

# RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

## From the Education & Skills Team

- Team Meetings:**  
 The team meets every Tuesday at 9pm UTC. Every other week the members try to discuss various perspectives of kinship and the imagined participatory society versions. Everyone is welcome to these discussions.
- Session on degrowth:**  
 Session on degrowth is on hold because of the climate scientist said that he is burnt-out at the moment.
- Session with Peter Bohmer on global and racial justice and participatory society:**  
 We are planning the session at the end of June or early July. Peter chose the topic that he will write about in RU2 book.

## From the Site Team

- Updated maps:**  
 The team has updated the membership map to reflect current membership.
- Updated the Solidarity page:**  
 The team has updated the Solidarity page.
- New version of the website (nicknamed the RU2):**  
 The team worked on a content for a page presenting an intro to participatory theory, vision and strategy. Also looked at some of the "best-of-the-best" content for the new site.



## Junebug

**Urška Breznik**

This is the last issue of RU Participating before summer holiday or perhaps the last issue ever. RU Participating was always meant to be a community newsletter. Created by the RU community for the RU community. A sort of insight look into the minds and souls of people who have come together to exchange participatory society practices that they use in their every day activism in their respective countries or collectives, to learn from each other, to get to know each other better, get mutually inspired and perhaps maybe to also build new ideas together. Hopefully in the last year and a half you enjoyed reading it and we sincerely hope that the thoughts shared by RU members through articles, interviews, reviews and members' picks helped you appreciate our community and made you want to participate.

The June issue brings us Topaz's review of the Standoff, a book that describes two standoffs in 2016: the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's protest against an oil pipeline in North Dakota and the armed takeover of Oregon's Malheur Wildlife Refuge led by the Bundy family, Matic tells us how he became interested in politics and participatory society which can be summarized in this two sentences: "Then through chance a friend of mine who was studying English, gave me a copy of The peoples history of United States that one of her teachers used as teaching material. It was an epiphany, a waking up moment." and Michael writes he became a radical: "Back at the dawn of time, or more precisely, back nearly sixty years ago."

Thank you for participating for 18 months!

## From the Outreach and Events Team

- **What RU talking about?:**  
The team has updated the flyer for the first episode of What RU Talking About? Discussed a date for the first What RU Talking About event that will be on the 20 Theses. Fintan will discuss this with the ZNet team. The team has finalised an email announcing What RU Talking About to the RU members that Mark is to send out.
- **New team member:**  
The team welcomed new member, John.

## From the Membership Team

- **Welcome meetings:**  
Membership team runs open ended welcome meetings for new and current members every Tuesday at 4 pm EST. If you haven't been, come join us for a chat.
- **First official Local chapter:**  
Shortly the thus far informal Maribor RU chapter will make its bid to be recognized by members council. Membership team will use this to entice groups of members to do so as well. We invite anyone who would like to start organizing on the ground in their area to contact our team and we will assist as we can. Team is preparing assistance, mentoring and material as a kind of starter kit for local chapters to assist in setting them up and kicking off activities.
- **New team member:**  
Johnny has applied to be part of the team and he has been welcomed into the team.

# Book Review: Standoff

topaz

I wanted to break away from my own tradition while describing Jacqueline Keeler's *Standoff*, however, I really couldn't think of a way to fit the theme of *Spy Vs. Spy* into a summary of her book. Joni Mitchell's song *Big Yellow Taxi* has a line with strong parallels to the No DAPL movement - we've paved paradise and put up a parking lot. Yet the result of the protest, as well as how Keeler contrasts the government's handling of the Lakota protest with the Bundy takeover of federal land, makes Led Zeppelin's *The Battle of Evermore* the song title with a correlation that signifies the seriousness of the situation. What is the thought process that decides to use fire hoses on people in freezing weather, while armed insurrectionists at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County, Oregon, are free to travel to and fro through troops? Ms. Keeler weaves ideas of colonialism into the reality of capitalism, and creates a captivating framework regarding THE BOTTOM LINE of the nation's GDP.

In her words: What does a colony do? What is its definition? The Cambridge Dictionary defines a colony rather simplistically as "a country or area controlled by a more powerful country." I would go further and describe how it operates, how it functions. A colony extracts resources and wealth from other nations and sends the profits gained from that enterprise back to the ruling elite of its home country—its 1 percent. In a colony without a homeland, as I propose the US is, that 1 percent, that ruling elite, is corporations. I'm going to pick and choose some of her ideas here to draw attention to an idea which *Standoff* is about, as well as being beyond the scope of a few hundred pages.

