

# Anarchists and the Alternative of Inclusive Democracy

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*«In this problematique, it seems that the anti-globalisation ‘movement’ in the form it has today will not be able to transcend its present character as an organised ‘resistance movement’ of the ‘multitude’ against the ‘empire’ on the basis of a set of reformist demands –as described by Hardt & Negri. One could therefore foresee that the anti-globalisation ‘movement’ in the future will either be phased out or, more likely, will be transformed into another kind of ‘new’ social movement, like, for instance, the green movement, and will be integrated within the ‘system’ soon afterwards».*

*T. Fotopoulos, «The End of Traditional Antisystemic Movements», November 2001*

## **Death of the anti-globalization movement and movements of “resistance”**

The anti-globalization movement can be officially proclaimed dead. While the social desolation caused by the global financial crisis is spreading exponentially on a global scale and while the political, social and economic rights of the non-privileged social majority are under savage attack by the transnational elite, the movement has maintained a disconcerting silence and, in reality, is nowhere to be seen. Whereas the current phase of the Social Struggle is marked by the effort of the transnational elite to avoid a systemic meltdown by restructuring the parameters of systemic domination through the intensification of the concentration of power at all levels, the inability of the movement to intervene in the social process and act as a viable opposition and alternative force to the onslaught of neoliberal modernity is merely the logical, yet regrettable, consequence of the hegemonic position attained by reformist organizations such as the World Social Forum (WSF) and ATTAC within the social movement sector, at the

expense of the more radical, potentially anti-systemic, political groups and formations.

This dichotomy is all the more pertinent today, when the measures of social cannibalism introduced everywhere by the political elites of representative “democracy”, irrespective of their ideological denomination, bear strong testimony to the fact that the crisis is rooted in common systemic factors that may account for this uniformity of action “from above” and therefore it cannot be countered or reversed within the institutional framework of the present political and economic system. The natural consequence of this is that reformist organizations such as the WSF which advocate the “reform” of the dominant, internationalized economic institutions and do not question the legitimacy of the system as a whole by demanding its complete overthrow, have no alternatives to offer when these same systemic institutions can only ensure their reproduction by intensifying the unequal distribution of political, economic and social power between upper social strata and the dependent bottom layers of the social pyramid. In other words, the WSF and its “civilized” political message advocating the use of institutional means for promoting social change, have become increasingly irrelevant in a context of intensified Social Struggle on a global scale, when those very institutional devices upon which the WSF relied for the implementation of its “strategy”, have been completely eradicated by the ruling elites through the conscious modification of the legal framework of legitimate political activity, so as to make it conform with the security needs of neoliberal representative totalitarianism.

The introduction of repressive legislation establishing the core legal tenets of a police state and the deployment of the full ideological force of systemic mass media for the purpose of cultivating a semi-fascist political culture prone to the systematic suppression of dissent, have redefined the boundaries of legitimate political action in Western representative regimes. Furthermore, the basic assumption of the reformist political agenda, namely that the system can be improved from within through civil society mobilization, peaceful demonstrations and electoral pressure, has been exposed for its fraudulent and utopian (in the negative sense) nature. For it is the very dynamics and function of the system of the internationalized market economy with its unilateral reliance on the unfettered activity of multinational corporations and the private sector as sole catalysts for economic growth, that have made compulsory the mass transfer of public funds into the financial system of private banks, the opening up of new business opportunities for private actors through the parallel depreciation of public services in fields like education and health-care, the balancing of state deficits by the curtailment of welfare-state institutions and the imposition of harsh measures of austerity aimed exclusively against the underclass and the lower-level social strata.

Ongoing developments have brought home the conclusion that the multidimensional crisis of the system cannot be resolved within the existing institutional framework. Social phenomena

such as political subjugation, economic dependence, social oppression and the destruction of the environment, are only symptoms of the existing hierarchical form of social organization which reproduces its dominance through the uneven distribution of power between elite groups, on the one hand, and the vast majority of the social body, on the other. Only the complete abolition of these systemic structures and their replacement by free and autonomous institutions generated in the context of collective political praxis carried out by a mass antisystemic movement engaged in Social Struggle can eliminate all forms of domination and oppression from all spheres of organized social life.

