

IDEAS FOR MOVEMENT

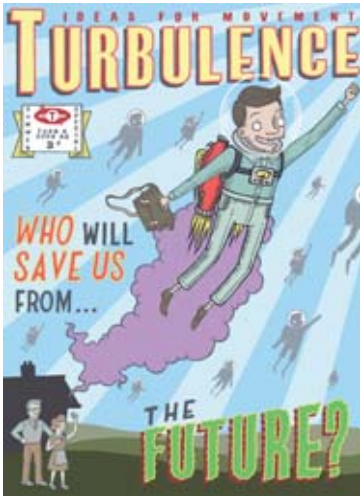
TURBULENCE

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WHO WILL
SAVE US
FROM...

THE
FUTURE?





Turbulence is a journal/newspaper that we hope will become an ongoing space in which to think through, debate and articulate the political, social, economic and cultural theories of our movements, as well as the networks of diverse practices and alternatives that surround them.

We don't want *Turbulence* to become yet another journal or yet another edited collection claiming to offer a 'snapshot of the movement'. Instead we want to carve out a space where we can carry out difficult debates and investigations into the political realities of our time – engaging the real differences in vision, analysis and strategy that exist among our movements.

David Harvie, Keir Milburn, Tazio Müller, Rodrigo Nunes, Michal Osterweil, Kay Summer, Ben Trott, David Watts

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WHERE DOES THE FUTURE START?
 What we take to be the present is made up of the apparent repetition of ordinary, regular points. In fact we become so accustomed to these regularities that we lose sight of the subtle differences that occur in their actual repetition. Octavia Raitt's *Today* drawings, done at the rate of one a day for 143 days, are a beautiful portrayal

of the difference that occurs in the repetition of ordinary points. She shows that finding the singular in the ordinary is a matter of selection. But every singular point means a break from what is ordinary, an opening up of possibility. In order to stop the future being erased by the present, we need to exploit this potential for singular points to change the rules of the game.

Present tense, future conditional

WHEN WORK on this issue began, tracking down the author of a quote turned out to be more difficult than we thought. You may have heard it too: 'today it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'. Everyone knew it, but had seen it attributed to someone else. Someone even thought they'd been around the time it was first uttered, by somebody at a meeting a few years ago. Further research proved inconclusive: like the story about the man who woke up in a bathtub full of ice without his kidney, it was everywhere, but came from nowhere in particular. Yet, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, this omnipresence seemed to count as its own confirmation. Everyone's saying it, so it must be true...

Today, it's the very act of thinking about the future that has become a problem. What both capitalism and really existing socialism had in common was the belief in a future where infinite happiness would spring from the infinite expansion of production. From Lenin's

'communism = soviet power + electrification' to capital's 'trickle down effect', the sacrifices made in the present were always justified in terms of a brighter future. And now? The socialist future has been dead since the fall of the Berlin wall. After that we seemed to live in a world where only the capitalist future existed (even when it was under attack). But now this future, too, is having its obituaries composed. Impending doom, be it ecological, financial, or the result of soaring commodity prices, is the talk of the town. The 'crisis of the future' – that is, of our capacity to think about the future – is born out of these twin deaths.

For anti-capitalists, socialism offered two articles of faith. First, a teleological view of history as something that would eventually, and inevitably, take us to communism. Second, a belief in a historical subject – a working class, personified in 'The Party', which would become conscious of its historical role and accomplish it. Both these dogmas lie shattered. It's impossible now to imagine

that infinitely expanding production will ever be able to deliver us the good life. And it's impossible to picture, in any simple way, a subject of social change for whom history is just the inert matter it can transform at will. That's precisely why it's easier to visualise catastrophe than transformation – as if capital is the only existing revolutionary force, and its end can only come as the (unwanted, but necessary; conscious, but inevitable) outcome of its own actions.

So as work on this issue drew to a close, we stumbled across another quote we liked (and this time we even know who said it: Franco 'Bifo' Berardi): "The future now seems imaginable only as the intersection of catastrophic tendencies. Paradoxically, only from the interference between the various planes of catastrophe does it seem possible to imagine a salvation." How can we think a path between these two poles, between salvation – the idea that religion or science will save us – and catastrophe? Can we still imagine a future?

Today I see the future

WE CAN ONLY ever think the future in the conditions of the present. And one of the most powerful myths is always that the present is the natural order of things: 'It has always been like this, and it always will be.' Ten years ago, against that closure of the future, a multiplicity of movements arose which claimed that other worlds were indeed possible. It went by a multitude of names: the 'movement of movements', alter-globalisation, anti-globalisation, the anti-capitalist movement. We knew it by the names of the cities where, in flashes, it would become most visible – Seattle, Chiang Mai, Genoa, Porto Alegre, Cancun.

Looking back today, it's hard to avoid two simultaneous impressions: success and failure. On the one hand, the movement of movements, compared to those days, appears a spent force; yet the situation it opposed has changed. The faint outlines of a victory? The door of history is open – or at least more open than it appeared ten years ago. Things that were necessary articles of faith have been discredited even in the eyes of their proponents. Political freedom goes hand-in-hand with free markets? The invisible hand of the free market, unburdened by regulation, knows best? Utter rubbish. In the words of the UK government's Chief Economist, Nicholas Stern, climate change is "the biggest market failure in history". Lawrence Summers, former US-Treasury Secretary and World Bank Chief Economist publicly defects from neoliberalism when he argues that "what is good for the global economy and its business champions" isn't necessarily good for workers. Of course, it's easy to overstate the point. The door of

history wasn't forced open only by 'the movements' – not unless we re-define 'the movements' to include millions who've never heard of Seattle or Chiang Mai or Genoa. But this much is clear: the liberal-democratic-free-market-capitalist future that was the only flavour on offer at the turn of the century has gone out of fashion in 2008, and the futures paraded before us all look rather different.

We see a few stifled yawns: yet another crisis and the end, if not of capitalism, then at least of its latest manifestation – bored now! Anti-capitalists are renowned for seeing every little downturn as the precursor of complete economic meltdown. And of course, CAPITALISM IN CRISIS! is the perennial headline of choice in left-wing newspapers the world over. We've all been there. Exactly a decade ago, two of us sat with a stack of envelopes and sent letters with precisely that title to hundreds of the world's social movements, in the hope of finding more people to shut down the summits of the WTO, the G8, the IMF, etc. So maybe it is hard for us to say this with any credibility. But this time it's different. Honest. Back then, the crisis was an emerging one, and it had more to do with the growing perceived illegitimacy of neoliberalism than with anything more 'material'.

OK, don't take it from us. Read the *Financial Times*, *Economist* or *Wall Street Journal*. Every day there are articles asking what is to come now that the 'American Century' has ended, now that food prices can't be kept in check, climate change rolls on, the world's financial architecture seizes up, oil production finally has peaked... It is ironic that, while on the left

it seems impossible to conjure up an image of revolution – a rupture with the past and the end of capitalism – the *FT* imagine it all the time. If it happens, it's the end of their readership's power; so they're keen to discuss what to do about it. Or take the new Shell report, *Energy Scenarios to 2050*. They state boldly that the era of Thatcher's 'There is No Alternative'-doctrine is over. Now the choice is a 'scramble' for resources and some nightmarish Hobbesian war of all against all, or 'blueprints' That's right, blueprints: some sort of organised supra-national planning. Meanwhile on the left, we only seem able to imagine the end of the world as *Mad Max*-style mayhem arising from our fashionable new friend 'eco-collapse'.

