

Introduction - Issue 08: Autumn/Winter 2004

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Do commons have a place? Or it is rather, like others have argued, that grassroots globalisation networks constitute a 'non-place' of resistance? Paul Routledge argues that "place" is still a central dimension of social movements. This because "they forge an associational politics" that is constituent of "a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements". In these "convergence spaces" conflict is prosecuted on a "variety of multi-scalar terrains that include both material places and virtual spaces." Is the convergence of struggles in these material and virtual spaces the real constituent force of commons?

David Harvie identifies the commons and communities that make the creative and communicative labour of higher education possible. Increasingly, as we have discussed in other issues of The Commoner, these commons are the target of enclosure strategies. But here David Harvie does not simply denounce these strategies. Instead, he suggests to begin a process of collective self-awareness on what is being enclosed, and what communities are turned into competing nodes. "This exploration of commons and communities within higher education can help us to: identify actually-existing alternatives to market-relations within universities; recognise our own power (power-to); and hence, articulate alternatives to neoliberal strategies for higher education; more effectively fight restructuring; trace the connections with other threads of the anti-capitalist movement(s); and finally, posit a transcendence of capitalist education".

Werner Bonefeld's contribution seems to take us away from the problematic of commons and communities, only to return to these with the parallel language of revolution and social autonomy. His argument is that there is no doubt that the end of struggle (human emancipation) must be anticipated by the organisational means of the struggle. And this implies that the ends of revolution "have to be constitutive of the means of resistance." This "social autonomy" as "the organizational form of struggle" is in clear opposition to "forms of organization that derive their rationale from capitalist society and are thus interested only in their own continued existence. "

Social autonomy, organization, communities, commons. These problematics are all there in the text proposed by Colectivo Situaciones. It examines the issues and dilemma of Argentina's new social subjectivities, by analyzing the events between December 2001 and May 2003. This is the lapse of time ranging from the outbreak of an economic and political crisis without precedents and the pretended normalization of the presidential elections. In between there is the emergence of a rich movement from below (piquetero movements, assemblies, barter clubs, factories occupied by their workers, etc.) which poses many questions. "The intensity of this period – no less than its complexity – has remained beclouded by those who have proclaimed that the results of the elections constitute the death of the movement of counterpower and the erasure of that which opened with the events of December."

If elections are used to normalize and recuperate social autonomy emerging from the street, what about war? George Caffentzis had to tidy his closet this autumn, and he discovered an old manuscript coming from the time in which nuclear annihilation was on the order of the day. Twenty years on, his reflections on the relation between war, capital's accumulation and reproduction as well as his historical contextualization of the Marxist critique of imperialism, seem to be very much up to date. Because you know, capital is still with us, and there is still a war going on . . .so maybe one could wonder: is there perhaps a link between the two? And if so, does this link have anything to do with the attempt to constitute capitalist social relations of production and reproduction?

Finally, Mariarosa Dalla Costa explores the relation between capital and reproduction and regards the powers of the “actors” of the latter (women, indigenous people and earth) as decisive force “that can lift the increasingly deadly siege capitalist development imposes on human reproduction”. She argues that the woman’s question, the question of the indigenous populations, and the question of the Earth have close synergies, and thus it is no surprising that in the last two decades they have become of great importance. If the path towards a “different kind of development cannot ignore them” it is because of the many powers (powers to) these subjects have. The many powers of civilisations that have not died “but have managed to conceal themselves” reside in the secrets that “have been maintained thanks to their resistance to the will to annihilate them.” The gift of struggles. Also the Earth has “many powers, especially its power to reproduce itself and humanity as one of its parts.” And these powers have been “discovered, preserved and enhanced more by women’s knowledge than male science”. These triple knowledge/powers – of women, of indigenous people and of the earth – should “find a way of emerging and being heard” and act as the decisive force they are.