The question arises then of whether the militant wing (associated mainly with anarchist groups and organizations) of what used to be the anti-globalization movement can take advantage of this opportunity and reassert its primacy within the social movement milieu. In my view, this question can be better answered by reviewing the causes that led to the militant wing's defeat the first time around and calling for a revision and rethinking of the strategy and tactics it has employed so far. As Takis Fotopoulos had written back in 2001, «this does not deny the fact that there are antisystemic elements within the 'movement' that could potentially function as catalysts for the creation of a true antisystemic movement. The problem with these antisystemic elements at the moment is that they do not have any clear vision for a future society and therefore a long-term strategy and short-term program».<sup>[1]</sup> By adopting such a broad vision, the militant currents can breathe new energy into popular movements "from below" by virtue of advocating a purely antisystemic outlook and agenda that would revive the radical movement's dwindling fortunes and would reconfigure its ideological structure and internal form of organization along purely libertarian, democratic lines.

### **As a way of illustration: The Occupy Wall Street Movement**

Sadly, the pseudo-anarchist Occupy Wall Street (O.W.S.) movement is yet another example of a reformist movement which reproduces all the popular misconceptions about the dominant institutions of the system, both in terms of the political aims that it espouses and also with regard to its tactics and methods of action. The practice of occupation of public spaces can only be interpreted as a gesture of collective protest aimed against the political and economic elites. However, in choosing such a form of action the organizers of the movement seem to base their strategy on the assumption that the political structures of representative "democracy" are somehow receptive or prone to respond to requests coming from below. Such a naïve presumption implies that the important question is to find ways for the people to express collectively their will to their masters, as if the problem was that the elites in power were not aware of where their subjects stand on matters such as the elimination of poverty, the preservation of institutions of social solidarity, the uneven distribution of wealth, etc. which

are directly affected by the growing concentration of income and economic power.

The fetish of non-violence is yet another suicidal prejudice undermining the protest movement, particularly in the present phase of neoliberal totalitarianism in which the elites rely increasingly in their apparatus of organized force so as to enforce the various aspects of the process of marketization upon society. In other words, the increase in the manifestations of state violence is a direct outcome of the breakdown of the system's legitimacy, of its growing inability to obtain the approval of subordinate and underprivileged social groups for the implementation of policies that can only result in the further deterioration of their social position. OWS organizers seem to conveniently forget that the Arab Spring (from which they claim to draw inspiration) was not a peaceful, non-violent affair and for the masses to be able to impose their will upon the elites, they have to be willing to defend themselves against systemic attacks, both in the physical and the ideological sense.

Lastly, the aim of creating "a general assembly in every back yard"[\[2\]](#) is indicative of the fact that OWS conceives of direct democracy as a mere process of collective decision-taking to be practiced within the existing institutional framework, since it does not attach any institutional, structural-economic or philosophical qualifications to its establishment as an alternative and autonomous form of social organization. In this connection, we must stress that the organizers' insistence on consensus[\[3\]](#) by definition precludes the possibility of the movement becoming a harbinger for the establishment of autonomous institutions of popular self-management on a mass social scale. The fact of the matter is that for direct democracy to flourish two things must happen: a) the systemic factors which negate democracy by virtue of reproducing the unequal distribution of political, economic, social and cultural power must be attacked and eliminated (not "reformed" as the OWS suggests) and b) direct democracy should be conceived as a holistic, emancipatory political project for the radical transformation of society consisting in a combination of processes, collective institutions of self-management and economic, political and social structures embodying the equal distribution of power in all spheres of social activity. In this context, direct democracy ceases to be an end-in-itself and becomes a means for the self-institution of the free, autonomous society.

## **From the politics of resistance, to the politics of emancipation**

In all major summits of the transnational elite (WTO, G8, IMF), there unfolded violent confrontations between the predominantly anarchist black bloc and the security forces of the transnational elite. In spite of the climate of terror cultivated by the elites and the measures of brutal repression carried out against the more radical sectors of the movement, anarchist militants refused to be intimidated and combated the police forces of occupation, fighting

pitched battles against a superior enemy in Seattle, Genoa, Strasbourg and so on. However, courageous as it was, the insurrectional strategy has proven to be counter-productive in terms, both of bringing globalization to a halt and also of expanding the social base of the anarchist collectivities (two aims which, in our view, are organically related to each other).<sup>[4]</sup> The one-dimensional anarchist perception of violence as the sole legitimate method of political action has resulted in the ideological and practical marginalization of the black bloc, effectively hindering its development into becoming a mass anti-systemic movement capable of challenging the status-quo. In this sense, mass counter-violence as a political strategy which is sufficient-to-itself, is an essentially reformist tactic, in that it reduces the substance of anti-systemic political activity to mere violent resistance. In other words, the fundamental goals of the anti-systemic movement are made to conform to the inherent limitations of the chosen method. It concedes the political initiative to the ruling elites adopting a passive, re-active posture against their oppressive policies. To overcome this seeming quagmire, we need to revert to the philosophical concept of violence as an «instrument», to be used in the service of a broader, radical political agenda.

