

# Revolution In Rojava Democratic Autonomy And Womens Liberation In The Syrian Kurdistan

The Kurdish women's movement is at the heart of the most exciting revolutionary experiment in the world today: Rojava. Forged over decades of struggle, most recently in the fight against ISIS, Rojava embodies a radical commitment to ecology, democracy and gender equality. But while striking images of Kurdish women in desert fatigues proliferate, a true understanding of the women's movement remains elusive. Taking apart the superficial and Orientalist frameworks that dominate, Dilar Dirik offers instead an empirically rich account of the women's movement in Kurdistan. Drawing on original research and ethnographic fieldwork, she surveys the movement's historical origins, ideological evolution, and political practice over the past forty years. Going beyond abstract ideas, Dirik locates the movement's culture and ideology in its concrete work for women's liberation and radical democracy. Taking the reader from the guerrilla mountains to radical women's academies and self-organised refugee camps, the book invites women around the world to engage with the revolution in Kurdistan, both theoretically and practically, as a vital touchstone in the wider struggle for a militant anti-fascist, anti-capitalist feminist internationalism.

A contemporary history of political violence and grassroots struggles in Syria since 2011

In 2018 one of the most important spokespersons for the struggle of Kurdish Freedom, Havin Gunesser, held three groundbreaking seminars on the historical background and guiding ideology of movement. A vital introduction to the

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Kurdish struggle, the Art of Freedom is the first English-language book to deliver a distillation of the ideas and sensibilities that gave rise to the most important political events of the twenty-first century.

"Surrounded by enemies including ISIS and hostile Turkish forces, the people in Syria's Rojava region are carving out one of the most radically progressive societies on the planet. Visitors have been astounded by the success of their project, a communally organised democracy which considers women's equality indispensable, has a deep-reaching ecological policies, and rejects reactionary nationalist ideology. This form of organization, labeled democratic confederalism, is both fiercely anti-capitalist and boasts a self-defense capacity which is keeping ISIS from their gates. Drawing on their own firsthand experiences of working and fighting in the region, the authors provide the first detailed account of a revolutionary experiment and a new vision of politics and society in the Middle East and beyond"--Back cover.

Crack Capitalism, argues that radical change can only come about through the creation, expansion and multiplication of weak points, or "cracks" in the capitalist system. John Holloway's previous book, Change the World Without Taking Power, sparked a world-wide debate among activists about the most effective methods of resisting capitalism. Now Holloway rejects the idea of a disconnected plurality of struggles and finds a unifying contradiction -- the opposition between the time we spend working as part of the system and our excess "doing" where we revolt and refuse to be subsumed. Clearly and accessibly presented in the form of 33 theses, Crack Capitalism is set to reopen the debate among radical scholars and activists seeking to break capitalism. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is infamous for its violence. The struggle it has waged for Kurdish independence

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in southeastern Turkey has cost in excess of 40,000 lives since 1984. A less-known fact, however, is that the PKK now embraces a non-violent end to the conflict, with its leader Abdullah Öcalan having ordered a ceasefire and engaging in a negotiated peace with the Ankara government. Whether these tentative attempts at peacemaking mean an end to the bloodshed remains to be seen, but either way the ramifications for Turkey and the wider region are potentially huge. Charting the ideological evolution of the PKK, as well as its origins, aims and structure, Paul White provides the only authoritative and up-to-date analysis of one of the most important non-state political players in the contemporary Middle East.

These are the essential writings of a man who inspired a new, egalitarian socialist regime in the Middle East, which is currently fighting for survival against religious extremism and state violence. Abdullah Öcalan led the struggle for Kurdish liberation for more than 20 years until his capture in 1999. Now, writing from prison in Turkey, he has inspired a new political movement. Called Democratic Confederalism, this revolutionary model is developing on the ground in parts of Syria and Turkey; it represents an alternative to religious sectarianism, patriarchy, capitalism and chauvinistic nationalism, providing the blueprint for a burgeoning radical democratic society. This selection of Öcalan's writings is an indispensable introduction for anyone wanting to engage with his political ideas. His central concepts address the Kurdish question, gender, Democratic Confederalism and the future of the nation. With *The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan*, his most influential ideas can now be considered and debated in the light of his continuing legacy, most notably in the ongoing revolution in Rojava.

