



Where is the
Impatience?

Dynamics Inherent
to Protest Movements

As I watch the world
through the porthole,
I get a little bored...

Step by Step

Stopping to Reflect

A compilation of texts, a contribution
to a correspondence between those

who desire
anarchy
and
subversion

**The
Local
Kids**

At what point can one speak in the plural? When one is plus one, or should it at least be a few, or many more? Some will consider it a failure to speak as a lone voice; for others it's the most valued stage to speak from. Determined to not be alone, putting forward questions, should one be satisfied by any response? The outcome of the encounter can be so tasteless and banal that the effort seems senseless. Determined to speak up, are there still questions left unanswered? At times the continuous affirmation of the I becomes nauseating; it's unclear if anyone is still supposed to be listening. The persistence of the individual to carry on can be admirable, but isn't it suspicious - this avoidance of the complications that are others? And what is left of the expansive potentials of the we when it's used as a camouflage strategy for the I to dissolve into the background?

Probably only few anarchist projects happen in splendid isolation, I don't know of a single one. Generally, if they don't already start from a constellation, they can count on a helping hand here and there, at the least a curious glance with questions and suggestions. That doesn't constitute an I, neither a we. Mostly there is an attraction towards one of both. Based on preferences or circumstances? Common sense which sees a chronological order between outlining a position and getting involved can be discarded, unless one wants to hang on to a reductionist two-step educational programme for life. Things are messy, artificial separations are not helpful (anymore).

Often when anarchists ponder on who to conspire with, affinity has been the answer. The trickiness there is that it is answering a question with a question. And the latter cannot resemble a questionnaire, somewhere affects come into the equation.

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Where is the Impatience?

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"In times of stagnation, whether it is out of lethargy or tyranny, life cannot come into existence. Living is unrest that is sparked by eccentric individuals. To live this life one has to take risks. Who wants to live, has to live dangerously."

Actually it seems that lots of people have daily a load of time at hand. The everyday exploitation is limited to a bearable level and is only a side phenomenon. Yet also this unemployment – "free" or freely organized time – is therefore not less stressed or constrained; irrespective if one pursues social trends and duties or if one indulges in non-activity, be it through the consumption of goods, of media and entertainment, of small-talk or drugs etc.

Also a lot of people who actually "share the opinion" that everything should be "different", are often in a state of permanent vegetation and lethargy which runs somewhere in between isolated self-care in an attempt to get on and cope, and some unreal, prefabricated behaviour that is confined to spending time in thought factories (universities), sport factories (fitness studios), fun factories (parties), experience factories (holidays) or rather all possible forms of work. The oppositional alternatives, those right in front of us, are from their starting point on just a staging, a "as if" activity, that pretends to change an aspect of society through a particular fake-activity and thus limits itself from the outset. The consumption of protest

events, the adherence to certain countercultural labels and symbols, identities and offers, some charity work, a few donations and benefit concerts, a bit of alternative food and consumption behaviour. All in all is society shaped by the belief in that what seems possible and what "is impossible", and breaking out of this paradigm seems also impossible.

This belief is a deeply scientific belief which explicitly denies a guiding hand and a almighty Lord and Creator, but then again declares what the natural laws of men are, its deepest instincts and thus what the necessary course of human history is. To understand and consequently obey these inherent laws of society is just rational – what can YOU achieve after all?

However, our inner will to live, fully and deeply live, our uniqueness and the wealth of our desires and capacities cannot be measured with the criterion of science. They are not superficial, quantifiable facts. The rationality of the material world opposes the logic of the gut, the own and individual will doesn't recognize calculated reason. Our contemporary understanding of the meaning of life is substantially tied with the concept of time: when it is about what we want to be or do, we divide certain periods of life into certain areas and organise, invest and offer or manage our energy consequently. According to expectations we invest our time and

capacities in this or that activity and thus results a life inside society and a status inside the social hierarchies. One believes in happiness through money, another in happiness through alcohol, one in happiness in the family, another in happiness through sport or a higher meaning in social and political commitment. What keeps together all these life's missions is the belief in time – one always exchanges time for something specific, harvests something – be it love, a high, prestige, muscles or just the hope in something. To see our life as a whole, as something that we can take in our hands to determine it ourselves, to be aware of and to here and now shape the endless extent and scope of our possibilities and to shape our ideas and relations without guidelines and benchmarks – to live and not manage our time – is something that seems strange, even impossible. Thinking inside of a time frame blocks us to live passionate – because it is dangerous, since we could risk something. And actually it is rather comfortable inside this social cage that has clipped our imagination and wings... and treats us with infinite playgrounds.

But freedom is not a pleasant platitude, not a Disneyland or a land of milk and honey. It is dangerous, because it confronts us with ourselves and the endless possibilities that we are willing and capable of giving form. Or to fight for. In the fight against society – against its rationality and its docile beliefs in the interchangeability and limitations of humans – the belief that we can individually look like, think and talk about, but that we are not capable of getting beyond life inside the social cage... and also not dare to. This belief in the necessity of the limitations of life and our individuality through collective, social unfreedom maintains itself through the belief in what humans are supposedly capable of, in what generally is impossible. This belief is mirrored in the step-by-step politics of those who always want to adapt their ideas to the masses, to find them where they supposedly are. One seeks consensus, portrays a good image and shows patience since actually the people are still not ready. One has to negotiate a bit, to educate a bit. But what are we actually waiting for? Do we want to break with this social cage, or do we want to politically negotiate and manoeuvre about it? Is this about a prison revolt or about more exercise time?

We only can talk about freedom in freedom. Only when we change the art of living we confront ourselves with life. Change starts in ourselves, in our surroundings, in everyday life. Something new arises from nothing. Only the rupture with the old makes place for what is possible, for what we can shape. In this nothing, this unknown, can our freedom and possibilities expand through others and grow beyond itself. Beyond the masses and their lethargy lies the confrontation with yourself, the break with habits, social devotion and calculation.

Enough of political tactics, enough of reasonable estimations of possibilities, enough of fear for the unknown. Why should we be afraid of "scaring the people"? Why should we be afraid to not "be understood"? I fear to squawk the same signs and words till exhaustion, to repeat the same, well-rehearsed rituals and empty phrases and to settle in the back of one's mind for the social securities in our big playground... future planning, money, family, a long life, some "freedoms". Why dare something, why jeopardize something, when it is so comfortable?

And where is the impatience? That savage, that urges us with fury to live?

And yes, the fight against this society is not a lonely fight, it is a social fight, but it starts with me.

"Logic may indeed be unshakeable, but it cannot withstand someone who is determined to live." - Franz Kafka



Dynamics Inherent to Protest Movements

First appeared as Des dynamiques inhérents aux mouvements de contestation
by I.M., March 2018

The reflections developed here are based on several months of being side-by-side on the ZAD [*Zone à Défendre*] of Notre-Dame-des-Landes [France]. They have also been elaborated collectively, which resulted in the organising of the “off” festival at the moment of the “*Fête de la victoire*” the 10th of February 2018 [at the time that the state announced that it will abandon the airport project]. The situation is so complex and evolving so quickly that trying to get an analysis into a few pages is a challenge. This is therefore only a partial and subjective point of view.

This struggle has marked the imaginaries of a number of militants for a decade, especially since many images about its organisation were created from within the ZAD to turn it into a model struggle. It is also enticed by these images that we came to the ZAD to see more closely.

We will try to propose some key points to understand what is happening in NDDL, but also in other struggles at the moment.

Context: a “historic” struggle

After the announcement on the 17th of January 2018 of the abandonment of the NDDL airport project, by the Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, many celebrated the victory after fifty years of more or less intense struggles. From a distance, this fight is seen as exemplary, firstly by its duration, and now also its “victorious” outcome. We will not talk about the reasons for this outcome, nor about the meaning that some give to this victory. Several texts talk about that [specifically: *Mouvement où est ta victoire ?*]. As one occupant puts it, “The ZAD is used as a megaphone for practices and strategies of

struggle that will be held up as examples for decades” [*The “Movement” is Dead, Long Live... Reform!*, February 2018].