PRESENT TENSE

The food crisis. The climate crisis. The oil price crisis. The Iraq crisis. The financial crisis. Crises are nothing new. We should know: we've cried wolf before. Back in 1997, in the midst of the Asian financial crisis, when millions of people were thrown out of work, governments fell and South America teetered on the brink of joining the crash-fest, some of us were excited. It was tempting to see those millions out of work, the race-to-the-bottom wage reductions, as bringing us closer

JOSEPH SCHUMPETER was an economist who popularised the term 'creative destruction' to describe the regular revolutionising of economic and regulatory structures and institutions needed to ensure new 'long waves' of economic growth. Crises were seen as a helpful way of sweeping away the old and creating room for the new. In *The Shock Doctrine* Naomi Klein outlines the way economic crises, natural disasters, and military conflicts have been transformed into moments of creative destruction by neoliberalism over the past 30 years. Turning disaster into an opportunity seems to have become so much a part of neoliberal 'common sense' as to be comparable with US President Nixon's 1971 assertion that – when it came to government intervention into the economy in order to stimulate growth – "We are all Keynesians now"



to rupture, to radical change. But far from heralding capitalism's downfall, these crises are in fact precisely what capital needs to constantly revolutionise itself and the world around it. So why think that now is different? Why think this is a turning point, and not simply another turn of the screw of capital's waves of creative destruction? Are we not all Schumpeterians now?

The answer lies not in pathological optimism, but in the possibility of crisis management

– or its impossibility, as it were. We can look at this from two perspectives. First, that of capital's activity. Crises aren't necessarily productive for capital, nor do they necessarily increase states' power. They have to be *managed* to have those effects. One crisis – say, the surging oil price – is relatively easy to handle. Two can still be manageable. But five or six major crises occurring at the same time? Of course, it's not only about numbers, because any amount of crises would be manageable if they

all had the same cause or proximate causes: the solution to one would probably also solve or at least contribute to solving another. But in this case, the various crises have multiple causes that are apparently independent of each other. More importantly, the most obvious solutions to any one crisis may exacerbate one of the others to a point of unmanageability.

Take the food price crisis. This year, food riots occurred in big cities in 37 countries: arguably a speedier and more widespread



But something very important is lost if we only look from the point of view of what capital has done to produce this situation, and what capital will do to manage it. Crises don't just 'happen' all by themselves; they are also the outcome of struggles that are ongoing and constantly spilling over boundaries and borders. Sometimes these pit different capitalists' interests against one another – for example, the OPEC countries against the world's leading economies. But the desires and actions of people too are constantly reshaping the field of play. The food crisis isn't just the by-product of neoliberalism's attack on any reproduction independent of the market: growing demand in developing countries is also the result of long-term pressures for increases in real wages and wealth redistribution policies. If we simply dismiss this process as the way capital reduces the risk of large-scale uprising (by 'buying us off'), then we end up playing the old teleology game, at the expense of other people's lives – 'hang in there, comrades, just one more sacrifice for the revolution!' More importantly we ignore the fact that transformations such as access to education and basic needs also create new bases for struggle. One of the factors in the rapid spread of the food riots is the fact that since some point last year, for the first time in history the majority of the world's population now live in urban areas, and access to means of communication

revolt than anything pulled off by the movement of '68 or the 'movement of movements'. People in a quarter of the world's countries said 'enough is enough' in a matter of weeks. A couple of governments fell; many gave rare concessions to the poor. There was panic on the first class deck, and an emergency global summit in Rome was called in June.

Then there's the climate crisis, caused by human emissions of

greenhouse gases, most of which come from the burning of fossil fuels. And then there's the oil price crisis, caused by our inability to kick our oil habit, rapidly rising demand in 'emerging' economies, chronic underinvestment in the oil industries of most oil-producing countries, and perhaps a growing belief that global oil production has peaked. And then there's the financial crisis, caused by... You catch the drift.

SCIENCE FICTION'S DOUBLE FEATURE

Sci-fi movies, books and comics tend to have two common features. First of all, they all tell us much more about the present than what is to come. That which is fantastically projected into the future reflects what appears to be just beyond our current scientific limits. The *Matrix* trilogy – where hacker Neo finds himself up against a simulated reality, governed over by intelligent machines which feed on the energy of humanity – could only have been created in the

1990s, in the context of the rise of both Virtual Reality and internet technology. Second, it is precisely this first feature which allows sci-fi to demonstrate how our 'situated-ness' – our present lived realities and immediate histories – determines the kinds of utopias and dystopias we are able to imagine.

But maybe there is an exception: The role monsters, like Frankenstein's, often play in sci-fi is generally less determined by the present than, for instance, the technologies used to create or destroy them. They imply a

potential for, or at least fascination with the idea of, transformation. They defy easy categorisation: they're often part-human, and tend to be embroiled in a process of becoming less so. They are the aspect of science fiction which can help open our imaginations to possibilities of becoming, rather than limit them to what seems possible from within the matrix of the present. They are an antidote to the idea of humanity as a 'species-being' whose essence is static; and a nod towards the idea of flight-lines out of this world.

SO WHO IS THIS AIMED AT? The short answer is: anyone wanting to think about how to change the world. That is, potentially everybody. But doing so isn't straightforward. This isn't a collection of lowest common denominator writings aimed at some abstract 'public' whose common sense we can second-guess. Even if we could, we'd much rather undermine it. To go through the experience of thinking differently – in a different way or from a different perspective – creates new possibilities. And perspectives aren't different takes on a same thing, but each one a world in itself. Likewise, words aren't different 'clothes' for one object, but can create their own objects. So thinking differently involves engaging with ideas that seem alien because they go against some of our assumptions about the world, or come from within contexts we are unfamiliar with. Some of the writing here might seem difficult or abstract – we have tried to contextualise pieces and explain technical jargon – but each article is open to anyone prepared to make the effort of reading it. Reading is a two-way violence: a text can change us to the extent that we are willing to appropriate it to our own ends. It's the same wager as love: if you jump in, you won't come back to the same point (and may regret it, or be disappointed); but if you don't jump in, how can you know what you're missing?

allows tactical information and agitation to travel much more quickly. It's the same with the oil crisis, where rising prices are also due to the victories of struggles in oil-producing regions as far apart as Venezuela and the Niger delta. More fundamentally, in an oil-dependent world, oil is used to do the work that workers have successfully refused: machines that are driven by oil get introduced only when labour power becomes too expensive.

In this respect, we don't have to choose between either mourning the death of the mythical proletariat as unitary world-subject, or giving up on it and accepting that the only force of transformation in the world is the aggregate of capital's decisions. It's not a question of *whether* we can act in the face of these crises: people have always acted, and are always acting, in ways that change the world. The real problem is this: how is it possible to act *on a global scale* in ways that can take advantages of conjunctures like the one we have now?