When scientific socialism, which for many years was

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implemented by Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), became too narrow for his purposes, Öcalan answered the call for a radical redefinition of the social sciences. Writing from his prison cell, he offered a new and astute analysis of what is happening to the Kurdish people, their freedom movement, and future prospects for humanity. The Sociology of Freedom is the third volume of a five-volume work titled The Manifesto of the Democratic Civilization. The general aim of the earlier volumes was to clarify what power and capitalist modernity entailed. Here, Öcalan presents his thesis of the Democratic Civilization, based on his criticism of Capitalist Modernity. This volume reveals the remarkable range of one of the Left's most original thinkers with topics such as existence and freedom, nature and philosophy, anarchism and ecology. Recognizing the need for more than just a critique, he has advanced what is the most radical, far-reaching definition of democracy today and argues that a democratic civilization, as an alternative system, already exists, though systemic power and knowledge structures, along with a perverse sectarianism, do not allow it to be seen. This monumental work gives profuse evidence of his position as one of the most influential thinkers of our day.

A new kind of society is being built in Syria, but it's not one you would expect. Surrounded by deadly

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bands of ISIS and hostile Turkish forces, the people living in Syria's Rojava cantons are carving out one of the most radically progressive societies on the planet today. Western visitors have been astounded by the success of their project, a communally organised democracy which considers women's equality indispensable and rejects reactionary nationalist ideology whilst being fiercely anti-capitalist. The people of Rojava call their new system democratic confederalism. An implementation of the recent ideology of the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan, it boasts gender quotas of 40 percent, bottom-up democratic structures, deep-reaching ecological policies and a militancy which is keeping ISIS from the gates. Revolution in Rojava is the first full-length study of this ongoing social and political transformation in Syrian Kurdistan. It is the first authentic insight into the complex dimensions of the revolution. Its authors use their own experiences of working and fighting in the region to construct a picture of hope for Middle-Eastern politics and society, and reveal an extraordinary story of a battle against the odds.

Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram argue for the benefits of social reproduction as a lens through which to understand gendered transformations in global migration. They highlight the range of sites, sectors, and skills in which migrants are employed and how migration is both a cause and an outcome

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of depletion in social reproduction.

After the dissolution of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in 2002, internal discussions ran high, and fear and uncertainty about the future of the Kurdish freedom movement threatened to unravel the gains of decades of organizing and armed struggle. From his prison cell, Abdullah Öcalan intervened by penning his most influential work to date: *Beyond State, Power, and Violence*. With a stunning vision of a freedom movement centered on women's liberation, democracy, and ecology, Öcalan helped reinvigorate the Kurdish freedom movement by providing a revolutionary path forward with what is undoubtedly the furthest-reaching definition of democracy the world has ever seen. Here, for the first time, is the highly anticipated English translation of this monumental work.

Since the earliest development of states, groups of people escaped or were exiled. As capitalism developed, people tried to escape capitalist constraints connected with state control. This powerful book gives voice to three communities living at the edges of capitalism: Cossacks on the Don River in Russia; Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico; and prisoners in long-term isolation since the 1970s. Inspired by their experiences visiting Cossacks, living with the Zapatistas, and developing connections and relationships with prisoners and ex-prisoners, Andrej Grubacic and Denis O'Hearn

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present a uniquely sweeping, historical, and systematic study of exilic communities engaged in mutual aid. Following the tradition of Peter Kropotkin, Pierre Clastres, James Scott, Fernand Braudel and Imanuel Wallerstein, this study examines the full historical and contemporary possibilities for establishing self-governing communities at the edges of the capitalist world-system, considering the historical forces that often militate against those who try to practice mutual aid in the face of state power and capitalist incursion.

