

# Urban Democracy

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Urban democracy is illusory as long as mayors, town directors, city councils – no matter how well-meaning – are under inescapable and unchecked pressure from regional, state or federal governments to cut spending, and from business to lower taxes and offer other incentives, or face an exodus of companies as well as forfeiting any chances to attract investors that offer additional employment opportunities.

Urban democracy is a necessity if democracy in society at large is to be real. Without meaningful ways for ordinary people to influence and shape the most vital conditions of their lives in their immediate surroundings, the democratic process is a mere façade, and political democracy is offering only the – perhaps illusory – promise of our potential, as ordinary citizens, to achieve real democratization, a real say, in our own affairs.

## **The Influence of “Big Money” Is Far Too Large**

The influence of “big money” is far too large within the framework of our democratic process: The mere fact that it is contributing to a deformation of the democratic process, has been noted again and again. This criticism is at the root of “campaign reform” in the U.S., as it was at the roots of attempts to reform the financing process on which all major party organizations depend in Europe. The extent of the damage done by “big money” when funneled to the parties and candidates most accessible to the whims and wishes of “big business” becomes clear when we look at the example of soft money and the engineering of the recent Bush victory in the U.S., the example of money-laundering and millions and millions paid illegally to the Christian Democrats in Germany to keep Chancellor Kohl in office for 16 years, or the riddle posed by the STRAW MAN of Big Business in Italy: *How Did a Man Without Considerable Means Assemble the Most Important Private Television and Media Empire in Italy, in Order to Build A Political Coalition from Nothing and Become Prime Minister?*

## URBAN DEMOCRACY

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**We propose to create a forum  
of international, democratic debate  
for the people,  
for their grass roots organizations,  
for concerned scientists  
and those engaged in politics  
who have decided to put the goal  
of strengthening political participation  
of ordinary citizens on the top  
of their agenda.**

We know that municipal (and regional) democracy cannot but fail if society at large is not fully democratized, in the sense of meaningful influence and a real voice for the majority that is at present allowed only to vote while the important decisions are taken by professional politicians susceptible to the pressures of the few with a lot of money.

But we also know that society at large cannot be fully democratic if local (and regional) affairs are left unattended by local people failing to empower themselves to decide the very things that affect them in an essential way at their very own doorsteps.

**Local reform, aiming at an increased say of the many in everything that is vital for their communities, is the prerequisite for democracy in our societies.**

**The legal and economic hindrances that we will encounter cannot all be removed by the isolated actions of local citizens for urban democracy – so we need to team up with other citizens in other communities (and regions), nationally and world-wide, to increase the pressure for a rational, humane modernization and conversion of our societies, in the sense of a more genuine democracy = rule of the people, by the people, for the people.**

Urban Democracy Group, Aachen, Germany

**We propose a discussion.**

The example of a town in Southern Brazil:

We are looking for information on towns like the one in Brazil that introduced free public health service, turning to empirically successful local or regional herbal medicines in order to cure certain ailments.

In addition to offering free access to doctors, they are giving away this medicine free at municipal dispensaries and decided to market these products in Brazil and internationally while excluding pharmaceutical corporations from the marketing process.

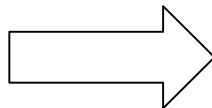
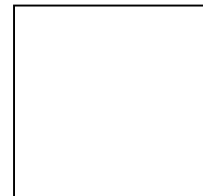
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We know that municipal (and regional) democracy cannot but fail if society at large is not fully democratized.

*But if people are awake  
If they discover they have a voice  
That they become well informed  
And conscious of their interests...  
Step by step, change can set in.*

More widespread,  
more informed,  
more intense participation  
of ordinary citizens  
in decisions of local importance  
will strengthen *civil society*.  
The individual benefits.  
The community benefits.  
The entire society benefits.

An example of...  
**regional  
resistance**



*This proposal for discussion refers to a German debate. It concerns the contradiction between a tendency to centralize power, to streamline organizations and advocate “bigness”. And the contrary tendency to “decentralize.” To give people locally and regionally a greater say. To accept that they ask, or may be asking tomorrow, for a greater say, in their own affairs.*

Presently, the leadership of the Social Democratic Party in the German state of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) tries to restructure the party organization.

