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Governments are invariably based in cities: whoever heard of a nation ruled from a village? Very often they actually build cites to house themselves: New Delhi, Canberra, Ottawa, Washington, Chandigar and Brasilia are examples. And isn't it significant that the visitor who wants to sample the real life of a place has to escape from the city of the bureaucrats and technocrats in order to do so. He has to go ten miles from Brasilia for example, to the Cidade Libre (Free Town) where the building workers live. They built the "City for the Year 2000" but are too poor to live there, and in their own homemade city, "a spontaneous wild west shanty-town life has arisen, which contrasts with the formality of the city itself, and which has become too valuable to be destroyed".

Anarchism—the political philosophy of a non-governmental society of autonomous communities—does not at first sight seem to address itself to the problems of the city at all. But there is in fact a stream of anarchist contributions to urban thought that stretches from Kropotkin to Murray Bookchin historically, and from John Turner to the International Situationists ideologically. A lot of the people who might help us evolve an anarchist philosophy of the

city would never think of trying because in spirit, though less often in practice, they have abandoned the city.

Particularly in Britain, the most highly urbanised country in the world, we have for centuries nurtured a myth of rural bliss —a myth cherished by people all across the political spectrum. Raymond Williams in his book *The Country and the City* has shown how all through history this myth has been fed into literature, always placing the lost paradise of rural bliss in some past period. And E. P. Thompson comments that what is wrong with the myth is that it has been "softened, prettified, protracted, and then taken over by the city dwellers as major point from which to criticise industrialism. Thus it became a substitute for the Utopian courage of imagining what a true community, in an industrial city, might be—indeed of imagining how far community may have already been attained."

Like Williams, he sees this as a debilitating situation: "a continuous cultural haemorrhage, a loss of rebellious blood, draining away now to Walden, now to Afghanistan, now to Cornwall, now to Mexico, the emigrants from cities solving nothing in their own countries, but kidding themselves that they have somehow opted out of contamination by a social system of which they are themselves the cultural artifacts". All those merry peasants and shepherdesses of the pastoral dream are now, they point out, "the poor of Nigeria, Bolivia, Pakistan".

And the paradox is that the rural poor of the Third World are flocking to the cities in vast numbers. If you want examples of anarchist cities in the real world today, in the sense of large-scale human settlements resulting from popular direct action and not on governmental action, it is to the Third World you would have to turn. In Latin America, Asia and Africa, the enormous movement of population into the big cities during the last two decades has resulted in the growth of huge peripheral squatter settlements around the existing cities, inhabited by the "invisible" people who have no official urban existence. Pat Crooke points out that cities

grow and develop on two levels; the official, theoretical level, and that the majority of the population of many Latin American cities are unofficial citizens with a popular economy outside the institutional financial structure of the city.

One way of reducing the pressure on these exploding cities, would be to improve life in villages and small towns. But that would demand revolutionary changes in land tenure, and on starting small-scale labour-intensive industries, and in dramatically raising farm incomes. Until that happens, people will always prefer to take a chance in the city rather than starve in the country. The big difference from the explosion of urbanism in 19th century Britain is that then industrialisation preceded urbanisation, while today the reverse is true. The official view of the shanty-towns of the Third World is that they are breeding-grounds for every kind of crime, vice, disease, social and family disorganisation. But John Turner, the anarchist architect who has done more than most people to change the way we perceive such settlements, remarks:

"Ten years of work in Peruvian *barriadas* indicates that such a view is grossly inaccurate: although it serves some vested political and bureaucratic interests, it bears little relation to reality … Instead of chaos and disorganisation, the evidence instead points to highly organised invasions of public land in the face of violent police opposition, internal political organisation with yearly local elections, thousands of people living together in an orderly fashion with no police protection or public services. The original straw houses constructed during the invasions are converted as rapidly as possible into brick and cement structures with an investment totalling millions of dollars in labour and materials. Employment rates, wages, literacy, and educational levels are all higher than in central city slums (from which most barriada residents have escaped) and higher than the national average. Crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution and gambling are rare, except for petty thievery, the incidence of which is seemingly smaller than in other parts of the city."