The forces involved

Let’s briefly recall the main forces involved. On the one hand, the citizenist components [composantes]: the **Coordination des opposants** (which includes some sixty parties, labour unions and associations; the most present on the ground is the ACIPA), **COPAIN** (which includes mainly farmers, of which the most influential are members of the *Confédération Paysanne*, who do not live on the ZAD), the “historical” farmers organised in the **ADECA** (on the ZAD and did not sell their lands to VINCI [company that would build the airport]), the **ecologists in struggle**. These groups, although not homogeneous, have as their line of action addressing the State in a legal and rather juridical framework. These components were struggling against the airport.

In 2009, at the call of some residents, young people came from different horizons: squatting, anti-authoritarian, autonomous, ecologist, or without political baggage. Looked upon with a suspicious eye at the beginning, they were finally accepted by the other components thanks to their determination facing the violence of the mobile gendarmes [militarised police forces] during the attempted eviction (Operation César in 2012). These **occupants** have added to the slogan “against the airport” of the ACIPA: and its world.

About 200 **support committees** have also been created, often with the same differences as in the ZAD and the other components.

Between the occupants, little by little, very marked

scenes were formed. To simplify, we can speak of two modes of organisation underpinned by two visions of struggles: the anti-authoritarian and feminist on the one hand, and the autonomous [meaning the heirs to the Autonomous movement and its political derivatives of the 70s] and “appelist” [see Tiqqun, *The Call (l'Appel)*, *The Coming Insurrection* etc.] on the other hand. Those last ones organised for about two years within the **CMDO** (*Comité pour le maintien des occupations* [name ripped off from *Conseil pour le maintien des occupations* – created during May 1968 at the Sorbonne by members of the Situationist International]). Between these two poles, more or less lasting groups have been formed, trying different paths. Other occupants, who do not see themselves in these fairly structured organisational forms, have always kept away from official meetings and actions. Nevertheless, the latter, called in NDDL “the people of the East” because they built their homes rather east of the ZAD, do not remain inactive or unorganized. Among other things, they imposed on the farmers a non-motorised area. To continue the description in broad strokes, it can be said that the occupants of organised groups are mainly from the intellectual petty bourgeoisie in the process of being downgraded, and that people “of the East” are rather from the impoverished popular classes.

Myths put to the test: unity, horizontality, consensus

If you managed to find your bearings in this social landscape, you understood that the myth propagated, in particular by the official texts of the ZAD (“in truth, if we won, it’s because there were so many modes of different actions with so many different people that the cops never knew how to react, and it was so cool”) or the books written by the collective *Mauvaise Troupe*, this myth of “**unity in diversity**”, is a deception that benefits the dominant forces. For the citizens, it was unthinkable to question the state or the capitalist system. It was just a case of defending the agricultural and real estate lands against the airport project. For the occupants, the airport was certainly important, but it was inconceivable to fight against this Useless Project without calling into question the state and the capitalist system that are at the root of it. The former nevertheless had to make arrangements with the latter as long as the preservation of the airport project, with the threat of violent militarised

expulsion, was brandished by the various Hollande [previously PM, of the Socialist Party] governments.

This myth of unity in diversity has done and continues to do, damage. Within the anti-airport movement, it muzzled the occupants, organised or not, but who were critical of the mechanism of confiscation of the struggle. They did not want to risk breaking the unity that “is the strength of the movement”. On the outside, this myth of unity in diversity has created imaginaries of idyllic struggle. Idealisation and a guilt complex are still the lot of many supporters of this struggle who think they are not able to do the same.

On the 1st of August 2017, at the GA [General Assembly] of the movement, the *Coordination* tested, through a theatrical staging, the strength of this myth. They took advantage of three actions of hostility at rallies that they had organised [*Fête des bâtons*, October 2016: a scuffle with journalists. Election campaign, April 2017: excrements on the windscreen of a car of a journalist during a press conference of a candidate from *France Insoumise* [left-wing political party] at *la Vache Rit*. *Fête de la Coordination*, July 2017: an altercation against Nexus experts who had a stand there after participating in a conference of the *Front National*] and which they held all the occupants responsible for. They asked the occupants to condemn the perpetrators of these “incivilities”. Faced with the refusal of the assembly, the members of the *Coordination* left angrily. Some CMDO members followed suit. They left the occupants alone, seemingly breaking the sacrosanct unity of the movement, to better recompose a facade of unity that would ex-



clude the less integratable occupants without ever publicly admitting it.

Another myth of which reality has taken care of twisting by the neck is that of the **“horizontal” functioning** of meetings. You know the classic vertical functioning of associations or collectives, with a board of directors or at least with decision-making by majority vote. The occupants, for their part, sought to implement a horizontal functioning in the meetings.

This organisation should have facilitated taking the floor. But horizontality is also a deceit, no one deals with it with similar characteristics.

Speaking does not only depend on a moderator, but especially on the ability of each participant to express themselves within the codes in force in the GA, on feeling legitimate to intervene, including against the majority of the group, on the ability to overcome sneers, humiliation or even intimidation. These skills, which depend mainly on whether or not they possess a certain cultural capital, are not evenly distributed among participants in a GA. Whatever the attitude of a group, it will always be the same people who will be more comfortable, excluding – even if they do not want to – those who in reaction will no longer speak, and then will not come to these meetings any more. It will always be the same who will have the opportunity to advance their interests.

One relies only on the rich – more or less consistently, this cultural capital goes hand in hand with a social capital – so that it becomes possible to operate their political and support networks on the outside. Thus, some living places on the ZAD found themselves at the head of material means put at their disposal to carry out their projects: agricultural machinery or construction equipment, for example, which were often not made available to all. Can we talk about horizontality if we do not ensure, within the movement, the equal redistribution of material and financial resources from the outside?

Another resource unevenly distributed among the occupants is the time available for reading, writing, documenting, searching for information and disseminating it, organising meetings, etc. And this time is all the more available when one lives in a brick house or a comfortable self-built home, without the

worry of having to search for water or a washing machine, where one has access to electricity and heating, resources that not all the inhabitants of the ZAD have. Rather than talking about diversity, it would be more accurate to talk about inequality within the movement. Inequality which, even if it has been fought against by certain people, persists and still has its effects.

The seizure of power is all the easier if a group endowed with all these types of material, social and cultural capital decides to take over the running of the meetings, to ally effectiveness and defence of its own interests; all on behalf of the common interest, of course. And we can wonder about the “benevolence” of this group when it decides to boycott, as did the CMDO in the autumn, the weekly - more anti-authoritarian - meeting of the inhabitants under the pretext that it is useless. Especially since at the same time, the same group sets up new governing bodies. Let us once again note the unequal positions between the strategy of the CMDO that builds this power and overtakes the majority of inhabitants, and some of the occupants who continue to state publicly that the movement must move forward “to the rhythm of those who stumble” (speech prepared at the meeting of the inhabitants, at which the CMDO is officially absent, and pronounced on the 10th of February).

On the ZAD, the myth of **“the seeking for consensus”** has had a hard time. It was loudly proclaimed that decisions were made by consensus. This made the more vertical components grumble, who thought it was a waste of time. It is clear from the analysis of horizontality that there can be no consensus if all participants do not approach a meeting on equal footing, let alone if a good deal exclude themselves from a functioning that excludes them de facto. But on the 18th of January, the day after the “victory”, the external components, having in mind only the new phase of the struggle, that is to say the future negotiations with the government [We now know that the delegation was rejected by the state on 28th February and then on 20th March. The negotiations dreamed of by the components are no longer relevant. On the other hand, targeted evictions are maintained. The failure of the delegates does not seem to encourage them to question themselves], threw off their masks. As these negotiations involved the redistri-

bution of private property (lands and farms), there was no longer any question of consensus or decisions taken by the entire movement.

The *Coordination* and COPAIN, followed by the CMDO, informed the GA that they were going to destroy the cabins and chicanes [street barriers] that had been built after the Operation César on the D281 route and maintained since, on the pretext that the government asked for it. These components were anxious to show the state their ability to control the situation internally.

