



## **The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy**

*Murray Bookchin, Debbie Bookchin (Editor), Blair Taylor (Editor), Ursula K. Le Guin (Preface)*

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**The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy** Murray Bookchin , Debbie Bookchin (Editor) , Blair Taylor (Editor) , Ursula K. Le Guin (Preface)

The ideas about political organization that have animated the new radical movements worldwide.

From Athens to New York, recent mass movements around the world have challenged austerity and 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. A pioneering voice in the ecology and anarchist movements, he is the author of *The Ecology of Freedom* and *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* among many other books.

## **The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy for online ebook**

### **Lynne says**

Bookchin is truly one of the most brilliant political theorists of our time, and his proposal for a communalist politics with a libertarian municipalist praxis is one that the Left should take seriously. The essays throughout the book tend to be repetitive in its elaboration of what the political program, economy, and ethics would entail. However, I was left so inspired by the political program presented that I am willing to overlook the editors' work. I think I might have to write a graduate paper on this!

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### **Nicole says**

I was hoping for more of what should come next, seems reasonable given the title. The critiques of Marxism and anarchism are useful, and I can grasp the general idea and benefits of libertarian municipalism, but I don't have much of an idea how to make that come about after reading this.

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### **Jacques Michel says**

Really liked the critique of traditional anarchist/Marxist politics and the defense of a new strategy based on libertarian communes. This definitely echoes the book on Rojava Revolution by Knapp et al. Other parts seemed a bit outdated such as the attack on identity politics.

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### **Rodolfo says**

This short collection of essays provides a very brief outline of Bookchin's thoughts about Marxism, Anarchism and the future of the left. An impassionate defender of the city, and the citizen as the atom of everything, Bookchin comes across as an on-point on many flaws and historical errors. However, beyond a will to reconcile environmentalism with human economics, in this book Bookchin just offers vague blue prints of how his ideal cities would look like. In a purely Aristotelian character, the reader is left to interpret what are the 'virtues' of his system, in the same way Aristotle never nailed down the specifics of what his ideal virtues were. A good book, worth the read because of the many potentially fertile ideas inside. However, in the line of Aristoteles' magna opus on Ethics and Politics, it seems an incomplete work.

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### **William says**

I'm a fan of Bookchin's thoughts on achieving a libertarian left society through communalism, but he's such a grumpy asshole throughout most of these essays that it's pretty unpleasant to read. I understand that there are

no easy victories when it comes to leftist organizing, but some of the marginal assertions (chiefly, that recognition of identity politics will only recreate oppressive power structures, that anarchism doesn't have a coherent political ideology, or that 90s/00s movements failed because of a lack of discipline rather than the sheer weight of globalized capital) are ludicrous to anyone who has actually studied these concepts. All in all, worth a read, but maybe stick to other people iterating on his ideas.

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## **Ward says**

Ondanks haar gebreken is deze bundel van essays zeker de moeite waard. Het kan het beste dienen als een introductie tot het gedachtegoed van Bookchin en een *eyeopener* tot een radicale, moderne en verfrissende vorm van linkse politiek.

Het werk is diep geworteld in de anarchistische traditie, maar erkent tegelijkertijd het grote historische succes van Marxisme en probeert daar het beste uit mee te nemen. Niettemin is Bookchin uiterst kritisch op beide scholen.

De uitleg van Bookchins eigen revolutionaire idee blijft echter veel vager dan zijn kritieken en historische analyses, die op hun beurt juist weer minder vernieuwd en interessant zijn. Hierdoor vond ik vooral de eerste helft van het boek (hfst. 1-5) interessant waar Bookchin zijn *libertarian municipalism* uiteenzet.

Bookchins these is dat door zijn "coherente systeem" van directe *face-to-face* democratie—waaruit de opheffing van de staat volgt en de onderdrukking hierdoor—alle andere hiërarchieën ook zullen verdwijnen, inclusief de catastrofale overheersing van de natuur door de mensheid, waardoor een ecologische samenleving zal ontstaan. Dit verband is ietwat vaag uitgezet. Ik hoop hierover meer te vinden in het werk *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, hetgeen echter geschreven is voordat Bookchin zijn coherente visie uitwerkte, dat in *The Next Revolution* behandeld wordt. Ik ben benieuwd.