FUTURE CONDITIONAL

Back to the view from the top: let's imagine it's your job to sort this mess out. Let's start with high oil prices and energy security –

crucial in a world where economic 'development' has so far been linked to access to fossil fuels. Many of the world's governments are getting interested in the production of agrofuels, one of the very few 'renewable' energies that is pretty much a straight swap for oil. The problem? Growing more crops for agrofuels would almost certainly exacerbate the food price crisis, and thus cause more of those food riots that governments would rather avoid. So what are you going to do? Annex an oil-producing country? Easier said than done: Iraq has proven that even the largest military power can become overstretched. And it doesn't deal with climate change, which must be managed because extreme weather events interfere with production, and voters expect you do to something about it. Solving climate change? Cut back on fossil

The power of those who control the present has unravelled to such an extent that the future once again appears unwritten

fuel use. Not really, as that would mean less economic 'development'. More renewable energy. But what about the food riots? Ignore climate change and adapt. What about a sudden spread of infectious diseases in the wake of major flooding? This is complex stuff.

Crisis management in an overly complex and open situation becomes very difficult, and that difficulty is obvious when listening in on the conversations of global elites. Which is where we return to the beginning: it seems that the power of those who control the present has unravelled to such an extent that the future once again appears unwritten, probably in a way that it hasn't been since the 1970s. There really are plenty of similarities: then, too, a phase of capitalist development was drawing to an end (Fordism/Keynesianism then, neoliberalism now); US hegemony was being challenged (by Germany and Japan then, by China and India now), while the country fought a neo-colonial war it couldn't win (Vietnam/Iraq); the dollar was weak, financial systems were in crisis, stagnation *and* inflation were setting in, oil prices had some nasty shocks in store.

More importantly, the present seems to be a point in which various historical series are crossing each other. And they're doing so in ways that could make them diverge in new directions. First and foremost, the series set in motion during the 1970s, where various crises – of public debt, the oil price boom, and a high level of working class organisation – overlapped and brought a 'solution' that involved financialisation, deregulation, the rolling back of social guarantees, and an internalisation of all risk by individuals (i.e. 'globalisation') appears to be coming to an end. The new wave of regulations introduced by the US Federal Reserve, along with the cries that the credit crisis is a result of 'the free market gone too free', would appear to point in this direction. What's more, this seems to be happening at a moment when the decades of effort to put climate



change on the agenda appear to have borne fruit; whilst the series of world events opened by 9/11 – and which had a tremendous impact in holding down the cycle of struggles begun in the 1990s – seems to be drawing to a close.

With this in mind we've assembled a collection of articles that, in different ways, speak to us about futures. As much as we didn't want people's ten-point programmes when, in June 2007 we asked 'What would it mean to win?', our interest here has nothing to do

with futurology. There are no grand predictions in what follows. No imminent victory, because comfort-zone wishful thinking is the last thing anyone needs now; but no apocalyptic doom either. Neither are there any forward-view mirrors where capitalism recuperates everything and always gets the last laugh. We must have the modesty to recognise that the future is unknown, not because today is the end of everything or the beginning of everything else, but because today is where we are. What we

do, what is done to us, and what we do with what is done to us, are what decide the way the dice will fall. This requires the patient and attentive work of identifying openings, directions, tendencies, potentials, possibilities – all of which are things that amount to nothing if not acted upon – and of finding out new ways in which to think about the future.

Turbulence, July 2008

1968

and doors to new worlds

WITH THE EXPLOSIONS OF 1968 STILL REVERBERATING, JOHN HOLLOWAY TALKS OF OUR FAST-MOVING, UNSTABLE AND POLYPHONIC REVOLT AGAINST ABSTRACT LABOUR, THE ACTIVITY THAT WEAVES CAPITALIST DOMINATION.

1968? Why talk about 1968?

There are so many urgent things happening. Let's talk of Oaxaca and Chiapas and the danger of civil war in Mexico. Let's talk of the war in Iraq and the rapid destruction of the natural preconditions of human existence. Is this really a good moment for old men to sit back and reminisce?

But perhaps we need to talk of 1968 because, even in the face of all the real urgency, we are feeling lost and need some sense of direction: not to find the road (because the road does not exist) but to create many paths. Perhaps 1968 has something to do with our feeling lost, and perhaps it has something to do with making new paths. So let us talk of 1968.

1968 opened the door to a change in the world, a change in the rules of anti-capitalist conflict, a change in the meaning of anti-capitalist revolution, a change therefore in the meaning of hope. This is what we are still trying to understand. That is why I say that 1968 contributes to making us feel lost and is also a key to finding

some orientation.

1968 was an explosion, and the sound of the explosion still echoes, difficult to distinguish from the sound of subsequent explosions that took up the themes of 1968 – most important perhaps 1994 and the series of explosions that is the Zapatista movement. So when I speak of 1968, it is not necessarily with historical precision: what interests me is the explosion and how, in the wake of that explosion, we can think of overcoming the catastrophe that is capitalism.

1968 was an explosion, the explosion of a certain constellation of social forces, a certain pattern of social conflict. Sometimes this constellation is referred to as Fordism. The term has the great merit of drawing our attention immediately to the core question of the way in which our daily activity is organised. It refers to a world in which mass production in the factories was integrated with the promotion of mass consumption through a combination of relatively high wages and the so-called welfare state. Central actors in this

process were the trade unions, whose participation in the system of regular wage negotiations was a driving force, and the state, which appeared to have the capacity of regulating the economy and ensuring basic levels of social welfare. In such a society, it was not surprising that aspirations for social change concentrated on the state, and on the goal of taking state power, either by electoral means or otherwise. Possibly it would be more accurate to speak of this pattern of class relations not just as Fordism, but as Fordism-Keynesianism-Leninism.

I want to suggest that there was something even more profound at issue. The danger in restricting ourselves to the idea of the crisis of Fordism (or indeed Fordism-Keynesianism-Leninism) is that the term invites us to see this as one of a series of modes of regulation which would then be superseded by another (post-Fordism or Empire or whatever): capitalism is then seen as a series of restructurings, or syntheses, or closures, whereas our problem is not to write a history of capitalism but rather to find a way out of this catastrophe. It is necessary to go beyond the concept of Fordism. Fordism was an extremely developed form of alienated or abstract labour and what was challenged in these years was alienated labour, the very heart of capitalism.

Abstract labour (I use the word that Marx used in *Capital*, because it seems to me a richer concept) is the labour that produces value and surplus value, and therefore capital. Marx contrasts it with useful or concrete labour, the activity that is necessary for the reproduction of any society. Abstract labour is labour seen in abstraction from its particular characteristics, it is labour that is equivalent to any other labour and this equivalence is established through exchange or its administrative analogies. The abstraction is not just a mental abstraction: it is a real abstraction, the fact that the products are produced for exchange rebounds upon the production process itself



and converts it into a process in which all that matters is the performance of socially necessary labour, the efficient production of commodities that will sell. Abstract labour is labour devoid of particularity, devoid of meaning. Abstract labour produces the society of capital, a society in which the only meaning is the accumulation of abstract labour, the constant pursuit of profit.

Abstract labour weaves the society in which we live. It weaves the multiplicity of human activities

together through the repeated process of exchange, through this process that tells us over and over again "it does not matter what you enjoy doing, how much love and care you put into it, what matters is whether it will sell, what matters is how much money you can get for it." That is the way our different activities are woven together, that is the way capitalist society is constructed.

