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The 'Intense Ideological Activity' of the 1919-20 Turin Factory Council Movement

Piermarco Piu

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Abstract

The article focuses of the activity of Gramsci, the Ordine Nuovo group and the communist vanguard in the Turin Factory Council movement throughout the ‘Red Biennium’ (1919-1920) and during the occupation of the Italian factories (September 1920). This movement questioned the owners’ power in the factory, with the occupation in Turin characterized by the workers collectively managing the plants without the owners. From this perspective, the Turin Factory Council movement and the local occupation represented one of the most advanced political and organizational developments of the Italian working class in the twentieth century. By applying ‘the molecular’ in directions that Gramsci would have found interesting, this article addresses how ideas and images of the Factory Councils circulated ‘mole-cularly’ within the Turin working class movement. This helps understand how the circulation affected the ‘spontaneous’ establishment of a ‘productive network’ of Councils during the Turin occupation. The ‘molecular’ focus shows that the Turin movement raised - without solving – one question of democratic relevance: how to overcome the division between leaders and led. By discussing this issue from a historiographical perspective, this article intervenes in the debates about September 1920 and the Red Biennium, asking to what extent the ideological work of Gramsci and the Ordine Nuovo group throughout 1919-1920 directed the spontaneous practices of the Turin workers during the occupation. Moreover, it sheds light on the emancipatory politics of 1919-1920, questioning whether the leaders-led distance was overcome in the production and circulation of conciliar ideas and images. Secondly, from a theoretical perspective, the molecular approach and the question of democracy are used to explore the theoretical and political lexicon of the Prison Note-books – particularly hegemony and the direction of spontaneity. The article discusses the molecular functioning of these two issues, arguing that an emancipatory hegemony cannot rely solely on the direction of spontaneity to address the leaders-led division. As such, the intellectuals and subalterns’ coproduction of theoretical perspectives emerges as one of the political and practical challenges for an emancipatory hegemony, particularly during the Red Biennium.

Keywords

Factory Councils, Red Biennium, L’Ordine Nuovo, molecular, hegemony, spontaneity and direction

The 'Intense Ideological Activity' of the 1919-20 Turin Factory Council Movement

Piermarco Piu

I. Introduction

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci argued that any enquiry into the ways in which a 'collective will' is formed requires analysing its *molecular* phases (Gramsci, 1975, Q8§195, pp. 1057-8). Eleonora Forenza (2009, p. 551) has observed that 'molecular', in this usage, is a metaphor for a method that understands the processes of collective will organization in its *historically absolute dimension*. In particular, this interrogation requires

> an extremely minute [...] process of exhaustive, capillary analysis. The documentation […] consists of an enormous number of books, pamphlets, news-paper and journal articles, conversations and oral debates […]; in their gigantic ensemble, they represent the intense activity ['*lavorio*'] that gives birth to a collective will with a certain degree of homogeneity […] which is necessary and sufficient to generate an action that is coordinated and simultaneous in the time and geographical space in which the historical event takes place (Gramsci, 1975, Q8§195, p. 1058; 2007, p. 346).

In the same note Gramsci argues that this 'molecular analysis' should be applied to the study of a particular form of collective will – that is, the political party (Ibid.)

As will become clear, these observations can be applied fruitfully beyond their original context, in directions that Gramsci did not explicitly contemplate but would probably have found interesting because, in the 'spirit' of the *Prison Notebooks*, they represent 'an effort of theoretical in-depth analysis of his whole experience' (Gerratana in Gramsci, 1975, p. XVIII). As such, 'the molecular' as a historical method can be used to analyse an episode of Gramsci's political activity and, more generally, the Italian workers' movements: it approaches the problem of how 'an intense

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(ideological) activity' can 'give birth to a collective will' in the light of the 'spontaneous' creation of a system of Councils in Turin during the occupation of the factories (September 1920). A brief moment in the story of Factory Council movement[1] during the Red Biennium 1919-20 is under the spotlight here, with the focus on the activity of Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group,[2] the Turin vanguard and the Turin working class.

In other words, the account considers the different roles that these actors played in the 'molecular circulation' of a number of ideas and images throughout 1919-20 – particularly, the theories and imaginaries related to the conciliar organization of an industrial city. This will allow for an assessment of the impact that this circulation, as a form of 'intense ideological activity', had on the creation of the Turin system of Councils in September 1920, as a

[1] The Factory Councils (*Consigli di Fabbrica*) present an Italian example of a wider group of socialist – although not necessarily communist – mobilizations that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, including the British Shop Stewards, the German *Arbeiterräte*, the Russian *soviets*, the Hungarian Republic of Councils, etc. These mobilizations created specific forms of worker's institutions – that is, the Workers' Councils. These were created around geographical units or factories placed under the direct economic control of the workers to bring about the workers' self-government of economy and society. Although these mobilizations were all inspired by the Russian *soviets*, each had its own particular unfolding. The development of the Factory Councils resulted from the political activity of the Italian workers' movement in the metallurgic factories during 1919, later spreading into other industries. Significantly, the metallurgical factories were also the context where the 'old' workers' institutions (i.e. the Internal Commissions) developed at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Factory Councils were therefore inspired by the Russian *soviets*, but they were based on the Internal Commissions. In this respect, the Factory Councils can be considered the highest political achievement of 15 years of struggle within the Italian metallurgical factories, particularly those of Turin. At the same time, the Factory Councils can also be considered one of the most signifycant outcomes of the Red Biennium (1919-20), since they played a central role in the Occupation of the Factories in September 1920. See in this respect Battini (1988, p. 193), Clark (1977, pp. 1-2), Sbarberi (1986, pp. 31-2) and Spriano (1964, p. 99 and, in English, 1975, p. 84; 1971, pp. 52, 69-70). For a general discussion of the Workers' Councils at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Corvisieri (1970). For a discussion on the Internal Commissions, see, e.g., Clark (1977, pp. 36-45) and Spriano (1971, pp. 46-9; 1972, pp. 120-5, 162-71, 173-6, 349-50).

[2] The *Ordine Nuovo* group grew substantially after the journal was founded in May 1919 (by Gramsci, Angelo Tasca, Umberto Terracini and Palmiro Togliatti). For example, it later included people such as Ottavio Pastore, Alfonso Leonetti, Andrea Viglongo, Pia Carena and Mario Montagnana; for a more comprehensive list see Angelino (2014, pp. 381-3). A detailed account of the history of the journal and the group in the context of the Red Biennium is outside the scope of this work. Accounts are provided by Angelino (2014), Clark (1977), Livorsi (1979), Maione (1975), Mazzacurati (2015; 2016), Spriano (1971) and Williams (1975).

moment of 'coordinated and simultaneous action in […] time and geographical space'. Therefore, this analysis addresses the *historically absolute* relation between conciliar ideas/images and their practical implementation.

Thanks to this 'molecular focus' on the Factory Council movement in Turin, it is possible to argue that during 1919-20 this movement had to confront what Gramsci (1975, Q15§4, p. 1752; 1971, p. 144) highlights as the first element of politics and political science: the fundamental division between leaders and led. As will become clear, the Turin movement (which in September 1920 was not explicitly directed by Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group, though it bore witness to their 'molecular' ideological influence) raised without solving a question that, in Gramsci's view (1975, Q8§191, p. 1056; 2007, p. 345, or 1971, p. 56 note 5), is of democratic relevance: how to overcome this fundamental division. This question will be explored both from the perspective of historical analysis, as a practical-political issue, and from a theoretical perspective, in relation to the ways in which concepts such as hegemony and the direction of spontaneity are conceptualized in the *Prison Notebooks*. These conceptual reflections can then be used to shed light on the politics of the Red Biennium.

On the one hand, from a perspective of historical analysis, this exploration allows for an illustration of the ways in which the specific modes of molecular circulation of conciliar ideas and images (e.g. workers' assemblies and debates, factory meetings, informal discussions, proletarian press, interventions from Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group, the communist vanguard or socialist militants, etc.) became central to fostering the mass participation of the Turin workers across and against persistent hierarchies during the Red Biennium, reducing the distance between leaders and led, particularly in September 1920. However, it is also evident that this distance permeated the specific division of intellectual labour according to which these conciliar ideas and images were produced throughout 1919-20. Was the elaboration of theoretical perspectives on the Councils confined to Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* groups and the communist vanguard? Was a 'theoretical consciousness' co-

produced by intellectuals and subalterns? And thus, more generally, to what extent was the divide between them overcome in Turin during the Red Biennium?

In this way, this article contributes to the historiographic and theoretical debates on September 1920 and the Red Biennium in Italy. In their analyses of the Red Biennium, scholars have observed that this period and, particularly, the occupation of the factories, was not a prelude to revolution in Italy (e.g. La Valle, 1976, pp. 138-9; Soave, 1965, pp. 175-7; Spriano, 1964, pp. 162-78; Vallauri, 1971, pp. 427-34). Nevertheless, even the most critical accounts have argued that these events illustrate one of the highest peaks of political maturity for the Italian working class of the twentieth (and twenty-first) centuries. In this context, the Factory Council movement in Turin, and the events related to the local occupation, undoubtedly offer a prime example of advanced political and organizational development. The 'molecular focus' does not aim to discuss the broader political possibilities opened up or foreclosed by the Red Biennium or September 1920,[3] neither does it evaluate the effectiveness of its forms of mobilization.[4] Rather, it explores some aspects of the emancipatory politics of 1919-20, by discussing the extent to which the leaders-led distance was overcome in the production and circulation of conciliar ideas and images.

Moreover, while previous analyses have focussed on the *practical* organization of the system of Councils in Turin during September 1920 (e.g. Alessio, 1920; Borghi, 1921; Clark, 1977, pp. 158-62; Parodi, 1930; Santhià, 1956, pp. 93-125; Spriano, 1964, pp. 69-72 and 148-51 [in English, 1975, pp. 64-6 and 117-20 respectively]), the

[3] For example, why was the Turin system of Councils not extended to a national level? What were the implications of the Red Biennium for of the split between the communists and the socialists, and to the subsequent birth of the Communist Party of Italy? To what extent did the 'failed revolution' of 1919-20 pave the way for Fascism? See some considerations in Clark (1977, pp. 210-26), Soave (1965, pp. 180-5) and Spriano (1964, pp. 162-78).