One of the primary strategic objectives of the black bloc was to avert the crystallization of a formal division within the anti-globalization movement between the segment of activists who espouse peaceful protest, and the more militant wing who uses violence as a method for social change. Unfortunately, such a division was, in the end, successfully imposed by the authorities and, it seems, not without a measure of consent on the part of the peaceniks. This was not because peaceful protesters were necessarily intimidated by anti-terrorist laws and rising levels of violence in the context of anti-globalization marches, although fear for one's own personal safety cannot be excluded as a factor. Apparently decisive for the lack of sympathy shown towards the black bloc was the fact that reformist protest organizations were able to retain the affiliations of their membership by cultivating the illusion that they offer a «political solution» to the problems engendered by globalization, a piecemeal strategy by which to achieve concrete results through the reform of global political and economic institutions. Illusive as this prospect was, it was nevertheless appealing enough to secure a continuous commitment from their membership and absorb its energies in the pursuit of harmless goals and away from militant political activity.

On the contrary, no such outlet was provided by anarchist groups participating in the anti-globalization movement. By this, we do not mean that anarchists should have abandoned their radical agenda and tactics in order to embark on a process of “civilized” consultation with the ruling elites. But, our position does imply that violent confrontational strategies and systematic political work towards a pre-defined political end are not two mutually exclusive concepts as many postmodern anarchists seem to believe. The black bloc is essentially a loose network of individuals or groups of people bound together by a shared perception of what it

means to be activist. Their common focus is exclusively on method, purposefully neglecting matters of theoretical substance. They do not possess a general political theory, a corresponding radical vision by which to secure the affinity of a growing number of activists who will agree to participate in the high-risk, militant activity of the groups, knowing that such actions constitute an integral dimension of a broader political movement, with a vigorous presence in all levels of organized social life.

## **The Inclusive Democracy Project**

The building of such a mass organization presupposes the serious involvement of a growing number of people in the daily practice of anarchism. This position should not be confused with the “anarchism in action” approach advocated by many Anglo-Saxon libertarian thinkers, who propound an escapist creed that presents anarchism as an alternative life-style which can be practiced in isolated communities within the context of the existing institutional framework.[\[5\]](#) In fact, our position is exactly the opposite, in that it presupposes that the conquest of freedom, in the form of collective (social) and individual autonomy as a whole, is not a private, but a collective enterprise. It postulates that true autonomy and freedom are concepts that may be implemented only through the agency of the social individual acting in concert with his peers and, therefore, it deals also with the question of democratic organization and the extension of the public sphere to include almost every social aspect of human existence.

In view of the pressing need for organization, I believe that it is time for anarchists everywhere to adopt the ideas outlined in the inclusive democracy project, which contains the blueprint for a future anarchical society based on the principles of direct political, economic, social and ecological democracy. The theoretical work carried out in the framework of inclusive democracy is, in my mind, the only scheme for an anarchist organization of society which addresses our contemporary problems and needs. The purpose of the Inclusive Democracy project is to propose an alternative model of social organization that eliminates all forms of institutionalized power and oppression from the social realm. The only way to accomplish this and also to ensure that new forms of oppression do not arise to replace the old ones, is to develop and build the institutional preconditions for the equal distribution of all forms of political, economic, cultural and social power among the citizenry, along with a solid philosophical/theoretical foundation that is needed to change the corresponding social mentality. By introducing the idea of a confederation of popular assemblies operating on the principle of direct democracy, the social ideal of autonomy is revived once again and becomes relevant to our time. In this form of organization, each individual citizen is invested with equal political power residing in his / her institutional ability to contemplate, deliberate and decide

along with his/her peers on the type of laws which govern his society. However, only by participating in the institutional collectivity of the assembly does the individual citizen become sovereign, meaning that he becomes able to enact legislation.