But the weaving goes much further than that: because this way of relating to one another,

through the exchange of things, creates a general thing-ification, or reification, or fetishisation of social relations. In the same way that the thing we create separates itself from us and stands against us, negating its origins, so all aspects of our relations with other people acquire the character of things. Money becomes a thing, rather than just a relation between different creators. The state becomes a thing rather than just a way in which we organise our common affairs. Sex becomes a thing rather than just

the multiplicity of different ways in which people touch and relate physically. Nature becomes a thing to be used for our benefit, rather than the complex interrelation of the different forms of life that share this planet. Time becomes a thing, clock time, a time outside us that tells us that tomorrow will be the same as today, rather than just the rhythms of our living, the intensities and relaxations of our doing. And so on.

By performing abstract labour, we weave, we weave, we weave this world that is so rapidly destroying us. And each part of the weave gives strength and solidity to every other part of the weave. At the centre is our activity as abstract labour, but the empty meaningless abstraction of our labour is held in place by the whole structure of abstraction or alienation that we create: the state, the idea and practice of dimorphous sexuality, the objectification of nature, the living of time as clock time, the seeing of space as space contained within boundaries, and so on. All these different dimensions of abstract meaninglessness are created by and in turn reinforce the abstract meaninglessness of our daily activity which is at its core. It is this complex weave that is blown in the air in 1968.

How? What is the force behind the explosion? It is not the working class, at least not in the traditional sense. Factory workers do play an important part, especially in France, but they do not play a central role in the explosion of 1968. Nor can it be understood in terms of any particular group. It is

rather a social relation, the relation of abstract labour, that explodes. The force behind the explosion has to be understood not as a group but as the underside of abstract labour, the contradiction of abstract labour, that which abstract labour contains but does not contain, that which abstract labour represses but does not repress. This is what explodes.

What is the underside of abstract labour? There is a problem here with vocabulary, and not by chance, because that which is repressed tends to be invisible, without voice, without name. We can call it anti-alienation, or anti-abstraction. In the 1844 *Manuscripts* Marx refers to anti-alienation as “conscious life-activity” and in *Capital*, the contrast is between abstract labour and “useful or concrete labour”. This term is not entirely satisfactory, partly because the distinction between labour and other forms of activity is not common to all societies. For that reason, I shall refer to the underside of abstract labour as *doing*: doing rather than just anti-alienation because what is at issue is first and foremost the way in which human activity is organised.

Capitalism is based on abstract labour, but there is always an underside, another aspect of activity that appears to be totally subordinated to abstract labour, but is not and cannot be. Abstract labour is the activity that creates capital and weaves capitalist domination, but there is always another side, a doing that retains or seeks to retain its particularity,

that pushes towards some sort of meaning, some sort of self-determination. Marx points right at the beginning of *Capital* to the relation between abstract and useful labour as the pivot upon which the understanding of political economy (and therefore capitalism) turns – a sentence almost totally ignored by the whole Marxist tradition.

Within capitalism, useful labour (doing) exists in the form of abstract labour, but the relation of form and content

“No, we shall not dedicate our lives to the rule of money, we shall not dedicate all the days of our lives to abstract labour, we shall do something else instead”

cannot be understood simply as containment: inevitably, it is one of in-against-and-beyond: doing exists in-against-and-beyond abstract labour. This is a matter of everyday experience, as we all try to find some way of directing our activity towards what we consider desirable or necessary. Even within our abstract labour we try to find some way of not submitting totally to the rule of money. As professors we try to do something more than producing the functionaries of

‘1968’ wasn’t just about Paris and the ‘French May’. ‘1968’ is a shorthand for a whole series of uprisings, insurgencies and revolutions that occurred across the planet over an explosive three-year period with no clearly defined beginning or end. In the United States, 1967’s ‘summer of love’ gave way to militant protests against war in Vietnam, uprisings in more than a hundred cities and a ‘police riot’ at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago. In Mexico City

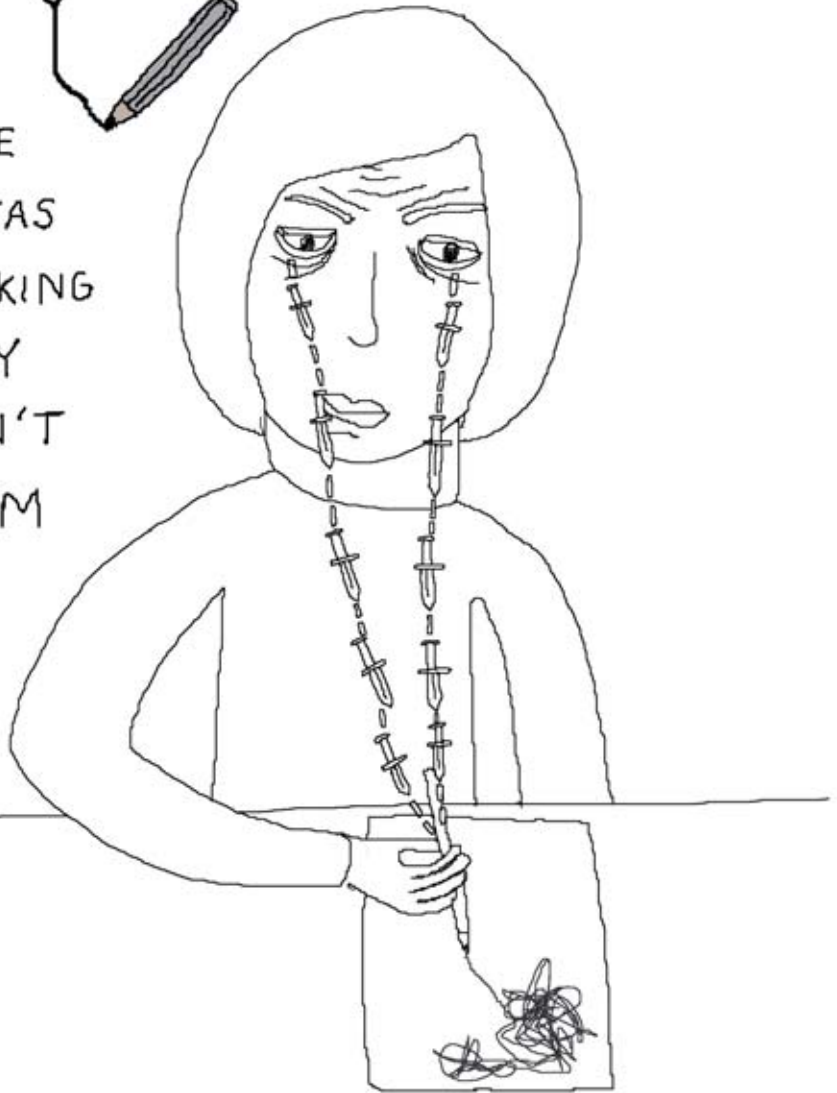
months of political unrest were crushed only by the Tlatelolco Massacre, when army and police murdered 200–300 people just days before the opening of the Olympic Games. During the Games, athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised the Black Power salute on the winners’ podium.

In Czechoslovakia, the Prague Spring ended only when Russian tanks rolled into the country. Nationalist residents of Northern Ireland’s second-largest

city repelled both police and loyalist thugs and declared the autonomous area of Free Derry. There were revolts, strikes, occupations and all types of other political activity in countless other countries, including Germany, Pakistan, Bolivia, Spain, Japan, Poland, Belgium, Sweden, Great Britain, Brazil, Nigeria, Senegal, Serbia, Austria, Turkey, Hong Kong, Egypt and Lebanon. Italy’s ‘hot autumn’ of 1969 opened up into the decade-long *Autonomia* movement.

