Rasmus Hästbacka
Another World is Phony?
The case for a syndicalist vision
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Contents

Swedish union paper Arbetaren. More articles by the same author can be found in Anarchist Library here.

Sometimes the term workers' council doesn't refer to delegates but to the assembly. Sometimes the expression workplace *committees* refers to councils, while the term workers' council (or labor council) instead refer to community councils. Two common synonyms for community are *commune* and *municipality*. It becomes even more confusing when some texts use the term commune to refer to a workplace assembly and its council. Two synonyms for community assemblies are *popular* assemblies and *citizens'* assemblies. In this essay I have tried to use a clear and consistent terminology.

Global federalism

If, in the future, community federations will be legislators, they could be given the task of regulating military defense, a popular army. That depends on how far-reaching the geographical scope of the federalist order has become. Today, syndicalists are building an international union movement, aiming at federalism on a global scale. This aspiration has been expressed by the Swedish union SAC in the following words:

"Instead of the current system of sovereign states, syndicalism seeks international, regional, and worldwide federations (...) within the framework of a common federalist legal order that overcomes nationalism and makes militarism redundant" (SAC's Declaration of principles, 1952).

Ever-so-beautiful visions are pointless, however, without strategies to reach them. SAC advocates neither armed struggle nor revolt through general strike. So, what do Swedish syndicalists propose? That is the topic of my second essay.

Rasmus Hästbacka

Rasmus Hästbacka is a lawyer and has been a member of the Umeå Local of SAC since 1997. The essay draws from a forthcoming book, Swedish syndicalism – An outline of its ideology and practice. *A previous version of the essay was published in the*

Photos of Swedish syndicalists: Food production workers (2019), Lumberjacks (1975), University employees (2019), Construction worker (1976).

"Most people live most of their lives within totalitarian institutions. It's called having a job."

— Noam Chomsky

Syndicalism is a movement of labor unions that aims for a vision beyond both capitalism and nation-states. But isn't the nation-state the guarantor of all citizens' security? What alternatives do syndicalists propose? These issues are addressed by Rasmus Hästbacka in the first in a series of three essays that will be posted to our website.

ASR are presenting this series in the spirit of debate and an exchange of ideas across national borders. We do not agree with every formulation, and have been quite explicit in our rejection of "participatory economics," which fails to offer a vision of a free society, is unworkable, and seems to have given no thought as to how their bureaucratic utopia could be brought into being. We also reject the notion expressed below that markets are compatible with syndicalism, or indeed with any vision of social solidarity and emancipation.

The working-class author Folke Fridell (1904–1985) was an active member of the syndicalist union SAC – *Central Organization of Workers in Sweden*, founded in 1910. In Fridell's novel *Dead man's hand*, we meet the main character David Bohm. He hates poverty as a worker but even worse is the lack of freedom in production. Bohm becomes convinced that workers must be allowed to "participate in decision-making and the sharing of wealth." This idea is still subversive today. If the idea guides action on a broad front, we will end up in a new world.

Syndicalism arose in the 1800s and quickly became a global union movement. Syndicalism is to a large extent identical to the industrial unionism of the IWW (originating in North America). The word syndicalism is borrowed from French. Directly translated it simply means union movement, but

egates in workers' councils will work in the companies over which they make decisions. All assignments should have term limits to secure rotation. Finally, people at the base level will have the right to initiate general meetings or referendums to overrule decisions by councils.

Individuals, minorities, and local units

A federalist order enables collective decision-making by majority rule in all areas of society. But what about the rights of individuals and minorities? Here, proposals from Stephen Shalom (mentioned above) and the late Murray Bookchin can be mentioned. Their proposals are inspired by liberalism and US republicanism. Bookchin was no fan of syndicalism as a strategy, but he had a lot to say about democracy in a federalist society. He suggested a constitution of individual rights. Shalom has added minority rights and courts which can overrule collective decisions that violate individual or minority rights.

Courts can also be given the task of clarifying the boundaries between local affairs and common affairs in federations. Thus, courts can overrule central decisions that infringe on local self-determination. Likewise, courts can overrule local decisions in matters that should be handled by a federation.

A federalist order allows all citizens to participate in decisions, to elect, instruct and recall delegates and to run for election themselves to various councils. The philosopher Slavoj Zizek has asserted the right to be a passive citizen. An individual can of course refrain from participating in decisions and leave it to the assemblies. The people in assemblies can in turn delegate more power to councils. If people aren't happy with the result, they can always recall decision-making power.