This aspect of inclusive democracy is again at odds with individualist anarchism. While the individualist's ideal anthropological type is a person admitting of no law and rejecting any "artificial" constraints on his / her behavior and desires,<sup>[6]</sup> the essence of autonomy presents us with a human being capable of self-reflectively providing himself with his own set of laws, in accordance with the values and belief-system that are compatible with collective and individual autonomy. What is needed then, in the collective, is the development of institutions of direct democracy on a mass scale, namely the institution of a confederal network of *demotic* assemblies which will embody the decentralization of power in all its forms, given that the face-to-face assembly will be the central decision-making organ of the community (demos) possessing supreme authority over the local political, economic and cultural spheres. Such a model is neither absolute, nor immutable. It simply lays down the necessary institutional preconditions for the complete elimination of authoritarian/power relations from organized social life. As it considers that popular assemblies are the ultimate source of authority in a genuinely democratic society, it depends on the assemblies themselves to ratify the model of such a novel social arrangement, to overrule it altogether (if they want to abolish democracy), or to modify certain aspects of their local model as they see fit. But in our view, the confederal scheme proposed by inclusive democracy must be expounded as an alternative form of social organization by anarchists everywhere. Otherwise, the movement will eventually subside and the people will return to their habitual practices, in want of a better solution.

### **"Take the power back": Liberation on the political level**

These institutions cannot resemble the isolated and disjointed anarchist collectives of the present, because radical social transformation cannot be attained through a strategy which simply aims at disrupting the social consensus on the level of ideas and precipitating a change in prevalent social values and beliefs by way of "leading by example". Attracting sympathy and provoking an emotional response on the part of the social body is a noble endeavor, but it is not revolutionary in its own right. In fact, it reinforces the divide between the fragmented anarchist social formations and the rest of society by enunciating the "exotic" quality of anarchist ideas and positing the necessity for a voluntary withdrawal from society as a precondition for living in accordance with anarchist, egalitarian norms. However, such a strategy simply overlooks the repressive power which social institutions and dominant economic structures (what we call the dominant social paradigm) exert upon the social body and their ability to ultimately affect the behavioral patterns and beliefs both of the majority of

the individual human subjects and also of the collectivity. This is why, a movement for social liberation cannot be introvert and content itself to co-exist peacefully with dominant social institutions, but must devote its energies to compete with state/systemic structures and to openly challenge their authority on the political, economic and cultural level. Under this light, self-organization in every sphere of social life is indeed indispensable but only as a method incorporated in a political strategy aiming to achieve something greater: the complete abolition of hierarchical social structures which reproduce the concentration of power in all its forms. Only then will the members of the demoi be truly autonomous, by being in control of the central political and economic decisions that determine the material conditions and the general framework of their social existence.

Through the confederacy, organized around the principal administrative unit of the demos, the movement will gain the holistic, coordinated perspective necessary to overthrow the system, without having to renounce decentralization and its effective transfer of power to the community. The confederal scheme will provide the power-base from which the movement might proceed to launch its campaign against the status-quo. If adopted, the struggle to develop now ID “organizations” (which in reality is nothing more than the nucleus of the future demotic assembly itself) will constitute a qualitative leap in the political activity of anarchist groups signifying the passage from the politics of adolescent resistance to globalization, to the politics of emancipation through the establishment of a network of autonomous political communities. These communities will strive to gradually develop their basis of political, economic and cultural decentralization of power and expand their resources in terms both of human personnel, but also of creating a demotic economic sector, operating without money and state and completely separate and autonomous from the system of the market economy. This process of gradual expansion ideally will continue to the point that the state apparatus will be no more than an empty shell, stripped completely of its ideological authority, deprived of its economic resources and abandoned by a disaffected citizenry.

At this point, one understands that what we are describing is a gradual process of revolutionary change, not a watershed event in the form of an uprising that aims to transform the dominant social paradigm (ideological structures and value-system congruent to the status quo) overnight. In the contemporary mythology of postmodern anarchism the spontaneous popular uprising is a mystical event that incorporates all those social characteristics deemed necessary to bring about the establishment of a new social order. Like a raging fire, the “Uprising” will consume the final remains of the old society and usher in a new era of peace, brotherhood and equality for the human race. However, past experience from Argentina in 2001 and Greece in 2008 has repeatedly validated the resilience of entrenched social reality against such magical recipes for change. In Greece, groups identifying with the insurrectionary tendency within the broader anarchist movement were so absolutely convinced about the



revolutionary virtues of spontaneity, that they purposefully overlooked all forms of conscious political work, in favor of engaging in one-dimensional actions that would serve to escalate the levels of violent confrontation with the state without the concomitant high level of political consciousness required to overthrow the system. The latent rationale behind this strategic decision (which was more a tacit agreement on a common line of action, rather than a self-conscious decision resulting from collective deliberation) was that if anarchists managed to avert the restoration of social peace, the «Uprising» would somehow find its way into producing forms of self-management and self-organization consistent with the prescriptions of their limited anarchist vision of society.