TODAY

I HAVE SOME
ALRIGHT IDEAS
BUT MY FUCKING
CRAP SUCKY
HAND WON'T
DRAW THEM



capital, as assembly line workers we move our fingers along an imaginary guitar in the seconds we have free, as nurses we try to help our patients beyond the incentive of money, as students we dream of a life not determined totally by money. There is an antagonistic relation between our doing and the abstraction (or alienation) which capital imposes, a relation not only of subordination but also of resistance, revolt and pushing beyond.

This is always present, but it

explodes in 1968, as a generation no longer so tamed by the experience of fascism and war rise up and say, "No, we shall not dedicate our lives to the rule of money, we shall not dedicate all the days of our lives to abstract labour, we shall do something else instead." The revolt against capital expresses itself clearly as that which it always is and must be: a revolt against labour. It becomes clear that we cannot think of class struggle as labour against capital because labour is on the same side of

capital, labour produces capital. The struggle is not that of labour against capital, but of doing (or living) against labour and therefore against capital. This is what is expressed in the universities, this is what is expressed in the factories, this is what is expressed on the streets in 1968. This is what makes it impossible for capital to increase the rate of exploitation sufficiently to maintain its rate of profit and hold Fordism in place.

It is the force of doing, that is, the force of saying "no, we shall

not live like that that, we shall do otherwise”, that blows apart that constellation of struggle based on the extreme abstraction of labour that is expressed in Fordism. It is a revolt that is directed against all aspects of the abstraction of labour: not just the alienation of labour in the narrow sense, but also the fetishisation of sex, nature, time, space and also against the state-oriented forms of organisation that are part of that fetishisation. There is a release, an emancipation: it becomes possible to think and do things that were not possible before. The force of the explosion, the force of the struggle, splits open the category of labour (opened by Marx but closed in practice by the Marxist tradition) and with it all the other categories of thought.

The explosion throws us into a new world. It throws us onto a new battlefield, characterised by a new constellation of struggles that is distinctively open. This is crucial: if we leap to talk of a new mode of domination (Empire or post-Fordism), then we are closing dimensions that we are struggling to keep open. In other words, there is a real danger that by analysing the so-called new paradigm of domination, we give it a solidity which it does not merit and which we certainly do not want. The relatively coherent weave that existed before the explosion is torn apart. It is in the interests of capital to put it back together again, to establish a new pattern. Anti-capitalism moves in the opposite direction, tearing apart, pushing the cracks as far as it can.

The old constellation was based on the antagonism between labour and capital, with all that that meant in terms of trade unions, corporatism, parties, welfare state and so on. If we are right in saying that the new constellation must be understood as having at its centre the antagonism between doing and abstract labour, then this means rethinking radically what anti-capitalism means, what revolution means. All the established practices and ideas bound up with abstract labour come into question: labour,

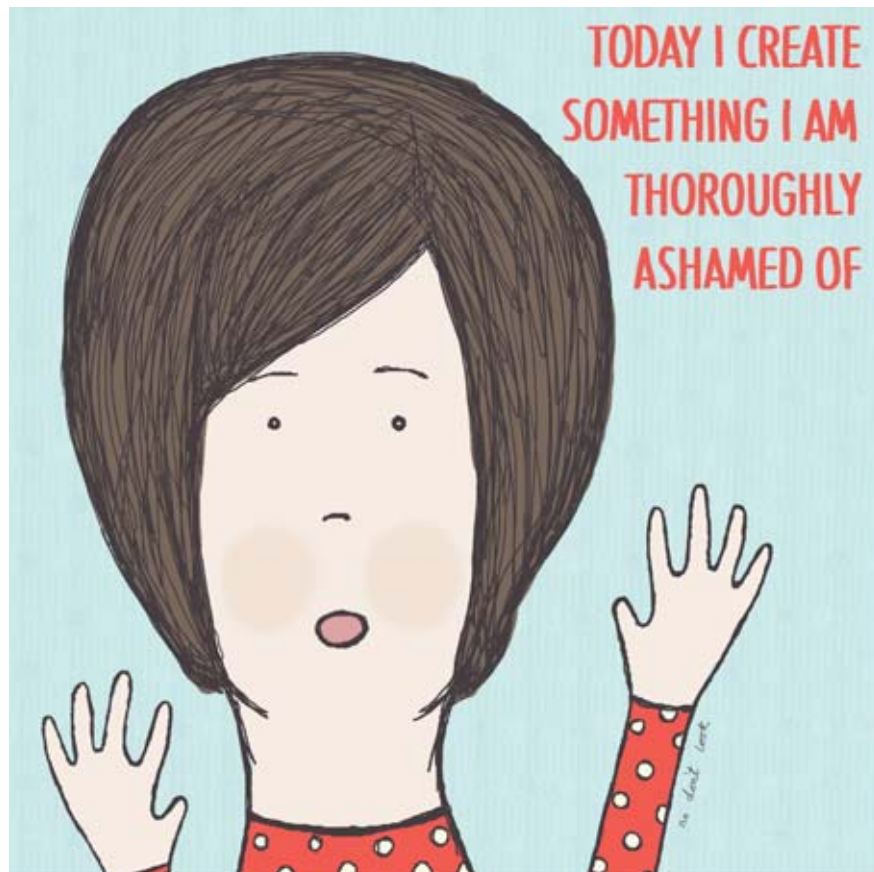
sexuality, nature, state, time, space, all become battlegrounds of struggle.

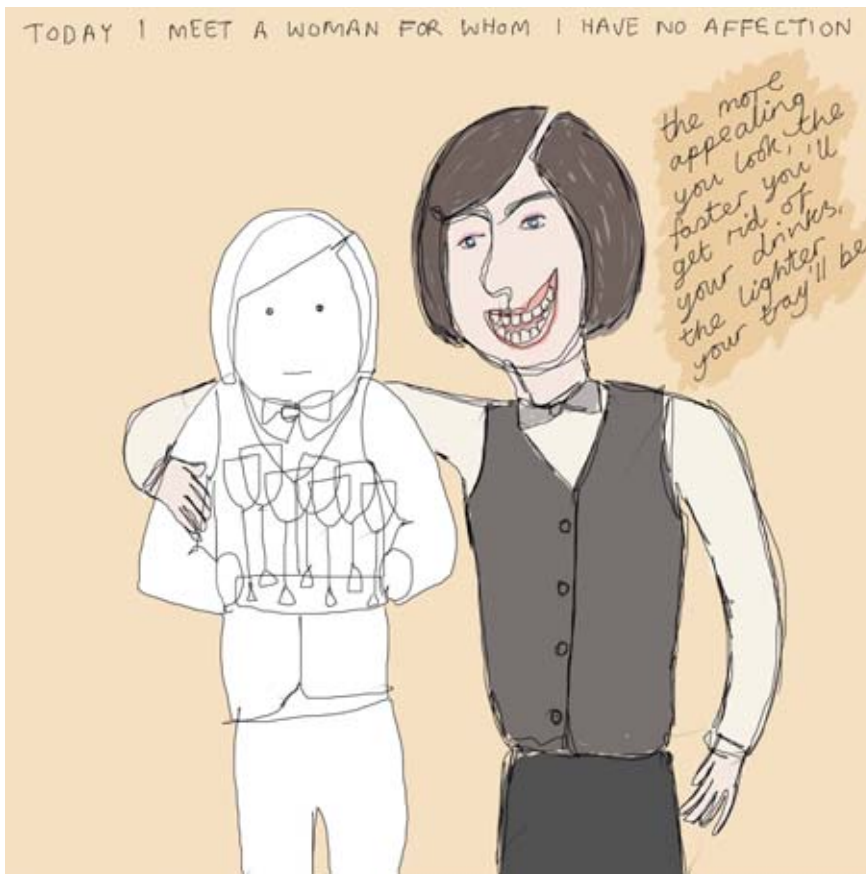
The new constellation (or better, the constellation that showed its face clearly in 1968 and still struggles to be born) is the constellation of doing against abstract labour. This means that it is fundamentally negative. Doing exists in and against abstract labour: in so far as it breaks through abstract labour and exists also beyond it (as cooperative, as social centre, as *Junta de Buen Gobierno*), it is always at risk, always shaped by its antagonism with abstract labour and threatened by it. Once we positivise it, seeing it as an autonomous space, or as socialism in one country or in one social centre, or as a cooperative

