

BUILDING AUTONOMY

FROM GRASSROOTS TO REVOLUTION

ABOUT THE BUILDING AUTONOMY WORKING GROUP

This brochure is the first publication of the Building Autonomy Working Group—an international working group integrated into the Peoples' Platform of Europe, consisting of anti-systemic organisations and collectives from all over Europe.

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ABOUT THE PLATFORM

With the Peoples' Platform of Europe, we would like to offer a transnational European framework in which we can come together to find solutions to existing social problems.

However, the aim of this platform is more than just an exchange of experiences. We want to contribute towards joining forces, coordinating our struggles and creating a common vision of the world we will build together.

The Peoples' Platform of Europe, therefore, thrives on the active and diverse participation of different democratic forces. To all anti-systemic collectives, struggling communities, revolutionary organizations, and social movements, we invite you to become part of the Peoples' Platform of Europe.

Let's reclaim the initiative!

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FOREWORD

**BUILDING AUTONOMY,
JANUARY 2026**

As we write this brochure on building communal autonomy from the nation-state system, one of the most emblematic examples and a profound source of hope is facing a severe assault: Rojava. The new regime of Syria, backed by western nation-states, ISIS and Turkey, seeks to eradicate the democratic self-organisation of North-East Syria. Just as in 2014, jihadists are now encircling Kobane and the Kurdish civil society is mobilising to defend the city by all means. Once again, the Kurdish people are fighting for their right to democratic self-determination and defending the dignity of all humanity with their own lives. People from all social movements and resisting communities worldwide are closely following the developments in the Middle East, for an attack on the revolutionary project of Rojava is an attack on all of us.

However, as internationalists we are not mere observers of what's happening in other parts of the world; international solidarity, when well organised, is a powerful force with the potential to change the course of world events. Thus, we are witnessing a historical wave of organised solidarity with Rojava from all over the world. The most notable example is "The People's Caravan to Defend Humanity" heading from Europe directly to Kobane, not only to cross borders but also to break the media blockade. Internationalism has always been a powerful tool for the ones who seek a free life for humanity in harmony with nature. Historically, international organisation has been and continues to be a pillar for anyone seeking to overcome the dominant, patriarchal system and to build up a communal life based on the mutual aid and solidarity that has been taken away from us.

With this in mind, and despite the most recent aggression on Rojava, we have decided to continue our work on the Peoples' Platform of Europe and on this publication. The Kurdish freedom movement itself has taught us that one of the highest expressions of international solidarity is to keep organising together and to keep working on our collective mission of building a free life.

A life free from dependency on state structures and mentalities.

A life of communal autonomy.

The times we live in show us clearly that **organised societies are key for the survival of human beings**, both in the present and in the future of our planet. Democratic confederalism is not just a proposal for the Middle East, but a concrete revolutionary perspective that society can and should develop all over the world. We hope that this brochure will be a tool, an inspiration and a catalyst for discussion and reflection for all those struggling for society's autonomy, wherever they are based around Europe.

Building Autonomy Working Group,
January 2026

INTRODUCTION

Every day, through different projects and struggles, each of us strives to live true to the values of freedom, social justice and solidarity. Faced with complex problems and deep social divisions, we seek to organise collective responses that can make this world a better, fairer place. Our efforts spring from personal and collective insights and visions; they experiment with methods, evolve, and create processes—some long, some short; they make mistakes, generate conflict and popular strength; sometimes they strengthen community bonds, and at other times their impact stays limited.

To create this brochure, we talked to multiple initiatives of autonomy across Europe. *Autonomy* can also be called self-organisation, self-determination, independence, freedom. It is the will to live freely, expressed through concrete choices and collective action. We don't see these initiatives as separate projects with different aims—they are all part of something bigger, of humanity's collective effort to change our grim reality and shape it according to our collective vision of peace, justice and freedom. **They are part of the**

revolutionary project that has no beginning and no end—it is, instead, an ongoing, cyclical process which tells the story of humanity defending itself from slavery and annihilation, as the material manifestations of dangerous ideas of dominance and supremacy.

These initiatives are real people doing real work to build an alternative way of living. We asked them honest questions about how they keep their struggle alive in very practical ways and how they resist the system imposed by corporations and nation-states—not only through direct conflicts with these agents, but also through building a democratic alternative in parallel. We learned through their examples that **resistance is not just confrontational—it is also constructive and very concrete**. Otherwise, it remains theoretical, fragmented and reactionary. Revolutionary resistance is a collective act—and internationalism is a proven method of building this collective will at the local and global level. Without it, our struggles risk withering away in isolation, forever stuck at the margins of history.

The democratic forces of the world already reject this marginalisation. The Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria, better known as Rojava, is a historical example of building and protecting people's autonomy under conditions of war. It is a political project of self-governance through the *democratic leadership* of youth and women, a real attempt to organise economy in harmony with nature and around the needs of society, a process filled with mistakes and transformations that is guided by the revolutionary spirit present throughout cultures and history.

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP: THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY DEMOCRATIC FORCES TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION, SHARED DECISION-MAKING AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. TAKING A LEADING ROLE IN PROBLEM-SOLVING WITHOUT SEEKING TO ACCUMULATE POWER, BUT FOSTERING INSTEAD A SENSE OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.

Everyone develops different forms of organisation—informal groups, associations, cooperatives or trade unions; everyone finds different ways to fund their projects; everyone relates differently to state institutions. **Our differences should not be used as lines of division,** and this is precisely the mistake we, as democratic forces, so often make. If we want to draw strength from one another, we need to reject the mentality of competition and thought policing—criticising with

the intent to reject rather than improve—and learn as much as possible about each other's initiatives with openness and curiosity. We should not learn simply through stories and good examples, but by forging deep bonds of friendship which will enable us to imagine and realise, at the European level, a visible and concrete alternative to the capitalist system, with ever-increasing strength. Faced with the disillusionment of the 'there is no alternative' mantra, we choose to fight back and seek long-term tactics and strategies together.

THE BUILDING AUTONOMY WORKING GROUP

The working group of Building Autonomy—one of the thematic committees of the Peoples' Platform of Europe—consists of a variety of organisations and collectives from all over Europe. We have different practices and we live in different territories. What is it that unites us?

First and foremost, the belief that it is possible to **organise ourselves internationally over the long term and through this, give strength to our community and local projects.**

We all see with our own eyes and feel with our own hearts that a radical social change is deeply needed. A revolution is needed. Or better put: many revolutions regarding

all aspects of life are needed. We believe in the importance of dreaming in the search for a free life. But we also need to critically analyse our history and our present. This analysis will show us that in Europe, the *anti-systemic and democratic forces* of society are not yet at the point of starting a radical mass revolution to free ourselves from the nation-state's dominion. So in one way or another, we are all faced with these questions:

DEMOCRATIC FORCES/ANTI-SYSTEMIC FORCES: WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF DEMOCRATIC MODERNITY, THE TERM 'DEMOCRATIC FORCES' REFERS TO THE SOCIAL FORCES CURRENTLY FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE AND ALL THOSE FORCES THROUGHOUT HISTORY THAT HAVE DONE THE SAME. ACCORDING TO ABDULLAH ÖCALAN, TWO CURRENTS HAVE DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST 30,000 YEARS: STATE CIVILISATION AND DEMOCRATIC CIVILISATION. DEMOCRATIC FORCES ARE THEREFORE THOSE THAT ACT FOR FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY.

Can we build a free life under the current circumstances?

How can we break free from the domination of nation-states, which we see as the principal agents of the patriarchal and capitalist system?

What does the revolutionary process look like nowadays and in our territory?

We come from different backgrounds, but we share a common

understanding and experience: *capitalist modernity*—a way to name today's shape of the dominant, patriarchal and neoliberal system—has colonised all aspects of life: the material, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. The results are the constant and multiple crises we are living through: ecocide, femicide, rising fascism and expanding war and militarisation. The word “modernity”, which is added to the notion of capitalism, points to the fact that this is our present reality.

CAPITALIST MODERNITY: A HISTORICAL-SOCIAL SYSTEM BASED ON PATRIARCHY, THE NATION-STATE AND INDUSTRIALISM, WHICH ORGANISES SOCIETY AROUND THE ENSLAVEMENT OF WOMEN, PROFIT AND STATE POWER.

