

Khasnabish (2010) asserts that “writing only *seems* like a solitary activity. In reality, it is the product of a tremendous diversity of experiences, encounters, inspirations and influences” (vii): even if I am alone whilst writing in front of a computer, my thesis is the result of a process of a collective production of knowledge.

My external committee, the activists and social movements, helped me not only in checking and correcting my thesis, but also by suggesting to me ways to increase the further production of movement-relevant theory. This process has been guided by the objective of building a culture of resistance, as I will explain in the next, final section.

8.6 Building a culture of resistance

It is time to conclude this thesis. What are the Brazilian experiences telling us? What can we learn? What is my contribution of movement-relevant theory?

Going to Brazil with my social ecology and activist background I (re)learned that no ready-made recipe for social change exists. Bookchin (2005b) once said that:

“We have to bear in mind that it is difficult to provide a “handbook” for achieving a successful revolution. No schematic formulas or laws can apply to all revolutionary developments, although parallel events are strikingly present” (261).

The importance of adapting ideas and practice to each historical and geographical context is crucial and “anarchists can celebrate the fact that their non-hierarchical ideals have taken different forms over the course of history because they voiced the demands of genuine social movements, not fossilized ideologies” (Bookchin 1989: 274).

Today we all live on a planet that has two different worlds. As Zibechi (2012) says:

“One is out of control, having made domination and destruction its main source of nourishment. The other world offers the only chance that we have to remain human and preserve nature and the commons for the benefit of all” (262).

This second world can be built, “expanding, dilating, disseminating, transmitting, dissipating, radiating, and resonating. In other words, naturally” (ibid: 262).

And, as Bookchin (2015) writes in the chapter *A Politics for the Twenty-First Century*, the actors that can build this second world are “the myriad millions who, mobilized by a grassroots movement, challenge global capital’s sovereignty over their lives and try to develop local and regional economic alternatives to its

industrial operations” (58). But how to accommodate all the different sensibilities and contexts of the millions that are mobilizing for social change?

The entire process of doing this thesis, from its design, fieldwork and writing brought me to a clear answer to this question. It is one that, as a transformative reflexive point, goes beyond the content of the individual research questions, embracing all of them. As an activist and researcher, after a four years research, I agree with the proposals of The Anarchist Federation (of Britain and Ireland) (2015a, 2015b) contained in their document *building a culture of resistance*. This is a process that I believe could open a concrete pathway to social change and finally enrich the social ecology tradition, permitting to it to adapt to the challenges that I highlighted in this chapter. Moreover, building Communalism could become part of building a culture of resistance. This would help to solve the controversy highlighted in the previous section.

A ‘culture of resistance’ is a concept that has not been fully explored in academic literature (for example it is only mentioned by Saucedo (2000)) and I found only a few mentions of it in online activists’ circles, but it deserves further elaboration.

The Anarchist Federation (2015a) defines the culture of resistance as “a set of bonds of solidarity and understanding between many different people in many different places” (29). Building a culture of resistance speaks to the links between what have been called our lifestyles and social/political actions (see Chapter 3), suffering from a binary divide:

“This culture is as much about the self-image and self-belief in ourselves as it is about any particular set of ideas or organizations. *A culture of resistance is in some way the sum of all the things that we do to survive and resist under capitalism*” (The Anarchist Federation 2015a: 29, my emphasis).

Furthermore, a culture of resistance aim to speak to everyone, in attempt to go beyond the divide between activists versus the rest of the world (Andrew X 1999; Trott 2005). A culture of resistance is, moreover, not limited to a specific geographical space or to a specific time, but is an effort to decolonize practices of resistance that resonate all over the world. A culture of resistance speaks of the importance of key common principles in our struggles (from direct democracy, to feminism, respect for life, direct action, etc.) that are elaborated in different ways in different contexts and actions. The culture of resistance is able to build bridges between these different geographical, economic and social contexts, from the core to the periphery, so that “these new relationships give us the confidence and the resources that we need to fight back wherever we are” (Anarchist Federation 2015a: 29). The culture of resistance goes beyond the limits of classifying experiences as either from the core or the periphery and helps us to take action where we live that varies in scale depending on the circumstances.