JUNTAS DE BUEN GOBIERNO – ‘Juntas of Good Government’ – are the councils established by the Zapatistas in their autonomous municipalities

that is not in movement against capitalism, it quickly converts itself into its opposite. The struggles against capital are fast-moving and unstable: they exist on the edge of evanescence and cannot be judged from the positivity of institutions.

The movement of doing against labour is anti-identitarian, therefore: the movement of non-identity against identity. This is important for practical reasons, simply because capital’s restructuring is the attempt to contain the new struggles within identities. The struggles of women, of blacks, of indigenous, as long as they are contained within their respective identity, pose no problem at all for the reproduction of a system of abstract labour. On the contrary, the re-consolidation of abstract labour probably depends on the re-shuffling of these identities, as identities, the re-focusing of struggles into limited, identitarian struggles. The Zapatista movement creates no





creation of spaces or moments in which we seek to live now the society we want to create. This means the creation of cracks in the system of capitalist command, moments or spaces in which we say, “No, we shall not do what capital requires of us, we shall do what we consider necessary or desirable.”

Inevitably, this means an understanding of anti-capitalist struggle as a multiplicity of very different struggles. This is not a multiplication of identities, but the rapid movement of anti-identitarian struggles that touch and diverge, infect and repel, a creative chaos of cracks that multiply and spread and at times are filled up and reappear and spread again. This is the polyphonic revolt of doing against abstract labour. It is necessarily polyphonic. To deny its polyphony would be to subordinate it to a new form of abstraction. The world we are trying to create, the world of useful doing or conscious life activity is necessarily a world of many worlds. And this means, of course, forms of organisation that seek to articulate and respect this polyphony: anti-state forms, in other words.

From the outside and sometimes from within, this polyphony seems to be just a chaotic, dissonant noise without direction or unity, without a meta-narrative. That is a mistake. The meta-narrative is not the same as before 1968, but there is a meta-narrative, with two faces. The first face of this meta-narrative is simply ‘NO, ¡Ya basta!’ And the second face is ‘Dignity, we live now the world we want to create’, or in other words ‘We Do’.

Perhaps we can conclude by saying that 1968 was the crisis of the working class as prose, its birth as poetry: the crisis of the working class as abstract labour, its birth as useful-creative doing. The intervening years have shown us how difficult it is to write poetry, how difficult and how necessary.

challenge to capitalism as long as it remains a struggle for indigenous rights: it is when the struggle overflows identity, when the Zapatistas say “we are indigenous but more than that”, when they say that they are struggling to make the world anew, to create a world based on the mutual recognition of dignity, that is when they constitute a threat to capitalism. The struggle of doing is the struggle to overflow the fetishised categories of identity. We fight not so much for women’s rights as for a world in which the division of people into two sexes (and the genitalisation of sexuality on which this division is based) is overcome, not so much for the protection of nature as for a radical rethinking of the relation between different forms of life, not so much for migrants’ rights as for the abolition of frontiers.

In all this transformation, time is crucial. Homogeneous time was perhaps the most important cement of the old constellation, the constellation of abstract

labour, accepted by the left as unquestioningly as by the right. In this view, revolution, if it could be imagined at all, could only be in the future. That has gone. What was previously seen as an inseparable pair, ‘future revolution’, is now seen to be pure nonsense. It is too late for future revolution. And anyway, every day in which we plan for a future revolution we recreate the capitalism that we hate, so that the very notion of future revolution is self-defeating. Revolution is here and now or not at all. That is implicit in 1968, with the movement’s refusal to wait until The Party considered that it was the right moment. That is made explicit in the Zapatistas’ ‘¡Ya basta!’ of 1 January 1994. Enough! Now! Not “we shall wait until the next Kondratieff cycle completes its circle”. And not “we shall wait until the Party conquers state power”. But now: revolution here and now!

What this does mean? It can only mean a multiplicity of struggles from the particular, the

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Starvation politics from ancient Egypt to the present

'FOOD RIOTS' IN RESPONSE TO HUGE FOOD PRICE HIKES HAVE HIT NUMEROUS COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD THIS YEAR. **GEORGE CAFFENTZIS** EXPLORES THE CURRENT FOOD CRISIS, ITS CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS.

FOOD PRICES are rising so much and so fast that millions are now on the verge of starvation. Between May 2007 and May 2008, corn prices increased by 46%, wheat prices by 80%, and soybeans by 72%; while rice increased by 75% in 2008 over its average 2007 price.

People in many cities throughout the world have responded to the explosion of staple food prices in the last few months by demanding that their national governments reduce them immediately. From Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Cairo, Egypt, the

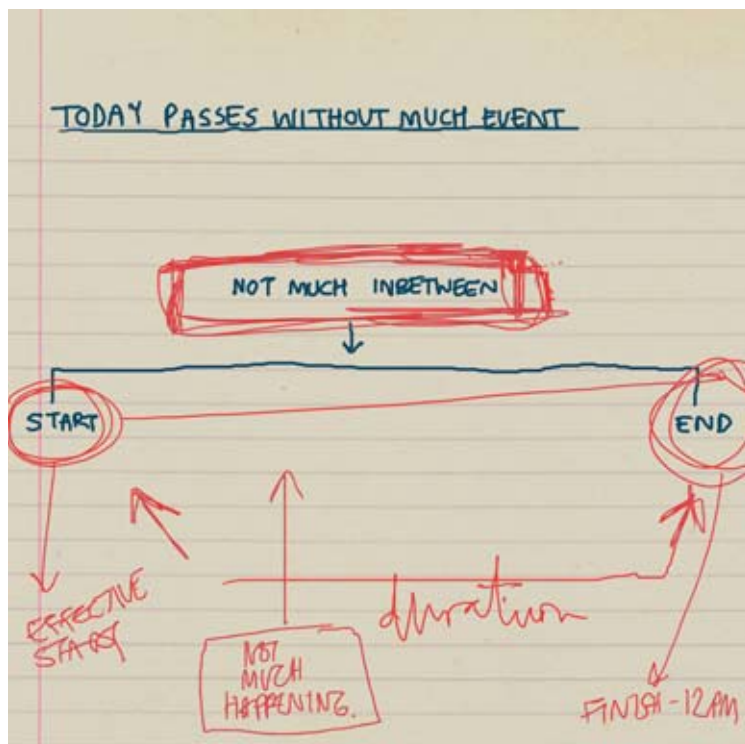
demonstrations often turned into riots, shutting down these cities for days. Millions are now calculating that unless they obstruct the 'normal' circuit of capitalist reproduction by taking to the streets they will face starvation.

