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THE COMMUNIST TERRITORIALITY: MARX, DELEUZE, GUATTARI, AND TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIALISM

Abstract: This article presents the question of the relationship between politics and territoriality in the philosophical-social perspective of Marx and the followers of his ideas in the last century. In this sense, the classical Marxist thought is placed in opposition with that of Deleuze and Guattari with regard to the importance, in the dialectic between territoriality and deterritorialization, of the former with respect to the latter. The thought of Marx and the more or less faithful attempts to apply it in the previous century has always had at its center the relationship between human groups and the territory, which in symbolic terms according to Deleuze and Guattari represents the stability of existence. In this sense, Marx and his interpreters favored the last triadic moment in the process of the development of the relationship between people and territory: that of communist re-territorialization.

Keywords: Marxism, Communism, Deleuze and Guattari, Territoriality

1. INTRODUCTION

Marx's work, dealing with the problem of the capitalist economy and society, plays a role of great importance in our historical epoch.

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Although his theses were elaborated long time ago, and their relevance with respect to present conditions is strongly debated, there is no doubt that Marxian reflection can easily be related to many present phenomena. This is because, as Karl Polanyi had well wrote, it speaks to us of the beliefs of the capitalist-industrial era and their resultants even more than of a universal historical process (POLANYI 1977, 6). In fact, as Giorgio Resta reminds us, the socio-economic relationship between human beings, according to Polanyi, “changed radically in the nineteenth century as a result of the commodification of land, labor and money and the advent of the self-regulating market system. It is at this point that the famous transition from the economy constitutively inserted in social relations to the society constitutively inserted in economic relations is recorded (RESTA 2020, 289)”.

In other words, it would not be so much the “arrival point” of Marxian predictions on world history that should concern us, whether or not they have been disproved by the facts, whether they have capitulated with the end of the Cold War or whether they have yet to be applied (all problems of an almost “confessional” nature within the political conventicles of Marxist derivation); rather, following what Polanyi wanted to tell us, it is the anthropological element that is central to the good use that could be made of Marx today. It being understood that it is not the only relevant and current element of the work of the Trier thinker, there are characterizing and directing questions in the anthropological question of Marxism that should not be overlooked at all (one of which is precisely the anthropological dimension in capitalism, more or less advanced).

2. TERRITORY AND POWER IN THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

It will be within this historical and social context inaugurated with the industrial revolution and its results that the new type of relationship that will be established between the territory and power has proven itself. In this case we refer to a power that is increasingly different from that of the traditional type: it is determined by the mechanics of the market and by the constantly developing technique that

conditions it even in its minimal applications. One of Marx's great intuitions will in fact be that of the interaction between capitalism, to be understood as an economic-social fact, and the anthropic and natural environment. Capitalism, as a synonym of market and technology, interacts closely with the environment and the territory, and this because of its purely social nature. Hence the necessary consideration according to which every territorial question not only does not ignore the social and human factor, but is closely linked to it.

Indeed, we can assert that issues related to the environment are always, in Marx's perspective, linked to the social level of the environment itself. In this sense, the close relationship with the human and cultural dimension has opened the doors to new dimensions of reflection on space, territoriality and the social question – also and especially from a philosophical point of view. In this area too, the anthropological dimension of Marxism is pre-eminent.

If Marx's philosophy was to all intents and purposes a clearly humanistic interpretation of the destinies of the world, it becomes evident the centrality of man in the relationship with the environment and the variable geometry of power between him and external things, that are its products or the space in which he lives.

The age of technology, industrial development and capitalism also has the power to tread even more strongly the anthropic footprint on the environment, to majestically cross geographical distances and to politically reinterpret territories on the basis of brand new possibilities of connection and communication. Suffice it to think that already in the first century of the capitalist era, humankind had already disseminated the seabed with cables for telegraphic connection to extend political, commercial and communicative control over the planet (ARESU 2020, 115-119), which made all previous forms of communication obsolete or in the process of being ready to overcome. The world, after the industrial revolution, has become a smaller place, and territoriality has been observed from a different perspective, with a broader vision and perhaps less attention to details.

Two German thinkers of the last century, Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger, reasoned about this transformed territoriality. Schmitt famously

wrote about the role of geographic and morphological elements in relation to the ways of life of the human being and the development of his technique (SCHMITT 2002). The role of technology as a factor of upheaval and re-creation of the world was extensively treated by Jünger (2017). Both saw in the aerospace revolution of technology the advent of the domination of the great biblical bird Ziz (JÜNGER, SCHMITT 1999), an explanatory symbol of the domination of a material element over an entire epoch.