[4] For example, was the occupation sustainable from an economic and technical-productive point of view? See contrasting perspectives in Borghi (1921) and Camuri (1934, pp. 265-7). Or, was the occupation effective (or potentially so) from a military perspective – i.e. in terms of capacity of attack and defence? Different positions are provided in Bianco (1930, pp. 735-8) and Togliatti in Bosio (1970, pp. 100-01).

theoretical and *imaginative* foundations of this system have not received particular attention. Similarly, many scholars have discussed the historical and political significance along with the development of a *general* theory of the Factory Councils in the work of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group (e.g. Clark, 1977, pp. 69-174; De Felice, 1971, pp. 271-307; Mazzacurati, 2015; Paggi, 1970, pp. 238-59; Silvestrini, 2012; Spriano, 1971, pp. 76-120). Yet these studies have primarily analysed the ways in which this theory impacted on the *general* unfolding of the Factory Council movement,[5] and have not considered the influence of this theory on a *specific* episode. From this angle, this article focuses on the *theoretical* and *imaginative* underpinnings of the creation of a system of Councils in September 1920, connecting them with the intellectual atmosphere of the Red Biennium in Turin. From this perspective, the ideological role that Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group played in the occupation of the factories can be clarified to address the interpretative void highlighted by Gianni Bosio, according to whom 'the reconstruction of the relation between the *Ordine Nuovo* movement and the occupation of the factories is not an easy task' (Bosio, 1970, p. 13). This focus also sheds light on the organizational dynamics of the occupation, upon which existing literature has not reached consensus,[6] with scholars, commentators and protagonists of the occupation having put forward different hypo-theses about these dynamics, from emphasizing their spontaneity[7] to highlighting the

[5] Nevertheless, these scholars have extensively discussed the historical conditions, sources, debates, people and formal/informal gatherings through which Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group refined and spread their views on the Factory Councils.

[6] This is related to the objectively difficult endeavour of providing a historical reconstruction of this episode. After all, 'neither the monographic contributions of the *Ordine Nuovo* journal, the studies on the origin of the Communist Party, the biographic material about the protagonists of the journal and the movement, nor the general historical accounts contain details about these intense weeks' (Bosio, 1970, p. 14; here and afterwards, unattributed translations are those of the present author).

[7] See, for example, Bianco in Soave (1965, p. 179), Borghi (1921), Garino and Revelli (2011 [1982], pp. 131-2), Noce in Bermani (1987, p. 142), Parodi (1962, p. 91) and Tasca in Bosio (1970, p. 125).

various ways in which they were affected by different political organizations.[8]

On the other hand, from a theoretical perspective, the molecular approach and the political questions about democracy emerging from the analysis of the Factory Council movement are pertinent to the theoretical and political lexicon of the *Prison Notebooks,* in particular two central issues prompted by or entangled with the experiences of the Red Biennium (e.g. Broccoli, 1972, pp. 41-62; Cospito, 2021, p. 101; Gramsci, 1975, Q1§61, p. 72; 1992, p. 169; Gramsci, 1975, Q3§48, pp. 330-31; 1996, pp. 50-51) the issues being hegemony and the direction of spontaneity. From this standpoint, the theoretical analysis of the ways in which hegemonic relations and the direction of spontaneity work at a molecular level sheds light on how an 'intense ideological activity' 'gave birth' to the system of Councils in September 1920, and vice versa. Here 'intense ideological activity' is understood as a molecular process of knowledge circulation across the cultural hierarchies between Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo group*, the communist vanguard and the working masses. While this circulation was clearly integral to the direction of the workers' spontaneity, it represented a necessary but not sufficient condition for the production of an emancipatory hegemonic relation whereby the division between leaders and led could be overcome. From this stance, one of the political and practical challenges of the Red Biennium and, more generally, of an

[8] A non-exhaustive taxonomy of these hypotheses includes: accounts that have emphasized the directive role of the Turin branch of the PSI, its ward circles or, more generally, the communist vanguards; see for example, Comollo in Paulesu Quercioli (1977, pp. 52-3), Longo (1974, p. 45), Santhià in Paulesu Quercioli (1977, pp. 98-9), Soave (1965, p. 183) and – at least for the final part of the occupation – Williams (1975, p. 248). At the same time, some commentators and protagonists of the occupation have argued that the occupation was organized independently of the activity of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group; see for example Clark (1977, pp. 148, 156, 162) and Viglongo in Bermani (1987, p. 49). See also Ferri (1957, pp. 465-6) who argues that the Factory Council movement was controlled by the Turin branch of the PSI. Other accounts have emphasized the directive role of FIOM; see for example Carretto and Matta (1970 [1921], p. 450) and Maione (1975, pp. 238, 243). For an account emphasizing the directive role of the Turin Chamber of Labour see Borghi (1921), and for an emphasis on the autonomous direction of the Factory Council movement, see for example Noce in Bermani (1987, p. 142), Pillon (1982, p. 8648) and – at least for the initial part of the occupation – Williams (1975, pp. 246-7).

emancipatory hegemonic relation, is to organize the horizontality of intellectual work within persistent hierarchies.

In this way, this article questions the limits of an emancipatory hegemony that relies solely on the direction of spontaneity to address the fundamental division that determines and haunts politics and political science. Moreover, it highlights the tensions between, on the one hand, hegemony and the direction of spontaneity and, on the other hand, democratic processes, in relation to the events of the Red Biennium. More generally, our discussion provides the first step towards a future reconstruction 'from below' of the political and ideological environment in which Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group, the Turin vanguard and the Turin working class operated during 1919-20. As such, this article considers the sources, the people and the debates that were relevant to the circulation and production of the *specific* theoretical and imaginative foundations of the system of Councils, and that are usually considered secondary in the existing literature. In particular, part of this molecular reconstruction draws on the reports, communiqués, calls and notices published by a range of anonymous militants, mapping the extremely detailed spread of conciliar ideas and images, and suggesting the collective extent of the 'intense ideological activity' of the Red Biennium.

Section II addresses the practical organization of the Turin system of Councils, discussing some theoretical elaborations from *L'Ordine Nuovo* that suggest an affinity with this practical organization. Section III will then turn to explore the hypothesis of the molecular influence of these elaborations on the realization of the sys-tem of Councils in September 1920. In particular, it illustrates the ways in which the molecular circulation of these elaborations took place across the cultural hierarchies between the communist van-guard and the worker masses during 1919-20. Section IV will then draw on this discussion to evaluate the emancipatory possibilities and the limits of a hegemonic relation where the spontaneity of the led is directed by the leaders. In conclusion it discusses how the intellectuals' and subalterns' co-production of theoretical perspectives emerges as one of the political and practical challenges for the Red Biennium as well as for emancipatory hegemony more generally.

II. A system of Factory Councils: practice and theory

In September 1920 about half a million workers, mostly metal-workers, occupied factories across Italy (Spriano, 1964, p. 63 [in English, 1975, p. 60]).[9] In this respect

> [t]he distinctive feature of the Turin occupation […] consisted of an effort to organize *a 'system' for the workers' management of the metallurgical factories* to ensure the coordination of production, exchanges of products and the supply of raw materials by creating a specific Committee at the Chamber of Labour,[10] as well as various sub-committees. (Spriano, 1964, p. 69, my emphasis; cf. Spriano, 1975, p. 64).

Along with expelling the owners, the Turin workers set up their own logistics and infrastructures, so as to bring about this workers' management system. A detailed account of the activities, extension and political or practical limits of this system would be outside the scope of this article – particularly because it is interested in the 'intense ideological activity' that gave birth to this system, rather than in its pure realization.[11] Suffice it to say, once the occupation had taken place, workers started setting up this system within the metallurgical (engineering) factories – particularly, around the car plants (e.g. the FIAT[12] plants) controlled by the Factory Councils, which regulated the internal activity of each workshop. Production continued during the occupation, despite the absence of the owners.

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[9] A detailed discussion of the occupation of the factories in Italy would be outside the scope of this work. Significantly, the occupation lasted for approximatively one month and did not have any revolutionary outcome. See Bosio (1970, pp. 7-69), Clark (1977, pp. 157-80), Spriano (1964) and Williams (1975, pp. 241-76). On the limits of the occupation and, particularly, the limits of the activity of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group, see Battini (1978, pp. 362-4), Clark (1977, pp. 210-7), Salvadori (1970, p. 1124), Soave (1965, pp. 180-85) and Spriano (1964, pp. 162-78).

[10] "The Chamber of Labour was an organization modelled on the French *Bourse du Travail*, and designed to unite all members of different Craft Unions, living in a given locality, for common action. It normally acted in conjunction with local Union leaders, and was usually controlled by them" (Clark, 1977, p. 83 note 41).

[11] See a more detailed account in Alessio (1920), Borghi (1920; 1921), Clark (1977, pp. 158-62), Spriano (1964, p. 148 and, in English, 1975, pp. 117-8) and Williams (1975, pp. 245-8). For an evaluation of the political limitations see Battini (1978, pp. 362-9) and Soave (1965); for an evaluation of the practical limits see Garino and Revelli (2011 [1982], pp. 135-6).

[12] *Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino*.

