

(Image Source: <http://rojavaplan.com/pics/victory-sunset.jpg>)

ROJAVA: POLITICAL TECHNOLOGIES AND THE FAILURE OF OUR IMAGINATION

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The system is failing.



(image source: https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/canadas-military-wants-new-drones-fighter-jets-and-to-keep-the-arctic)



(image Source: <http://static.politico.com/82/9b/c6100ca745bda1eb756c5f482b77/161017-nsa-building-getty-1160.jpg>)



David Graeber on Rojava



U.S. Strengthens Its Forces in a Crowded Syrian Battlefield

By MICHAEL R. GORDON MARCH 4, 2017



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U.S. Marines Join Local Forces Fighting in Northern Syria

POSTED 6:39 PM, MARCH 8, 2017, BY CNN WIRE

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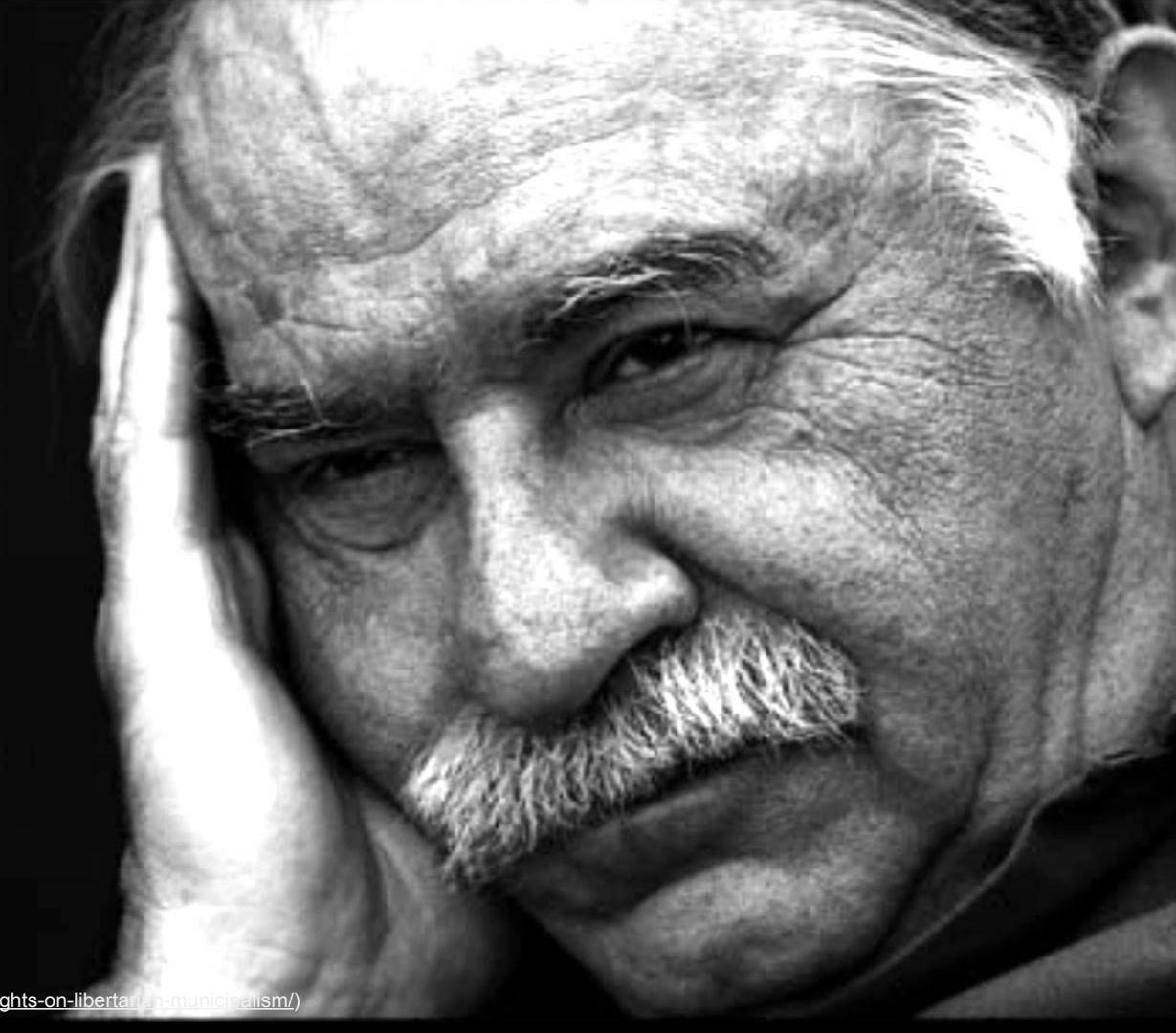
US Marines have arrived in northern Syria with artillery to support US-backed local forces fighting there, two US officials told CNN.

