

Communalism

Communalism usually refers to a system that integrates communal ownership and federations of highly localized independent communities. A prominent libertarian socialist, Murray Bookchin, defines the Communalism political philosophy that he developed as "a theory of government or a system of government in which independent communes participate in a federation", as well as "the principles and practice of communal ownership". The terms 'government' and 'autonomous' in this case do not imply an acceptance of a State, parochialism, or individualism.^{[1][2]}

This usage of communalism appears to have emerged during the late 20th century to distinguish commune-based systems from other political movements and/or governments espousing (if not actually practicing) similar ideas. In particular, earlier communities and movements advocating such practices were often described as anarchist, "socialist" and/or "communist".^[3]

Many historical communities practicing utopian socialism or anarchist communism did implement internal rules of communalist property ownership in the context of federated communalism. It is at least theoretically possible for a federation of communes to include communes which do not practice communalist rules of property, which is to say, that the overall national government may be a federation of communes, but that private property rather than communalist property is the order within each such commune. Karl Marx, often viewed as the founder of modern communism, criticized older forms, including primitive communism and/or utopian socialism, as poorly conceived and/or prone to disintegration in practise.^[4]

Communalism in the form described above is distinct from the predominant usage in South Asian forms of English: allegiance to a particular ethnic and/or religious group rather than to a broader society^{[5][6]} As such, this usage is synonymous with sectarianism and associated with communal violence

Contents

History

- Communalism in Christianity
 - The Latter Day Saint movement
 - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
 - The Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite)
- Secular communalist movements

Politics

- Libertarian municipalism
- Confederalism
- Policy and administration
- Participation in currently existing political systems

Economics

See also

References

External links

History

Communalism in Christianity

In this primarily religious-based community, the communist-like principle of Koinonia used by the early Christian Church as described in the Acts of the Apostles (4:32–35), which expressed the broad, general principle of "all things in common" (or, in some translations, "everything in common").

Communalistic tendencies were often present in radical Reformation-era Christian movements in Europe. (This was later argued most famously by the Marxian theorist Karl Kautsky: see, for example, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation*.^[7])

Some features of Waldensian movement and associated communes in northern Italy in the 13th and 14th centuries followed certain aspects of communal ownership.

Famously, Czech Taborites (radical section of the Hussite movement) in the 15th century attempted to build a society of shared property in the city of Tábor in south Bohemia.

Certain aspects and streams within the German Peasants' War in German areas of the 16th century, particularly Thomas Müntzer and the so-called Zwickau prophets had a strong social egalitarian spirit.

European Radical Reformation of Anabaptist and different groups of Schwarzenau Brethren started processes which later led to communal movements of Shakers, Hutterites and the Bruderhof.^[8]

The Anabaptist Münster Rebellion of 1534–1535 attempted to establish a society based on community of goods.

All of these post-Reformation attempts were led by biblical literalism in which they referred to previously mentioned passages from the Book of Acts. Radicalism of their social experiments was further heightened by chiliasm and ardent expectation of theocracy.

The Plymouth Colony was established by Separatist Pilgrims who had travelled from Europe in order to flee religious persecution and establish a religious community separate from the Church of England. The social and legal systems of the colony were tied to their religious beliefs as well as English Common Law. The presence of secular planters ("The Strangers") hired by the London merchant investors who funded their venture led to tension and factionalization in the fledgling settlement, especially because of the policies of land use and profit-sharing, but also in the way each group viewed workdays and holidays. This form of common ownership was the basis for the contract agreed upon by the venture and its investors. It was more akin to what we now think of as a privately held corporation, as the common ownership of property and profits was insured by the issuing of stock to the settlers and investors. It was also temporary with a division of the common property and profits scheduled to take place after seven years.

[I]n 1620. July 1.

1. The adventurers & planters doe agree, that every person that goeth being aged 16. years & upward, be rated at 10li., and ten pounds to be accounted a single share.
2. That he that goeth in person, and furnisheth him selfe out with 10li. either in money or other provissions, be accounted as haveing 20li. in stock, and in [th]e devission shall receive a double share.
3. The persons transported & [th]e adventurers shall continue their joynt stock & partnership togeather [th]e space of 7. years, (excepte some unexpected impedimente doe cause [th]e whole company to agree otherwise,) during which time, all profits & benefits that are gott by trade, traffick, trucking, working, fishing, or any other means of any person or persons, remaine still in ye comone stock until [th]e division.
4. That at their coming ther they chose out such a number of fitt persons, as may furnish their ships and boats for fishing upon [th]e sea; imploying the rest in their severall faculties upon ye land; as building houses, tilling, and planting ye ground, & making shuch comodities as shall be most use full for [th]e collonie.
5. That at [th]e end of [th]e 7. years, [th]e capitall & profits, viz. the houses, lands, goods and chatles, be equally divided betwixte ye adventurers, and planters; wch done, every man shall be free from other of them of any debt or detrimente concerning this adventure.
6. Whosoever cometh to [th]e colonie hereafter or putteth any into [th]e stock, shall at the ende of [th]e 7. years be alowed proportionably to [th]e time of his so doing.
7. He that shall carie his wife & children, or servants, shall be alowed for everie person now aged 16. years & upward, a single share in [th]e division, or if he provid them necessaries, a duble share, or if they be between 10. year old and 16., then 2. of them to be reconed for a person, both in transportation and division.