For example, 'the Fiat [Centro] Factory Council appointed special Commissars […] to maintain transport and to guarantee supplies of raw materials' (Clark, 1977, p. 158, my parenthesis). Subsequently, the need for raw materials and semi-finished products grew (Montagnana, 1952, p. 139),[13] and so the system expanded, connecting not only different factories within the same industry (e.g. foundries, machine tools factories, etc.) but also different industries (e.g. tyre factories, chemical and textile works, oxygen factories, etc.), including those not directly ancillary to the metallurgical factories (Borghi, 1921).[14]

The creation of the Turin workers' management system was accompanied by the development of Committees, which reached their final form approximatively in mid-September. These were developed thanks to a (new)[15] Directive Committee 'consisting of the executive committee of the Chamber of Labour, plus one representative of FIOM[16] [Italian Federation of Metalworkers]' (Clark 1977, p. 161, my parenthesis). This Directive Committee set up three technical committees – 'Exchange and Production', 'Buying and Selling' and 'Voucher, Subsidies and Kitchen' – which

[13] As Soave (1965, p. 178) has noted, the real political challenge of the occupation was bypassing the capitalist market and the international network of capitalist relations that encapsulated the supply and selling of products. From this angle, the Turin experiment represented an inchoate attempt to respond to this challenge – at least because, after mid-September, the 'Exchange and Production' Committee organized (and centralized) the supply side outside of market relations.

Notably, Williams has argued that "[i]t is an interesting comment on the limitation even of the Turin movement that exchanges between different branches of the same firm did not require Committee authorization, whereas exchanges between different firms did. The pre-existing capitalist structure was thus maintained under workers' control" (Williams, 1975, p. 246). Nevertheless, Williams' excerpt refers to the organization of the system of Councils in an earlier stage of the occupation. This organization was questioned by the workers during their assemblies, with workers rather arguing for the creation of workers' institutions to regulate the exchanges on behalf of the collective, see Anon (1920d). From this angle, the 'Exchange and Production' Committee can be considered an outcome of these deliberations – that is, an inchoate attempt to create 'a central economic Council, which decides the productive and distributive plans and thus succeeds in abolishing capitalist competition' (Gramsci, 1920b).

[14] In this respect, as Borghi has recalled, 'even raincoats, umbrella and clothing accessory factories were occupied' (Borghi, 1921).

[15] This new Committee replaced the initial Directive Committee that was set up by the Turin branch of FIOM at the beginning of the occupation, see Clark (1977, p. 160).

[16] *Federazione Italiana Operai Metallurgici.*

regulated all the activities and relations between different industries and factories (Borghi, 1921). Committees thus coordinated the Factory Councils at the city level (Clark, 1977, p. 162). In particular, the 'Exchange and Production' Committee

> regulate[d] the exchanges of raw materials and semi-finished products between different industries, monitoring requests and availabilities, as along with all the actual transfers of material between plants of different industries. The Committee also commanded the collective utilization of the available means of transport and the mobilization of specialized technical personnel (Borghi, 1921).

whereas the 'Buying and Selling' Committee

> monitored all the sales and all the purchases, and created a single Cash Office to collect money for the sales and payments involved in the purchase of raw materials that could not be obtained in the occupied plants; […] it worked as a general accounting office for the whole organization (Ibid.).

In this way the Turin movement established a network of factories organized around the car plants, connecting the activities of the different Factory Councils – a structure that can be called 'a *productive system of Councils'*.

Significantly, this system exceeded the pure logic of industrial production. In fact, it activated further networks of contacts and solidarity which included other sections of the Turin proletariat (e.g. the railway workers),[17] consumers' co-operatives[18] (the Turin Cooperative Alliance, ACT)[19] and the local circles of the PSI, the

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[17] 'As lorries commandeered by workers shuttled supplies between the occupied plants […], the Turin section of the railway union, on 3 September, instructed its men to assist metalworkers in the "liberation" of trucks loaded with fuel and raw material from the depots. The rail men sent them along the tracks and sidings feeding the plants' (Williams, 1975, p. 244).

[18] '"Communist kitchens" were set up in the factories, with provisions supplied by the Turin Co-operative Alliance' (Clark, 1977, p. 161); 'during the occupation of the factories […] the shops of the cooperative Alliance gave the goods on credit to the workers who were occupying [the factories]' (Comollo in Paulesu Quercioli, 1977, p. 52, my parenthesis).

[19] *Alleanza Cooperativa Torinese*. Significantly, the ACT and its activities were an integral part of the daily life of the workers who occupied the factories. Therefore the activation of extended circuits of solidarity should come as no surprise. From this angle, the headquarters of the ACT – along with those of the Chamber of Labour – were located in "[t]he building in corso Siccardi […] [which] was not only the place where the economic and political activities of the

Italian Socialist Party.[20] In this way, the occupation in Turin 'widened into a complex, if improvised, local economic system' (Clark, 1977, p. 162). The situation was 'moving rapidly towards [an inchoate] [...] urban soviet' (Williams, 1975, p. 248, my parenthesis). As Gramsci prefigured in the early days of September, 'today the problem of the constitution of the urban soviet occurs concretely to the working class' (Gramsci, 1920d).[21] That is, the organization of the system of occupied factories was extending across the urban territory, including larger and larger portions of the political and social life of the Turin workers.

This illustrates the 'tendency' towards the soviet because, firstly,

> [f]rom an instrument of economic control*, the council system becomes the base for developing a power that is informed by it [the council system] but also includes the other centres of proletarian organized life*. […] [T]he "seed" from which might arise a dictatorship of workers and peasants (State of soviets) must be found […] in the Councils (Silvestrini, 2012, pp. 159-61, my parenthesis and emphasis).[22]

The tendency towards the soviet was also illustrated by the composition of the directive and technical Committees, which in mid-September included members who, though not necessarily communist,[23] were part of FIOM and the Turin Chamber of

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main people's organization took place. It was also the fundamental meeting and gathering point in case of assemblies, conferences, theatre plays, carnival balls […]. In this location […] there was a workers' sociability that did not have anything to do with that of the bourgeoisie, which was deployed in the cafes in the city centre or in the theatres. [Workers] went together into […] the large rooms of the mutual aid associations, bringing food from home, and consumed it at full crowded tables, during dinners that ended with songs and speeches […]. [T]hese forms of associative life contributed towards elaborating a model of life, behaviour and systems of values that were able to characterise the workers' urban world" (Castronovo, 1987, pp. 188-9, my parentheses).

[20] 'during the occupation of the factories, the circles bought us food, gave us the necessary information' (Santhià in Paulesu Quercioli, 1977, p. 99).

[21] Spriano (1971, p. 121) has argued that this question was not taken any further during September 1920. The present article seek to demonstrate the opposite point.

[22] Guiducci (1977, pp. 192-3) had put forward a similar perspective, arguing that the transition from a system of Councils to the soviets can be understood in terms of the extension of the Council system across the urban territory to include 'the variegated geography of the proletarian social life'.

[23] As illustrated, the Directive Committee included the Executive Commission of the Chamber of Labour, which consisted of a mix of communist and reformist members, see Ballone and

Labour. This condition resonates with the composition of the soviet, which 'includes elements deriving not only from Council institutions, but also from "unions, Chambers of Labour and the general Confederation of labour"' (Silvestrini, 2012, p. 163). Or, at least, it resonates to the extent that it illustrates a *tendency* towards the soviet, rather than its creation, because a soviet 'is composed by delegates with *proven* revolutionary and *communist faith*' (ibid., my emphasis).[24]

What was the role of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group in this situation? A year before, in 1919, Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group had put forward ideas and images that bore an affinity to the practical realization of the productive system of Councils. As Gramsci wrote in *L'Ordine Nuovo* on 8 November 1919:

> [t]he worker can see himself as a producer only if he sees himself as an inseparable part of the whole labour system which is concentrated in the object being manufactured […]. The worker will see himself as a producer if – after he has become psychologically part of a particular productive process in a particular factory (e.g. in a car plant in Turin) [...] he can now go one stage further and comprehend the whole of the Turin car-manufacturing process. *If he can comprehend Turin as one production unit characterized by the car; see a large part of the general productive activity of Turin as existing and developing simply as a result of the existence and development of the car industry: and so see the workers in these general productive activities as themselves belonging to the car industry*, for the simple reason that they create the necessary and sufficient conditions for that industry's existence. *Starting off from this original cell, the factory, seen as a unit* [...] *the worker proceeds to the comprehension of ever vaster units, right up to the level of the nation itself* – which is in its entirety a gigantic apparatus of production, characterized by its exports, by the sum or wealth it exchanges for an equivalent of wealth coming in from every part of the world, from the various other gigantic apparatuses or production into which the world is divided (Gramsci, 1919e, my emphasis).[25]

Della Valle (1992, p. 72). See also the role of Romita in the 'Buying and Selling' Committee later in this article.

[24] On the relation between Factory Councils and soviets in Gramsci, see also De Felice (1971, pp. 276-9 and 305-6), Livorsi (1979, p. 404) and Paggi (1970, pp. 240-41).

[25] *Syndicalism and the Councils*, now in Gramsci (1977, pp. 110-11, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, the idea of 'the worker as a producer'[26] is supported by other ideas and images, like *'Turin as one production unit characterized by the car'*. Significantly, these ideas and images are integral to the ways in which the conciliar conception of an industrial city – particularly, Turin – is presented in the contributions that appeared in *L'Ordine Nuovo* or were written by members of the group.[27] In fact, in this and other[28] excerpts Turin is represented as an 'inherently industrial and proletarian city', where the urban space is adapted to productive needs (Olmo, 1998, p. 18), the social characteristics of which are strongly affected by industry – particularly,

[26] The theoretical, historical and political relevance of this excerpt will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the 'worker as the producer' can be connected to Gramsci's remarks about the 'collective worker' in the *Prison Notebooks*, see for example Gramsci (1975, Q9§67, pp. 1137-8; in English 1971, p. 202) and Iacono (1976). Moreover, the creation of a productive system of Councils represented an inchoate form of worker's control over production – that is, a necessary step towards the construction of a proletarian political power (a Workers' State). See for example De Felice (1971, pp. 291-311) and Salvadori (1970).