The US-backed fighters are preparing to move in the coming weeks to assault the city of Raqqa, ISIS' self-declared capital, according to the officials. The Pentagon and the Marine Corps have declined to confirm the deployment because of security concerns in the region. They have also declined to specify the exact location of the forces or how many are there.

The Washington Post was the first to report the deployment of the Marines.

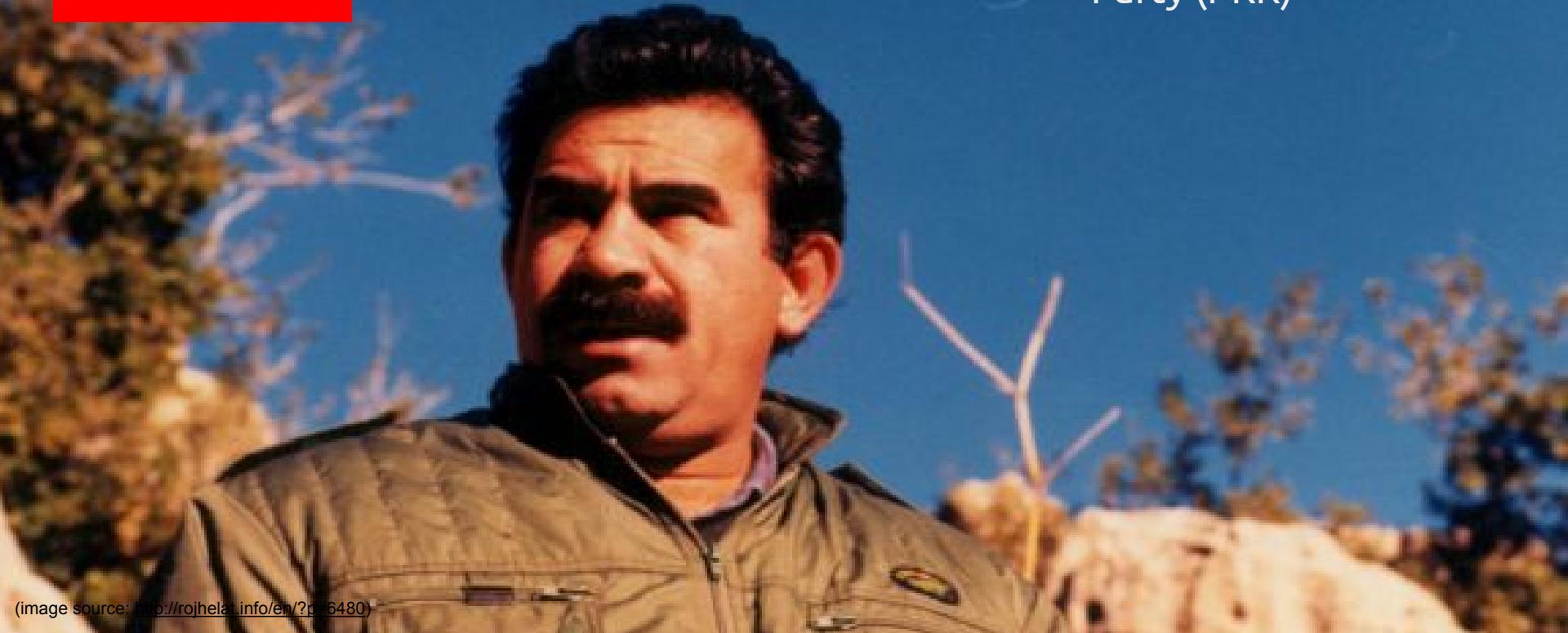
"The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking."