Hence, in this worldview we see that human action, is seen as predictable and is made to conform to a necessary outcome, while the «Uprising» assumes the attributes of a metaphysical social entity deterministically moving towards a preordained and “socially necessary” political end. Yet, such a mystical concept is not entirely alien to classical anarchism and its emphasis on the determinism found in the natural environment, on the innate inclinations of mankind towards solidarity and collectivist forms of co-existence and on the conception of hierarchical forms of social organization as simple obstacles to be removed and swept away by violent revolution, so that the “true” and spontaneous collectivist dispositions of the proletariat may be allowed to express themselves freely and flourish. Such mythical notions are evident in the works of Malatesta and other anarchist-communist thinkers. However, never did those classical thinkers of anarchism eschew or abandon conscious political work at a mass social scale, as post-modern anarchists do, favouring instead the «creative interplay» of dormant social forces, and never did they stop believing that human liberation and the abolition of domination is possible without the prior elimination of those systemic institutions concentrating political power in the hands of the State apparatus, and economic power in the hands of private capital which has ownership and control over the means of production and distribution. In stark contrast to this antisystemic stance of classical anarchism, post-modern anarchists in their majority reject grand narratives of human liberation and seem to favour some sort of *modus vivendi* with the system

From the above, it becomes apparent that even though a popular revolt might represent the outright rejection of the status-quo by the masses, in no way can it be interpreted as an automatic endorsement of the ideal of autonomy by the majority of the social body, or as a harbinger of the collective institutions through which the practice of self-government may be realized. In other words, people might be quite certain about *what they do not want*, but this does not mean that they have developed a political consciousness and a concomitant political project which allows them to undertake the self-organization of their lives in a way that will eliminate the sources of their present grievances.

Of course, this lack of subjective realization on the part of the citizenry does not mean that the mass movement should delegate power to an elite group of professional “revolutionaries”, who by virtue of possessing a “superior” knowledge of social affairs, would be in a better position to formulate “revolutionary” strategy and dictate to the masses their future actions. The transitional strategy of inclusive democracy suggests precisely the opposite. Namely, that activists should work towards the establishment of a confederal network of demotic assemblies which will assume the role of the principal decision-making organ of the movement. In this manner, inclusive democracy militants will not act as an elitist group, semi-detached from the core constituency of the movement, but instead will act at the local level as a catalyst that will radicalize the grass-roots and inject into it the conceptual tools and institutional mechanisms through which the demotic assemblies may begin to articulate an autonomous political discourse and establish its self-reflective political identity. In other words, through the application of the unitary confederal principle and through the implementation of a strategy for the economic empowerment of the demoi, the movement will, for the first time, become aware of itself.[\[7\]](#)

## **Liberation on the economic level**

This strategy for emancipation on the political level must necessarily be accompanied by a strategy for liberation on the economic level, through a step-by-step plan of “disengagement” from the market-economy, outlining the practical measures for the creation of a demotic economic sector. The material basis of the autonomous economic sector of the demos will be the social ownership of the means of production and distribution. This means that the productive resources located in the vicinity of the administrative unit of the demos will be under the control of the demotic assembly which will establish the right to decide about their allocation and utilization in accordance with the democratically articulated material needs of the community. The aim of such an economic system is not the self-sufficient economic development of the demos, but the restoration of the sovereignty of the demos over the economic process, through the decentralization of production and self-reliance primarily on the productive resources of the locality. Indeed, self-sufficiency is neither tenable, nor desirable under contemporary economic conditions. Each demotic economic unit will be integrated in a confederal economic system, the principles (mutuality, solidarity, cooperation) of which will regulate the direct exchange of goods and services with other demotic communities.