[27] Notably, these images and ideas were not only held by the communists in Turin, but also in other intellectual groups (e.g. liberals such as Luigi Einaudi) and have also impacted on post-WWII historiography, e.g. Spriano (1972). For a more general discussion, see Maione (1975, pp. 335-9), Musso (1998) and Olmo (1998).

[28] See, for example: 'overall, Turin is like one big single factory, whose main productivity is provided by the motor car industry' (Gramsci [?], Romita [??] et al. 1919). The '[?]' is attributed by Mazzacurati (2015, p. 406 note 43), while the present article attributes this quote to Gramsci and (at least) Romita, because they were both part of the Executive Commission of the local PSI branch at that time: see Anon (1919c) and Anon (1920a).

'Turin […] is the industrial city, the proletarian city, *par excellence* [...].Turin is like one great factory: its working population conforms to a single pattern, being powerfully unified by industrial production' (Gramsci 1920a, now in Gramsci, 1977, p. 151 and 1987, p. 387).

'The city [of Turin] was and still is shaped as a matter of course around a single industry that "controls" all the city's movements and regulates its outlets. Turin is the *motor car* city' (Gramsci, 1920c, now in Gramsci, 1977, p. 296 and 1987, p. 625).

'Turin is a city […] given over almost exclusively to industrial production. […] The production apparatus in Turin is strongly centralized and unified. The engineering industry […] dominates the entire industrial field. […] Engineering production in Turin is entirely given over to the car' (Gramsci, 2017 [1920], pp. 41-2). This excerpt is part of an article that Gramsci sent to the Comintern journal *Communist International*, and which was published in November 1920. It appeared with some modifications in *L'Ordine Nuovo* in March 1921; for a detailed discussion of this article, see Silvestrini (2017).

See also Terracini's comment on the development of the Factory Councils in Italy, published in the *Italian Socialist Almanac* (*Almanacco Socialista Italiano*) in 1920: "[i]n Turin, the great mass of the workers who lived and worked in the *factories, vast as cities*, […] changed as long as the working process to which they were attached changed' (Terracini, 1970 [1920], p. 139, my emphasis). Significantly, Terracini's contribution was published before September 1920.

the car industry (Musso, 1998, p. 38). At the same time, the conception of an industrial city is strongly affected by a conciliar imaginary that understands its organization as a system of interconnected factories.[29] In this way, Turin is conceived of as a connected system of interdependent factories that are organized around the car industry – that is, a *model* of a productive system of Councils.

This model performs a descriptive and political function. On the one hand, it describes the organization of Turin as an industrial city, thus providing an empirical understanding of the social world.[30] The 'factual' aspect of this model can be illustrated by what the Executive Commission of the Turin branch of the PSI (which included Gramsci)[31] stated in December 1919:

> [o]verall, Turin is like one big single factory, whose main production is determined by the motor car industry. The working mass is strongly unified by this powerful formation of the productive system; strongly unified as a bloc that is organized and disciplined by the Chamber of Labour (Gramsci [?], Romita [??] et al., 1919).

On the other hand, the 'Turin model' performed a political function, because it helped the Turin workers to organize their mobilization during the occupation, thereby actualizing the political

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[29] See for example: 'the big industrial city […] can only live thanks to the superior relations that connect one factory to the other' (Leonetti, 1920).

'Every factory that has become […] a complete centre of communal life must develop relationships with other similar organizations' (Togliatti, 1919).

'A factory is united to the other factories and the whole economic life of the place with a thousand relations. It depends […] on the factories that elaborate its raw materials and on the factories that are provided with raw materials by this factory, it also depends on all the factories in the same branch and on the economic regime of the country' (Radek, 1919).

[30] However, this description is not necessarily accurate. In this respect, scholars have questioned the overarching importance that the car industry might have had to the city of Turin and, more generally, the stereotypical representation of the city that concealed a greater social complexity. In particular they have contested the idea that the city was organized around the car plants, following the 'canonical' model of industrialization – that is, Manchester. See for example De Felice (1971, p. 307), Musso (1998, pp. 37, 39, 42-3), Olmo (1998, pp. 13-18) and Ottaviano (1988, pp. 204-6). See a different position in Clark (1977, p. 59), who implicitly agreed with the accuracy of these descriptions. Similarly, Castronovo (1987, p. 176) compared the organization of Turin to the industrial polarization of Manchester. For the political limits of these description see Maione (1975, p. 339).

[31] See Anon (1919c) and Anon (1920a).

aim of the Factory Council movement. That is, as will become clear, the 'Turin model' impacted on the organization of the productive system of Councils, informing the practices of the Turin workers during September 1920 in their attempt to take control of production and running the factories without the owners.[32]

In this way, Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group – and, more questionably, the Turin working class[33] – produced a '*revolutionary "sociology"*' that,

> [f]rom the direct study of the organizational forms of production one can derive the constitutive elements for a new vision of the forms and nature of the revolutionary process (Paggi, 1970, p. 222; my emphasis).

That is, the image of an 'industrial and proletarian Turin' became a description of the productive organization that was needed to support the political mobilization of the Turin working class.

At the same time, this image is entangled in the idea of the Factory Councils as developed by *L'Ordine Nuovo*, since their 'inquiry into this organizational form often ended up by fusing and intertwining with the description and analysis of the concrete social situation of the city of Turin' (Paggi, 1970, p. 259). *L'Ordine Nuovo*'s inquiry into the Factory Councils was in turn grounded on the concrete experiences, knowledge and political perspectives of the Turin workers. In particular, Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group were interested in the workers' thoughts about their lives and the struggles in the factories, about the ways in which factories operated and were organized, and about the political function of the workers' institutions within the factories – that is, the Internal Commissions (e.g. Bermani, 1980/1981, pp. 15-17; Bianco in Paulesu Quercioli, 1977, p. 30; Frongia in Bermani, 1987, p. 121; Garino in Bermani, 1987, p. 91; Noce in Bermani, 1987, p. 139; Santhià 1956, p. 62, 164-7; Viglongo in Bermani, 1987, p. 41). Therefore, the 'revolutionary sociology' of Gramsci and the *Ordine*

[32] On the question of the occupation of the factories and the workers' control, see for example De Felice (1971, pp. 291-311) and Salvadori (1970, p. 1112-4).
[33] See Section IV.

Nuovo group – particularly, their 'Turin model' – "'translate[d]" the elements of historical life into theoretical language' (Gramsci, 1975, Q3§48, p. 332 and 1996, p. 52; see also Paggi, 1970, p. 260).[34]

So far, the above discussion has merely suggested an affinity between theory and practice – that is, between the 'model' of a system of Councils and its concrete realization. Crucially, this article will demonstrate this affinity through employing a molecular approach. In fact, the idea of a 'translation into theory' – as it holds for the 'Turin model' – is a conceptual shortcut. That is, it stands in for a variety of imaginative and theoretical products that resulted from the 'intense ideological activity' of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group, collectively organized through conversations, oral debates, pamphlets and newspapers during 1919-20. This 'theory' – or this 'model' – became a shared form of knowledge, circulating among interconnected political subjects (i.e. the metallurgical union, the workers' movement, the PSI) and across socio-political stratifications (i.e. the vanguard intellectuals, the leaders, the militants and the working mass). In the end, this affected the realization of a system of Councils in September 1920.

III. The occupation of the factories and the molecular circulation of a 'model' for a system of Councils

How did the 'Turin model' become a shared form of knowledge? How did this shared knowledge impact on the creation of the worker's management system in September 1920?[35] The point is to understand to what extent Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group

[34] Significantly, Maione (1975, pp. 22-4 and 38) has questioned the extent to which the *Ordine Nuovo* group succeeded in interpreting the workers' exigencies and thereby effectively 'translating' the elements of their historical life. For a critique of Maione's position, see for example De Felice (1971, pp. 360-4) and Varni (1974, pp. 94-7).

[35] This is at odds with those scholars who have argued that, in Gramsci's work, the productive system of Councils was only a theoretical sketch devoid of any practical application, see for example De Felice (1971, pp. 305-7) and, implicitly, Mazzacurati (2016, p. 89). On the contrary, this article agrees with Paggi's observations (1970, pp. 258-9), according to which the Factory Councils were the *concrete* form of a political process, rather than an abstract hypothesis. Moreover, it further develops these observations by considering the productive system of Councils as the historical expression of concrete social, political and ideological processes, rather than merely as an abstract hypothesis without historical application.

ideologically '*directed*' the practices of the Turin workers. In this respect, the present Section will explore the hypothesis of a 'molecular' – though not necessarily immediate – influence of the 'Turin model' on the realization of a productive system of Councils. Moreover, it will illustrate the specifically molecular circulation of ideas through 'hierarchies of culture' which 'reinforced' the *loose relationships* between the model and the concrete organization of the productive system of Councils.

During September 1920, in fact, the productive system of Councils was realized to a large extent independently of the actual intervention of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group – in other words, they did not direct its creation and coordination. Instead, the productive system of Councils resulted from the complex political and organizational dynamics initiated between the Turin branch of FIOM and the local Chamber of Labour, with the further intervention from the local branch of the PSI.[36] And while many of the people who were part of these institutions were either close or belonged to *L'Ordine Nuovo*, this fact cannot account for the development of these dynamics. Although the local branch of FIOM was practically controlled by the Factory Council movement,[37] which was conceivably very close to the *Ordine Nuovo* group,[38] the situation at the Chamber of Labour was a different matter. The composition of the Executive Commission presented a balance between communist and reformist members: the majority was communist, whereas the secretary – Luigi Chignoli – and the minority were reformists (Ballone and Della Valle, 1992, pp. 71-2; Spriano, 1971, pp. 107-8, note 5, and 118, note 2).

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[36] For a detailed account of these dynamics see for example Borghi (1921) and Williams (1975, pp. 245-50).

[37] See for example Garino in Bermani (1987, pp. 91-2), Garino and Revelli (2011 [1982], pp. 101-2), Montagnana (1952, p. 118), Pillon (1982, p. 8643) and Spriano (1971, pp. 82 and p. 108, note 1).

