

SHOULD WE REVIVE MURRAY BOOKCHIN?

Can anarchism drive community organizing for urban decentralization and direct democracy?

By Moshe ben Asher, Ph.D. and Khulda bat Sarah

More than 40 years ago, Professor Warren Haggstrom (d. 1986)¹ assigned “The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure”² as required reading for his community organizing class, in which I (ben Asher) was a student. It was eye-opening and inspiring for a would-be organizer to explore the political philosophy, history, and potential for grassroots empowerment by direct democracy.³ Soon afterwards, my reading of *The New State*⁴ was another mind-bending encounter with direct democracy.⁵ But, then, in the late 1970s, Lawrence Goodwyn’s history of the populist movement in the United States was published,⁶ which caused me to dial down my optimism about direct democracy. Goodwyn posited that, before the end of the nineteenth century, political reformers had reached a “silent” consensus that “. . . reform politics need not concern itself with *structural* alteration of the economic customs of the society [emphasis added]. The reform tradition of the twentieth century unconsciously defined itself within the framework of inherited power relationships.”⁷

What, then, was a newly minted organizer to do with his cognitive dissonance? I was disheartened to see the pressing need and possibilities for a new directly democratic state, while simultaneously acknowledging the deeply held bias among “reformers” against changing the structure of our existing national state.

Searching for an answer, I began to read the writings of the better-known anarchists. They favored structural change, but they wanted to *eliminate* the national state. Murray Bookchin was described as “an American anarchist and libertarian socialist author, orator, historian, and political theorist.”⁸ At the time of his death, he was also viewed as a visionary, teacher, and activist in the field of ecology.⁹ Could anarchistic thinking, given its nihilistic character, produce a strategic vision to create a new state with a directly democratic foundation?¹⁰

Advocating Direct Democracy

Recently we encountered Bookchin’s writing again and, surprisingly, learned of his relevance to the present-day

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). We asked ourselves, is it possible he could become a source of intellectual insight and inspiration for progressive community- and faith-based organizing in the United States?

Reading Bookchin’s more recent writing, including an updated critique of capitalism focused on its march to environmental destruction, we thought perhaps he had abandoned anarchism. We learned that in his later years he had become an advocate of decentralization and direct democracy.

We appreciate Bookchin’s point of view that favors grassroots empowerment. We agree with him that politics and policy are inadequate to deal with the country’s pronounced structural inequality of power, which is the root of our economic, political, and social inequality. And we concur that counterbalancing reform requires a change in the structure of our national state.

We can see why Bookchin’s vision would have been attractive to the leader of the PKK, who according to some reports has adopted Bookchin’s model of confederated direct democracy. The PKK has claimed at times to have abandoned terrorist violence and armed rebellion against the state¹¹—which have not been particularly successful for them¹²—in favor of promoting directly democratic municipalities. Kurdish freedom in this incarnation no longer requires overthrowing the state. With the advent of municipal confederations, the PKK expects the nation-state will simply “wither away.” Whatever their expectations, the typical short- and medium-term effects should offer more practical benefits than did the prior violent methods.¹³

We have also been interested in Bookchin’s attractiveness to advocates of “radical municipalism.” They regard him as an intellectual and ideological mentor for their activism, which we will explore in an upcoming issue of *Social Policy*.

Caveat Emptor

But we can’t imagine Bookchin’s replacement of the nation-state by a “confederation of free municipalities.”

He would have us assume that the United States of America will cease to exist in the foreseeable future. We're not seers, but we can distinguish between (a) revolutionary change in the form of a nation's government, which is certainly possible, and (b) the end of a nation as an identifiable state. It's not that nation-states never end—of course, they do. But when they do, it's the result of historical forces or military conquest by a foreign power, not an organized internal political or social movement, although such movements may be present to pick up the pieces.