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## **Camille says**

This was the first Bookchin I tried to read. I picked it up and then put it down as it is not a great entry point to his work. This is his final collection of essays and was released posthumously. It feels decidedly lopsided and alternately useful and in the weeds.

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## **Dayton says**

So after reading three of his books this summer (plus a fourth he co-wrote), I'd say there are few if any authors with whom I agree more on sort of the broader outlines of what a moral society might look like (in this book best summarized in "The Ecological Crisis and the Need to Remake Society"). But on the specifics there are some things in this book that frustrated me, both stylistically (overconfidence) and substantively (vague on some crucial issues, also seems less engaged with climate/environment than he did in the '60s).

My favorite essay from this book, though I didn't always agree, was "Nationalism and the 'National Question.'" But despite a few great essays the book as a whole is kind of repetitive. And it's way less eco-conscious and way more Western-centric than *The Ecology of Freedom*.

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### **Arthur Davis says**

The nature of the book as a collection of essays means that it tends to repeat itself, as each portion needs to explain the same ideas in order to make sense on its own. This means that you get multiple shots at understanding the harder concepts, but it also means that the book tends toward pointless review once you have the ideas down.

Those ideas swing wildly in terms of quality throughout the book. One paragraph Bookchin is espousing a clear idea of how a society could be organized from the bottom up rather than the top down, or accurately predicting the rise of reactionary politicians in response to a crisis; but in the next paragraph he's fear-mongering about nuclear power, or decrying the concerns of marginalized groups as "parochial identity politics," or blaming postmodernism for a nonspecific corruption of leftist thought.

A more cohesive book that focused on the author's positive contributions rather than his critiques of others would probably be more valuable. As this is the first of his books that I've read, I cannot say if one of his other works would fit this niche. I sincerely hope so.

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### **Jonathan says**

I really struggled with this book. I genuinely wanted to be interested in the subject matter but the writing style just made the book more hard going.

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### **Tabasko633 says**

Another revolution! This collection allows us to understand how Murray Bookchin moved to what he calls Communalism. It is written very fluent (and provocative) and gives the reader a good overview of the history and tensions between the main left theories of the last centuries, namely anarchism and marxism. In his essays, he presents then his logical outcome for a free society that takes the best ideas from both: Liberal municipalism. But while he sketches very interesting arguments and ideas for local politics and transformational paths, his vision lacks details at some very important points. How exactly would the confederation work? Why does having a confederation logically solve all the problems of decentralised politics? He sometimes contradicts himself when it comes to enforcement of rules and does not reference many of his claims. So in the end, his theory was not very convincing, but the book worth reading. Especially the first and the last essay.

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### **Kriegslok says**

In an unlikely future world Murray Bookchin might be considered a saviour and a turning point in the history of the human lemming, the point we turned back from the cliff edge. As Bookchin acknowledges turning around humanity would be a tall order that cannot be achieved overnight or through a simple revolutionary uprising overthrowing the "system". This book is both a critique of attempts past to change the course and