8. That such children as now goe, & are under ye age of ten years, have noe other shar in [th]e division, but 50. acers of unmanured land.
9. That such persons as die before [th]e 7. years be expired, their executors to have their parte or shaf at [th]e division, proportionably to [th]e time of their life in [th]e collonie.
10. That all such persons as are of this collonie, are to have their meate, drink, apparell, and all provissions out of [th]e comon stock & goods of [th]e said collonie.^[9]

Although each family controlled their own home and possessions, corn was farmed on a communal plot of land with the harvest divided equally amongst the settlers. The secular planters resented having to share their harvest with families whose religious beliefs so sharply conflicted with their own and as a result shirked work and resorted to thievery, whilst the Pilgrims resented the secular planters taking days off for holidays (especially Christmas) and their frequent carousing and revelry which often left them unfit for work. This conflict resulted in a corn production which was insufficient for the needs of the settlement. Because further supplies from their investors were withheld due to a dispute of the agreed upon payments from the settlement, starvation became imminent. As a result, for the planting of 1623, each family was temporarily assigned their own plot of land to tend with the right to keep all that was harvested from that plot, whether it be sufficient or not and all other production responsibilities and the goods produced therefrom would continue to remain as was originally agreed upon.^[10]

In the mid-17th century the True Levellers, followers of Gerrard Winstanley, believed in the concept of "levelling men's estates" in order to create equality. They also took over common land for what they believed to be the common good.

The Latter Day Saint movement

In the 19th century the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints^[11] attempted to live a form of Christian communalism called the Law of Consecration, using organizations described as the United Order. This was established under Joseph Smith^[12] and was first practiced in Kirtland, Ohio in the early 1830s. This originally helped Latter Day Saints with settling in Ohio and was to have helped with building and sustaining entire communities in Missouri, including Independence, Adam-ondi-Ahman, and Far West. Subsequent events, including the 1838 Mormon War, made it impossible for these communities to thrive.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

After the followers of Brigham Young settled in the Utah Territory, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) began to establish a series of community cooperatives, which were collectively called the United Order of Enoch. This program was used in at least 200 LDS communities, most of them in outlying rural areas, away from the central Mormon settlements. Most of the cooperatives lasted for only two or three years before returning to a more standard economic system. One of the last United Order cooperatives was located in Orderville, which continued until an 1885 antipolygamy law enforcement action under the Edmunds Act effectively ended it by jailing many of its leaders.

The Law of Consecration (as expressed via the LDS Church) was an attempt to base income on a families' actual needs and wants, not on their ability to produce. This was to be done through a strictly voluntary covenant; it was not deemed acceptable to establish economic equality through force (see also Agency (LDS Church)). The LDS church has never called this practice communism, instead it has formally stated that, due to matters of spirituality, the United Order and communism are materially opposite in purpose:

"Communism and all other similar isms bear no relationship whatever to the United Order. They are merely the clumsy counterfeits which Satan always devises of the Gospel plan [...]. The United Order leaves every man free to choose his own religion as his conscience directs. Communism destroys man's God-given free agency; the United Order glorifies it. Latter-day Saints cannot be true to their faith and lend aid, encouragement, or sympathy to any of these false philosophies [...]." (Message of the First Presidency, read by J. Reuben Clark Jr., 112th Annual General Conference, April 6, 1942.)

The Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite)

The Church of Jesus Christ, also known as the Cutlerites, are a church in the Latter Day Saint movement founded by Alpheus Cutler and headquartered in Independence, Missouri. It has operated a functioning United Order since 1913. The Church of Jesus Christ require membership in the United Order as a condition of membership in the church as The Church of Jesus Christ has reject tithing and all similar means of finance. They state that they are attempting to replicate, as far as possible, the idea of "all things common" as taught in the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Secular communalist movements

Communalist experiments throughout history have often developed bitter animosities as the parties disputed about the exact issues underlying the confusion over definitions discussed above. The Paris Commune was one such case.^[13]

"Libertarian communalism" is a severe and historically justified attempt to organize the political sphere fundamentally and democratically and to give it an ethical content. This is more than a political strategy. This is the desire to move from hidden or emerging democratic opportunities to a radical transformation of society, to a communitarian society focused on human needs, satisfying environmental requirements and developing a new ethic based on solidarity. This means a new definition of politics, a return to the primordial Greek meaning - the management of the community or the polis through the general meeting, on which the principal policy directions are formed, relying on reciprocity and solidarity

Communalism as a political philosophy was first coined by the well-known libertarian socialist author and activist Murray Bookchin as a political system to complement his environmental philosophy of social ecology.