Of course, the substance (productive goals) of the economic plan of the confederacy will not be determined unilaterally by some upper caste of “professional” functionaries invested with power to formulate policy on the “confederal level”. The formation of such an institutional power elite is out of the question, since delegates to the peripheral and confederal assemblies

will be appointed directly by the demotic assemblies and will be subject to their strict mandate and revocable at any time, should their actions exceed or violate the extent of their mandate. Instead, peripheral and confederal organs will primarily serve an administrative function. Their job will be to coordinate the efforts of the individual demotic sectors in order to meet the requirements of the confederal plan and to facilitate the constant and reciprocal flow of information from the confederal to the demotic level, in the interests of improving or adjusting individual aspects of the confederal plan whenever this is necessary.

To ensure that the equal distribution of economic power is safeguarded money as a medium for the appropriation of goods and services and as a means for income accumulation will be abolished. Instead, a system of vouchers or credit cards will be put in place. The units contained in a credit card will represent purchasing power corresponding to the amount of labor offered by the individual citizen as a minimum requirement for the satisfaction of his basic material needs by the confederacy. Of course, this minimum amount of labor again will be subject to the decisions of the demotic assembly, and will not be pre-determined by so-called “experts” (although their expertise will be taken under consideration) or bureaucrats. Furthermore, additional consumption of non-basic goods will be accessible through the provision of additional working hours, but such non-basic needs will be satisfied on the level of the demos. Purchasing power is strictly ascribed to the individual citizen and cannot be transferred to, or appropriated by another person. In this manner, the accumulation of wealth and the hereditary preservation of social privilege are prevented from occurring in the economic framework of an Inclusive Democracy. Of course, special provisions will apply for those social groups who are not in a position to contribute the necessary amounts of labour such as children, the elderly, the handicapped etc.

Overall, the primary economic unit is the demos, the members of which are invested with the authority to make all the fundamental macroeconomic decisions regulating economic production in the confederacy («what», «how» and «for whom» it is produced). The confederal assemblies serve the executive function of coordinating the production of the autonomous demoi in the economic framework of the confederacy, according to the instructions given to them by the demotic assemblies. Also, their primary task is to ensure that a uniform level of comprehensive social welfare exists throughout the confederacy, as regards the satisfaction of the basic needs of all citizens, which are democratically defined by the citizens themselves. However, even at this advanced stage of the economic process, the power rests with the collective body of the demos, who have the right to decide about the material means and the division of labour by which production is implemented.[\[8\]](#)

## **A new concentration of power?**

The argument has been made that such a strategy is bound to result to a new concentration of power within the social movement sector. Again, the approach of the inclusive democracy project takes caution against the reproduction of hierarchical structures within the movement by effectively disallowing the possibility for the accumulation and institutionalization of political power in the hands of a privileged minority, even a group of ID sympathizers. On the subjective level, the sphere of individual commitments, value-systems and beliefs (the social paradigm which is congruent with the ID institutions), it is made abundantly clear that the loyalty of inclusive democracy activists should not rest with a particular ID “organization”, but with the autonomous collective institution itself, namely the demotic assembly. This is quite understandable, since an ID organization is in effect a non-organization, whose sole aim in terms of a private political agenda, is slowly to disintegrate and be absorbed within an expanded demotic assembly formed to put into effect the practical steps for the political and economic emancipation of the demos. On the objective level, the level of political and economic structures, the blueprint for a future society propounded by the ID project simply negates the institutional factors which might contribute to the creation of a dynamic towards the concentration of political or economic power by any one person or group. Nor does it afford the institutional means for the consolidation and reproduction of such power

However, many post-modern anarchists distrust even direct democracy. They argue that, by definition, it entails the repression of the will of the minority and for this reason it will have to rely on a new mechanism of organized force in order to secure compliance with the decisions taken by the majority.<sup>[9]</sup> They propose consensual decision-taking as an alternative to the ‘inherently oppressive’ democratic ideal. This view is emblematic of the ideological hegemony that liberal individualist currents have achieved within the contemporary anarchist movement and has taken a disastrous toll on the revolutionary prospects of libertarian socialism and its relevance as a viable social alternative, in a historical juncture when statist socialism in both East (existing socialism) and West (social-democracy) has collapsed and the path had been cleared for libertarian socialism to forcefully assert itself as the only genuine revolutionary solution to the political, economic, cultural, ecological and social impasses generated by the hierarchical structures of heteronomous society.