We come from different backgrounds, but we believe that in times of radical isolation and fragmentation of society, **the revolutionary potential lies in an autonomous, communitarian approach to society itself.** Society is not some abstract concept—it is simply people living together. It is the expression of our social nature as humans—it is families, friends and neighbours, organising our lives together and supporting each other in times of need. Under capitalist modernity, society is oppressed by the apparatus and the mentality of state, which has taken away our prerogative to organise our own economies and institutions, with the false promise of

peace and prosperity, in order to accumulate wealth and power in the hands of the few through war and destruction. To take an autonomous, communitarian approach to society means to reject the nation-state as the only solution to our social problems by collectively building up our own institutions, economies and repositories of knowledge.

WHERE TO START?

Connections, education and mutual support. The first proposal of our group is a system of European solidarity brigades and delegations dedicated to solidarity, education and raising awareness of our respective local projects in order to strengthen the comradeship of democratic forces across Europe and develop a shared analysis and vision. This proposal, which emerged during the Peoples' Platform's first meeting in Vienna in 2025, will be further developed at our upcoming gathering in Catalonia. It consists of:

- **Solidarity brigades:** groups made up of people from different organisations and backgrounds who provide militant support to organisations and projects in need. This support can be logistical, organisational or even educational.

- **Delegations:** groups made up of people from different backgrounds who travel to a region of Europe to learn about the realities, struggles

and projects that have developed there. These are delegations with an educational focus, aimed at mutual exchange and knowledge-sharing: **to develop common goals, visions and language.**

FINDING A COMMON LANGUAGE

We adopt practices that can be described as *"grassroots organising"*, *"revolutionary basework"*, *"work on the ground"* or simply as *"work with and in society"*. We are members of neighborhood initiatives, housing syndicates, squatted communities, youth education, food and agricultural cooperatives, public kitchens, work unions and medical care collectives. This "work" is not only random jobs or activism—it is our way of life. We ourselves are part of these communities. We as organised, political people don't separate ourselves from society. We live, learn and struggle together with all parts of it. We propose to summarise these kinds of practices, when carried out in the anti-systemic perspective, under the term of **militancy within society**.

GRASSROOTS ORGANISING: POLITICAL ORGANISATION IN WHICH ORDINARY PEOPLE PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY TO BRING ABOUT SOCIAL OR POLITICAL CHANGE. IT INVOLVES DIRECT PARTICIPATION AND SELF-ORGANISATION.

By this, we don't aim to homogenise our perspectives (which would be impossible anyway, given the

diversity of expressions that the political and social reality finds across Europe). **But we do aim to find a common language, some unifying umbrella terms to talk about our work, experiences and analyses. We see this as a key challenge in building up a deep and ever-lasting international bond, which allows us to truly advance our common debates and analyses.**

PARADIGM OF DEMOCRATIC MODERNITY: IN ABDULLAH ÖCALAN'S THEORY, IT IS AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL TO CAPITALIST MODERNITY BASED ON GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY, WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY. IT IS THE WAY IN WHICH DEMOCRATIC FORCES VIEW, THINK ABOUT AND SHAPE REALITY.

In our own political analysis, we as a working group follow the *paradigm of democratic modernity*, proposed by the *Kurdish freedom movement*. If Marx understood history as a class struggle, this proposal sees history as two rivers—capitalist modernity and democratic modernity—and these two rivers flow within each and every one of us and all of our societies. It is not one group of people against another.

KURDISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT: A KURDISH POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT FIGHTING FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, CULTURAL RIGHTS AND FORMS OF DEMOCRATIC SELF-GOVERNMENT.

The democratic river is the sum of humanity's efforts and ideas of how to live a free and dignified life; the

capitalist river is the sum of humanity's efforts and ideas of how to monopolize wealth and social control. Both rivers flow at the same time, but they are asymmetrical in power. The capitalist current is much stronger—it dominates humanity. To be able to do this, it has to steal water from the democratic river. It cannot survive without stealing its freedom and autonomy. Surplus value cannot be produced and accumulated without exploiting the productive labour of workers, the reproductive labour of women and the ecosystems of planet Earth. These exploitative, racist, sexist and fascist mentalities cannot survive without colonising the free minds of the people. This means that even though the capitalist river is stronger, the democratic river is the real source of energy and that by recognising its strength and role in history, it can liberate itself from this parasitic relationship.

Capitalism feeds on our freedom. To build our autonomy is to take our freedom back and dry out the capitalist river.

This process involves building strong community ties and self-organised institutions to address shared needs; at the same time, it is inevitably a struggle against the attacks on all oppressed people, aimed at securing new rights and better living and working conditions.

Our task as militants within society is to **connect the concrete, existential problems of society to and through the revolutionary process, which develops and promotes the self-organised community as the solution to these problems.**

WHICH COMMUNITY?

To build our autonomy, we must build communities that embody the values of mutual aid and solidarity. **Society is the community to which we all belong**, with all of its flaws and contradictions. Thinking about the specific communities that we are forming or are already part of, we wonder:

How can we shape these communities so that we organize their potential for democratic autonomy?

How can we define where a community begins and where it ends, who's in and who's out?

To build strong communities, we need to (re)connect through our shared traditions, cultures and histories, and rediscover the deep bond that exists between us. However, such traditional communities can be easily co-opted by fascist ideology if based on essentialist or biological characteristics like race and sex. On the other hand, non-traditional communities, based on

shared values or a set of voluntary agreements (e.g. a neighbourhood initiative or a squatted community), tend to be more fragile and to lack long-term commitment. These non-traditional communities have also shown to be more easily co-opted by state structures. Hence, we need to ask ourselves:

How can we unite the strong bonds coming from the traditional approach to communities with the shared values on which non-traditional communities are based?

How can we reconnect to the democratic and communal roots of lost traditions and cultural expressions?

The idea of coming together in a network of communities to upscale this to the level of society instead of remaining singular, marginalised communities, leads us to a whole new set of pending questions:

How can we, starting from a point of individualisation and anonymity, reach a point of commitment and belonging between people, for example between people of a village, a neighbourhood or a building?

How can we organise as the big community called society, that consists of many smaller communities and identities, while integrating existing structures of society?

In doing so, how do we defend our

communities from being co-opted by state mentalities and structures?

Finally, how do we further transform ourselves from a community based on mutual aid into a community struggling to increase our autonomy and self-determination?

CONSTANT REFLECTION, CONSTANT TRANSFORMATION

The revolutionary approach of building up communal autonomy is undoubtedly a process of constant transformation: within us as individuals, within our existing communities and the ones that are growing over time, and within society itself. To advance on this challenging path, **we need to constantly reflect, question and analyse ourselves, our works and our dynamics—even when this feels uncomfortable.** Only in this way will we find new, creative ways to collectively challenge the dominant system.

The questions we are raising are complex, big and can be overwhelming. But also the experiences and knowledge we have are rich—especially if we come together internationally. This is the core of our proposal as the working group of Building Autonomy, and of the Peoples' Platform in general: let's deepen the bond between grassroots organisers, society's militants and revolutionaries across borders.

Let's bring together the experiences of our political work. Let's sort and map the pending questions and contradictions that we can crystallise together through discussion. And let's face them with the creativity and critical thinking that come up when we meet, exchange and engage internationally. If our specific local initiatives are connected in a broader vision and strategy, these bridges will strengthen us and our communal autonomy from the system.

THE MEANING OF INTERNATIONALISM AND THE PEOPLES' PLATFORM

Within the Peoples' Platform of Europe, we believe it is essential to address every issue from an internationalist perspective.

Why? What is the relationship between local autonomies united in diversity and the internationalist perspective?

Through debates and discussions, we have discovered that one of the greatest contradictions common to European organisations is the difficulty of harmonising the local dimension of struggles with the international context. They are often perceived as two different dimensions, to be addressed in different spaces and at different times.

However, we have realised that this approach creates limitations in our

anti-systemic struggle. The point we want to introduce, therefore, when talking about autonomy, is that in the face of global patriarchy, statism and capitalism, **every struggle must begin to analyse theoretically and organise itself practically with an internationalist reading of both the problems and the possible solutions.** Society's autonomy can only be strengthened through connecting the different thoughts and actions of social groups that, driven by the same urgency for freedom, are fighting in their own ways and in their own historical contexts.

Achieving **fluidity between theory, experience, praxis and analysis** is crucial and this brochure is only a starting point. All contents come from the collective, internationalist work and discussions we have done so far as a working group for Building Autonomy.