Since syndicalism is a global phenomenon with a long history, the terminology in syndicalist texts can be confusing.

As said, syndicalists propose a double governance through workers' federations and community federations. In this sketch it is natural that community federations will be legislators. That includes regulating some form of police, courts and prisons. I will now turn to common objections to economic democracy and federalism.

Control from below

If people elect delegates to community councils, what stops the delegates from turning into a political class which in turn gives rise to a bureaucratic class? First, people would not elect politicians to run the economy. As Bertrand Russel put it: "In an ideal democracy, industries or groups of industries would be self-governing as regards almost everything except the price and quantity of their product, and their self-government would be democratic."

Furthermore, a way to safeguard the self-management of workplaces against legislative excesses and bureaucracy, might be to give the legislative organs a mixed composition. It can be a mix of citizens' delegates and workers' delegates. Workers' delegates could be advisors in this context or real legislators. An additional argument for including workers' delegates is to include the knowledge from all industries and professions in the legislative process.

But still, if people elect community councils to adopt laws and express consumers' interests, what prevents them from becoming a ruling class? And what prevents workers' councils from becoming a boss class? Syndicalists propose several checks and balances. All delegates should follow directives from below and if they don't, their mandate can be immediately recalled from below.

Furthermore, delegates in consumers' and citizens' councils will be rooted in the local communities they represent. Del-

syndicalism is not just any union movement. It has certain defining features.

What is syndicalism?

Syndicalist unions are not limited to only one craft or one industry. They are organizations for all workers as a social class. These class organizations are intended to fulfill a dual function. They are tools in the struggle for daily demands *and* for implementing a vision of a new society.

A key concept of syndicalism is direct action. That is collective pressure exerted by the concerned workers themselves, especially in their capacity as producers. Historian Wayne Thorpe summarizes the pioneers' arguments for direct action as follows: "Since inevitable class conflict was fought out first and foremost on the economic terrain, direct action through trade unions was more effective than indirect action mediated through electoralism and parliamentarism" (see the anthology *New perspectives on anarchism, labour and syndicalism*, published in 2010).

In common with many other unions, syndicalist unions rest on three basic values: union democracy, solidarity at work, and independence from all religious and political organizations. Why these values? All democratic associations expect their members to respect the internal democracy (or else the associations will dissolve). All unions must promote solidarity or fail as unions. A syndicalist union must stay independent or cease to be syndicalist.

The long-term vision of syndicalism can be summed up with the terms *economic democracy* and *federalism*. What does the vision entail and how can organizing through unions lead to it? In this essay, I will approach the vision and relate it to three major currents of ideas: liberalism, socialism and democratic theory.

In a second essay, I will touch on strategies for realizing the vision, strategies proposed by syndicalists. In a third and final essay, I will conclude with syndicalist recipes for rebuilding the labor movement.

My primary sources of inspiration are Swedish syndicalism, along with ideas from liberals Adam Smith and John Dewey and syndicalists Noam Chomsky and Rudolf Rocker. Important references below are Chomsky's book *American power and the new mandarins (1969)*, Rocker's book *Nationalism and culture (1937)* and a dissertation by historian Lennart K. Persson in Swedish, *Syndikalismen i Sverige 1903–1922 (1993)*.

Why bother?

One may ask why syndicalism deserves to be considered at all. During the 1900s, syndicalism lost twice. It lost to its competitors in the labor movement, the state socialist labor parties. Syndicalism did not become an effective challenger of capitalism and the nation-state, except for a brief period in the Spanish Revolution 1936–39. The most important Spanish labor organization was the syndicalist union CNT. The revolution was crushed by the combined forces of fascism, nazism, the Soviet Union and liberal democracies (see for example Chomsky's essay in *American power and the new mandarins*).

Today, however, state socialism has gone bankrupt in the East, West and South. In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party no longer describes its goal with the word socialism. After the Second World War, leading social democrats excelled as world champions of administering capitalism. But that era too is gone.