The position advocating consensus is fundamentally flawed and is mistaken in more than one respect. First, it sees the defence of individual autonomy as a matter of simple procedure and it reproduces within emancipatory discourse the antithesis between society and the person, without taking into account that in an autonomous society individual autonomy complements social, collective autonomy and vice versa, since the whole purpose of the emancipatory project is to organize social coexistence in such a way that does not contradict or negate the

liberty of the person, but on the contrary enhances its autonomy by reconciling personal interests with the interests of the whole. Under this light, autonomy is a matter of installing a combination of interdependent democratic processes, structures, institutions and culture, which can only be implemented if they are incorporated as the mutually-complementing political goals of a mass libertarian movement fighting for radical systemic change. However, the very prospect of the construction of such a holistic movement with its own analysis of social reality and its own emancipatory political strategy is shunned by the post-modern anarchist adherents of consensus.

Furthermore, the argument which claims that democracy constitutes a type of state-structure is also flawed, since the very essence of state power resides in the separation of the political process from society and the construction of a formal public sphere outside and above the social body. However, in the context of ID political structures and institutions, the separation of the political sphere from society is abolished. Politics is re-integrated into society, which practices politics as the systematic activity making possible the concrete self-institution of the social body. The citizenry regains access to the political process and everyone participates on an equal footing in the self-management of society as a whole, thus making self-government on a mass social scale possible. Hence, it is evident that the state-analogy cannot be made to hold in a social context where all forms of power are distributed equally among all citizens and everyone participates directly in the formulation of decisions that determine the greater political, economic and ecological parameters of his / her social existence.

Even as regards the question of the protection of “minorities”, this argument is void of meaning in the context of an Inclusive Democracy. This is because, the demotic assembly (main decision-taking body in an ID) operates on the principle of democratic rationalism, a core philosophical belief of which is that there are no eternal truths and the validity of a premise is determined, in the last instance, by its ratification by the assembly of autonomous citizens. It follows, that no decisions or laws passed by the assembly are immutable and that any one citizen can challenge the correctness or just nature of a decision providing rational arguments to support his position. Of course, this adoption of the open discourse of democratic rationalism as the common language and cultural paradigm of the autonomous citizenry is imperative. Otherwise, we are left in a situation where any citizen, without any adherence to the freely-agreed collective criteria entailed in the common cultural paradigm, might be free to repudiate or sabotage the decisions of the assembly out of selfish impulses, spite, or ulterior political motives, thus making self-government untenable. Furthermore, the terms majority and minority in an ID do not correspond to fixed social entities and this division does not express an institutionalization of the power of one group at the expense of the other, since the institutional framework of ID does not contain the preconditions for such a concentration of power by any group or private person. It simply corresponds to an institutionalization of the

difference of opinion and the right to dissent. Far from leading to new forms of power-relations, this division embodies in ID the free expression of individual differences in the personality and character of each citizen, contrary to consensus, which envisages a society of robots where everyone will think and act exactly the same. In fact, it is not difficult to imagine a frightening consensual society, in which dissent and «deviant» viewpoints become outlawed as impediments to the smooth functioning of “harmonious” social affairs.

Two final points should be made. Firstly, consensus as a method does not offer any incentive or promote self-reflection with a view for compromise and a collective synthesis of opinions, but encourages the individual to selfishly adhere to his own attitudes and ideas, having no reason to doubt them. It also leads to the incorporation of interactions in the private sphere as an integral and indeed necessary part of the political process, given that as individualist anarchists contend, preparation of the conditions that will make consensus possible must be made before the assembly comes together to discuss any issue. Hence, behind-the-curtain negotiations and pressures exerted in the private sphere are made a component of the decision-taking process, before citizens enter the realm of complete equality instituted by the explicitly political body of the demotic assembly. Secondly, consensus might be viable in small affinity groups concerning themselves exclusively with the organization and implementation of direct action, but it cannot be applied to decisions regarding issues of actual self-government on a mass social scale, i.e. the allocation of scarce material resources, or matters pertaining to the large-scale organization of society in terms of safeguarding individual and social autonomy and economic self-sufficiency.