[38] See for example Garino in Bermani (1987, p. 87), Santhià (1956, pp. 164-8) and Spriano (1971, p. 49). Spriano (1971, p. 57 note 2) also noted the close collaboration between the Turin branch of FIOM and the *Ordine Nuovo* group. Nevertheless, the extent to which the Factory Council movement was influenced or controlled by the *Ordine Nuovo* group – at least during spring/summer 1920 – is a matter of debate: see for example Clark (1977, pp. 136-8), Maione (1975, pp. 38-9, and p. 86 note 73) and Viglongo in Bermani (1987, pp. 49-50).

Moreover, during the first days of the occupation, a number of Factory Councils 'spontaneously' established connections between different plants of the same factory, as well as among different factories – i.e. for the exchange of products and supply of raw materials. For example, the Factory Council of the Moncenisio Works coordinated the exchange of materials between the two plants of Condove and Turin (Anon., 1920b; Anon., 1920c). Moreover, it established a connection with the Factory Council of the Garavini Company, in order to receive raw materials (Anon., 1920b). Notably, these connections were autonomously established prior to 5 September 1920 – the 'Red Sunday' – when Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group held their first meetings at the occupied factories. As mentioned, a central organ that coordinated the different factories, and thereby different Factory Councils, was gradually set up only during mid-September.

Nevertheless, the creation and coordination of a productive system of Councils can be traced back to the conciliar ideas and imaginaries presented by Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group. From this angle, dispersed elements of 'ideological direction' can explain the 'spontaneity' of a social practice. That is, the realization of an inchoate system of Councils was influenced by the intellectual production of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group during 1919-20.[39] This influence must not be understood as the mechanical application of theoretical-imaginative resources to social reality. Rather, this influence should be considered part of the 'intense ideological activity' through which (cf. Q8§195, cited at the start of this article), a collective will 'generated an action that was coordinated and simultaneous in time and geographical space'.[40]

[39] This is at odds with Boggs' contention that '[t]he factory councils that actually appeared in Piedmont during the *Ordine Nuovo* years *never* approximated the theoretical prescription formulated by Gramsci' (Boggs, 1974, p. 180, my emphasis).

[40] This is not to overlook the role that an organizational structure plays in the 'generation' of coordinated activity. Ideas do not spread by themselves; rather their diffusion requires an apparatus. However, an analysis of the organization and diffusion of ideas (and practices) should consider *how* these ideas (and practices) are spread through the apparatus, what tactics or strategies of diffusion are involved, etc., because the same apparatus can spread ideas in different ways.

In this respect, the practical realization of the productive system of Councils conceivably includes traces of the ideological influence of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group. On the eve of the occupation of the factories (28 August 1920), Gramsci wrote:

> The system of Councils […] can only be represented *by transferring the complex of industrial relations* that link one job crew to another, one shop to another in a factory, *onto the level of an entire industrial zone* (Gramsci, 1920c, my emphasis).[41]

The idea of interlinking an entire industrial zone so that it functions like one large entity resonated in a report published in the Piedmontese edition of *Avanti!* (the PSI newspaper) a few days later, during the occupation of the factories (8 September 1920). In particular, the report asserted that 'the factories of the Turin workers have become like one single factory' (Anon., 1920e). This excerpt implies that 'the complex of industrial relations' in a factory has been transferred onto the 'city as one production unit'. This suggests that the image of 'Turin, one single factory' – which is integral to the 'Turin model' and thus part of the ideological debate before September 1920 – circulated from theory (August 28) to reality (September 8).

The ideological influence of this model on the practical realization of the system of Councils can be illustrated from another perspective: that of specific people who participated in the elaboration of conciliar ideas and imaginaries, and whose role 'on the ground' was fundamental during September 1920. For example, Giuseppe Romita[42] was central to the organization of the productive system of Councils, because he was appointed to the coordination of the 'Buying and Selling Committee' (Anon., 1920f). Therefore, he likely contributed to 'transferring the complex of industrial relations' from the factories to the 'city as one production unit', because he

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[41] *On the* L'Ordine Nuovo *Programme*, now in Gramsci (1977, p. 295, my emphasis).

[42] Although he was a member of the PSI, Romita was neither a communist nor necessarily aligned with Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group: see Andreucci and Detti (1978a, pp. 375-80) and Williams (1975, pp. 247-8). Significantly, his political activity was characterized by a long-standing collaboration with the Turin cooperative movement, see for example Anon (1919b) and Anon (1920g).

centralized the internal necessities of different individual factories[43] at the city level, into the productive system of Councils. At the same time, like Gramsci, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Turin branch of the PSI from September 1919 to February 1920 (Anon., 1919c; Anon., 1920a). He therefore played a role in the elaboration and circulation of the image of 'Turin, one single factory'. As previously noted, during December 1919 the Turin Executive Commission of the PSI published a call that stated:

> Overall, Turin is like one big single factory, whose main productivity is provided by the motor car industry (Gramsci [?], Romita [??] et al., 1919).

Another significant episode involves Giovanni Parodi.[44] Parodi was a metallurgical worker, a member of the Turin Executive Commission of the PSI between February and August 1920 (Ferri, 1958, p. 260) and, above all, the secretary of the Factory Council / Internal Commission[45] at the Fiat Centro (Spriano, 1964, p. 67) – that is, the factory that would become the model and inspiration for the entire occupation (Montagnana, 1952, p. 143). In particular, the episode concerns the exchange of know-how and material between the Fiat Centro and the Lancia factories. In Parodi's words:

> with the aim of simplifying the working process, the Workshop [Factory] Council deliberated over sending a Commission of Technicians to the Lancia Automobile Factory, in order to share the secrets [of the working process] of different factories. […] The Internal Commission of Lancia was immediately in harmony with the Internal Commission of the Fiat Centro. […] A cordial

[43] i.e. the purchase and supply of raw materials.

[44] See his short biography in Andreucci and Detti (1978a, pp. 54-6).

[45] Strictly speaking, the Fiat Centro did not have a Factory Council, rather an Internal Commission which was elected by the Committee of the Workshop Delegates of the Fiat Centro; see for example Parodi, Aprà, Bordigari et al. (1920). Nevertheless, Parodi (1930) used 'Internal Commission', 'Factory Council', 'Workers' Factory Committee' and 'Workshop Council' interchangeably. The present article moreover considers Factory Councils and Internal Commissions as equivalent, because it does not differentiate between the contribution of Internal Commissions or Factory Councils during the occupation. Furthermore, as Musso has noted, during the Red Biennium 'the denomination and distinction between the two organs [Internal Commission and Factory Council] are sometimes very uncertain and the labour disputes were determined by the real competencies of the internal representatives rather than by the form of the representative organ' (Musso, 1980, p. 197).

exchange of assistance thus started, not only in terms of sharing working secrets, but also […] [in terms of] the exchange of specialized workforce, raw materials, handmade products, accessories and other things (Parodi, 1930, p. 646, my parenthesis).

Interestingly, the 'Turin model' had already circulated at the Lancia factory – particularly, in the form of ideas and images of 'conciliar interconnections'. In September 1919, the day after Gramsci discussed the Factory Councils organization with the workers of that factory,[46] the Lancia Internal Commission (and soon-to-be Factory Council) held a meeting with the workers, addressing the 'connection of the Factory Councils into higher units right up to the national Council' (Anon., 1919e). In this respect, the Lancia workers were conceivably invited to adopt a 'producer psychology', and to 'start off from the factory, and include vaster units, right up to the level of the nation'. In turn, the collaboration with the Factory Council of the Fiat Centro suggests that the discussions at the meeting in 1919 resulted in a practical implementation.

The situation is similar for the Factory Council of the Fiat Centro. Available documentation suggests on the one hand that Parodi was central to creating concrete 'conciliar interconnections' in September 1920. On the other hand, in the years prior to this, he was also involved in the elaboration of conciliar ideas and images that crystallized in the 'Turin model'. As Maurizio Garino[47] – one of the protagonists of the Turin Factory Council movement – has recalled:

Gramsci created a Committee for the Study of the Factory Councils. Already at the end of 1918, beginning of 1919. There was me [Garino], Ferrero, Montagnana, Parodi, Viglongo. […] We set up the Factory Councils from there (Garino and Revelli, 2011 [1982], pp. 92-3, my parenthesis).[48]

In this respect,

[46] 'Tonight […] the workers of the Lancia Works are convening […] to discuss the nomination of the Workshop Delegates. Comrade Gramsci will intervene' (Anon., 1919d).
[47] See a short biography in Andreucci and Detti (1975b, pp. 439-41).
[48] See also Garino in Paulesu Quercioli (1977, pp. 64-6).

> on a theoretical level [...] in that Committee for the Study of the Councils […] we elaborated the system of Councils by taking inspiration from the soviet […]. We elaborated the construction of this system in Turin (pp. 103-4).

Garino does not elaborate further on the ways in which the Committee's theory of a (Turin) system of Councils was inspired by 'the soviet'. In this respect, Karl Radek's observations on the 'objective' organization underpinning the soviet – which were published in *L'Ordine Nuovo* at the end of 1919 – can conceivably fill this interpretative void:

> [a] factory is united to the other factories and the whole economic life of the place with a thousand relations. It depends […] on the factories that elaborate its raw materials and from the factories that this factory provides raw materials to; it also depends on all the factories in the same branch and on the economic regime of the country (Radek, 1919).

Notably, Radek's words also shed light on what Parodi – along with the Executive Commission of the Fiat Centro Factory Council – wrote in *L'Ordine Nuovo* in March 1920 :

> the Workshop Council, [its] forces and [its] activities […] must converge towards the construction of a system of local soviets. […] The ways in which *different factories proceed in mutual agreement* is a source of cohesion and proletarian order for the Councils, which are the fundamental elements on which the structure of the local soviet must be based (Parodi, Aprà, Bordigari et al., 1920, my emphasis).