Is it conceivable that conditions in the U.S. will bring about an incremental disintegration of the country as a nation-state, creating a void eventually to be filled by bottom-up institutions of libertarian municipalism? Neither we, nor we imagine the billionaire class, are holding our collective breaths in anticipation of that possibility. It's beyond far-fetched.

When it comes to municipal confederations as the antidote to government nonfeasance and malfeasance, caveat emptor. Eliminating representative metropolitan-wide government (not to mention state and national governments) would at best introduce mind-boggling economic spillovers and political swings between chaos and rigidity, particularly in industrialized states and their urban centers.¹⁴ The tripartite economic and political interests of (a) metropolitan areas, (b) districts within the metropolitan areas, and (c) neighborhoods within the districts, are not the same, and they cannot be represented politically as if they are the same.¹⁵

This deals a knockout blow to a basic principle of libertarian municipalism. Legislators or administrators serving *ex officio* at the pleasure of neighborhood assemblies, as proposed by Bookchin, are not likely to manage the demands of *metropolitan* government, let alone the demands of regional, statewide, and national governance. We would expect them instead, naturally enough, to represent disproportionately the narrower interests of their neighborhood constituencies at the expense of district and metropolitan missions.¹⁶

Bookchin argues, however, "In the case of libertarian municipalism, parochialism can thus be checked not only by the compelling realities of economic interdependence but by the commitment of municipal minorities to defer to the majority wishes of participating communities."¹⁷ It has a hopeful ring to it, but we don't see any convincing evidence that it's likely to turn out as he imagined.

Moreover, whatever future we anticipate, we ought to base our expectations on what we know historically about urban "civic behavior." That nearby neighbors may at times see their common interests and decide to cooperate for their common good, we may reasonably expect.¹⁸ But because each neighborhood has its own cultural, class, and historical identity, each is far less likely to form political alliances at the district or metropolitan level with other, very different, non-contiguous neighborhoods. Try to imagine, for example, agreement on urban renewal (which we know as "urban removal" for its effects on low-income neighborhoods) by the residents of the demographically disparate South Central and Westside districts of Los Angeles. Like-

wise, the neighborhoods of Pacoima and Larchmont have vastly different interests in regard to routing metropolitan rapid-transit.

Regarding the behavior of urban citizens in neighborhood jurisdictions small enough for direct democracy, Bookchin assumed that, ". . . the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, and the like would be melded into a general interest in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns."¹⁹

Bookchin's assumption, however, has no foundation in urban history or social science. Another anarchist, John P. Clark, concludes that "Bookchin's programmatic formulations sometimes seem to presuppose that such a citizenry has already been formed and merely awaits the opportunity to take power."²⁰

Polycentric Public Powers

Resolving the competing and conflicting interests of the three urban arenas and constituencies—metropolitan, district, and neighborhood—requires separating and balancing their powers. We should not assume that the culture and interests of the neighborhood (which at times can be acutely inward-looking) can adequately govern the whole metropolitan area. Nor should we assume, as is assumed now virtually everywhere, that metropolitan-level officials' ideologies and interests should exclusively govern the application of public powers²¹ in neighborhoods.²² But resolution can largely be achieved electorally in a polycentric metropolitan government structure, in which constituencies based on districts (rather than neighborhoods) elect both district and metropolitan officials.²³

The destructive effects of imposing metropolitan or statewide development schemes on powerless neighborhoods can be seen in the City of Los Angeles. Land developers have been allowed to run amok. The City has given priority to their profit-seeking over environmental, esthetic, ethnic, and cultural objections raised in the public interest.²⁴ Similarly, by the introduction of Senate Bill 827 in 2018, which would have compelled cities to allow more dense housing near public transit hubs, the State of California threatened to undermine the integrity of powerless neighborhoods.²⁵ Although the bill died in its first committee hearing in 2018, its sponsors have resurrected it in the 2019 legislative session, promising that "the battle to increase California's housing supply has just begun."²⁶ The legislation created vociferous factions among municipal residents and various other interested parties.²⁷ As one L.A. resident noted: "SB 827 . . . could have a dramatic impact on L.A.'s Jewish community [and on African-American, Armenian, Chicano, Chinese, Ethiopian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Thai, and Vietnamese communities] by altering the neighborhoods where many of us live."²⁸ One imagined outcome especially disturbing to low-income residents, which has been suggested by a rent-control advocate, is that the current bill ". . . would accelerate gentrification, and . . . [he] likened the bill to 'Negro removal'."²⁹ The State of California should not

