marxism to Anarchism and ultimately transcending both traditions in his synthesis of the two (*Communalism* or *Libertarian Municipalism*). Raised in a communist family in New York City, Bookchin was trained as an orator by the Young Communist League (he was later kicked out at age 18 for openly critiquing Stalin). He developed an interest in Trotskyism while working and attempting to organize within the automotive industry, and later spent time in various anarchist movements. He would eventually critique the anarchists' lack of any ability to amass and maintain power, (namely, in the failure of the CNT to claim the power it inherently possessed, in July 1936).

David Harvey, Marxist Geographer and Cultural Anthropologist, says this of Bookchin:

> "I find myself very much in agreement with a past anarchist, Murray Bookchin, who kinda said 'I think that the future of the left depends crucially on putting together the best of anarchism and the best of Marxism, and unless those two anti-capitalist perspectives can be put together in a political process, the left is doomed to failure.' He severed himself from the anarchist tradition because he couldn't stand the dogmatic anarchists. I've had a hard time in the Marxist tradition with the dogmatic Marxists. The dogmatic Marxists and the dogmatic anarchists should go to HELL."

WHAT ARE SOME Common objections TO DIRECT DEMOCRACY?

The most common objection to direct democracy is its VIABILITY

The complaint sounds something like, "We live in a complicated society, in a global economy, and in giant cities with millions of people. There's no possible way to scale up direct democracy in a meaningful way." Bookchin would perhaps respond with one of his most quoted phrases:

"THE BELIEF THAT WHAT CURRENTLY EXISTS MUST NECESSARILY EXIST IS THE ACID THAT CORRODES ALL VISIONARY THINKING."

"The belief that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking." He continues, "…aside from the utter irrationality of crowding tens of millions of people into congested, indeed, suffocating urban belts, must the present-day extravagant international division of labor necessarily exist in order to satisfy human needs?"

Another important question is that of the American Civil War--what happens when a large portion of citizens support regressive policies? Bookchin answers this in *The Next Revolution*.
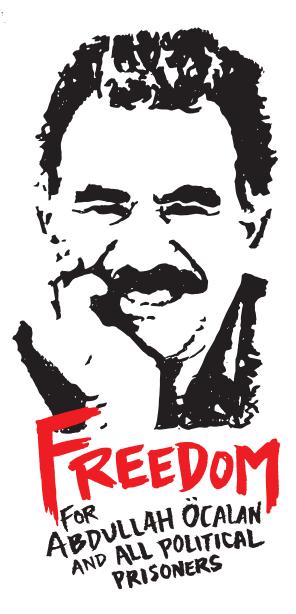
"Policy is made by a community or neighborhood assembly of free citizens; administration is performed by confederal councils composed of mandated, recallable deputies of wards, towns, and villages. If particular communities or neighborhoods (or a minority grouping of them) choose to go their own way to a point where human rights are violated or where ecological mayhem is permitted, the majority in a local or regional confederation has every right to prevent such malfeasances through its confederal council. This is not a denial of democracy but the assertion of a shared agreement by all to recognize civil rights and maintain the ecological integrity of a region. These rights and needs are not asserted so much by a confederal council as by the majority of the popular assemblies conceived as one large community that expresses its wishes through confederal deputies. Thus, policy-making still remains local, but its administration is vested in the confederal network as a whole."

To provide more substance about how confederal councils "prevent such malfeasances," I'll use the example of *Rojava (DFNS)*, the autonomous zone in so-called Northern Syria (formerly Western Kurdistan).

Bookchin's communalist educational project can be seen in the Rojavan revolution, where *democratic confederalism* (a political system that synthesizes libertarian municipalism, militant feminism, and pluralistic, secularist values) is the guiding system since 2005 and has been a ray of hope in Syria's dark civil/proxy war. Rojava has successfully scaled up direct democracy among a population that has doubled to 4.6 million—half of which are refugees or internally displaced peoples. They've done so in extremely harsh circumstances (besiegement by ISIS, for example), and in the midst of a deeply patriarchal culture.

Feminism has been a crucial value within the Rojava revolution since its roots in Marxist Leninist guerilla movement, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (more popularly called the PKK). The PKK's imprisoned leader, and one of the primary architects of the Rojavan system, Abdullah Öcalan, writes the following about gender in his pamphlet *Liberating Life:*

> "I have often written about 'total divorce', i.e. the ability to divorce from the five thousand years old culture of male domination. The female and male gender identities that we know today are constructs that were formed much later than the biological female and male. Woman has been exploited for thousands of years according to this constructed identity; never acknowledged for her labour. Man has to overcome always seeing woman as wife, sister, or lover – stereotypes forged by tradition and modernity."