While originally conceived as a form of social anarchism, he later developed Communalism into a separate ideology which incorporates what he saw as the most beneficial elements of left anarchism, Marxism, syndicalism, and radical ecology. Politically, Communalists advocate a stateless, classless, decentralized society consisting of a network of directly democratic citizens' assemblies in individual communities/cities organized in a confederal fashion.

This primary method used to achieve this is called libertarian municipalism which involves the establishment of face-to-face democratic institutions which are to grow and expand confederally with the goal of eventually replacing the nation-state. Unlike anarchists, Communalists are not opposed in principle to taking part in electoral politics – specifically municipal elections – as long as candidates are libertarian socialist and anti-statist in policy

Politics

Libertarian municipalism

Starting in the 1970s, Bookchin argued that the arena for libertarian social change should be the municipal level. In a 2001 interview he summarized his views this way:

"The overriding problem is to change the structure of society so that people gain power. The best arena to do that is the municipality — the city town, and village — where we have an opportunity to create a face-to-face democracy

In 1980 Bookchin used the term "libertarian municipalism", to describe a system in which libertarian institutions of directly democratic assemblies would oppose and replace the state with a confederation of free municipalities. Libertarian municipalism intends to create a situation in which the two powers — the municipal confederations and the nation-state — cannot coexist. Communalists hold that this is a method to achieve a liberated society

Libertarian municipalism is not seen merely as an effort to "take over" city and municipal councils to construct a more "environmentally friendly" government, but also an effort to transform and democratize these structures, to root them in popular assemblies, and to knit them together along confederal lines to appropriate a regional economy. Bookchin summarized this process in the saying "democratize the republic, then radicalize the democracy".

It is a dual power that contests the legitimacy of the existing state power. Communalists hold that such a movement should be expected to begin slowly, perhaps sporadically, in communities here and there that initially may demand only the ability to alter the structuring of society before enough interlinked confederations exist to demand the outright institutional power to replace the centralized state. The growing tension created by the emergence of municipal confederations would represent a confrontation between the state and the political realms. It is believed this confrontation can be resolved only after Communalism forms the new politics of a popular movement and ultimately captures the imagination of society at large.

Confederalism

Communalists see as equally important the need for confederation – the interlining of communities with one another through recallable delegates mandated by municipal citizens' assemblies and whose sole functions are coordinative and administrative. This is similar to the system of "nested councils" found in participatory politics

According to Bookchin, "Confederation has a long history of its own that dates back to antiquity and that surfaced as a major alternative to the nation-state. From the American Revolution through the French Revolution and the Spanish Revolution of 1936, confederalism constituted a major challenge to state centralism". Communalism is seen to add a radically democratic dimension to the contemporary discussions of confederation (e.g. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) by calling for confederations not of nation-states but of municipalities and of the neighborhoods of large cities as well as towns and villages.

Policy and administration

Communalists make a clear distinction between the concepts of *policy* and *administration*. This distinction is seen as fundamental to Communalist principles.

Policy is defined by being made by a community or neighborhood assembly of free citizens; administration on the other hand, is performed by confederal councils a level up from the local assemblies which are composed of mandated, recallable delegates of wards, towns, and villages. If particular communities or neighborhoods—or a minority grouping of them—choose to go their own way to a point where human rights are violated or where ecological destruction is permitted, the majority in a local or regional confederation would have the right to prevent such practices through its confederal council. This is explained not as a denial of democracy but the assertion of a shared agreement by all to recognize civil rights and maintain the ecological integrity of a region.

Policy-making remains local, but its administration is vested in the confederal network as a whole. The confederation is intended to be a community of communities based on distinct human rights and ecological imperatives.

Participation in currently existing political systems

One of the core distinctions between left anarchism and Communalism is that Communalists are not opposed in principle to taking part in currently existing political institutions until such a time as it is deemed unnecessary. Communalists see no issues with supporting candidates or political parties in local electoral politics—especially municipal elections—as long as prospective candidates are libertarian socialist and anti-statist in policy. The particular goal of this process is to elevate Communalists (or those sympathetic to Communalism) to a position of power so as to construct face-to-face municipal assemblies to maximize direct democracy and make existing forms of representative democracy increasingly irrelevant.