In India, of course, the East India Company's role evolved over the seventeenth century, from trading to ruling large parts of India in the eighteenth century, which culminated in India's British rule.

And later, Keeler comments about a dinner she attended.

Looking into these incredulous white men's faces, the first thought that ran through my mind was, "Don't you know history? How do you not know the history of this country?"

The not so hidden theme in the book, which took me some time to realize, was that regardless of what actually happened during the takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, the 'last man standing' would be a white man with guns. The paradoxical result is that since whichever 'side' wins, patriarchy and patriarchy's preferred solution, violence, will be regarded as a winning strategy, which means there is no need for actual violence. Contrast that with what happened in previous demonstrations with unarmed people of color, both here in the States, and in India. Voting rights and self rule! Gandhi and King were leaders of pivotal movements in social justice. For the protestors of the No DAPL movement, a victory would have been devastating to the gluttonment of greed which exists. There is even precedent of placing a potential environmental hazard on tribal lands if the nuclear power plant on Prairie Island is considered.

Keeler's book is full of information, presented in a way that shows she has storytelling in her family, a traditional practice that will continue to serve the people, whether they be Lakota, Dakota, Nakota or German, Scandinavian, or Czech descent. Her statement that English is not their native tongue either is true, and very, very scary.

The well written and researched book, *Standoff*, demonstrates irrefutably what both Marvin Gaye and Four Non-Blondes note - *What's Going On*.

# Why RU Participating, Matic?

## Matic Primc

My name is Matic Primc. I was born in Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, Federal republic of Slovenia, within it on the outskirts of city of Celje in a small village called Trnovlje, home to about 2500 people. Needless to say it was a communist country with a market socialist system. We were what you would these days call an upper middle class family, my mother was a lawyer employed at the municipality of Celje and my father was the manager of the regional post office branch, resenting the fact that workers could overrule the manager. As during communism the wage differences were capped at 1:4 between lowest paid and best paid there wasn't much inequality and we were basically somewhere in the middle of society. Certainly no economic hardships.

As I was growing up in my early teenage years I was oblivious to political goings on despite there being major shifts happening in society. Like all kids I supposed, when asked about politics, I would repeat my parents views like a parrot, taking them as the fount of wisdom. My fathers was that he was wishing to end the communist system because he wanted to be an entrepreneur and felt the communism was stifling him. He did have an obsession with it, always running some side business ventures so as I child I used to work in fathers workshop assembling components for telephone infrastructure, or shoveling manure to feed the worms producing soil for flowers and even building giant waterslides, all business ventures my father engaged in still under communism.

When I was 13 years old Slovenia was the first republic to declare independence from Yugoslavia and after a short and quite innocent (as far as conflicts go) military fight Slovenia became a separate country and reinstated capitalism. Fathers entrepreneurial career took off, mother quit her municipal job and opened a real estate company. Their companies took off and we rose up and became quite well situated, certainly no middle class. We were the new budding bourgeoisie. So a time of success for our family, an experience not necessarily shared by the rest of the population. I still did not follow politics but unbeknownst to me at the time big changes were coming to society and fast.

All state owned and worker run companies were artificially made insolvent through the diktat of foreign institutions. When they inevitably ran into trouble they were privatized through manipulative schemes (designed by Jeffrey Sachs) and ended in either bankruptcy, in the hands of corrupt political operatives or in the hands of foreign companies. Workers rights and womens rights were gutted. Health care system that was the envy of many a country was partially privatized, copays were

introduced and a separate health insurance system run through the private insurance companies was established. All state owned housing was sold off to the citizens at ludicrously low prices in order to create the housing market.

The state abandoned housing policy entirely and housing was left at the mercy of the market forces. The main motto of the decades after reversion to capitalism was to get the state out of the economy. Many of you will be surprised to learn this entire process was carried out under ideological leadership of Slavoj Žižek, the ideologue of the longest ruling political party in Slovenia and its presidential candidate, who these days likes to live action role play as a revolutionary communist for gullible international audiences.

At age 15 of course I had no idea this was going on and what the implications were but I could see the emerging symptoms of economic hardship among my peers as poverty levels rose and social security evaporated. I could see the social or moral reasoning being replaced with profit logic throughout the society. I could feel the emotional and economic strain that was settling on the society.

After a while my families' business ran into trouble and since my father, while very capable, never learned the fine art of entrepreneurship (gather money while the going is good but steal everything and leave behind a huge debt once the bad times roll in), we ended up struggling to stay abreast. This produced a lot of strain in my family as well which became a place of psychological abuse that eventually ended in divorce and estrangement. Mother proved to be more adept at fraud than father, leaving him basically destitute, with terminally failing health.

