questioning the humankind/nature divide: the anarchist geographers and the city

February 1st, 2021 | 6 PM s.t.

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Early anarchist geographers Elisée Reclus (1830-1905) and Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) contributed to urban thinking producing notions that can provide original insights for current debates on urban activism and "the right to the city". On the one hand, they considered urban centres as places for the construction of critical thinking, from the medieval city to the Paris Commune. The forms of social organisation and political autonomy fostered by the Commune remain the archetypical model for current activism, self-organisation and occupation of spaces as it will be discussed. On the other, they participated in the wider denunciation of the industrial city's evils such as pollution and socio-spatial marginalisation, and proposed to "produce" new and connected urban forms in the countryside, consistently with their philosophy of nature which did not see Manichean distinctions between "human" and "natural" facts. While these ideas chimed with ideas of "garden city", anarchist geographers remained aware that green spaces do not make sense without social justice, and that the transformation of spaces is indispensable for the transformation of societies.

communitarian anarchism and social change. implications for the rise of another city

February 8th, 2021 | 6 PM s.t.

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In a recent publication, John Clark (2013) substantially criticizes Murray Bookchin's municipalist ideas, probably the most popular vision for the production of an alternative urbanity today, and suggests another emancipatory vision. Drawing on Hegel and the tradition of what he calls Communitarian Anarchism, Clark calls for the realization of a self-negating community: the Impossible Community. In this talk, this vision is the starting point to explore some aspects of the thinking and conceptions of social change of communitarian anarchist Gustav Landauer (1870-1919). It will be argued that Landauer's thinking around notions of beginning and exodus not only lays grounds for a particular conception of social change (i.e. interstitial change, cf. Redecker 2018), but opens up ways of thinking of such change itself as ends and means of emancipatory struggle. Lastly, implications of this thinking will be related to concrete practices of and struggles for an alternative urbanity and the vision of the Impossible Community.

it's the strategy, stupid! pathways to transformation towards urban degrowth

February 15th, 2021 | 6 PM s.t.

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How do we strive for a thriving city for all? Should we rely on actions of civil disobedience; introduce proposals to the city council; or show in the niches how society can be better organised? This talk sheds light on different perspectives on scales, logics, and infrastructures of urban transformation. Building on the work of Erik Olin Wright, the contribution attempts an analysis of the strategies that undermine the hegemony of urban growth regimes and aim for transforming cities into liveable places of solidarity. In doing so, entry projects and leverage points for post-growth cities should become visible. Far from creating a "master plan", the combination of different elements towards a strategic pluralism should become part of the discussions. The invitation that comes with this perspective is the realisation of the radical idea that another city is not only possible, but also necessary and feasible.

urban commons as anarchist strategy of action: from theory to practice in barcelona

February 22nd, 2021 | 6 PM s.t.

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Within the many streams of libertarian socialism, autonomist Marxism and anarchism, although differing in their vision of social transformation to which they point, share similar strategies of action, including the emphasis on the commons. From a theoretical point of view, the commons are interpreted as practices of self-organization and self-government, based on reciprocity, use value, and participatory democracy that can define a path of emancipation from capitalism. In the last few decades and especially since the 2007/8 crisis, commoning initiatives have multiplied in western cities. The increasing number of (squatted) self-managed social and cultural centres, housing cooperatives, urban gardens are seen to offer an alternative production of urbanity that challenges the current neoliberal capitalist one. In this lecture, firstly, I will introduce the theory of the commons, with specific attention to the implication of the production of urban space. Secondly, I will present the current development of commons initiatives in Barcelona, a city with strong anarcho-cooperativist culture.

Further information and the link to the event can be requested here: pts@isr.tu-berlin.de