What they want is a strong organization of the party in that state, under more direct control of the party leadership in Düsseldorf.

Such “restructuring” has already occurred in a number of other German states, notably Bavaria.

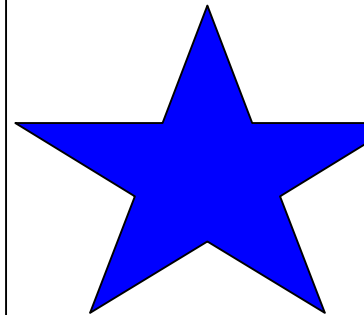
**This time, the district organizations are not as willing to bow to the plans drawn up by the leadership.**

**Especially the party organization of the Western Ruhr District opposes the plan.**

Nobody should be naive enough to believe that the district leadership does not have interests of their own that are behind their wish to preserve greater independence.

*The rank and file will have to learn a lot in order to generate a district “leadership” through which they can make themselves heard, instead of one that is simply “professional”, that dodges pressure from below in order to “preserve its independence.” And capitulates, more often than not, before pressure from the top of the party...*

But clearly - the district level is closer to the rank-and-file than the state level or the federal level. To diminish its say in party affairs or to abolish this level altogether is claimed to enhance effectiveness; it certainly doesn't enhance intra-party democracy.



## Public affairs

- the “res publica”,  
the *chose publique*,  
the *öffentliche Sache* –  
should be decided  
by all, not by a few...

Change comes slowly.

Sometimes *it accelerates, in a surprising way.*

It is under the pressure of situations  
that people can be awakened by circumstance  
and begin to take an interest in their own affairs,  
“public affairs.”

The CULTURE of a society  
can either discourage or encourage this.

CIVIL SOCIETY, as we see it, requires a CULTURE of  
participation, where as many as possible are committed,  
engagé, engagiert. To be committed means also to learn, to  
communicate. It means to act, to intervene.

## Urban Self-rule

*"Yes" or "no"? And if "yes" -*

*From "below" or from "above"? By the many or by  
the few?*

*Another German debate – though not necessarily a debate restricted  
to the German context – concerns what has been called “the  
endangered municipal self-rule” of German towns, threatened, some  
say, by numerous political decisions of the States, the Federal  
Government, and the European Community.*

*Stephan ARTICUS, the managing director or ‘caretaker’*

*(Hauptgeschaefsfuehrer) of the German municipal association, the  
STÄDTETAG, recently alluded to the fact that 70 percent of all decisions taken  
by the European Commission, the federal or state governments in accordance  
with European rules and regulations are affecting the cities.*

*And Petra Roth, the Christian Democrat mayor of Frankfurt (Main) expressed  
her concern that, on the local level, the citizens are “losing influence when it  
is being left solely to the market how they are supplied with energy and water.”*

*Partial privatization of public utilities might in fact lead to cost-saving, she claimed. But in this way, the ability of the cities to formulate and shape urban development would be reduced.*

**Let's briefly look back:**

It was in the nineteenth century that liberal reformers and social-democratic reformists teamed up to create municipal water works, tram companies, bus companies, and power plants.

The thrust at the time went not in today's main direction, but in exactly the opposite direction. Private utilities and transport companies had been formed in many major cities on the European continent, often with foreign capital. No matter how important their contribution may have been for some time, they soon turned out to be more interested in reaping a considerable profit on their investment than in improving services, at reasonable rates.

*As with railway companies, which were "nationalized" for similar reasons (in Britain, Germany, France, and so on), the municipal transport, water, and energy "market" proved not as effective as promised and was largely taken over by city governments.*

*It is only at a time of extremely neo-liberal "monetarism," when under the pressure of federal budget cuts, tax reductions, shrinking allocations of federal tax money to municipalities, and a destructively enforced compulsion to "tighten their belts" and reduce expenditures, that towns have begun to sell transport, energy, and / or water companies (as in Berlin).*