Contemporary crises are piled high: economic crashes are travelling the globe since the breakthrough of neoliberalism in the 1970s; the threat of nuclear war is still real; we live in a climate crisis and the legitimacy of capitalism itself falters. These

Rule of law in a federalist order

The general opinion among syndicalists seems to be that the principles of liberalism have married a rotten institution (the class-state) and that these principles should be transferred to a federalist society. Then, police and courts will no longer apply class laws but hopefully administer justice in an equal society. The same idea is put forward by the contemporary political scientist Stephen Shalom. To prevent courts from becoming corrupt elites, Shalom suggests a jury system to which ordinary citizens are randomly selected. To me, it seems more reasonable to have a mix of juries and professional judges

Anarchists have proposed serious solutions to the roots of crime, but weak methods to deal with remaining crime. The method is usually amateurs patrolling the streets. That is a reasonable complement to trained police but not a serious substitute for it. Peter Kropotkin believed that customary law would promote enough security in the future (see his book *The Conquest of Bread, 1906*). Are customs a sufficient protection against, say, axe killers and mad pedophiles? Perhaps if everyone watches over everyone else, that is if social pressure becomes unbearable.

The largest syndicalist experiment to date is the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39. The revolution was triggered by Franco's attempt at a fascist coup. The Spanish syndicalists had no respect for the police, military and courts that for decades had crushed unions, held political prisoners and murdered workers. When workers conquered their workplaces, villages and cities in 1936, they set up a new police and legal system that was subordinated to the new organs of popular democracy. In the midst of war, of course, many fascist coup plotters were simply shot. But syndicalists also showed a humanitarian backbone. For example, the syndicalist D.A. de Santillan advocated that fascist leaders be placed in minimum-security facilities to do community service.

functions in a modern society. Syndicalists want to embed such functions in a federalist society. A line of argument close at hand, is that not until we reach a situation of economic democracy and federalism will it be possible to practice the liberal principles of rule of law with greater success.

Who can deny that the liberal principles are appealing? They concern equality before the law, impartial courts and punishment with a focus on reintegrating antisocial individuals. These principles were originally intended to ensure individual freedom, democracy and protection against theft. But the principles are corrupted when combined with a class-state.

There is not much left of individual freedom and democracy when individuals are forced to sell themselves to employers. Equality before the law becomes a joke when the right to make decisions belongs to employers and workers are expected to be content with the duty to obey. Employers steal the fruits of worker's labor, backed by the state. A form of dictatorship and robbery that ought to be prohibited is on the contrary legalized. This is class legislation in favor of economic elites.

The fact that economic elites dominate the political democracies of today is described by mainstream political science. In the United States, researchers Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page have found that a majority of US citizens have little or no influence in politics. On the other hand, the top one percent of the income and wealth scale get almost everything they ask for. Put bluntly, capitalist democracy is a formal democracy but seldom a real or functioning democracy. In constitutional terms it is a democracy, but in substantial terms it is a plutocracy. Public opinion is seldom transformed into public policy.

are all good reasons to take a closer look at the alternative vision of syndicalism.

Utopianism?

Syndicalism is often dismissed as youthful utopianism, at best, or at worst dismissed as stupid and destructive. When the adult in the room speaks, the only balanced model is welfare capitalism, a mixed capitalist economy, and centralized nation-states is the end of history (possibly supplemented by supranational organs). But if the adult in the room is correct, it is difficult to explain why syndicalism has attracted such sharp minds as Noam Chomsky, Bertrand Russel and Carole Pateman.

In Sweden, the late Harry Järv was a supporter of syndicalism. As an author, translator and editor, Järv was referred to as a one-man university and scholarly giant. He became a war hero in Finland's defense against Russia. Later on, he headed the department of handwritten scripts at the Swedish Royal Library.

Carole Pateman reminds us, in the book *Participation and democratic theory (1970)*, that capitalism is not a democracy. In private corporations, the owners and bosses exercise dictatorship. Employees in the tax-financed sectors are ruled by bosses too, even if the political superstructure is of a parliamentary nature.

Syndicalists are simply consistent democrats when they want to introduce democracy at work: economic democracy. Syndicalists also use the expression *workers' self-management*. This would mean that the workforce participates in decisions and has the right to elect, instruct and replace the management. As a vehicle for democratization, syndicalists form local job branches. In Sweden, they are called operating sections since the purpose is for workers to take over and operate production.

Democracy is at best half, if we are citizens in politics but servants and subjects in the economy. In the United States, workers' pursuit of economic democracy has often been described as a pursuit of economic citizenship (see for instance the book *Citizen worker* by historian David Montgomery).

Classical liberalism…

Syndicalists are furthermore consistent heirs to classical liberalism. Central to liberal thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt was the right of the individual to decide over herself and her work. To inquire and create in freedom, without tyrannical control, is the theme that runs through Humboldt's work *The limits of state action (1852)*. Karl Marx addressed the same theme when he criticized exploitation and alienation under capitalist tyranny (in Marx's *Economic and philosophic manuscripts, 1932*).