Other coups have occurred, such as quietly adding a phrase that may provoke opposition to the common communique of "victory" adopted in the GA [more in: *Contre l'aéroport - et pour son monde, ou quoi ?*]; such as the threat to leave the movement and leave the occupants of the dominated fraction, the "losers" as some of them call themselves, alone in the face of the police forces or the Prefecture if those defiant refused the compromises.

Chronicle of an ongoing bureaucratisation

[for a more in-depth vision: *The "Movement" is Dead, Long Live... Reform!*]

It is always easier to understand the processes at the beginning of their establishment, when they are still visible because they face resistance, than when they are well oiled and have forced the acceptance of all. The different options still possible in the premises have disappeared, and the established processes are no longer put in question.

The process of bureaucratisation ensuring the power grab of the dominant factions of the movement (essentially COPAIN, the *Coordination* and the CMDO ["The fundamental struggle today is between, on the one hand, the mass of workers – who do not have a direct say – and, on the other hand, the leftist political and trade union bureaucracies that control – even if only 14% of the labour force is unionised – the gates of the factories and the right to negotiate on behalf of the occupants. These bureaucracies are not fallen and treacherous workers' organisations, but a mechanism of integration into capitalist society." CMDO (the original not the copy), Paris, 22nd May 1968]) was slow and all the more insidious because it was the work of friends with whom complicities and bonds were formed in

the sharing of everyday life over the years. The ZAD is particular in that these are closely intertwined places of life and places of struggle. These emotional ties have weakened the alertness of the anti-authoritarian occupants, although aware of these kind of processes. The vagueness (in which the members willingly remained) of groups organised within the movement does not make it possible to clearly name adversaries. Self-censorship also came from the reaction of close friends exclaiming "you're annoying!" at the slightest critical remark. The isolation and the feeling of being "paranoid" and to be told so has made many occupants powerless. Those who were lucid about the turn of events, tired of being alone in denouncing it, often left the movement once and for all.

Bureaucratisation from above

First, it was the control of key positions, such as the press group or the external communication, which centralised the information, without redistributing it in full, and spreading the fable of the united and consensual ZAD on the zad.nadir site and the mailing lists. It was the mandates, not re-discussed, preventing the control by all of positions of power. It was the specialisation of functions, preventing the rotation of tasks. It was the preparatory meetings for the GA, announced but difficult to reach by individuals not organised in structured groups, or simply unannounced and therefore not open, which allowed the elites to have decisions adopted in the GA that were favourable to them through a pre-defined group strategy.

These manipulations of decisions are also made through **informal lobbying**: construction projects, "strategy workshops": "It's about inviting people from COPAIN, committees, probably from ACIPA, to a meal where discussions are held on a so-called informal way. My theory is that these meals are organised when there is an idea that has to get adopted [...] to prepare the ground and influence future decisions." [*De la bile sur le feu et autres états d'âme anti-autoritaires*. ZAD, 2017]

It was especially, during the autumn of 2017, the creation by the CMDO supported by the other components, of **new decision-making bodies**: the GA *des Usages*, actually coming into competition with

the old GA of the movement, monthly, where everyone can come to debate and participate in decisions. In the GA *des Usages*, certainly consensus is still part of the facade, but the positions are previously discussed within each component that informs the GA.

The validation of these decisions by the GA takes the appearance of a farce since they can only be contradicted by a text, duly argued, presented by a group or a living place, within a time frame of one month. A selective procedure excluding many occupants who do not have access to the internet, do not sufficiently master the writing or the art of argumentation, or do not organise themselves into an internal collective.

This pivotal GA is backed by commissions, open to all at the face of it, but requiring availability and knowledge that not everyone has. A "*Hypothèses pour l'avenir*" commission to study the legal possibilities of the division of land, including the different types of lease that can be negotiated with the State, and the statutes of an Association intended to sign the possible agreements and to manage the lands that the State would leave to the movement. A commission to resolve the conflicts that will undoubtedly arise, and a "welcome" commission to accommodate the applicants for a plot on the ZAD, and bring them up to date with the conditions of entry. It is now within these commissions that the structures of the future are being elaborated. In February, these commissions were transformed, by a process that remained opaque for many, into a set of working groups whose right of entry remained the same.



Bureaucratisation from below

Many of the occupants, who are not part of the dominant fraction, are nonetheless seduced by the formidable efficiency put in place in these structures, and are hired or recruited to do research and present in the GA the different, envisaged legal options. By that, they agree to work in the only authorised framework. Gradually, they begin to think what, a few weeks before, they would never have imagined thinking, and assume rewarding roles of responsibility that they never imagined being capable of accepting. Because of this position "between two", they agree to play a role of intermediary with the other occupants, either trying a kind of impossible conciliation given the seriousness of the issues, or trying to persuade once again the most "anti-system" ones to adapt to the more moderate ones.

Is this dynamic specific to the NDDL ZAD?

Perhaps you wonder if these bureaucratic "excesses" are the result of opportunistic individuals who run rampant on the ZAD? Perhaps you have in mind personal examples of struggles confiscated in the same way by an organised group?

We will not return to the dynamics of bureaucratisation of **social struggles** in the workplace. It goes beyond this framework to dissect the roles of political, associative or syndicalist leaders whose function is very often to get onboard to better control the direction, and to cool down the machine before pushing the brake. Many texts and testimonies denounce these associative, political and syndicalist bureaucracies at work against employees or residents of marginalised neighbourhoods.

We are interested here in the so-called territorial struggles, quite new in the panorama of protest movements.

The Italian No TAV struggle, against the construction of the high-speed train Lyon - Torino in Val di Susa, is emblematic. It is mythified by *Mauvaise Troupe*, as a sister struggle to that of NDDL, notably in the book *Contrées*, 2016.

It would be a popular struggle in which the anarchists have found themselves, it is said, fighting

alongside grandmothers and councillors. Anarchists ready for illegal sabotage, once arrested, have been disavowed by much of the No TAV movement opting for a respectable “composition” of the struggle.

“The ritual of the legitimising of the opposition to the TAV is that of “popular assemblies”, a sort of (so-called) moment of direct democracy.”

But this myth of the assembly, falsely horizontal, carries a lot of political elements. It leaves the field open to the leadership of the crowd leaders. It usually restrains implicitly, but sometimes also explicitly, individual initiative or that of small groups. It endorses the “valsusin” centralism (the opinion of the “people of the valley” take precedence over those of others, simply because of their geographical origin) and the constant compromise with the authoritarian components (for the most part from the Autonomists) or legalists (a good number of committees, the pacifists, sometimes parties) of the “movement of a thousand souls”. All these elements are erased in favour of the only aspect that matters: that of seeking an investiture in the “masses” [more: *No-TAV, défendre un territoire ou détruire le vieux monde ?*].

In **Bure**, where the February expulsions did not spell the end of the resistance, the most seasoned militants also face the challenges of unity and consensus. Few texts from Bure have been written analysing these problems, but in informal conversations, activists often say that they are aware that the unity between political activists, local residents and associations or affinity groups is a deceit. In the assemblies, they encounter the same limits of a horizontal functioning that does not question the interests defended by each one. But since the struggle is in its activist phase, being more recent, the same processes are not so advanced. However, the risk is great to see, here too, the most radical forced to tone down to preserve unity until a hypothetical “abandonment of the project”.

In the struggles against extraction, in France or elsewhere [more: *Extractivisme, exploitation industrielle de la nature*, Anna Bednik, *Le passager Clandestin*, 2016], we also encounter these inter-classist compositions. So as not to divide the resistance that defends a territory, all classes are mixed up: villagers and landowners, as well as grassroots

volunteers and organising activists, supposedly side by side, maintaining an ideological confusion for the benefit of the latter of each. There is a social correlation not to be forgotten between those who frame the struggles and those who are able to derive the most benefits from it. The executives are never the losers.

In struggles against mining, as in all environmental struggles, those in command have no motivation to fight against the capitalist world, in which they manage to defend their interests. Moreover, they have the means to impose a “goodwill between the different components”, thus deferring the responsibility of internal conflicts to those whose engagement in this struggle is essentially based on anti-capitalist or “anti-system” positions: their radicality can be exploited for actions or threats of illegal actions, in which the citizens refuse to get involved. This “goodwill” is actually a kind of holy water to chase away that cursed “class struggle”.