-Murray Bookchin





Abdullah Öcalan
Founder of the Kurdistan Workers'
Party (PKK)



DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM IN ROJAVA



Democratic Federation of Rojava - Northern Syria

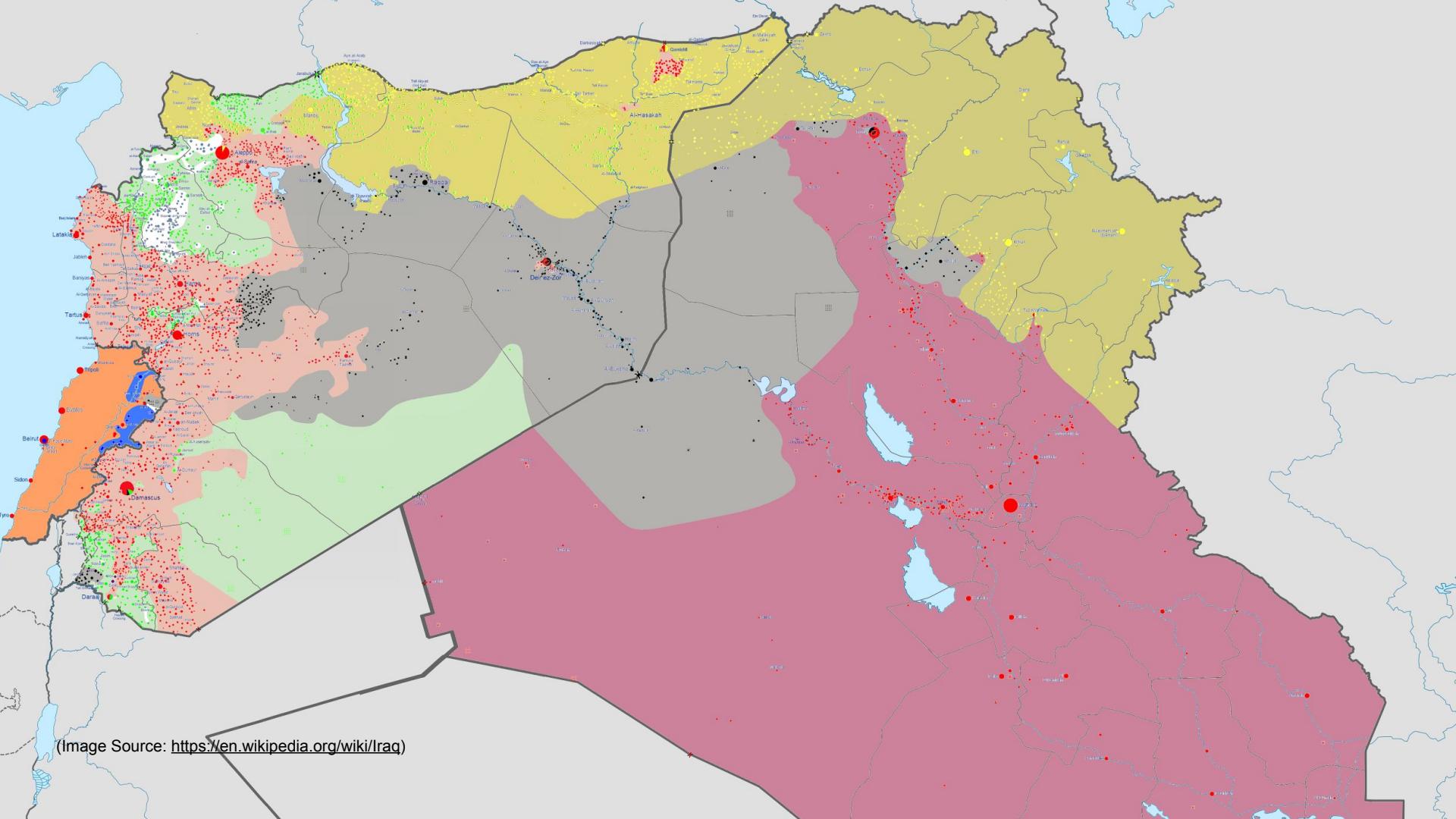
A Cooperative Economy





تل حلف (Tell Halaf)
Ancient Hittite settlement (6000 BC)
Northern Syria





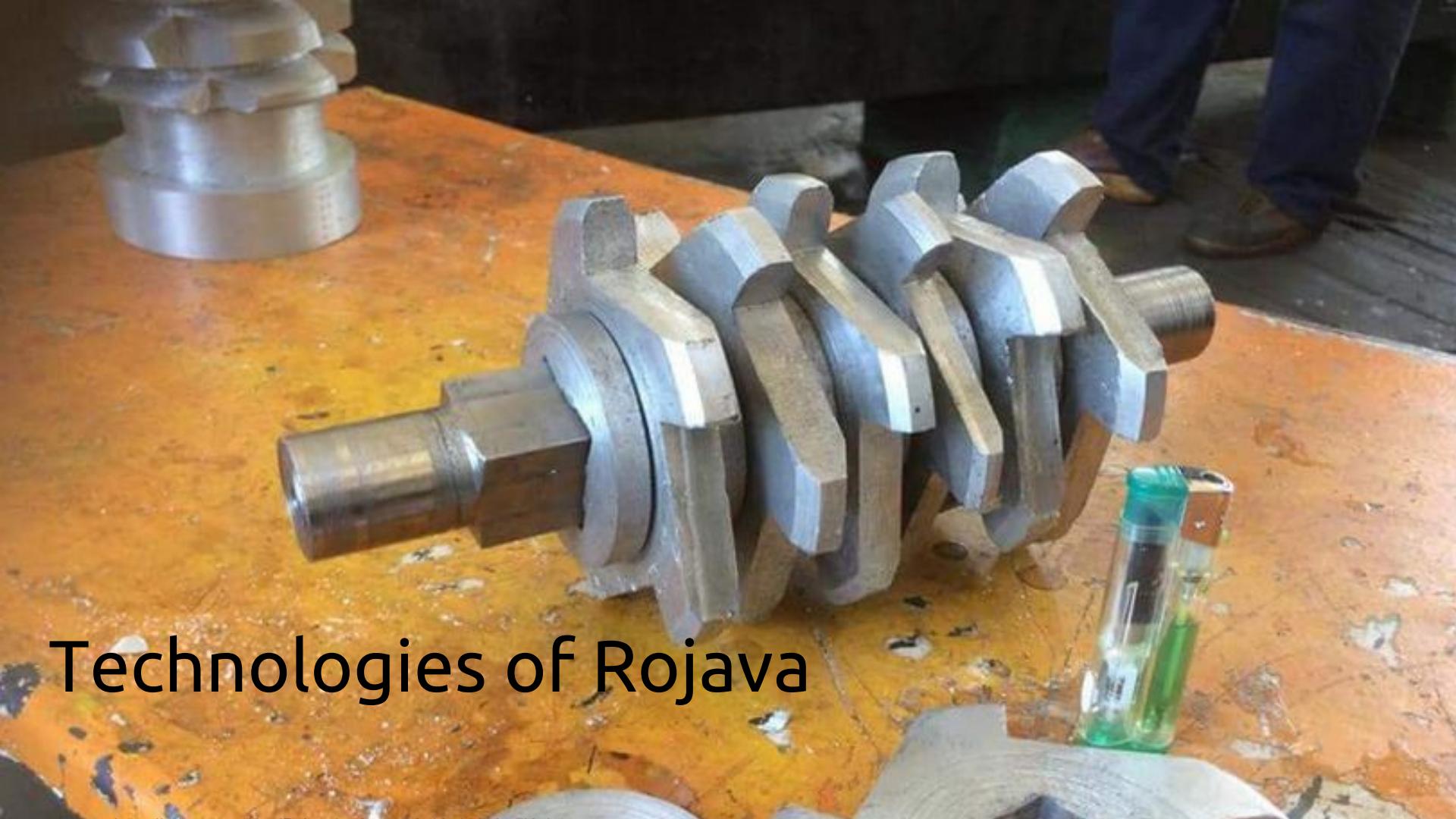
(Image Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq>)

"As you all know from history, rulers and power holders establish their systems first in thought...The implementation of isolated interpretations of these sciences has led to devastating results for nature, society, and human beings in general, as demonstrated by the normalization of militarism and violence; the deepening of sexism and nationalism; the unrestrained development of technology, especially weapon technology for the control of society and individuals; the destruction of nature fueled by nuclear energy, cancerous urbanization, and anti-ecological industrialism."

"At this point, we propose jineology as a necessary strategy towards overcoming the prevailing, dominant system of the field of science and constructing an alternative system of science liberated from sexism."