Bertrand Russel joined the call for economic democracy. He drew inspiration from European syndicalism, IWW and British so-called guild socialism (see for example Russel's book *Roads to freedom, 1919*). Guild socialism is often described as a compromise between syndicalism and social democracy. I have repeated that image in the past, but my union friends who have consulted primary sources and the latest research have given me homework.

Right from the start, guild socialism included a range of views. One pole on the scale was a "light version" of state socialism. The other pole on the scale was an anti-state strand. During the state-directed economy of World War I, more guild socialists moved to the anti-state pole. The latter strand is British syndicalism, although guild socialists continued to stick the label "state" on their vision. Interested readers can consult the historian Richard Price (in Swedish here). *ASR* 85 addresses this current in a review of *Towards A Libertarian Socialism:*

tecting citizens from terrorism. At the same time, Noam Chomsky and others have pointed out that according to CIA's assessments, US foreign policy after 9/11 has contributed to increasing the threat of terror attacks by a factor 7. In Sweden, too, rule of law is undermined by politicians who refer to terrorism. At the same time, the Swedish arms trade benefits the single largest financier of Islamic terror: the Saudi regime.

In case after case, syndicalists can demonstrate that the security of citizens is given a low priority by modern nation-states. Perhaps the strongest evidence is that the states, in cooperation with the business world, have pushed humanity ever closer to a climate catastrophe for more than 30 years. This includes parliamentary states with access to the latest science.

Perhaps it is not syndicalists who have gotten lost in utopian dreams, but on the contrary all kinds of state worshipers who lack contact with reality. As historian Howard Zinn put it: "No, the government is not our friend. Occasionally, it can get friendly when there's a great people's movement that compels it to be friendly." In my view it is a kind of superstition to trust the state like a caring parent or guardian angel. A very dangerous illusion indeed.

Rule of law in liberal states

Syndicalists don't deny the need for formal institutions responsible for the security of citizens. What syndicalists do question is that nation-states are the best possible institution to fulfill that function. If we continue these reflections on security and legal certainty, what do syndicalists have to say about life after the nation-states?

The Swedish syndicalist Frans Severin wrote the book *Är syndikalismen statsfientlig? (1924)*, in English *Is syndicalism hostile to the state?* Severin emphasizes that syndicalists don't deny the need for legislative, executive and judicial

state against neoliberalism. It is also natural to defend parliamentary democracy and liberal principles of the rule of law against totalitarian forces. To look beyond these intermediate goals, and imagine a world without nation-states, is not easy. Why should people even strive for an order beyond nation-states? Isn't the state the primary guarantor of citizens' security? This is how the state is usually justified. To then strive for a different order appears to be a path to chaos.

It is often said that the best way to protect people from violence is to place the monopoly of violence in the hands of nation-states. That is a truth with modifications. In the book *Nationalism and culture* (and later works), Rudolf Rocker points out that the construction of nation-states began in Europe by means of extreme violence and culminated in two world wars. Then came the Cold War and the horror of nuclear weapons. According to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the risk of nuclear war is even greater today than during the Cold War.

...versus citizens' security

Syndicalists repeat that all states (despite all reforms) are basically class-states. Even the most liberal states are machines of violence in the service of capital-owning classes. Noam Chomsky has pointed out that the United States is one of the freest states internally, but the most brutal state abroad. Several million died only in the US attack on South Vietnam and neighboring wars. They were crude colonial wars dressed in rhetoric about freedom.

Even if every state puts murderers in jail, the worst mass murderers usually go unpunished: the gentlemen in high places who are responsible for wars of aggression carried out by states.

Since the 9/11 terror attacks of 2001, the liberal principles of rule of law have been undermined under the pretext of pro-

Reflections on the British Labour Party and European Working Class Movements, an anthology of writings by G.D.H. Cole.

...its heirs...

There are more currents in the labor movement that are serious heirs to liberalism: anarchism, council communism and oppositional forces within social democratic and communist popular movements (see, for example, the book *Chomsky on anarchism, 2005*). Political scientist Mats Dahlkvist gathers all these currents under the Swedish term rörelsesocialism (in English movement socialism) in contrast to state socialism.