BUILDING AUTONOMY

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “BUILDING AUTONOMY”?

To build our autonomy means to **create the culture and the material conditions necessary for a just, beautiful and free collective life.** Through autonomous communal life, we can escape the material and mental dependency on the nation-state, capitalism and patriarchy. This deadly triad is responsible for ecocide, femicide, racism, class inequality and all attacks on the bonds of society, which it carries out by pitting people against each other. This imposed isolation has emptied life of all meaning and beauty—young people are ever more depressed, anxious and trapped in an apocalyptic future they see as inevitable.

We can oppose this and gradually regain our autonomy in every aspect of life: from the material and reproductive spheres to freeing our imagination and thinking from the influence of state mentality and neoliberalism.

We oppose death with a free life—a life of self-defense, self-sufficiency and self-governance.

These three macro topics help us organize the present text, our discussions and our political work in general, although we are aware that there are no rigid boundaries between them and that many ideas can be associated with one or the other in the same way. Still, this seemed to be the best way to explore complex issues such as autonomy, to start formulating our message and to try to move forward together in this important conversation.

MILITANCY WITHIN SOCIETY

What we call direct militancy within society could also be called grassroots organising, revolutionary base work, work on the ground or the direct organising with people. It is an organised practice, a militancy, that is not understood as a few hours of the day spent on a cause,

like a hobby; rather, it is a life that stubbornly embodies certain values and principles and their immediate practical and actionable implications. This way of living and struggling continually fuels our commitment and love for a world where everyone can express their qualities, and participate in the organisation of our collective life. We say *everyone*, because **we understand the revolutionary process as the process through which the whole of society is strengthened through self-organisation**. We think of participation as the possibility for people to abandon the principle of delegation and choose to be active subjects in solving problems; we see grassroots organisation as the space in which this attitude can be expressed and exercised.

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND VALUES OF MILITANTS IN SOCIETY

All of us individually are born into and shaped by the dominant, patriarchal and colonial system. So, as organisers and militants we find ourselves in a deep contradiction and challenge: **the system of domination we want to overcome lies deeply within ourselves**, we have internalised classism, racism, sexism and individualism. Our ways of thinking and acting are shaped by the state's mentality, so we tend to reproduce patriarchal dynamics, to fall into neoliberal logic without even noticing it and with that, to

hinder the flourishing of our communal struggle for autonomy.

In order to tackle this problem, we need to define the values and characteristics we want to cultivate in ourselves and in society, always asking ourselves how to unlock people's potential to self-organise in a democratic way. These are the values that guide the way we act and organize:

PARTICIPATION

Militants of society should live in and with the social context they work in. It is essential to be part of the potential communal life we are creating, and of the territory we are working in. If we are connected with the communal reality and history of our territories, we can create deep bonds with the people by sharing our memories, principles, hopes and questions. The aim of this sharing is to **give people the possibility to accept their legacy, criticize it and transform it according to their ideas of a free life together**. If a transformation takes place in us as militants and in the people, a common vision of communal freedom can be created, and the militant work can be considered successful revolutionary work.

LOVE AND TRUST

When it comes to values and

emotions, we as militants want to cultivate a deep faith in the people. **A revolutionary is recognized more by their love and trust in the people than by the thousand actions carried out without this trust.** We need to critically observe the paternalistic and authoritarian tendencies in our characters that sometimes emerge when working within society. Humanity will not be freed by a false generosity or the attitude of a liberal social worker; it will free itself in communion. Therefore, we must find the place where we as militants are truly moved by solidarity, an act of love and a real commitment. By doing so, we can have a transformative role in peoples' lives just as they are transforming us.

PRACTICALITY AND HUMBLENESS

Another key value in our militancy is practicality (or concreteness). It describes the responsibility that comes with **wanting to respond to the real needs of people through self-organisation, and stop generating more empty structures or bureaucratic constructs without a clear, practical aim.** On the other hand, we have to be careful not to fall into reactive activism without strategy, but relate our praxis to revolutionary theory. As militants in society, we have a special potential to bridge the gap between theory and praxis through our work in neighbourhoods, housing

syndicates, squatted communities or educational initiatives, but also through our international organisation and collaboration.

In the context of political work, **humbleness is the opposite of ideological dogmatism and puritanism.** Being purist and dogmatic means turning our political struggle into an identity of superiority and arrogance—towards other militants and towards society. It means believing our way of seeing and doing things is the only right way, it means frustration with differing views and opinions, it means rigidity and antagonism in our collaboration. Finally, it means seeing ourselves as something separate from society, instead of accepting the role of society's democratic forces. Our humbleness helps us **learn from each other and from our societies—otherwise we can't know what we need to do in our revolutionary work.**

If we are motivated by a sincere search for the revolutionary social principles that survive latently in society, then practical work in society will become our academy from which to draw notions and examples and build our revolutionary theory. With this revolutionary theory, we can finally return to everyday social spaces (neighbourhoods, homes, workplaces) and strengthen that latent potential, emphasizing it and relating it to

everyday life. In this sense, we can also say that revolutionary theory and practice are two sides of the same social struggle, and that the militants who struggle in this way assume, in doing so, the role of **democratic leadership**.

THE SOCIAL WORK DILEMMA AND THE INFILTRATION OF INSTITUTIONS

There are many concrete examples in Europe of what grassroots work can mean. We can mention, for example, the countless neighbourhood committees, which try to organise initiatives that bring people together and encourage them to live in community, the struggle for housing as a fundamental right, the grassroots trade unions of workers who try not to bow to the logic of exploitation and resignation, and the voluntary associations that work daily to help others.

There are many more examples of how society tries to organise itself. It is necessary to discuss what their objectives are and whether they are moving towards building various forms of autonomy. This is not always the case; more often than not, these types of organisations are oriented towards forms of welfare work, or become so despite attempts to create alternative models. Others, more radical initiatives, which clearly understand the need to free

themselves as much as possible from approaches that ultimately generate power relations rather than liberation, often fail to expand their capacity for transformation. We can also explore the issue of paid social work, which often takes place within NGOs or voluntary associations, and ask ourselves how this type of work can or cannot be put at the service of radical transformation.

It is not easy to find a synthesis for these different initiatives and perhaps it is not necessary; **what is necessary is to think openly and without prejudice**. There is no doubt that many grassroots organisations are affected by NGO-isation and that, even if they start out with a radical and confrontational approach, once they come to terms with the state (for example, by legalising a squatted space or receiving funds for social and cultural initiatives), they become increasingly dependent on it. On the other hand, it is true that many associations and NGOs employ people who potentially express many of the traits that characterise a grassroots organiser; however, these traits are often absorbed by the logic of the system and do not allow individuals to develop a broad vision of how their work can be put at the service of a collective struggle for autonomy rather than a system that starves them.

Or do we believe that only radical organisations can be part of a genuine revolution?

One idea we would like to share in this regard, which should always be put up for discussion and not taken as a summary of our debate, concerns the tactical role that the relationship with institutions can play. Knowing that we cannot dismantle the state mentality and infrastructure overnight, we ask ourselves how we can progressively erode its power in favour of autonomous processes.

And thus, we come to two processes that can coexist:

1) Being and staying with society which is the revolutionary subject, by infiltrating institutional structures where society is strongest and the state is very weak, in order to democratise that branch of the state, get in touch with people in popular contexts and exchange knowledge about current contradictions, dangers and opportunities;

2) Strengthening the organisational work outside of the system, so that once social links are made within the system infrastructure, and people see that despite their revolutionary will, statist institutions won't let them be free, we offer an organised alternative they can turn to.

But where? Where to build this alter-

native?

It is necessary to identify a territory in Europe for the construction of a completely autonomous social infrastructure—far from the system and the state centers—which would be, at the same time, a place of revolutionary education, social organisation, and political action. A concrete example that can fully embody a revolutionary communal life, in which every person from society can join, once their will and hope are reconnected to the revolutionary spirit.

If the infiltration praxis and autonomous organisation are strategically planned with a common political perspective, they will protect and empower society, and the state won't have space to proliferate because society won't have any reason to believe and trust in its proposals. There is no one specific plan about how to build this strategic approach—it will look differently in every territory, subsuming all peculiarities and challenges that are preventing society from fulfilling its needs in that specific context.

