Voices of Resistance from Occupied London

Editorial

And it's 2007. Eighteen years have passed since Fukuyama proclaimed the "End of History" and his arrogant statement never fails to deliver a good laugh. When did history end? It certainly did not go up in the flames coming out of the Parisian suburbs last year. It was not trampled under the feet of the Latin American populations rioting against president Bush's visit to their continent last week. It did not disappear in the fields of the Chinese rural populations constantly uprising against their masters, nor did it collapse along with the twenty-four year old now evicted Ungdomshuset social Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark - an eviction only made possible after seven hundred youths were arrested, spectacularly marking the end to the country's social consent model. How could history end? Capitalism's contradictions, it's very own integral accidents make for a promising future. We live in exciting times: gone are the depressingly quiet nineties, ours could truly be an era of resistance and revolt.

And yet, for all his injudiciousness, Fukuyama can ostensibly gain hope by gazing at very specific parts of the globe and London would probably be one of his favourite places to do so. Non-abiding to the physics law that action brings reaction, our city is one of the most tightly controlled and repressed urban spaces in the world yet resistance seems to be scarce. But how did we even get here? The capital city of the Fallen British Empire knew only too well how to go down in style, just like the fallen empire itself: Timely retreat and careful absorption of colonised populations into the 'homeland' have made sure that exploding suburbs remain a spectacle to be seen only on the other side of the English Channel.

Centuries of experience gained by colonial rule guaranteed that when the colonial process was to be internalised and applied to the homeland's own populations and cities it would do so at utmost perfection. Contemporary Britain boasts the most advanced and widely applied surveillance technology systems in the world; control encroaches all elements of the everyday lives of what seems to be a spectacularly apathetic population.

Voices of Resistance from Occupied London was born some 10,000 km away from the British capital, in rural South Africa. One of the oddest things about London is how it is always easier to understand and interpret some of its most striking features from a safe distance. Indeed, the view of our city from afar dictated a need for a strong anarchist presence: If we can do London, we can do any place, we can do all places!

...and most places are not even like London at all. Live here for too long and it becomes only too easy to forget that this condition is an exception, not the rule. Luckily, this is a fact constantly reminded to us by comrades and friends arriving and leaving the city in an endless flux, in turn comprising one of the city's most promising features. One of the journal's main aspirations is to use itself as a medium to facilitate the exchange of such experiences and ideas, galvanising links between us here and our friends and comrades 'abroad'.

In the process of interpreting what it is that represses us in the city, we have sought and received the most welcome help of contributors not necessarily abiding to our own ideas and principles. This is an anarchist publication aspiring to offer space to all people from within the wider spectrum of the antagonist social movement.

Contributions in the form of comments, feedback and articles for future issues are always gracefully received at occupiedlondon@riseup.net. The second issue of the journal will be dedicated to the wave of militant struggles and urban revolts recently sweeping across Europe. The deadline for submissions is May 15. Get writing!
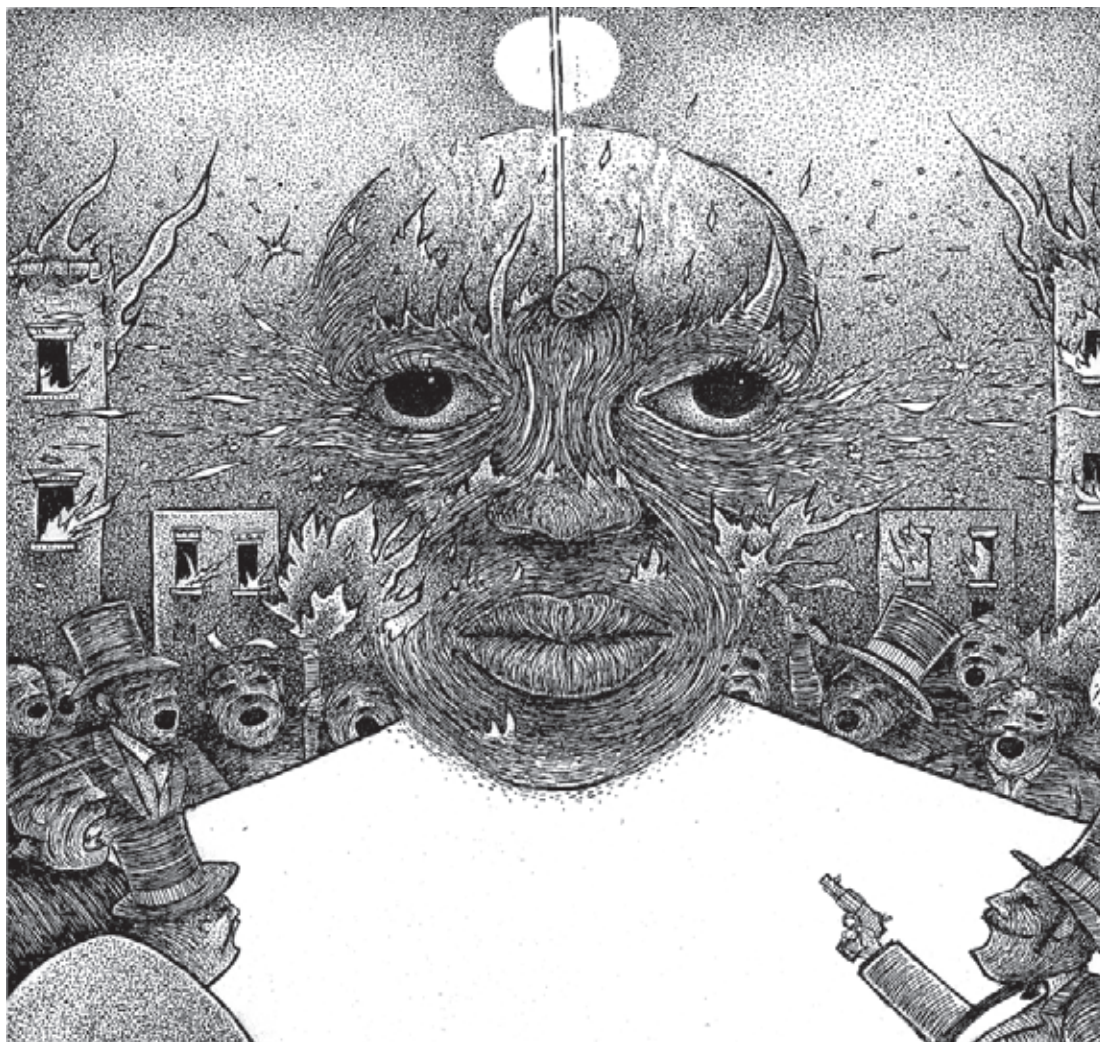
Random Thoughts on Neo-liberalism
Or, the Resisting Individual in the Contemporary Society

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Resistance of human individuals against societal norms that repress them is as old as humans themselves. Essentially, this very resistance comprised a moving force behind human survival and evolution. It is remarkable that humans began resisting before human societies were even formed, by solely fighting against animals... And later on, once part of a social group, they would fight against external groups and even form sub-groups to fight their own, whenever the latter operated against the individual's will or when it broke predetermined facts and pre-agreed conventions.

This is the only way in which the individual could (and did) achieve fulfilling his or her desires - desires that would of course differ from time to time. Historically, resistance (or for that matter, reaction) was not absent from any society: It merely changed its form depending on what society was applying such repression, the reasons pushing for resistance and the methods used by the latter. Such resistance is not always nor neces

sarily a collective issue; it could derive from individuals, a fact that by no means downgrades its importance. From the farmer waving his rake when threatened to the citizen appealing to a public bureau in order to denounce their boss who will exhaust them mentally and physically without offering the agreed compensation, it is always the same issue we are talking about: resistance and dissent of individuals, instinctively rising against whatever it is that hurts them.

Therefore, and since each of us will enact such resistance at least once during our lifetime, we could safely talk about an integral part of human nature, capable of avoiding being trapped in whatever social norms. A solid political analysis would understand that it is invalid and nonsensical to judge the way and means each of us chooses to resist with: dissent is a given and each concerned individual should centre their acts around it. Alas, whenever a social sub-group acts in resistance or reaction it is crucial to contemplate whether the

years and on hundreds of occasions (reaching its achievement of the given target is indeed achieved by their chosen form of resistance.

The ways in which resistance is received, on the other hand, largely relies upon the political interests of the prevalent political powers. Thanks to the democratic façade, society's members are given the "right" to take the streets and chant their slogan - though even this very right has been challenged lately. Alas, it is such political powers that shape the prevalent opinion of what an "acceptable" protest should be like: Permission should be sought by the public authorities; a bureaucratic process has to be followed for such permission to be granted; police should accompany the protest, which should in turn comprise of members of a specific group that do not hold beliefs considered to be 'dangerous': their demonstration should be peaceful... But what does 'peaceful' really mean?

When the resisting individuals decide to fight against whatever elements repress them, in cooperation with the social subgroup agreeing with them, there is no path left to follow other than that of delinquent behaviour.

Resistance is by definition delinquent, since it transcends the limits pre-set for the individuals deciding to set their own path in accordance to their demands. To discuss whether such reaction should be considered "good" or "bad" based on "peaceful" and "violent" protest, that is of no relevance here since such fake dilemmas are set by the ruling class. The form of resistance chosen each time should only be accountable to the ruled class applying it and not to the bosses who cause it.

After all, passive resistance or pacifism does not exclude violence from its content. Quite simply, when these are applied on the streets anti-violence does not make its appearance. Regardless, true violence is applied by those with the means to do so at each given period of history. The simplest such mean, thoroughly tested over hundreds of years and reaching its apogee during Hitler's era) is the invention of the "enemy within", intended to terrorise us about who knows what. In the Greek reality the enemy within took the form of the terrorist (no longer haunting us following the capturing of terrorist organisations), the football hooligan (no longer able to burn our property as CCTV is now introduced in football grounds) and the hooded up demonstrator who could continue to threaten the respectable citizens unless the police start raiding houses of suspects, as recently announced.

The culture of "non-violent" or "non-confrontational" attitude is a culture largely imposed by mass media in order to serve specific causes of social conduct and submission. But how could you possibly convince the indignant student, the worker or citizen that if they stay calm and refrain from "provoking" the authorities everything would turn out to be all right?

In other words, dissent will by definition be delinquent. To take the recent example of students repeatedly taking the streets rising against the unacceptable proposed educational reforms in Greece. Students spontaneously took the streets to defend the given: their right to move freely; academic asylum as well as public and free education for all. The State, knowing no other way to settle issues creating social resistance, chose to follow a familiar path: violent repression, bloodletting demonstrations, mindless use of chemicals, mass arrests, fabricated polls "reflecting" public opinion as being against the students... Distinguishing the students' movement from a "tiny minority of anti-authoritarians defiling the student movement" (as if students cannot be anti-authoritarians), libel and criminalisation of movements... In other words, it did its job right, since this is the mission of the State: To clobber each and every deviant opinion and behaviour.

The movement that sprang out of the students lit up all of the folds of social demands as well as the multitude of means that can be used for their achievement. Students organised via direct democratic procedures, challenging the role of the ruling class and its media and immediately turned to counter-information with demos, occupations, press releases, clashes with the police, poster pasting, neighbourhood events and whatever else deemed feasible in order to give voice to the other side. Since, therefore, this is their resistance against a law repressing them and denying them certain rights, how could their dissent comprise a "lawful" act within the unlawful margins set by the authorities, themselves very unlawful?

In either way dissent cannot, by definition, be legal. Laws are set by bosses in order to facilitate their own disgraceful interests. In this mission of theirs they have the faithful support of some obedient servants: mass media, forces of control and repression, judges and public servants. Our duty is to get rid of every form of repression, every law curtailing free thought and to reject all forces violently repressing voices of resistance.

The State breeds violence, while social struggles breed freedom.

City of Panic

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The urban territory is increasingly traversed by streams of diasporic, heterogeneous and de-territorialised imaginary. Panic tends to become the urban psychic dimension. It is a reaction of a sensitive organism submitted to a stimulation too strong and too rapid. A reaction of an organism urged by too frequent and intense impulses to be emotively and conversationally elaborated.

What is panic? We are told that psychiatrists recently discovered and named a new kind of disorder – they call it "Panic Syndrome". It seems that it is something quite recent in the psychological self-perception of human beings. But what does panic mean?

Once 'panic' used to be a nice word, and this is the sense in which the Swiss-American psychoanalyst James Hillman remembers it in his book on Pan. Pan used to be the god of nature, the god of totality. In Greek mythology, Pan was the symbol of the relationship between man and nature.

Nature is the overwhelming flow of reality, things and information by which we are surrounded. Modern culture is based on the idea of human domination, of the domestication of nature. So the original panic feeling (which was something good for the ancient world) is increasingly becoming terrifying and destructive. Today, panic has become a form of psychopathology: We can speak of panic when we see a conscious organism (individual or social) being overwhelmed by the speed of processes he/she/it is involved in, and has no time to process this information input. In these cases the organism, all of a sudden, is no more able to process the sheer amount of information coming into its cognitive field or even that generated by the organism itself.