There's a revolution going on in northern Syria, one that challenges everything we know about government and society and freedom. With centuries of ethnic oppression behind them, their backs against the embargo wall of Turkey, and the ruthless forces of the Islamic State laying siege to their cities, the people of Rojava are trying what might be the most ambitious social experiment of our times. Two-and-a-half million people are trying to live without a nationstate, using direct democracy to build a society ruled from the bottom up. As the Syrian civil war rages, the Kurds and other ethnic groups of Rojava fight for autonomy, feminism, ecological stewardship, cooperative economics, and ethnic, linguistic, and religious pluralism. It behooves us to understand their struggle as best we can. This book, compiling the words of militia members and academics alike, lays out the Rojava Revolution in plain language.

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In the Spring of 2017, activist, journalist and hip-hop artist Marcel Cartier was given exclusive access to the structures set up in the predominately Kurdish areas in northern Syria. Over the course of more than a month, Cartier travelled across the terrain known as Rojava, experiencing the radical grassroots revolution that is sweeping the region. He spoke with commanders of the People's Protection Units (YPG), visited women's organisations, saw the cooperatives and communes in action that have transformed the concept of democracy, and found his understanding of revolution challenged and reinvigorated. Unique in its access, emotion and humanity, *Serkeftin: A Narrative of the Rojava Revolution*, is a beautiful account of a contradictory and complex process that is fundamentally changing society in the midst of the 21st century's most brutal civil war. Meaning 'victory', the Kurdish word 'serkeftin' captures the spirit of optimism in the catastrophe that has engulfed this beautiful country since 2011 and has simultaneously brought the possibility of freedom ever closer.

The second instalment of the iconic memoirs of one of the first female fighters of the PKK

"This is the book I've been waiting for—only it's richer, deeper, and more intriguing than I could have imagined. *A Road Unforeseen* is a major contribution to our understanding of feminism and Islam, of women and the world, and gives me fresh hope for

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change.” —Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed* and *Living With a Wild God* In war-torn northern Syria, a democratic society—based on secularism, ethnic inclusiveness, and gender equality—has won significant victories against the Islamic State, or Daesh, with women on the front lines as fierce warriors and leaders. *A Road Unforeseen* recounts the dramatic, underreported history of the Rojava Kurds, whose all-women militia was instrumental in the perilous mountaintop rescue of tens of thousands of civilians besieged in Iraq. Up to that point, the Islamic State had seemed invincible. Yet these women helped vanquish them, bringing the first half of the refugees to safety within twenty-four hours. Who are the revolutionary women of Rojava and what lessons can we learn from their heroic story? How does their political philosophy differ from that of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Islamic State, and Turkey? And will the politics of the twenty-first century be shaped by the opposition between these political models? Meredith Tax is a writer and political activist. Author, most recently, of *Double Bind: The Muslim Right, the Anglo-American Left, and Universal Human Rights*, she was founding president of Women’s WORLD, a global free speech network of feminist writers, and cofounder of the PEN American Center’s Women’s Committee and the International PEN Women Writers’ Committee. She is currently international board chair

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of the Centre for Secular Space and lives in New York.

Revolution in Rojava Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan Pluto Press (UK)

In mid-2012 the previously almost forgotten Syrian Kurds suddenly emerged as a potential game-changer in the country's civil war when in an attempt to consolidate its increasingly desperate position the Assad government abruptly withdrew its troops from the major Kurdish areas in Syria. The Kurds in Syria had suddenly won autonomy, a situation that has huge implications for neighboring Turkey and the near independent Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. Indeed, their precipitous rise may prove a tipping-point that alters the boundaries imposed on the Middle East by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. These important events and what they portend for the future are scrutinized by the renowned scholar of the Kurds Michael Gunter. He also analyses the sudden rise of Salih Muslim and his Democratic Union Party (PYD) - which was created by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and remains affiliated to it - and the extremely complex and deadly fighting between factions of the Syrian Opposition affiliated with al-Qaeda such as the Jabhat al-Nusra jihadists and the PYD, among others.