In this way, Parodi not only contributed to the *practical* implementation of a productive system of Councils that connected some Turin factories during the occupation, but, along with Gramsci, also provided its theoretical basis by contributing to the ideas and images of a Turin system of Councils that understood its organization in terms of a network of interconnected factories.

These 'molecular supports' help in assessing the ideological influence that Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group held over the concrete realization of a productive system of Councils. And yet, they do not account for the initial 'spontaneous' dimension of the work-

ers' management system. In fact, during 1920 *L'Ordine Nuovo* lost its 'ideological grip' over the Turin workers' movement, with Gramsci at times quite isolated from the other members of the group (Clark, 1977, pp. 91-3, 94-5, 110, 132, 136, 138, 140-46, 148, 156, 162; Spriano, 1971, p. 115). It appears then that the links between the 'Turin model' and its 'practical realization' are quite loose.

Nevertheless, these loose links do not necessarily undermine the hypothesis of ideological influence. The question of *hierarchies of culture* is significant in this respect. Even though this expression was not developed during the Red Biennium,[49] it nevertheless took on a particular meaning during summer of 1919:

> it is necessary to foster the formation of hierarchies of culture, the formation of an aristocracy of vanguard communists. […] They will […] be appointed with the task of popularizing revolutionary concepts, developing them among the local masses by adapting these concepts to the different psychologies (Gramsci, 1919a).[50]

In this respect, 'hierarchies of culture' encompass the ideological and social functions of the Communist vanguard intellectuals, leaders and militants vis-a-vis the working mass.[51] This implies that

> in every factory, the most advanced elements ([…] the members and the supporters of the Party) start with the movement. They must be the first to assemble and prepare the work; they must call for a factory meeting, and they must explain the basic concepts underpinning the new form of Internal Commission to the masses (Gramsci [?], 1919b).[52]

It appears that this way of organizing the circulation of knowledge was quite effective. Looking back at the gatherings and assemblies of summer in autumn 1919, Gramsci noted that:

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[49] In this respect, Gramsci had already introduced the question of the 'spiritual hierarchies', see Manacorda (1970, pp. 33, 45).
[50] See a similar emphasis on 'conscientization' in the assemblies in Gramsci (1919d).
[51] Compare this to the emphasis on the Workshop Delegates 'as conscious workers [who] will undoubtedly win authority over the masses' (Gramsci et al., 1919, my parenthesis), now in Gramsci (1977, p. 115, my parenthesis). For a general discussion on the 'hierarchies of culture', see for example Manacorda (1970, pp. 43-6).
[52] The attribution to Gramsci is by Mazzacurati (2015, p. 402, note 8).

listeners immediately demonstrated that they mastered the central idea, because they inferred the consequences as well as the precise practical inferences that were relevant to their own factory with its particular mechanisms of production (Gramsci, 1919c).

To what extent could this form of organization convey the theories and imaginaries of the Councils? And to what extent did these theories and imaginaries became a form of shared knowledge, thus influencing the realization of the productive system of Councils on a mass level? These 'revolutionary concepts across hierarchies of culture' were disseminated during the expansion of the Council movement in Turin (July–December 1919).[53] Interestingly, during this time the theory of the Factory Councils and thus the 'Turin model' were developed within and beyond *L'Ordine Nuovo,* which refined their theoretical, imaginative and practical aspects.[54] Moreover, the 'Turin model' was also spreading along with the 'revolutionary concepts'. As already illustrated the idea of 'Turin as one production unit characterized by the car' appeared in the 8 November 1919 issue of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in an article entitled *Syndicalism and the Councils*. At the same time, conciliar images were repeated within theoretical remarks about the system of Councils. In fact, this system represents the social leadership of all the workers,

as realized in *organs of production* (work-crew, workshop, factory, union of the factories in a given industry, *union of the productive enterprises in a city*, […] a province, a region, the nation, the world) (Gramsci et al., 1919, my emphasis).[55]

This excerpt, which includes the image of the 'unification of the factories at the city level', is part of the 'Declaration of Principles' in the *Programme of the Workshop Delegates* – that is, the political manifesto of the Factory Councils. This *Programme* was written by a 'Committee for the Study of the Programme of the Workshop

[53] For a more detailed account, see for example Clark (1977, pp. 79-88), Mazzacurati (2015) and Williams (1975, pp. 94-136).
[54] A number of suggestions are in Mazzacurati (2015, pp. 349, 351-2, 357-8, 362, 369, 370-1).
[55] Now in Gramsci (1977, p. 116, my emphasis).

Delegates'[56] at the end of October 1919 (Anon., 1919f). Gramsci was not part of the Committee, although he took part in collaborations with it.[57] At the same time, the Committee comprised members of the Internal Commissions, some of whom were close to *L'Ordine Nuovo*.[58] From this angle, as Gramsci notes,

> the project [...] for the programme to be undertaken was studied and prepared by the workers themselves in factory meetings, under the guidance and leadership of the communist elements (Gramsci, 2017 [1920], p. 49).

On 1 November 1919 the assembly of the Turin branch of FIOM (which represented 16,000 members) voted in favour of adopting this 'Declaration', thus committing to extend the already-existing Factory Councils. The majority of workers were thus persuaded by the metalworkers' vanguard, who supported the Council movement and were aligned with *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Significantly, this 'Declaration' was not only discussed in front of the workers, who gathered at the *Teatro Torinese* that day; it was also circulated from one worker to another prior to the opening of the assembly (Anon., 1919g; Spriano, 1971, p. 82 note 1). Then it was further circulated in the following weeks, in the 8 November issue of *L'Ordine Nuovo*, and its later reprints. In this way, in less than a month, about 10,000 copies of the *Programme* were spread across the Turin factories (Anon., 1919h), to the point that in the end there

[56] Notably, Mazzacurati (2015, pp. 379 and 405 note 32) has confused this 'Committee for the Study of the Programme of the Workshop Delegates' with the 'Committee for the Study of the Factory Councils'. However, the former was a provisional Committee created at the end of October 1919, see also Clark (1977, p. 84 note 43), whereas the latter was created at the end of 1918-beginning of 1919, as illustrated in Garino and Revelli (2011 [1980], pp. 92-3).

[57] In this respect, the existing literature has discussed the 'Gramscian style and spirit' of the *Programme*, see Williams (1975, pp. 123, 132-3), or has directly attributed the *Programme* to Gramsci, see for example Gramsci (1987, p. 311).

[58] In particular, Giovanni Boero and Enea Matta: see Anon (1919f). On their relation to *L'Ordine Nuovo*, see respectively Andreucci and Detti (1975a, pp. 332-3; 1977, pp. 369-70). Another member of the Committee was Felice Bordigari, who was part of the Executive Commission of the Fiat Centro Factory Council and, along with Parodi, contributed to the circulation of the 'Turin model', see Parodi, Aprà, Bordigari et al. (1920).

were only a few hundred left.[59] Notably, the 8 November issue of *L'Ordine Nuovo* and its reprints included *Syndicalism and the Councils*, which formulated the image of 'Turin as one production unit characterized by the car' – that is the idea of Turin as a model for a productive system of Councils.

Crucially, this shows the magnitude as well as the extreme detail with which images and theories about the productive system of Councils circulated across 'hierarchies of culture'. In particular, this episode explains the ways in which ideas and images were organized by interconnected political subjects and circulated across a stratification of 'hierarchies of culture' through informal discussions and, on a mass level, through the dense network of proletarian press distribution in Turin. More generally, the argument in this Section has provided a glimpse of the above-cited 'enormous number of books, pamphlets, newspaper and journal articles, conversations and oral debates' that are needed to 'generate an action that is coordinated and simultaneous in the time and space' (therefore emphasizing the importance of molecular processes of collective will organization in its *historically absolute dimension*).

IV. The articulation between hegemony and the direction of spontaneity: the molecular circulation of knowledge and the question of emancipation

So far, this article has approached the 'intense ideological activity' that 'gave birth' to the Turin system of Councils in terms of molecular processes of knowledge circulation across hierarchies of culture. Significantly, these discussions can be used to explore the theoretical and political lexicon of the *Prison Notebooks*, particularly addressing the emancipatory stakes implicit in the articulation between hegemony and the direction of spontaneity – that is, the division between leaders and led, and the strategies to overcome it within a context of persistent hierarchies. At the same time, a conceptual exploration of this articulation from a molecular perspective also provides a theoretical framework for historical analysis. This

[59] On 22 November 1919, in fact, a brief sentence at the bottom of the last page *of L'Ordine Nuovo* states: 'A few hundred copies of the past 8 November issue are still left in our office'.

framework highlights some aspects of the emancipatory politics of the Red Biennium, and points to its limits – particularly, the ways in which persistent hierarchies in the Turin context hindered processes aimed at healing the leaders-led fracture.

Scholars who have discussed the pedagogy-hegemony relation in the *Prison Notebooks*[60] have observed that Gramsci relates the disparity between leaders (intellectuals) and masses (subalterns) to their respective degree of critical awareness – that is, to the *different cultural levels* existing between them (Baldacci, 2016, p. 146; 2017, p. 33; Urbani, 1967, p. 27). This is why the question of 'hierarchies of culture' can be considered central. As discussed in Section III, the purpose – and the necessity – of these cultural hierarchies is directly related to the social and ideological function of the vanguard communists, who, on the basis of what workers thought about their lives and struggles in the factory, 'popularise[d] the revolutionary concepts, […] [and] develop[ed] them among the local masses' (Gramsci, 1919a, my parenthesis).

Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group thus viewed these hierarchies as inevitable but also functional to the objectives of the workers' movements – although only temporarily. In this way,

> it is the pursuit of a "*single cultural environment*" […] that […] is revealed in Gramsci's commitment. *L'Ordine Nuovo* and the experience of the Councils represent the greatest moment of tension around this problem (Broccoli, 1972, p. 45, my emphasis).[61]

From this stance the creation of this

> 'single cultural environment' […] will be possible to the extent that the masses-intellectuals dialectic relation will be able to express the translation of political claims into theoretical language. That language is intended to flow within the masses, thus becoming good sense and universal conception (Broccoli, 1972, p. 4).

