

**Kalb, Don and Massimiliano Mollona (eds.). 2018. *Worldwide Mobilizations. Class Struggles and Urban Commoning*. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books. 256 pp. Hb.: \$120.00/£85.00. ISBN: 9781785339066.**

This is a book that had to be written exactly now, in the present moment, engaging as it does, with the “on-the-street movements” that are being seen all across the globe, from places as far apart as New York and New Delhi and spanning geographies from Brazil to Nepal. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen people from almost all walks of life come out of their homes into the streets. Unlike the labour movements of earlier times, this era is seeing a new phenomenon, that of “communing” or claiming of the city’s urban space by those who are increasingly feeling the alienation of public space by state/policymakers, from common users to private corporate players. The claims are not just for wages and for jobs but also for rights to live a life of dignity and quality. The process of dispossession as highlighted by Saskia Sassen, in her works on urban spaces, is one that is clamouring for a redefinition or reinvention of the classical Marxian concept of class. Labour is being replaced by life conditions, the struggles of survival are cutting across class, as the so-called middle class is also being dispossessed through mounting debts in a neo-liberal market society that forces consumption levels on people not equipped to fulfil all the aspirations stimulated by burgeoning markets. Thus, the process of primitive accumulation in the present times is directly linked to dispossession, not only of land but of space (both physical and social) that should or was dedicated to the common person, public parks, children’s playgrounds, rights to livelihood, to health and to clean air and potable water.

Capitalist accumulation and an aggressive market have negatively impacted the lives of people from all walks of life, except the very elite. The rich alone have been receiving all the benefits of a neo-liberal economy, passing on the burden to the 99%, made famous by the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that originated in the largest and richest urban centre in the world, New York but spread its ideology everywhere. As this book suggests, the 99% can be viewed as a new class. Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no longer linked to conditions of labour but the wider aspects of redistribution and consumption. It now relates more to conditions of life and struggles for survival as well as to human happiness and welfare. It is directly related to the environmental degradation brought about by industrialisation and corporate greed for unlimited extraction of the earth’s resources and aggressive push for accumulation at the cost of all human life indexes.

The struggle today has extended beyond the right to wages, to right to health, right to breathe fresh air, right to aesthetics and generally for humane conditions of existence. It is for this reason that class needs to be redefined. However, the contributors and editors of this book do not wish to discard Marxism but redefine it in terms of disjunctions of “life-spaces” of the marginalised from the abstract workings of the global markets so that soaring GDPs can co-exist with homelessness and despair, where the rural and urban poor come together with a downward spiralling middle class. Terms such as “populism” and “selective hegemony” serve to describe the present scenario where Laclau’s empty signifiers such as “state” and “corruption” often form a pivot around which diverse political groups can coalesce and mobilise.