In this essay Öcalan's political project, the

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Democratic Confederalism, is developed systematically. A fundamental criticism of the nation state is followed by a description of its possible alternative, a transnational grass-roots democracy. The texts that form this essay have been compiled from several of Öcalan's, as of today, still untranslated books.

Anarchy and Society constructs a tentative synthesis of sociological and anarchist thought, providing a roadmap to a future 'anarchist sociology'.

In early 2018, Turkey invaded the autonomous Kurdish region of Afrin in Syria and is currently threatening to ethnically cleanse the region. Between 2012 and 2018, the "Mountain of the Kurds" (Kurd Dag) had been one of the quietest regions in a country otherwise torn by civil war. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the Syrian army withdrew from the region, enabling the Party of Democratic Union (PYD) to introduce a Kurdish self-administration and later to establish the Canton Afrin as one of the three parts of the heavily Kurdish Democratic Federation of North-Syria, or Rojava. This self-administration, which had seen multi-party elections in 2017, included autonomy for a number of ethnic and religious groups, and provided a safe haven for up to 300,000 Syrian refugees, is now at risk of being annihilated. In this volume, Schmidinger provides a comprehensive history of the region and gives inhabitants of a variety of ethnicities, religions,

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political orientations, and walks of life the opportunity to speak for themselves. As things stand now, the book might seem to be in danger of becoming an epitaph for the "Mountain of the Kurds," but as the author writes, "the battle for the Mountain of the Kurds is far from over yet."

Based on unprecedented access to Kurdish-governed areas of Syria, including exclusive interviews with administration officials and civilian surveys, this book sheds light on the socio-political landscape of this minority group and the various political factions vying to speak for them. The first English-language book to capture the momentous transformations that have occurred since 2011, the authors move beyond idealized images of Rojava and the Kurdish PYD (Democratic Union Party) to provide a nuanced assessment of the Kurdish autonomous experience and the prospects for self-rule in Syria. The book draws on unparalleled field research, as well as analysis of the literature on the evolution of Kurdish politics and the Syrian war. You will understand why the PYD-led project in Syria split the Kurdish political movement and how other representative structures amongst Syria's Kurds fared. Emerging clearly are the complex range of views about pre-existing, current and future governance structures.

The Kurdish territory of Rojava in Syria has become a watchword for radical democracy, communalism

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and gender equality. But while Western radicals continue to project their own values onto the revolution, the complexities of the situation are often overlooked or misunderstood. Based on over 17 years of research and fieldwork, Thomas Schmidinger provides a detailed introduction to the history and political situation in Rojava. Outlining the history of the Kurds in Syria from the late Ottoman Empire until the Syrian civil war, he describes the developments in Rojava since 2011: the protests against the regime, the establishment of a Kurdish para-state, the conflicts between the parties about the administration of the Kurdish territory and how the PYD and its People's Councils rule the territory. The book draws on interviews with political leaders of different parties, civil society activists, artists, fighters and religious leaders in order to paint an complex picture of the historical conflict and the contemporary situation.

What is nature? What is humanity's place in nature? And what is the relationship of society to the natural world? In an era of ecological breakdown, answering these questions has become of momentous importance for our everyday lives and for the future that we and other life-forms face. In the essays of *The Philosophy of Social Ecology*, Murray Bookchin answers loud and clear. Refreshingly polemical and deeply philosophical, they take issue with technocratic and mechanistic ways of understanding

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and relating to, and within, nature. More importantly, they develop a solid, historically and politically based ethical foundation for social ecology, the field that Bookchin himself created and that offers us hope in the midst of our climate catastrophe.