In conclusion, the proposal presented in this brochure is not a definite, unified solution, but rather an invitation to further explore the tactics and strategies which are necessary to achieve the common goal of simultaneously weaken-

ing the influence of the state and strengthening the autonomy of society. The following sections will explore the macro topics of self-defense, self-sufficiency and self-governance as fundamental elements in the concrete construction of social autonomy, drawing from practical experiences in Europe that will hopefully stimulate a perspective of **convergence within diversity**.

SELF-DEFENSE

WITH PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY OF SQUATTED PROSYGIKA OF
ATHENS, INITIATIVE OF WESTERN ALPS AND COOPERATION HULL

We define self-defense simply as **the communal defense of life**. Self-defense was described in various ways during our discussion in Vienna, but it all revolved around this fundamental concept. All life on Earth is threatened by the attacks of capitalist modernity, culminating in the total climate collapse that is slowly unraveling before our very eyes. We have explained that capitalist modernity survives through these attacks—war and exploitation are the principles of this system, not anomalies to be fixed through technical adjustments. We need to create our own alternative, our own spaces and mechanisms for a free and peaceful life. Living together in communities, organising collectively to resist the attacks on our health, psyche, and the environment we live in and share with all of life, the daily struggle against the patriarchal mentality embedded in us through state institutions and propaganda, or the daily practices of meeting, discussing, deciding and building common experiences and visions that shape our autonomous institutions—all of

that is part of self-defense. **Self-defense, therefore, is not only physical, but first and foremost ideological and mental.** Every individual and collective act we take to establish free mindsets, alternatives to the dominant culture, and forms of grassroots organisation of society is an act of self-defense. Everything that allows us to recognise and defend ourselves against the attacks of the patriarchal and liberal system is self-defense.

WHAT KIND OF ATTACKS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? HOW DO THEY AFFECT THE DYNAMICS WITHIN OUR ORGANISATIONS AND OUR POLITICAL WORK?

"The repression the squatters are receiving is the state's attack on the most radical part of the movement. It is an attack on the houses of the fight, on the liberated areas, on the practice of self-organization, on the training ground for young fighters. It is a long war whose intensity fluctuates according to the dynamics and unity of the movement."

Community of Squatted Prosfygika of Athens

To answer these questions, it may be useful to reflect on the different

ways in which capitalist modernity and the dominant male mentality manifest themselves in everyday life. In fact, doing so is essential; otherwise, we risk not noticing these attacks and therefore failing to organise forms of life that are truly alternative to capitalist modernity.

For example, attacks on our mentality that fuel growing individualism and mistrust among people break the strong bonds that make up society and trap people in increasingly less community-oriented approaches to life.

Do we discuss ego, protagonism and competitiveness within our organisations?

Or the patriarchal attacks which, through the dominant male ideology, erode our ability to build relationships free from dynamics of possession, control and power.

DO WE ASK OURSELVES EVERY DAY WHERE WE SEE THE PATRIARCHY IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR COMRADES? AND THEN, HOW DO WE DEAL WITH WHAT EMERGES?

"As the Women's Structure of the Sy. Ka.Pro, we recognized from the begin-

ning that there is no personal freedom without collective struggle and without personal cost. We decided to stand on the front line against what oppresses us and undermines our lives and dignity [...]. An opening step forward this was the creation of a physical space for the Women's Structure, a double apartment which was designed to accommodate all of our common needs and activities. From being the space for our assemblies, film screenings, events and celebrations, to operating as the kitchen for collective cooking and for making handmade products for our internal economy, but also as a hostel for women and femininities in need, the „double house“ was our first response to our needs and a way for us to share our experiences of collective life and culture with other female comrades.”

Community of Squatted Prosfygika of Athens

“At the start of 2026 we began monthly education sessions. We do this as the ruling class constantly shapes consciousness through media, culture, and selective (and distorted) history. Division, cynicism, confusion and internalised liberalism weaken collective struggle. It's not enough to rely on “common sense”, and immediate lived experience has its limitations. A lack in theoretical and historical understanding can mean we repeat the mistakes of past movements when time and resources are already so strained. Therefore, political, histori-

cal, and theoretical education helps build a collective understanding and apply learnings in our current moment and context, enabling us to move forward stronger, and build a resilient organisation/movement that can sustain the struggle for the long term, and not scatter under pressure. Instead, education helps us grow in our confidence, understanding and commitment—and helps us develop as organisers and leaders. Education therefore isn't just learning, it is an act of self-defense.”

Cooperation Hull

ARE WE ABLE TO TURN CONTRADICTIONS INTO ELEMENTS OF COLLECTIVE CRITICISM DRIVEN BY A LOVING AND SINCERE DESIRE TO TRANSFORM OURSELVES, OR DO WE TURN THEM INTO ELEMENTS OF CONFLICT, INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND FACTIONS?

“When you re/create a culture of accountability there is a transition that happens where you go from fear to security. From individualisation to connectedness. At first, an accountability process can feel like you're falling into a bottomless pit. This is because many of us have become detached from how we view ourselves

and work as part of the collective and wider ecosystem. But as we remember that connection, that bottomless pit becomes something to rely on. It's an invisible hand, many invisible hands, gently pushing and pulling us in the right direction. The direction of being held accountable and the ability to see your actions, behaviours and thoughts as part of systems. We will forever be moving away from oppressive systems of patriarchy and capitalism into democratic and symbiotic ones. Self-critique, where you reflect on your own behaviours and relate them to internal and external systemic problems, is transformational and imperative to this process of accountability. If you can't see or hear yourself accurately then there is a danger that you will be acting as if the world moves around you. Giving critique to others is another skill. To be able to give feedback with love and care, presenting it as a gift, and being able to bring in clarity for constructive transformation, offers breathing space for any tensions and for harmful behaviours to be able to evolve into healthy ones. It's an essential part of this work."

Cooperation Hull

"The problematic behaviours appear in minor or major incidents in everyday life and it is our responsibility to be aware of them, regardless of their level and intensity. The problematic behaviour may start from one person and spread to the whole group, meaning that regardless of who started it,

everyone is involved if they maintain a competitive approach when talking about a problematic situation. In contrast, if the collective body takes a common stance and stops the competition the moment it starts, we are talking about a common perception. [...] We need to recognise the hierarchies that harm our horizontality, self-organization, empowerment and autonomy, and dilute our collective perception.

We, as the Women's Structure of the Community of Squatted Prosfygika, as women and femininities from below, we realised that gender is not enough to unite us and we self-organised beyond age, racial, cultural, religious and political differences. [...] The proposal of communal feminism is the abolition of authoritarian relationships and the creation of relationships of equality and comradeship. We believe that the first step for building these relationships is understanding our diversity as part of ourselves rather than our whole identity, which allows us to see ourselves beyond the narrow boundaries of imposed identities. This process is not a personal journey but is walked collectively. It requires trust, responsibility, commitment, and openness, interaction, consensus, consistency, criticism and self-criticism. [...] This revolutionary culture gives us strength and resilience to fend off attacks, to accept the cost and to continue to fight back until the total destruction of capitalism and patriarchy.

The community has developed its own justice system and as women of the community, we have the key role in realising and promoting this justice system. We recognise that this responsibility falls more on us, since always as women and femininities we are the most underprivileged and oppressed parts of any society. If not us, then who?"

Community of Squatted Prosyfika of Athens

Let us build **autonomous institutions that deal with conflict management in our community**. This, too, is self-defense.

Self-defense is organised primarily through the development of deep individual and collective self-awareness. This awareness is rooted in history, and it comes to life through the traditions, languages, customs, arts and sciences of society. It is a matter of asking ourselves how capitalist modernity disconnects us from feeling like subjects immersed in history and how it disconnects us from our own histories in particular.

WHAT TRADITIONS HAVE WE ABANDONED? WHAT FORMS OF COMMUNITY LIFE HAVE BEEN SWEEP AWAY?

"Mutual aid as a way of life. Who or where do you turn to when you're in a position of need? What affects people's ability to reach those people or places and why? What mechanisms and connections used to be available 5, 10, 20, 50 years ago and what's here now? And why? Mutual aid is something that just happens when people socialise and build, and the act can be invisible to outsiders and look different between contexts, for example: sharing lifts to school, batch cooking for your neighbour, providing hormones to a friend's friend. Mutual aid isn't something you tend to shout about or promote because it just is what happens when humans interact with each other. It's responding. It's participation.