If these territorial struggles are new, the mechanisms described above are not. Marc Ferro [*Des soviets au communisme bureaucratique. Les mécanismes d’une subversion*, 1980] analyses their establishment in the first years of the Soviet revolution. In particular, it details, with references to support, the processes of bureaucratisation from above and bureaucratisation from below. “[...] the phenomenon of bureaucratic capture is not the right of two members of each organisation to the Executive Committee, because this proposal was freely discussed and voted on by the general assembly. The bureaucratic phenomenon appears from when the choice of the two delegates is no longer the responsibility of the assembly but of the governing bodies of each organisation, their Bureau. The general assembly has lost its right of control.” In NDDL, it was according to this procedure that the members of the *Délégation inter-composantes* who wished to negotiate with the state as well as the members of the *Collège de l’Association* were appointed.

“Thus, bureaucratisation from above appears as one of the forms of the struggle that the institutions are engaged in for the conquest of power. It is one of the procedures used by any power to reinforce itself by subverting elective practices, democratic in principle, but constantly

distorted. These traits are corroborated by the specific characters of bureaucratisation from below."

(Marc Ferro)

Territories in struggle and class struggle

The environmental struggles to which many activists are rushing, are intended to oppose the statist development of the territory, but they leave aside the problems of wage exploitation and private property, the abolition of which is fundamental for the advent of an egalitarian society. Obscuring those aspects on which all current social movements have come up short, the activists and their citizen allies believe that the class struggle is no longer relevant. Only, whether we like it or not, it is rampant, even in the territorial struggles. Disguising class relations in neighbourhoods and social and economic inequalities in local complicities is a perversion, denounced in the No TAV struggle, which also allowed the ZAD to accept the immediate destruction of the road of chicanes "to reassure neighbours". Refusing to see these antagonisms, kept under wraps for a time but which reappear as soon as possible, under the pretext that "we have won these struggles together, all sensibilities of actions mixed up, and we will finish them together" [*Soutenir Bure, toujours*] is to prepare oneself for disillusionment that would not be necessary if these dynamics of reformism and bureaucratisation were denounced from the beginning in an attempt to stop them.

We have not dealt with all aspects of this struggle (material necessities subordinated to organisational



tasks, for example [The pyramidal aspect of even horizontal struggles: there are always fewer people making proposals than people required to implement them, it would be important to analyse the roots of this difference in numbers. In addition, there are people who surf the - especially long - struggles for a career. Until we analyse and resolve this problem, it will be difficult to move forward. The division between manual and intellectual work in each group and at different levels is another theme.]), and some considered here would have deserved more investigation. Let's hope that these few keys will allow you to open discussions on NDDL, and more generally on the dash for power in the struggles that we live in with each other.

The bureaucratisation of the struggle at NDDL is all the more irksome because the occupation of the ZAD has led to exciting experiments in non-standardised agriculture, self-built homes, artisans and artistic activities outside of control, attempts at social relations without sexist or racist domination, for nearly ten years. This struggle is also interesting because of the reflections of those who undergo these dynamics of taking power, who are gradually becoming aware of it, and then who try to oppose it without much effectiveness until now, but who do not give up.

Let's hear the words of an occupant of the ZAD: "I think this is the most exciting thing we can do here: inventing new forms of organisation, not being fooled and finding ways to adapt when we have the impression of being trampled on, thinking collectively about what we dream of building here." [*De la bile sur le feu*, ZAD, 2017]

A rebellion in the process of integration

Acceptance and pacification: practical case: the D281 road

What has been described above are mechanisms that have been put in place gradually during many months. Some will say from the beginning of the occupations, practically. Since the fight has moved to another phase on the 17th of January, where are we at now (March 2018)?

For the components that were ready to negotiate, there was no time to lose. Since the establishment

of the new *GA des Usages* and its satellite commissions, the substantive discussions were dismissed under the well known pretext of the urgency of the moment. On the 18th of January there was no more hesitation. During the evening's exceptional GA, COPAIN and the *Coordination*, followed by the CMDO, announced that, as requested by the State, they would begin dismantling the "chicanes" road as early as Monday, 22nd of January. No discussion possible, no concessions possible. The occupants, in the shock of this coup that a farmer of COPAIN admitted a month later to be "crappy", could only comply under the thinly veiled threat of being alone and stigmatised if they objected. Everyone had in mind the precedent of the GA of the 1st of August (see above).

The ones refractory to free movement on the road of the chicanes (to maintain a pressure in the event of threat of eviction) had been brought to think about a possible development of this road during the winter. Not about the question of the normalisation or not of this road, mind you, but the question of how to normalise it. "*Cercles de qualité*" were set up during which these modalities were discussed. Little by little, it was no longer conceivable to keep it as it was. It had to be surrendered to the state...

The following week was crucial for the future. The support committees, called in as reinforcements, understood on the job that the "all together" with which their organisers had enticed them, did not stand the test of facts. The initiators of this destruction, supported by the tractors, feared that opposition would turn to violence. They were so aware of the movement's internal tension that they kept the press off the road, although they have been so fond of good media relations for years. Bit by bit, the chicanes were destroyed, the tires and carcasses of cars swept away. Many occupants were keen to do it properly because it had to be done. Other occupants played the role of intermediary with the refractory ones, to "appease", to try against all evidence reduce the gap between the different fractions of the movement. It was clear to all now that some components were calling the shots and would use these schemes in the future to assert their private property interests [more: *Déchicanisons : comme un malaise*], and that others would be the butt of the joke, and that their in-

terests (whose main one was to live on the ZAD, in the non-motorised zone, but not only) would not be taken into account. Between these two poles, isolated individuals radicalised themselves, seeing the irreparable created by this coup de force, or on the contrary made concession upon concession to mitigate the consequences.

Since then, the road is officially "open". The workers took turns to clean it (pruning hedges, cleaning ditches, draining entrances to fields or paths, working on the pavement). The Prefecture, which controls these works, paid no attention to the demands (can one speak of claims faced with such a disproportionate balance of power?). The ecologists in struggle were a cog in the appeasement by negotiating for the works to be "respectful of biodiversity". At the end of the works, it was clear that they had been the most destructive: there is not a plant left between the roadway and the hedges and the latter are see-through because they were massacred. But it's done: the land is laid bare, and the "neighbours" come with their family to take their Sunday walk...

The road is open also to the presence of the forces of the state. Gendarme, intelligence and anti-terrorist squadrons also accompanied the workers every day. Officially to "protect" them. But in reality to capture all the information possible: registration of persons, observation of places, and even searches of homes nearby in the absence of occupants. It took a lot of energy to constantly monitor the cops to avoid intrusions, to play the appeasement again to prevent that a slip-up could trigger repression. Especially since the people who made sure that the cops stayed on the road were alone. No taking turns, no solidarity. In this way the dominant fractions of the movement extracted the price of the rebellion of the precarious and despised part of the movement. While preparing the negotiations, they obtained, through fatigue and demoralisation, an acceptance and pacification that they could only obtain thanks to the work of the occupants in the intermediary position.

This does not mean that there was no resistance. In a meadow adjacent to the road, *Lama Fâché* has been rebuilt: a beautiful shed offered by a neighbour, a canteen working with equipment and food given by some living places in the ZAD (but not all).

And some works of the DDE [state service in charge of infrastructure works] are sabotaged as soon as finished. But at the end of February, solidarity with the evicted from Bure was difficult to organise. These occupants, despised and left alone in front of the cops ("It's your fault if the cops are in the area"), do not see why they should be spending energy on solidarity which they themselves do not receive.