Technological transformations have displaced the focus from the sphere of the production of material goods towards the sphere of semiotic goods. With this, Semio-Kapital becomes the dominant form of the economy. The accelerated creation of surplus value depends on the acceleration of the Info-sphere. The digitalisation of the Info-sphere opens the road to this kind of acceleration. Signs are produced and circulated at a growing speed but the human terminal of the system (the embodied mind) is put under growing pressure and finally cracks under it. I think that the current economic crisis has something to do with this imbalance in the field of semio-production and the field of semio-demand. This imbalance in the relationship between the supply of semiotic goods and the socially available time of attention is the core of the economic crisis as well as the core of the intellectual and the political crises that we are living through now.

Semio-Kapital is in a crisis of overproduction, but the form of this crisis is not only economic, but also psychopathic. Semio-Kapital, in fact, is not about the production of material goods, but about the production of psychic stimulation. The mental environment is saturated by signs that create a sort of continuous excitation, a permanent electrocution, which leads the individual mind as well as the collective mind to a state of collapse.

The problem of panic is generally connected with the management of time. But we can also see a spatial side to panic. During the past centuries, the building of the modern urban environment used to be dependent on the rationalist plan of the political city. The economic dictatorship of the last few decades has accelerated the urban expansion. The interaction between cyber-spatial sprawl and urban physical environment has destroyed the rationalist organisation of the space.

In the intersection of information and urban space we see the proliferation of a chaotic sprawl following no rule, no plan, dictated by the sole logic of economic interest. Urban panic is caused by the perception of this sprawl and this proliferation of metropolitan experience. Proliferation of spatial lines of flight. The metropolis is a surface of complexity in the territorial domain. The social organism is unable to process the overwhelmingly complex experience of metropolitan

chaos. The proliferation of lines of communication has created a new kind of chaotic perception.

In the summer of 2001, Fury, a novel by Salman Rushdie, came out. On the cover, the Empire State building was hit by a lightning. Not long after the release of the book from the printers that cover looked like a frightful premonition. But this premonition was not just on the cover for the novel describes (or rather evokes) the psychic collapse of the western metropolis.

Rushdie depicts the virtual class nervous system, intended as social class producers of signs as well as a class of those that live a common condition of evanescence and existential fragility. Cellularised splinters, fragments in a perpetual abstract recombination, connected terminals that lost competence and conjunction memory.

You feel the psychopathic vibration that is amassing, after the permanent electrocution decade, after the desire economic investment decade. You feel anxiety growing, and the urban libidinous economy going insane.

Millions of mobile phones are calling each other, mobilising the lipid energy postponing the contact, the pleasure the orgasm from one side to the other of the city, from a moment of compressed urban time to another.

The action of the novel develops mainly on the roofs of Manhattan skyscrapers. Scary black birds wondering about the fates of buildings announcing the next collapse.

A while ago, Mike Davis (City of Quartz, Dark Cities) mapped the urban territory perception (the 1990 Los Angeles territory in City of Quartz and the 2002 New York City one in Dead Cities) through the rebuilding of the mythologies of fear and of the security and privatisation policies that have a devastating effect on social space.

"The neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture insinuates violence and averts imaginary threats. The pseudo-public spaces of today, the big malls and the executive centres, the cultural acropolis and so on are full of invisible signs to keep the underclass far away," (Mike Davis: 1990, page 226).

After September 11th 2001 the securitisation paranoia becomes the main tendency in the imaginary, in the production of high technology goods and in urban design.

"The fear economy grows in the middle of an overall famine... The low paid security guard army will grow by 50% during the decade, while

video-surveillance fed by facial recognition software will snatch what is left from the daily routine privacy. The airports' departure security regime will provide a model for the regulation of the urban masses, in the shopping centres, in the sporting events and elsewhere... Security, in other words, will become an urban service completely developed like water, electricity and telecommunications." (Davis, Dead Cities 2002: pages 12-13)

The city of panic is the place where nobody has the time anymore to get close to each other, for the caresses for the pleasure or for the slowness of whispered words. Advertisement exalts and stimulates the libidinous attention, person to person communication multiplies the promisses of encounters, but these promisses never get fulfilled. Desire turns into anxiety and time contracts. _

(Translation by Enrico)
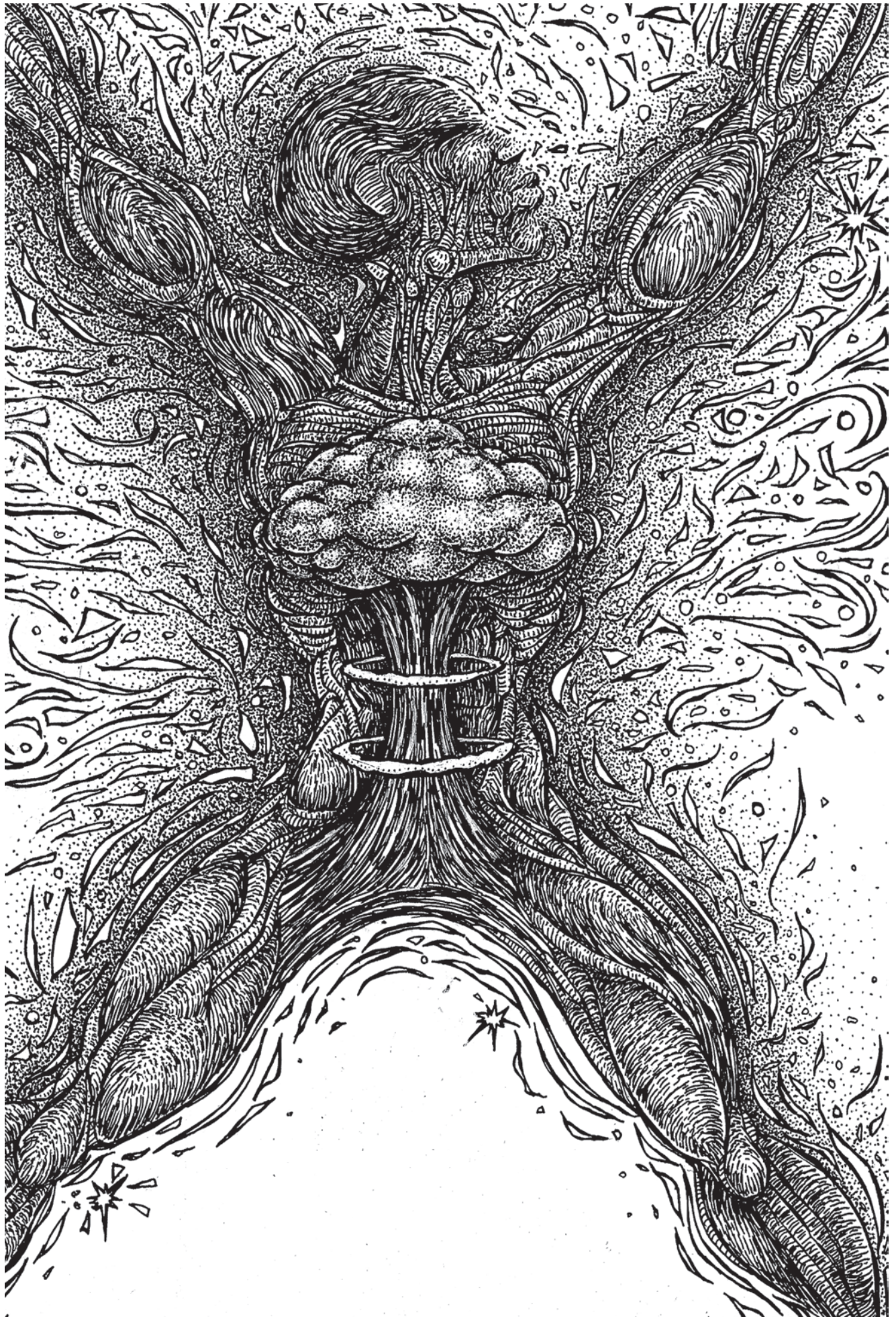
The Spring of Social Centres

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Social centres have increasingly become an integral part of anarchist and anti-capitalist activity in the UK. At present there are around fifteen such places which operate as public, political and social centres. Some were formed from situations way back in the early eighties, like Bradford's 1 in 12, while others came into being recently, through the anti-G8 mobilisations in Scotland (2005). In London there has been a very active "push" for social centres largely developed on the initiative of the anarchist collective WOMBLES starting in 2002. Squatting has always been associated with radical politics and there has been a long history of occupied political spaces mainly functioning as "squat cafes" and other resource centres. There has, however, been an attempt to move away from the "squatter" image of these places and move towards a more engaging aesthetic based on experiences from around Europe and especially Italy. The ideas which have developed around occupying private space and turning them into political and cultural hubs has come through the experimenting and experiences of those involved. A certain genealogy of social centres in London has been formed over the last few years, to include the Radical Dairy (Stoke Newington), Occupied Social Centre (Kentish Town), Ex-GrandBanks (Tufnell Park), Institute For Autonomy (Bloomsbury), The Square (Bloomsbury) and most recently, the Vortex (Stoke Newington). Despite the unavoidably short life span of each of these projects, knowledge and experience have been built upon and mistakes, on the whole, being learnt from.

What social centre projects have managed to do in a relatively short time span is to intensify the political activation and the scope of interaction of those that dwell through them: Thousands of people have passed through social centres attending hundreds of film showings, discussions, events, concerts and cultural events. Presence, in most cases, is guaranteed. If we build it they will come and if we present ourselves as open, inviting and our spaces as clean and accessible, the diversity of people quickly expands. Almost gone are the days of the pissed up punk drinking special brew whilst his/her stereotyped dreadlocked brethren roles another joint. In come mother and baby groups, packed out cinemas, good quality food, well organised concerts and political mobilisations. This consistency becomes easier as more people become involved, not looking for a subculture to indulge in, but a place of social interaction that presents and communicates ideas. With every occupation there is a willingness to go beyond the limitations of the last, to attempt to answer the critiques or lack of radicalisation that certain activities contain. This dynamic of constant self-critique and analysis becomes the driving force of developing new politics to face up to the changing nature of a society which is less concerned with anti-systemic change and more interested in surviving within the schemas of capitalism. To many, social centres become a first "port of call" - their first interaction with ordinary people who want to fully participate in reshaping and re-imaging their environment. Interaction with anarchists becomes normalised and barriers fall.

London is an odd place. Highly urbanised and commercialised, with thousands of interweaving communities, gentrified by the spoils of war – the immense financial capital that passes through it on a daily basis. Property prices have risen to historically high levels forcing many out to the urban periphery. Due to this upsurge in highly priced property and its commodification we see a terrain of struggle which has come to dictate and cascade through other areas of life. The control over property has become a major battleground even more so as the neo-liberal doctrine permeates all areas of "public" spaces and services. The mass sell-offs and takeovers have spurned conflicts not only in London but all over the UK. Gentrification has been the most widely used term and accurately describes a process of transformation based on the new material conditions generated both by the integration of telecommunications technologies within the economy and the break-down of the
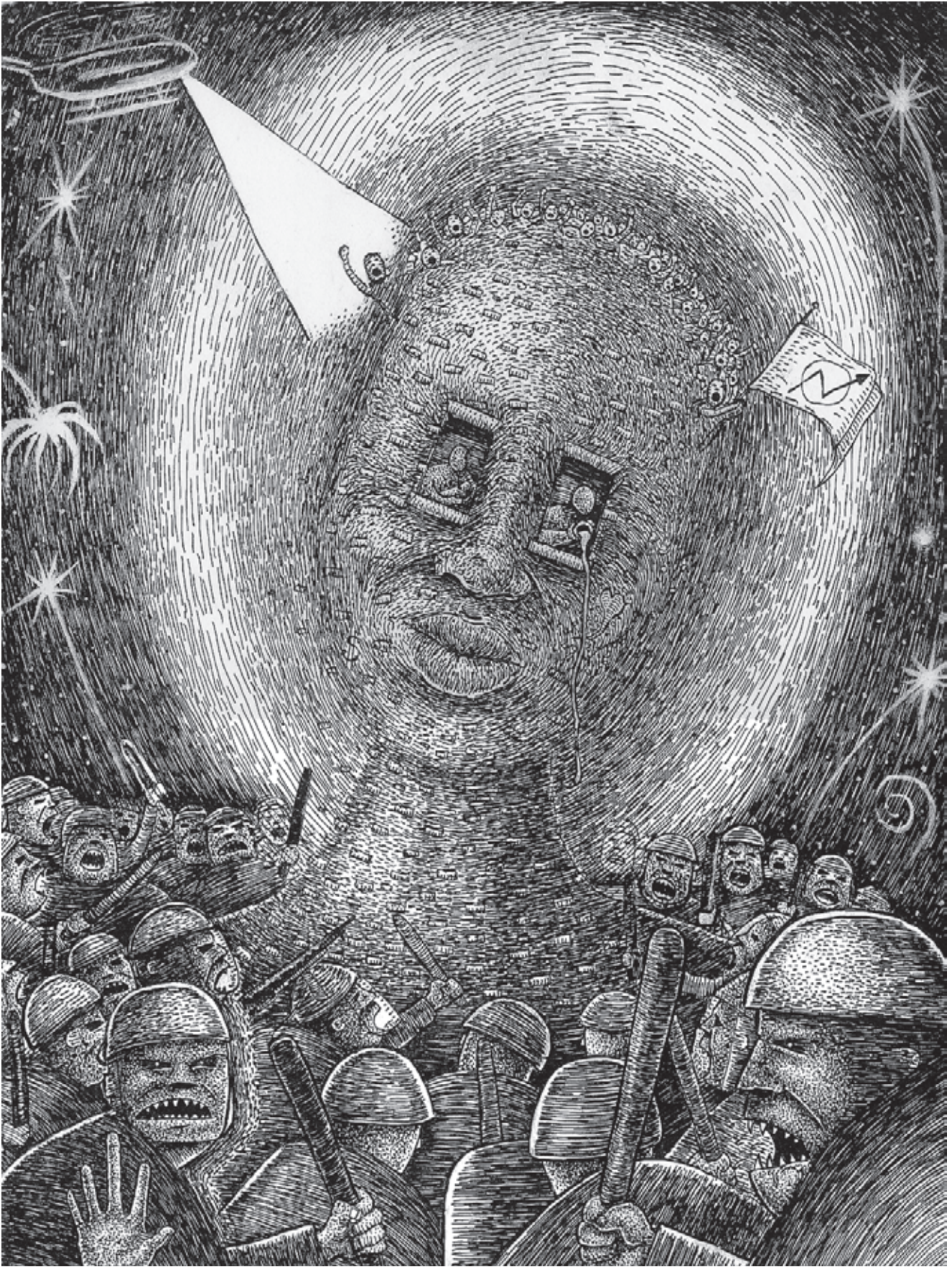
social democratic contract.