This type of speeding up, which went hand in hand with the modernization of the globe and its societies, was first of all guaranteed by the train (SCHIVELBUSCH 2014), the use of which was fundamental for the accomplishment of a new style of warfare: the Prussians for example used it to mobilize troops against France, and it became new method of political and economic appropriation of space, especially regarding the American continent. In short, the train, even before the plane, capitalized the technical potential of taking possession of spaces and geographical connection, becoming a revolutionary factor also for the political psychology of techno-industrial modernity (GNERRE 2021).

All these elements had and obviously have a considerable political value, and the reading of Marx helps to insert them into that specific historical-social link identified by Polanyi – the connection between the socio-economic fabric and the anthropological dimension.

Understanding the appropriation of spaces and the distribution of power over them on the basis of the relationship between capital and technology is the lesson we can draw from Marx. The French philosophical school has in fact continued this type of reasoning, proposing its own specific alternatives to the classical Marxist discourse. On the other hand, it is essential to understand the Marxian reasoning also to better interpret the relationship between power and territories that the socialist political experiments of communist kind have established. The ideological question here helps to conceive what types of problems these experiences wanted to overcome and what kinds of results they wanted to achieve. In the philosophical-political conception of the Marxist school, the communist revolutions had to lay the foundations for a total social transformation, of which they represented the beginning of

the reshaping of relations between groups (LENIN 2017), and this would have clearly changed the relations between humankind and the surrounding environment. It is therefore not possible to ignore the understanding of this school of thought, both to acquire a social point of view (therefore closely linked with the question of power) on the transformation of territories and their use after the industrial revolution up to the present day, and for understand those political forms that overwhelmingly in the previous century tried to modify also the relationship between humankind and territory.

3. CAPITALISM AND DETERRITORIALIZATION

To better understand the question of the Marxist interpretation of territoriality we must refer to the lesson of Deleuze and Guattari. The discourse proposed in the *Anti-Oedipus*(1975) introduces us to the Marxian hypothesis, providing the correct categories for its reading within the perspective of territoriality. This examination, however, leads the two French authors to different positions from those of Marx himself, which it is also useful for us to acquire. Writes Tiziano Cancelli in this regard:

“According to the two philosophers/psychologists, the true root of every productive process that characterizes reality as a whole is to be identified in the free flow of the desiring flow, to which the schizophrenic subject, due to his condition, would be more exposed. Desire, called ‘flow’, in its free and wild form would be the source of all production of reality, but also, and above all, of production within the capitalist system. For this reason, capitalism would act in a completely schizophrenic way, oscillating between two opposite tendencies: the deterritorializing one and the reterritorializing one.

In the first phase we have to deal with a fully destructive, disintegrating dynamic, capable of liquefying all the bonds and constraints present in society: through the liberation of the anarchic flow of desire, capital would carry out a constant destruction of every hierarchy and every rule, thus leaving the same desire free to flow. In the second phase, however, it would be the violent mechanism of

repression that would make its appearance: desire, in the process of reterritorialization, after being freed, would be immediately locked up within new bonds and new hierarchies born from the rubble of the first [...].

The dynamics described in this scheme by Deleuze and Guattari highlights a fundamental point: if the schizophrenic process coincides with the desiring production tout court, then it is evident that the anti-capitalist critique carried out up to then by orthodox Marxism is totally ineffective and absolutely unable to deal with the real complexity of production processes. Capitalism, according to the theory of Deleuze and Guattari, should not be criticized from a moral point of view, but from the point of view of inefficiency, being unable to carry out the liberation of the desiring production promised from time to time”² (CANCELLI 2019, 25-26).

Clearly, what in these passages is called the ineffectiveness of the Marxist anti-capitalist critique, is instead a different point of view on the question of territoriality, correctly pinned by the two French philosophers. If Deleuze and Guattari come to criticize the economic proposals of the Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin to withdraw Third World countries from the international market as para-fascists (DELEUZE, GUATTARI 1975, 272), evidently their perspective was heterodox compared to classical and (in this case) thirdworldist Marxism, and had also different purposes. So what was Marx's specific point of view with respect to the territorial question?

In Marx's work there is to all effects a double sentiment, but this is not due to a schizophrenic attitude, but rather to a dialectical conception of history and social relations. For Marx, as can be seen very clearly from the *Manifesto*, the order of the world, life according to a rational principle of stability and durability of well-being, is a good; in the same way, paradoxically, those great transformations are also positive which, at the cost of many human lives and the previous social peace, have allowed a qualitative leap in technical availability (MARX

² Translated from Italian.