The culture of resistance is not only built in moments of intense mobilizations, but also in all the everyday practices of resistance, at all levels of society, everywhere in world.

In Herod's (2002) understanding, "a culture of resistance though is only *against* something, oppression, not *for* something, liberation" (np). In fact, the culture of resistance is born from the scream of "NO" (Holloway 2010a, 2010b) in opposition to all forms of domination: "a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal" (Holloway 2010a: 1). The culture of resistance is, indeed, formed as oppositional to capitalism. However, in my view, it encompasses not only forms of protest (marches, strikes, petitions), but also all forms of social alternative projects - from social centres, to info-shops, working cooperatives or cooperative houses and gardens, printing/publishing initiatives, consumer collectives, etc.- all forms of resistance to capitalism. A culture of resistance "builds structures and ideas of cooperation and solidarity that prefigure the world to come" (Anarchist Federation 2015a: 30-31), with the overall aim not only to build a post-scarcity society but also to provide ethics for it (Bookchin 1986a).

The scream that gives rise to the necessity of a culture of resistance is a "No" to capitalism and "a scream of hope, not of despair. [...] It is an active hope, a hope that we can change things, a scream of active refusal, a scream that points to doing" (Holloway 2010a: 22). It is thus not only a culture of opposition, but also a culture of creation: two moments that cannot be disjointed. Holloway (2010a) is very clear on this point when he writes that:

"The struggle of that which exists in the form of being denied is inevitably both negative and positive, both scream and doing: negative because its affirmation can take place only against its own denial, and positive because it is the assertion of that which exists, albeit in the form of being denied" (213).

This coexistence of screaming and doing generates alternatives. When we scream in the streets against something, we should also always propose and do something else. These alternatives, all part of a culture of resistance, become then "cracks, or faults beneath the surface [of capitalism]" (Holloway 2010b: 8). In the presumptuous monolithic capitalist system of the daily life, cracks emerge, cracks created as a form of resistance that destroy the surface of capitalism and offer the possibility of experiencing alternative worlds, allowing seeds of alternative societies (Ward 1996) to sprout.

In being affirmative, a culture of resistance reveals the areas where we have to fight, from the workplace, to the neighbourhood, the forest, the oceans. Furthermore it teaches us important lessons from struggles of the past and reminds us of the importance of imagination to create new solutions for the present struggles and the future society.

From a social ecology perspective, a culture of resistance is an expression of the power to create, the liberatory use of power that expresses a reconstructive vision (see Chapter 3).

If the Left tradition is today not heard, not only because the mass media are controlled and censored, but because it is unable to speak to people and propose alternatives (Clark 2013; Taylor 2014), the culture of resistance should be able to speak to different people and in different contexts. This effort to decolonize knowledge moves us towards a culture that American activist and writer Scott Crow (2014) defines as a culture that can “speak from the heart about liberation in more human and encompassing terms” (85).

The relevance of building a culture of resistance does not lie in a claim that ‘everything will work’ against capitalism. Similarly to the dialectical process of dialectical naturalism (see Chapter 3), the aim of building a culture of resistance is not merely to collect different examples of resistance but to derive new forms of resistance that speak the language of specific communities. The importance of building a culture of resistance rests in understanding the deep meaning of solidarity and that we are not alone in the struggles. A culture of resistance makes clear that we have a shared experience in the way we are dominated by capitalism and in the ways we can resist it. In this, the culture of resistance overcomes the individualist drift of this era (Anarchist Federation 2015a).