Sadly and terrifyingly nowadays, there are many other interactions that happen first and get in the way of sharing resources, ideas and love. We are all constantly battling prejudicial narratives and othering, being in fear of our bodies and voices under the patriarchal mindset, or feeling scarcity or competition in life and restricting what we give out. Talking explicitly about mutual aid and creating projects from this practice and way of being is one method of immediately popping that bubble. [...] Mutual aid is an act of care and love, connecting us back to ourselves and each other. Who knows what incredible things can happen from that."

Cooperation Hull

HOW HAVE WE LOST AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH AND MINDSET TO LIFE, LEAVING ROOM FOR THE HEGEMONY OF PROGRESS, TECHNOLOGY AND SPEED?

HOW MUCH ARE WE INFLUENCED BY THIS HEGEMONY?

"The slow expansion of projects has been seen as a negative outcome. But perhaps even having the goal of expansion limits us to do exactly that, as we are focused on speed and growth over slow, relational development that sticks around. When it comes to meeting our material needs and the needs of our society in the 21st century, it is very hard not to want quick work with fast growth and change but this can only come if not at the expense of relationship building and care. And with the inclusion of every voice, no matter the age."

Cooperation Hull

"As an organised group, we used to live in the city and mainly did educational work with children and teenagers in working-class neighborhoods. We realized the significant limitations of working in the city; we felt that our efforts weren't enough to tackle the enormous volume of social issues that we had to face every day."

Life here in the valley has been, above all, a life of discovery, learning, and friendship. We have met many people who, long before us, chose to tie their lives to a territory, rediscovering an ecological approach to life. From them, we have learned many traditions and farming techniques. If capitalism wants us to be consumers disconnected from the land and from history, our drive must be to root ourselves in a territory, keep its history alive, and cultivate a culture of freedom, resistance, and ever-renewing communal life. In this sense, being farmers does not simply mean cultivating and producing food through agriculture, but defending a communal approach in the search for meaning and the fulfillment of vital needs, both for human society and for the rest of the living world. We belong to the land, materially, historically, culturally; the land does not belong to us."

Initiative of Western Alps

Feeling immersed in history means having **a clear understanding of the deeper meaning of our actions and the enormous value that our particularities play in the constant flow of the history of the universe.** But this cannot remain merely a theoretical or abstract discussion—it must become concrete and practical. Our qualities must be put at the service of the struggle for a beautiful and dignified life for all. Knowing oneself means trusting oneself, preventing one's brain

and heart from being occupied by the cumbersome influence that the neoliberal, patriarchal and capitalist mentality has exerted on us since birth. This cannot be an individual exercise—on the contrary, it must be a collective effort. Since our social nature is collective, the institutions we organise to structure our self-defense must also be collective.

Having clarified this, we can understand even more deeply what we want to defend, what we want to build and how to do it by any means necessary.

In this sense, in practical terms, we can think of autonomous institutions in city neighbourhoods and in inland and rural towns, trying to reason collectively, on these premises, **what tactical plans can guarantee us the possibility of success in a long-term struggle.** Our physical self-defense capabilities are often no match for attacks by the state. Direct confrontation is often not a viable option. Even alternative and revolutionary culture is often unable to cope with the threats of the system.

“A feeling of hopelessness continued to come up in education sessions. We can understand this as a result of the ideological attacks from capitalism that make us feel small and weak, as the narrative that there is no alternative, and that the state system we are up against is a natural and therefore an unchangeable fact of life. Hope is necessary for the struggle. By coming together to explore this, educate ourselves on why we have a lack of hope and where in the system this comes from, we can start being more resilient to what patriarchy and capitalism tells us.”

Cooperation Hull

HOW MANY PEOPLE ABANDON THE STRUGGLE AND RETREAT INTO PRIVATE LIFE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOW ALIENATED OR FRUSTRATED?

SELF-GOVERNANCE

WITH PARTICIPATION OF INITIATIVE DEMOKRATISCHER
KONFÖDERALISMUS, COMMUNITY OF SQUATTED PROSFYGIKA OF
ATHENS, INITIATIVE OF WESTERN ALPS AND COOPERATION HULL

Self-governance describes **the ability to solve issues of society in a way that involves everyone thinking, being considered, and deciding together.** When we build autonomy, it helps to focus on this comprehensive understanding rather than looking for technical solutions for managing our commons and our collective life. After all, the process of building autonomy is driven by the subjects who want to decide together and don't accept to be ruled and oppressed. Only with the united will of many people, resilient autonomies can be built. Self-governance, therefore, means developing a comprehensive, radical form of grassroots democracy in which all parts of society participate on an equal basis. We use the term *democracy* exclusively in this sense and not as a description of parliamentarism in the capitalist nation-state and its various predecessors, all of which were based on the exclusion of essential parts of the people.

Democratic self-governance is a

radical break from the type of organization where essential decision-making processes are reserved for a select few—mostly older, wealthy white men (other groups with proportional decision-making powers are derived from this).

Which are all the groups and identities that form part of the diverse community that develops self-governance together?

What do different parts of society need in order to feel ready for collaborative decision-making processes?

Different parts of society can organize in autonomous structures to jointly develop their needs and concerns and represent themselves with a united voice; these autonomous groups could be, for example, women, gender dissidents, children, neurodivergent people and people with disabilities, and various ethnic, religious or cultural groups.

Autonomous organisation of different identities is not an obstacle but a fundament for democracy. It is what makes pluralism visible and what creates the beauty of society. The value of **united plurality is at the heart of democratic confederalism.** One of its requirements is a common base of understanding, to which we are trying to contribute with this publication. There are no requirements, however, on the form and scale of self-governance, which depends instead on the specific

needs of society, ranging from a neighborhood assembly to a village consiliary justice committee.

In this framework, social norms and principles should no longer be a system of static, general and abstract laws that bind people through discipline and violence of authority, but **a dynamic system of mutual conditioning among all members of the community, based on a common sense of responsibility towards society.** Thus, rules should be decided and accepted according to their impact on the life of the community and the way they reflect—or do not reflect—democratic and ecological principles. With this understanding of what rules are and how they can be generated within the community, the justice system could finally be based on communal relationships instead of power and dominance.

If we make self-governance an integral part of building autonomy, we will have the opportunity to apply these big ideas on a small scale and to continuously learn and improve through experience. Our collective empowerment will show us that we are not as dependent on the state's governance and organisation system as it seems. **Instead of treating self-governance as an abstract, idealistic question, grassroots organisation links democracy to concrete issues that**

need to be decided upon. In this understanding, self-governance is closely linked to self-sufficiency. It describes the possibility for everyone to participate in the process of the collective understanding of our common problems and needs, of the creative search for new solutions, and the empowering experience of communal decision-making. This is far more important for democracy than just focusing on specific forms of votes or elections.

During the workshop for building autonomy in Vienna, the participating organisations talked about various ways of making self-governance an everyday practice: neighborhood meetings, autonomous organisations of young people, women, and gender dissidents, reliable forms of organised communities in squatted houses, etc. These experiences and examples raise important questions:

What is the balance between our organisational forms of self-governance and our ability to organise basic needs?

Sometimes we stick too much to meetings and popular assemblies without developing solutions. In other cases, we do and produce a lot, but forget to use it as a tool to organise together with the neighbourhood.

At the same time, the system—espe-

cially in Western Europe—allows self-governance to a certain extent in order to keep us busy; there are a large number of free time activities organised by neighborhood associations, such as gardens, swimming pools, music & culture events. Therefore, we must regularly ask ourselves:

TO WHAT EXTENT OUR SELF-ADMINISTRATION CHALLENGES THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM OF THE NATION-STATE AND CAN GRADUALLY REDUCE ITS DOMINANCE? WHICH PROJECTS REALLY HELPED ORGANISING PEOPLE TOGETHER AND WHAT WAS THEIR KEY TO SUCCESS?

"The kitchen is the social heart of our initiative in our small town. Neighbours come here to get to know each other, share experiences, and get help with their problems. Initially, the first group of volunteers had to handle many tasks, but more and more people quickly felt encouraged to take on more responsibilities. The group tables constantly create new encounters and build relationships between neighbours. The community kitchen creates a vibrant community from a diverse group of people who would otherwise rarely meet in their daily lives.

The community kitchen is open to everyone. When dealing with racist, sexist, or similar divisive and discriminatory remarks, we focus on dialogue and want to openly challenge and intervene decisively. We have witnessed how people with fascist mindsets have been able to overcome these through conversation and community, and find new hope. To maintain an overview, it is our practice to spread out among the different tables. However, as militants, we don't just want to ask questions in our discussions, but rather encourage people to take collective action to address the crises and to take the initiative."

