

# Paris 1871 and Fatsa 1979: revisiting the transition problem

Onur Acaroglu

University of Birmingham

## Abstract

This article approaches transition as a problem on its own right, through the cases of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Fatsa 'Commune' of 1979. Transition has received scant attention as an object of theoretical inquiry. Prior to Etienne Balibar's suggestion that the history of the mode of production occurs at the intersections between political struggles and economic contradictions, a theory of transition had not been explicitly explored. Problematizing transition can reveal what is 'ruptural' about ruptural moments, indicating the limitations of the prevalent mode of production. This investigation builds on the Althusserian theory of temporal lag, and considers aspects of the cases in order to translate its insights into the historical events, and conversely to develop theoretical initiative based on findings. An examination of outstanding figures and events in the cases suggests that they can inform a theory of transition and address certain challenges of contemporary radicalism.

This article considers the notion of transition beyond the capitalist present; a discussion which necessitates a consideration of time (past, present, future). It does so from our current neoliberal context, in which both the past and the future are denied. As such, it seeks to re-open and recover the notion of a different past, as part of a process through which we might think about ways in which to envisage and construct a different, post-capitalist, future. This is conducted using the concept of *décalage*, or 'dislocation', as developed by Althusser and Balibar, and through an exploration of two instances of (defeated) transition: the Paris Commune and the Fatsa 'Commune'. The paper proceeds as follows. First, the paper considers transition, and especially defeated transitions, and the lasting lessons and effects that such defeats have beyond the present within which they occur. Next, the paper sets out a framework influenced by the work of Althusser and Balibar. Elaborating upon the concept of 'dislocation', the paper adopts a framework in which different aspects of capitalist totality (economic, political, ideological) each have different temporalities, which nevertheless combine unevenly. This creates the possibility for transition or change to occur in one domain, whilst pressures arising in others might have a constraining effect. Transition, therefore, has the potential to be both enabled *and* constrained by the 'dislocation' between different domains of capitalism. This framework is subsequently used to consider, first, the Paris Commune, and then the Fatsa 'Commune'. In considering the Paris Commune, the paper argues, we witness an event which, rather than acting as a template for social change, instead illustrates the *possibility* of rupture, itself necessary for radical social change. Next, in turning to the Fatsa 'Commune', we see how experiments at problem-solving acted to politicize the Fatsa municipality, despite the unamenable economic environment within which these occurred. Finally, the paper concludes with an assessment of transition, and the way in which historical

discussions of transition speak to the present. As the historical episodes considered herein illustrate, transition is the result of ruptural moments that have a connection to the future. Yet, these future-moments can nonetheless occur, and be seen, in the present and the past. Likewise, progress (towards the future) can also be reversed. Transition, therefore, is non-linear; begging the question of how to determine an advance. To this question the paper posits a criterion of communal and direct political activity; whilst nevertheless noting that such activity is also, perhaps unavoidably, surrounded, constrained, and repressed by the capitalist world system within which it occurs.

## **Beyond the present, and the role of transition**

Surveying our socially-constructed relation to time in the twenty-first century, François Hartog (2013, p. 8) contends that 'presentism' is the prevalent disposition. This refers to a mindset whereby the 'present' loses its relativity, as both the past and the future blend into a congealed, unchanging moment. The main culprit responsible for this loss of a future horizon is neoliberalism. Its deep sedimentation as a political project and economic dogma, as well as a 'common sense' way of relating to the world, is coupled with the collapse and acquiescence of real socialisms. Contemporary populisms that idealize a mythical past ironically also benefit from this effacement of history from the present. This is because populism claims to offer an alternative to the bleakness of the neoliberal imagination, while at the same time remaining fully immersed in neoliberal precarity as the condition of its emergence. Enzo Traverso (2016, p. 62), another historian of historiography, laments that 'Today, in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, the past is revisited almost exclusively through the prism of nationalism'. He refers to the brutal nationalisms and right-wing authoritarian regimes throughout the ex-Soviet geography. But this can be extended to much of the globe as the financial crisis of 2008 continues to reverberate across social and political life. It is this erasure of history, therefore, that is constitutive of neoliberalism. This includes a timeless fluctuation of markets; without a 'prognostic structure', as Reinhart Koselleck (2004, p. 95) puts it. On this basis, therefore, this article seeks to recover 'historical time': as a contested terrain, as a contribution to a critical engagement with the question of how to consider change within neoliberal capitalism, and as an important task of historical materialist theory.

On this question of historical time, we should perhaps begin by noting that the previous century is more distant than one might think. The October Revolution, as Eric Hobsbawm (1994, p. 55) argued, was *the* epochal event that set the stage, and created the dichotomy of capitalism and socialism, and their variants. This is the central dividing line running through twentieth century modernity. This division between a notionally communist East and capitalist West, moreover, served also to prevent a notion of historical permanence from emerging. Neither side could be certain of their longevity, creating in turn an uncertain future that was marked by the constant potential for change. As such, the twentieth century had a future-oriented outlook in which the potential for transition was present. The twenty-first century, in

contrast, appears to be characterized by an absence of such prospects.

In order to help restore the 'future' as a variable in Left theory and practice, this article proposes to revisit the theme of transition. As we shall see, transition is imminent to society. Yet, the article rejects the notion of clear-cut distinctions between the past and present. Instead, moving beyond a present-focused notion of time, the article instead develops a consideration of multiple temporalities. This is developed through a consideration of two case studies – the Paris Commune and the Fatsa 'Commune'. Here we see different social groups operating according to disparate temporal logics. Such an approach allows us to theorize transition, both as an idea of, and a lesson for, social and historical transformation. In addition, it allows us to open up the contemporary (insurmountable and monolithic) present, and thereby disrupt the constraints upon revolutionary practice that our current notion of the present creates. In this sense, these historical episodes offer the potential through which to consider both socialist transition and social processes of temporality. We should note, however, that the article does not present a detailed historical comparative study, but rather seeks to tease out the theoretical implications of each historical case.