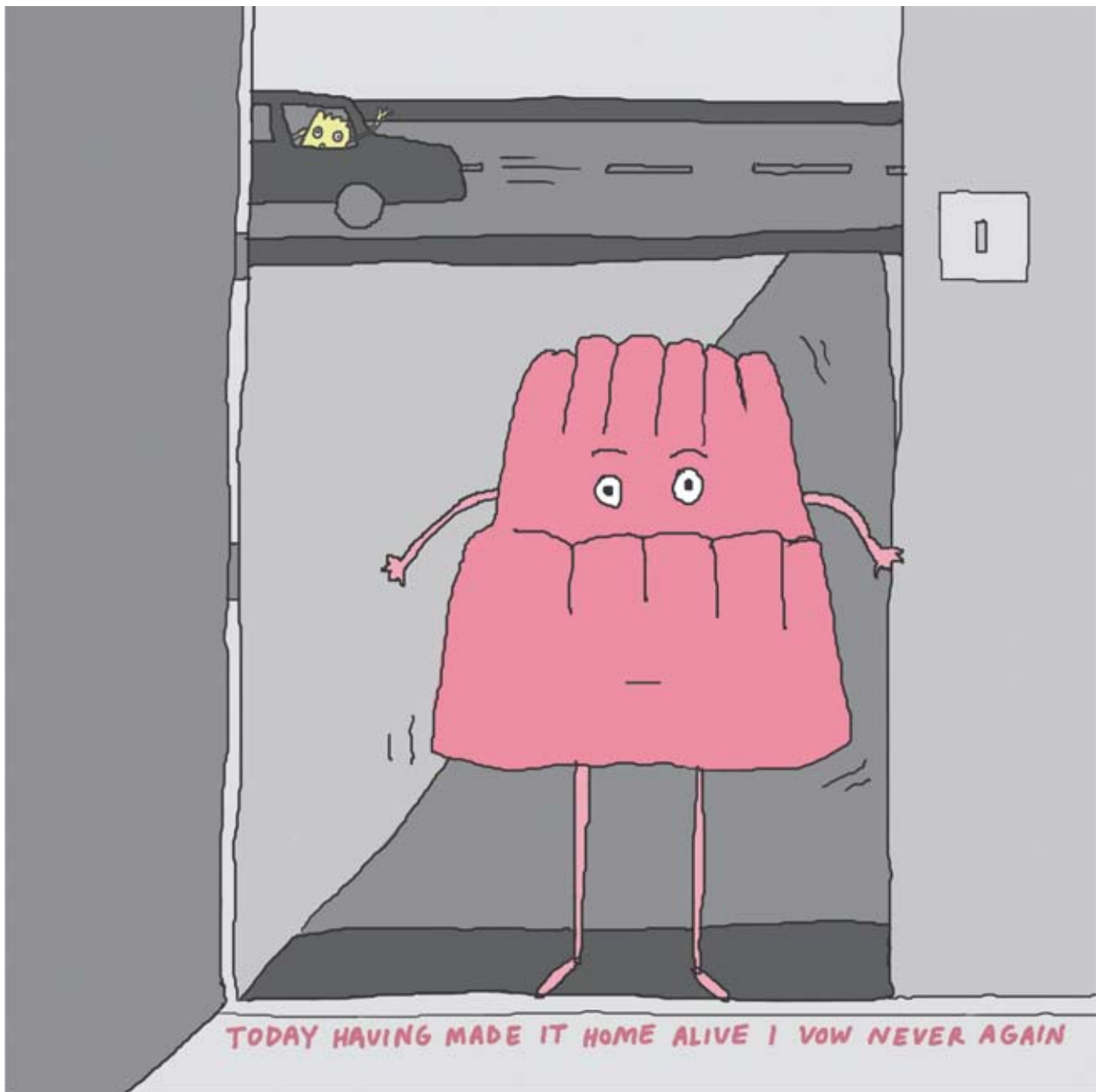
Indeed, the scenes from these places are no less dramatic in the suffering and anguish they suggest than those coming from Burma after the cyclone. The price hikes themselves have taken on the character of a natural disaster. They are treated by many commentators as a sort of 'perfect storm,' to use the deceptive jargon of our day. According to Steve Hamm, a *Business Week* journalist, a multiplicity of unrelated factors from the drought in Australia, to the "richer diets" in China and India, to "the soaring cost of oil" and "the increased use of corn for ethanol" have come together to make food unaffordable for a substantial part of the world's population.

This explanation, however, is far from convincing. It does not explain why these millions of people are exposed to international markets and hence at risk from the 'perfect storm'. The apparently unrelated factors listed by Hamm would not lead to widespread starvation if people were not dependent on world grain markets in a way that they were not a few decades ago.

In reality, the latest grain price hikes are the last act in a long process that started in the mid-1980s with the implementation in much of the world of the World Bank's and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), whose first task was to privatise agricultural lands and totally commodify food production and distribution.

If we look at the policies that governments across the world, but especially in the South, were forced to adopt in the name of the 'debt crisis' or 'economic development' we see that each of the recommended policies was geared to raise people's dependence on the world market for access to food:





- government subsidies for agricultural inputs (from fertilisers to seeds) were eliminated, as were price control and marketing boards;
- land privatisation was instituted with drives to titling and registration;
- large amounts of acreage were removed from local food production and devoted to mining, oil extraction, or the production of non-edible or export crops;
- most important, violating a long

tradition, the World Bank and IMF insisted that governments in the South dismantle their food reserves and put them on the market, arguing they were no longer needed in a global economy.

Not surprisingly, countries that in the past had always been self-sufficient as far as food production was concerned were by the end of the millennium net food importers. A good example of this dynamic is the case of Mexico and corn. Millions of corn-growing peasant

farmers have been driven from their *ejidos* (inalienable land held in common or by families) over the last decade due to their inability to compete with US corn exported to Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a model neoliberal trade treaty. As a result, Mexicans are now dependent on corn imports from the US for the provision of their basic staple food at a moment when corn prices are soaring.

Once this history is understood, no one can see the price hikes as

in any way caused by a surprising conjuncture of unrelated factors. For the crucial question to be posed both logically and politically is: *Why is it that billions of people are now dependent on an international grain market that literally condemns them to death?* For if they were not so dependent, then the storm in the international grain exchanges, however 'perfect', would have passed by without hurting many. Far from being natural, this dependence has been constructed step-by-step, policy-by-policy despite a long series of oppositional demonstrations, general strikes, and rebellions throughout the world, and the criticism of anti-globalisation scholars.

Capitalist planners' obstinate attachment to this strategy is not hard to decipher, for it is at the heart of the neoliberal agenda that strives to:

- establish international capital's ever tighter control of all natural resources, especially staple food stocks, which constitute a formidable weapon, already used throughout history to impose discipline over recalcitrant workers and reward compliant governments;
- eliminate populations not considered productive;
- reduce the real wage everywhere.