*With tight budgets, the priority seems to be "cost cutting."*

*Theaters are closed or their budgets shrunk, so as to make the work frequently next to impossible. Schools and universities have faced cuts and personnel shortages for years, already – and more cost-cutting is due, for university institutes not deemed immediately beneficial for the economy, that is to say, the interests of big business. There was a wholesale closure of publicly supported youth clubs (especially in the German states that once formed the G.D.R.). The upkeep of vital health and traffic infrastructure is poor, if not scandalous, promising huge repair bills once the time comes that such repairs can no longer be postponed. All this has happened in one of the richest countries on earth, in a country where private wealth – in a few hands – is amassed at an accelerated pace and in*



*historically unparalleled proportions. Public coffers are empty and vital services cut, because it is deemed essential to strengthen the competitiveness of German capital by reducing taxes, while the government is keeping the pressure on trade unions to accept wage restraints and is encouraging a relaxation of labor laws that limited night shifts as well as work on Saturdays and Sundays. German corporations, although financially sound, need more money, the reasoning goes, to invest in the modernization of the 'productive sphere' and increase productivity. All this is to counteract the 'profit squeeze' due to international competition among major globally active corporations. The result is that with productivity increase people are made redundant – often at a faster rate than new, and better-paying jobs are being created in new sectors of industry. The rest is expected to take up unqualified, badly paid “service jobs” (McDonald's, etc.) or accept long years of being on the dole. Needless to say, many of the added financial resources German capital owes to this policy of redistribution from public to private coffers (and from below to above) goes into speculative ventures. Rather than in production or in the important commercial sector (international trade, etc.), it is above all property speculation, currency speculation, the stock market etc. where the really big money seems to be made – although, of course, in cyclically varying fashion.*

***How does that all relate to the privatization of, for instance, public utilities that the EC (and not only the EC) seems to encourage, and that some municipalities like Berlin were eager to carry out already?***

***It relates to it because the acquisitions of such utilities by private investors are really conceived as large speculative ventures.***

***Giorgio Bocca, who writes for L'Espresso, noted that the same privatizations were carried out in Italy. They concerned profitable, well-run enterprises, he says. And no where did monopolies disappear for good. Instead, new monopolies were created. Bocca says, “I don't see what advantage it entailed to privatize the two Italian electricity utilities. [...] It didn't make sense, economically. Except simply in so far as the stratum of 'owners' wants to rule unconditionally [...].”***

*He maintains, “[...] these privatizations achieve nothing, in economic terms, while they entail a lot in speculative terms. It’s always the same people who snap up the objects of privatization. If you privatize television, it doesn’t end up in the hands of the citizens but in those of powerful groups who can afford to buy it.”*

*As far as we can see, the privatization of British Rail did not encourage the necessary investment that the Thatcher government had been neglecting for years in the most irresponsible manner, in order to ‘balance the budget.’ It did not improve safety. Private investors want to make money, and rail/road/air competition do not allow for an ‘unlimited’ increase in fares. Thus, cost-cutting is the rule, at the expense of safety. Modernization is insufficient, resembling more of a face-lift. The government’s reasoning is that they wanted to get rid of a rail network they did no longer want to ‘subsidize.’ Now, they really have to pay for big subsidies demanded by private rail companies, financing rail safety plus private profits. A one-time flow of money into public coffers at the moment of privatization will cost the tax-payer a lot, in the long run.*

*The public support for privatization found in some corners is of course not entirely based on ignorance. Neglected public companies like British Rail were in bad shape, due to permanent underfunding. (SNCF is in much better shape, by comparison.) The main reason however is that for the public, at a first glance, the difference between a public company and a private company, is not tangible. Both operate according to the logic of profit. The municipalities see in electricity, gas, and water companies mere tools that flush funds into their depleted coffers. The idea of a non-profit public utility, a company founded to render a service to the community at the lowest possible charge, has long vanished from the minds of professional politicians. Many consumers, on the other hand, seem to be unconcerned. As if they were saying, “If we are going to be scalped, it doesn’t matter whether it’s a public or a private company that does it. – The private company, being exposed to competition, may even be cheaper.” They forget two things: In private business, mergers and acquisitions will bring about new oligopolies (or in fact, local and regional monopolies) sooner or later. After a period where corporations are battling for market share, prices will go up again. Secondly, The higher prices paid to your community were not*

*entirely lost money; they were money used, for instance, in part to finance your school system. Because of the higher price for gas, water, or electricity, you paid lower local taxes than you would otherwise pay, or you got better service.*