compel the identical development in substantially different neighborhoods; but au contraire, neighborhoods should have sufficient institutionalized public powers to choose the extent to which they adopt development policies and practices, based on legislation that offers them options.³⁰

What's called for is a polycentric model, which is reflected in our system of national, state, and local governments.³¹ Polycentricity can produce a balancing of power between the different levels of government, which is as vital to healthy democracy as the more commonly recognized intra-governmental separation of powers we see within all three levels of government. The balancing of power between governments ensures that the powers of the national government are somewhat "balanced" (read, narrowed) by the powers of state governments, and the powers of state governments are somewhat balanced by the powers of local governments. This model enables a strategic organizing vision of directly democratic urban government in which neighborhoods, districts, and metropolitan jurisdictions share the public powers.

Then, too, if we're going to have directly democratic metropolitan government, it is not enough to have models that are theoretically coherent. They must also fit within the cultural experience of our diverse urban citizenry. Tellingly, Bookchin's vision does not go beyond the vague ideological conviction that we need directly democratic municipalities, which in turn will name deputies to be responsible for metropolitan governance.

What in Bookchin's scenario, then, would serve as a system of local law? Should we assume that he imagined the populations of directly democratic assemblies operating without laws, or with laws that each assembly would devise for itself, or that the assemblies would evolve a "common law" that would be binding on all? If there is to be law, assuming that humankind will not have reached the kind of perfection that precludes conflicts and crimes, will each municipality have its own civil and criminal courts to adjudge every legal matter, from causing a nuisance to mass murder? And if, on the other hand, all the libertarian municipalities within a region share a common law in the absence of any higher authority, who will be responsible for legislating and enforcing the common laws and procedures governing civil conflicts and alleged criminality? To what judicial authority would appeals be directed? And if there is no common law, how would commerce and social integration among the various municipalities be possible? The anarchist vision, for all its ideological purity, turns out to be institutional nonsense and a harbinger of social chaos and rigidity.

By way of contrast, we have proposed elsewhere open, directly democratic New England town government as the ideal model for urban neighborhood governance.³² We have also proposed two-tier metropolitan government as the model for overall metropolitan governance. Our expectation that these models will be acceptable to the citizenry reflects their well-tested functionality, their historical and widespread adoption in this country, and their suitability for institutional inte-

gration in a polycentric structure of governance.

On the subject of economics, Bookchin proposed "municipalizing" the economy, which is attractive in some respects. But it loses credibility when proposed as a replacement for virtually all private industry. Consider his proposal from an organizer's perspective. How might we expect it to play at the door in an organizing drive or campaign? Should we expect that citizens will understand and support confiscating all private industry and placing it under the authority of a confederation of municipalities? Then, too, we wonder if Bookchin seriously considered how the major stockholders and managers of private industries would respond to the idea that their enterprises would be commandeered by libertarian municipalities.³³

Bookchin paid a great deal of attention to the hoped-for future, including how the progressive grassroots forces should transform themselves to attain it. But he mostly ignored what the billionaires and their enablers would do to prevent that, the limitless resources they would devote to maintain the status quo or even to widen the existing inequality of power. Insofar as we can tell, his writing ignores one of the guiding principles of social strategy—to wit: carefully assess the opposition, especially vis-à-vis the resources of your own organization or movement.

Ideological & Utopian Bias

We are not surprised by this strategic insufficiency, since Bookchin was much more devoted to ideological insight than to its institutional counterpart. He seemingly didn't understand that knowing what people *do* institutionally is at least as important as what they *think* ideologically. Our experience is that action leads to understanding much more often than understanding leads to action.