In focusing on transition, we immediately come upon the problem that there remains scant writing on social transformation that explicitly refers to the process of transition (although see the recent discussions in Rahnema, 2017). This might be a result of a more general reticence to provide, in the words of Marx, 'recipes for the cook-shops of the future'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, historical materialism is typically considered to be a critical enterprise grounded in the concrete reality of the mode of production, and therefore averse to more speculative ideas about the future (Engels & Marx, 1932, p. 18; Marx, 1990, p. 175). It remains possible, however, for a theory of transition to be constructed without prescribed or preconceived blueprints. Such an approach, this paper argues, focuses on highlighting or conceptualizing the potential for rupture across space and time. In doing so, we can draw on the Althusserian concept of 'temporal lag' or temporal dislocation (*décalage*), as well as the work of Althusser's student, Étienne Balibar, who is noted for, 'thinking the *problem* of transition with greater care and precision' (Toscano, 2014, pp. 764–5; see also Althusser, 1970, pp. 62–63; Balibar, 1970, p. 223). The article focuses on two specific moments of rupture: the well-known Paris Commune; and the less known Fatsa 'Commune' of Turkey. The former has been central to the development of Marx's historical materialism, providing a reminder of the complexity of history as lived social practice. Fatsa, in contrast, whilst resulting in a similarly tragic end, was nevertheless less comprehensive in its attempt to rearrange social relations in a socialist direction. The case studies are chosen, in part, as they illustrate the contingency of the given historical moment. In addition, they provide an opportunity for us to consider those transitions which appear to have produced a rupture with the present; albeit one that has not resulted in the transformation beyond a capitalist order. That is, to a degree they both represent a form of failure, or defeat. Yet defeat itself is not straightforward. On this point, Badiou (2010, pp. 24–6) is especially pertinent. He identifies three forms of defeat in the vast history of attempts to establish societies based on mutual free

association, two of which are of interest for the present discussion. The first form of defeat sees a fleeting moment of political power, followed by a heavy-handed counter revolution in which sustained repression is the response to those who have sought to subvert the institutions of the status quo. The second type of defeat is that in which broad and disparate social movements compel the state into a defensive position, yet eventually retreat in the face of a re-emboldened established order. In doing so, however, they also leave a legacy, especially in the cultural realm, that can have an effect beyond the moment in which they occur. This second type can be seen, for instance, in the experience of the 1968 revolts – most of which were followed by right wing electoral victories, as well as a decline in both Socialist and Communist votes – but which nevertheless left a lasting legacy in cultural terms (Wilson, 1969, p. 539).<sup>2</sup> The case studies discussed in this article initially appear to conform to the first type of failed transition described above: a moment of power, followed by repression. At the fall of the Paris Commune, during the ‘Bloody Week’ of 21–28 May 1871, it is estimated that the Versailles army executed up to ten thousand communards (Horne, 2007, p. 415). Similarly, the coastal district of Fatsa, Turkey, was put down with disproportionate violence, as an army advanced upon the civilian government in the same way that you might expect it would repel a foreign invasion. Both cases, however, have also had a cultural legacy. It would therefore be inaccurate to classify them in simple terms, as exhibiting the failure to achieve political power. In this sense, it is possible to consider both of these ‘failures’ in terms of our second type of defeat – in which the collective memory of the event has left a legacy that is influential upon the state. This can be seen, for instance, in the way in which the Fatsa ‘Commune’ acquired the name which it was given; initially as a disparaging label applied by the stridently anti-communist state (Müftüoğlu, 2011). Thus, journalist Vehbi Ersan (2014) claims that the term Commune was coined by a hostile press, along with military courts referring to the founding of a ‘Commune’ in Fatsa, with the intention of undermining its authority. Whilst it is unclear whether the reference was derived from the earlier Paris Commune, the title certainly suggests that the memory of the Paris insurrection could still invoke rage and fear among functionaries of the state. In this sense, the Paris Commune is an event that it is as equally ‘historical’ as it is ‘actual’; in the sense that a certain disposition for rebellion is immediately ‘present’ despite having transpired in the distant past. It is to these themes that we shall return in the course of this article.

### **Contingencies and dislocation**

The Paris Commune presents a fascinating snapshot of the intertwining of both the granular and the supranational levels of transition. Whilst the Commune did not abolish the pre-existing social order as such, we might still conceptualize it as a process of reconfiguring social reproduction, in a move away from market imperatives and towards principles of voluntary association and solidarity (Ross, 2016, p. 1). Ross’s fascinating account of the many neglected sides of the Commune (such as artistic developments and gender relations) has the merit of capturing this experience as a fleeting intervention into the usual course of events. This forms an uneasy transit between the past and the present; as a historical idea and lesson through which to locate the non-contemporaneous in the contemporary. Events, outcomes or experiments

appear to occur in a way that is not of their time; speaking to the present and the future, yet being incongruous with the context in which they do occur. This incongruity, we might conclude, results from an apparent mismatch between social life and its productive underpinnings. As Marx (1959, p. 41) put it: '[man] is at home when he is not working, and not working when he is at home'. Capitalist production processes systematically alienate and prevent the potential vibrancy of human creativity; creating a temporal tension between the future (that which is possible) and the present (the social relations of production, which constrain).

This mismatch represents a contradictory expression of the real relationship between actualized events and productive underpinnings. Further, by 'productive underpinnings' I refer to the classical schema of the mode of production, comprised of productive forces and relations of production, and the effective control of such forces (for more detailed contemporary elaborations of this schema, see Althusser, 1971; Callinicos, 1990). All societies need to rely on production for survival. Perhaps central to historical materialism, moreover, is the need to adopt a theoretical framework that remains focused on this need for material reproduction as the basis for analysis (Althusser, 1971, p. 2; Marx, 1968, pp. 8, 10–18). This is not synonymous with identifying an economic core that is behind every occurrence. Rather, it denotes a concern with placing the levels along which society reproduces itself and culturally flourishes within a contextual totality. Thus, social phenomena can be explained with due specificity, precisely by considering their location within processes of social reproduction. Likewise, and in contrast to much of orthodox (or, vulgar) Marxism, it is possible to develop a theory of transition that can account for different (post-capitalist) experiments and alternatives in space and time, without reducing their occurrence to preconceived stages of historical or material development. The brand of (crude) Marxism targeted here – in which stages of social change are expected to unfold in a predictable fashion – can be illustrated by way of a historical example. The decoupling of the Communist movement from the social democracy of the Second International was a political break in the spirit of the non-linearity of social development. While the Bolsheviks called for a government of Soviets, their erstwhile social democratic and Menshevik foes expected socialism to come to fruition through a (predictable, linear) protracted process of reform. In his pamphlet on the 'Renegade Kautsky', referring to the prominent German social democrat, Lenin (1974) lampoons his view that democracy under capitalism is a 'presocialist democracy'. Insisting on the need to proceed from a bourgeois democracy to a qualitatively different one, Lenin champions the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which was but a transformation of democracy into one compatible with the goals of socialism. This 'river of fire' between bourgeois democracy and its socialist counterpart, as historian Ellen Wood (1986, p. 53) has called it, is a structural obstacle for the survival of any attempt at social transformation, and its hallmark is precisely the untimeliness of its disruption. On the surface, this was a historic debate about the strategies of revolutionary overthrow and gradual reform. However, it is also a perennial sign of particular conceptions of history. Wood's (2002) research on the transition to capitalism has thus shed light on the haphazard nature of this transition: capitalism as it is understood today was not present as an embryonic form within pre-capitalist

societies where trade and commerce existed. Rather, it had agrarian roots where the dispossession of direct producers coincided with a unique political system, its possibility turning to an imperative through a combination of factors. In sum, the transition to capitalism was not conjured into being by technical, impersonal processes, but came about as a historic mode of production against the odds. Similarly, as Lenin had also grasped, the transition to socialism, while existing as a possibility in the midst of the social formation, is not an automatic tendency and cannot be reformed into existence.