Delegation and negotiation

The problem of delegation to negotiate with the state is another path to the integration of this "Zadist" rebellion. If the perspective of negotiating with the state, which had been fought against for decades until the abandonment of the airport project, was prepared long ago by the citizen components, the same could not be said for some of the occupants who had fought against the airport but who were determined to continue fighting against its world. The farmers of the *Confédération Paysanne* now put forward the satisfaction of their interests: they expect from a negotiation the freezing of land use, giving them the time to organise. "*Foncier droit devant*" [word play: the expression would be *Foncer droit devant* which translates as "Charging straight ahead", instead the word *foncier* is used which could be translated as "profound(ly)" or, alternatively, "real estate" and *droit foncier* also translates as "land rights"] says the leaflet signed by the CMDO on the 10th of February [more: *ZAD will survive* (in French)]. They showed their ability to manage the "Zadists" and to keep them in a framework acceptable to the state. Their struggle is now directed against the FNSEA [big union of farmers] and they hope that the state will, if not be on their side, at least be a "benevolent" referee. The elites of the occupants, in particular the CMDO and its relatives, expect from this negotiation a recognition as interlocutors, for the continued existence of their presence in the area, in order to maintain their material and social resources that would allow "to ensure the influence of the struggle of the ZAD at the international level".

To keep up this image of a democracy that cares for all, it was necessary to convince the maximum of anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist occupants to participate in this negotiation. It is not nothing for people who have refused for years to have spokespersons to designate delegates. It is not



nothing neither for people who experienced the police violence of 2012, at Sivens or Bure, the state violence of social exclusion of all kinds, to accept to recognise the state as interlocutor.

For this, there were many meetings, of different forms, to get people to think inside the frame. Meetings that were well controlled by experienced "facilitators" who knew how to cut short the unwelcome or reframe the undecided. For example, we could discuss what we would ask for during the negotiations or what we would never accept as a compromise. But we could never question the very desirability of this negotiation. One could think about the skills required of the delegates, and their numbers, but not whether the occupants wanted them. Little by little, reluctance diminished. And the most critical occupants adapted to the constraints imposed. Even the militarised eviction of the occupants of Bure, fighting against the project of burying nuclear waste, which made 15 arrests, did not call into question the negotiation process. Solidarity with Bure certainly, but that it doesn't disturb our future businesses.

It should be noted, for the record, that the CMDO, which is made up of occupants, has decided to send a delegate only for its group, and therefore does not represent the other occupants. Also note that in the end, there is still a large part of the occupants who did not play the game of these long and tedious meetings, and who remained on the side. They do not feel represented in any way. They are not taken into account: "they will only get what they have been asking for!".

On 28th of February, the Prefect objected to the delegation: she did not want to hear about the association, the freezing of land use, or amnesty. She has issued a warning for evictions “of people who are against the rule of law but who are receiving the RSA [welfare benefit]”. She intends to conduct discussions with all “partners” (FNSEA, Chamber of Agriculture, ...) within a monitoring committee and not bilateral negotiations (with only the movement's delegation). On 20th of March, Sébastien Lecornu, the right hand of Nicolas Hulot [then Minister of ecological and fair transition], confirmed the same positions.

As a result, the thinking heads went for the principle of facing reality. They took the hit by saying: “it had been planned, the state tests us at the first appointment”.

The appellists tried to raise the bar by organising a rally (“excessively calm” to reassure the ADECA who will sit on the monitoring committee) in front of the Prefecture on 19th of March and calling on all the associations to protest against all evictions on 31st of March, end of the winter ceasefire in Nantes. They still hope to force open the Prefect's door and arrange negotiations with the state. Other occupants are still hoping, after this failure, to recover the lost unity by launching actions against the evictions.

Legalisation and evictions

Legalisation to avoid the eviction promised by [the PM] Edouard Philippe at the end of the winter ceasefire is one of the lines thrown out by the government to get out of this conflict with their heads held high. He also doesn't want to tarnish his image by embarking on a process of hazardous evictions. Occupants often have experience with these kind of situations, and even if they do not look for them, they will be difficult customers.

The government proposes to continue the existence of the presence of a large number of occupants, provided that they agree to legalise their “illegal” activities. Illegal activities include self-built homes without permits, non-standardised forestry or agricultural activities, the residence of people without papers or evading control, for example.

How many occupants will be ready to be registered, how many will be able to conform to the regula-



tions, to pay the various taxes? How many will agree to live a standardised life while many artisan, agricultural, social, artistic experiences abound without asking any authorisation from anyone (except the concerned surrounding)? These are questions that underlie many conversations, but are never discussed in a meeting. Too delicate, no time...

Farmers from CLIC (occupants with agricultural activities for their own account) intend to take advantage of the hand extended by the Prefect and to legalise their activities, without taking into account their former struggle “outside of the framework”, meaning “not conforming to the norms”.

As for the evictions, we understand a little more at each meeting the fraud of the dominant fraction of the movement. The delegation, despite the received mandate, did not leave the Prefect's office when she sent them packing: “there will be targeted evictions”. Of course, ADECA, ACIPA and the *Confederation* had just received their invitation for the monitoring committee. The occupants did not break the unity by leaving the office alone... The closer the time of the evictions, the more the positions of the components became cynical: “we agree to oppose evictions within the movement but the saboteurs on the road have put themselves outside of the movement.”

And it is now said that it is not possible to organise for the evictions: impossible to predict, since they are targeted. But they commit themselves “to rebuild more beautiful cabins”, with a contempt and paternalism that is chilling to the bone. The domin-

ant fractions possess the art of not seeing the capacity for reconstruction of the “people of the East” who did not wait for them to rebuild the *Lama Fâché*. And these interventions are made by people “in-between” who are more and more moving towards the dominants.

Integration of the rebellion

Although we were aware of the way in which power grabs have taken place in the past and in contemporary struggles, now we have suffered the effects on us. We return for a few moments to a kind of political “self-analysis” to try to understand the implemented mechanisms. The ones described below are not the only ones, there are more violent ones which allow to bring the most recalcitrant ones to reason, in particular the insults, the personal attacks, the blackmail, the threats or the realisation of threats.

We were surprised to realise, after the fact, that we had “believed” in the fable of the Prefect accepting that a “punk-with-dog shed” (*Lama Fâché*) would continue to exist in the middle of a departmental road limited at 90km/h. It was rationally inconceivable. But we ended up believing it. Right, we were not surprised when COPAIN announced that “the Prefect wanted its destruction”. Another example: we were sure, with the experience of others, that negotiating with the state cannot be done without putting in place a balance of power. But we “believed”, carried away by the collective illusion, that this delegation could get a little something, even if insufficient. We were not surprised, however, by the dismissal of the Prefect. This formidable psychological mechanism of **double thought**, which consists in retaining at the same time two thoughts which cancel each other while denying their opposition, obstructs all resistance. This double thought is still at work in the minds of many occupants who, despite the evidence of inequality and domination they had in front of them, continued to irrationally believe in the “unity of the movement”.

A first mechanism at work in this struggle was the setting up of many internal meetings for the occupants, not closed but not open, often called by emergency messages, where the occupants were led to position themselves in an imposed framework. They are called “*cercles de qualité*”: just like

at Toyota where the workers meet to improve the conditions of their exploitation, the occupants were led to reflect on the acceptance of what they refused. This was the case first of all for the destruction of the road, then for the idea of negotiating with the State, then to designate delegates without voting. After the failure of the delegation, this was the case for the ways of not opposing evictions, but to rebuild afterwards “more beautifully”. At first, the idea itself is disgusting, then as friends make the first step down a slippery slope, we fit ourselves into the imposed framework and we surprise ourselves grappling at the snares of this on-board thinking. Suddenly, this bureaucratic glue prevents a profound autonomous thought. For or against, it is always defined in relation to this frame.

A second mechanism that destabilises reflection is **ideological shelling** through different people, a sort of crossfire. There is the madness of the power trip of that leaflet “Zad will survive” published in thousands of copies for the carnival of the 10th of February, it is one of the last examples (“we are the strongest and we will deceive the state”). On the other hand, the moving of critical people towards dominant positions really destabilises, even though they had positions or written texts with which we agreed in the past. This is the role of “in-between”, it is very effective. Especially since this movement is not a sudden reversal, but an insidious step-by-step that also testifies to the destabilisation of these people. So finding ourselves reflecting with shifting people (in the same vein as sands that are moving), we begin to doubt the relevance of our analysis and even the radicality of our positions. Alertness is all the more weakened because these people are close to us.