The idea of public and common space is fast being undermined as the limitless demand of profit takes over. Everyday experiences become increasingly mediated by our relationship to capital while our ability to impose our own desires and autonomy is increasingly undermined. With each generation, the struggles and defeats of the previous one are embodied and reflected within our social reality. Public spaces once existing and able to create elements of autonomy outside the market logic are now where the state surveys and controls – by use of surveillance cameras, privatisation, commercialisation and intrusions by the police.

There is nowhere that we can socialise and exist without being exploited or expected to participate in a certain level of capitalist consumption. Social need is constructed through the systemic denials of capitalist society. Our needs and the needs of capital diverge and therefore what we are offered leaves a lot to be desired, literally! Our needs are social in that they are part of a social fabric that makes us human. Alas, rather than being met by the economy, our needs are subservient to it, manipulated and directed into consumer demands and fashion trends. Our real needs become marginalised and shaped into commodified needs, readily equated with commodified products. Our alienation leads to increased uncertainties and insecurities reducing our potential for public participation.

Within this context of the social reality that we experience, *occupation/expropriation* becomes a choice in participating on our own terms. *Self-organisation* becomes a mode of inclusion, *anti-hierarchy* both a political rejection of the present order and a way to maximise the human potential that already exists. *Anti-capitalist* as a process of basing our real existence on individual and collective needs without the distortions for the abstract push for profit. These form our "platform" to open up space in London.

Developing the network of Social Centres

In January 2007 the second nationwide gathering of social centres was held at Bradford's 1in12. Around forty people from fifteen different collectives attended the meeting to discuss how the various spaces could connect and organise between each other. The discussions veered from the predictable "technical" discussions around "how we organise our small corner of the world", to much wider, deeper discussions on why we need to do so. The "how" question has become a particularly annoying fetishisation and specialisation much seen in the UK activists' "scene": If we don't know how, then we don't know anything... but it's the "why" which gives doing the "how" meaning, and it's this meaning that we are trying to produce.

A project was unveiled, put together by the author of this piece in the form of an enquiry. This initial "taster" was in the form of a survey with questions attempting to gather some basic information about each social centre. The survey focussed on quantifying the scope of this embryonic movement. Social centres were asked how many people were involved in there collective, how many events are organised per month on average, how many visitors they get. Though a "guestimate", I am sure there is constant monitoring of who turns up when and what is organised so I take these responses to be more legitimate than other similar reflections.

The results show that between the fifteen spaces, there are around 350-400 people involved in social centres around the country - organising around 250 events per month and gaining the presence of 4,000 to 6,000 people. Not bad for a political minority! By making this data visible and presenting it back to those of us involved in such projects the aim is to expand the knowledge of what we do, and with whom. We have these resources, we have this presence, we need to transform it and develop it. It is up to us from that start point to attempt to strategise the future developments of social centres as a political project. Are we content on where we are? Is it enough? Ideology is dead, and with it the dogma of both the left and traditional anarchists. If we are to re-imagine and give meaning to revolutionary praxis in the 21st Century we would need to reconnect with not just ourselves and others like us who oppose capitalism but also the multitude of people who are not satisfied with a private existence. Only through this process are we truly going to get to a level where we are asking the right questions, let alone providing the right answers._

Welcome to the Occupation

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As the world hunkers down to face a new century locked into perpetual war, the British government continues to exploit the political capital gained after 9/11 to carry out arguably the most sustained assault on personal freedom ever seen in this country. With individual liberty and autonomy fast disappearing under an avalanche of laws designed to broaden the scope to which the state may "legitimately" interfere in its citizens' lives, reports released in November last year by Privacy International and the Surveillance Studies Network detail the extent to which surveillance technologies have become a key weapon for use alongside proto-totalitarian legislation in this government's obsession with complete state-control.

These reports warn that Britain has become, in the words of Information Commissioner Richard Thomas, a "surveillance society"; according to the SSN, monitoring technologies are now "extensively and routinely used to track and record our activities and movements", the kind of surveillance under which we go about our lives ranging "from US security agencies monitoring telecommunications traffic passing through Britain, to key-stroke information used to gauge work rates and GPS information tracking company vehicles". Systematic tracking and recording of travel and use of public services, automated use of CCTV and its combination with biometrics, companies analysing our buying habits and financial transactions, and workplace monitoring of telephone calls, email and internet use have all become staples of daily life in Britain. If these trends continue, the SSN projects that within ten years surveillance in this country will be "all-pervasive".

If the SSN's report gave the UK food for thought, a similar report released around the same time by human rights group Privacy International went one step further, putting Britain bottom of the entire Western world for the protection of individual privacy. We are the worst-ranking country in the European Union according to their findings, the only EU country in the black category denoting "endemic surveillance".

But while the many large-scale and overtly proto-totalitarian schemes being implemented by the government are clearly a serious cause for concern (and it is mildly encouraging that they have been recognised as such by Left and Right with near-universal complicity), the real problem here is a perhaps more insidious one. Sure, large scale, state-run surveillance technologies coupled with the tide of supposedly 'anti-terrorist' legislation makes it ever easier for the government to incarcerate anyone it chooses to deem a terrorist, placing freedom of speech and association in even greater jeopardy than they have traditionally been in this country – that is obvious; but the way in which institutionalised snooping of the kind seen today extends into the basic fabric of British society actually has ramifications of a more far-reaching and damaging kind. Surveillance on the "endemic" scale we are currently experiencing creates a climate of suspicion, breeding a lack of trust in society from the most fundamental levels which damages the ever-weakening bonds of community upon which the health of a society depends. When parents start using webcams and GPS systems to check on their teenagers' activities for example, they are saying they do not trust them; when welfare benefits administrators demand evidence of double-dipping or solicit tip-offs on a possible "spouse-in-the-house" they are saying they do not trust their clients; when an employer uses key-stroke information to gauge work rates and GPS systems to track company vehicles, he is saying that he does not trust his employees.

The basic, interpersonal relationships from which society is built depend on trust, and it is not difficult to see how the institutionalisation of surveillance practices like these drives a wedge between individuals, creating an atmosphere of distrust in virtually every sphere of human interaction. Moreover, to single out the example of "the workplace", in the case of the employer spying on

his employees we see how the manner in which such technology has become enmeshed with the capitalist economic system further depersonalises and dehumanises the already inherently antagonistic relationship between capitalist and worker, with surveillance technologies catalysing a rapid acceleration in the breakdown of social relationships by aggravating existing antagonisms built into the capitalist economic model.

Another example is about to be played out in the characteristically obnoxious manner in which the government is proposing to enforce its forthcoming smoking ban. Councils across the country have been given £29.5m of taxpayers' money to pay for a network of informers to enter premises "undercover", to sit among drinkers and even to photograph and film people. These informers will be able to hand out on-the-spot fines to individuals violating the ban and are encouraged to bring about court action against premises. In schemes like this we see how the government is now actively encouraging people to go out and spy on each other, thus inevitably stoking the fires of suspicion, resentment and therefore creating fragmentation and division in society, rather than promoting social cohesion. Anarchism's aim is to bring people together, to strengthen bonds of community and mutual help; with snooping, duplicity and outright backstabbing actively encouraged in such a way it seems clear that anyone promoting the idea of "community" in 21st century Britain is up against an ever more powerful force pulling in the opposite direction.

If we look at this assertion from a slightly different angle though we see that it conceals an even more serious problem for anarchism in 21st century Britain: certain schools of anarchist thought concede that the state itself is a 'necessary evil' as long as human beings exist in a certain kind of competitive and mutually hostile relationship which makes it necessary. If this is the case, by fostering suspicion and distrust among the country's citizens, by actively promoting suspicion and the fragmentation and atomisation of society, the surveillance infrastructure in effect bolsters the position of the state, providing evidence to the public of the validity of its self-professed raison d'être and thus making its inherently authoritarian behaviour even more "defensible". Here we see how the twin conflicts of "us against the state" and "us against each other", a solution to the latter being an essential precondition for our successfully resolving the former, are affected by the entrenchment of a surveillance culture. By ripping apart the social fabric of the country and replacing healthy, living social relationships with those of distrust and suspicion, the state makes the attainment of this precondition more difficult, exacerbating the cause of the social ills whose alleged job it is to remedy and in doing so making the argument of those calling for its elimination even more of an uphill struggle than ever.

On the other hand, it means that this argument is one which needs to be heard now more than ever before, for it is clear that no solution to this self-perpetuating cycle will ever be reached while working within the parameters of the state – how could it? All the SSN's report describes is the logical extension of tendencies inherent in the state and capitalism. It's easy to complain about recent developments in surveillance and the proto-fascist tendencies of the current government, in seeking a solution we must realise that what we're talking about is not something that can realistically be separated from the capitalist state.

In other words, all we're seeing here is the state with the gloves coming off. Those who see a solution to the problem in, for example, placing legally enforceable limits on governmental use of surveillance, are missing the point. In no state under the yoke of government will any amount of "regulatory" legislation ever suffice to prevent its very progenitors consolidating and entrenching their own position – if headway is to be made in rectifying the asymmetry of power inherent in such endemic and intrusive surveillance, it is imperative that we first recognise the utter absurdity in expecting to find a durable and effective solution to the problem by appealing to the antagonist to rectify it for us._
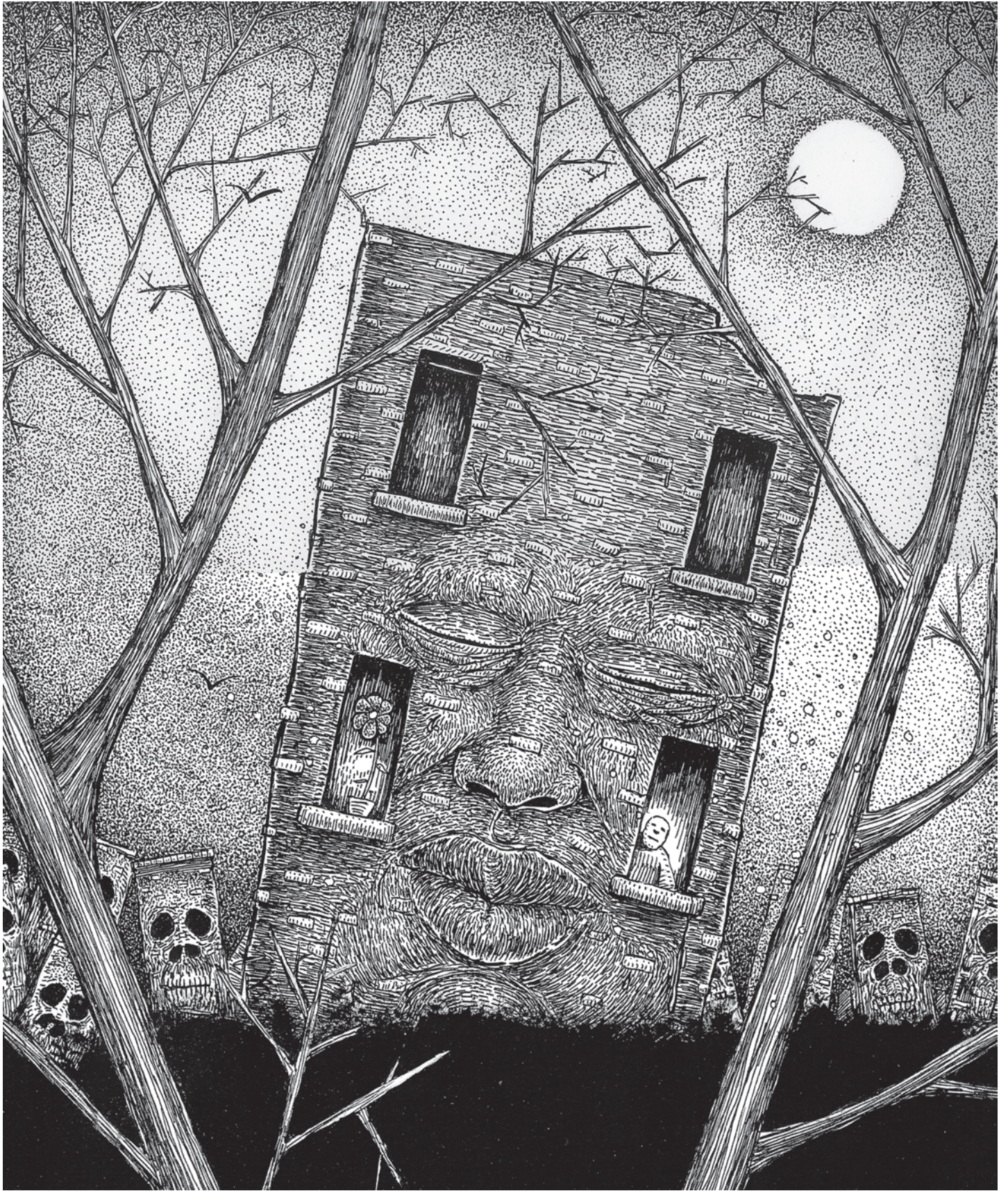
"Resisting, Subverting and Destroying the Apparatus of Surveillance and Control"
An Interview with Mike Davis

You often draw lines of comparison between different tendencies of urban control across the globe. Could you compare the situation in Los Angeles, the repression and surveillance happening there when you were writing City of Quartz with the situation in London today?