Noam Chomsky and other syndicalists agree with the liberal critique of the class character of the state. Adam Smith wrote that: "Laws and government may be considered ... as a combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods which would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor." The quote can be found in the book *Capitalism as a moral system. Adam Smith's critique of the free market economy (1991)* by Spencer J. Pack.

Karl Marx made similar analyses with the term class-state. The state preserves the economic power of owning elites. This power, in turn, is used to influence politics for the benefit of the owners. Today, the class character of nation-states is perhaps most obvious in the workplace. The legal system preserves the superior position of employers.

...and bankruptcy

Chomsky reminds us that the principles of liberalism were formulated in a feudal system and pre-capitalist market economy. The syndicalist and historian Rudolf Rocker noted that liberal principles could not be realized when capitalism broke

through and a majority of the population had to sell their labor power to a class of business owners.

The liberal mainstream went from opposition to state and feudal tyranny to defending private-capitalist tyranny. Since then, leading liberals have defended almost everything the state does in service of capitalism, from subsidies to companies on the domestic scene to foreign wars of aggression to secure raw materials and markets. Just as the Soviet empire had a cheering crowd of Bolsheviks around the world, a liberal crowd has been cheering on the US empire. In several books, Chomsky has highlighted how liberal intellectuals have developed the same elitism and contempt for ordinary people as the Bolsheviks (his first book was *American powers and the new mandarins*).

Liberals who have remained true to their ideals of freedom have continued to inspire syndicalists. The liberal John Dewey observed the conflict between democracy and capitalism: "Power today resides in control of the means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation and communication. Whoever owns them rules the life of the country". Dewey drew the logical conclusion: "In order to restore democracy, one thing and one thing only is essential. The people will rule when they have power, and they will have power in the degree they own and control the land, the banks, the producing and distributing agencies of the nation."

This quote can be found in the book *John Dewey and American Democracy (1991)* by Robert Westbrook. For liberals like Dewey and John Stuart Mill, an anti-capitalist stance was natural (see Mill's book *Principles of political economy, 1848*).

A syndicalist vision

A democratic guiding star of syndicalism is that everyone who is affected by a decision also should have the right to influ-

this wreck called "state socialism." These parties have proved capable of managing class society in the West and introducing new forms of class rule in the East, but unable to abolish class society. All "socialists" who oppose democracy in the workplace are in fact anti-socialists.

Is the syndicalist vision a stateless society or a fundamentally new state? The answer lands in semantics. Old-fashioned anarchists call it "no state" while libertarian Marxists call it "new state." (I am referring to Marxists who reject both Bolshevik "workers' states" and the concentration of power in Western welfare states.)

As said, guild socialists too have spoken of a "new state" in their visionary sketches. Perhaps contemporary guild socialists would approve the expressions *decentralized federal state* or *a state of participatory democracy*. As a syndicalist, I label the long-term vision economic democracy and federalism and try to outline the key institutions.

To sum up, syndicalists propose a kind of double governance. That is a popular governance through workers' federations and community federations. While people will participate as workers in the first structure, they will participate as consumers and citizens in the latter.

The nation-state...

Literary scholar Frederic Jameson has said that in our times it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. It is indeed a challenge to contemplate the post-capitalist vision of syndicalism, for us syndicalists as well. The part of our tradition that is perhaps most tricky to carry on is the critique of nation-states and the question: what can be put in their place?

Syndicalists have become accustomed to waging defensive struggles. For syndicalists, it is natural to defend the welfare

As said, syndicalists also endorse market mechanisms. Defenders of capitalism have hammered in that market economy is synonymous with capitalism. Sometimes I wonder if they are so ignorant that they believe it themselves. It is not difficult to give examples of non-capitalist market economies. Capitalism was preceded by a household-based market economy in which artisans and farmers owned the means of production. Today, there are islands of a socialist market economy based on producer cooperatives. One such island is the cooperatives in the US state of Ohio. These companies have been documented by economist Gar Alperovitz.

A defining feature of capitalist production is that the means of production are separated from the producers. This fact forces producers to sell their labor power to those who own or control the means of production. This is also a fundamental problem with the system, according to syndicalists, because it is a relationship of exploitation and domination. This critique of capitalism is shared with all consistent liberals and socialists.

The notions differ when it comes to the question: what exactly does it mean that the population should take over the means of production? Many labor parties have responded that a new class of state bureaucrats will control the means of production. Thus, workers will still lack democratic control and be forced to submit to a ruling class that they haven't elected and don't have the right to instruct or replace. Syndicalists are consistent socialists by opposing concentrated power in both state and corporations.