Since the beginning of 2011, the political situation in Syria has consistently found itself at the top of news broadcasts, newspaper headlines and the agendas of politicians. Little known, however, has been the struggle of the Kurds in Syria to have their voice heard on the political stage and to have equitable access to both economic and political resources.

This examination of contemporary Kurdish politics in Syria therefore concentrates on the Syrian-Kurdish political parties which operate illegally in the country. It is these parties and their political leaders, such as Abd -al-Hakim Bashir of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria and Abd al- Hamid Darwish of the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria, who, despite state sanctions, have attempted to promote their political agendas and to bring about change for the approximately three million Kurds that currently reside in the country. Harriet Allsopp examines Kurdish political parties, how they have tried to negotiate their illegality and how they have developed since 1957 when the first one was established. BY 1960, all political parties were banned, and the Kurds found themselves under increased political pressure from the central state.

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From 1960 until the present day, this prohibition has been the official position of successive Syrian governments, despite a brief political opening upon the accession of Bashar al-Asad in 2000. It is through a systematic analysis of the history of Kurdish political parties that Allsopp highlights how, on the eve of the Syrian uprising, they were in the midst of a crisis, widely seen as ineffectual and out of touch. Nevertheless, out of the uprising, Kurdish politics has appeared to take on a much more cohesive and effective character. The Kurds of Syria explores the fundamental issues of minority identity and the concept of being 'stateless' in a turbulent region, as well as the organisation of political parties in Syria, making it vital for all those researching the politics of the modern Middle East.

'There is no alternative' has been the unofficial mantra of the neoliberal order since its utterance by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. However, there is an alternative to our crisis-ridden, austerity-inflicted world - and not just one alternative, but many. Challenging the arguments for markets, mainstream economics and capitalism from Adam Smith onwards, *Economics After Capitalism* provides a step-by-step guide to various writers, movements and schools of thought, critical of neoliberal globalisation. These range from Keynesian-inspired reformists such as Geroge Soros and Joseph Stiglitz, critics of inequality like Thomas Piketty and

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Amaitya Sen, to more radical voices including Naomi Klein, Marxists such as David Harvey, anarchists, and autonomists including Toni Negri and Michael Hardt. By providing a clear and accessible guide to the economics of anti-capitalism, Derek Wall successfully demonstrates that an open source eco-socialist alternative to rampant climate change, elite rule and financial chaos is not just necessary, but possible.

"e;Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter into contracts... I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated."e;-From a letter by Nelson Mandela during his imprisonment, February 10, 1985A revolutionary imprisoned on an island fortress may hold the key to peace in the Middle East. The leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah calan, is considered by many to be the "e;Kurdish Mandela"e;, courageously issuing proposals for peace even from his prison cell. His ideas on democracy, women's liberation, and freedom have even inspired the remarkable Rojava Revolution in northern Syria. As Turkey descended into tyranny and Syria exploded in civil war, a peace delegation of European politicians, academics, and journalists, led by Nelson Mandela's lawyer and Supreme Court judge Essa Moosa, repeatedly attempted to go to meet with calan at his prison on

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Imrali Island. Your Freedom and Mine tells the story of these momentous delegations. The book opens with an informative historical overview of the Kurdish Question, leading up until the optimistic opening-and eventual bitter failure-of the peace process in Turkey. It includes official documents and reports from the Imrali Delegations in Istanbul and Diyarbakir/Amed, which involved in-depth interviews with Kurdish and Turkish politicians, media, and civil society regarding the degenerating political and human rights situation. The final section is a collection of testimonials from delegation participants. Your Freedom and Mine offers crucial insight into the dramatic history and current reality of the Kurdish struggle for recognition and peace in Turkey.

Comprehensive account of the great revolutions that swept over Europe and America.

