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Base-building here and now

how to start any project in your region

Union of Green Libertarians

Writer's note: This essay isn't meant to be neither a manual nor an instruction guide, rather a way of reapproaching methods of self-sufficiency, communalization, solidarity and liberation

It's 2021 and in the past 20 years we've seen multiple mass protests and riots which gave hope to comrades in the beginning, however ended up in institutional changes at best, nothing at worst. We have to admit though that those riots gave birth to new generations of anarchists, autonomists and people who – instead of embracing the capitalist realism – aren't willing to give up their struggle and beliefs for a better future.

We, the writers of this essay, are only a very small portion of them. We were very young when news spread all around Greece about the murder of a 15 year old child with the perpetrator being a cop. 2008 was a year of turmoil in Greece. A list published by Konstantinos Karamanlis, the prime minister, gave to the public the name of ministers, entrepreneurs and bureaucrats who have received illegal funds from Siemens in order to serve better its interests in the country. The murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos was the drop that overflowed the bottle. Mass riots spread over

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the country, mostly in urban centers, with cop cars, cop stations and government buildings being torched, cops getting beaten and neighborhoods transforming into battlegrounds. But as you can guess, all this led to nothing. Ironically, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the current prime minister, was the first name on that list.

So what do we do? Post-industrial/service sector economy nullified any usefulness syndicalism had to offer. Class consciousness is as rare as elephants in Europe and what we have to deal with right now is a false dipole between reaction and liberal identity politics.

No matter how many protests take place, no matter if they last for a year, if there's no class-consciousness among the people, they will soon fade away like they never happened.

This is where the idea of base-building came up. A year ago we came in contact with a comrade living in Costa Rica who had started a base-building project called Finca Dio that's focused on co-op farming. With land the only thing he owned, he had to build everything from the scratch, including a cabin, a garden, a food forest and a henhouse. As both of us had land, we thought of doing the same thing here in the Greek countryside. We won't go into an in-depth analysis, but rather briefly describe what we did and what we're planning to do for the near future.

Right now there are two autonomous farms in Greece, one in Thassos Island, the other in Galatista, Halkidiki. Both farms include a garden with crops and a small food forest. In Thassos there's also a 25m2 that half of it serves as storage for tools, while the rest serves as a winter corral for the goats living in the farm. Construction of two cabins within each farm is also on its way: those cabins will host anyone that wishes to spend their days on the farm, travel around the place etc and there's gonna be a small library with anarchist/autonomist reading material, both in Greek and in English. The plan is a) to create libertarian cells in the countryside that will combat ruling class' ideology within the young people and promote an alternative to that and b) a big portion of the crops will be distributed among poor people. It's as simple as that. We've mostly

heard good words from other comrades regarding our project and we hope it goes as planned.

But let's move into an analysis of Greek geography in order to give you a proper picture of our line of thought:

Greek geography isn't really different than that of Japan: a coastal country with a lot of islands but mountainous mainland, except for the Thessaloniki and Larissa plains. Greek climate is no different to that of South Italy with dry summers and wet winters. The mountainous mainland makes mass agriculture difficult, but it's perfect for permaculture and animal herding. Co-op farming has its possibilities to not only thrive, but produce food enough for the farmers and the poor people, saving you a lot of money you would otherwise spend on the grocery stores. In small communities, farmers sell their products on the market (both legally and illegally) and gain money from it. Same goes for animal herding: sheep and goat milk turned into delicious cheese and yoghurt is enough for yourselves and the poor folk; and if in need for money, why not sell some? There are herders who sell animal meat on local meat houses, but we agreed to not slaughter any animals, neither for food, nor for profit.

Now, we will try to apply that narrative to other countries with different climates and geography. Let's start with Rostov Oblast, in European Russia. Rostov lies near the Ukrainian border in an area that is called Pontic-Caspian steppes. These lands were famous from the ancient times of their never ending pasture and became a cradle for many Eurasian nomadic civilizations, from the Scythians to the Tatars, whose economy was built upon animal herding and trade. However times changed since then and modern technology allowed Russia to turn those wild lands into its agricultural base. Those steppes now offer a chance for multiple co-op farming and can become a base for anarchist/autonomist praxis. After all, a good base is all that matters.

When it comes to building, the cost of materials and level of expertise required is often an obstacle. Earthbag construction of-

fers an extremely low-cost and sustainable solution and requires no prior experience. Buildings are made by polypropylene bags filled with local soil and are perfect for disaster-prone areas as the durability of these buildings is notorious. Alternatively, you can use cheap material like wood or sheet metal. Lots of furniture may be found in the trash and what you can do is extract the wood out of it and store until you have a lot of material to start your construction project. Clay's also an infinite material that can be found in the ground and can be used to make everything: from pots and ashtrays to construction bricks and cabin roofing/insulation. And of course, by mixing dry terracotta dust with wood ash in water you can have some very precious cement.

In the urban centers, things get a little different. You can't have farms, you can't have animals, but you can have squats. There are multiple squats in Greece, Germany, France, Spain etc that are being run by comrades. But it's not enough. Community gardens can and should become another base for praxis in the urban centers. Of course you cannot have the space you would have in the countryside, but vertical farming can offer a solution to that problem. Balconies and terraces can be transformed into green gardens with vines, tomatoes, carrots, onions and other crops being planted in plastic or clay pots and then be hanged from the wall. In colder countries (like Norway) greenhouses can be of use when cold winter arrives.

But what if there are no squats and your apartment balcony is too small for a garden, not to mention a greenhouse? Well all you have to do is travel to the past and see how the people in your region made a living. Fishing with friends or/and comrades can be developed into an autonomous fishing co-op, interest in theory can be developed into an autonomous bookshop; and you don't have to buy books, rather print them and do the bookbinding yourselves (there's a lot of DIY material on that).

DIY of any kind can save you a lot of money, at least it saved us since we started with a budget of 300€. Of course different projects

require different things and tools; however the method is not very different than people like to think.

Now, for the most crucial part, try to keep in contact with locals and neighbors as much as you can. Even if they don't really understand what you're doing or what you're trying to achieve, they will be a time when you will need some help, or they will need some help and hence you might be build a relationship of trust. Even if they don't share the same principles with you, they won't go openly against you. Furthermore, there will be people that might find interest in what you're doing and maybe would like to join your cause. It happened to us and it also happened to a comrade we interviewed a couple o' days ago.¹

20th century anarchism is gone and it's never coming back; it's good to learn from the mistakes of the past, the point though is not to repeat them. We can't just sit down and wait for the proper material conditions to arrive, because they will move past us. Remember in 2011 how the Egyptian working class was organized horizontally in neighborhoods, protecting their families and neighbors when the government released the army and state-sponsored looters? Imagine how much power those protesters would have, if instead of the liberal bourgeoisie, the ones pushing for counter-bases and institutions where the anarchist working class.

We should experiment with each and every idea we have and let our creativity guide us towards new ways of liberation.

¹ prasinoieleutheriakoi.wordpress.com