fate of humanity as well as an attempt to present an alternative. This is done through a collection of stand alone pieces each dealing with specific themes and written over a couple of decades. There is inevitably some overlap and repetition but I found this helpful in reinforcing and representing information which may not be fully grasped in a single reading from one angle. Writing many of these pieces towards the end of his life Murray Bookchin brings the knowledge of years of activism and theoretical understanding. Unlike many who become trapped in dogma and ideological purity Bookchin never lost of the purpose of revolutionary action - namely to make life happier, easier and fairer for all (that grand Utopian dream). In rejecting the dogmas he does not throw out the baby with the bathwater but insists that theory, ideas, practice needs to change and adapt to a changing world. This is perhaps best expressed in the final chapter "The Future of the Left". Elsewhere he writes about anarchist misconceptions of power and leadership attacking correctly I think the failure of many "alternative" "autonomous" groupings to understand the realities of power and politics and the individualist lifestyle politics that often dominates a clique and marooned self appointed vanguard. He also singles out post-modernist approaches as being disruptive of a real politics of change. The chapter on the "national question" is especially good looking at the relationship between the left and national liberation which is admittedly not good or successful. As Bookchin points out the reality has forgotten the liberation aspect while the national aspect has reared its ugly and desperate head to maintain anything but liberationary or egalitarian systems. In place of the revolutionary statist projects of the past Bookchin argues for a "communalist" revolution based upon the development of bottom up systems of direct democracy. Arguing convincingly that there is no reason why direct democracy based on neighbourhood level committees should be any more absurd or unworkable than our existing top down system he argues for communities to take control of their own communities and lives, to wrestle power away from the state. A commune of communes answerable to the communities would work in turn for the people to whom they are in turn directly answerable and recallable. I am grossly simplifying a well developed and argued idea here. Bookchin had no illusions about the difficulties faced or the practicalities to be worked out. Nor did he doubt that attempts at implementing such a democracy would be met with opposition, assimilation and defeats. However, the argument he makes for a communalist future based on learning the lessons of past failure are strong. Indeed today in Kurdistan a "Democratic Confederalist" experiment is taking shape and facing the challenges that Murray Bookchin explores in this book. As a first serious attempt at this new form of revolutionary democratic power the communities involved are doing incredibly well under the most difficult, and far from ideal, of conditions. The degree to which this experiment is successful, or is allowed by hostile states to succeed, remains to be seen. Anyone fed up with conventional party / revolutionary politics and / or wishing to understand developments in revolutionary Kurdistan should read this book.

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## **Loránd says**

The urgency of action, and organization is best summarized with one quote: *"If we do not do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable."*

In this collection of essays Bookchin synthesizes a theory of revolution, and politics from the traditions of Anarchism and Marxism. The reader can expect critiques of both the aforementioned ideologies, critiques that reveal the necessity to reinvent how we think about social progress.

Furthermore, the author proposes that path to a free, rational, and ecological, and technologically advanced society has to be done through the practice of "libertarian municipalism", within the framework of the ideology that he named "communalism". Although critics in the past have seen this work as highly theoretical it is finding very real applications in contemporary northern Syria. Amidst the civil war which started in 2011 a true social revolution has been started amongst the Kurdish population in the self-

proclaimed autonomous zone known as Rojava. It is truly breathtaking what is happening there, and I recommend that the reader of this book immediately pick up *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in the Syrian Kurdistan*.

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### **Herman de Jonge says**

In this collection of essays Bookchin gives a great analysis of the development and current state of the Left, particularly in its Marxist and anarchist variants from the late 19th century. His analysis is easy to understand and great to read. Yet, his solutions can be seen as somewhat utopian in nature. Not only does he propose a particular institutional form, municipalism. He also proposes a set of values, that are libertarian, egalitarian and ecological in nature. It isn't clear whether and how the two would be necessarily combined. An egalitarian, free and ecological society doesn't necessarily involve municipalism at an institutional level, while a society ordered by municipalism is easily thinkable without embracing libertarian values. A municipalist society that for example embraces a certain kind of religious conservatism would be just as imaginable.

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### **Geoff says**

This was a dense and difficult book. The Next Revolution was my introduction to Murray Bookchin and perhaps I should have chosen some other easier places to start. For such a short book, it took me a very long time to read it. It wasn't so much that I don't agree with Mr. Bookchin's analysis, but the delivery of the content was hard to digest. He has a large expanse of history, and if you don't know the history like he does, you can get lost pretty quickly. This collection of essays focuses on his advocating of a libertarian municipalism form of government. He does his best to explain his ideas to the reader, but if Mr. Bookchin is hoping for the next revolution to go in this direction he is going to have to take pains to simplify his message. As written, only the most intrepid will follow along with him

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