Economics

Communalism proposes that markets be abolished and that land and enterprises – such as private property – be placed increasingly in the custody of the community – more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their delegates in confederal councils. (However, Communalism makes allowances for personal property.) The planning of work, the choice of technologies, the management and distribution of goods are seen as questions that can only be resolved in practice. The maxim "from each according

to his ability, to each according to his need" is taken as a bedrock guide for an economically rational society, where all goods are designed and manufactured to have the highest durability and quality, a society where needs are guided by rational and ecological standards, and where the ancient notions of limit and balance replace the capitalist imperative of "grow or die".

In such a municipal economy – confederal, interdependent, and rational by ecological, not only technological, standards – Communalists hold that the special interests that divide people today into workers, professionals, managers, capitalist owners and so on would be melded into a general interest (a *social* interest) in which people see themselves as citizens guided strictly by the needs of their community and region rather than by personal proclivities and vocational concerns.^{[14][15]} Here, it is hoped, citizenship would come into its own, and rational as well as ecological interpretations of the public good would supplant class and hierarchical interests.

See also

- Cellular democracy
- Direct democracy
- Eco-communalism
- Green Mountain Anarchist Collective
- Inclusive democracy
- *The Law of Peoples*
- Libertarian municipalism
- Libertarian socialism
- *Monthly Review*
- Participatory politics
- Social ecology
- Democratic confederalism
- Christian socialism
- Communitarianism
- Egalitarian community
- Harmony Society
- Jesuit Reductions
- Mertonian norms

References

1. Random House Unabridged Dictionary Second Edition, 1998, New York
2. Bookchin, Murray (2006-08-27). "What is Communalism? The Democratic Dimension of Anarchism"(http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/bookchin/cmm12.mcw.html). *dwardmac.pitzer.edu*. Retrieved 2017-08-25.
3. See, for example, the following entries in the 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* Ryan, J.A. (1908); "Communism"(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04179a.htm>) and Ryan, J.A. (1912). "Socialistic Communities"(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14069a.htm>) (Access date: 12 September 2014).
4. *The Collected Works of Karl Marx* Moscow,
5. RH Webster
6. "Communalism" (<http://www.countercurrents.org/communalism.htm>). *www.countercurrents.org* Retrieved 2017-08-25.
7. "Karl Kautsky: Communism in Central Europe (1897)"(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1897/europe/index.htm>). Marxists.org. 2003-12-23 Retrieved 2011-12-29.
8. "Biography of Eberhard Arnold"(<http://www.eberhardarnold.com/biography.html>). *www.eberhardarnold.com* Retrieved 2017-12-01
9. Bradford, William, Of Plymouth Plantation, Chapter 6, pp.56–58
10. Bradford, William, Of Plymouth Plantation, Book 2, 1620–1623, pp. 110–186

11. This organization was called the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" at this time; other formal names were Church of Christ (1829-1834), Church of the Latter Day Saints (1834-1838), then the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" in 1838. Today, multiple groups claim to be the continuation or successor of Smith's original church, the largest of which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Salt Lake City, Utah; see [Latter Day Saint movement](#) and [List of sects in the Latter Day Saint movement](#)
12. [Section 42](#)
13. Gonzalo J. Sánchez, *Organizing independence: the artists federation of the Paris Commune and its ...*
14. Brown, L. Susan. [The Politics of Individualism](#) Black Rose Books (2002)
15. Brown, L. Susan. [Does Work Really Work? \(http://www.spunk.org/texts/writers/brown/sp001735.html\)](http://www.spunk.org/texts/writers/brown/sp001735.html)
 - *The politics of social ecology: libertarian municipalism* by Janet Biehl and Murray Bookchin, Black Rose Books Ltd., 1998, ISBN 978-1-55164-100-3
 - Paul F. Downton, *Ecopolis: architecture and cities for a changing climate: Volume 1 of Future City*, Springer, 2008, p. 157, ISBN 1-4020-8495-1, ISBN 978-1-4020-8495-9
 - *Neither Washington Nor Stowe: Common Sense For The Working Vermonter*, by David Van Deusen, Sean West, and the [Green Mountain Anarchist Collective](#) (NEFAC-VT), Catamount Tavern Press, 2004.

External links

- [The Institute for Social Ecology](#)
- [Murray Bookchin's overview of Libertarian Municipalism](#)
- [New Compass.net](#) Communalism political activist group.
- [Communalism: A Liberatory Alternative](#)
-  Media related to [Communalism](#) at Wikimedia Commons
- [African Communalism](#)

Retrieved from '<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Communalism&oldid=831483135>

This page was last edited on 20 March 2018, at 20:35.

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.