*Initiative Demokratischer
Konföderalismus*

ARE THERE POSSIBILITIES TO LINK PROJECTS WHICH TAKE CARE OF DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LIFE WITH THE LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE OF BRINGING LIFE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITIES?

"Our narrative about the neighborhood of Prosfygika speaks to the struggle for survival and dignity, for solidarity and companionship, for self-organisation, equality and social struggle, for interracial and inter-religious coexistence in times of poverty and social cannibalism. A social and cultural workshop of self-esteem and

community that continues to belong to those who built it—immigrants, refugees and opponents of capitalist barbarism. It talks about the smiles of dozens of children playing in the streets of the neighborhood, collective kitchens and self-organized production and education, social and political actions, care for the sick and the weak, maintenance work, with meager means—a place that concentrates the memories of the working class struggle over the past eighty years."

*Community of Squatted Prosfygika of
Athens*

"If we can develop a culture of land sharing and communal use, confederating every little property, these lands can be shielded from the statist and capitalist processes we imagine will unfold (or that we are already seeing to some extent), such as land purchased by large corporations for the installation of solar panels. This is the work we are carrying out, striving to do so by addressing concrete needs such as, for example, food. Here we are part of:

- *a farmers' market, entirely self-managed and operating outside the logic of agribusiness. Producers use certified organic methods, overseen by a community-based monitoring system. They are members of the valley community, and the market has become a traditional gathering place for socializing;*

- *an agricultural support community, where people organize themselves to decide how much and how to produce food throughout the year. It is a community-driven process that seeks to self-manage the planning phase of production, the actual production, and the harvesting and distribution of food;*

- *an ecological school aimed at bringing together people who already live here with those who wish to move to the valley, to create a form of communal life together, build bonds of trust, deep friendship, and shared political visions. Often, young people from the city and working-class neighborhoods also come up to the valley to share in a different way of life—one that is more communal and less alienating. It is a still-young experiment in local self-governance, based on the principles of social peasantry;*

- *diverse cultural initiatives—from music to community theater to political debates—to support a full and satisfying village life, in which meaning and purpose are created together.”*

Initiative of Western Alps

DO WE HAVE ANY IDEAS ON HOW TO DEVELOP SELF-GOVERNANCE IN OUR REGIONS IN THE COMING YEARS?

“With electricity you can push back the darkness. You can keep yourself

warm. You can cook healthier food, and preserve it for longer. You can keep medicine safe to save lives. You can record memories, listen to music, read books. Electrical power saves you time and work. You can keep your body, person and home clean. Electrical power is the power to do THINGS. And when you control that—locally, through renewable energy generation and storage—then you can do anything. You don’t have to meet certain requirements to keep the lights and the fridge working. You can be independent and disconnected from the state. And when you’re disconnected, they can no longer threaten you with disconnection. They cannot hold it above your head. They cannot say “be a good little citizen or you can eat in the dark” as they will no longer have the power to disconnect you. Show them who’s boss. Disconnect first.”

Cooperation Hull

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

WITH PARTICIPATION OF INITIATIVE DEMOKRATISCHER
KONFÖDERALISMUS, COMMUNITY OF SQUATTED PROSFYGIKA OF
ATHENS, INITIATIVE OF WESTERN ALPS AND COOPERATION HULL

Society will not be free if it cannot organise its basic needs collectively. Starting from this idea, in Vienna we discussed why building autonomy requires developing self-sufficiency.

Organisations that participated in the workshop had already established a diverse range of **self-sufficiency practices: healthcare, food and energy production, mutual aid collectives, or academies for education**. Through the debates, we clearly saw that **self-sufficiency must include all areas of life, taking into account all of our material, immaterial, and emotional needs, with a broad understanding of production and reproduction**. This gives us the ability to resist and to break free from the shackles of the capitalist, patriarchal system in a resilient way. Without taking steps in this direction, we remain dependent on a system of production and reproduction which is driven by the idea of gaining profit and expanding power.

Such a system does not take care of people and nature, destroying that which is giving life. In fact, the primary characteristic of states, big corporations and patriarchal relationships is violence. Often, violence hides behind an accepted normality, laws, or the monopolised ownership of necessary means, which is actually a theft from the people.

However, self-sufficiency does not mean simply regaining those structures of production and reproduction from the system. Rather, it means redefining our social needs. It requires **a process of self-reflection on how we have been shaped by the system.**

**WHAT DO WE REALLY NEED FOR
A GOOD LIFE, AND WHICH DESIRES
ARE THE RESULT OF MANIPULATION
BY ADVERTISING?**

**WHAT DO WE NEED TO FEEL JOY AND
LOVE?**

**HOW DO WE CARE FOR EACH OTHER
WHEN WE FEEL SAD, ANGRY, OR
ALONE?**

"Our initial thought was about bread. Food that represents humanity and all its differences. Every corner of the world has its unique culture and his-

tory, just like bread. We could tell our own story by making our own bread, initially covering the community's needs and eventually generating income. So, a bakery structure was the first to be established within the squatted Prosfygika neighborhood, shortly after the formation of the organised assembly.

Over the years, we realised that the breadmaking process was much more than what we initially perceived. It's a dynamic that maintains cohesion within the community, brings old and new comrades together in kneading and during difficult times in the community after repression operations. It manages to give us the strength and perspective we need to continue the struggle, making us resist with determination when barbarism threatens to overwhelm us.

Today, the Bakery Structure operates daily, making bread and various pastries, and has expanded distribution points outside the neighborhood. It is a reference point for the community. The act of many hands kneading the same dough, beyond its practical purpose, has become a strong symbol of what community life is—and how people collectively shape communal processes."

*Community of Squatted Prosfygika of
Athens*

Our objectives to live in free togetherness with all peoples and genders

and in solidarity with Mother Earth are challenging us as a society.

WHAT SKILLS DO WE HAVE TO LEARN OR IMPROVE TO GET THERE?

"Many problems became clear in the countless conversations during our weekly kitchen meetings. From this reality arose the idea of establishing a neighborhood council where needs could be discussed and ideas developed on a larger scale. In addition, several working groups were formed to address specific topics: food (neighborhood kitchen and community garden), women, social services, language café, children and families, public welfare in public spaces, and culture and education."

*Initiative Demokratischer
Konföderalismus*

"The technical nature of the energy system means some of the work requires somewhat specialist knowledge and skills. In general, community energy attracts people with degrees and confidence. We have—so far—largely replicated this, and thus risk becoming a service rather than empowering. We hope that our democratic model, once up and running, combined with in depth conversations and outreach over summer, will counteract this."

Cooperation Hull

WHAT KIND OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND METHODS DO WE NEED TO LEARN THESE SKILLS?

"Education plays a crucial role in developing a self-organised practice. Besides the Culture & Education working group, which gives importance to issues affecting the neighbourhood and organises various events, the activist group has developed a regular workshop about our organisation. There, we deepen our understanding of ourselves as part of a history of self-organised neighbourhoods and movements, and give meaning to that. Furthermore, our shared core values and the structure of the organisation are explained, and we encourage taking responsibility and getting involved."

*Initiative Demokratischer
Konföderalismus*

"A challenge with education has been developing a program to teach and figuring out how to proceed and what material to prioritise, especially given how rapidly the world is often changing. There's pressure to keep education always "immediately relevant", which is necessary to an extent. However, sometimes, it's important we collectively build a knowledgeable toolkit for the future, as we never want to find ourselves caught on the backfoot in a critical moment."

Currently, we run monthly sessions,

which have taken place in various forms and been led by various working groups while the education team finds their feet, as well as cooperation with external facilitators to share their expertise. Education sessions have included topics of "Why Education?", Anti-Raids training, a film screening of a community energy project, workshops on transitional theory, and workshops on Class. Planned upcoming sessions include a two-day workshop on "Why Revolution?" (rather than reform), also featuring content on imperialism and internationalism (and our place in a global context).

One particularly relevant topic to us, which started out as one of the monthly education sessions, is raising class consciousness and having a shared class analysis. We participated in workshops, facilitated by The Class Work Project Cooperative, in order to collectively raise consciousness of the class experience and the intersecting factors that affects it as well as the different ways it impacts decision making and holding power in political and grassroot organisations. Without these learnings, discussions and deep sharing of ourselves to each other, the connecting and building work that is in front of us has a limit. The ideas and methods, in all their seriousness and creativity, are limited. And the ability to build alternatives where everyone can see themselves, is stunted."