- Gönül Kaya, journalist and Kurdish women's movement representative

(source: Stateless Democracy reader (see suggested reading)

A large, multi-toothed metal gear assembly is positioned horizontally on a weathered wooden workbench. The gear has a central hub with a threaded bore and several large, rectangular, flange-like features. It is supported by a cylindrical bearing. To the right of the gear, a small, clear plastic container with a green liquid sits on the bench. In the background, another metal component, possibly a cylinder or part of a machine, is visible.

Technologies of Rojava



(Source: <http://rednblacksamander.deviantart.com/art/Feed-the-Revolution-608021560>)

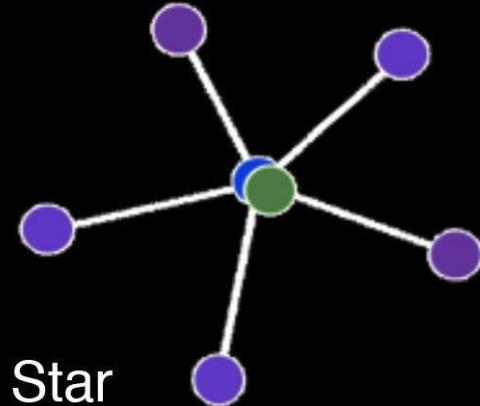
Donate Funds Directly

Bitcoin address: 1HZHrCynsSdJdCKz9SSnnCXZo4YdfNYZtR

Donate Documentary Equipment

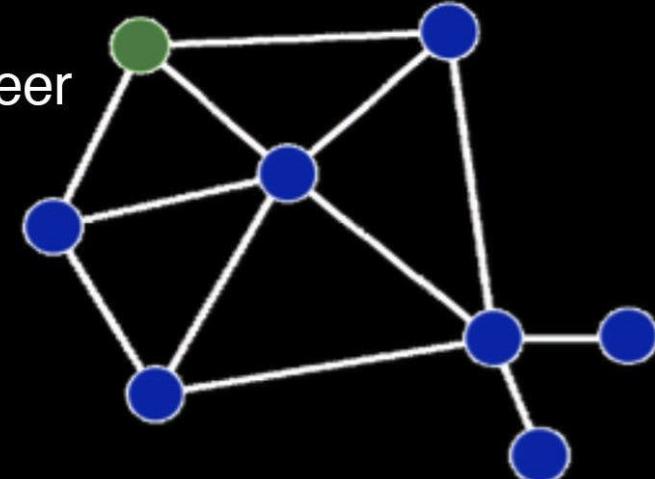
We are now collecting used video cameras, digital cameras, digital tape recorders, and similar devices that can be used by the people of Rojava to record the revolution. Donations can be sent to The Base:

" Rojava Solidarity NYC
c/o The Base
1302 Myrtle Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11221

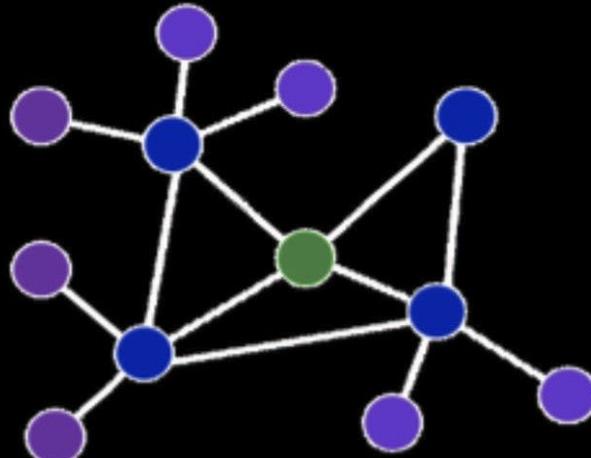


Star
(Point to Multipoint)

Peer-to-Peer
Mesh



Cluster Tree
Mesh



- Coordinator
- Router
- End Device



Mesh Network in Hong Kong

(Image Source: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/firechat-enables-activist-mesh-network-in-hong-kong>)

3D Printing



(Image Source: http://3dprintingindustry.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/leg_3dp.jpg)



What can we learn from Rojava's use of technology?





"The increased deployment of nuclear power facilities must lead society toward authoritarianism. Indeed, safe reliance upon nuclear possible only in a totalitarian state."

"...dispersed solar sources are more compatible than centralized technologies with social equity, freedom and cultural pluralism."