There is nothing comparable at all in the U.S. to the apparatus of surveillance that exists in London. Even CCTV cameras are only recently becoming an issue in the U.S. Total surveillance of down town areas of American cities is something I wrote about in the early nineties but only applied to tiny areas, a few acres in down town Los Angeles for example. If Giuliani does become president we will get closer to the idea of having total surveillance and control in the city centre but London is at least one if not two generations ahead of the United States. Having said that, the foundations in the U.S. exist: the freeways now have surveillance systems that monitor gridlock. But I find London really shocking in many ways. I had no idea for instance until I came here about the fact that subway passes are used to monitor and accumulate data. In the United States things have gone in a different direction. Obviously, in every economic transaction you have and particularly on the internet, data is being transferred or sold for marketing purposes. I think the American political system might be the most advanced in the world in this sense - using marketing data to target people and pass political messages across to them. Also, there is a much larger budget and much bigger research effort going on in the U.S. To give you an example of how this works: The Bush Administration wants guest programmes to satisfy the labour needs of crucial industries like agribusiness. Alas it has been blindsided by a revolt in the republican grassroots against democrats. One of the things they are calling for is building a wall the entire length of the Mexican border and the Congress has actually authorised part of that, although people who actually work on border control and surveillance laugh at it since these walls would be totally ineffective: 12-foot high sheets of metal that anyone could climb. They are working on

something completely different: a virtual border, more like the virtual control that now exists around the city of London. They had to feed red meat to the conservatives in the suburbs who wanted a Berlin-like physical wall since only that gives them the reassurance of border control. Real control over people's movement however does not so much require these walls as it requires the technology. This is the one sphere where I think the U.S. is more advanced in creating a society of total surveillance. Perry, the Governor of Texas, has authorised putting cameras up on areas of the border that people commonly cross and plugged them in to the internet. So it has created virtual vigilantes. Anybody who wants can waste their time looking at a desert, and if you see a Mexican coming across it you can call a number to some department of the Texas state which will alert the border control.

So the internet gets to threaten freedom because of the way in which we can all surveil, oppress and jail each other: we are all prison guards now, watching each others' movements. This is a frightening idea and the right-wing loves it, having some role to play in the policing of immigration and society. Everyone wants to wear a badge in some sense.

In LA they recently put on digital screens on the freeways to give warnings about traffic, although we are still far behind Europe in that. They now use them for alerts on kidnaps etc. The problem with implementing a lot of this in the U.S. and in inner cities in particular is that it wouldn't survive for a day! They would have to in some way to arm, fortify and protect surveillance cameras. The degree of vandalism in American inner cities is so advanced and extensive... I once calculated the square footage of graffiti in LA and interviewed people cleaning up graffiti. One morning I got up and the inside of my mailbox had been tagged. When you have that many kids engaging with vandalism, graffiti etc. they will start putting up cameras but they are going to be broken and torn down. It might work well with the middle

class - it will work well at leafy suburbs of Santon or white parts of Johannesburg but when you start putting the surveillance cameras in the townships or the American ghettos, you will have to have a policeman standing in front of them each. This is one of the contradictions of surveillance society. CCTV is not nearly as advanced in the US as in Europe. People are more reassured by private police in the U.S.

Why aren't cameras being vandalised in London?

That would be one of my questions too. I think that we need to propagandise and fight for the idea of a universal insurrection against surveillance state, against the erosion of civil liberties. We need to encourage people and find every way possible in which to resist, subvert and destroy the apparatus of surveillance and control. Of course, millions of teenagers do that anyway. Kevin Lynch wrote a book on vandalism; he was very interested in vandalism as an urban process, in spontaneous vandalism of all sorts. He studied it in the seventies, partially to understand how architects could combat it and partially because he was interested in its logic. He thought that anything that involved people and the built environment, including destroying it, was a good thing. If you wanted to generate a theory of participatory architecture or urbanism, vandalism seemed to be the most common and popular form of participating in the built environment by revolting against its dehumanisation, in working class council estates in American inner cities and so on.

I think we need a strategy to support each other; we should vandalise and subvert the surveillance state and the middle class that supports it. Tearing down the armed response signs from peoples' lawns freaks them out... Not that the armed response is real or reliable, but people get immense reassurance from having the sign there. If you remove it they think that all forces might mobilise against them and that they might get killed the next day. I started off vandalising lawn jockeys - these are a phenomenon of American segregation and racism. They are black jockey figures put in the lawn like the pink flamingos they put there. They are popular amongst people who are nostalgic of the old racial order, when all blacks were servants or slaves. When I went back to L.A. in the late eighties I discovered that there were quite a few of these around houses in Beverly Hills. It is something to which all the creative energy of youth needs to be applied: to find ways in which to fight back and subvert the surveillance society. To your central question I have no answer to at all. I lived in London in the eighties, very

unhappy and poor, but had some great inspiring moments. I was down in Fleet Street at the battle of Fortress Murdoch, with the print workers battling the cops every night... Wonderful things. A lot of tremendous energy in the city. So I am appalled to come back here and see peoples' complaisance and complacency.

London is a place where so many people come through.... Migrants coming to work, students coming to study, a constant flux of people coming in and out. We were wondering if that has something to do with this complacency - or does it, on the other hand, provide in itself possibilities for resistance?

It does, though today immigrants are as radically vulnerable in London as they are in the U.S. I gave a talk the other night and tried to explain that it is hard to think of a time in the American history that immigrants (including legal ones) have been so vulnerable. The Bush Administration's position is that even legal immigrants have no real standing under the American Bill of Rights or Constitution. You do not have the protection of habeas corpus, Anglo-saxon liberty etc. Gigantic immigrant rights protests took place last year in the United States expressing people's existential anxiety, the recognition that they have got a right to stand. On the other hand, the logic of this in London is clear: More than New York, London is the ultimate playground of rich people. Russian billionaires come here, not to NYC. Everything is being done to reassure that this is the ultimate secure place to park your money. London has always played this role to some degree though it used to be considered that NYC was the ultimate place to go. London has been challenging this very aggressively, the irony being that this aggression is partially driven by Ken Livingstone's policies.

In your RIBA lecture you spoke of cities as the only viable solution for the future, when talking about the environment. Could you elaborate?

Inevitably, this will become a world in which at least two thirds of the population will live in cities. I wish I could believe in traditional Kropotkinite ideas of returning to mutual aid in the countryside... that's why I think we have to dust off this great conversation about alternative cities between socialists and anarchists roughly around the 1880s and the 1930s. Cities are the only way to square the circle between humanity's demand for equality and a decent standard of living in a sustainable planet. The substitute for ever going intensified private or individual consumption is the public luxury of the city. I am very much influenced by the constructivist ideas deriving from Russia in the early twenties. They were confronted

with the fact that Russia had no capacity to build very lavish housing for the working class, but they would compensate by creating the most wonderful, utopian public spaces. Every factory would have a great sports centre, a cinema or a library. Public space not only satisfies the same needs, it also produces and satisfies other ones. It is one thing to be alone at home with an infinity of pornography on the internet and quite a different thing to be young, in the plaza or the public space surrounded by people your own age and all the possibilities that brings along....

In essence, the city is the economy of scale: it produces the most sufficient relationship between humans and nature. It produces a public or social wealth comprising not only a substitute for private consumption or private wealth, but is also the basis for needs that cannot exist or be fulfilled under capitalism. If people had a choice between all the pornography you can ingest in your lifetime and flirting with people in an enormous bathhouse, what would they choose? That is the genius of the city. Patrick Geddes, the great urban thinker from Edinburgh and friend of Kropotkin's, was the first one to see that the dependency of the city and its vulnerable condition on its hinterland is watershed that urban density supported the preservation of open space and services the nature. He was the first one to think deeply about the politics of infrastructure and recycling, not exporting waste downstream, sustainability... To see that in some relationship to social justice. He is the one who went to India with the British Army asking about sanitation systems in the country. The Indians had solved their problems - they know what to do with their shit. You are the ones who've got the problem, as you want to dump it in the water! There is a direct connection between Geddes and Kropotkin and a whole, partially lost anarchist tradition thinking about self-organised urban space, self-governed cities and how cities work environmentally. There is no other possible solution: Trading carbon credits in markets will not save the earth. Building cities that are truly cities in the most profound sense will do so. Creating an equality of pleasure and public luxury will do so. And recognising that consumption has turned into a rampant disease that poisons us and our children.

In 1934 came an end to the discussion and free thinking about alternative urbanism ranging across the span from abandoning the cities and going back to mutual aid and the countryside to, at some cases, in the Soviet Union, visions of super-cities, hyper-cities. There is a hugely rich vain of creative utopian thought about urbanism that needs to recur. It is not just the product of thinkers and planners, projects and case studies by governments, but it is also about capturing the individual activity of urban dwellers and poor people, everyone.

(...) Talking about the provos in Amsterdam, the situationists etc... The problem is often creating use of urban space by avant-garde groups, people trying to reclaim and maintain traditional bohemias: refugees, squatters, artists... Inadvertently doing the work of redevelopers and real estate. In Los Angeles, despite tons of money thrown at the downtown (Los Angeles has one of the most inhuman downtowns in the world), the city never managed to gentrify it. The turning point was when my architecture students and starving artists willing to live side-by-side with homeless people started moving in the studio spaces there. They finally got to the point where they created cool places: restaurants and bars started to open, just like with the Lower East Side in NYC or Soho in London. Prices skyrocketed, these people were pushed out and the yuppies came in, and they were in turn replaced by even richer people. This is a real problem because when you get some creative network or community of young people trying to live in the city in a different manner they can unwillingly become foot soldiers.

Reformist politics has zero to say about this. There is absolutely no reformist government anywhere in the world that can deal with the serious and major issues of urban inequality, because it will not take on property values, land inflation etc. Until you start talking about confiscating the incriminating land value or socialising land or systems of limited equity in land, you cannot control the city, you cannot achieve any real equality in it. _

Mike Davis is professor of history at the University of California, Irvine, and the author of, amongst others, "City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles" (1990), "Dead Cities, And Other Tales" (2003) and most recently, "Buda's Wagon: A Brief History of the Car Bomb" (2007). The text above is a short excerpt from the interview he kindly gave to us on the 23d of February in London.

Airportising the City:
Images of Flying Yuppies and Total Spatial Control

Antonis V, antonymous@riseup.net

1. I'm at work. Why I'm at work and the exact nature of my employment is a long, painful and largely irrelevant story; the important point here is this: My yuppie co-worker moans about the time length of his daily commute, apparently exceeding two hours in each direction. He is particularly bitter about the "outrageous" lack of a "decent connection" between Fenchurch Street and Bank stations, between which he claims to change trains at least three times, effectively adding 35-40 minutes to his journey. Fenchurch Street is approximately seven hundred meters away from Bank station, a distance walked in a maximum of ten minutes.

2. Walking up Kingsland Road in Hackney in North-East London, past the Dalston Kingsland Silverlink station. To your right is Hackney in all of its glory – buzzing streets, people shouting, cars honking and, in a citywide exclusive, posters on the walls. You would be forgiven to momentarily think you are not in London, UK but some place further East. A glance to a narrow alleyway on your left will set the record straight: from within it emerges the monstrous face of gentrification. Gillette "Square" is the latest in a series of developments ripping out alive public space, leaving urban void across the capital. The square is located in Hackney but in terms of its aesthetics for all one knows it's stadium-like floodlights could be shinning the ground between the towers of Canary Wharf. Should he choose a reasonable route to get there, my confused co-worker would reach Gillette Square from Canary Wharf in 30-40 minutes, which is how much it takes him to "commute" between locations seven hundred meters apart. For him, Gillette Square *is* in Canary Wharf.