## **Counter-violence and Inclusive Democracy**

For the disenfranchised sectors of the population, counter-violence is an important and legitimate method of resistance and intervention in the political process. Through the use of violent forms of protest and self-defense the antisystemic movement proclaims its autonomous will, its reluctance to rely on the mediation of the established institutional mechanisms for the advancement of its goals and its refusal to recognize the elite as legitimate actors. Violent actions might serve to accentuate the already existing divisions within the political establishment and possibly even generate new ones. For all these reasons, the inclusive democracy approach does not overrule the use of violence as an acceptable method of political action. However, it attaches certain political qualifications to its deployment. Namely, inclusive democracy subscribes to the view that counter-violence, either has to be a necessary measure of self-defense against repressive attacks from the state, or it has to be employed within a clearly defined political framework, as a means of advancing goals which have been formulated and ratified in the context of the autonomous collective organs of the

movement (i.e. interventions through the method of direct-action, taking the form of militant demonstrations, occupations of the offices of municipal authorities, workplaces and abandoned buildings, wildcat strikes organized «from below», etc).

In the aftermath of the December uprising in Greece, an informal divide has become apparent between a small, but energetic segment of Greek anarchists who seem to have come to the realization that mass political work is necessary in order to cultivate and consolidate ties with communities on the local level and the bulk of insurrectional anarchists who have opted for a more violent course of action, a type of low-intensity urban guerrilla warfare, as a means of preserving the “spirit” of a “constant” uprising and upsetting the status-quo. As a stark daily example, the difference between the two concepts of struggle became pronounced in their respective approach towards the issue of free public transportation. While “political” anarchists who identify with the neighborhood assemblies that were founded in December, launched an initiative in which activists simultaneously occupied several metro stations, sabotaging ticket-validation machines and enabling passengers to travel freely from one destination to another, the insurrectionists responded by organizing a raid against a station of the urban railway, in which part of a train was set alight and utterly destroyed (of course the proper measures ensuring the physical safety of the passengers were taken).

The first direct action is in touch with the everyday needs of local populations and as such, it serves to expand the social appeal of anarchist ideas. On the other hand, the second action is inward-looking and designed to secure rather questionable gains on the level of political symbolism. However, even the first action, well-planned and well executed, was fundamentally lacking the overall political framework which might show the people how this one-time event (free tube for everyone), can be transformed into a permanent situation (free public transport for all citizens). This context, in our view, can only be provided by the application of the Inclusive Democracy project for political, economic and social liberation.

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[1] T. Fotopoulos, The End of Traditional Antisystemic Movements and the Need for A New Type of Antisystemic Movement Today, [http://www.democracynature.org/vol7/takis\\_movements.htm](http://www.democracynature.org/vol7/takis_movements.htm).

[2] See <http://occupywallst.org/>

[3] see <http://takethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/>

[4] A strategy that has been outlined in the works of the intellectual forefather of insurrectional anarchism, Alfredo Bonanno. For more, see his landmark «From Riot to Insurrection», at [http://www.geocities.com/insurrection\\_raven/en\\_texts/from\\_riot\\_to\\_insurrection.html](http://www.geocities.com/insurrection_raven/en_texts/from_riot_to_insurrection.html).

[5] For example, such was the type of anarchism promoted by the «Practical Anarchy» periodical

(<http://www.practicalanarchy.org/>), or by the anarcho-primitivist, anti-rational writings of John Zerzan, who was closely associated with the Eugene Oregon anarchists providing the driving force behind the violent clashes between the black bloc and the state security forces during the W.T.O. summit in Seattle

[6] See for example the brochure “*El Anarquismo en la sociedad postindustrial*”, written by Constantino Cavalleri, which was widely circulated in Greece among insurrectional anarchists, <http://cid-e409d2735205223e.skydrive.live.com/self.aspx/.Public/El%20anarquismo%20en%20la%20sociedad%20postindustrial%20-%20Constantino%20Cavalleri.doc>

[7] For a detailed description of the institutional aspects and cultural preconditions of an Inclusive Democracy see chapter 6 of T. Fotopoulos’ monumental work *Towards an Inclusive Democracy: The Crisis of the Growth Economy and the Need for a New Liberatory Project*, <http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/fotopoulos/english/brbooks/brtid/IDBook.pdf>.

[8] For a more detailed exposition of the institutional structure of economic democracy according to ID theoretical analysis visit this link, [http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/fotopoulos/english/brbooks/multi\\_crisis\\_id/ch14.htm](http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/fotopoulos/english/brbooks/multi_crisis_id/ch14.htm).

[9] J. Biehl, *Bookchin Breaks with Anarchism*, [http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=189:bookchin-breaks-with-anarchism&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2](http://www.communalism.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=189:bookchin-breaks-with-anarchism&catid=84:movement&Itemid=2).