A third mechanism is that of the **division of labour of domination**. In the past few months, many committees transformed into working groups and have captured the energy of all kinds of occupants: from the thinking heads to the intermediaries who are concerned about being recognised for their skills, through the leaders of components with an external network they claimed to be powerful. This hierarchy in the elaboration of the future, leaving a large number of occupants on the sidelines, deprives them of knowledge that is being built without them. We are from school onwards condi-



tioned to experience a certain fascination, not to say submission, to any procedure, any regulation. Those figures of authority who proclaim they are the most competent and who, in fact, have the cards in hand, disarm those who do not sit in these entities. As always, we feel inferior to these experts, we restrain criticism, we just allow a timid question.

This is how the assimilation to the dominant line takes place.

Based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, we can describe three forms. The **objectified form**, which takes the very concrete aspect of documents and texts. We think here of *Sursis ou sursaut*, published in the *ZadNews*, in the summer of 2017, or *Le manteau et le corps*, published a few weeks later. These texts carry the analysis of the CMDO to all the cabins, and into the heads that live there. It also takes the **institutionalised form**, new commissions and the *GA des Usages*, which were created with rules that keep out opposition [...]. These bureaucratic procedures eliminate many opponents who entrench themselves in an ineffective scene. The **embodied form** is the most formidable. This form is not imaginary. It's the brain that actually works. We come to say, by a formidable psychological reversal: "the *GA des Usages* thinks like me". And we comply, without realising it, with what has been validated in the chambers of decisions beforehand.

This is how we come to think of as unavoidable situations that were considered unthinkable.

As in the USSR, relatively speaking, the opponents of the dominant fraction, which was gradually gaining power, were silent. Outwards: to avoid tarnishing the image of the "Movement" and undermining the solidarity essential to achieving the goal: the abandonment of the airport project. Inwards too: self-censorship has been powerful. And it took weeks, after the announcement of this abandonment on the 17th of January 2018, for the words to be released and critical analysis texts to be published. As with the USSR, the first to denounce this situation were not believed, they were even called "liars", "paranoid", "divisive" ... As in the USSR, the opponents at first did everything to ensure the group's long-term survival. The idea of rupture was unacceptable. The interests of the collective went before their personal interests. Many of them participated fully in the preparation of demonstrations that they criticised [as with *Fête des bâtons*, 8th October 2017, and *Fête de la victoire*, 10th February 2018], considering that it was their duty "to make the ZAD function even if we do not agree", even feeling guilty because they don't live up to the imposed pace of work.

Conclusion? The eviction of conflictuality

There is no conclusion possible. The story is not over. At the time of writing, the date of the ultimatum for the evictions has not yet been exceeded. Let's bet that it is the most precarious, the most "border-line", those who will be pointed out by the state, or who cannot or will not comply with the diktats of the state, who will pay for the normalisation. Many will no longer see any sense in living in an area that has become a tourist or ecological reserve [more: *Ça y est, on a gagné*] and will leave on their own. Others, out of bravado or because they have nowhere to go, will wait to be evicted, in small waves.

To tell the truth, the evictions started long ago, with the departure of the opponents who no longer saw any sense in staying while they saw a devastating normalisation that few people wanted or could fight against.

The evictions took another turn the 1st of June 2018, when the Prime Minister appointed a mediator and the components of the struggle (except the

occupants) rushed to be heard. Then in February and March, when the delegates (including the occupants) went to the Prefecture, hoping for a negotiation that the state refused them. It was the eviction of the conflictuality that took place then. Quietly, evacuated in the car trunk of delegates. Since then, it was never able to return.

“Winston dropped his arms and slowly filled his lungs with air. His mind escaped to the labyrinth of double thought. To know and not to know. In full awareness and with absolute good

faith, utter carefully arranged lies. To simultaneously retain two opinions that cancel each other out when we know they are contradictory and believe in both. Use logic against logic. To repudiate morality when one appeals to it. [...] Above all, apply the same process to the process itself. There was the ultimate subtlety. Persuade consciously the unconscious, then become unconscious of the act of hypnosis that has just been perpetrated. The very understanding of the word “double thought” implied the use of double thought.”

George Orwell, 1984.

Metamorphoses

As I watch the world through the porthole, I get a little bored...

First appeared as *E guardo il mondo da un oblò, mi annoio un po'...* in *Metamorfosi* (Edizioni La Miccia, Napoli), May 2016

At the time of the transformation of the industrial economy into the post-industrial economy, we are witnessing yet another mobilisation of powers for yet another adjustment of the world. The underlying logic is the one of uninterrupted production, extending henceforth from the battlefield of World War I (which gave a decisive development to the universe of the factory), colonising the whole of society. The domination of modern technology stretches out over the world which, on that level, loses the quality of being just a tool in the hands of humans, to become the real objective of productive and economical action. It is the post-Fordist era, that operates according to the law of “production of production”. Work extends de facto everywhere, the yielding of profit is not confined to the

activity when one goes to work, but is integrated into the lymph nodes of the system that has to be reshaped based on that model. Profit is not only produced through the circulation of goods or investments, but also by the circulation of information and consequently the monopolistic management of information. In this world whatever object, living being and ecosystem can be turned into data, become a number, a function. Its insertion in “integrated systems” corresponds to the claiming of an exact control of a given environment; to supervise, to direct, to remodel.

Since the Second World War the use of technology in the management and treatment of information takes on an important strategical increase, spe-

cifically with the boom of the internet from the '90s. The digital revolution has created a world in which compatibility and interconnectedness – made possible by the progressive convergence of information and telecommunication technology and by the total globalisation of networks – are undoubtedly two pillars on which the modern information society rests. It becomes increasingly important to be able to manage the continuously growing amount of information and data, put into circulation quickly and effectively. The ICT (information and communications technology) complex – that among its many fields of applications finds fertile ground in the cities – handles this.

The improvement of quality of life, respect for the environment, the promotion of organic food, etc. are presented as the winning “of minds” and not as new, juicy profit opportunities. In parallel, public services change face to adopt a more friendly one... While they are talking about active participation in co-planning and while they are developing tools of digital democracy, they are hiding the fact that the “human, intellectual and social capital” of the citizen-customers is put at the service of urban and regional development. There needs to be innovation, there needs to be originality, there needs to be a consenting and enthusiastic mass to compete on the global economical level. No more, no less... Global means doing business, and cities become businesses. They attract investments and companies, supplying performances and a competent workforce. The commodity city, in perpetual valorisation of itself, demands a radical urban and social restructuring.

It is not a coincidence when, since some decades, we are witnessing processes of “regeneration” and “gentrification”, that deliver the transition of the old, industrial economy into the post-industrial economy. Industry has left corpses to be revitalised, the metropolis created zones of degradation that have to be turned into a profit. Propaganda advertises them as zones of a strategic economical importance, re-evaluates them and decides the price too of the replacement of one class by another. The marginal and often criminalised categories of the urban jungle make place for “new settlers from the middle to high levels of the bourgeoisie.”

Recently, in Naples, a small group of international vultures has been welcomed into the discomfort of one of those places where power has left corpses behind, as the bringers of new and mythical hopes. A training college of Apple for programmers of iOS will soon be build to form an army of competent technicians who will function as the search engines of their computers. A smart city, in which the virtual and concrete dimensions integrate increasingly intensely, needs smart people who not only know to use technologies that make it “smart” but also develop unique and specific competences that make it competitive. Diffusing the competences plays a crucial role in triggering technological development, which opens up the door towards new innovating processes... in a circle that is self-reinforcing. Diffusing the competences so that one can live in this kind of world, and because one wants to live and create this kind of world... All this for the profit of those who are living off this machine, like companies and institutions.