Commuting space evaporates in the mind of the yuppie, it becomes non-space, dead space - a hurdle in the effort to get from A to B. When in motion s/he is as much in interaction with the immediate surroundings as when in an aircraft. The airportization of intra-urban mobility comes as a natural evolution of segregation: When there are no dividing lines left to draw, too many no-go zones, the whole city except for the commuting route to be followed becomes a no-go zone. In the mind of the yuppie the map of the meta-segregated city is deducted to a spider web; dots joined together by increasingly 'strategic' transport links. In 2007, the ultimate symbol of London must be *its Underground map.*

Whenever the gentrifying hordes redirect from their safe pathways to 'explore' unknown urban areas they act as a colonising force. Take the example of the long-lost, trendy area of Hoxton in South Hackney and the adjacent traditionally working class area of Haggerston. You can tell that such colonisation is about to take place when estate agents start referring to Haggerston as "East Hoxton". They are soon to launch their attack and Gillete Squares come handy as operating bases, projections of the financial sky scrappers of Canary Wharf (the 'fatherland') and constant reminders of the fact that these are only 30 minutes away. In colonial times, the colonized lands had to abide to the metropolis, literally the mother city. The post-colonial metropolis has internalised the process: The ruler's flag is replaced by the organic deli but the message remains the same: *we are finally here, and we are now in control.*

3. Dubai City, United Arab Emirates. How I got here and what I am up to is a long, painful and largely irrelevant story. In a hotel bar scene straight out of a sci-fi movie a Filipino cover band entertains what must be one of the most ethnically diverse and segregated clientèles in the world. The expatriate standing by the bar remains silent for a
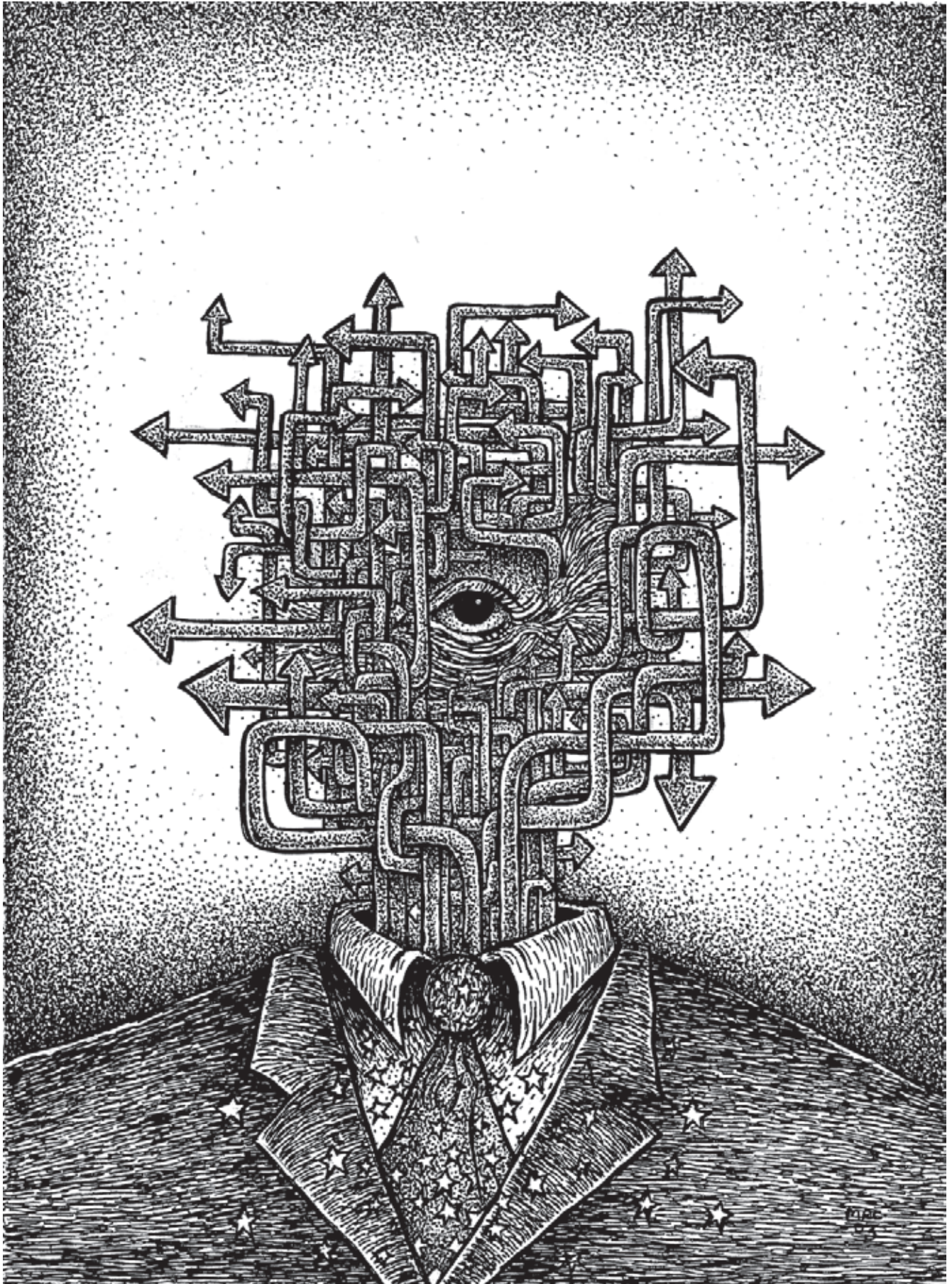
moment. "The worst thing about Dubai? It has to be rush-hour traffic jams at the Seikh Zayed Road, for sure". You wonder if the perpetual flux of state-controlled slave labour or the horrific environmental damage caused by colossal urban projects with skyscrapers springing up literally overnight even cross his mind. And then... "Oh and another thing. Book your flight a few days too late and your trip back home could cost you a fortune". *'Home'*, in this case, is the USA and though Emirates Airlines are on their course to achieving their aim of directly connecting Dubai to every major city in the world (1), my Dubai 'friend' has every reason to feel left out when compared to his London counterparts. The "Ryanair effect" means that already a few thousand Londoners work their nine-to-fives in the City from Monday to Friday before flying "home" for the weekend. "Home" in their case be anywhere from Hamburg to a seaside property in Ibiza. Thanks to its new unlikely suburbs London has finally acquired its long sought opening to a sea - not to the North Sea alas but *the Mediterranean*.

4. Back in London. Posters in the train from the airport could have been dictated to the advertisers by your parents: "Keep your music down"; "Don't eat smelly food". Show some respect, kid: your fellow passenger is not an urban dweller. No experiences, no interaction should take place between commuters. Traversed space and spent time are no more than a necessary evil. The authorities will step in to escort the passengers to safety. Do not drink, do not smoke, do not eat smelly food, do not listen to your music too loud. Transport for London's official advertising policy dictates that no 'controversial' material is to be at display: should it receive any complaints for an advertisement, TFL will promptly exclude this from running in the future. The urban experience has to be purified and neutralised by all means and costs; passengers are to remain forever numb.

5. You walk out of the underground station, mechanically touching your oyster travel card on the yellow reader. You float on an ocean of beeps, each of them adding yet another tiny bit of information to Transport for London's ever-expanding database, registering the details of yet another trip. If intra-urban mobility is airportised the oyster card is our new passport. The card will take commuters from A to B simultaneously facilitating the retreat of such 'respectable' crowds from the street. The latter turn into metaghettos, emptying out street level space and allowing for a vicious attack on the essentially chaotic and anarchic urban spirit: Hit us with a SOCPA (page 29)

and no-one will even be there to see; everyone is too busy hopping on and off trains a few meters underground. But the battle for urban and spatial freedom can only take place at the most disputed territory of all, the road (see Reclaim the Roads, page 26). Throw away your oyster card and hop off that tube train: Once again, I'll see you on the streets._

1 Davis, M. (2006): "Fear and Money in Dubai", New Left Review 41

Disneyworld Company

Jean Baudrillard (July 29 1929 - March 6 2007)

In the early 80s, when the metallurgical industry in the Lorraine region entered its final crisis, the public powers had the idea to make up for this collapse by creating a European leisure zone, an "intelligent" theme park which could jumpstart the economy of the region. This park was called Smurfland. The managing director of the dead metallurgy naturally became the manager of the theme park, and the unemployed workers were rehired as "smurfmen" in the context of this new Smurfland. Unfortunately, the park itself, for several reasons, had to be closed, and the former factory workers turned "smurfmen" once again found themselves on the dole. It is a somber destiny which, after making them the real victims of the job market, transformed them into the ghostly workers of leisure time, and finally turned them into the unemployed of both.

But Smurfland was only a miniature universe. The Disney enterprise is much bigger. To illustrate, it should be known that Disney "Unlimited," having taken over one of the major US television networks, is about to purchase 42nd Street in New York, the "hot" section of 42nd Street, to transform it into an erotic theme park, with the intention of changing hardly anything of the street itself. The idea would be simply to transform, in situ, one of the high centers of pornography into a branch of Disney World. Transforming the pornographers and the prostitutes, like the factory workers in Smurfland, into extras [figurants] in their own world, metamorphosed into identical figures, museumified, disneyfied. By the way, do you know how General Schwarzkopf, the great Gulf War strategist, celebrated his victory? He had a huge party at Disney World. These festivities in the palace of the imaginary were a worthy conclusion to such a virtual war.

But the Disney enterprise goes beyond the imaginary. Disney, the precursor, the grand initiator of the imaginary as virtual reality, is now in the process of capturing all the real world to integrate it into its synthetic universe, in the form of a vast "reality show" where reality itself becomes a spectacle [vient se donner en spectacle], where the real becomes a theme park. The transfusion of the real is like a blood transfusion, except that here it is a transfusion of real blood into the exsanguine universe of virtuality. After the prostitution of the imaginary, here is now the hallucination of the real in its ideal and simplified version.

At Disney World in Orlando, they are even building an identical replica of the Los Angeles Disneyland, as a sort of historical attraction to the second degree, a simulacrum to the second power. It is the same thing that CNN did with the Gulf War: a prototypical event which did not take place, because it took place in real time, in CNN's instantaneous mode. Today, Disney could easily revisit the Gulf War as a worldwide show. The Red Army choirs have already celebrated Christmas at Euro Disney. Everything is possible, and everything is recyclable in the polymorphous universe of virtuality. Everything can be bought over. There is no reason why Disney would not take over the human genome, which, by the way, is already being resequenced, to turn it into a genetic show. In the end [au fond], they would cryogenize the entire planet, just like Walt Disney himself who decided to be cryogenized in a nitrogen solution, waiting for some kind of resurrection in the real world. But there is no real world anymore, not even for Walt Disney. If one day he wakes up, he'll no doubt have the biggest surprise of his life. Meanwhile, from the bottom of his nitrogen solution he continues to colonize the world - both the imaginary and the real - in the spectral universe of virtual reality, inside which we all have become extras [figurants]. The difference is that when we put on our digital suits, plug in our sensorial captors, or press the keys of our virtual reality arcade, we enter live spectrality whereas Disney, the genial anticipator, has entered the virtual reality of death.

The New World Order is in a Disney mode. But his employees we see how the manner

Disney is not alone in this mode of cannibalistic attraction. We saw Benetton with his commercial campaigns, trying to recuperate the human drama of the news (AIDS, Bosnia, poverty, apartheid) by transfusing reality into a New Mediatic Figuration (a place where suffering and commiseration end in a mode of interactive resonance). The virtual takes over the real as it appears, and then replicates it without any modification [le recrache tel quel], in a pret-a-porter (ready-to-wear) fashion.

If this operation can be so successful in creating a universal fascination with only a tint of moral disapproval, it is because reality itself, the world itself, with its frenzy of cloning has already been transformed into an interactive performance, some kind of Lunapark for ideologies, technologies, works, knowledge, death, and even destruction. All this is likely to be cloned and resurrected in a juvenile museum of Imagination or a virtual museum of Information.

Similarly, it is useless to keep searching for computer viruses since we are all caught in a viral chain of networks anyway. Information itself has become viral; perhaps not sexually transmissible yet, but much more powerful through its numerical propagation.

And so it does not take much work for Disney to scoop up reality, such as it is. "Spectacular Inc.," as Guy Debord would say. But we are no longer in a society of spectacle, which itself has become a spectacular concept. It is no longer the contagion of spectacle that alters reality, but rather the contagion of virtuality that erases the spectacle. Disneyland still belonged to the order of the spectacle and of folklore, with its effects of entertainment [distraction] and distanciation [distance]. Disney World and its tentacular extension is a generalized metastasis, a cloning of the world and of our mental universe, not in the imaginary but in a viral and virtual mode. We are no longer alienated and passive spectators but interactive extras [figurants interactifs]; we are the meek lyophilized members of this huge "reality show." It is no longer a spectacular logic of alienation but a spectral logic of disincarnation; no longer a fantastic logic of diversion, but a corpuscular logic of transfusion and transubstantiation of all our cells; an enterprise of radical deterrence of the world from the inside and no longer from outside, similar to the quasi-nostalgic universe of capitalistic reality today. Being an extra [figurant] in virtual reality is no longer being an actor or a spectator. It is to be out of the scene [hors-scene], to be obscene.

