



Communalism as a Democratic Repertoire

Call for Abstracts

Pasts, Presents and Futures of Communalism

9 & 10 January 2025

Nijmegen, the Netherlands



Radboud Universiteit



GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

More than 150 years have passed since the birth of what Gustave Lefrancais dubbed 'communalism'. Inspired by the experiences of the *Communards* that ruled Paris for 72 days in 1871, communalism has resurfaced throughout history as a democratic repertoire of local self-government during modern times. In Russia 1917, Germany, Italy, Austria and Hungary in 1918, in Spain in the 1930's, in the student movements of 1968 and recently in Venezuela, South-Africa, Rojava, the Occupy movement and the Spanish municipalist movements: the Commune and its radical politics constituted for revolutionary movements an example, a symbol, or both. In this one and a half century of experiences, theories of communalism have developed and matured, mostly in conversation with the influential work of Murray Bookchin.

In this conference, we want to gather scholars from both a variety of disciplines and countries, in order to discuss this past and present of communalism, but also look ahead at its future. We hope to highlight and discuss the current trends and challenges in communalist thought, institutions and practices. This includes the main academic debates on radical or new municipalism, commons and prefigurative politics, but also on contemporary experiences of communalist politics. How do we build sustainable and vibrant communalist institutions? What are the key elements that make these institutions sustainable? What have been their main obstacles? How can we scale up these practices? What can we learn from local experiences around the globe? But also: what characterises 'the Commune' as an organisational form? How, or to what degree, does 'the Commune' offer an alternative to statist and/or supranational forms of politics? How may 'the Commune' cater to a radically different form of democracy? What concrete forms of participatory decision-making or political representation may be implied in a communalist politics? How may communalism help to address urgent societal and political issues - such as climate change, the resurgence of the far right, racism, poverty, war and territorial conflict? How have different social movements and radical tendencies of the 19th, 20th and 21st Century interpreted 'the Commune'? What may we be able to learn from them today?

An earlier conference organised by this research team resulted in an edited volume on *Communalism as a Democratic Repertoire*, which will be published in the *Advances in Democratic Theory* series at Routledge. The aim of this conference is to build an international network on communalist studies that can enrich communalist practice and theory in a sustainable way.

The conference will take place over two days in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. There is no conference fee. Key notes will include **Debbie Bookchin** and **Hannah Proctor**.

We welcome abstracts of up to 500 words for presentations that touch upon these issues and that can help us better understand the past, present and future of communalism.

The **deadline for abstracts is November 10, 2024**. We will inform prospective participants before November 18th about their participation. Abstracts can be sent to Gaard Kets (gaard.kets@ru.nl).

This conference is part of the research project *Vive la Commune! Communalism as a Democratic Repertoire*, that is funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

The organising committee consists of:

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