*In other words, even in economic terms, a point can be made for municipally, regionally, or state-owned public utilities. From the point of view of local democracy, the economic considerations are not the only ones that are of importance. A democratic say in local affairs presupposes enlarged control of a community's citizens over their living and working conditions. Of course, as it is, the local company is not independent of the world market price of gas or oil. But it is free to say no to nuclear energy, if it wants to. It is free to push for energy saving construction of houses, because in operating the utility, there is no profit motive at the root of all of their considerations. They do not need to increase output; they might be very happy to decrease it by encouraging and subsidizing household appliances that are energy-saving, as well. They may diversify energy production, encouraging the use of wind and solar energy. They benefit from little loss of power when power is generated locally and no long-distance overland lines are bringing in the bulk of the energy used. Rational production is local production for local needs, to the extent that this is possible. Of course, production is social production, of course it undeniably entails exchange relations, between industries, between regions, as well as nationally and internationally. But where production is serving mainly the needs of profit accumulation instead of the needs of people, a lot of irrational, avoidable, unnecessary trading develops. It swells the bank accounts, it creates movements from account to account, from port to port, warehouse to warehouse – but it doesn't generate additional wealth, in the real terms of products, tools, cultural goods for the people. It enriches trading corporations, financial institutions, it makes international corporations grow to vast proportions – but the people are not better off. The environment suffers. Waste is entailed. **We need a lot more municipally and regionally owned and controlled companies, a “mixed economy” where the people of the community, via their direct votes and their local and regional democratic bodies, have a say, and where the employees have a greater say (in terms of co-participation, co-determination of what***

*is produced, when, why, under what circumstances). And this not only in the transport and energy sector but in all sectors.*

*The contrary movement, to privatize municipal utilities in the water, gas, electricity, and transport sector, is a development pushed in the interest of the few investors who have no stake in the community except an interest to make as much money as possible in the shortest possible time. In the same instance, it robs local citizens of a chance to steer and control their future – not under entirely free conditions, but under conditions that give them more of a say than the prevalence of private utilities does. In other words, if a public sector is maintained, communities are offered a chance to supply citizens under conditions laid down by these citizens in a more autonomous way than would otherwise be the case. If public utilities in many towns appear as ‘alien’ and even ‘hostile’ suppliers to many customers today, public ownership at least gives citizens the legal lee-way to change this and push for the right to plan independently, rationally, and according to humane principles. It is not only private, profit-oriented business; municipal bureaucracies can also be a source of alienation and disempowerment; local grass roots activism for increased urban democracy means an effort for increased empowerment of citizens across the board. It means that the ordinary silent majority can discover its ability to speak up, and that the underprivileged can be encouraged and can themselves find the courage to challenge undue privilege and demand compensatory justice.*

*This is necessary if we want a rational, humane modernization of our society.*



*We have finally to begin restructuring our democratic institutions, especially by making that ordinary people can join into the political decision-making process, with sufficient hope of making a difference. We have to increase elements of direct democracy on all levels, starting with the local / regional level and starting (especially) with the sphere of economic activities, the employment sector. The new German Act Concerning the Constitution of Companies (BVG or Betriebsverfassungsgesetz) that foresees workers’ delegates in even the smaller companies is a good, but a rather modest, first step in*

*this direction. Winning the struggle against abolishing the public sector and introducing a new, invigorated sector of mixed ownership is a second step, which implies and necessities further democratization. In a 'mixed economy', the public sector should play an increasing role next to the present private sector; it should be a vanguard of democratization and democratic, rational (instead of bureaucratic) planning. And its democratization might well rest on mixed ownership, with unsellable shares held by employees, by municipalities, and by regions (the latter being democratically run and able to delegate trade union people, delegates of grass roots organizations, and pro-grass-roots experts to the 'board of directors', and into local and regional planning committees which should be linked internationally and which should, on the other hand, be required to have their suggestions discussed and amended by the assembly [or 'plenum'] of plant employees).*

### **Municipal self-rule is not a value in itself.**

*Let's look at its history, taking the German case as an example.*

When it took on its modern, institutional form in Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it provided an instrument for the so-called propertied classes to formulate their interests, often by reaching compromises between various factions such as the bloc of industrialists, the commercial bourgeoisie, homeowners, and so on.