Regardless of the immediate result, therefore, the October Revolution conversely showed the temporal complexity that is inherent to any historical conjuncture, as it came about in an underdeveloped context while revolutions in continental Europe failed to materialize. It is perhaps in this way that we can consider episodes of transition (defeated or not) to be experiments in alternative modes of production, to the extent that what is now the given mode of production was also experimental. This has profound theoretical implications despite their not resulting in a more absolute transformation to a post-capitalist society.

The concept of *dislocation* (*décalage*), a byword of the unique structuralist Marxism of Althusser and Balibar (1970, p. 17) is useful here as a framework through which to explore these kinds of transitional anachronisms, in terms of deviant post-capitalist forms within a wider capitalist context. Translated from the original *décalage*, 'dislocation' broadly corresponds to a discrepancy or lag that is intrinsic to the social formation. The social formation, the centrepiece of the social theory of Louis Althusser and Balibar, refers to the 'totality of instances articulated on the basis of a determinate mode of production' (1970, p. 207). 'Instances' make up the granular units of social practice (Althusser, 1970, p. 58; Resch, 1992, p. 36). Processes of production constituting the social formation are made up of economic, political and ideological practices, formulated in Balibar's conception as part of a multilayered transition between modes of production (Balibar, 1970, p. 223; Brewster, 1970, p. 316). Balibar contends that porous layers of the social formation undergo simultaneous yet autonomous changes resulting in a lag between them, where the occurrences in one field are not immediately visible in another. Dislocation is therefore a key concept that comprises the temporal differences along different layers of social reproduction, recognizing their differential patterns and autonomous logics.

Althusser and Balibar elaborate their criticism of historicism in terms of dislocation, targeting what Althusser (1970, p. 94) proposed to call an 'essential section', encapsulating an intellectual operation in which a vertical break is made at any moment in historical time, a break in the present such that all the elements of the whole are in an immediate relationship with one another, a relationship that immediately expresses their internal essence.

Althusser rejects the notion of a unitary historical essence discernible in all facets of a vertical cut in time. Such a (linear) historicist framework loses sight of the internal differentiation within

each instance. Developments in different directions *can* take place in the present, in contrast to those who would posit a linear historical direction. This has the potential, therefore, to create contradictory, incongruous or seemingly incompatible developments and events at any one point in time. For instance, we might see a progressive political transformation develop within a context characterized by an oligarchic, stagnant economy, as seen in Fatsa 1979. Similarly, we might witness rapid industrial development alongside, and in the service of, a monolithic clique that stifles all semblances of popular rule, as in the Stalinist period of the Soviet Union. Consequently, we should reject any notion that transition emerges directly from the functioning of particular types of social structures. Instead, we anticipate an intersection between political struggle and economic contradictions. It is through these contradictions, moreover, that the history of the capitalist mode of production bursts into the lived praxis of social history (Balibar 293).

With this way of considering *multiple* (non-linear) temporalities, it is possible to conceptualize different structures of production in such a way that does not presuppose or expect a correlation between particular modes of production and particular political outcomes (Balibar, 1970, p. 301). Political formations and social formations develop historically over time; but not in a way that one presupposes or determines the other. This, we might consider to be a form of dislocation. between the political, economic and ideological practices and their interplay during moments of transition. This, however, raises the question of the degree to which the economic domain is determinate, or whether a materialist approach is jettisoned altogether. In seeking to respond to this question, Althusser (2005, pp. 201–2) replies that the complexity of the multiple levels are in themselves the unity, through which the economic domain indirectly asserts itself. In other words, the ‘last instance’ determination of the economy is always delayed in the pregivenness of the social formation; in fact, the ‘lonely hour of the last instance never comes’ (Althusser, 2005, p. 113). It is, therefore, futile to seek a ‘core’ from which the mode of production emanates. Moreover, the topological model of base and superstructure is ‘metaphorical’ for Althusser (2014, pp. 236–245), since their theoretical separation cannot be conceived empirically. Relations of production are superior to the superstructure of law/state and ideology, yet they are co-constitutive when considered empirically (Althusser, 2014, p. 779).

This echoes the dialectical view of social relations set out in classical Marxism: the categories in question are held constant when being discussed, but in reality should always be considered as part of a totality in motion. Marx (1993, p. 215) had remarked that the concepts in the *Grundrisse* were presented in an ‘idealist manner’, showing an awareness that the parts that make up the structure are taken up separately. Yet this is done for analytical purposes. In reality, even if it were possible to isolate different parts as if frozen in time, it would still be unfeasible to encounter them – money and capital, in his case – in ‘pure’ form, as they lapse between forms depending on the relations within which they are embedded. While Marx did not write an explicit treatise on the dialectical method as such, his key works attests to the

emphasis on process against stasis, or circulation as opposed to immobility (Harvey, 2010, pp. 11–12). Ironically for a thinker long held to be a rigid structuralist, Althusser's theory also deploys a similar fluidity in its theorization of the coextensive economic, political and ideological instances.

In light of these observations, the Commune is a perplexing limit case. It is transitional along three practices. First, the Commune represents a transition at the economic domain, witnessing structural change in the mode of production and the regime of surplus extraction. Second, it witnesses change at the political domain, with a transformation in the nature of state power. Third, at the ideological domain, the Commune represents, in a general sense, the (counter) hegemonic confrontation of the worldviews of the preceding epoch (Balibar, 1970, pp. 293–302; Toscano, 2014, p. 765). The case studies that we discuss below, therefore, provide an important instance through which to consider the questions of temporal lag, dislocation, and transition, each as developed above, in concrete cases where we see most advanced forms of transition emerge, albeit in a form that is eventually defeated. As we shall see, crucial to these historical processes is the interaction between each of these three domains of capitalist totality; and each with their own temporality. It is to these empirical developments, therefore, that we turn now to consider.

## **From Paris to Fatsa**

The history of the Paris Commune can be traced back to the storming of the Bastille in 1789 by the urban-dwelling commoners of the Third Estate (Wood, 2002, pp. 12–13). The decades following this fall of the monarchy saw tumultuous cycles of revolution and restoration. The significance of the event of 1789, however, was its demonstration of the will of the commoners and their efforts to act as their own representatives. Indeed, the same aspiration could be seen in the June Days of 1848, when a wave of working class unrest shattered the political edifice. Yet this failed to institute a radical democratic and social republic. At the height of the Commune this idea was revived. As a police official astutely observed: 'I attribute all of the events which have just come to pass in Paris to the clubs and the reunions ... to the desire of those people to live better than their condition allows' (Wolfe, 1965, p. 162).