The culture of resistance reminds us of the planetary links that all the actions have; it shows the ecology of our society. Moreover, reminding us that our struggles are part of a planetary struggle, it unifies them, allowing for a unity-in-diversity in our efforts to build a different world.

The culture of resistance is not a pre-compiled list of actions or ideas or rigid personal beliefs to follow, but rather a learning process, a project, that conforms to the Zapatista motto “caminando preguntando”: “a culture of resistance is the school in which we learn how to be free, how we become through the fight against capitalism everything that we will be after it” (Anarchist Federation 2015a: 31).

Indeed, in the anarchist tradition learning has a central role, not as an end in itself, but as “one of many arenas of human relationships, in which the relation between the vision and the ways it is translated into reality is constantly experimented with” (Suijsa 2006: 146). This is also true in the social ecology tradition where “education [...] is the top “priority” for a radicalization of our time” (2004a: xxvi). Moreover, Bookchin (1986a) stresses that a revolutionary process is not only about mobilizing but also educating, in order to “use knowledge for the empowerment of people not for their manipulation” (45). For him, education, experimentation and learning from failure provide the path towards self-awareness and self-management and towards liberation (Bookchin 1990: 189). Moreover, as a learning process, a culture of resistance helps also to pass information among people and make connections through different generations and struggles, without reinventing the wheel each time

(Dixon 2014). Building a culture of resistance requires what Haiven and Khasnahish (2014) call 'opening times' and 'opening spaces'. It is necessary to create moments in which stopping performing day-to-day business and dedicating time to education and elaboration. At the same time it is necessary to have safe spaces in which different individual and groups can meet to share and debate.

Moreover, as a learning process, a culture of resistance can help during and beyond moments of intense mobilizations. As Chomsky (2011) says, echoing the concern of Žižek mentioned before, what is necessary after intense mobilizations is to maintain the pressure on the system created during these moments over time, "building, organisations that keep doing things, people that keep learning lessons from the last time and doing it better the next time" (71).

The importance of cities in the today struggles (see Chapter 1) is valid also for building a culture of resistance, as Ward (1990) stresses:

"The city in itself is an environmental education, and can be used to provide one, whether we are thinking of learning *through* the city, learning *about* the city, learning to *use* the city, to *control* the city or to *change* the city" (152).

Indeed, the current crises can be faced only by building "new thinking and creative solutions" (Chodorkoff 2014: 159) whose emergence can be facilitated by the urban environment.

With these characteristics, I would argue that the project of building a culture of resistance is what is needed for social ecology to built a true dual power. Indeed, as demonstrated by the group Beyond Resistance, an affinity group of anarchists formed in 2009 from across Aotearoa, the Maori name for New Zealand, there is a strong link between building a culture of resistance and establishing dual power. Building dual power, indeed, "has to come about through struggle, through on-going organising around real (not perceived) needs, and through direct action" (Beyond Resistance 2010: np). In this it should go beyond the simple managing of collective spaces or resources; "Dual power is prefigurative in terms of the means we use now, the way we organise our struggles, and the way we relate to others during that struggle" (ibid: np).

My experiences in Brazil and this thesis also help to build this culture of resistance, contributing to bridging decolonized knowledge and becoming part of the creation of that other world introduced by Zibechi (2012) at the beginning of this section: "It is not possible to impose this other world, as capital was imposed, but we can breathe life into it, nurture it, and help it expand and rise" (262).

As the character Catherine from the novel by Chodorkoff (2011) insists in the quote that opens this chapter: memory and imagination are key. Every day we face incredible challenges posed by the capitalist system, with its destruction of the environment and persistent social inequality. On one hand, we have to remember

and analyse the past, what we did, what “they” did, and whether it worked or not. On the other, we must be able to use our imagination or what is called “the *creativity* of life” (Bookchin 1986a: 26), to explore new and alternative forms for a human and ecological liberation, deploying them differently depending on the times and contexts. Social ecology, then, is an invaluable tool for the crises of our times.