**Today, even the Frankfurt (Main) Christian Democrats defend municipal self-rule.**

**But which interest groups, in a city like Frankfurt, are best positioned to make use of it?**

**Local politicians complain that self-rule is too limited, that it becomes well nigh meaningless if it is emasculated by shrinking budgets, if state, federal, and European interference leads to reduced legal competence.**

*Their point is a valid point.*

*But do they not forget another point*

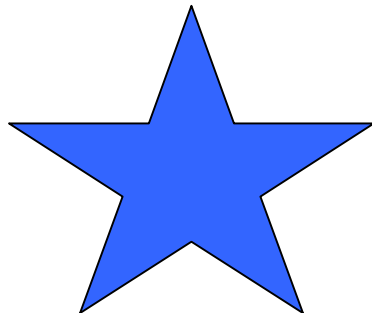
*That limits and stifles local democracy?*

**In whose service is self-rule, in Frankfurt today, if not in that of the banks, the property developers (often, merely a subdivision of banking and insurance corporations or pension funds), the Airport Corporation (FAG), the Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations acting as pressure groups for trading companies, holding companies owning department stores, corporations with important offices or company headquarters in Frankfurt, and so on)...**

Is there a lobby  
of the ordinary  
citizen?

If yes, are ordinary  
citizens more than  
marginally  
represented – or is  
**their influence**  
(except on  
election day)  
minimal?

**A question remains:** *Who is the “ordinary citizen”?*



## ***Debate:***

### ***Who is the "ordinary citizen"?***

Can “general interests” of the ordinary citizen be defined.

And if yes, by whom – if not himself?

But what if the amorphous mass of ‘ordinary citizens’ fails to do this – if it fails to discover what are essential, instead of whimsical issues for them?

***Was not the dissipation of forces, the “particularization” of interests, local, regional, and group egotism at the root of a Yugoslavia falling apart briefly after 1989?***

***Of course people everywhere in Yugoslavia were fed up with a bureaucratic, corrupt regime.***

Particular interests set us apart.

What can unite us are essential interests.

Health for instance, the desire for preventive and curative medicine, for the preservation of a relatively sane body and mind, is a unifying interest. But the concrete challenges and problems of health are regionally, sometimes even locally, specific. While we have to deal with the specific problems, we can abstract from them and together with others can refer to health as a common concern.

***Of course, “Socialist autogestion” in Yugoslavia was a farce: the directors of companies had a big say, the ‘socialist participation’ in the democratic running of companies was reduced to meetings that were acclamatory; directors became directors because they had essential connections (backing from those “above” them). Directors operated under the constraints of market forces. The employee’s democratic role was that they okayed the distribution of bonuses during general assemblies at the plant level. But to accept bonuses for yourself and okay those of the management is tantamount to an active role in a very limited sense of the word.***

What was the most decisive factor in the disintegration of the country was regional egotism.

Rejection of financial transfers from the economically more

developed North of the country to the South (Serbia proper, with the political center, Beograd).

A history of political and cultural repression, bureaucratic blunders added to the desire for separation. Why “pay” for those lazy, stupid buggers in the South? On the other hand, the Southerners took it for granted. Hadn’t they born the brunt of the anti-Fascist partisan struggle against Nazi Germany? Hadn’t they struggled against the Turks in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the North hid under the skirt of Austria-Hungary? Above all, hadn’t it been a political decision by the Beograd government, supported by them too, to concentrate and modernize industry in the North, with its old industrial heritage, dating back to Habsburg times? Of course, they South felt it deserved something in return: support for its own industrialization, now that the North was flourishing...



This reading of the collapse of Yugoslavia acknowledges additional factors, like the interest of the West to 'destroy' a country that had led, besides Nehru's India, Sukarno's Indonesia, and Nasser's Egypt, the bloc of neutral states, the 'Third Bloc' striving for independence from NATO and WARSAW PACT countries. Breaking apart, it ceases to be a symbol of these aspirations.

The interpretation of the country's collapse offered here maintains, however, the nationalist sentiments were rekindled and became aggressive because no compromise was achieved to settle economic grievances. There existed no local or regional democracy, no attempt to make the promise of 'autogestion', of self-determination and self-administration more than a façade. The upper layers of the caste of professional politicians competed in their jockeying for power. When the centrifugal forces became too strong, they decided it was better to be No. 1 in their region of origin than an also-ran in Beograd, the federation's political center.