While Bookchin had a populist streak a mile wide, he also had utopian inclinations a mile deep. They led him to promote direct democracy without a practical organizing strategy to bring it to life within the framework of metropolitan, state, and national governments.

Bookchin recognized that changing the structure of the state requires a popular movement. He claimed readiness to wage war against the "cosmic forces of capitalism."³⁴ But he had virtually nothing to say practically about the funding needed to sustain professional movement-organizing; so his waging war against capitalism sounds like pie in the sky in the by and by.

Similarly, he failed to address how the newly emerging municipalities would acquire public powers. Is it possible he believed that every aspect of political, economic, and social life should be completely voluntary? One thoughtful critique of Bookchin notes that libertarian municipalism is ". . . distant . . . from any actual exercise of public power."³⁵ In our view, he simply didn't address the subject of acquiring municipal public powers, which are indispensable to organized society. Notably, public powers are under the ultimate control of state legislatures which are much more conservative (read, beholden to the donor class³⁶) than urban governments.³⁷ What, then, should we assume about how libertarian municipalism would overcome

those conservative forces to become more than voluntary associations with various shared interests?

Given Bookchin's preoccupation with vision and ideology, we're not optimistic about the prospects for empowered libertarian municipalism. We doubt that his knowledge and experience of movement-building is of the kind that can survive the four or five decades needed to achieve its objectives; or that it can master the challenges of funding, recruiting, educating, and training a corps of dedicated professional organizers.³⁸ A grassroots vision of direct citizen-empowerment that fails to carefully assess and strategically respond to institutional forces that will do all in their power to undermine decentralization and direct democracy, deserves the name "utopian."

Bottom Line

Bookchin's writing leaves us with insurmountable doubts. Seemingly, he was indifferent to balanced social-change thinking, writing, and action, elements of which include: (a) social criticism, which typically spotlights the shortcomings of existing culture and institutions; (b) social futurism, which uses language that draws detailed images of the desired future; (c) social strategy, which describes how to get to the future; (d) social (action) methodology, which describes the tactics and tools of strategy; and (e) social morality, which defines the moral vision and moral action essential for social progress and change.

Bookchin's failure to rigorously address these elements led him to unsupportable assumptions and unjustified expectations. He produced an excess of criticism, a tendency toward futurism unconnected to long-range strategy, an absence of proven methodology, a strategy without specific morally driven conviction or constituency, and a morality exclusive to the anarchist ideological cognoscente rather than inclusive of the general citizenry. The best we can say is that Bookchin was an incisive social critic.

Most problematic in Bookchin's vision is his apparent abhorrence of state or public powers. He implicitly rejected the idea of citizens voluntarily combining their personal power in collective, institutionalized forms that exceed the power of the individual; and which, in turn, can compel individual behavior. To recognize the folly of extending this viewpoint beyond municipalities, one need only imagine modern life without institutions that enable state-legislated motor vehicle codes, federal food and drug regulations, and international aviation flight-rules. We can also imagine—given the current threats to the planet from climate change and global warming—the pressing need for coastal cities to use the best engineering and architectural practices against rising sea levels, which can only be met when those practices are legislated into national, state, and local codes. Bookchin's vision of a future without higher levels of institutional powers, beyond municipalities, is more aptly characterized not as a

utopian dream but a dystopian nightmare.

So, the obvious answer to our earlier question is no. We should not revive Murray Bookchin's vision as a source of insight and inspiration for today's community- and faith-based organizing. He and his vision should be left behind in the archives of anarchist luminaries, out of the consciousness of the public, activists, and professional organizers.