1980). These two things are not in any contradiction in logical terms, since the dialectic serves as an essential link to explain how some historical phenomena have both positive and negative repercussions, and that one can and must discern between them according to a rational choice.

It is evident that for the German author capital and its destructive phenomena (even in the Schumpeterian sense of the term) were positive only to the extent that they could found greater stability in a subsequent historical cycle. In a nutshell, this is the dialectical principle that can be translated with the Latin expression *ex malo bonum*. We can say that, to all intents and purposes, the Marxian accent is placed on the fact of territoriality, albeit with a clear awareness of the historical necessity of change, which however makes room in the *Manifesto* for a clear indulgence towards the positive aspects of pre-capitalist and feudal forms of life (MARX 1980, 59). If capital deterritorializes, Marxism – and this would be its fault – when applied, practices a reterritorializing movement.

So how does the problem of deterritorialization relate to the effectively territorial sphere, as well as to the moral one? There is no doubt that the two levels are connected, since the ways of life, especially in the premodern world, were geographically determined. There are three important elements in Marxist thought that can help us understand the ways in which the philosophical problem of deterritorialization interfaces with concrete territoriality.

We derive the first example from the work of Engels, which as we know is inserted in the theoretical corpus of Marxism. In the *Anti-Dühring* he has the opportunity to speak of the beginning of the deterritorializing process, where this occurs with the birth of the commodity form:

“[Private property] already exists, albeit limited to certain subjects, in the natural primitive community of all civilized peoples. Already within this community it develops, first in exchange with foreigners, taking the form of commodities. The more the products of the community take the form of commodities, that is, the less they are produced by it for the personal use of the producer and the more they are produced for the purpose of exchange, the more the exchange

supplants, even within the community, the primitive natural division of labor, the more unequal the fortunes of individual members of the community become, the more deeply the ancient common possession of land is undermined, the more rapidly the community pushes itself towards its dissolution and its transformation into a village of parcel farmers” (ENGELS 2021, 172-173).

The birth of the inter-communitarian market in the ancient world resulted in both the expansion of knowledge of the world and the social openness to neighboring territories. This increased the space available to the market and traders, where at the same time it parceled out the productive sphere (in that case the agricultural one, therefore closely linked to stantiality). The openness towards the outside within the market processes has as a counterpoint, according to Engels' thought, the individualization of the life and spaces of the community. Opening up to external spaces, in other words, leads to the fragmentation of internal ones, to division and inequality.

This process should be imagined as a trend that has become more established over time, but which has had to emancipate itself against the ethical, political and cultural ties that held it back (CHESTERTON 2017, 52-56). Moreover, this is perfectly in line with Polanyi's considerations on the complete anthropological metamorphosis that took place with the advent of capitalism, which overcame those total social facts that were the economic spheres of the ancient world, by their nature territorialized and impossible to imagine except in the their geographical and cultural context.

“These allocative systems – which [Polanyi] studies with reference to the chthonic civilizations, the ancient Mesopotamian and Greek economies, the ‘free port’ system practiced in various areas of Africa and India – are not based on the maximizing behavior of individuals, rather they respond to the Maussian logic of ‘total social facts’. They cannot be effectively understood except by adopting an articulated perspective, where the economic dimension is not dissociated from the cultural, social and psychological one” (RESTA 2020, 285).

This emancipation took place in all respects with a great process of uprooting and therefore deterritorialization, specifically that of the

peasants from their fields to lead them into the arms of wage labor for the factories created by the industrial revolution. This was defined by Marx as original appropriation.

“All the upheavals that serve as leverage for the capitalist class in formation mark an epoch in the history of original accumulation; but above all the moments in which large masses of men are suddenly and forcibly detached from their means of subsistence and thrown onto the labor market as masses of landless or homeless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the possession of the land, constitutes the basis of the whole process. of feudal property and clans into modern private property, transformation carried out with unscrupulous terrorism: here are so many idyllic methods of original accumulation. They have conquered capitalist agriculture, incorporated land into capital, and provided urban industry with the necessary endowment of unreserved proletarians” (MARX 2013, 745-755).

To this, Marx writes, the elimination of common lands was also premised. It was an ancient institution that the developing economic system could not tolerate (MARX 2013, 750). Also in this case, we see how between parcelling and enclosing common lands, or the creation of the large estates of capitalist agriculture, the capitalist process also led the territories in a process of rapid change, determined by the acceleration of the market. Whereas property in the capitalist system cannot by its nature be stable, but must be bought and sold, shared out or added to a larger capital, in the same way privatized territories suffer the same fate. It would be worth mentioning here the ecological problems resulting from it, such as that deriving from monoculture and the consequent impoverishment of the land, or the destruction of ecosystems and ecological niches as a result of large-scale production. This principle is important because it has to do once again with the relationship between humankind and the environmental dimension, that is also the territorial one.