*We all know that the cost of civil war was enormous. We know that economic disruption threw back all states that formed the Yugoslav federation, not just Serbia. The human, social, and economic cost of war was not only enormous, if was avoidable.*

**The Yugoslav example shows the irrationality 'ordinary citizens' are capable of. We must not idealize ourselves, must not idealize the 'little man,' the 'common folk.' Regional egotism, a refusal to balance out interests, drove the conflict and were instrumentalized by power-hungry, privilege-loving political leaders (on both or all three sides of the struggle); the readiness to demand all for one's self, one's group, one's region, the preparedness to resort to cruel means in the effort to defend one's uncompromising view of 'the regional interest': all betrayed a refusal of mediation, of 'Vermittlung'. The nationalist resentment was reawakened because no solution was found for the legitimate rights, the right to enjoy the fruit of one's labor, and the right to local and regional self-determination, that is, the right to make the important choices of how one lives, or wants to live.** *Of course there are reasons why most of the police and army 'jobs' went to Serbs (aside from will of Serbian nationalist leaders); in Great Britain, the armed forces also recruit disproportionate numbers of soldiers and sailors in the economically backward and crisis-stricken parts of the country (mainly in Scotland, Wales, and Northern England). Of course, the North had some reasons to feel*

*'milked,' but the South had also some reasons to expect transfers. (The problem arises again in Germany, over the 'Laenderfinanzausgleich,' or in Italy, between what the Northern petite bourgeoisie likes to call 'Padua', and the Mezzogiorno. But of course, everyone with some clear insight into the problem knows that 'Paduanization' is no answer. Paduanization is an expression of 'particular interests' being put before the essential interests of all ordinary citizens, both North and South. This holds true for Germany, former Yugoslavia, Italia; It holds true for the relationship of the NORTH and SOUTH , on a worldwide scale: transfers are necessary.*

## **Local Self-Determination!** **And Cooperation!**

*Local self-determination, a lessening of alienating influences on our lives, must and will go hand in hand with regional, trans-regional, inter-national, and inter-continental cooperation, or they will not exist, at all.*

*What local democracy is about is not "collectivism", it is not conformism, it is not uniformity.*

*Instead it is expressivity, intelligence, variety, choice.*

*It is what Marx called 'individuation', the fuller, more meaningful developments of individual potentials or capacities.*

Historic fairness and human decency require that the project of democratic self-rule, of urban democracy, of regional self-determination (in other words, the democratic process of decentralization, where power is seen as belonging to the grass roots locally wherever problems that can be solved locally are to be dealt with) is not conceived as separate from questions of trans-regional, inter-national, and intercontinental responsibility and solidarity.

Local democracy is unthinkable and would not work without cooperation, mediation, compromise, coordination. Whether we will be subjugated to an imperial globalism of all-powerful corporations exerting their influence through international organizations and national governments dominated by them, or instead will succeed to strengthen civil society in our quest for more meaningful democratic involvement and participation of ALL, depends very much on our ability to strengthen local self-rule, urban and regional democracy by forging cooperative alliances the world over. For this,

- global cooperation by ordinary citizens and their grass-roots organizations,
- the democratic evolution of institutions of self-rule on the local, regional, and national level that encourage direct influence by the people,
- local, regional, and national bodies of democratic, rational (instead of bureaucratic) planning that draw up broad outlines of needs, resources production goals,

are all essential. A networked world, linking computerized information, would make large planning bureaucracies obsolete. It has become possible to locally and regionally formulate pieces of rationally planned world-wide production based on need instead of the profit motive, and place them into a puzzle that as a whole makes sense if local, regional, and national bodies autonomously decide only those items of a plan where no outside input/output is seen as necessary and forward all data concerning the need of outside resources or goods and the ability to furnish resources or goods to any outside partners to all other potential partners, via the 'net,' as well as taking such data from others into consideration. The 'plan' as a broad assessment of needs, resources, productive capacities (including socially desirable and locally okayed input of working time) would be perpetually adapted, in flux, as information as to changing needs, changing resources, etc., came in. Today's supermarket scanning systems are a perfect example of how it is possible to keep minute-per-minute track of stock, of changing 'consumer preferences', wishes or needs, although supplemental communicative roads of citizen input as to needs, as to priorities, as to the desire to shape working conditions, determine working time, etc., must be invented. The California-based virtual companies that coordinate the production schedule of Asian subcontractors or partners *and* the incoming 'buy' list of supermarket and department store chains are another example of the communicative, computer-based and net-based technology available for democratic, rational, broadly sketching planning efforts coordinated worldwide on the basis of solidarity, compromise, and fair mediation of interests.