Cooperation Hull

This list is, of course, only a start—the aim is developing a way of working together that no longer accepts domination and no longer reproduces forms of oppression such as sexism, racism, ecological and colonial exploitation and class oppression. Breaking away with the mentality of the patriarchal capitalist state will change every relationship dramatically. Self-sufficiency in agriculture, for example, will no longer concern only food production, but it will also reshape our relationship to Earth, cultivating it into **a symbiosis built on care and regeneration**. In the field of human relationships, many things will certainly have to change in order to end male dominance. Our experience shows that men don't simply change ingrained patriarchal behaviors on their own, and often block necessary processes, even subconsciously. That is why the interventions and intuition of **autonomous organisations of women & gender dissidents** are crucial sources of wisdom.

This comprehensive understanding of self-sufficiency—beyond funds or material conditions—can orient our thinking about specific issues that we encounter in our daily practice when dealing with contradictions, challenges and conflicts—even when they do, in fact, relate to finances. This was already present in many ways in our Vienna debates, where we also discussed

self-sufficiency in the narrow sense—financial issues and how we can deal with them. Talking and thinking from a broader perspective, we concluded that many progressive projects currently receive financial support from the state in a direct or indirect way, which tasks us with developing alternative financing options in order to reduce this dependency. One option is **mutual economic support across national borders**, which can help us counteract the unequal material conditions of our struggles.

Many other questions can be raised with regards to our definition of self-sufficiency:

DOES OUR WAY OF WORKING REALLY CORRESPOND TO OUR VALUES, OR ARE WE REPRODUCING PATRIARCHAL OPPRESSION?

"A contradiction we're having to sit with is how we have gotten our money so far. Most of the money that paid for the Lonsdale Community Centre's (a public space we use and organise in often) renewable energy system came from Northern PowerGrid. A company that Warren Buffett personally owns a third of all shares, and his company Berkshire Hathaway owns another third. Or similarly, the funding to find out if an energy club is feasible has come from Great British Energy—a

company set up by the state to develop more renewable energy projects. We have used the capitalists' money to try and dismantle the capitalist's house. We are working on a community share offer, to raise the funds through the community—rather than grants—to fund our next installation. We hope in the long run to have a business model that does not depend on grant funding."

Cooperation Hull

DO WE PAY ENOUGH ATTENTION TO HOW WE ARE DOING AND HOW WE CAN SUPPORT EACH OTHER EMOTIONALLY AS A COLLECTIVE?

"We repeatedly take on the role of spreading hope and strengthening morale. Resignation, depression, and anxiety are widespread. However, this is precisely the opposite of what we need to shape and effect political change. Such feelings are understandable in the face of devastating wars and crises. We also understand that these resistances are desired and promoted by the political system. In the Council from Below, we want to counter this collective resistance with hope and joy through cultural elements such as singing, theater, dancing, and humor, but also with commitment and strong visions."

Initiative Demokratischer
Konföderalismus

ARE WE ONLY DEVELOPING STRUCTURES OR ALSO NON-PATRIARCHAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT HAVE A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE? HOW DO WE DEAL WITH CONFLICTS AND LEARN FROM THEM?

"We practise self critique and giving of feedback in order to push through tensions or confront disagreements. We have organised conflict resolutions in the form of written feedback and 1-2-1 or group discussion. It's been a learning process, working with compassion as a leading feeling whilst holding the needs of the collective."

Cooperation Hull

HOW CAN WE CREATE A STRONG NETWORK, WHICH CONNECTS THE SELF-ORGANISATION OF DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LIFE TO A COMMUNAL PROJECT?

"Food groups started as a mutual aid tool to encourage self-organising and run autonomously to each other but follow similar ways of working. The food groups are connected to a warehouse in the city that redistributes surplus food through an organised subscription and are then sent food in crates each week. Roughly, each individual member of the group pays

£3 (kids are free) and a weekly food bag can be valued at about £25 on average. This ability to reduce food costs has been a massive support for individuals and families, with some now able to afford buying from the local organic farm or being able to reduce hours of employment.

Due to the low cost of the surplus food, the groups have created their own financial surplus which means they can rent space in a community centre to organise, pay for childcare in meetings and order other food and items in bulk. We also bought in bulk what our local organic farm had surplus of and got a reduced rate due to providing labour in a volunteering capacity. Meetings happen when the groups need or want them, usually a mixture of practical logistics, socialising and sharing a meal, and creating grand plans for the future as they expand. The groups are a mix of people from different ages, material situations and class backgrounds. The members tend to live close together as this is an important factor when organising around food and relationship building.

Sharing and using vehicles for delivering food to houses has been very important to meet the accessibility needs or low capacity of people. The groups have also reduced social isolation and have had some beautiful moments of sharing intimate details about lives which never would have happened if they didn't organise together around

food in this way. Some individuals have started to grow their own food through the talking of climate and food shortages, which is valuable education and further empowerment.

Unlike in a typical food bank, there is no hierarchy or set of rules that the 'organisers' create and the 'service users' must follow. Everything is democratically discussed and agreed on and roles are cooperatively shared as much as possible. The groups are sure to change as time goes on but if they were to stop, it would have a huge effect on our food costs and sharing of communal life."

Cooperation Hull

WHAT PREVENTS US FROM BUILDING THIS NETWORK (E.G. CAPACITIES, RECOURCES, BARRIERS OF OUR MENTALITY LIKE COMPETITION OR LIBERALISM)?

"Our city has a vibrant leftist movement. Many people are involved in or work on social and ecology projects. There are successful initiatives, anti-fascist alliances, peace activists, feminist forces, trade unions—and already organized neighborhoods. However, there has been no continuous collaboration so far; only on exceptional occasions do initiatives connect beyond their own issues. In our view, what has been lacking for a deeper connection between us, is a shared direction and

idea—a common paradigm. For the 'Council from Below' we offer Democratic Modernity as a solution. Within this paradigm, democratic forces with different perspectives and currents, but with shared values and foundations, can unite—in their diversity. It is not about us sharing all aspects of our paradigmatic foundations or other forces adopting our terminology. It is about strengthening our awareness of the common struggle. But it is also about each individual learning.

The Council from Below connects various organisations and projects, but always through the collaboration of specific people. We therefore understand the council as a learning space for personal and political development, where it is possible to engage with new political ideas, visions, and ways of working and to grow within them. For many, education ends after passing through the traditional state institutions. Yet, societal change is only possible through continuous learning processes. Furthermore, problems of the society are also reflected in our personalities. In order to develop collectively, we must also be able to develop individually. In the Council from Below, we can boldly experiment and offer constructive criticism."

*Initiative Demokratischer
Konföderalismus*

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS?

"The lessons are learned slowly. The processes we have started more formally, such as to do outreach, to go and seek out the people that we want to mobilise, to create assemblies where people will decide for themselves, to put people into groups to redistribute wealth, have all largely fallen away. The process of genuinely meeting another person, without any expectations of them, without any desire for them to do what you want them to with some level of coercion, to remove the barriers to genuine connection is the process that we are moving towards. This is not an easy process. British society is loaded with so many implicit and explicit modes of conditioning that it is hard to be a human.

This is harder still amongst the people who come from some level of privilege. The middle classes are often the most blind to their position. Rarely able to acknowledge their privilege, and also unable to give it up. There are many more formal processes we have attempted in the last three years, but it is probably most true to say that these processes have not been successful, or reflected a deeper understanding of what motivates working class people in a marginal city like Hull. As of early 2026, there is now a small group that is wanting to commit to more ideological development, food groups, Power Hull and the monthly crew assembly which is struggling to find clarity on its purpose. These are the main ongoing "processes" in Cooperation Hull,

alongside the more informal learning and personal development that is taking place on a daily basis."

Cooperation Hull

Even working in a small neighbourhood requires a lot of capacity, so organising on a bigger scale is hard to imagine or plan out.

BUT ARE WE DEVELOPING SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR A SMALL GROUP OR FOR OUR SOCIETY?

DO WE, PERHAPS, LIMIT OUR OWN THINKING WITH THIS "CAPACITY APPROACH", PREVENTING OURSELVES FROM DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS FOR OUR OVERLOAD?