Out of all this I became a very angry young man, not quite understanding what was going on but nonetheless raging at the society without a specific focus, drinking, getting into bar fights. I dropped out of the university and joined the army when I was 19. After a half year stint I moved to Maribor, enrolled into university again and dropped out again. Then through chance a friend of mine who was studying English, gave me a copy of The peoples history of United States that one of her teachers used as teaching material. It was an epiphany, a waking up moment. Soon I found Chomsky. I began to ravenously consume books on politics, economics, social sciences and slowly I grew into a politically formed person. When reading Chomsky I stumbled upon ZNet which was a large influence on me and it has been the first bookmark on any computer I use for over 20 years.

Reading ZNet acquainted me with participatory economics. I traveled to the US to attend Z Media Institute summer class in 2011 and ever since I have been a strong advocate for participatory society. I have tried to apply the concepts in every activity I engaged in. When I had a company it was democratically run. When I was employed in an NGO I proselytized its virtues and implemented the practices. When I was part of an activist group we had participatory internal structures. Participatory theory however was not well known and it was tiring explaining this to every new group that I joined and also being basically alone trying to implement and develop it was not an easy thing to do. So when RU was launched I was quite happy to find a group of same minded people and joined immediately. It was a real relief to be part of a group of people who already agreed with these concepts and were trying to act according to them.

I like RU as a place for exchanging ideas, further developing the participatory concepts and learning how to spread them and how to implement them on the ground. The organization is still growing and finding its feet and I think once the local chapters start to get going and make the first steps in their locales it will be an exciting time. I think that if we keep working on it and do devote some time to learn and grow and break through the barrier between internal dialogue and real actions where we live RU can become a very important organization internationally.

Aside from RU I am also active as one of the ZNet staff, now cocreating the media I used to consume for most of my adult life.

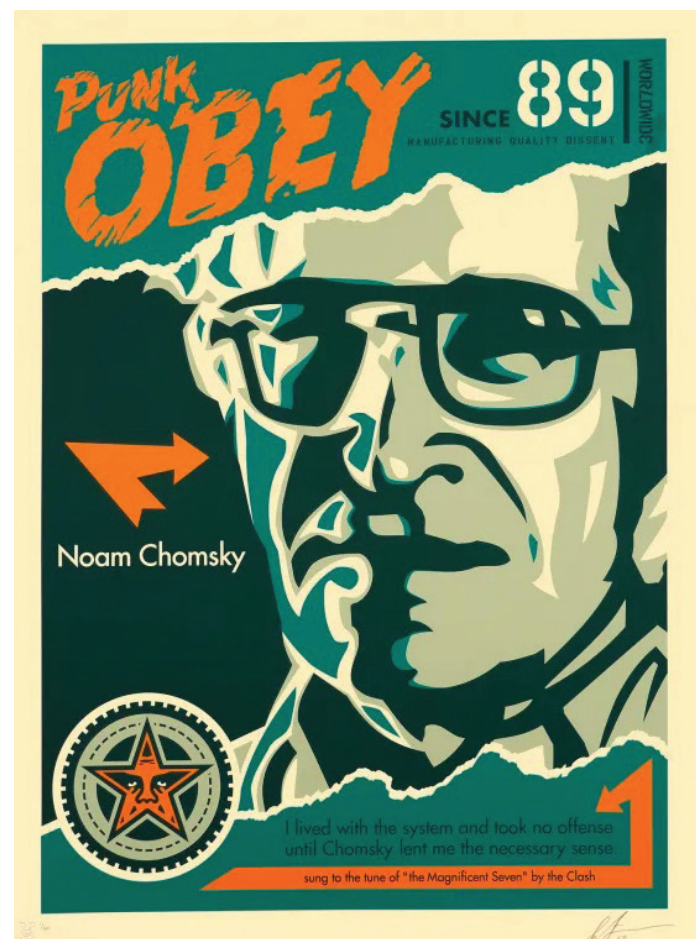
Most of my activist time however is spent on the ground in Slovenia. I have been active since 2012 in a local municipalist movement called Initiative for city-wide assembly (IMZ), fighting for direct democratic decision making in Maribor. We organize regular citizen assemblies in various city districts where we try to create a political space for regular citizens to make their demands on the political system that typically cares little about what they want. The IMZ became quite influential, a terror for politicians in Maribor but also influential nationally, pioneering many practices that have over the years become good practice examples that foster imitation in other parts of the country. One of the bigger successes of the IMZ was that it fought for and won first implementation of participatory budgeting in the Slovenia and which is now becoming the new standard among Slovenian municipalities with at least 45 municipalities now including direct decision making by citizens as part of their regular operations.