In terms of the historical background, the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 had recently concluded with a humiliating defeat for the French side. This resulted in a host of punitive measures that only just fell short of the direct occupation of Paris. Napoleon III had been captured and the Second French Empire had collapsed. This led to the creation of the Third Republic, with Adolphe Thiers as its head executive. Due to the siege of Paris, the National Assembly had established its capital at Tours, later reconvening at Bordeaux and finally settling at Versailles following the armistice. During the war Paris had been defended by the increasingly politicized National Guard, which was autonomous from the regular army. The Central Committee of the

National Guard was dominated by figures from the Left, and posed an existential threat to the republic by claiming legitimacy as the new government. For this reason, Thiers attempted to recapture the cannons, which had been moved by the National Guard to Montmartre. Whilst this was partly an attempt to regain territorial control, it was also a matter of restoring investor confidence. As Thiers explained:

“Businessmen were going around constantly repeating that the financial operations would never be started until all those wretches were finished off and their cannons taken away. An end had to be put to all this, and then one could get back to business.” (cited in Merriman, 2014, p. 88)

The planned occupation of Paris was, however, thwarted by the working class population. On the 18th of March 1871, the National Guard ordered the seizure of Hôtel de Ville, where the proceedings of the short-lived Commune began with an assembly composed by factions of Blanquists, Jacobins, and members of the International Workingmen’s Association (Horne, 2007, pp. 296–7).

While constantly threatened by a continuation of hostilities from Versailles, the Commune was able to enact ground-breaking measures. This included the provision of pensions to widows, regardless of whether they had been married (Horne, 2007, p. 331). Other initiatives included decrees that limited the salaries of government officials to the level of ordinary workers. This was followed by an attempted ‘nationalisation’ of the workshops abandoned by the bourgeoisie. The separation of the Church and the state was an objective consistently focused on, to the extent that religious icons were removed from schools, state funding was withdrawn, and property was confiscated from the Church. Additionally, steps were taken to ensure equal pay for equal hours’ work and an end to competition between male and female workers. Notwithstanding the male majority of the ruling bodies, socialist women such as school teacher Louise Michel were active participants in debates. Also, as the National Guard did not have a formal leader, instead being a people’s militia, a person such as the Polish republican exile, Dombrowski, could lead a defence against the protracted offensive from Versailles. The lack of a formal head of the army, or a centrally formalized command structure, was an indication of the improvised egalitarianism of the communards. It was also, for many observers, a ‘fatal lack’ (Hazan, 2015, p. 111). Thus, the regular army troops that entered Paris on 21 May 1871 were far more experienced than the National Guard that sought to defend the Commune, regardless of the determination of the latter. The final scenes of skirmishing took place at the Père Lachaise cemetery, where the battle left all but 147 communards dead. Those who survived the fighting were subsequently marched to what is now known as the Communards’ Wall, where they were executed and buried in a mass grave. The Versailles forces, who had been allowed by Chancellor Bismarck to bolster their side beyond the terms of the armistice, acted with such brutality that *La France*, a conservative journal, would remark ‘These are no longer soldiers accomplishing a duty’ (quoted in Hazan,

2015, p. 116).

In reflecting on the decisions that had led to the defeat of the Paris Commune, both Marx (1977, p. 592), and later Lenin (1974, pp. 475–8), would point to, first, the decision to consolidate the position in Paris rather than march on Versailles, and, second, the failure to seize the Central Bank. Despite initial reservations, and personal bitterness with the French section of the International, Marx had recognized the gravity of a leftist takeover of France. In his view, had the Central Bank been captured, the Commune could have reached a favourable compromise with Versailles (Marx, 1977, p. 594). This was also crucial in Lenin's political development, leading him to strongly advocate such centralizing measures following the October Revolution in Russia 1917, and also prompting him to caution against a repeat of the 'excessive magnanimity' shown by the Communards (Lenin, 1974, p. 475). These lamentations, however, reduce the event of the Commune to a simple question of political power. Moreover, they are not necessarily correct. Capturing the Central Bank could have also provoked a direct Prussian intervention. Likewise, an attempt at political centralization could have stifled the innovative measures and discussions of the multi-coloured Commune councils. This is why, in studying such cases, we need to differentiate between different domains, and their different temporalities, within the social order.

Badiou (2010, pp. 133–150) refers to the Paris Commune as a 'political declaration', and a deviation from the prevailing left strategy of a march to power within the existing state. In doing so, he refers to an example where the National Guard exhorts the working class of Paris to take public matters into their own hands. This represents a significant moment of social and political transformation, as a central institution of authority invokes the autonomy of the citizens, thereby momentarily ceasing to be an overbearing power over them. This also attests to the political vivacity of the Commune. Indeed, the Commune was centred around a council, but that council cannot be neatly described as a representative political body. Rather, it is external to formal power, yet at the same time bent on taking state power. Badiou's (2010, p. 150) claim, therefore, is that the Left ought to rediscover such a type of practice, which he terms, 'dis-incorporation'. Thus, to reduce the evaluation of political activity to the attempt to seize state power impoverishes the theoretical and practical significance of events such as the Commune. A case in point is this account of the spontaneous deliberations in the streets during the communal days:

"One enters, one leaves, one circulates, one gathers. The laughter of Parisian children interrupts political discussions. Approach the groups, listen. A whole people entertain profound matters. For the first time workers can be heard exchanging their appreciations on things that hitherto only philosophers had tackled. There is no trace of supervisors; no police agents obstruct the street hindering passers-by. The security is perfect." (2010, pp. 176–177)

Such a transformation of everyday proletarian life evinces important ideological changes. At

the same time, such an experience makes visible the working class, through the very process of negating its reduction to wage-labour.

In considering the Paris Commune, it is perhaps not so much the content of the discussion, or the potential political affiliations of the workers, that matters. Rather, it is the frame in which the Communards defy the social stratification imposed upon them – the sheer impudence of the act – that etches the 72 days of the Commune into the global memory of social struggles. These minute temporal steps forward, towards a social expropriation of the established ways of producing and doing things, is subsequently invoked across space and time. The contention here, however, is not simply that a heroic and somewhat romanticized image of the Communards is a source of motivation from a past struggle. Rather, it is that the Commune *was* the future in the ways it subverted the ancient regime and it *is* immediately present in all similar episodes of rebellion.

In the creation of the totality of social life every moment of production is one of reproduction. Society utilizes means transmitted from previous moments to recreate itself. A theory of transition must, therefore, be mindful of the novelty of every moment of social production. For this reason, Balibar (1970, p. 273) is right in arguing that every turn of social relations requires its own explanation, rather than being seen as a reified, uniform repetition. The practices of the Central Committee of the National Guard, for instance, do not constitute a blueprint for ideal measures (the opposite may even be said for some aspects). Rather, they signal the radical novelty that any revolutionary project must engender. A theory that relegates the lived praxis of history to schematic models would be shorn of a conceptual lens through which to make sense of radical contingencies, not to mention incapable of informing political strategy. In relation to this, Harvey (2000, p. 173) astutely observes that historic events like the establishment of the Commune represent a utopian process that is paradoxically concretized since it ceases to be a Utopia in the traditional sense of a fantasy: happy and impossibly perfect. This aspect of the Paris Commune is also the reason why Marx finds in it the making of history in all its rough novelty. Such an approach therefore goes beyond the determinism and teleology of more orthodox conceptions of social transition and change.