Certainly, it is not an innovation for the political propaganda which sells this as a novelty, as it has previously sold the future high-speed train line between Naples and Bari; yet another occasion to integrate this underdeveloped and eternally lagging behind South with the “expansive networks of the global world”. What better opportunity to finally enter Europe when we’re also blessed by the arrival of high-speed in these desolate lands? Unnecessary to say that the hysterical internet squabbling between a Renzi [Prime Minister at the time] and a Magistris [Mayor back then] is apt to create a smokescreen for those who don’t want to see that there is a single underlying logic that unites all people in power. That of distributing here and there the innovations of strategic interest while, on one side they persuade the spectators that they are witnessing the turn-around of the South of Italy, on the other side they are occupied by the mirage of their fake participative democracy.

During this time cities are more and more becoming arenas of strategic interests that of course are well protected. They develop an entire security industry that through the “active prevention” concept sells the “assistance of the military to the national policy” as indispensable. To acclimatise the population to the hindering presence of the army in the streets seems a good start. They have to prevent,

to dissuade all potential of interior revolt that would be harmful to the important sites of the global economical machine. The latter feeds itself with resources that are not only in faraway places, paired with war scenes, but it also has vital interest to protect in its birthplace, this rich West which it tries to pacify. Actually the resources are also human intellectual capital that can continue to advance this winning model of profit and social control. The resources are also the works that multinational companies put in place, with the unconditional support of politicians, in key places for the reproduction of the global economy. Power takes less and less shape as an enclave shielded at who knows what distance from earth. They continue to pretend that capital is a supernatural entity, a sort of Biblical monster; distant and impalpable, without a precise face and anyhow tending to omnipotence. But never before has domination put on display so much uncovered faces, even common faces, of young men and women that sacrifice their individuality at the service of development and technological progress, for example. Technology, beyond the illusion, is not at the service of society but of profit. And the city is "a visible sign of power".

Behind the realisation of the project of the "Smart City" are the biggest digital multinationals. IBM and Cisco Systems are at the centre of huge turnovers, to a point that certain critiques coming from the same official circles speak of these cities as markets for the goods proposed by these multinationals. But the question is much more thorny.

The objective, decried as well as pleaded for by the new millennials, would be "intelligence", the idea of giving an active role to objects present in the city, through the internet... From dull and outmoded street furniture to collectors and distributors of wide ranged information and data, that, obliging and obedient, assist those performing the management of the infrastructure. Actually "the internet of things" doesn't essentially mean intelligence but rather, possibility of identification, traceability... legibility ultimately. Today, as yesterday, IBM is working for power in providing advanced technology for the identification of individuals. As one of its advertisements says: "Let's build a smarter planet for smarter data". How do individuals react faced with this work of meticulous registration that power wants to get increasingly better at? By



becoming nothing but sterile users, will they stop being obstacles for the rest of time? How long will it take before the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion – that always legitimised the exercise of power – completely takes shape in the difference between those who have a smartphone and those who don't, between those who are *tagged* and those who are *untagged*?

Becoming used to an increasingly intense integration with the machines – which in the domesticated and sick heads of some persons has to become total – has been facilitated by the generalised use of tools such as GPS and the internet, only two of the numerous presents of research linked to the military sector. This is not surprising since a lot of technologies that occupy the daily life of the average person carry the stamp of state defence and security. A lot of so-called "convergent technologies" are in fact "dual", meaning that their function is at once civil and military. They are at the basis for one part of the economic growth and of the international dominance of the countries that develop them, and for another part of the security of the West and its strategic interests present a bit everywhere. To defend its hegemony, the technocratic power of the world follows a path to the development that changes the character of its armies, wars, cities.

On the other hand, nanotechnology, biotechnology, IT, telecommunications, robotics... the so-called "convergent technologies" in short, are either the consumption product of civil industry, or the outcome of research activities with military aims. But

technology is also and above all a logic. One that has the intention of annihilating the essence itself of the individual, namely the incalculability and unpredictability that can make it escape from an integrated and controlled existence. This logic can unite these different research fields in one convergent project that can not only manage the living but also remodel it in all its aspects.

We're still surprised that so many things seem to be sufficiently legitimised by the simple fact that they (henceforth) exist, that their nature is not put into question. The internet is maybe one of them. Since the beginning of time, the fact that something exists has never been a good reason to not reflect on it a bit. And it is not enough to get off the hook by claiming its existence is after all comfortable and its use "only" instrumental, if only to find yourself one day with a chip implanted in the brain, and only understand it once it already devoured three quarters of our identity. At this moment when technology functions faster than thought, this is only a question of time. If the technological change is exponential, our thought is not. It is so difficult to follow that we are constantly surpassed, and we always run a risk. Namely to not be capable of thinking through in its totality the nature and the effects of what we are using, if not later, if not when we are already totally submerged.

Machines came into our lives because they were of service, and they stayed because they made us to be at their service. This new world build around our always more transparent and permeable bodies is littered with portals that open up to ten, a thousand other worlds in one click. Worlds that, even if they are defined as real because of the undeniable relation they have with the reality that has activated them, actually initiate a new conception of time and space that belongs to the virtual. Immediateness and ubiquity are the time and space of technology. The contraction of time and space that widens our small individual worlds, brings us to see things that our eyes would never see, there where our legs would never take us.

An uninterrupted flux of information reduces our bodies to communicating vessels in permanent interconnection with the net. A network, a system of electronic machines of which humans will be an always more integral part (it's enough to think

about the development of RFID technologies), that is a transmitter of data to be consumed by multinationals and governments, for financial and controlling advantages. We should ask ourselves where this need comes from for even an individual in struggle for all this information diffused on the internet about actions and experiences coming from anywhere at any moment, because it cannot be considered as *input* to action (that would be sad), and neither is pointing towards a real knowledge of what is happening elsewhere. All real knowledge is proscribed by the nature itself of the media, its media being, its operational mediations and its filters between the disclosed facts, the context that produced it and the person that received it. Maybe we have to answer that this need is the child of its times and to imagine how much a continuous "elsewhere" can distance us from the present that we can hold in our hands. It cannot be reduced to a problem of the relation of the individual with a tool and how to use it. Let's remember that it is the powerful defenders of the techno-scientific supremacy that make these superficial distinctions to explain that there is a good and bad way of using their innovations, to assign the responsibility of the meaning to the individual, and thus legitimising it as inherently innocent. The rest of the world, if we consider the long-term effects, can only be screwed.

The technological "development" has never been neutral, it always had one-sided objectives and has also always produced one-sided effects. The most invisible and unpredictable effects are the effects in the long-term that it provokes in the depths of our perceptions of ourselves and of the world. The skies it hopes to conquer, at the benefit of the science that creates it and the economic-political power that finances it, are those of a global technocracy capable of reprogramming people, surroundings, societies, economies, as if they were computers. Nonetheless, its innovations have birthplaces that are not the underground caves of a mad genius, but are universities, technological colleges, multinationals.

We'll have to see how this high-tech society will resist the blows of a world that collapses, when the difference that separates the included from the excluded will become an irreconcilable chasm.

Metamorphoses

Step by Step

First appeared as *Passo dopo passo* in *Metamorfosi* (Edizioni La Miccia, Napoli), May 2016

The process of the socio-urban restructuring of the historical centre of Naples went through a first phase at the beginning of the 90s. The objective was and still is to bring the city into the European norms which envisage the displacement of the most marginal categories of the population from the historical centres to the periphery in great part made up of suburban dormitories. The poor, immigrants and marginalized are an obstacle to the creation of a city on display and attracting tourists, and thus money, and that becomes the headquarters of institutions, companies, etc. In short a place emptied of all pre-existing historical and cultural heritage, a place under huge surveillance and militarised where capital can proliferate and expand with the least possible obstacles.

In Naples this transformation is going much slower than in the rest of Italy and Europe because of the heavy involvement of criminal organisations in the



territory of the city and the massive presence of that social marginality that lives at the limits, sometimes largely crossed over, of legality, but its advance seems relentless. The crucial years during which the advance towards a massive “gentrification” took a decisive turn were 1993 and 1994.

During the first, Antonio Bassolino was elected the Mayor of Naples, who, in the middle of the *Mani pulite* operation [“clean hands” – huge investigation into corruption at the highest levels of the Italian society – triggered the implosion of the main political parties], represented the man of change, who would “step-by-step” give new life to the so-called “Neapolitan renaissance”. The second was the year of the notorious G7.