I am employed in a organization I cofounded called Organization for participatory society, which is an association working to promote participatory concepts

and practices. The organization has worked to promote giving more voice to citizens in political processes, economic democracy, citizen direct democracy with particular focus on participatory budgeting on the level of municipalities, schools and other public and private organizations. Through it we also carry out smaller projects on fighting climate change.

I am also part of a housing cooperative struggling to establish the first housing coop in Slovenia as well as a number of more short lived communities or projects. I get frustrated by the activists often for many reasons. One is that what is left has been entirely watered down. People who are mildly, on a theoretical level, against fascism, or believe that gay people should be allowed to marry, already feel that they are »the left« even though they never spared a thought about systemic change. A lot of people get dragged into taking part in the identity politics games, that the corporate world loves so much, wasting their time pursuing goals that would, even if achieved, in no way inconvenience the powers that be.

For the left generally I hope it gets serious and starts fighting to win. The problem with leftists is twofold. One is that there isn't enough of us and those that do exist tend to not be serious about it. I hope we in the RU will be serious. RU serious?



# What got U started

**Michael Albert**

Back at the dawn of time, or more precisely, back nearly sixty years ago, I became radical, then an eye blink later revolutionary, and finally, a few years on, a persistent advocate of participatory economics and participatory society. Outrage at the Vietnam War and st society's hostility to the Civil Rights Movement caused the first step. Experiences in diverse movements of the 1960s caused the second step. But what about the third step, the step more germane to what go me started toward Real Utopia?

On one hand, I encountered people asking "I get what you are against, but what do you want?" At first I thought their question was just a way to dodge acknowledging and opposing rampant injustice. I thought they were saying, "no alternative, no right to rebel." On the other hand, at the same time, I encountered fellow rebels of diverse backgrounds who tended to prioritize one dimension of life above all others. In those days it was most often economics, but sometimes it was authority, race, and then, a little later, gender.

Regarding the requests for vision, initially I thought I didn't need to have in mind an alternative to what exists to rebel against what exists. I was a kid. How the hell should I know what would replace capitalism, war, racism, and all the rest that we suffered? But then I realized that while I was right that I was justified even without myself having vision, I was wrong that their question was unfair. I decided that while some people who challenged me for what I wanted to put in place of existing society were just trying to shut me up, other people asking the same question sincerely wanted to know what I was asking them to fight for. And I began thinking they were right. What sense did it make to chant "we want the world and we want it now" if we had no idea what world we in fact wanted?

Similarly, regarding the then rampant emphasis on the "primary contradiction" approach for creating organization and program, I decided folks taking that type stance were wrong. It polarized constituencies, It didn't correspond to reality. It made no strategic sense, Just as one could view society with lenses attuned mainly to class, one could also view it with lenses attuned mainly to gender, race, power, international relations, or ecology. Each "monist" approach made some sense. Each would reveal some truths. But each would also miss other truths. On further examination, I decided the various oppressive phenomena of society were all entwined and even mutually constructive, or, in more modern terms, they intersected.



Noam Chomsky and Michael Albert at the Building a Society from Below at MIT

So there it was. The useful lessons of feminists, civil rights activists, anarchists, and Marxists led me and others to become attuned to what we called "the totality of oppressions," and then led to what we called liberating theory. We sought to highlight not one realm of life so as to then examine all else in relation to that one realm, but instead we sought to highlight all major realms, to see them as they impact one another and us. Roughly simultaneously, our desire to answer sincere requests about vision led us to participatory economics and then to participatory society. And so, pushed by events and by insights from past movements, we built the liberating theory participatory society road that we then travelled.

# Member's Picks

## Books:

Memory Speaks (Belknap Press, 2021)

by Julie Sedivy

Memory Speaks is an amazing look at lost language. As a native speaker of English, who has never lived outside of an English speaking country, I was stunned to find how several of her thoughts and summaries applied to my life and experiences.