This commitment to a non-teleological, non-deterministic approach towards transition can also be seen in the address given by Marx to the International Workingmen's Association at the time. Here he advised workers not to attempt an insurrection, especially with the Prussian occupation underway:

“Any attempt at upsetting the new government in the present crisis, when the enemy is almost knocking at the doors of Paris, would be a desperate folly. The French workmen must perform their duties as citizens; but, at the same time, they must not allow themselves to be swayed by the national souvenirs of 1792, as the French peasant allowed themselves to be deluded by the national souvenirs of the First Empire. They have not to recapitulate the past,

but to build up the future. Let them calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities of republican liberty, for the work of their own class organization. It will gift them with fresh herculean powers for the regeneration of France, and our common task — the emancipation of labour. Upon their energies and wisdom hinges the fate of the republic.” (Marx, 1993, pp. 16–17)

In providing this advice, Marx appears to have been preoccupied with the preservation and improvement of the republic, and the working class as its rejuvenating citizenry. He advises prudence and patient work to consolidate republican liberties, with a view to an eventual ‘regeneration of France’. In a letter to Kugelmann, Marx (1968) comments on the uprising as an example of adventurism; in which the movement would risk overstressing itself, which would in turn result in widespread demoralization. In sum, the onset and initial outbreak of the insurrection met with a lukewarm reception from Marx, at best.

On the other hand, the same letter also contains a crucial point, one which leads Marx to some revisions in his theory of historical change:

“World history would indeed be very easy to make, if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favourable chances. It would, on the other hand, be a very mystical nature, if ‘accidents’ played no part. These accidents themselves fall naturally into the general course of development and are compensated again by other accidents. But acceleration and delay are very dependent upon such ‘accidents’, which included the ‘accident’ of the character of those who at first stand at the head of the movement.”

Marx therefore places emphasis on the accidental nature of historical change. In doing so, moreover, he suggests that the defiance of what is realistic may open a window of new possibilities. As a result, Marx decides to support wholeheartedly the development of this experiment at self-governance, despite initial reservations about the ‘ripeness’ of the historical conditions. In fact, he moves precisely to commend the audacity of the Commune, remarking: ‘the great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence’ (1993, p. 38). Here the organizational framework of the Commune is the aspect that distinguishes it as a *transitional* reorganization that can be a precursor to more lasting social transformation. This perspective is more clearly spelled out in a draft of the *Civil War in France* (Marx, 1977, pp. 556–557):

“The Commune does not do away with the class struggles, through which the working classes strive to the abolition of all classes . . . but it affords the rational medium in which that class struggle can run through its different phases in the most rational and humane way.”

This is therefore a theorization of social struggles as subjects in the flow of history. It avoids the closure of teleology by incorporating the ‘accidental’, such as the improvisation of a Commune

in the core of the capitalist world. In addition, social and political subjects make up a part of the opened trajectory of history, not guided by a discernible logic (Marx, 1968). In this way, historical events make up a succession of existential and political choices that alter the horizon of possibility. The Commune, in particular, was a moment of rupture where local autonomy coincided with an internationalist vision of mutual aid and solidarity. This should not be viewed as a moral corrective to the capitalist system; but rather as the political strategy at the core of a revolutionary unravelling (Harvey, 2000, p. 174; Ross, 2016, pp. 5–7).

The legacy that the Paris Commune had inherited was riddled with contradictions of a political and ideological nature. In the economic realm, revolutionary turmoil had eradicated all traces of feudalism, and refashioned cities with the interests of the traffic (figuratively and literally) of unbridled capitalist commerce. Yet at the same time, Paris was engulfed by a rural-dominated assembly that was close to advocating the return of a monarchy.

The Paris Commune also highlights the potential for rapid progressive change. For instance, the effective organization of the women's union, as part of the Paris Commune, demonstrates the achievements that the empowerment of those that face a double class and gender oppression could accomplish within months.<sup>3</sup> Founded at the height of the Commune, the *Women's Union for the Defense of Paris and Aid to the Wounded* called for ground-breaking measures such as the abolition of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children, and socialized education and day-care. It also set a precedent by involving thousands of women across the Parisian *arrondissements*, in areas of work that had been traditionally composed of males (Gogol, 2012, p. 67; Jellinek, 1937, p. 400; Ross, 2016, pp. 26–27). These achievements were particularly noteworthy when we consider the male-dominated nature of the radical scene at the time.<sup>4</sup> One of the founders of one of the women's unions was the Russian, Elisabeth Dmitrieff. She had been involved in the Narodnik movement and was a collaborator of Marx. She took part actively in the affairs of the Commune and was recognized as a citizen on par with all communards. The Women's Union thus challenged the established asymmetric dichotomies of local-international, male-female, private-public, and even immigrant-national.

The involvement of the popular masses and the inclusion of their aspirations in the day-to-day workings of the Commune both dismantled the structures of political power and inequality and set the foundations of a social revolution. Marx's initial reservations about the insurrection shows the way that the ideological and political domains, with their respective contents and processes, contrasted with revolutionary expectations or predictions. The democratization of decision-making signalled a hegemonic shift away from hierarchical authority, marking a watershed moment where the institutions of the *ancien regime* were rendered outdated and redundant. Additionally, the disruptions of social and political produced by the Paris Commune manifested themselves immediately at the domain of production, albeit at an embryonic level. To provide an illustrative example, the changes that were witnessed in gender relations during

the Commune directly affected the demography of the process of production, casting light on the question of domestic labour and its remuneration. The contribution of Louise Michel to the Commune, as a founder of the Women's Union, and also as a socialist firebrand, helped to bring out these tendencies (Horne, 2007, pp. 298–9). Michel had been an illegitimate child herself, and by participating in the deliberations and defence of the Commune, she at once transformed the domain of its social revolutionary endeavours towards a dissolution of taken-for-granted familial arrangements. In doing so, she additionally redefined the character of the Commune. Indeed, the Commune's revolutionary totality was made up of, and validated by, such individual journeys of emancipation. By way of the example of Michel and many other unnamed participants, who shaped and were shaped by Communard aspirations, the economic question of the appropriation of surplus value is shown to be imbued with the ideological transformation of gender norms and its political implications for inclusive participation. The problematizing of childcare as a social responsibility, and the abolition of 'illegitimacy' for children, were both suggestive of the potential transformation of the family structure that we could expect to occur within a post-capitalist social order.

