



## THROUGH THE CAPITALIST LOOKING GLASS<sup>(1)</sup>

Any position reduced to the pure negation of being “anti-something”, without any further adjectives is problematic. This kind of thought implies a hollow neo-liberal idea of liberty. An idea for which there are no adjectives but unlimited alternatives, where all qualities and limits—even interstellar distances—are possible to surpass with money, slavery, consumption and extended ecocide. This is an obsessive liberty, where a goal is evaluated higher than the consequences caused by realizing it—any sacrifice does not count.

If we abandon this logic another world is not possible. The famous slogan from the anti-globalization movement is feeble. We have to deal with the dirty old one.

But that’s not all. “One world” presupposes full globalization, even M. Jacksons “We are the world” is not free

of anthropocentric supremacy. Both phrases are presumable only within cultural colonialism, technological hegemony and large scale digital reproduction powered by fossil fuel and global capitalism—which are again phenomena of neo-liberal thought.

Social revolts cannot be reduced to any “we need change!”-kind of demand, nor to pure insurrectional “liberty”. Both of them are empty concepts, since the imperative for the change of a liberalistic subject (and economy) and creative destruction are the exact preconditions for neo-liberal capitalist reproduction.

The idea of freedom has to be re-thought, not universally, but focally<sup>(2)</sup>, not as a general idea but a particular one, not only unlimited but also limited. ‘Universal’, ‘general’ and ‘unlimited’ are again ideas which

belong in a dream-world of neo-liberalism and can be seriously considered only if there is a functioning global infrastructure for distributing ‘universal’ thoughts, physical power to realize ‘generality’ everywhere, practical potential to consume resources, labour and energy to break all ‘limits’. I cannot see how this could happen without slavery and exploitation.

If there are no realistic possibilities to do something, we stop talking and dreaming about those things. We will condemn them as nonsense, right? We will say “nah, it does not work”, just like they say when we talk about revolution. Perhaps they are right. Revolution will never work as it has been classically presented: in both meanings of the word ‘work’. It is not about labour or production and it certainly doesn’t appear universally and without adjectives as many of “us” claim.



The following might sound a bit blasphemous for most radical theories (sorry about that) but it has to be said anyway. If we think our desired social changes from an anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian perspective, and these desires are serious in their objectives, we need to base insurrectional practices on something other than a logic that is thinkable only in capitalism.

If there is any will to be consistent, one foot in the struggle has to stand on something we could call a post-capitalist imagination, while the other stands on insurrection. If universality is a neo-liberal fantasy, this means that a post-capitalist standpoint but also insurrection and its tactics vary everywhere and are not exportable, as such.

We don't know what post-capitalism actually means, but we know what it does not mean.

If we deny the whole capitalist imagination, we have to expand this denial also to capitalism itself and consider that capitalism is not actually what it claims to be. It is not hegemonic, it is not universal, it is not liberal, it is not homogenized, it is not omnipotent, it is not logical, it is not even utilitarian, secularized theology or based upon money etc. These are just its own fantasies, ideals, failed capitalist day dreams and therefore useless viewpoints for post-capitalist epistemology and analysis.

To be able to imagine post-capitalism and to recognize its embodiments already existing in this reality, one has to see what is peculiar about capitalism for those who observe it, what is peculiar in the place and time from whence it is observed. Capitalism is not a common enemy, but many different

enemies. We cannot cut the head of the beast if we are actually confronting several of those.

The deconstruction of existing capitalist social relations (whose purpose is mainly to ensure the movement of money, ideas and products) is inevitably a process that rearranges material conditions as well. Diminishing the logistical flow of goods and transactions will create a new imagination, new social relations and practical solutions to solve the needs and desires of the people involved. What kind, we don't know before we try. The promise of an all-enabling liberty will be rooted in new kinds of relations and logistics: the imaginary limitlessness of the neo-liberal project will be replaced with social and environmental "boundaries" which post-capitalist 'focality' or nomadism imposes.