## Articles:

In this latest cogitation by Media Len staff David Edwards we have some wise words and a warning for activist (especially those with a future orientation like us at RU): [LINK](#)

## Videos:

Oakland Permaculture heals the hood

Permaculture instructor Andrew Millison journeys to East Oakland, California, to visit the legendary plant nursery Planting Justice, which primarily hires formerly incarcerated people. They provide a fair wage and benefits to former prisoners with unbelievable results: a 2% recidivism rate, compared to 60% for the State of California.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_HtYKgXT774](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_HtYKgXT774)

## Films:

Aftersun, 2022, dir: Charlotte Wells

Debut film of the Scottish director Charlotte Wells is a warm, loving and at times heartbreaking collage of mostly video recorded moments of the 11-year old Sophie's (first time Scottish actress Francesca Corio) and her young 30-year old father Calum's (Irish actor Paul Mescal, nominated for BAFTA and Oscar for this role) summer holiday in a discount and a bit of run down hotel at a Turkish resort. It is a melancholy study of a young man going through some kind of mental distress, never openly discussed in the film, that he tries to hide from his observant and funny daughter on the cusp of adolescence. He takes her scuba diving, teaches her self defence, plays pool with her, applies sunscreen on her back, lovingly teases her and dances to "Under pressure" with her, all the time treating her as his equal. They share silly jokes and sometimes appear like peers. However, there are moments where Calum appears distant, doesn't want to sing their go-to karaoke song REM's "Losing my religion", hides himself smoking, appears to have financial struggles and we get glimpses of him practising tai chi, of his self-help books and of him crying. Occasionally we see short, dreamy sequences of a grown up Sophie observing her father as a young man dancing with abandon in a strobe-lit club. She is trying to embrace him while he is frantically dancing, fails multiple times, but when finally succeeds, the embrace is short and Calum falls back into the darkness.

The director uses the technique of grainy video footage, reflections in the television screen, in the coffee table or a mirror, shadow and piercing sun to create the elusive psychological state of Calum and the occasionally tense



atmosphere. The film is also a study of a parent that is seen from the perspective of a now grown up daughter realizing that her father was all the time also an autonomous person, separated from herself, with a life of his own. At the end of the film we see Sophie, perhaps a filmmaker, looking at the video footage, maybe trying to decipher who her father is/ was.

## TV Series:

Succession (2018-2023)

If you categorically don't like films and series about the rich, you should avoid Succession at all cost because it will make you even angrier. For all others, Succession is a must. Often described as a Shakespearean tragedy, it is definitely one of the best television shows that you will ever come across with great scripts, brilliant dialogues, consistent inner logic, complex characters and amazing acting throughout all four seasons. The main protagonists are the billionaire media family, with the cruel patriarch Logan Roy at the head of it and his four children fighting for his approval and ehm...succession (with many other interested parties in tow). The family is so far ahead of any other players, that they create and destroy US presidents (calling them "the Raisin"), smartly knowing there is really no big difference between the Republicans and Democrats, they appoint puppet ambassadors to countries they call "a pan-Habsburg American led EU alternative" (and as a Slovenian I can only confirm I agree with their description of Slovenia), they see through identity politics and opportunistically use it when it serves their goal and they jump from the helicopter to the SUV to the private yacht but still manage to speak about environmental sustainability. The siblings are well aware that their father's horrible parenting has turned them into "needy love-sponges" but that does not prevent them treating their partners and each other horribly. Oh, and, their rich mother has also sold them out for money.

Because the series just ended, you won't be able to avoid spoilers, so here are the best one-liners that the siblings use to decode the obituaries of their father's death (in one of the episodes of the last season) in the mainstream US newspapers:

"A complicated man" = "threw phones at staff"

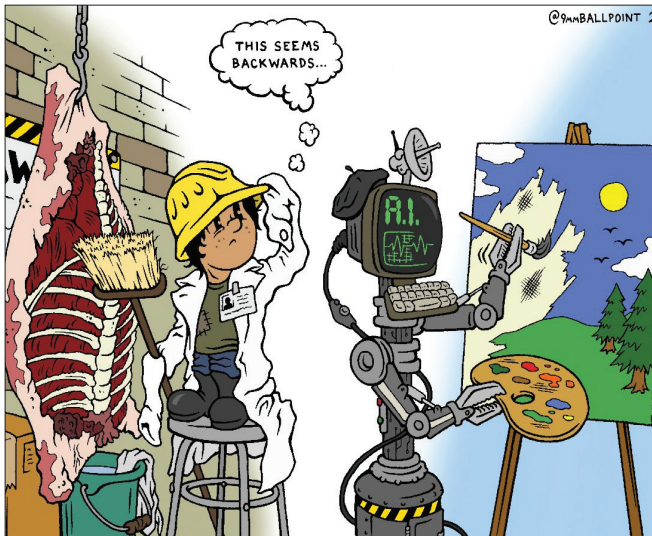
"Sharp reader of the national mood" = "a bit racist"

"Very much a man of his era" = "again racist, also relaxed about sexual assault"

"Business genius" = "never paid a penny in US tax".

# RU Serious?

... it's memeing time.



**leftism leaving  
people's bodies as  
soon as you ask them  
to *Stop Defending IP  
law***