What an extraordinary tribute to the capacity for mutual aid of poor people defying authority. The reader who is familiar with Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* is bound to be reminded of his chapter in praise of the mediaeval city, where he observes that "Wherever men had found, or expected to find, some protection behind their town walls, they instituted their *co-jurations*, their *fraternities*, their *friendships*, united in one common idea, and boldly marching towards a new life of mutual support and liberty. And they succeeded so well that in three or four hundred years they had changed the very face of Europe." Kropotkin is not a romantic adulator of the free cities of the middle ages, he knows what went wrong with them, and of their failure to avoid an exploitive relationship with the peasantry. But modern scholarship supports his interpretation of their evolution. Walter Ullman for example remarks that they "represent a rather clear demonstration of entities governing themselves" and that "In order to transact business, the community assembled in its entirety … the assembly was not 'representative' of the whole, but was the whole."

This implies a certain size and scale of communities, and Kropotkin again, in his astonishingly up-to-date *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, argues on technical grounds for dispersal, for the integration of agriculture and industry, for (as Lewis Mumford puts it) "a more decentralised urban development in small units, responsive to direct human contact, and enjoying both urban and rural advantages". Kropotkin's contemporary Ebenezer Howard, in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* asked himself the simple question: how can we get rid of the grimness of the big city and the lack of opportunities in the country (which drives people to the city)? How on the other hand can we keep the beauty of the country and the opportunities of the city? His answer was not only the garden city, but what he called the social city, the network of communities. The same message comes from Paul and Percy Goodman in *Communitas: means of livelihood and ways of life* where the second of their three paradigms, the The New

extent to which ecologically-minded counter-cultural youth began to subject city planning to a devastating review, often advancing alternative proposals to dehumanising urban 'revitalisation' and 'rehabilitation' projects …"

For the countercultural planners "the point of departure was not the pleasing object or the 'efficiency' with which it expedited traffic, communications and economic activities. Rather, these new planners concerned themselves primarily with the relationship of design to the fostering of personal intimacy, many-sided social relationships, nonhierarchical modes of organisation, communistic living arrangement and material independence from the market economy. Design, here, took its point of departure not from abstract concepts of space or a functional endeavour to improve the status quo, but from an explicit critique of the status quo and a conception of the free human relationships that were to replace it. The design elements of a plan followed from radically new social alternatives. The attempt was made to replace hierarchical space by *liberated space*."

They were, in fact, rediscovering the polis, reinventing the commune. Now Murray Bookchin knows that the countercultural movement in the US has subsided from its high point of the 1960s, and he inveighs against the crude political rhetoric which was the next fashion. "Far more than the flowers of the mid-sixties, the angry clenched fists of the late sixties were irrelevant in trying to reach an increasingly alarmed and uncomprehending public." But he insists that certain demands and issues raised are imperishable. The call for "new, decentralised communities based on an ecological outlook that unites the most advanced features of urban and rural life" is not going to die out again because of the harsh fact that "few choices are left today for the existing society".

Commune is what Professor Thomas Reiner calls "a polynucleated city mirroring its anarcho-syndicalist premises". And the same message comes again in Leopold Kohr's dazzling essay *The City as Convivial Centre* where he finds the good metropolis to be "a polynuclear federation of cities" just as his city is a federation of squares.