- Denis Hayes, activist and founder of Earth Day, in his book *Rays of Hope: The Transition to a Post-Petroleum World* (1977)



(Image Source: <http://breakingenergy.com/2014/11/10/nrc-resumes-nuclear-power-plant-license-renewals/>)

Exercise

What is the political system that maps to each of these technological systems?

- 1.) Drones / surveillance
- 2.) Transgenic (genetically-modified) crops
- 3.) A hypothetical machine that “prints” DIY medicine
- 4.) Antidepressants
- 5.) The Internet

How Does Facebook Choose What To Show In News Feed?

$$\text{News Feed Visibility} = * I \times P \times C \times T \times R$$

Interest Post Creator Type Recency

Interest

Interest of the user in the creator

Post

This post's performance amongst other users

Creator

Performance of past posts by the content creator amongst other users

Type

Type of post (status, photo, link) user prefers

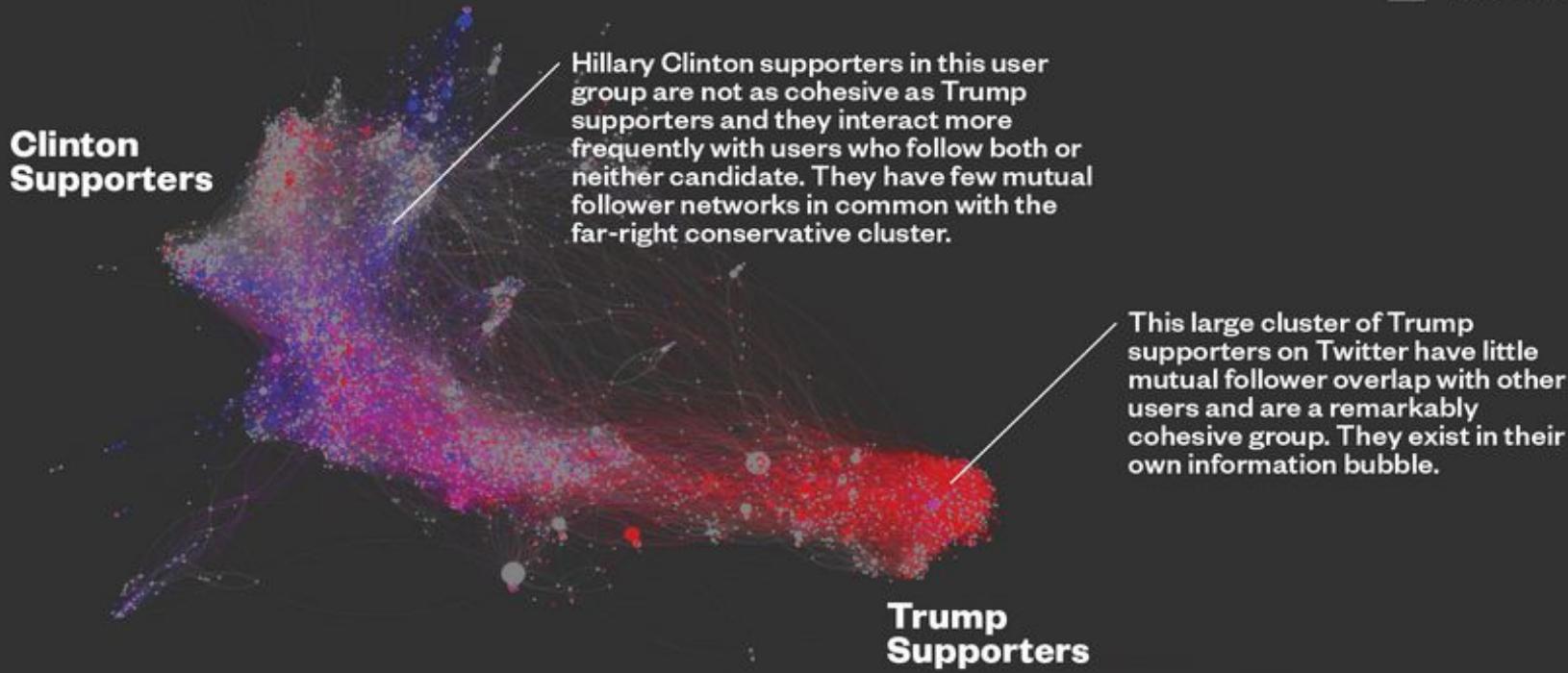
Recency

How new is the post

- * This is a simplified equation. Facebook also looks at roughly 100,000 other high-personalized factors when determining what's shown.