[60] The overlap between pedagogy and hegemony in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* has been extensively discussed by Gramsci scholars, see for example Baldacci (2016; 2017), Baratta (2007, pp. 195-209), Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo (2002), Broccoli (1972), Buttigieg (2005), Mayo (2014), Manacorda (1970) and Urbani (1967).

[61] See also Broccoli (1972, p. 54-6).

The 'popularization of revolutionary concepts through hierarchies of culture' thus represents one way in which 'a theoretical language that interprets the political experience of the masses flows within the masses', thereby creating a 'single cultural environment'. In this way, following his experience with the Factory Councils, Gramsci became aware that cultural hierarchies must be levelled, in order to 'create the conditions in which the division [between leaders and led] is no longer necessary' (Gramsci, 1975, Q15§4, p. 1752; 1971, p. 144). Crucially, establishing a hegemonic relation between these groups appears as the only possible way of levelling hierarchies, thus creating a 'single cultural environment'. In other words, hegemony might work towards forms of social emancipation that challenge the fracture between intellectuals and subalterns – however this is only possible under one specific condition. That is,

> only the connection between the hegemonic relationship with the *philosophy of praxis* can start this developmental dynamic. This is because this philosophy is intrinsically connected with a project of emancipation of the subaltern social groups, and it aims to go beyond the division between leaders and led (Baldacci, 2016, p. 157).

Assuming that the philosophy of praxis is the unification of theory and practice (Frosini, 2009), a 'project of emancipation of the subaltern social groups' thus has a theoretical and practical character. At the same time, the philosophy of praxis 'translates the elements of the (subalterns') historical life into theory', guiding political activity within a (subaltern) context.[62] From this perspective, in this 'emancipatory project' the theories formulated by intellectuals are inspired and indeed *developed within* subaltern contexts as well as *from* the experiences and knowledge of subaltern groups. That is, theory accounts for the concrete conditions of subaltern contexts, thus providing an empirical understanding of these social contexts. Moreover the empirical understanding of

[62] See a general discussion in Green (2002, pp. 8, 19-20).

these contexts is directly related to the formulation of political strategies whose aim is to transform these contexts.

In this way, the combination of theory and practice results in a conception of the world that offers a *wider understanding of the material environment*. From this angle, the ideological and social function of the intellectual boils down to the ideological direction of spontaneous philosophies – that is, spontaneous conceptions of the world.[63] Indeed, as Nicola Badaloni has argued, in the *Prison Notebooks*

> *spontaneity* is a set of daily experiences that are already guided [*illuminato* in the original Italian] and unified by a traditional philosophy; the "conscious direction" is the substitution of this spontaneous philosophy with a more articulated and unifying one which springs from a *comprehensive vision of the material environment* where that so-called spontaneity is located (Badaloni, 1973, p. 84, my parenthesis and emphasis).

Moreover, considering that "'pure" spontaneity does not exist in history' (Gramsci, 1975, Q3§48, p. 328; 1996, p. 48), the whole cultural and social life of subaltern groups is organized around a particular balance between spontaneity and direction which characterises the sources of meaning of their experiences as well as the criteria that inform their actions. In other words, the sense of their experiences and the guide to their actions is directly linked to a particular 'philosophy' that, as Cirese (1982 [1976], p. 238) has noted, is at the same time adherent to their social condition. In particular, this 'spontaneous' philosophy is never fully spontaneous, and thus it is a worldview that provides at least some (local) awareness of the surrounding environment.

Significantly, this balance between spontaneity and direction has political implications:[64] it is indicative of a more or less developed

[63] For the equivalence between a 'spontaneous philosophy' and a 'spontaneous conception of the world' see Cirese (1982 [1976], p. 240) and Gramsci (1975, Q11§12, p. 1375; 1971, p. 323).

[64] Notably, the *Letters from Prison* (1994) further discuss spontaneity, although from a pedagogical perspective. In particular, Gramsci considers the contrast between spontaneity and authoritarianism in the education of children, see for example Manacorda (1976, pp. 78-80, 88-9, 91, 95, 114, 116, 119, 139, 148-9, 174-5, 241) and Massucco Costa (1958, pp. 200-01).

political consciousness.[65] As Gramsci has argued 'spontaneity is [...] characteristic of the "history of subaltern classes" and, especially, of the most marginal and peripheral elements of these classes' (Gramsci, 1975, Q3§48, p. 328; 1996, p. 49). In particular, spontaneity is the earliest moment of their political consciousness (Del Roio, 2009b, p. 795) – that is, the germinal form of their organized 'collective will' (Nardone, 1971, p. 58). Spontaneity is thus an aspect of those uprisings, mobilizations, social movements, and so on, that are not (or not completely) organized in a coherent, planned and centralized way. From this stance, spontaneity points to socio-political phenomena that are not (fully) influenced and informed by pre-existing theoretical elaborations (Del Roio, 2009a, p. 794). Conversely, 'direction' is a specific mode of exerting power that is characterized by consent and thus hegemony, and that commands 'spontaneous' socio-political phenomena (Filippini, 2009, pp. 219-20). At the same time, it is also one way of providing these spontaneous phenomena with a 'theoretical consciousness' (Badaloni, 1973, p. 83).

The ideological direction of spontaneous conceptions of the world thus implies the provision of a 'theoretical consciousness' to the experiences of subaltern groups as well as to the criteria that inform their action. This is by no means the erasure of spontaneity. As Gramsci argued in his evaluation of the Red Biennium,

> [in] the Turin movement […] [the] element of 'spontaneity' was not neglected, much less disdained: it was *educated*, it was given a direction, it was cleansed of everything extraneous that could contaminate it, in order to unify it [*renderlo omogeneo* in the original Italian] by means of modern theory but in a living, historically effective manner (Gramsci 1975, Q3§48, p. 330; 1996, p. 50, my parenthesis).

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[65] From this angle, Gramsci's discussions have critically re-adapted Lenin's reflections on spontaneity and consciousness in *What Is To Be Done?* (1905). Lenin's reflections were in turn part of a broader debate involving many other Marxist intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g. Luxemburg, Sorel, Bernstein, etc.) which focused on the interplay between historical necessity and historical contingency in the transition from capitalism to socialism. For a discussion on Gramsci's interpretation of Lenin and the broader debate among the Marxist intellectuals, see for example Badaloni (1973, pp. 75-82) and Liguori (2011, pp. 60-61).

From this viewpoint, the direction of the intellectual produces an 'effective' homogenization between 'spontaneous' philosophies and more organized forms of culture. The result is the creation of a 'single cultural environment' where the distance between leaders (intellectuals) and led (subalterns) is potentially overcome.

Therefore, hegemonic projects for the emancipation of subaltern groups have two distinctive features. Firstly, they have an intrinsic *theoretical and practical* character. Secondly, they imply a dialectic between *spontaneity* and *direction* that *homogenizes* spontaneous and 'theoretically conscious' conceptions of the world. These emancipatory projects thus spring from *the concrete experiences of subaltern groups,* and they are integral to the creation of a *single cultural environment.* In other words, political projects that are rooted in subaltern socio-cultural contexts, and which direct the spontaneity of subaltern groups, can potentially transform 'hierarchies of culture' into a 'single cultural environment', thus developing an emancipatory hegemonic relation where the distance between leaders and led is (potentially) overcome. From this stance, as the case of the Factory Council movement in Turin illustrates, *processes of the molecular circulation of knowledge* are central to understanding this aspect of social emancipation.

In fact, as already illustrated, Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group and, more generally, the Turin vanguard intervened in the assemblies and mobilizations of the Turin workers. In particular, they sought to 'popularise revolutionary concepts' among the workers – a form of intervention that is integral to the creation of a 'single cultural environment'[66] as well as to the realization of the system of Councils during the occupation of the factories. Crucially, this 'popularization of revolutionary concepts' is also understood in terms of the molecular circulation of conciliar ideas and images across hierarchies of culture. Therefore, the ways in which knowledge circulated across hierarchies of culture during the Red

[66] As illustrated, the 'popularization of revolutionary concepts' represents one way in which 'a theoretical language flows within the masses', thus contributing towards creating a 'single cultural environment', see Broccoli (1975, p. 4).

Biennium were a determining factor for the mass organizational activity of the workers in September 1920, when the 'Turin model' was implemented. From this perspective, the horizontality of practices was a result of processes of knowledge circulation that fostered mass mobilization across hierarchies, particularly in the first days of the occupation.[67] This conceivably 'favor[ed] the molecular transition from the groups that are led to the leading group' (Gramsci, 1975, Q8§191, p. 1056; 2007, p. 345, my parenthesis), contributing to the emancipatory objective in which the fracture between leaders and led can be healed.[68]

But what are the political limits of hegemonic projects of emancipation? In particular, what are the political limits of Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group's political activities during the Red Biennium? The way in which Gramsci understands the question of hierarchies is particularly significant in this respect. As Solinas (2017, pp. 335-7) has argued, this question is implicit and nevertheless very important in Gramsci's work and political experiences. Here,

> [t]he organic unity of classes, the concentration in a collective, active and directive subject who gathers the latent movements of the will and expresses them. This is the ground where hierarchies (positively) emerge, as an organic element of a plurality becoming one. […] The most developed hierarchy represents something like the voluntary self-disciplining that the class 'gives' to itself, and it is made of an organic relationship between whole and parts, between direction and the organism that expresses this direction (Solinas, 2017, pp. 338-9).