And like Kropotkin too, the *Blueprint for Survival* sees the goal as "a decentralised society of small communities where industries are small enough to be responsive to each community's needs". And long before the energy crisis hit people's consciousness, Murray Bookchin in his essay "Towards a Liberatory Technology" (which I published in *Anarchy* in 1967 and is now in his book *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*) argued the energy case for the polynuclear city:

"To maintain a large city requires immense quantities of coal and petroleum. By contrast, solar energy (from the sun), wind power and tidal energy reach us mainly in small packets. Except for great dams and turbines, the new devices seldom provide more than a few thousand kilowatt-hours of electricity. It is hard to believe that we will ever be able to design solar collectors that can furnish us with the immense blocks of electric power produced by a giant steam plant; it is equally difficult to conceive of a battery of wind turbines that will provide us with enough electricity to illuminate Manhattan Island. If homes and factories are heavily concentrated, devices for using clean sources of energy will probably remain mere playthings; but if urban communities are reduced in size and widely spread over the land, there is no reason why these devices cannot be combined to provide us with all the amenities of an industrial civilisation. To use solar, wind and tidal power effectively, the giant city must be dispersed. A new type of community, carefully tailored to the nature and resources of a region, must replace the sprawling urban belts of today."

A quite different line of anarchist urban thought is presented in Richard Sennett's *The Uses of Disorder: personal identity and city life*. Several threads of thought are woven together in this book.

The first is a notion the author derives from the psychologist Erik Erikson, that in adolescence men seek a purified identity to escape from pain and uncertainty, and that true adulthood is found in the acceptance of diversity and disorder. The second is that modern American society freezes men in the adolescent posture—a gross simplification of urban life in which, when rich enough, people escape from the complexity of the city to private family circles of security in the suburbs—the purified community. The third is that city planning as it has been conceived in the past, with techniques like zoning and the elimination of "nonconforming users", has abetted this process, especially by projecting trends into the future as a basis for present energy and expenditure. "Professional planners of highways, of redevelopment housing, of inner-city renewal projects have treated challenges from displaced communities or community groups as a threat to the value of their plans rather than as a natural part of the effort at social reconstruction." What this really means, says Sennett, is that planners have wanted to take the plan, the projection in advance, "as more 'true' than the historical turns, the unforeseen movements in the real time of human lives".

His prescription for overcoming the crisis of American cities is a reversal of these trends, for "outgrowing a purified identity". He wants cities where people are forced to confront each other: "There would be no policing, nor any other form of central control, of schooling, zoning, renewal, or city activities that could be performed through common community action, or, even more importantly through direct, nonviolent conflict in the city itself." Nonviolent? Yes, because Sennett claims that the present modern affluent city is one in which aggression and conflict are denied outlets other than violence, precisely because of the lack of personal confrontation. (Cries for law and order are greatest when communities are most isolated from other people in the city.) The clearest example, he suggests, of the way this violence occurs "is found in the pressures on police in modern cities. Police are expected to be bureaucrats of hostility resolution" but "a society that visualises the lawful response to disorder as an impersonal, passive coercion only invites terrifying outbreaks of police rioting". Whereas the anarchist city that he envisages, "pushing men to say what they think about each other in order to forge some mutual pattern of compatibility", is not a compromise between order and violence, but a wholly different way of living in which people wouldn't have to choose between the two.

And are cities going to change? They have to because they are collapsing, replies Murray Bookchin in a book recently published in America *The Limits of the City*. The cities of the modern world are breaking down, he declares, under sheer excess of size and growth. "They are disintegrating administratively, institutionally, and logistically; they are increasingly unable to provide the minimal services for human habitation, personal safety, and the means for transporting goods and people … Even where cities have some semblance of formal democracy, "almost every civic problem is resolved not by action that goes to its social roots, but by legislation that further restricts the rights of the citizen as an autonomous being and enhances the power of super-individual agencies."

Nor can the professionals help: "Rarely could city planning transcend the destructive social conditions to which it was a response. To the degree that it turned in upon itself as a specialised profession—the activity of architects, engineers and sociologists—it too fell within the narrow division of labour of the very society it was meant to control. Not surprisingly, some of the most humanistic notions of urbanism come from amateurs who retain contact with the authentic experiences of people and the mundane agonies of metropolitan life."

He's right. Ebenezer Howard was a short-hand writer and Patrick Geddes was a botanist. But the particular bunch of amateurs who, for Murray Bookchin, point the way are the young members of the counterculture: "Much has been written about the retreat of dropout youth to rural communes. Far less known is the