Safeguards to protect women and enforce their political equality are built into Rojava's unique version of Libertarian Municipalism. Each of the four levels of government (a directly democratic, bottom-up structure) have a separate Women's Council with veto power. Women's rights are enforced by the YPJ, a women-only defense force (who are currently leading the global fight against ISIS). Each leadership position at any level is required to have both a male and female counterpart. This built-in accountability makes sure that, even if a certain village votes to create an anti-women policy, the decision-making structures connected to it will not allow power to be used for the sake of oppression.

FREEDOM
FOR ABDULLAH ÖCALAN
AND ALL POLITICAL
PRISONERS

ROJAVA

DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION OF NORTHERN SYRIA

(((bottom-up power structure)))

↑ ↑

Start here

↑ ↑

PEOPLE'S COUNCIL OF WEST KURDISTAN

REPRESENTATIVES OF DISTRICT COUNCILS; TEV-DEM

→ Orchestrates coordination between 3 cantons

→ Women's council

DISTRICT PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

WHOLE CITY

→ Women's Council

NEIGHBORHOOD PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

7-30 COMMUNES

→ holds assemblies

→ Women's council

COMMUNE

30-400+ HOUSEHOLDS

→ holds assemblies

→ Women's Council

→ mediation for disputes between citizens

→ separate all-male (YPG) and all-female (YPJ) defense forces

COMMISSIONS

→ Commissions do much of the work of communes and People's Councils.

DEFENSE
POLITICAL
ECONOMICS
CIVIL SOCIETY
FREE SOCIETY
IDEOLOGY
JUSTICE
WOMEN'S COUNCIL

Women-only commissions work together with each of these general commissions.

DEMOCRATIC AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATIONS

→ Created by councils in anticipation of other nations not recognizing their form of democracy as legitimate

→ Orchestrates matters at the federal-international level (consulates/offices in Moscow, Stockholm, France, and Germany)

BOOKCHIN'S INFLUENCE ON THE ROJAVA REVOLUTION

Late 1970s to late 1980s —— Abdullah Öcalan leads the PKK, a Marxist-Leninist party promoting armed struggle to overthrow the Turkish state and form a Socialist Kurdish state

Early 1990s —— Öcalan begins rethinking the PKK's political program and goals.

1999 —— Öcalan is arrested in Nairobi and sentenced to death in Turkey. Turkey abolishes the death penalty in hopes of joining the EU. Öcalan's sentence becomes life imprisonment.

1999-2009 —— Öcalan is the only prisoner in Imrali, an island prison. The work of Judith Butler, Bookchin, and Benedict Anderson influence his intellectual and political journey.

2004 ——————
Öcalan has his lawyers contact Bookchin. He is "eager to make the ideas applicable to Middle Eastern Societies." Bookchin responds asking for patience, as he is ill.

2006 ——————
Bookchin passes away before seeing the PKK implement his ideas.

2011 ——————
Syrian War breaks out. About half the population had been organized into councils inspired by Bookchin's Libertarian Municipalism.

2014 ——————
Rojava declares autonomy and approves interim Constitution.

how has Social Ecology influenced other SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

1962
OUR SYNTHETIC ENVIRONMENT
is published by Bookchin, preceding Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* by six months. He warns of damaging anti-ecological effects of our "synthetic" environment in a broad analysis (pesticides, untested medicines, food additives, etc.)

1960s
LEFT GREEN ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENTS
ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT
GREEN POLITICS
NEW LEFT / SDS

Bookchin influences various movements, including the early anti-nuclear power movement and the New Left. He writes a program for an alternative Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) centered around affinity groups and ecological issues. Bookchin introduces the 'affinity group' as a method of organizing, inspired by revolutionary Spain. Clamshell Alliance, an anti-nuclear group in New England, implements this method.

1970s
ISE
ECOFEMINISM

Students begin visiting the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) in Vermont during the summer to learn permaculture, radical agrarian/political thought, appropriate technology, etc. The ISE offers what is likely the first ecofeminism course taught anywhere, with Ynestra King.

1980s + 1990s
GREEN POLITICS
WTO PROTESTS
ALTER-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

Bookchin's thoughts influence Green Politics significantly in the eighties and nineties. Many ISE-involved activists become involved in the WTO protests and alterglobalization movements of the late nineties.