"We've experimented with lots of ways of inviting people to events and public assemblies. The face-to-face methods included street stalls, door-knocking, asking shopkeepers to put posters up in their windows and speaking to parents at the school gates.

The best assemblies were the ones where we had built a good relationship with organisations or community leaders that were already rooted in the area, for example a housing charity and a youth group. We visited and joined in with their events regularly in advance to meet their people and get

to know their needs so we could cocreate a focus for the assembly in their area. [...] We are constantly reflecting on how to slow down or change flow in order to feel connected to the present moment for people. We now focus on a few effective tools that meet people's needs, as opposed to trying to regularly commit to those high levels of outreach. So to engage more people based on material experience and need, rather than a belief that coming together is worth their time, which is more abstract and less useful."

Cooperation Hull

WHAT DO WE NEED TO STEP OUT OF THIS MINDSET AND GET A BIRD'S-EYE PERSPECTIVE ON OUR EFFORTS?

"There are limits that talking about an idea can have, versus doing it and experiencing the (material) change. Meaning, it's a bit of a chicken and egg situation—how can you join something if you haven't been told about it? How can you experience the change if you haven't tried it? This perhaps goes back to apathy and the current norm of the separation of self from the collective, being able to see yourself in something bigger than your daily plans or immediate needs, with people outside your usual social or familial group. It also is almost definitely linked to 'our approach' when it comes to inviting and engaging people with our ideas and methods. 'Our' being

the middle class folk who started this organisation and who created the starting frameworks of our organisation. What puts people off ideas? What deters them from turning up again? Or taking on new responsibility? Or for taking a risk and seeing themselves as part of something bigger than themselves? Being from the place you are organising in, or not, plays an unsurprisingly huge role in how people connect to you and what you say.

Ultimately we've learned that people who live in neglected areas where there is much less culture of participation are not going to be mobilised in the way that we started with. Organisation is different and it takes time to build trust—that doesn't mean that this couldn't be done in a way that could scale if done right, but it won't come without the creativity and commitment of organisers actually getting to know people, sharing their lives and committing to it all."

Cooperation Hull

Questions like these help us avoid remaining stuck in the status quo and instead encourage us to learn from each other with curiosity, and to build our autonomy—step by step.

"Step by step, we strive to promote groups and projects that address

diverse needs and form the backbone of self-sustaining ways of life. Not a bubble disconnected from the rest of the world or a utopian island, but a system capable of challenging the capitalist way of life—one that is accessible and replicable.

From an organisational standpoint, we are an organised political commune, a group of people who have decided to organise their entire lives together and link them to a local political project. Together we discuss which projects to be part of, what goals we'd like to achieve, analyze what's happening, and divide up tasks and responsibilities. We try to tackle everything together, from political projects to personal matters. For this reason, the projects we are part of are not projects of our organisation, but initiatives in which our organised commune participates and actively contributes, both in the city and in the countryside.

Staying connected to the city remains essential to avoid creating fragmented—and therefore vulnerable—"happy islands." These two approaches are an integral part of our method. Being present in working-class neighbourhoods to foster a culture of resistance as a form of political education, especially among young people but not exclusively. Finally, being present in the valley to create living spaces that are increasingly autonomous from the system, where those who choose to embrace a revolutionary perspective can take root and organise themselves

on a systemic level."

Initiative of Western Alps

This is why we need to come together—to discuss, to share and to interact—not only in our local communities, but also nation-wide and internationally.

CONCLUSION

After opening up multiple discussions around the forms of a renewed internationalist process based on rebuilding our autonomy, we feel it is essential to conclude with a reflection on why it is so urgent to work and organise ourselves, starting immediately and across the globe. We are living in the context of World War III, in which capitalism has reached a new peak of crisis that is forcing the world into a new transitional phase. The hegemonic powers are therefore reviving **the instrument of total war as a means of reconfiguring the territories and areas of influence of their future**. All of this goes against the freedom of people and nature. At the moment, every political option linked to a government, a nation-state, or a capitalist economic power around the globe sees war as an inevitable step. In some parts of the world, this is already evident and implemented. Even in Europe, the reality of war is now undeniable. What role, then, does the struggle to organise autonomy play in this scenario?

BUILDING AUTONOMY IS BUILDING PEACE

For us, building autonomy means building peace. Not a hypocritical, bourgeois peace. Not the simple cessation of armed conflicts and one-sided surrender. But an active process of daily, widespread self-organisation, aiming to implement ways of life according to collectively defined programs and visions. A permanent and constantly evolving commitment. Peace as the dynamics of social relations, where conflicts are constructive and their solutions are collective, according to the principles of protection and regeneration of life. It is the art of politics driven by love for life, nature and human beings as part of it. It is the sense of responsibility to give meaning to every individual and collective decision, always keeping in mind both the historical genesis of every choice made by the community, and its purpose. Through practice, discussion, criticism and self-criticism, every decision and every problem can be resolved with new and col-

lective choices and perspectives, but always in the interest of a free life together.

Every experience driven by this collective spirit of search and action—even the smallest experience of neighbourhood autonomy—is a step toward liberation from the influence of the war mentality. It is an immune system against the traps of the system and advancing fascism. If fascism is the absorption of all social prerogatives into the fabric of the nation-state, thus annihilating all diversity and generative conflict, the organisation of communal autonomy is the strongest example of social and political vitality. With this approach, even the greatest conflicts and difficulties of life can be resolved in togetherness, by cohesive and organised political subjects, with meaningful efforts and struggles as part of our everyday life. In this way, society will not escalate into war, and peace will be built day by day.

As mentioned in the introduction, this is precisely what happened in Rojava. The organisational effort there was an attempt at peace. This did not only concern internal conflicts, but also provided a concrete and real example in the heart of the Middle East of how peace can be achieved in a world at war. We need to recognise this strength and beauty, knowing that as residents of Europe, we need to develop our own tactics and strategies here,

inspired by a future where the whole continent will be dotted with projects, institutions, cooperatives, cultivated fields, and autonomous territories all connected to each other. We are already on the path toward this goal.

The proof is the process started by the Peoples' Platform of Europe as a concrete opportunity to articulate our autonomous and revolutionary path in response to the problems of the contemporary world. Starting from Europe and connecting with revolutionary experiences around the world, we can inherit the best of our traditions and experiences of political struggle and reinterpret them to confront the particular forms of the dominant system attacks to our peoples today. Through working groups, gatherings, and political education within the Peoples' Platform of Europe, we can return to building a common theoretical and practical ground on our continent that renews the hope for revolution, as the real solution to war and the deadly collapse of our planet. Through internationalist meetings, debates, and exchanges, we can now recover a hope that has been missing for too long in our societies, especially in the West where, although we benefit from many privileges, we have never been so alienated from a meaningful life. **We have never been so far removed from happiness and beauty.**

Organising our autonomy from the state through a concrete path to peace and democracy is the challenge that the Peoples' Platform of Europe wants to face. From young people and women, to society at every level, shape and form, we want to build a real space in which to organise our desire to live freely together. How? Without focusing on our disagreements, but rather on our will to transform and improve ourselves together through practical, meaningful action. We will produce very concrete common goals for the European continent and its different regions with their different specificities on which we will work in synergy, knowing that we are no longer alone and fragmented. The more we join these processes and spaces of democracy, the more our strength will grow and spread. Let's organise together, join the working groups, participate in the seminars and decision-making moments of the Peoples' Platform of Europe, and start a new revolutionary process together.

NEXT STEPS OF THE BUILDING AUTONOMY WORKING GROUP

In the coming months, our working group will realise the concrete proposals to be developed at our self-organised gathering for building autonomy in Catalonia. In line with the rest of the work of the Peoples' Platform, we will focus on connecting militant organisations working

in society, grassroots organisations, and individual militants through international exchanges and visits where we can live together, get to know each other, and learn more about each other's projects. We will create spaces for learning, training, and debate. It is a practical proposal to facilitate exchange between comrades involved in grassroots organisation.

In this way, we will continue to strengthen the sense of belonging to a larger and truly revolutionary project, which will only be possible if everyone can enrich it with their own experience and knowledge, looking to our future as a land of opportunity where we, together, can make a difference.

Building the autonomy of society from the state is the main task of our revolutionary project. In these historical times, it is our only hope for survival. We must take this seriously and direct our efforts towards making it a reality—both in the local and in the international.

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