Institutions of Democracy

The heart of Bookchin's vision is anarchist antipathy to state institutions per se, as if they are inherently, inevitably, and irredeemably malevolent—and *not necessary*. Bookchin seemingly overlooked or dismissed the indispensable role of such institutions in constructing positive social meanings and socialization, which serve to weave the fabric of society.³⁹

One of the dangers of wholesale rejection of higher levels of institutional power is that, as Aristotle understood thousands of years ago, but which has not been acknowledged by anarchists in general or Bookchin in particular: nature abhors a vacuum.⁴⁰ The collapse of institutionalized state power creates a void, which is often filled by the emergence of malevolent power-seekers, whether the Bolsheviks in Russia⁴¹ or ISIS in Iraq.⁴² Ironically, ISIS recognized the value of local institutions for administration, revenue generation, and political rule. In the absence of democratic institutions, city hall and provincial government may become the bailiwick of players hostile to democracy.⁴³

Democracy in its origins and its continuation relies upon the enduring behavior of citizens seeking collectively to meet their common challenges and to realize their hopes and dreams for a better life for themselves and their children—which is true even when our institutions are not yet perfected.

Our hope lies not in our rejection of imperfect democratic institutions but in our willingness to challenge them and to support their improvement. It is our sacred obligation as citizens of a democracy, our exclusive responsibility, to hold our institutions to the highest democratic ideals of accountability, equality, equity, efficiency, and economy. The obligation is sacred because the survival of our nation as a freedom-loving democracy depends upon it.

We cannot escape that obligation by promoting an ideologically pure, sweeping rejection of institutional life beyond municipalities. As Milton Mayer put it: "I am sovereign here. I hold the highest office of the land, the office of citizen, with responsibilities to my country heavier, by virtue of my office, than those of any other officer, including the president. And I do not hold my office by election but by inalienable right. If I try to abdicate it, to the general will, or to my representatives or to my ministers, I am guilty of betraying not only democracy but my nature as a person endowed with certain inalienable rights."⁴⁴

¹ At the time, Haggstrom was an associate professor at the UCLA School of Social Welfare.

² See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1963, 1965), Ch. 6, pp. 215-281.

³ The heart of Arendt’s “lost treasure” is the recognition that, “. . . political freedom, generally speaking, means the right ‘to be a participator in government’, or it means nothing”—*ibid.*, p. 218.

⁴ See Mary Parker Follett, *The New State, Group Organization and the Solution of Popular Government* (New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1918).

⁵ Our reference is not to ballot initiatives, recalls, and referendums, but to the form of “open” (i.e., directly democratic) governance characteristic of New England towns, Swiss *landsgemeinde*, and early soviets.

⁶ *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) and *Democratic Promise, The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

⁸ See “Murray Bookchin,” Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Bookchin].

⁹ See Douglas Martin, “Murray Bookchin, 85, Writer, Activist and Ecology Theorist, Dies,” *New York Times* (August 7, 2006).

¹⁰ For a detailed critique of Bookchin, see John P. Clark, “Beyond the limits of the city: A communitarian anarchist critique of libertarian municipalism,” in *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism* (New York—London—New Delhi—Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 247-290.

¹¹ The Anadolu Agency, an international news agency run by the Turkish government, reported there was a demonstration on January 12, 2018 in the Manbij District of Aleppo against PKK “militants.” See YouTube video, “Hundreds protest against violence of PYD/PKK in Manbij, Syria,” Anadolu Agency (January 13, 2018) [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KX5sE3jewG0>].

¹² See Wes Enzina, “A Dream of Secular Utopia in ISIS’ Backyard,” *New York Times* (November 24, 2015): “Since its founding in 1978, the P.K.K., led by [Abdullah] Ocalan, had been fighting for independence from Turkey, hoping to establish a homeland for the country’s 14 million Kurds. The effort had caused the deaths of 40,000 people, thousands of them civilians, and led to the imprisonment of Ocalan. The American State Department designated the P.K.K. a terrorist organization in 1997.” The difficulty of obtaining reliable contemporary news accounts of PKK activity suggests that it’s best to avoid definitive conclusions about the purposes and actions of the PKK.