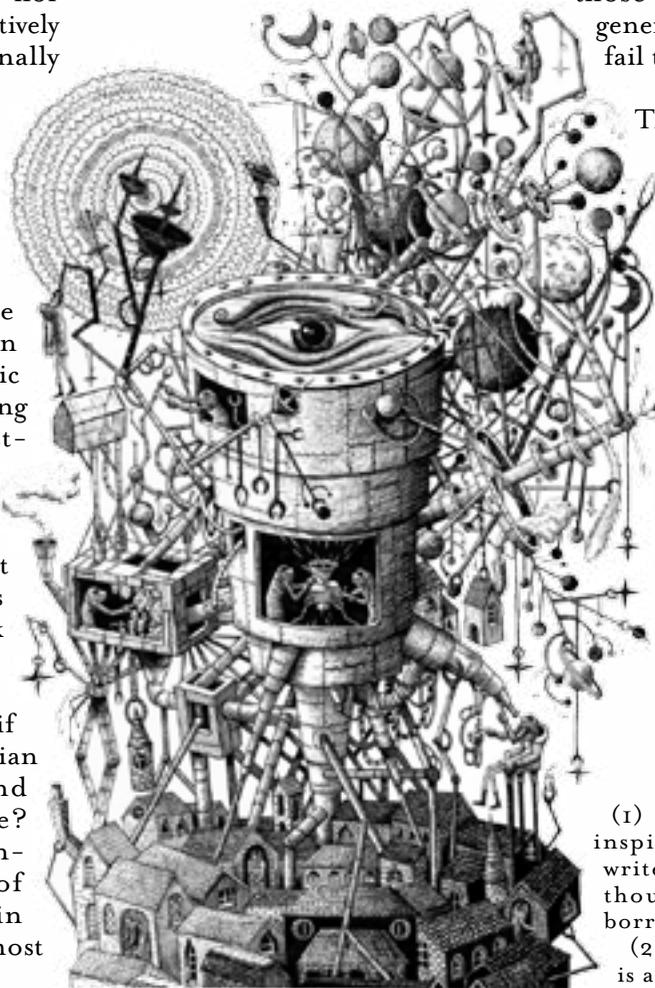
Instead of unity, we have to admit that the collapse of capitalism is breaking the world as we see it now into parts and that each part is not an atom or individual—but something between these extremes. Also it is clear that such a future cannot imply mass-society, cosmopolitanism, large scale digital reproduction, globalization, cultural universalism or even a Nietzschean “death of God”—as the God whom Nietzsche talked about was actually the result of the expansion of capitalism—nor can it be expandable, cumulatively progressive or conventionally productive.

Some local struggles that appeared after anti-globalization mobilization (such as ZADs, Halkidiki and no-TAV) pointed out a very appropriate question: is a modern urban metropolis, a fully capitalistic creation with hardly anything else, a real place of post-capitalistic struggle? Does it have anything useful to contribute to a radical political imagination except as a place to socialize? Is it even possible to think post-capitalism if he who is thinking is part of capitalistic circulation and if a big part of its authoritarian power is in urban and industrial infrastructure? Can we get any real (non-imaginary) experiences of ‘heterogeneity’ if we live in cities where capitalism is most complete in its illusions?

Perhaps we can. But that means a struggle must be outrageous if it is to manage to create a post-capitalistic existence within the heart of the beast. We have to fill it with experiences of new focality—city and neighborhood have to be truly lived—while cutting down streams and stems of capitalistic reproduction and ideas. This truly needs some contemplation and experiments, but I’m not going to go more into that now.

Perhaps the general language of generalized life prevents us from thinking with a language of the particular. Perhaps the true political contradiction is not between owners and workers but between a fundamentally unique human collectivity and generalizing universalism. Perhaps past struggles between particular and universal are much more important and radically different than any enlightened, industrial or modern revolution—those struggles that always-generalizing history will always fail to praise.

The question of particularity is a question about practicality, about how practical activities and conditions are creating knowledge. Can you do it in the sameness of a university or factory? In an all-equalizing mass-protest? In front of a computer?



(1) This short meditation is inspired by philosopher and writer Antti Salminen whose thoughts are also carelessly borrowed several times in it.

(2) Rather than ‘locally’, focal is a place of focus.