No state or new state?

When socialism degenerated into *authoritarian* state socialism in the 1900s, syndicalists found themselves forced to talk about *libertarian* socialism. It is reasonable to use quotation marks when referring to the "labor parties" that have marketed

ence that decision. The syndicalist opposition to capitalism and nation-states is basically an opposition to concentrations of power. Centralized and top-down governed corporations and states are illegitimate. Syndicalists want the concentration of economic and political power to be dissolved. In other words, power should be transferred down to the people.

A rather silly but common misunderstanding of syndicalism occurs when *institutions* are confused with *functions*. Do syndicalists want to end the construction of roads and enforcement of traffic rules, since these functions are carried out by states? Not really. While syndicalists regard capitalist and state institutions as illegitimate, syndicalists do not regard every function presently performed by these institutions as illegitimate. Reasonable functions, socially beneficial functions, should be taken over by new organs of popular democracy.

As a framework for popular democracy, syndicalists propose economic democracy within a federalist social order. What does that mean? The visionary sketches by syndicalists are usually articulated in obsolete terms. Therefore, I am going to summarize common features of the sketches in an updated language. Then I will reflect on of how the security of citizens is promoted (or counteracted) by modern nation-states. I will end the article with the question of how syndicalists argue that security can be promoted in a world without such states.

Economic democracy and federalism

As said, a democratic guiding star of syndicalism is that everyone affected by a decision should have the right to influence that decision. This will be made possible by a combination of industry-specific federations and geographical federations. The smallest building blocks are general meetings at workplaces, in neighborhoods and villages. Such meetings should be held at the base level and elect some form of work-

ers' councils, consumers' and citizens' councils. Syndicalists usually refer to general meetings as *assemblies* as well, for instance a workers' assembly that elects a council.

The base organs and their councils should form industry-wide and geographical federations, from local federations all the way to large-scale international federations. Syndicalists usually refer to the representative organ of a whole federation as a *congress*. In a federalist society, economic democracy would mean that federations of local communities own the companies while federations of workers manage them – for the benefit of consumers and within a framework that all citizens have the right to influence.

In addition to community-owned companies, syndicalists envisage worker-owned companies. That includes producer cooperatives, individual entrepreneurs, and family businesses in which only family members work. These owners possess means of production that they themselves work with. They do not buy the labor power of other people to rule over them and enrich themselves on their labor.

There is an obsolete slogan of the labor movement that goes: "Abolish private ownership!" The slogan is often perceived as "no one should be allowed to own anything," while the actual goal is that we all shall become owners. On the one hand owners of personal possessions, on the other hand owners of the means of production.

Syndicalists do not advocate pure decentralism. Federalism is a synthesis of decentralism and centralism. That means self-determination in local affairs, but also cooperation and joint decisions in regional and more far-reaching matters. Within every unit of a federation, syndicalists advocate base democracy. That is a combination of direct and representative democracy. At the base level, decisions are made in assemblies or through voting by a ballot box (or the electronic equivalent). At the representative level, decisions are made by councils in accordance with directives from below.

While the base level decides on issues of great importance, the representative level handles issues of less importance. It is not decided, once and for all, what should count as great importance. The base level may delegate more or less power to councils and evaluate it regularly. Likewise, in a federation, decision-making power can be transferred from local units to central organs and vice versa.

Allocation

Allocation is about how economic activities are coordinated and resources distributed in a given system. Syndicalists advocate both decentralized planning and market mechanisms.

The best contemporary articulation of decentralized planning (that I know of) is so-called participatory economy developed by Robin Hahnel and Michael Albert. They suggest a procedure whereby consumers and workers express roughly what they want to consume and produce. Facilitated by information technology, people arrive at a plan where supply and demand meet – without resorting to authoritarian central planning or time-consuming democratic congresses.

During the Spanish Revolution, the syndicalist D. A. Santillan proposed a kind of community councils, more precisely planning councils composed of workers' delegates from all industries. These councils would make allocation decisions, such as what to produce and how much, identify shortages or abundance of labor power and decide on mergers of companies (see Santillan's book *After the revolution, 1937*). Santillan's proposal can be criticized for giving too much power to the producers' side, especially to its delegates. Hahnel & Albert seem to have found a planning procedure that allows the consumers' side to express its wishes too, not only via delegates but directly – both in assemblies and as individual consumers.