PRESENT DAY
COOPERATION JACKSON
KURDISH STRUGGLE / ROJAVA

Kurdish communities (most famously, Rojava) in Turkey, Syria, and parts of Iraq and Iran have been influenced by Bookchin's municipalism, along with Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi. Anarchist group Demand Utopia synthesizes social ecology with inspiration from the Situationists to orchestrate direct actions (primarily in the Pacific Northwest) and Rojava Solidarity actions.
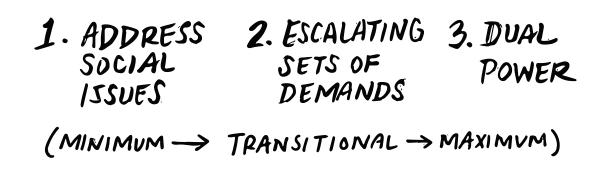
REFORM: REVOLUTION
PROTEST TO POLITICS

CHAIA HELLER'S piece, *Illustrative Opposition: Drawing the Revolutionary out of the Ecological,* describes the importance of expanding our analysis beyond single issues towards the necessity of political reconstruction.

POLICE BRUTALITY   BORDERS
SINGLE ISSUES → POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION
HEALTH CARE   TRANS RIGHTS   LIVING WAGE
HOUSELESSNESS   VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

"Social ecology provides a thoughtful and comprehensive interpretation regarding how to engage in a political revolution by engaging in local municipal politics to initiate a broader move toward a confederation of directly democratic communities."
- Chaia Heller, Social Ecologist

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1. ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES   2. ESCALATING SETS OF DEMANDS   3. DUAL POWER

(MINIMUM → TRANSITIONAL → MAXIMUM)

On a 2012 panel discussing the revolutionary status of Occupy, Heller spoke of the need to address political and social issues while implementing escalating sets of demands into a dual power situation through a minimum program, to a transitional program, and then a maximum program. The tension between reform and revolution does not necessarily mean the two form a binary; rather, they can be used in tandem to achieve revolutionary goals.

ILLUSTRATIVE OPPOSITION

Illustrative opposition is a framework for highlighting a single issue while "illustrating a broader political critique and reconstructive vision…it is a practice of holistic picture-making in which one brush stroke serves as an invocation to bring an entire picture to fullness," according to Heller.

CRITICAL MOMENT

Look at the issue, research its emergence, and the history of resistance to the issue.

RECONSTRUCTIVE MOMENT

Look at expansive ways to view the issue; find ways that it connects to broader issues.

ILLUSTRATIVE MOMENT

Direct action. This can look like many things, from creating and distributing pamphlets, to engaging in performance art, to facilitating ongoing lecture series or discussion groups accessible to the community.

RECLAIMING UTOPIA

MARX

- UTOPIAN SOCIALISM IS NAIVE
- UTOPIANS DON'T UNDERSTAND CLASS STRUGGLE + INDUSTRIALISM

Marx and Engels saw "utopian socialism" as naïve. They thought that proponents of utopian socialism sorely underestimated the reality of the class struggle, and the necessity of confrontation with bourgeois society and the state. They dismissed the utopians (Fourier, Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Proudhon) as simpleminded, as they preceded industrialization. The critique against the so-called utopians became synonymous with thinkers who were deemed unaware of modern industrial development and the proletariat's role within it.

SOCIAL ECOLOGY

- RECONSTRUCTIVE VISION FOR SOCIETY
- TRANSFORMATION ALONG RATIONAL + ECOLOGICAL LINES
- RE-IMAGINING REGIONS
- SOCIAL + ECOLOGICAL RENEWAL

Conversely, Social ecology's reconstructive vision is a fundamental transformation of society. In *Toward Climate Justice*, Brian Tokar asked a series of rhetorical questions that serve to describe the utopian elements of social ecology.

> "Can the potential for a more thoroughgoing transformation of society actually be realized? Is it possible for now-isolated local efforts to come together in a holistic manner and fulfill the old left-libertarian dream of a "movement of movements," organized from the ground up to radically change the world? Can we envision a genuine synthesis of oppositional and alternative-building efforts able to challenge systems of deeply entrenched power, and transcend the dual challenges of political burn-out and the co-optation of aspiring alternative institutions? Can a new movement for social and ecological renewal emerge from the individual and community levels toward the radical re-envisioning of entire regions and a genuinely transformed social and political order?"

Tokar's questions show how social ecologists view a reconstructive vision, in terms of moving beyond the competitive nature of capitalist society towards interdependence. This vision stretches beyond electoralism or street protest, trascending binaries of either smashing or seizing the state. Many varied elements are synthesized into a new kind of politics, with the creation of institutions rooted in meaningful direct democracy, building alternative institutions in which counterhegemonic power can take root from below, to contest against state power. Social ecology's vision reconstructs power which has too long been formed into oppression, and rearranges it for the transformation of society along rational, ecological lines.

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