Disney wins at yet another level. It is not only interested in erasing the real by turning it into a three-dimensional virtual image with no depth, but it also seeks to erase time by synchronizing all the periods, all the cultures, in a single traveling motion, by juxtaposing them in a single scenario. Thus, it marks the beginning of real, punctual and unidimensional time, which is also without depth. No present, no past, no future, but an immediate synchronism of all the places and all the periods in a single atemporal virtuality. Lapse or collapse of time: that's properly speaking what the fourth dimension [la quatrieme dimension] is about. It is the dimension of the virtual, of real time; a dimension which, far from adding to the others, erases them all. And so it has been said that, in a century or in a millennium, gladiator movies will be watched as if they were authentic Roman movies, dating back to the era of the Roman empire, as real documentaries on Ancient Rome; that in the John Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, a pastiche of a Pompeian villa, will be confused, in an anachronistic manner, with a villa of the third century B.C. (including the pieces inside from Rembrandt, Fra Angelico, everything confused in a single crush of time); that the celebration of the French Revolution in Los Angeles in 1989 will retrospectively be confused with the real revolutionary event. Disney realizes de facto such an atemporal utopia by producing all the events, past or future, on simultaneous screens, and by inexorably mixing all the sequences as they would or will appear to a different civilization than ours. But it is already ours. It is more and more difficult for us to imagine the real, History, the depth of time, or three-dimensional space, just as before it was difficult, from our real world perspective, to imagine a virtual universe or the fourth dimension [la quatrieme dimension]. _

This is a translation of Jean Baudrillard's "Disneyworld Company", published on March 4, 1996 in the Parisian newspaper, Liberation.

Translated by Francois Debrix. Francois Debrix is a Ph.D. candidate in Political Theory and International Relations at Purdue University.
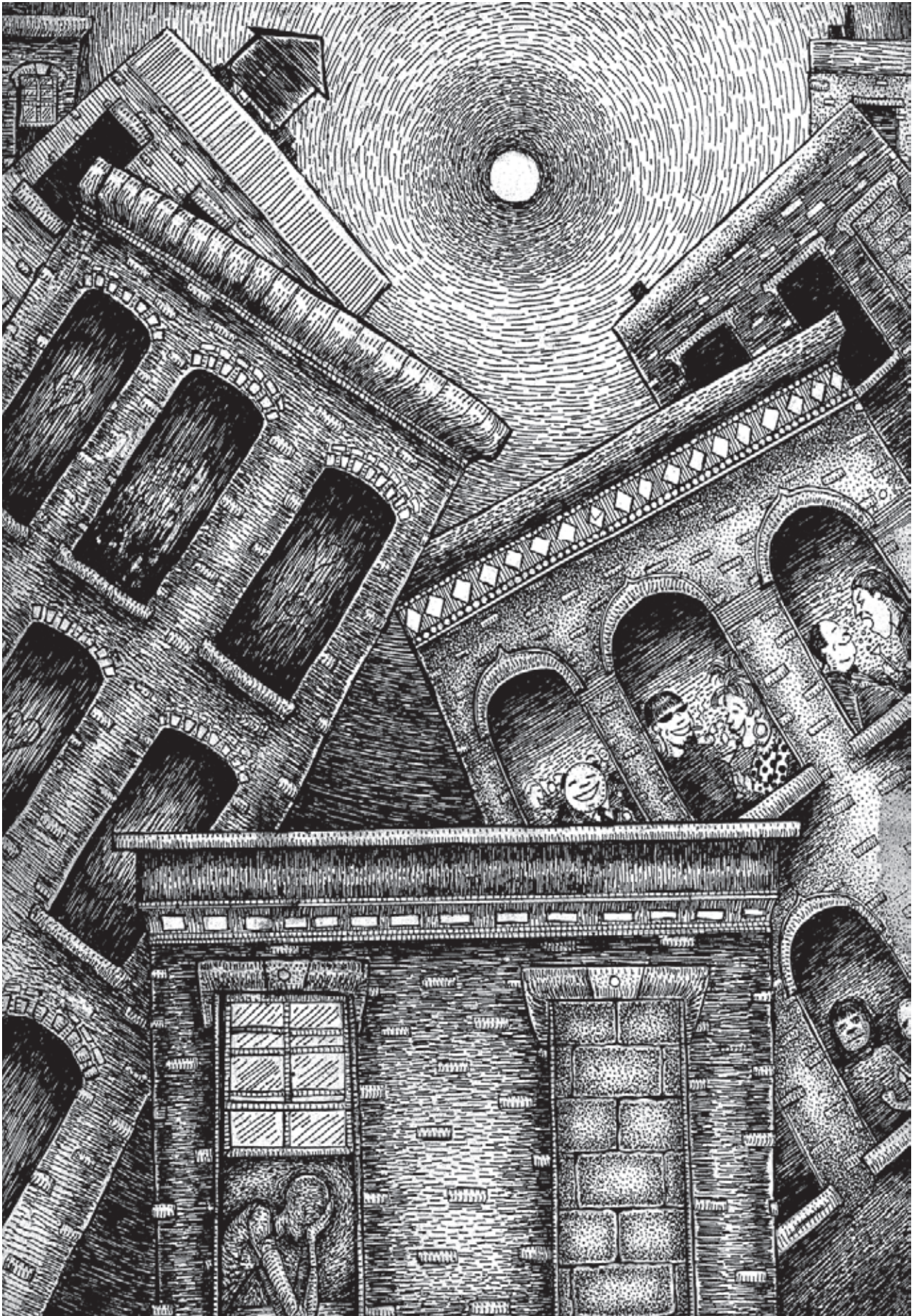
"This place is finished, as it was. What matters from now on is not the fields, not the mountains, but the road. There'll be no village, as a place on its own. There'll just be a name you pass through, houses along the road. And that's where you'll be living, mind. On a roadside"

'Border Country': 242, cited in David Harvey 1996: 30-31

"The dictatorship of the car –model product of the early period of consumption affluence- is being written on the landscape with the dominance of the national roads, which mangle the old centres and call for a larger dispersion.'

Guy Debord, 'The Society of the Spectacle': thesis 174

Reclaim the Roads

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The road is a beautiful and controversial thing; it brings people and things and at the same time takes them away. Roads connect and disconnect, and determine the landscapes. You never know where a road starts and where it finishes and although there is always a mania from diverse authorities to produce them and control them, uncontrolled situations on the roads are de facto. How many times has someone crossed the road when there was no zebra crossing? How many times has a driver or pedestrian ignored the orange or red light? A cyclist delayed an entire bus? Or a car crash occurs? How many times have you met accidentally a friend on a road?

The processes of urbanization and industrialization theorize roads as the absolutely necessary element; and states, or other authoritative entities, seem to like both of them as indicators of their progress and 'civilization level', hence they take the responsibility to build the roads. There are two main reasons for the road construction, a practical one and a theoretic one. The practical reason is that the authorities want to ensure the easiest possible movement of capital, commodities, and of labour power (the latter called 'human beings' according to other perspectives). The theoretical

or ideological reason for the production of the roads is that roads are a very effective way for the state to establish its control into the society. Without state we cannot have road projects. Then what will happen to us without roads now that we bought a new car?

Additionally, people embed a blurred idea of their right to freedom of movement; their freedom of movement is taking place within a controlled network, a controlled environment and landscape. But at the end roads are such controlled spaces that actually they cancel the freedom of movement. You cannot move around the city from roof to roof, from backyard to backyard, or on a horse. Neither can you walk down the middle of the London Ring road; if you walk you do it on the pavement, if you drive you do it on the prescribed lane, the entire time obeying the traffic police. Further, if you cycle you die because cycling is for the time-wasters. If you cycle it means that probably you do not work, hence you do not produce, and you do not have strict timetables or a lot of deadlines, you do not need to be fast and effective. Secondly, cycling is almost free because you pay no petrol or oil, no ticket, no tolls, no congestion fees, no engineering service, tyres and vehicle property

taxes; you do not register and you have no number plate in order to be written on the records. In other words, the state which owns the roads and dictates their use does not like it you if you do not think in terms of engines.

Roads are an old thing as old as cities and somtimes even older. The very first hunters-gatherers were nomads and had 'road' routes that they followed without cars. Roads exist much before engines and even before the wheel. Therefore, why is the road defined in reference to wheels and engines? Some people define roads as the thing that they protest on, paint on, walk on in the late night when there are no cars and the place where they cycle. At the end of the day the etymology of the road is from the Old English 'rad' which is associated with riding. Clealy, you can ride things without engines and even without wheels!

State is afraid of the roads, which is why is trying to control them as much as possible. State is afraid of them because they are public space,

everyone who uses them in any way can identify herself or himself with roads. Hence, consciously or subconsciously to define them in different ways is a semi-radical activity, threatening for the authorities. The rules intend to alienate us from our roads, we may not produce them, but we use them, they are a part of us. In addition roads are very vulnerable to sabotage; if you block a road you can seriously block a great part of the dominant system.

The body metaphor for roads as 'arteries' is not accidental, blocking a road is like blocking an artery, like cutting off circulation of the artery which brings blood into the brain. Hence, authoritative mechanisms need the roads for establishing control and for their practical utilities, and on the other hand they are also scared of the responsibility and the trouble that their dependency on the roads may provoke. They are threatened by the chaotic ontology of the road and by possibility that they can not control it. _
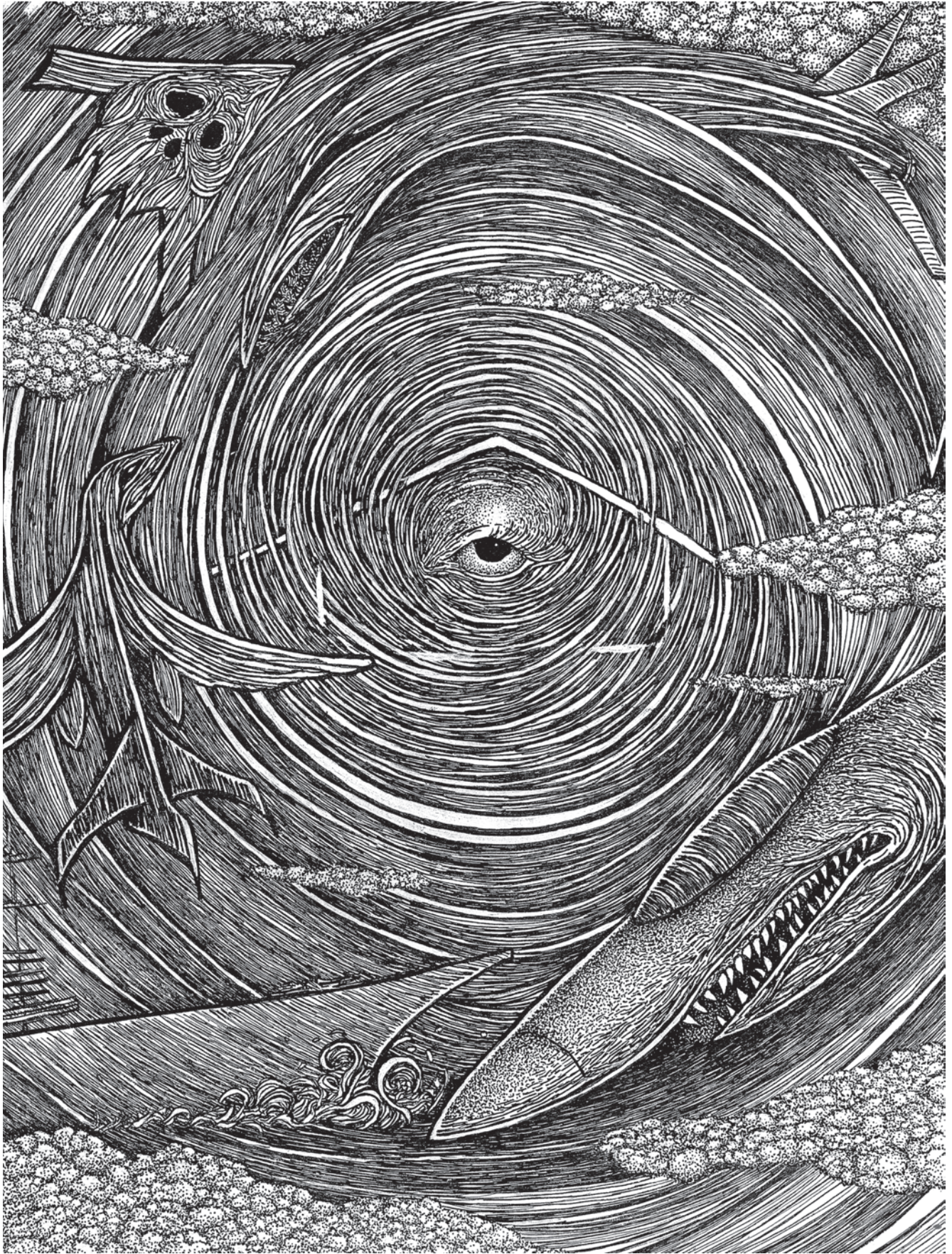
SOCPA
The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005

Rikki, rikkiindymedia@googlemail.com

What does the phrase "Serious Organised Crime" conjure up in your mind? Violent murder, drug gangs, and protection rackets perhaps? High-level fraud and corruption, corporate tax evasion and dodgy arms deals maybe? Think anti-social behaviour, and peaceful protest, and you'll be on the right lines. SOCPA is a long document, setting up the 'Serious Organised Crime Agency' but also introducing clauses that target protesters in this country in various ways. Section 125 covers harassment (used on animal rights protestors), Sections 128-131 deal with military bases (with serious penalties on trespassers) and Sections 132-138 outlaw "unauthorised" demonstrations roughly 1 kilometre around Parliament.