According to Marx, this displacement of people, which loosens their bond to the soil of origin to the point of canceling it, manifests itself even in the great migrations of those who need to lend their labor power. Thus Marx described, for example, the Irish migration phenomenon:

“The famine of 1846 in Ireland struck a million men, but only poor devils, without prejudice in any way to the wealth of the country. The twenty-year exodus that followed it and which still tends to grow has not decimated, as for example the Thirty Years War, the means of production together with men. The Irish genius has discovered a brand new method to transfer as if by magic an impoverished people a thousand miles away from the stage of their own misery. Emigrants to the United States send home sums of money each year to cover the travel expenses of those who remain. Each echelon that emigrates this year pulls another one next year. Instead of costing Ireland, emigration therefore represents one of the most profitable branches of its export trade. And finally it is a systematic process, which does not temporarily dig a void in the mass of the population, but pumps more men every year than the new generation replaces, so that the absolute demographic level is lowered from year to year” (MARX 2013, 720).

Continuing to describe the harmful effects on Ireland itself that the migration phenomenon produced, it is interesting to note that throughout the volume Marx also used the term “emigration” to refer to the movement of capital. The understanding of the relationship between people and territory in Marx is very clear: both, in their link, constitute society (stratifying themselves in relations of production), unless the capitalist phenomenon makes these two things a commodity. Ultimately, according to the thinker from Trier, capital deconstructs people's relationship with a territory on which to live and build permanently, and this weakens his social nature.

4. THE SOCIALIST RETERRITORIALIZATION

To this capitalist deterritorialization, Marx contrasted what for Deleuze and Guattari is a “reterritorializing” movement. This movement, however, in the Marx's perspective, proceeds further and not backwards with respect to the march of history, and therefore does not want to deny technical development, but to put it at the service of humanity and its primary needs, including those of a long-lasting relationship with a territory. This type of reterritorialization takes place, by political and historical necessity, on the terrain of internationalism, that means the

international relations between the world working class, which would have constituted for Marx the revolutionary class with respect to the overthrow of capitalism and the political dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Obviously this idea was subjected to a subsequent rereading and interpretation by the followers of the Marxian discourse. On the basis of the theories of Marx and Engels, Stalin, under the Leninist supervision, elaborated the theses on the national question (STALIN 1974), which for a long time were taken into consideration by the countries of the socialist camp, as with all Stalinist political theses (CHAVANCE 2019, 7). In the “traditional” theses the absolute compatibility between the principle of national self-determination and proletarian internationalism was supported. We can read this concept, for example, in the formulations of the political doctrine of socialist countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (KIM JONG IL 2002).

In any case, it is with the transformations that technology (including the military one, with the invention of the atomic bomb) has imposed on the spatial perception of the planet that innovative socialist responses have been obtained with respect to the concrete political question. The bipolar opposition and the so-called Cold War led the socialist camp to reimagine forms of political territoriality due to new levels of confrontation, which exceeded in intensity and need for organization that of the class struggle in advanced countries as imagined by Marx. With the failure of the Spartacist seizure of power in Germany, the national question within a clash between power blocs assumed considerable importance, evoking the need for a *Weltpolitik* perspective.

From the clash between ideas in the Soviet Union emerged the theory of “socialism in a single country”, with which Stalin hypothesized a centralization of the communist charisma only in the country of the Soviets, from where the CPUS should have collaborated with the socialist states of the Warsaw Pact and with the progressive bourgeois governments. This perspective, a direct derivation of the image of Leninist democratic centralism, had its roots in a typically industrial, Fordist conception of efficiency. Even this principle will be taken up by Stalin also as a guideline of Christian ecumenism that was to be adopted

by the Patriarchate of Moscow, which was to become a *muscovite Vatican* (CODEVILLA 2011, 426, 469).

This perspective was opposed by the Maoist one, in a revisitation of the question of spaces due above all to differences in the operational line of the Chinese Communist Party compared to that of the Soviet Union. The opposition arose from the need to launch an authentically national line within the Communist strategy of the CCP (MEISNER 2007, 82). Despite Stalin's premise for collaboration between the CCP and the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist party, and did not consider the victory of a communist revolution in China likely (MEISNER 2007, 104), Mao over time consolidated a so-called national-communist political line, whose goal was to decentralize the development of the social-communist path of humanity. The national ways to communism, hypothesized by Mao, were based on a different vision of spaces. Mao's grand political and military strategy was notoriously that of the encirclement of the city by the countryside (MAO TSE-TUNG 1969, 64). The majority of the people who made up the People's Liberation Army were in fact classified as peasants (MEISNER 2007, 110-111).