The programme of the Mayor at the time was mainly based on the revalorisation of the historical centre, with all its adverse consequences. It was notably possible thanks to funding, spread out here and there, that the then-government had scheduled for the organising of the international meeting of the “great 7 of the world”.

The squares would be turned again into ancient marvels free from cars and street vendors, the historical buildings would be restored, the public transport reorganised and strengthened and the streets invaded by all sorts of uniforms for the policing imposed by capital. That year the pillars were built for the project that would make Naples a destination for hordes of tourists attracted by the beauty of the place, which, over the course of years, would radically change the social and cultural structure of the city.

The objective has been fully reached; today we find ourselves in a situation where whole buildings are used as Bed&Breakfast at the expense of those who are looking for accommodations for a decent price, where small shops are disappearing replaced by supermarkets, bars, pizzerias, fast-food, pastry and ice-cream shops, restaurants, all these places where tourists can satisfy one of their primary needs: to stuff themselves. Where hundreds of cameras control even the most remote spots of all the neighbourhoods of the city. Where thousands of tourists "graze" in the city streets preventing the locals of moving around even on foot. Where the forces of order have increased exponentially, including a massive presence of soldiers armed to the teeth, posted to places considered key points. And where public services (transport, health, etc.) have reached again the nightmare levels of the 70s.

It goes without saying that the rise of rents, the generalised lack of comfort, the always more restricted and militarised social spaces will displace a considerable amount of people away from the city centre. It seems evident that we are living (or maybe it is more correct to say surviving) in a place that in a troubling way resembles a maximum security prison, in a sterile and empty place where any social, non-conforming political expression is impeded and repressed by force.

In this context of progressive transformation the cultural, artistic and even political associations have been integrated, and have played a dominant role in almost all Italian cities. They represent a real vanguard on the issue of regeneration (in a direction that the author of this text considers authoritarian) of degraded neighbourhoods, of dilapidated and chiefly central zones. That is, of all those places that don't produce a profit and where the established order scarcely takes root. They start with the micro to arrive at the macro: they open an alternative bar to which soon dozens are added, they organise tours of local cultural interest, they invite some sort-of-famous artist to give a touch of colour to a place otherwise considered shabby, they clean up some parks, they demand to install some new lampposts and the cards have been played. Under the pretext of avoiding degradation and abandonment another part of the city is submitted to the logic of control and economical exploitation.

It is evident that the realising of this outcome has also and above all been made possible thanks to a difficult and cumbersome social pacification that cannot only happen "with the force of arms". Those in power have understood that the "social forces", the "well-meaning soul" of society have to get involved in the management of public affairs, or at least pretend to do so, to have free rein in its decisions (with the criminal system, an agreement under the table will do).

Since more than twenty years, the municipal administrations have put in a slow-paced but relentless effort in that direction. The keyword is: recuperation. Not only urban, but above all social.

Every change, obvious or not, of the society in an authoritarian direction takes place in parallel with the sociocultural transformation of the citizens who are part of the economical and productive processes. Where ignorance, religion, misery don't come about, politics does: the one with a capital 'P'. Active citizenship, participative democracy, bottom-up decision-making are the battle cry that power, self-declared "enlightened", uses as lubricant to pass measures that increasingly limit the space of political action.

The average citizen feels included and principal actor in the decision-making mechanisms that govern the living together and, for that reason, become themselves controller and oppressor of all behaviour that goes beyond the rules that they think they have contributed in setting out.

Concepts such as conflict, rebellion, radical opposition to power have been almost totally eliminated or, at least, totally diluted by society.

Erstwhile revolutionaries present themselves today as an integral part of the political decision-making process. Power is not seen any more as an enemy, as something we have to defend ourselves from or against which we should fight. Today it is considered as the privileged interlocutor for the management of the public things. One doesn't storm the Winter Palace any more, now one politely knocks on the door. Collaboration and supposed active participation are considered as tools of political struggle, even not in terms of a radical transformation of society, but in a reformist sense

of it. All this without questioning the existence of the statist political system.

Today one actively undertakes a electoral campaign, one presents oneself at the elections for the municipality (someone even succeeded [from the social centre *Je so' pazzo* came the electoral list *Potere al Popolo!*]), one becomes collaborator of the ruling city councillor and at the same time one plays the role of firemen in the context of (few actually) popular struggles.

When one doesn't manage to reach directly to the vital organs of power, the strategy of bottom-up organising is implemented. Consultations, associations, citizens assemblies of so-called liberated zones (meaning more or less unofficially linked to the current Mayor De Magistris) grant themselves a leading role and a privileged contact to bring to the attention of the political class all those entities that believe they can transform a "fake" democracy into a real democracy, directly in the hands of the citizens.

To make this concept even more clear, we transmit one part of a pamphlet distributed in the middle of March on the occasion of a citizen assembly where it is clearly stated that: "We are in an election period: the promises are not kept and the words lose their meaning. For that reason, at a time when many speak about participation, we challenge everyone to break with this democracy and to build a new one, real and radical, through real mechanisms of involvement of the inhabitants of the territories. Not substitute the institution but to overrun it by participative and collective processes... In June there will be municipal elections and all these machinations are nothing more than an electoral campaign in favour of the current Mayor De Magistris who claims the title of the revolutionary, attentive to social demands of his underlings. It is not an accident that the last polls show a marked advantage to his "anachronistic" adversaries.

For miserable political calculations, years of struggles have been sold out with the purpose of creating some leeway in a comforting institutional framework. A new political class has emerged made up of windbag militants, who will give a fresh face to the deformed and detested one of the current ruling classes. They will be our next enemies."

Nothing more to add...






Stopping to Reflect

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Stopping to reflect, now more than ever, seems a waste of time. In the tumultuous succession of events, with which even our most up-to-date smartphones seem unable to keep pace, the only possible watchword seems to be: Just do it. But do what? This I still don't understand.

If you keep an ear open, everyone seems capable of talking about everything: an opinion on every event, a solution for every problem, from small-time drug dealers at home to global terrorism. And I, who ceaselessly have the feeling that I don't understand shit, observe and plod on. I can cope with the apathy of the many, most likely because I have no deep relationship with the many, mainly due to my arrogance. But "the comrades" are the ones who block my sun! The assemblies, the fliers, the blogs, the initiatives, the rallies, the actions ... the benzodiazepines! Perhaps these are what I could truly make use of.

Yes, because there are immigrants turned back at the borders, Western bombings over half the world, security alarms and restrictions of individual freedom, Rojava under attack, racism, job insecurity, repression, and a measureless list of other fronts of struggle. There's something for every taste and every ideology. The one who hesitates is lost, the one who reflects too much is an intellectual, and the one who does not throw himself into the fray is a collaborationist.

If these really are the rules of the game, for now, I'm out. I tried to take on the role of the anarchist militant, seeking for a long time the facet of an-

archism that most suited me. I have recognized "comrades" and done things "as comrades". I don't spit in the vegan plate from which I have eaten, I simply stop for a moment, even if out there everything proceeds straight towards catastrophe.

I see people who talk fervently of things happening on the other side of the globe, but let crimes and abuses go on under their noses; persons convinced that they are fighting an invisible enemy or one immeasurably larger than them, who in the meantime behave in an authoritarian and despicable way with those around them; people, promiscuous in expressing solidarity to every exploited individual, who mess up relationships and are alone or cling to a few exclusive ties; persons ever intent on propagating better, possible societies because in fact they are deeply dissatisfied with their existence; persons who shout at others to free themselves from their chains, and then run back to the job, to the family, to their jails.

I have been and still am one of these persons. I want to stop being this!

Our lives burn fast without leaving a trace. Our gaze is turned upward and away, while around us all becomes a void. By dint of climbing and taking shelter at ever purer heights, the earth is finished, and we are fighting among ourselves about who should rush down first. I'm about to go back to the valley to reflect on what to do, perhaps I'll even find a (travelling) companion [*compagno* - fellow subversive, comrade / *compagno di viaggio* - travelling companion].