We see, therefore, the benefits of an analytical approach that treats different domains – economic, political, ideological – as susceptible to different temporalities; creating both unevenness and combination. In this way, the establishment of the Commune seems out of joint with its historical context, precisely because it challenges (and refutes) a linear notion of history in which change is considered through a singular narrative. Yet, there is a grain of truth to the non-contemporaneity of the Paris Commune. It shows the complexity of the social totality. It sits uneasily with the institutional framework of its background. In this sense, it is uneven with its 'time', which is actually only a slice of the multiple temporalities of the present. It is this notion of different (non-linear, and multiple) times that we now deploy in considering the Fatsa 'Commune'; which, whilst more recent, nevertheless has a direct and literal link to the earlier Paris Commune.

## **From Fatsa to Paris**

Fatsa, a modest sized, semi-rural district in Turkey, is nowadays in the grip of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), as is much of the Black Sea region. This is a dramatic change from the time of the so-called Fatsa 'Commune'. In order to understand how this could come about, it is important to take into account the brutal social and political engineering of the coup d'état which took place on 12 September 1980. The Turkish military, led by Kenan Evren, seized power during that coup under the pretence of restoring order and establishing social peace. The aim, it was claimed, was to intervene against both left and right extremisms, with the stated goal of achieving 'national unity and cohesion' (Zürcher, 2004, p. 353). The National Security Council then disproportionately targeted left parties and civil society organizations, subjugating activists, students, and workers with the use of heavily authoritarian measures. At the same time, politicians with a far-right background were rewarded with ministerial posts (Poulton,

1997, pp. 179–81). The Republican People’s Party, the party that had been founded by Kemal Atatürk and which constructed the Republic of Turkey, was (in a twist of irony) shut down in an ostensible effort to restore Kemalism. In a context in which the mainstream centre-left party would not be tolerated, the plight of the socialist left was far worse. In fact, the socialist left was the main target of the coup. As a result, it suffered vast human losses at the hands of the military regime. This repression was coupled with the ham-fisted implementation of structural adjustment programmes that sought to secure the far-reaching liberalization of the Turkish economy.<sup>5</sup>

The Fatsa region has consistently elected Erdoğan’s government into office. Yet, this is tightly connected to the fact that the military only loosened its chokehold on politics after instituting an administrative system that did not allow any serious challenge to the interests of the ruling class. The socialist left has yet to develop a comparable mass movement, despite many initiatives in the ensuing period. While it was not without contention, the Erdoğan government embodies all the key features of the 1980 administration and had the blessing of a wide array of political actors on the right. The experience of the Fatsa ‘Commune’, however, which is detailed below, shows that political inclination is far from fixed in any society. It was also in this area that methods of grassroots governance were cultivated by the coarse hands of the farmers and workers, in defiance of agricultural monopolies and political adversity. Unlike the Paris Commune, the Fatsa case was not a full-blown working class takeover of local government. Instead, the ‘Commune’ utilized the existing political apparatus, alongside of spontaneously created channels of decision-making. As such, it highlighted the diversity of methods associated with attempts to produce social transformation (Erdil & Yazan, 2015; Morgül, 2007, pp. 132–180; Öymen, 2008; Zürcher, 2004, pp. 268–288).

Both cases considered here (Paris and Fatsa) are broadly comparable as episodic, intentional situations of socialist construction within the current political arrangement. Further, they supersede the standard unidirectional nature of political representation in liberal democratic arrangements (from the represented to the representative); thereby putting some flesh on the bones of the concept of popular power, albeit not necessarily representing a form of prefigurative governance. As a result, the differences and parallels between the two cases raises an additional question of whether we can adopt a unitary theory of transition. As with the Paris case, therefore, an exploration of the Fatsa ‘Commune’ highlights the benefits of an approach which considers capitalism (and transitions beyond it) through a lens which focuses on differential temporalities, in different domains.

In the local mayoral elections of 1979, the population of Fatsa, a semi-rural district in Northern Turkey, elected the independent socialist, Fikri Sönmez.<sup>6</sup> Sönmez was a tailor by training and a prominent activist. This was the start of a process where the political apparatus of the municipality was captured by the left. Alongside this formal election to power, improvised mechanisms of local governance were adopted, undermining the hegemony of the state by

relegating its institutions to a secondary role alongside people's committees. An 'accident' that paved the way for this unique experience was the untimely death of the social democratic candidate Nazmiye Komitoğlu, the previous mayor who had enjoyed widespread popularity. The Fatsa experience was therefore an unexpected seizure of initiative, as was the Paris Commune. Also similarly to Paris, this experience ended in heavy-handed repression by the state, yet left a lasting imprint on the social imaginary (Aksakal, 1989, pp. 35–6; Karacan, 2015, p. 91; Zürcher, 2004, p. 264).

The 1960s and 1970s were times of political polarization in Turkey (Ersan, 2014; Yaşlı, 2014). A vibrant socialist movement and working-class confidence both resulted in heavy pressure upon the state's staunchly pro-western and NATO-abiding policies. Social opposition in Turkey had reached unprecedented levels in these decades. Social movements and left wing parties demanded the expansion of democratic rights in the constitution of 1960, along with far-reaching redistributive measures and reforms. With the help of the proportional representation system, socialist politicians could intervene in mainstream politics due to the tide of mass opposition. At the same time, however, the growing chasm between the left and the right, was accompanied by similar divisions within the left (at times reaching fratricidal proportions). These divisions within the left were often focused on the question of *which* model of transition to follow – Soviet or Chinese – oftentimes paying insufficient attention to the specificities of Fatsa itself (Birand, 1999; Müftüoğlu, 2011).

Prior to 1979, broad social segments had found themselves in dire straits in Fatsa. This was largely due to the commodification of agricultural production, which had driven peasants to indebtedness and landlessness. At the same time, the black market had proliferated (Morgül, 2007, pp. 44–67). This volatile situation hastened the cultivation of resistance movements in the area. In particular, the mass organization, Revolutionary Path (*Devrimci Yol, Dev-Yol*), established a rapport with the community on the basis of their praxis-centred approach to social grievances. Fikri Sönmez, from a modest background and longstanding member of Dev-Yol, had led raids on illegal stockpiles and distributed seized goods to the population, cultivating a relationship of trust and mutual aid. In return, the community began to defend the revolutionaries against law enforcement and far-right aggression. Dev-Yol, as a mass organization with no formal membership and flexible organization, was able to bypass sterile discussions, and instead was able to focus on practice within the native realities, as the way of developing theoretical perspectives. Dev-Yol's novel mobilization strategies were instrumental in the radicalization of Fatsa (Morgül, 2007, pp. 100–106; Türkmen, 2007, pp. 57–70). They had begun to create committees of resistance (*direnış komiteleri*), which functioned as hubs of organization and theoretical education. These committees were also able to organize physical resistance against aggression from far-right paramilitary groups. This was therefore a method of horizontal, direct action, conceived through an open-minded appraisal of the possibilities of the political conjuncture. During the months when these committees took root, Fatsa captured national attention with its cultural activities and

successful campaigns to solve local difficulties. The community was encouraged to participate in these new organs of governance, and act on the decisions that were taken in them. In the meantime, the municipality embarked on a venture to establish a degree of economic self-sufficiency to support these procedures (Morgül, 2007, pp. 157–180). The People's Committees (*Halk Komiteleri*) devised by Dev-Yol were the axes of mobilization. Dev-Yol, at the same time, enacted direct propaganda reflective of its conception of democracy, and opened avenues to embed Marxist theory within social life (Müftüoğlu, 2011).