Clinton and Trump supporters live in their own Twitter worlds

- Follow only Trump
- Follow only Clinton
- Follow both
- Follow neither



A photograph of Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian activist, speaking at a TED talk. He is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt over a patterned collared shirt. He has dark hair and glasses, and is wearing a black microphone headset. He is gesturing with his hands while speaking. The background is a dark blue.

“I once believed that in
order to liberate a society,
all you need is the Internet.
I was wrong.”

- Wael Ghonim, Egyptian citizen and online activist

So what do we do instead?

We do what the revolutionaries of Rojava do: we learn to co-design our politics with our technologies.



One thing I want to impress on you as a scientist:

The more time you spend trying to create something new, the more you realize how many things have not been created yet.

(Source: <http://www.four-magazine.com/articles/746/a-day-in-the-life-of>)

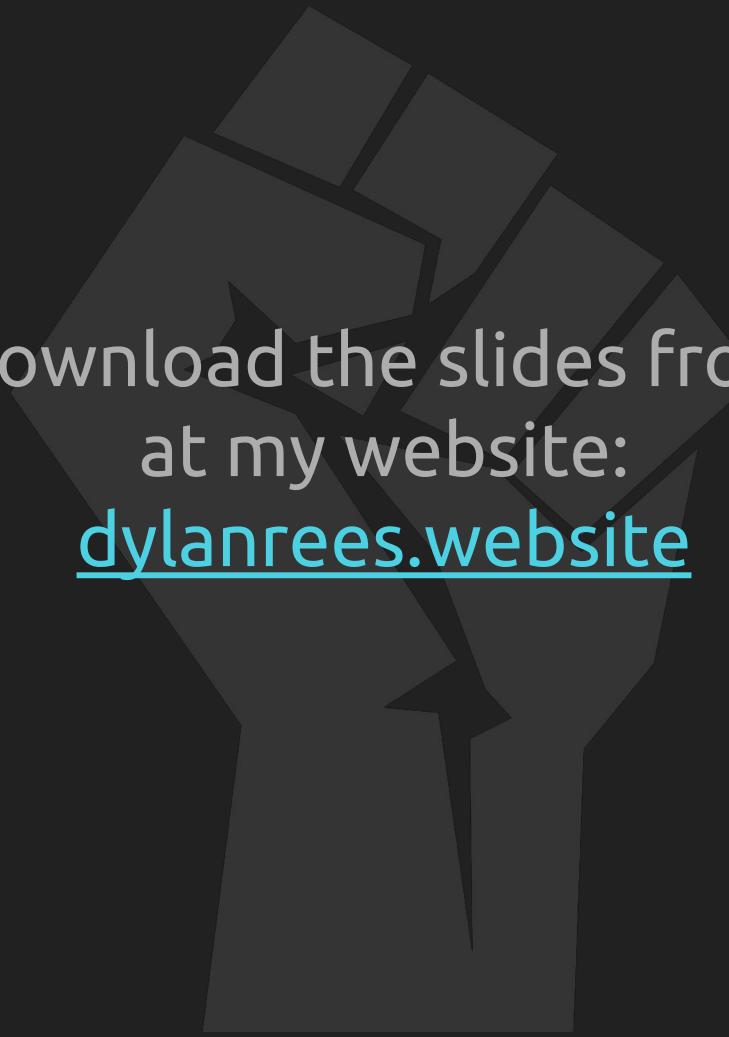




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In Summary:

Agitate. Organize. Create. Co-create. And
re-imagine!



You can download the slides from this talk
at my website:
dylanrees.website

Supplemental Resources

- 1.) [Stateless Democracy Reader](#)
- 2.) [Rojava subreddit](#) (links to a large number of Rojava resources)
- 3.) [The Flowers of Rojava](#) (trailer)
- 4.) Langdon Winner, "[Do Artifacts Have Politics?](#)"
- 5.) Twitter Account of Rojava's [Economic Committee](#)
- 6.) Pop science article on [mealworms eating styrofoam](#)
- 7.) [Four Thieves Vinegar Collective](#): Make Your Own Medicine
- 8.) David Graeber, "[Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology](#)"
- 9.) Murray Bookchin, "[The Meaning of Confederalism](#)"