In 2001, Brian Haw began a vigil in Parliament Square in response to the years of child-murdering sanctions against Iraq. Despite many legal challenges, his protest site grew ever larger.

SOCPA created a new legal basis with which to remove him. Left-wing MP John McDonnell told me "This was a targeted attempt to remove demonstrators from outside Parliament itself. In debates on a number of occasions there were laughable instances brought forward that we'd have terrorists hiding behind Brian Haw's placards and that's why the police were given control over the size of the placards. But the issue wasn't about security, it was that they didn't like being reminded of the implications of their decision on Iraq."

Anyone demonstrating within the zone must notify the police at least six days before (in emergencies not less than 24 hours) and the "Commissioner must authorise" but he may impose conditions. Brian spotted a legal flaw. As his demo had started in 2001, he'd need a time machine to comply. Winning his argument in court, on August 1st 2005, Brian became the ONLY person in Britain immune from the new law.

On that warm summer's afternoon, 200 people gathered outside Parliament and used a megaphone in defiance of the Act. Police wandered around handing out warning leaflets and were heard talking about a quota of arrests, needing six. In court the following January, we learnt police had negotiated with Stop the War Coalition organizers that day, but none were arrested or stood trial.

SOCPA has been continually challenged by creative campaigners. At Sunday campaigning picnics, an amusing pattern emerged, as Community Support Officers called police, then constables and sergeants called superiors. Decisions were finally taken by Chief Inspectors - a first sign that this was no ordinary law and had a clearly political dimension. Over the months, various officials, including GLA-hired heritage wardens (a particular source of amusement), puzzled over blank white banners, iced cakes with political slogans, and 'Peace' flags, as they tried to work out whether illegal protests were occuring. Mark Barrett was arrested for taking part in what was described by the picnickers as a "banner-making workshop" - police pounced on him as he tried on one of the small neck-hung banners he'd created.

On a drizzly October morning, Milan Rai and Maya Evans took part in a worldwide commemoration, naming some of the dead Iraqi civilians and British soldiers. Police moved in, gave them a warning and then arrested them both. Maya's December trial was the first SOCPA conviction, and her face graced the front page of the Daily Mail which asked what had happened to freedom. Indeed!

A huge 'critical mass' of over 1000 cyclists

forced police to back down over attempts to enforce SOCPA on them, and a High Court challenge asserted their right to choose their own route, so Parliament Square and Downing Street still remain common stopping points.It became ever clearer that political decisions were being made. Whenever media was involved, the police would back off. Notable examples were the visit of American activist Cindy Sheehan, and a carol-singing evening with Brian Haw in the Square. On both occasions, press were present, as well as high-profile visitors. No arrests or interference occurred despite appreciable numbers. In January, an unauthorised 'naming the dead' ceremony (6 months after the July bombings) was left untroubled while the media watched.

But Barbara Tucker stood alone outside Parliament with her banner "I am not the seriously organised criminal", and was an easy target for the police who arrested her, beginning a campaign of intimidation and harassment that continues to this day. She has been 'reported for possible summons' nearly a hundred times, has been badly assaulted on several occasions, and charged with various spurious offences – police even tried to section her under the Mental Health Act. Despite all this, there's been no sensible trial against her and she is still innocent of any crime, but currently is under bail conditions that ban her from the SOCPA zone.

In May 2006, three judges, apparently believing in time travel, brought Brian's display under police control. Charing Cross Superintendent Peter Terry devised some conditions restricting Brian's demo to 3 metres in length and then launched a night raid and removed most of his site. This January a court judged that this had been unlawful. The Act gives the power of authorisation to the 'Commissioner', and despite a dodgy undated letter delegating this role to Terry, the court ruled no right to delegate. Brian was immediately presented with new 'lawful' conditions, but strangely, Terry has continued flouting the law and still often 'authorises' demos even though he knows he is powerless to do so.

So far, legal challenges against the law have failed. The Human Rights Act allows a government to balance the needs for freedom against the need to protect the workings of parliament and 'democracy'. The Act says that the Commissioner MUST authorise, so the requirement to notify is not seen in law as sufficient interference with human rights. A November High Court challenge failed. Next month sees a challenge to the 24 hours notice aspect. Last year saw an urgent demo outside Downing Street after Jenin prison was suddenly handed over to Israel. There was a pressing need to protest within 24 hours. It is possible that this aspect of the law might be successfully challenged in terms of human rights.

Another challenge comes from within Westminster. Baroness Sue Miller was observing the farce of more than 800 police officers using SOCPA to control and disperse a group of no more than 150 anti-war protesters at the 'Sack Parliament' demo last October. She decided to introduce a Repeal Act, which has now had its second reading. Brian's Parliament Square campaign is using this as a focus in their battle to remove the SOCPA laws (www.repeal-socpa.info).

Milan Rai and Maya Evans are both currently charged as organisers of a 'Remember Fallujah – Naming The Dead' event, and will appear in court next month. As they both have 'previous' it is quite possible they will face prison if found guilty. At least, they could receive massive fines which they are unlikely to pay on principle, so ending up behind bars on that basis. Maybe this might wake up a public campaign to remove these restrictions?

Otherwise this law will continue to succeed in hampering hard-earnt freedoms. In practice, anyone from outside London is dissuaded from protesting, and serial protesters here are targeted and harassed off the streets. With the right to impose and change conditions on the ground, police can make any protest virtually impotent, and anyone wanting to hold a protest now has their name added to a police database. This is political, divisive, and repressive. We must find ways to fight it, to make it unworkable, and ultimately to have it repealed.

More info, history and current campaigning at http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2006/12/358676.html

In Conversation with Bill Brown
from New York City's Surveillance Camera Players

scp@notbored.org

Bill Brown is a member of the New York City Surveillance Camera Players. The SCP are an anti-surveillance activist group that has been organising, amongst others, walking tours of cameras in NYC and coordinated the third international day of action against video surveillance on the 19th and 20th of March 2006. "We Know You Are Watching, The Surveillance Camera Players 1996-2006", was recently published by the Factory School. More at http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html

The SCP seem to be an exception to the rule that U.S. radical groups are not very well known outside the U.S. - why?

Because we haven't been caught by typical hang-up setups that effect the left scene and anarchists, the inability to really understand the richness of what the media can mean. I am a very fierce media critic and find that the media lies consistently; nevertheless they are not a monolith and you can exploit cracks, inconsistencies and contradictions within them. Other groups in the U.S. either ignore the media all together or depend upon them completely. So either way their fortunes rise or fall with media attention. The only reason that the SCP get involved with the media and have done so successfully is that surveillance is media. You are inextricably involved in the media by definition of being interested in surveillance cameras. It would be impossible to not be involved with them at some level simply by being involved with surveillance cameras, which are a media. They just aren't a public media or an artistic media but they are irreducibly mediatic or theatrical. Other campaigns in NYC, whether anarchist or radical, do not begin by examining the roots of their problem nearly as clearly or the problems they examine are too broad. In other words, there is a knee-jerk response without thinking that the media does not necessarily know what it's doing at all times and it could therefore report things that other parts of the media think should better be suppressed. And they report things now without knowing that they would have better been suppressed ten years from

now. The media is not nearly as conniving, sophisticated and in control as we think it is. From what I've seen behind the scenes, it comes out looking so well just because it is technically flash. But these people are not in full control of what they are doing... they do loose control in occasion.

Would this same remark go beyond the media to include other forms of power?

Absolutely. Whether it is police power in the street, with their tactics or their sense of organization for protecting a summit, it is generally easier to involve an enemy that is ruthless and highly organized than it is to realize that this enemy is actually very splintered and fragmented. This takes place not just in the media but in armies, actions, political actions, police's actions, financial actions: everything that they are not fully in control of their technical means, while there is a fantasy that they are.

Why is it a group like the SCP happened in NYC? Does it take the toughest forms of repression for such a brilliant anti-repression practice to come out?

I think so. Surveillance is not an issue that unites other parts of the country. There are some parts of the country that either have no surveillance cameras or have no concern about their uses. It happens to work very well in NYC because of its large amount of cameras. It is also very involved in the federal and international government, therefore there are federal and international cameras here. And the news media is based here. The great weakness of the news media is that they need to fill their content 24/7. In the moments when they are stretched thin they might put something on the air that in their better judgement would probably keep off the air. So here in New York a number of things overlap: Surveillance, growth and property, military actions and the news media. The SCP could not function at these levels of success in any other city. There wouldn't be sufficient numbers of cameras, sufficient numbers of them connecting with the police and the military and there just wouldn't be enough media to make it worthwhile to do such a thing.
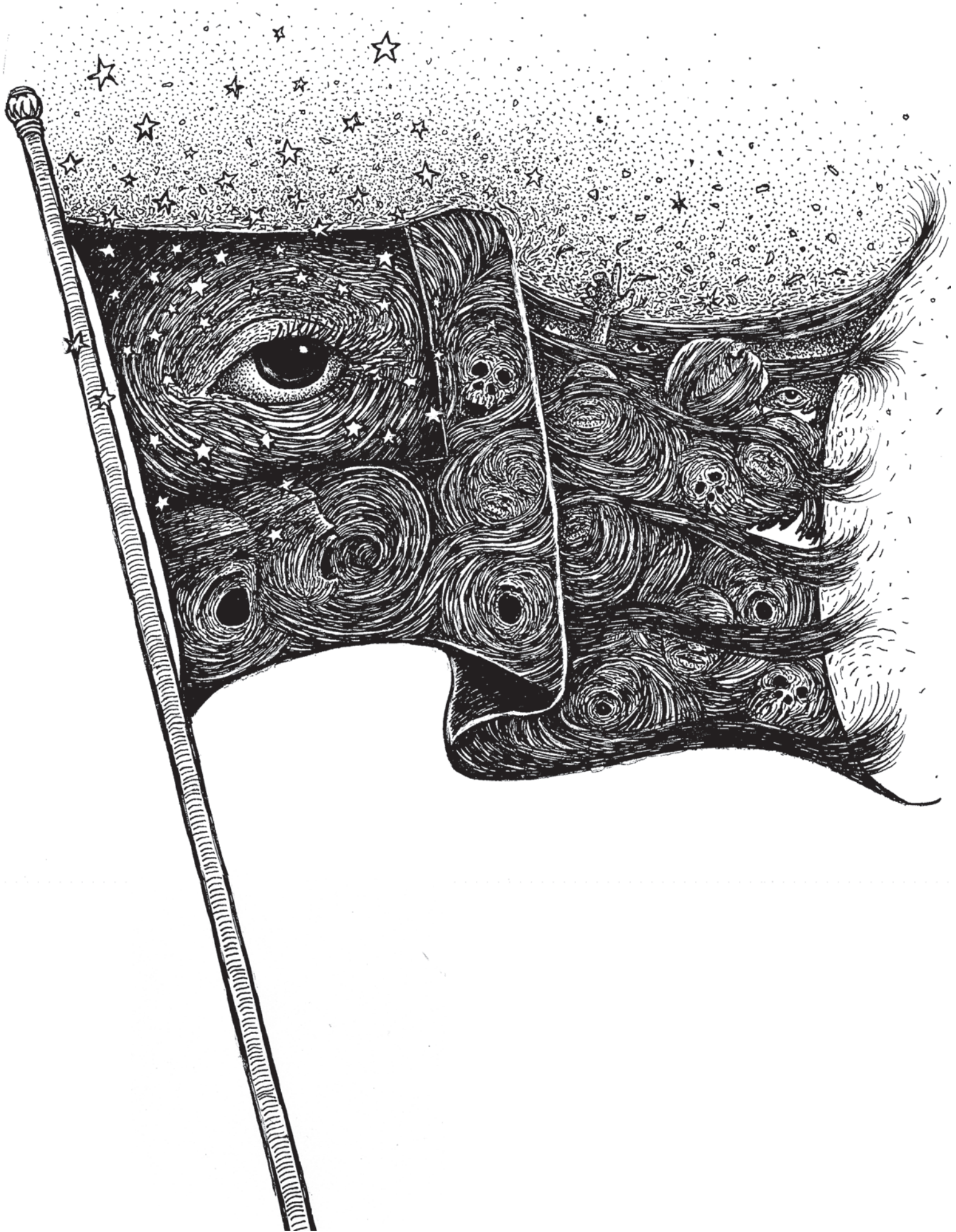
Ultimately the SCP use the media against itself.

Why didn't a group like the SCP happen in London, a city with features very similar to those characterising New York City?

People in London and elsewhere in the UK told me "it's too late, mate". They understood the cleverness of performing against the cameras, using the media against itself. That we just use surveillance cameras against themselves and engage in a war for the control of their images. People in England told me that this is a great idea but comes ten years too late. The surveillance camera players concept works best where cameras are freshly installed. When they are deeply ingrained as in England, the tactic is obsolete: it's then necessary to burn the fucking things. But in places like Turkey, Greece, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany... places where cameras are just going up, a negative public response is stronger. The public opinion there has much more of a role to play than it does in England. In the U.S. or in England the cameras have been up for a long time. Therefore the types of tactics that the SCP use aren't necessarily as effective as in a country where the subject is brand new and the theatrical public relations aspect of it becomes very powerful.

But at the same time in countries with freshly installed cameras, burning them down is easier. In Greece, people often burn down cameras and get some public support for doing so. A few days ago Athens lawyers' association made a statement, demanding that the cameras come down and expressing its solidarity to those who destroy them...