When Sönmez won the municipal election in 1979, the People's Committees (*Halk Komiteleri*) were established as autonomous elements of the municipality (Türkmen, 2007, pp. 146–157). This process therefore altered the mode of local governance in an inclusive direction. In doing so, moreover, Fatsa demonstrates the tension between burgeoning social movements and a state that had come to be increasingly subservient to the capitalist class. The Fatsa 'Commune' emerged in this context as a development in left politics with the potential to construct political hegemony. In particular, it was able to combine a wide grassroots base with (partial) support from the parliament. With the guidance of the municipal authority, channels of self-governance were established that circumvented state institutions and combined executive and legislative power in the hands of the community (Uyan, 2004, p. 55).

The main difference between Fatsa and Paris is that the former was not a 'commune'. That is, if one understands a commune to be a worker-led insurrection that socializes the main institutions of the state and radically relocates the loci of power to local committees. Instead, the people's committees in Fatsa were a prefigurative template that had the potential to lead towards an eventual insurrectionary autonomy. This potential was the result of their institutional grounding in every neighbourhood and the inclusion of people of every social origin and political persuasion. The only group barred from participation, at times by violent means, were the neo-fascist Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi – MHP*) whose adherents were organized in a militia format (Aksakal, 2007). The significance of this exclusion is that it brings to attention the question of repression in the context of a proto-socialist local government. The MHP were not a 'party' in the traditional sense of a political organization with branches that contend for governing positions. Rather, it was a tight-knit, hierarchically organized and armed militia with organic personal and institutional ties to the state.

The actors involved in socialist construction in the area needed to cultivate a new political culture with a view to fostering direct participation by, and for, the working majority, if they hoped to resist an eventual crackdown. In addition, the question remained of how, or whether, to gain control over economic assets in order to materially bolster the workings of the new channels of governance. In dealing with these questions, conscious construction by the community would be key to the success and maintenance of the revolutionary project. Sönmez was a charismatic figure at the helm of the revolutionary group. His popularity was grounded in

a history of involvement in campaigns against the hoarding of agricultural products, with hazelnuts being the most important primary good and source of income and employment. Thus, individual political acumen combined with a background of economic (over)determinations. In the process leading up to the Sönmez administration, and in contradistinction to the flourishing of left movements elsewhere, social relations in the area were shaped by the economic preponderance of rural monopolies, reinforced by the physical demands of hazelnut production. This was a context in which rampant usury lined the pockets of unscrupulous politicians. Private ownership of land directly and explicitly contrasted with the interests of the majority.<sup>7</sup> In such a context, efforts to build rapport and solidarity were less dependent upon intellectual or academic persuasion, and more the result of direct action; a ‘propaganda of the deed’, of sorts. Sönmez himself, not holding any university credentials, contrasted starkly with the national leaders of the socialist movement. It was this status of Sönmez – as internal to the local community – which was crucial to his ability to cultivate an organic social movement of the oppressed; one which was informed by a rich history of struggles and democratic legitimacy, on a level that far surpassed the advantage of institutional backing that other socialist groups received from the erstwhile powers of existing socialism.

A powerful example of the way that Fatsa’s People’s Committees combined legislative and executive functions could be seen in the ‘End to the Mud Campaign’ (Türkmen, 2007, pp. 105–115). This involved a voluntary and massive effort to clear the roads around Fatsa. Given the damp climate of the region, the accumulated mud on the sides of the roads had created large pools that compromised the hygiene of the sewage system and blocked access to Fatsa, thus being a major problem for the populace (Özgür Açılım, 2007). Sönmez consulted with the population in an attempt to learn from them what the primary issues were. Later, he appointed engineers and accountants in order to calculate the estimated costs and feasibility of clearing the roads. He was told that it would take up to four years to fix the problem, by which time diseases would easily have taken a toll on the people of the region. Upon receiving such reports, Sönmez decided to consult the population through the Committees once more. This represented a systematic process of consultation that was done largely outside of the apparatus of the state or the municipality. Activists travelled from across Turkey to observe and take part in this process. Moreover, the endeavour managed to bring an end to the problem within a few months by harnessing the voluntary labour and means of the local population, where men and women took an equal role, and doctors shovelled alongside farmers in a communal solidarity. This was reminiscent of the ancient Anatolian tradition of *imece*, involving the collective effort at building accommodation; although it did not mean a simple repetition of an age-old custom but its reinvigoration in a post-capitalist mode of social production directed by the labourers and emancipated from the yoke of market-based calculation (Morgül, 2007, p. 157).

Most studies on the Fatsa ‘Commune’ tend to view it as merely a reflection of narrowly conceived left-right political polarization without considering subterranean social dynamics and

class struggles. Such accounts tend often to attribute the developments in Fatsa to the work of a conspiratorial, even terroristic, vanguard (Ahmad, 2006; Pevsner, 1984; Yayla, 1984; Zürcher, 2004). Other accounts, in contrast, discuss the Fatsa experience in such a way that is designed to selectively draw out aspects of the Commune so as to retrospectively justify (or discredit) a particular political line. Sympathetic accounts, some written by erstwhile members of Dev-Yol, make exaggerated claims about the level of involvement in municipal practices, going so far as to suggest a disappearance of the distinction between authority and the ruled.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, other factions of the left have made inflated accusations that the Commune and Dev-Yol represented a 'renunciation of class perspective' and 'petty bourgeois radicalism', referring to its flexible structure and emphasis on popular unity against fascism (Erdoğan, 1998, p. 24).

It is possible to refute such criticisms from the left by returning to the activation of an age-old institution, which resonates with the observation that Marx had made in a letter to the Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich. Here, Marx said that the Russian *mir*, the self-governing peasant community, could not only survive but also act as a catalyst of a transition to socialism (Shanin, 1983, pp. 97–123). We should note that it is misleading to read inherent temporalities into social institutions such as the *mir* or *imece*. Their progressive potential, or lack thereof, is rather inscribed in specific intersections of political, economic and ideological social practice. The anachronism of such social arrangements, stretching from the deep recesses of pre-capitalist history to a prospective socialist future, attests to the uneven and combined temporality of transition. Political developments can take a turn for a reactionary deluge or a radical social change when combined with economic trauma. This is intrinsic to the workings of capitalism. This being the case, such temporally obscure elements of social life can have a combined impact of propelling society forward, from the Russian *mir* to the Anatolian *imece*. The radical novelty of such transitional periods, therefore, also has a kernel of a sort of return, not as the negation of centuries of historical change but as a reactivation through and beyond capitalist social relations.