*The best premise (if not precondition) for this is voluntary cooperation. It is friendliness. It is a desire to turn to the other, instead of combating him in a competitive game. This leaves enough room for withdrawal, being on your own, for necessity moments or hours, days or months of solitude.*

Individualism, today, is often the contrary of individuation. Millions of people thought of them as brandishing a particular, individual style when wearing Roebuck shoes, or whatever they were called. Millions think that a hair-style, or style of dressing, a particular car or kind of music they prefer constitutes their individuality and sets them apart from others. *If you enjoy these little diversion, alright. But don't forget there are millions like you. Don't forget the products that help you define your 'individual' style are produced by the millions. Those who devised and marketed them preformulated 'your' individual style. You have been largely passive in this, a productive, process. You have been active only as a 'consumer,' a buyer, somebody who is sporting these goods. Don't forget you have a productive bend, a creative potential, as well. It is in developing this potential that you become a full, mature, or rather, maturing and 'growing' individual.*

**This society does not encourage and further the development of individuals. It encourages and furthers the development of a gullible mass of people: people usable as working people who function in the desires way (instead of thoughtful, self-confident, imaginative producers), people who will make willing, uncritical 'consumers' (instead of productive consumers, consuming producers), people who can be manipulated by the media and a caste of professional politicians.**

Decades ago, an American sociologist called this type of social being (who thinks or may think, in fact, that he or she is 'very individualistic') the 'outer-directed personality.' For it, outside determination of thought, will, morality by authoritarian institutions (the church, school, family, army, the factory) has largely been superseded by instant impulses, kicks offered by the entertainment industry, by info-tainment, by more or less 'populist' or 'charismatic' politicians, fashioned after an image that has been drawn up by experts of modern mass psychology.

Both the outer directed personality of today's society and the inner-directed one that was prevalent in much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, are 'ideal types.'

They do not (often) appear in pure form, it seems.

**We all carry part of them in us, in greater or lesser proportions. But we also carry a creative urge in us, a desire to be free instead of alienated or manipulated, a capacity to think for ourselves and to act in our best interest while taking care not to disregard the best interest of our fellow men.**

Who is the 'ordinary citizen', then?

Perhaps, today, more often than not he is somebody crazy to consume, trapped by the latest craze, impatient that he cannot afford so many things. Somebody hooked by the false promises of a society that has low quality shoes, shoddily produced cars, food produced under the most questionable circumstances, noisy neighborhoods and ugly houses available for almost unaffordable rents for most of us. Today this person, faced with the carrot and the stick of his or her invisible masters (masters invisible as the absentee landlord was frequently invisible for the tenants of another time or country) adapts to the rat-race of anti-cooperative 'competition', hoping to chance upon his own lucky streak while in fact what he finds is stress, burn-out, sometimes sickness, and even premature death.

But this same person, tomorrow, may crave something different, may opt for different goals: dignity, decent living and working conditions, a say in his own affairs, friendliness and cooperation among neighbors and work-mates.

**THE CITIZENS THAT URBAN DEMOCRACY and SOCIETY-WIDE DEMOCRATIZATION DEPENDS UPON WILL NOT ONLY CHANGE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES.**

**THEY ARE ABLE TO CHANGE, THEMSELVES.**

**BOTH PROCESS ARE NOT NECESSARILY COMPLETELY SYNCHRONIZED; ONE MAY TRACK THE OTHER, AT TIMES; IN OTHER MOMENT, THAT RELATIONSHIP MAY BE REVERSED.**

# THE FACT REMAINS THAT CHANGE, AN URGE TO CHANGE, HAS ALREADY SET IN.

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