Hierarchies are therefore central to the organization of the workers within a political subject and to their strategies of emancipation. In particular, as Revelli (1988, pp. 114-8, 120-21) and Sbarberi (1988, pp. 17-18) have noted, the integration of individuals within a functional hierarchy is central to the abolition of the

[67] In this respect, Paggi's considerations on the Factory Councils can be extended to the system of Councils: '[t]he council is […] an attempt to provide a tool that is adequate to mass action' (Paggi, 1970, p. 255). On the mass character of the occupation, see also Soave (1965, p. 175)

[68] As Galli has argued 'the generalized participation, the mass participation, in the collective organization of production, under the perspective of the complete overcoming of the relation between leaders and led [...] is at the centre of the Council experience' (Galli, 1970, p. 206).

leaders-led division. In this way, equality is subsumed to the more compelling question of order.[69] This relation between equality and order is not only an aspect of Gramsci's theoretical writings, but is also implicit in the experience of the Factory Councils:

> the factory council […] presents […] a body that is conciliated and homogeneous in its internal composition. It traces the productive units of the factory (the work-crew, the workshop, the whole factory), with *an organization that is not of an egalitarian type*, rather it is highly diversified, because *it brings about a "hierarchy of competences and powers"* that encompasses rank-and-file, "N.C.O's", "officer corps" and "general staff" (Sbarberi, 1986, p. 32, my emphasis).[70]

In particular, the Factory Councils assume the capitalist division of labour in the factory as 'objective' and 'natural', so that 'old' hierarchies are not disrupted (Tomasetta, 1971, p. 222). That is, the 'old' hierarchies are re-considered or, better, re-purposed to serve the objective of effective emancipation (Ciliberto, 2020 [1989], p. 130). At the same time though, assuming this division of labour and hierarchies, along with their projection at the city level or, more generally, at the level of society, is highly problematic. As Revelli has pointed out,

> in this context [of society organized as a factory], the concept of equality is rendered completely devoid of meaning, and is replaced by the alternative concept of solidarity. In a universe dominated by the variety of functionally hierarchical roles […] people can only be united – not equal (Revelli, 1988, p. 121, my parenthesis).

This article is not in complete agreement with Revelli's idea of an equality completely stripped of meaning, which is perhaps too extreme. In fact, the experience of the Factory Councils represented an attempt to create a 'single cultural environment' whereby the distance between leaders and led was overcome. At the same time, the aporia remains: an equality that is subordinated to hierarchies

[69] On the centrality of the question of order in Gramsci's early work see also Ciliberto (2020 [1989], pp. 117-38).
[70] See also Sbarberi (1998, p. 55).

remains only a partial equality (Sbarberi, 1988, p. 18). In fact, spontaneity in the Turin assemblies and mobilizations was organized through cultural hierarchies – that is, according to the ideological direction of a political vanguard. As mentioned, the creation and management of the Factory Councils resulted from the mass organizational activity of the workers, which was in turn ideologically directed by Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group during the Red Biennium. That is, horizontal practices resulted from a political process of knowledge circulation epitomized by the assemblies and mobilizations of 1919-20, fostering the practical participation of workers across persistent hierarchies. Nevertheless, the political perspective that emerged from these assemblies and mobilizations was not necessarily the result of a *collective elaboration*. In other words, it was not necessarily elaborated outside of the circles of the *Ordine Nuovo* group, and thus of the Turin vanguard. As Garino has recalled:

> those of the *Ordine Nuovo* were a group of intellectuals, although they came among us workers to see the concrete problems. […] Firstly they thoroughly inquired about the concreteness of each problem. And who did they ask information from? Not the managers, no, rather the workers, those who had calluses on their hands (Garino in Bermani, 1987, p. 91).

More generally, the communist vanguard in Turin gathered and developed the workers' information, opinions, perspectives and proposals into encompassing intellectual frameworks that provided the workers with a comprehensive understanding of the material environment. That is, the communist vanguard produced a theoretical consciousness out of the concrete experiences and knowledge of the workers, thus developing the workers' critical awareness such as to 'favor the [molecular] transition from the groups that are led to the leading group' (Gramsci, 1975 and 2007, Q8§191; loc. cit.: 'molecular' added above the line by Gramsci). But still, the workers were predominantly a source of information, with the ideas and images that underpinned the theory of the Councils, and likely the 'Turin model', elaborated within *L'Ordine Nuovo*. In this sense, the underpinnings of the theory were predominately developed by

Gramsci and the other editors (or, if anything, by the vanguard of the Turin workers, as Parodi's case has illustrated).[71]

This is further confirmed by other protagonists of the Turin Factory Council movement, such as Battista Santhià:[72]

> Gramsci and Togliatti […] [w]anted the workers of the different factories to inform them about the different types of works in progress, the tools for the plants, the general organization of production […]. The outcome of this work soon appeared in the first issue of the *Ordine Nuovo* when the journal discussed the problem of the development of the internal commissions […] to reach the factory councils (Santhià, 1956, pp. 62-3, my parenthesis).

Although ideas and images were collectively socialized through ideological direction – or, through the 'popularization of revolutionary concepts' – theoretical work was arguably the expression of the communist vanguard (see also Bermani, 1980, pp. 15-17; Bianco in Paulesu Quercioli, 1977, pp. 30-31; Garino in Bermani, 1987, p. 91; Leonetti, 1975, pp. 15-16; Noce in Bermani, 1987, p. 139; Santhià, 1956, pp. 164-8; Viglongo in Bermani, 1987, p. 41). During the Red Biennium the fracture between intellectuals and subalterns was therefore overcome at the level of practice, but remained unresolved at the level of the intellectual division of labour.

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[71] This does not imply that the rank-and-file workers did not contribute at all to the discussions in *L'Ordine Nuovo* or the Turin workers' movement. In this respect, workers *did* provide contributions, e.g. Anon (1919a) and Jacchia (1919). Nevertheless, their contributions put forward proposals and considerations or flagged up problems that Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group or the Turin vanguard *later* re-worked in their writings.

From this angle, the workers' contributions inspired the theoretical foundations of the 'Factory Council' idea. For example, they expressed the need to understand the Internal Commissions as the expression of the whole working class: see Anon (1919a). Nevertheless, this 'need for representation' had to be further refined within *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in order to become the fully formed organizational structure of the Factory Council. At the same time, the workers' contributions addressed practical issues in the development of the Factory Councils. For example, the existence of divisions within the workers – i.e. between 'organized' and 'unorganized' workers – highlighted a concrete obstacle in the evolution of the Internal Commissions towards the Factory Councils, see Jacchia (1919). At the same time, this problem had to be addressed from an intellectual perspective within *L'Ordine Nuovo*, prior to becoming a concrete proposal of organization, see Pastore (1919) and Gramsci et al. (1919).

[72] For a biographical account see Andreucci and Detti (1978b, pp. 504-6).

This is not to undermine the – indeed impressive – political work that Gramsci and the *Ordine Nuovo* group did in Turin during 1919-20.[73] Nevertheless, this insight is relevant to historical analysis. In particular, it highlights one of the limits of the emancipatory politics of the Red Biennium, showing that as long as the division of intellectual labour remained unquestioned, the distance between leaders and led persisted to a certain extent. Moreover, from a theoretical and conceptual perspective the discussion in this Section informs considerations of emancipatory hegemony in significant ways – particularly, in terms of turning 'hierarchies of culture' into a 'single cultural environment'. As illustrated, the ways in which knowledge circulates is central to this transformation. Crucially though, the emancipatory aim of this transformation – that is, equality between leaders and led – can be pursued on levels beyond that of knowledge circulation. From this angle, *horizontal practices that result from the direction of spontaneity are important, although not sufficient. The political and practical challenge to an emancipatory hegemonic relation is to organise the horizontality of intellectual work within persistent hierarchies.* The challenge is, therefore, to operate within socio-culturally stratified contexts in order to *collectively produce forms of knowledge that do not result from the sole theoretical effort of an intellectual vanguard* (even if it is inspired by the experiences and perspectives – the 'spontaneous

[73] The persistence of the intellectual division of labour might come as a surprise – like a sort of elitist posture in *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Workers were able to have and produce informed positions, after all: illiteracy was a relatively marginal issue in Turin at that time (see Castronovo, 1987, p. 189). Moreover workers were 'craving' culture and were increasingly interested in socialist perspectives, see Bermani (1980/1981, p. 12). Nevertheless, the problem is that rank-and-file workers could hardly produce theoretical contributions similar to those of the *Ordine Nuovo* group (who commanded the use of Marxist concepts and Marxist interpretative frameworks). This problem was conceivably due to the pedagogical activity of the 'Popular Universities' and the 'socialism of the professors', which provided the workers with a culture that was 'external' to their own problems – that is, a culture that, albeit vaguely socialist, was still entangled with and subsumed under the bourgeois culture of that time (ibid.). Significantly, it was the activity of *L'Ordine Nuovo* that raised the interest towards the development and diffusion of a 'workers' culture' in the workers' movement, see Spriano (1971, p. 42). More generally, it was only after the birth of the Communist Party in 1921, and increasingly after World War II, that the workers' movement began a systematic operation that elevated the political culture of the subaltern masses who, for the first time, learnt how to read a newspaper or to intervene in public discussions, see Liguori (2012, p. 122).

philosophy' – of subaltern groups). This is the only way in which the fracture between intellectuals and subalterns can be overcome at the level of the intellectual division of labour.

Therefore, the question of co-producing knowledge and, more generally, co-theorization, emerges as a fundamental challenge for the emancipatory politics of the Red Biennium and, more generally, for an emancipatory hegemony that aims to create a 'single cultural environment'. What is at stake here is not just *the fact* that the intellectuals should/must approach the 'spontaneous philosophy' of the subaltern groups. Rather, following Manuela Ausilio's observations (2019, p. 90), it is *the ways in which* they approach this spontaneous philosophy. The extent to which this challenge can be fruitfully deployed to further our understanding of Gramsci's political activity and the theoretical and political lexicon of the *Prison Notebooks* is a question that should be pursued in future research – for example, through a reconstruction 'from below' of the political and ideological environment where Gramsci, the *Ordine Nuovo* group, the Turin vanguard and the Turin working class operated during 1919-20.

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