¹³ We lack the expertise to make predictions regarding the PKK’s adoption of Bookchin’s vision of municipal confederations, but we note that the PKK remains outlawed as a terrorist organization by Turkey (<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/pkk.en.mfa>), the U.S. (<https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>), and the E.U. (https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/8573/statement-spokesperson-latest-pkk-attacks-south-east-turkey_en). See Juan Masullo and Francis O’Connor, “PKK Violence Against Civilians: Beyond the Individual, Understanding Collective Targeting,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* (August 2, 2017) [<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2017.1347874?journalCode=ftpv20>].

¹⁴ See our paper, “Directly Democratic Metropolitan Government,” *Social Policy* (Spring 2016).

¹⁵ See Moshe ben Asher, Externalities and Spillovers, in “Vill Economics” (unpublished paper, 1978), pp. 14-16 [http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/VILL_ECONOMICS.pdf].

¹⁶ The metropolitan missions focus on responsibility for “indivisible” public goods and services—those which are vertically integrated and do not lend themselves to provision by multiple neighborhood organizations—which includes: air pollution control, water supply and purification, waste disposal, street and boulevard construction and maintenance, superior court civil and criminal judicial administration, and the like.

¹⁷ See Murray Bookchin, “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview,” Institute for Social Ecology (1991) [<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-libertarian-municipalism-an-overview>].

¹⁸ There are undoubtedly potential glitches in this picture too. See, for example, Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action, Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965, 1971).

¹⁹ Bookchin, “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview.”

²⁰ See Clark, “Beyond the Limits of the City: A Communitarian Anarchist Critique of Libertarian Municipalism,” Academia.edu, p. 16 [https://www.academia.edu/16545120/_Beyond_the_Limits_of_the_City_A_Communitarian_Anarchist_Critique_of_Libertarian_Municipalism].

²¹ These include the powers to legislate, to tax, to spend public monies, to police, to take by eminent domain, and to market tax-free bonds.

²² The bias in this direction is revealed in scholarly academic and professional planning literature as normative. The costs of mass alienation of the citizenry from the exercise of public powers is not simply downplayed but ignored altogether. See, for example, in regard to Los Angeles: Roger Keil, “Governance Restructuring in Los Angeles and Toronto: Amalgamation or Secession?” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24(4):758-781 (December 2000).

²³ For a detailed treatment of this variation on two-tier metropolitan government, see Moshe ben Asher, *Social Infrastructure Organizing Technology*, Part Three—Macro Technology, Institutional Schematic (updated from original publication of doctoral dissertation; Berkeley: University of California, PhD dissertation, 1980), pp. 52-74 [<http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/SIOT.pdf>].

²⁴ See, for example: Bianca Barragan, “Mapped: The Los Angeles Land Lost to ‘Careless’ Development,” *Los Angeles Curbed* [<https://la.curbed.com/2016/5/18/11705234/los-angeles-lost-land-development-map>] and Editorial Board, “A case study in why Angelenos think City Hall is corrupted by developers,” *Los Angeles Times* (November 1, 2016).

²⁵ See Senate Bill No. 827, January 3, 2018 (Amended in Senate, March 1, 2018), California Legislative Information [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB827].

²⁶ See Benjamin Schneider, “YIMBYs Defeated as California’s Transit Density Bill Stalls,” *Citylab* (April 18, 2018) [<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/04/californias-transit-density-bill-stalls/558341/>]. For more definitive treatment, see Liam Dillon, “A major California housing bill failed after opposition from the low-income residents it aimed to help. Here’s how it went wrong,” *Los Angeles Times* (May 2, 2018).

²⁷ See: Joe Fitzgerald Rodriguez, “SB 827 rallies end with YIMBYs shouting down protesters of color,” *San Francisco Examiner* (April 5, 2018) and David Zahniser, Liam Dillon, and Jon Schleuss, “Plan to dramatically increase development would transform some L.A. neighborhoods,” *Los Angeles Times* (March 25, 2018).