In 2011, Syrians took to the streets to demand the overthrow of the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Today, much of Syria has become a war-zone where foreign journalists find it almost impossible to go. Burning Country explores the reality of life in present-day Syria. Drawn from over fifteen years of work with the people of Syria, it reveals the stories of opposition fighters, exiles lost in an archipelago of refugee camps, and many others. Examining new grassroots revolutionary organisations, the rise of ISIS and Islamism, and the emergence of the worst refugee

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crisis since World War Two, Burning Country is a vivid account of a modern-day political and humanitarian nightmare. -- from back cover.

This book examines modalities for the recognition and political participation of minorities in plurinational states in theory and in practice, with a specific reference to the Republic of Turkey and the resolution of the Kurdish question. Drawing on the experience of Spain and Eastern Europe and other recent novel models for minority accommodation, including the Ottoman experience of minority autonomy (the Millet System), the volume brings together researchers from Turkey and Europe more broadly to develop an ongoing dialogue that analytically examines various models for national minority accommodation. These models promise to protect the state's integrity and provide governmental mechanisms that satisfy demands for collective representation of national communities in the framework of a plurinational state.

The Kurds, once marginal in the study of the Middle East and secondary in its international relations, have moved to centre stage in recent years. The contributors to *The Kurdish Question Revisited* offer insights into how this once seemingly intractable, immutable phenomenon is being transformed amid the new political realities of the Middle East.

From Athens to New York, recent mass movements around the world have challenged austerity and

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authoritarianism with expressions of real democracy. For more than forty years, Murray Bookchin developed these democratic aspirations into a new left politics based on popular assemblies, influencing a wide range of political thinkers and social movements. With a foreword by the best-selling author of *The Dispossessed*, Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Next Revolution* brings together Bookchin's essays on freedom and direct democracy for the first time, offering a bold political vision that can move us from protest to social transformation.

Kurdistan is currently divided between four countries: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. In each of the parts of Kurdistan, Kurdish identities and cultures have been repressed for generations. This book, by Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson, gathers together first-hand accounts of the struggles for a new society taking place in Bakur and Rojava the parts of Kurdistan within the borders of Turkey and Syria. The setting up of local assemblies and co-operatives, as well as radical women's and ecological movements, are rapidly gathering momentum in Kurdistan. The book gives a simple introduction to democratic confederalism, the idea that has inspired many of those involved in these movements. The book also compiles accounts from Kurdish people who are oppressed by the state of Turkey and profiles some of the companies that are complicit in their repression. The interviews give suggestions of how

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people outside of Kurdistan can act in solidarity."

Murray Bookchin was not only one of the most significant and influential environmental philosophers of the twentieth century--he was also one of the most prescient. From industrial agriculture to nuclear radiation, Bookchin has been at the forefront of every major ecological issue since the very beginning, often proposing a solution before most people even recognized there was a problem.

*Ecology or Catastrophe: The Life of Murray*

*Bookchin* is the first biography of this

groundbreaking environmental and political thinker.

Author Janet Biehl worked as his collaborator and copyeditor for 19 years, editing his every word.

Thanks to her extensive personal history with

Bookchin as well as her access to his papers and

archival research, *Ecology or Catastrophe* offers unique insight into his personal and professional life.

Founder of the social ecology movement, Bookchin

first started raising environmental issues in 1952. He

foresaw global warming in the 1960s and even then

argued that we should look into renewable energy

sources as an alternative to fossil fuels. Wary of

pesticides and other chemicals used in industrial

agriculture, he was also an early advocate of small-

scale organic farming, which has developed into the

present locavore movement and the revival of

organic markets. Even Occupy can trace the origins

of its leaderless structure and general assemblies to

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the nonhierarchical organizational form Bookchin developed as a libertarian socialist. Bookchin believed that social and ecological issues were deeply intertwined. Convinced that capitalism pushes businesses to maximize profits and ignore humanist concerns, he argued that eco-crises could be resolved by a new social arrangement. His solution was Communalism, a new form of libertarian socialism that he developed. An optimist and utopian, Bookchin believed in the potentiality for human beings to use reason to solve all social and ecological problems.

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