Yes, I saw the story...which is unique. And calls marking a change in how we approach the international day of action next year: by not distancing ourselves from violent forms of protest against the cameras. This has been a very important issue that has taken years to be able to think about. The cutting edge movement against surveillance cameras in Turkey, for example, is not yet destroying cameras; it is simply performing against them, mapping them, raising the subject. In other countries more dramatic action is called for. But for example in the American environment if you were destroying cameras people would see you as a reason for putting more cameras up: you're just another violent activist. While in Greece that switch is not capable, because the cameras are so new and fresh.

One group in France petitioned the mayor asking him to bring down the cameras. I can understand the need for diversity of tactics, but to what extent? If you had a group petitioning for better control of the cameras would you consider it part of the international day of action?

I would not... Over the world there are different ways of protesting. The French network did indeed have a petition sent to various mayors of France. It was very clever in its way though I found it openly reformist. It was admitting that mayors have power, which I don't think they do. It was attempting to draw a distinction between the mayors of these cities and transnational capital by saying that the mayors are people with faces and names; that they come from communities, that they might actually like their communities etc. Trying to say that our problem is not with the government but with transnational capital. It was a fairly clever strategy to divide parts of of the ruling class from each other -the mayors from the federalists- but at the same time they did admit that the mayors have power. I wouldn't be able to support such an action in the same sense that I am not able to support an action that would call for simply registering the cameras, regulating them and allowing them to stay in place. It seems to me that if we are going to get the government involved at all it should be to rule that the cameras shouldn't exist. Ultimately they should come down until such time that their use can be confined.

And finally, the eternal dividing question in our movement, on violence and non-violence...

There is plenty of violence in standing there with certain signs; you're doing violence to the ideology or the respect of the watchers. In Munich there's a law saying that you can't give the finger to a camera because you are showing personal disrespect for the camera operator. In this Munich law it isn't symbolic protest, it's very much a direct threat against the watcher. There is a very violent aspect in simple performances. It's legally accepted violence; it's not breaking the camera, but you are really breaking that person's authority. The charm of the SCP is in that it has balanced the two extremes. It never got involved speaking to politicians, never humbled itself to be able to speak to them. On the other hand it has not done the reverse, which is to break cameras. It's managed to be active in this ground between typical bourgeois leftism and typical anarchism which is more direct action without the theory: it's managed to dance between the two fairly successfully.

The Cancer Cells

in Solidarity: Greek style   06/02/07

70 DAYS ON HUNGER STRIKE: WE'LL NEVER FORGET, NEVER FORGIVE!

By Edd 'Last Hours' edd@rnzine.co.uk

The Cancer Cells

Sack Parliament? In this city?!?   9/10/06

Panel 1: So you were arrested for being in the square then? / Sort of!

Panel 2: Apparently they had a bunch of photos of me showing up late to some meeting they think happened

Panel 3: Wait! **WAIT!** Cops take photos outside your meetings / And you don't throw bricks at them? / If only!

Panel 4: So anyhow most people had been turned away & told they'd be nicked if they had the audacity to protest against the opening of parliament

Panel 5: A bunch of us sneaked through though. Still I have no idea what I thought we could do at that point / ... But yeah, I was there less than 5 minutes

Panel 6: A bunch of people tried to take the road but failed / Then I ran away & got nabbed / Then I spent 12 hours in a police cell innit...

For more information check – www.indymedia.org.uk – right!

By Edd 'Last Hours' edd@rnzine.co.uk

A CALL TO ATTACK AND BLOCK CAPITALISM
## Towards an inventive strategy

In the cycle of recent counter summit mobilisations we can see that each time we've won its because we invented some new tactics rather than reproducing a ritualised staged confrontation. For example, in Seattle in 1999 the capitalists did not expect a large physical mobilisation of people trying to shut their meeting down. In Genoa in 2001 they expected the red zone to be the focus of action and yet we were elsewhere. During the G8 2003, the commercial centre of Geneva could be set on fi re, blitzed without anyone being caught because we had the element of surprise. Since Genoa we have had few successes, mainly because we were pursuing another Genoa whilst the police organised to prevent that. Thessaloniki, St Petersburg, Gleneagles and others were arguably failures in terms of sabotaging capital because they were repeats of similar centralised spectacles. However they were powerful events in terms of networking and building relationships between disparate people and groups in struggle. But the question is who blocks who If we organise a large mobilisation in one place then the strategy of the state/capital is clear. They also mobilise there. Through the nature of capital they always have greater resources than we do. The conditions of political struggle have also changed; in many situations night time sabotage has become safer than open demonstration on the streets. Terrorism is the new spectacle of capital, the currency of fear is their means to legislate against, divide and imprison us. We make their work easier if we allow them to label us by our mobilisation in one place. Today effective struggle against capital means blocking the economy. The insurgents in Algeria, the piqueteros in Argentina, the anti CPE movement in France have in common this focus: attack on circulation of capital by all means. Therefore we would argue that by blocking the economy through attacking infrastructure and the fl ow of capital across the world we open the doors to an insurrection. There have been many criticisms of counter summits, notably the idea that they are purely about spectacle. This ignores the vast power that new encounters and networking hold for inspiring new struggle. We believe that the power of convergence should not be lost but focused instead on conspiracy, sharing experiences, and skills. Literally speaking, this means that we would dissociate convergence with actions because it is harder to share ideas under the repression that follows acts of sabotage. Hitting where it hurts is easier when they are not watching you. There is a value in meeting and sharing ideas prior to and after an event. This should be a focus of centralised organisation as it has a value in its own right. We need opportunities to strategise. We are committed to transnational acts of sabotage but we need to learn ways of theoretically discussing them as the police are in all our meetings. Therefore we propose, that in Germany in 2007 the convergences are for planning and strategising for transnational counter summit actions and analysis of their outcomes. The target should not be Heiligendamm but the global economy. Meaning that, there are large international gatherings before and after direct actions against the G8 summit that allow us the space to conspire and be inspired together without providing the excuse for massive repression. We call for actions to take place on the three days of the summit (6th-8th June 2007) across the world with the aim of paralysing the global economy. We call for these ideas to be discussed in every context of international preparation for the summit This proposal is not explicitly against mass actions, just against one mass action in one place against G8. Symbolic actions are not useless but capital is not at war in a symbolic way. Our limitations are the bounds of our imagination.

The 22nd of October collective

....and a response

In recent weeks we have heard much discussion of criticisms of the current mobilization against the 2007 G8 (e.g. those of the „22nd of October Collective" published on the Indymedia UK website). Though we have taken part in such discussions we do not consider the debate between centralized and decentralized action to be very fertile. However, it is indubitable that as a movement our strength lies in our ability to innovate, and that the current proposals for Heiligendamm offer nothing but a repetition of tactics which have over recent years become increasingly ineffective, as the forces of order learnt from their mistakes and our internal weaknesses began to show through. For us it is clear that if the Heiligendamm G8 counter-summit goes as planned - with its array of single-issue demos, its symbolic blockade which will block nothing, and its camp which can be encircled by the cops at the slightest pretext - it will go down in history as the self-managed burial of the anti-globalisation movement.

We disagree with the alternative proposal of the „22nd of October Collective": to remain in our „own" cities or countries and fight locally misses what is most fruitful about mass gatherings. We need to make a camp in the vicinity of Heiligendamm in order to meet, discuss, get organized and feel our collective strength. We also need to engage in actions which test this strength and inspire new potential. But the relation between massgathering and mass-action has to be reconsidered, with the former functioning as a point from which to emerge rather than a base to which we retreat, and to which we become bound. Recent years have shown the preeminence of tactics aimed at blocking the fl ows of commodities and capital. It is as if the relentless pace of globalization has become unbearable, and everyone can feel that the only reasonable response is to jam the machine. We can see from recent struggles in France, Bolivia, Algeria and Argentina that the only way to block them, is for us to be mobile. We must be free to move to places where we can be most effective. But above all, we must be clear that if we limit our action to blocking the delivery of supplies to a meeting whose organizers have such huge resources of time and money with which to prepare themselves, then we will be sacrifi cing ourselves for a goal which falls drastically short of our potential. We must raise our sights from an impractical and insuffi cient blockade of a lonely hotel on the Baltic sea, to blocking the economy, to blocking Germany. Also, only by opening up our struggle in such a way do we stand a chance of out-maneuvering the massive security force which will be mobilized against us. In view of this we propose to massively congregate in the proposed camp 10 days before the start of the G8, to meet and plan together in peace, but to preempt the opening of the G8 with a massive exodus, away from Rostock where there is nothing to block, away from the high-security hotel where the G8-leaders are already blocked, towards one or more centers of capital and state-power (e.g. Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt...). And there to engage in a day of blockades which will have more than just a symbolic effect. A series of such days of blockades would constitute a literal movement with a singular purpose: to block the motor of accumulation of which the G8-leaders are just the interchangeable masks. This proposal will require much organizing activity, possibly more than people had hitherto envisaged for July, but as opposed to the alternative of blocking ourselves in a corner of Germany where we can block nothing, it at least stands a chance of success.

11. November Bewegung
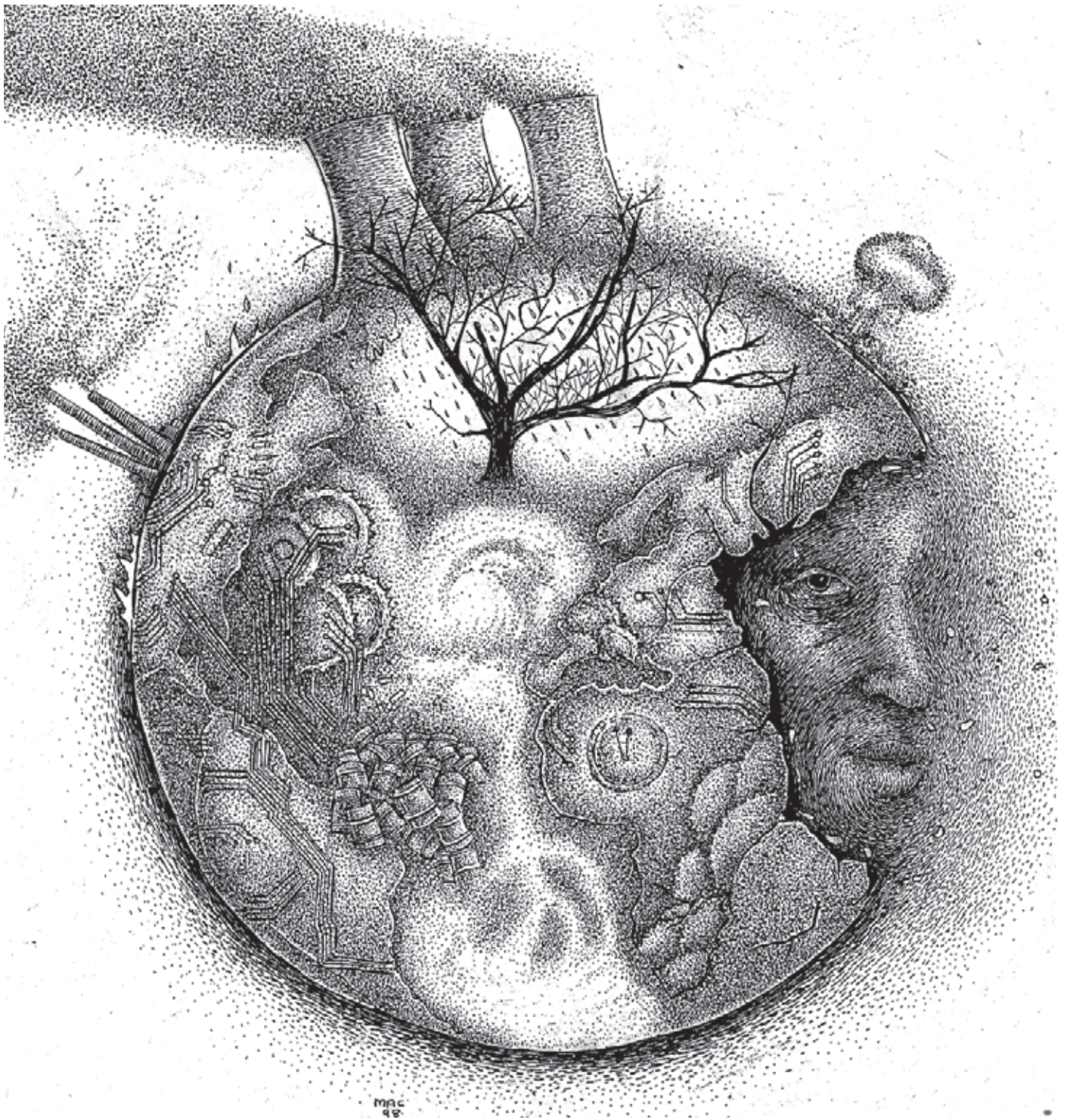
G8

This issue would not have been made possible without the generous financial support* of the Copenhagen Police

* Albeit entirely unintentional: In early March, a group of London activists arrived in Copenhagen to express their active solidarity with the people of the 24-year old Ungdomshuset Social Centre which had just been violently evicted. The Copenhagen Police "wrongfully arrested" and detained part of the group, subsequently offering compensation.

This one is for Ungdomshuset!