²⁸ See Edmon J. Rodman, “Guide for the Jewplexed: Sacramento: Are you knocking down the tent?” *MegilLA#22* (April 6, 2018) [email broadcast from edmojace@gmail.com].

²⁹ See Jill Cowan, “Why This Week Is Big for Housing Fixes,” *New York Times* (April 23, 2019).

³⁰ As one Idaho native living in a small town understands the heart of this conception: “This is localism, a bottom-up, practically oriented way of looking at today’s biggest policy dilemmas. Instead of always or only seeking to fix municipal issues through national policy [or for that matter, state or metropolitan policy], localism suggests that communities can and should find solutions to their own particular problems, within their own particular contexts. The best walkability solutions for Washington, D.C., may not work in my town. Urban revitalization efforts in Detroit will need to look different than those efforts employed in rural Iowa. If we’re to find hope and unity for our politics in this fractured era, localism may be the perfect place to start.” See Gracy Olmstead, “Can ‘Localism’ Restore Sanity to U.S. Politics?” *New York Times* (April 11, 2018).

³¹ For the theoretical underpinnings of polycentric government, see: Vincent Ostrom, *The Political Theory of a Compound Republic, A Reconstruction of the Logical Foundations of American Democracy as Presented in The Federalist* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Center for the Study of Public Choice, 1971).

³² See our paper, “Public Powers for the Commonwealth: A Challenge to Faith-Based Organizing” *Social Policy* (Winter 2015).

³³ Industry reactions to late nineteenth and twentieth century labor organizing suggest what the response would be nowadays to the rise of libertarian municipalism intent on wealth-confiscation. See for example, Robert Michael Smith, *From Blackjacks to Briefcases: A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and Unionbusting in the United States* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003) and Stephen H. Norwood, *Strikebreaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

³⁴ Bookchin, “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview,” p. 9 [https://archive.org/details/al_Murray_Bookchin_Libertarian_Municipalism_An_Overview_a4].

³⁵ Clark, *Ibid*, p. 13.

³⁶ For a demographic and political assessment of the donor class, see Sean McElwee, Jesse H. Rhodes, and Brian Schaffer, “How big is the gap between the donor class and ordinary Americans? Bigger than you think,” *The Washington Post* (December 15, 2016).

³⁷ The current trend of local governments passing progressive legislation—such as the Austin, Texas ordinance requiring businesses to provide paid sick leave—not surprisingly has stimulated reactionary state legislatures to pass laws preempting the local ordinances. The reactionary state legislatures rarely hesitate to override “the authority of local governments to set their own direction.” See Allegra Kirkland, “Texas Activists Fight Back Against GOP’s War on Local Democracy,” *TPM* (June 8, 2018) [<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/muckraker/texas-activists-paid-sick-leave-fight-gop-preemption>].

³⁸ We note that although Bookchin was a trade union activist and participated in organizing drives, he may not have known the extended challenges of funding scaled-up local and regional organizing into a long-lived national movement. Regarding those challenges, see for example, Fred Brooks, “One Hypothesis About the Decline and Fall of ACORN,” *Social Work*, 58(2):177-180 (April 2013).

³⁹ For one of the most illuminating renditions of the sociology of knowledge, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1966).

⁴⁰ An aphorism ascribed to Aristotle, which sums up his arguments in *Physics* (4:6-9).

⁴¹ Notably, when the Russian nation-state failed, the Bolsheviks seized power from the soviet assemblies that initially were spontaneous local councils of workers, residents, and soldiers.

⁴² “The disintegration of the social fabric [in Iraq, caused by the U.S. invasion] . . . created an opening for ISIS to step in. . . .” See Fawaz A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016; Kindle Edition), Loc. 364.

⁴³ See Rukmini Callimachi, “The ISIS Files,” *New York Times* (April 4, 2018).

⁴⁴ See Mayer, “The Tribute Money,” *The Progressive* (March 1953), in which he explained why he was acting to hold the national government accountable through his war tax resistance.

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