The election of the socialist candidate Fikri Sönmez as mayor of Fatsa inaugurated this experience of radical local governance. The issues that the population faced ranged from the infrastructural problem of mud on the roads to concerns around gender inequality. The political processes of the committees did not have a predefined protocol, but invited the community to partake in discussions. The working existence of these prefigurative bodies attested to alternatives to pre-existing bureaucratic mechanisms, and facilitated the execution of solutions without intermediaries. This fostered a new political culture of participation that contested the structural exclusion of the public from political decision-making processes. The Fatsa experience is therefore an invaluable resource for reflection on prefigurative practices because it involves the dislocation between political innovation alongside an outdated pattern of exploitation. As a 'limit case' it brings to the forefront the limitations of interstitial transition within social relations (Balibar, 1970, p. 293). A self-help type of activism, to borrow a contemporary turn of phrase, not only dovetailed but enhanced the respectability and legitimacy of Revolutionary Path, since it did

not seek to substitute itself for popular initiatives. This was inscribed in the suggestions for the candidacy of Fikri Sönmez himself. To reiterate, the configuration of political power began to shift towards a mass-led, directly participatory mechanism with the help of local activists. However, this experience was still limited by the wider context of heavy economic exploitation and monopolization that stifled development towards a potentially self-reliant and collectivized economy. Additionally, the political deadlock in the national assembly, exacerbated by social-democratic enmity towards the socialist left and the ever-increasing threat of far-right terror, confined the local political advancement to a spatio-temporally modest scale. As a limit case, Fatsa 1979 reveals the tension of a movement along an axis of social reproduction that is insufficiently complimented by necessary economic transformation, such as the removal of main resources from market-based processes of distribution.

In terms of strategy, both Paris and Fatsa have provided examples of socialist subjectivity as an intervention in the state of affairs, and rather than weighing their degree of success – both were destroyed by the status quo, after all – it is more helpful to take from this engagement the way in which the present holds open windows of possibility for social transformation. So, ancient techniques of village organization, for instance, can become past kernels of future forms of social organization if they are in interaction with an appropriate host in terms of ideological and political factors. Political practice that facilitates these attempts at self-government find themselves to be amid social transformation and can look back into theory but also forward on the many new questions that these experiences bring up.

## **Conclusion**

Different groups in society and different domains of social reproduction operate according to discrete temporal logics. This notion of multiple temporalities comes to the fore when political attempts at a transition towards enhanced self-governance occurs within regressive economic contexts. The notion of fragmented temporality reveals an effective way to map social formations and processes of (potential) transition. Transformative political activity, moreover, is the effort at tying the loose ends of temporal lags, occupying the gap between the contemporaneous past and the present. In this light, it is possible to distinguish what is 'transitional' in these experiences during their short timespans: those subterranean processes which build self-governance, such as the diverse unions that sprang up in Paris or the campaign to clean mud off the streets in Fatsa. Such subterranean impulses are non-contemporaneous – the future, made up of the constructions of ruptural moments, but which can nonetheless be seen in the present. Likewise, we need also to keep in mind the ever-present possibility of regression: the potential of a lapse into the past, where kernels of post-capitalist society can evaporate. While it remains worthwhile, and indeed necessary, for a historical materialist enterprise to retain a notion of progress, therefore, it is equally necessary to recognize that its actualization is non-linear. This, of course, raises a subsequent problem. In order to distinguish between particular processes and events, in terms of whether they

represent a form of progress, or not, we need some kind of criteria. This article suggests that such a criterion might be the attempt to solve political and economic problems through communal and direct modes of doing politics.

The historical episodes considered here show the advantages of Althusser and Balibar's theory of temporal dislocation. The distinction between political, ideological, and economic domains is analytically valuable as it allows for an appreciation of the moments of interstitial rupture, such as the decision in Fatsa to gather all means necessary to tackle a source of malaise, or the abolition of distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children in Paris. Observing how transformations go through permutations along these levels also shows that they are coextensive. Interstitial changes do not immediately challenge capitalism, yet they create tangible examples that disrupt patterns of exploitation, and reverberate across moments of social reproduction; they occupy the temporal lag between the present and the prefigurative not-yet. In both cases (Paris and Fatsa), the nature of state power had radically changed with its partial dissolution in socialized mechanisms of decision-making, yet they were both encircled by a mode of production that accumulated power and resources at the hands of a minority who marshalled these to nip prefigurative situations in the bud. It should be borne in mind that the remembrance of the communal experience, at times, shows a nostalgic and romantic character because of their brutal defeat. A way to break this cycle is to consider the multiple layers of transition at once; focusing on the small scale of change, but with the larger picture of the capitalist world-system in mind. Such an approach has the potential to increase the prospects of survival of such minimal moments of emancipation. Yet, transition does not conform to schedules of development. Instead it involves many false starts and missed opportunities, as well as moments of sheer confusion and strokes of good luck.

In sum, there is no tactical orientation that immediately threatens capitalism, because 'capitalism' as such is not a monolithic order with a homogenized temporality. That said, alternative and conscious forms of social organization can and do undermine structures of power and inequality. What this article has tried to show is that these potentials for disruption feed from a different (combined) temporality, shared between different cases across space and time. In considering earlier attempts at transition, we are able to re-open and rediscover the transient nature of human-made institutional arrangements and social orders; which have a historical genesis, as well as a conceivable end.

## Notes

1. The full passage reads as follows:

“Thus the Paris Revue Positiviste reproaches me for, on the one hand, treating economics metaphysically, and, on the other hand – imagine this! – confining myself merely to the critical analysis of the actual facts, instead of writing recipes (Comtist ones?) for the cook-shops of the future. (Marx, 1990, p. 175) This suggests that aside from substituting preconceived blueprints for reality, Marx simply sought to avoid association with positivist and elitist pretensions of superior knowledge of laws governing society.

2. Badiou’s (2010, p. 35) third form of defeat refers to those cases of intransigence in nominally socialist regimes where local initiatives accuse the existing political systems of reneging on their revolutionary promises. The Prague Spring and the Shanghai Commune, for instance, represent two clear examples.

3. Much of the factual discussion here is informed by the fascinating exploration of the Commune in Ross, 2016. Ross considers individual stories of emancipation throughout the course of the Commune and draws sophisticated conclusions regarding contemporary possibilities. However, the intention here is to shed light on what the Commune as a contingent phenomenon signals for debates around transition.

4. To give just one example: Proudhon believed that women should remain within the home (Guérin, 2013, p. 11).

5. On the trajectory of authoritarian neoliberalism in Turkey, see Tansel (2018).

6. For the complete election results, see Aksakal, 1989, p. 134).

7. For a more detailed account of hazelnut production and networks of usury and hoarding that drove up market prices, see Morgül (2007). This work, along with Türkmen (2007), have been consulted for local social and political history in Fatsa.

8. See Morgül, 2007, pp. 124–125 for an account of these receptions.

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