In other words, unlike the Soviet perspective, the political-spatial idea of Chinese communism was based on greater decentralization, which could also be experienced in the proliferation of agricultural communes that sought to make themselves economically autarchic. This clearly did not mean an absence of central leadership, which was indeed well present: as the Maoist motto put it, the Party should also command the guns (MAO TSE-TUNG 1969, 69), but rather a vision that emphasized on the periphery rather than the center. This view will greatly influence and guide the political perspective of so-called Third-Worldism.

As in capitalist deterritorialization we can observe an ambivalence between centralization and decentralization by market mechanisms, in socialist reterritorialization there is instead a centralization and decentralization subordinated to political vision and social organization. Obviously both these polarities are already present in a nutshell in Marx, in whose work the apparent paradox of a collective work that becomes personal freedom and autonomy is expressed. The

same principle applies to the idea of internationalism, in which a rational world organization can only operate on the basis of the agreement of the nations and their working classes.

As we have seen, therefore, not all “traditional” readings of Marxism followed the same reterritorializing method. Here we wanted to use only the examples of the Soviet Union and its ideological and methodological followers and of Maoist China for two reasons: the first is that relating to space, which would not have allowed us to consider other contemporary political-ideological formulations in the Marxist field; the second is that for which these two lines of thought have been implemented and consolidated in historical experience, coming into contact with world political facts, so that they have been able to develop a concrete vision of the problem of territoriality, understood in the anthropological-philosophical sense of which we are talking about.

Centralistic or decentralized, the theoretical problem of classical Marxism was favorably placed on the reterritorializing principle. If for Deleuze and Guattari also capitalism is facing re-territorializing movements, these are however unhinged by new forward thrusts of Capital itself. The point here is not the dialectic between territorialization and centrifugal thrusts (although perhaps this term is not entirely correct, given that we have observed non-centralistic forms of re-territorialization), but the emphasis that is placed on a moment rather than on a other.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the Marxist theses the necessity of *solve et coagula* is considered for deterritorializing movements, which are reconfigured in as many reterritorializations, understanding these processes as phases of creative destruction *à la* Schumpeter. The Marxist attempt remains that of preserving a nucleus of fundamental humanity, despite the great historical transformations, the various threats produced by modern technology and the risk of the commodification of reality.

If capital has provided the human being with so many tools that could guarantee him greater security, it has created as many

contradictions, or elements of instability that must be healed. One of these is precisely the split, given by the commodifying factor, between the people and their environment. This split, as we have seen, can and does happen precisely in the sense of human alienation from his territory, literally from his *homeland* in the even etymological sense; however, it also and above all occurs in the form of the distancing of the territory from the subjective human sphere towards that of the object external to man. But this falls within the great Marxian and idealist philosophical problem of the humanization of the world and transcends the pure question of territoriality.

Knowing how to dissect the question with precision becomes necessary for many reasons, but above all to have a correct interpretation of an author and his school of derivation (more or less faithful to the original theses). The question of territoriality is a capital question of Marxian thought and, as we anticipated at the beginning of this text, Marxian thought still has very strong hermeneutical connections to contemporary reality. Grasping the links between the political question, philosophical elements, technical development and the principle of territoriality is all the more important the more the processes of globalization and unification of the perspective on planet earth advance.

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KOMUNISTIČKA TERITORIJALNOST: MARKS,
DELEZ, GATARI I SOCIJALIZAM
DVADESETOG VEKA

Sažetak: Ovaj članak postavlja pitanje o odnosu između politike i teritorijalnosti u filozofsko-društvenoj perspektivi Marksa i sledbenika njegovih ideja u prošlom stoleću. U tom smislu, klasična marksistička misao stavlja se nasuprot onoj Deleza i Gatarija, i to s obzirom na važnost – u dijalektici teritorijalnosti i deteritorijalizacije – prve u odnosu na potonju. Marksova misao, kao i manje ili više verni pokušaji da se ona primeni u prošlom veku, oduvek je u svom središtu imala povezanost između ljudskih grupa i teritorije, koja u simboličkom smislu, prema Delezu i Gatariju, predstavlja postojanost egzistencije. U tom smislu, Marks i njegovi interpretatori favorizuju poslednji trijadički momenat u procesu razvoja odnosa između naroda i teritorije: momenat komunističke reteritorijalizacije.

Ključne reči: marksizam, komunizam, Delez i Gatari, teritorijalnost

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