In sum, these price hikes are the dénouement of a long war on the people of the planet to eliminate the most elementary right: the right to eat to live.

This is not a new strategy discovered by geniuses like Larry Summers on H Street in Washington. In fact, as the novelist Sol Yurick writes in his forthcoming autobiography, *Revenge*, the biblical Joseph was the archetype for the IMF/World Bank officials of today. Joseph, as financial advisor to the Pharaoh, recognised a cycle of seven "good years" and seven "lean years." He cornered the market by hoarding the grain in the good years and was able to use the stored grain in the lean years both to sell at an exorbitant price and to buy the peasants' land cheaply in the



TODAY
I LISTEN
TO
NOTHING
BUT
BRITNEY
SPEARS
AGAIN

Why is it that billions are now dependent on an international grain market that literally condemns them to death?

face of their imminent starvation. What is important to note about this story is that Joseph and the Pharaoh were not 'middlemen' interested in the money they made in selling the hoarded grain; they were using their control of grain to enslave Egyptian workers and to appropriate their land.

What is to be done to prevent a repetition of this ancient tale? Across the world people are rioting in desperation, as they often did in response to the introduction of SAPs. The pace of these riots and rebellions will increase, since for

most people the affordability of food is a question of life and death. These uprisings might bring some restraint in the grain markets and cause governments to bend the neoliberal rules by providing more subsidies.

However, a reversal of the trend towards increasing dependence of people on the world grain market for accessing their staple food will require the strengthening of the already existing long-term international movement of both farmers and city dwellers committed to restoring land to the people producing food for their localities. The hunger generated by the food price hikes on the world market, which was meant to breed docility, will give this movement a tremendous impetus.

George Caffentzis is a member of the Midnight Notes Collective and co-editor of *Midnight Oil: Work Energy War 1973-1992* and *Auroras of the Zapatistas: Local and Global Struggles in the Fourth World War*.

Six impossible things before breakfast

IN A WORLD SATURATED WITH CAPITAL'S ANTAGONISMS, A POLITICS BASED EXCLUSIVELY ON OPENNESS AND AFFIRMATION IS BOUND TO FAIL. BUT **THE FREE ASSOCIATION** SUGGESTS THAT ATTEMPTING TO FOUND OUR PRACTICE ON ANTAGONISM BRINGS ITS OWN SET OF PROBLEMS...

Mildred: What're you rebelling against, Johnny?

Johnny: Whaddya got?
– *The Wild One (1953)*

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said. "One can't believe impossible things." "I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

– *Alice in Wonderland*

ONE OF THE KEY novelties of the movement of movements over the past decade has been its openness, unity-in-diversity and sense of affirmation. From startling alliances on the streets of Seattle, to experiments in political forms, we've been swept up in its global reach and sense of potential. But more recently, older themes seem to be re-emerging: antagonism, resentment, class hatred and rupture. It feels like shaking hands with a long-lost friend. You repair to a bar to renew your friendship over a few drinks, and end up

drunkenly chanting, 'The rich... the rich... we've gotta get rid of the rich!'

We're on shaky ground here. Perhaps it's just tempting to retreat to old, worn-out certainties. Yet aren't they certainties because they express a truth about our world? A shot of realism that clarifies a problem? We don't want to lose the sense of openness and the commitment to experimentation that we found with the turn-of-the-century cycle of protests. Yet that cycle seems to have stalled.

A return to Black Bloc tactics represents not the emergence of something new but a retreat to familiar patterns of behaviour – with familiar outcomes. Antagonism as identity, with its own dress code

The movement of movements has reached an impasse; innovation and expansion appear out of reach. In these circumstances a re-examination of out-of-time concepts like antagonism and class hatred might just prove timely.

WE ARE THE WRECKERS

Of course rupture and antagonism in the recent anti-capitalist movement are nothing new. They've been a continuous thread from San Cristobal and Seattle to Genoa and Oaxaca. But the way they've been woven has changed enormously.

Summit protests, for instance, reached a low point with the media-driven Make Poverty History campaign at the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles. All political contestation was hollowed-out, to the extent that the campaign's 'demands' were ones that everybody could agree with. Before 2005, summit demonstrations had been at least protests, if not concerted attempts to physically shut meetings down. In stark contrast, Make Poverty History *welcomed* leaders of the G8 to Scotland and turned a whole history of summit-stopping on its head.

The lessons of 2005 were not lost on the wider movement. Two years later, when the G8 met in Heiligendamm, the explicit goal of all major actions around the summit was to delegitimise the G8. For some, the strategy was clear: open resistance to the world the G8 represents. A mass demonstration in Rostock turned into a mini-riot with banks attacked and cars set alight. Antagonism pure and simple.

But is it so simple? Sure, the message was unequivocal, but property destruction on this scale at a summit is hardly new. And despite claims that the riot "made resistance incalculable for the police and state apparatus", the evidence suggests that it was wholly calculable – not just in terms of the financial costs of damage, but in its timing and location. In this respect, a return to Black Bloc tactics represented not the emergence

today I embark upon the
great cardigan wash



of something new but a retreat to familiar patterns of behaviour – with familiar outcomes.

Antagonism as identity, with its own dress code.

Others took a more innovative line. Block G8, for example, was a broad coalition of more than 200 organisations from autonomous groups and the ‘far left’ to church groups but, crucially, it was based on a clear antagonism to the G8. After many months of discussions an agreement was drawn up; one of the clauses was a declaration

that the G8 was illegitimate, another was on acceptable levels of militancy. This opened up exciting prospects for transformation, with people acting outside their comfort zones, but it too experienced problems. First, there were clear differences among the signatories about what this pre-agreed antagonism might mean in practice. Serious fissures emerged within the coalition following the mini-riot in Rostock. For some, attacking banks and fighting with police was taking antagonism

too far. Yet, later on in the week, with the summit under complete siege by Block G8ers and with a festival atmosphere deep inside the ‘Red Zone’, others criticised demonstrators for not being antagonistic enough. Why didn’t we make a concerted attack on the fence itself? The antagonism against the G8 was kept within clearly defined boundaries.

A second problem of organising around a pre-agreed antagonism is that it limits your mobility once the situation changes. At

Heiligendamm, the initial success of the road blockades depended on a closed group with a secret plan. But getting thousands of people from the camp to the road was one thing; maintaining a successful blockade once there was something else. At the East gate there were a number of highly frustrating meetings on Wednesday evening, as the Block G8 'action committee' dominated discussions – taking full advantage of their 'ownership' of megaphones and the sound system, and of their authority as organisers. They suggested that those who disagreed with them were undermining the 'action consensus' (i.e. the pre-agreed antagonism) and were only intent on 'escalation'. In fact, the blockade was in danger of falling apart altogether when Block G8 proclaimed 'victory' and told us to withdraw. This retreat was halted only when two people sat down in the road in front of the sound system to prevent it leaving: blockading the blockaders!

Finally, a more general criticism of the 2007 counter-mobilisation was that antagonism tended to remain at the level of the G8 itself, rather than capitalist social relations understood more widely. In fact over the past decade we can chart a narrowing, rather than an expansion, of the focus of antagonism. The movement came into being at Seattle around a shared opposition to the related neo-liberal policies that the G8, WTO and World Bank were enforcing globally. This allowed a resonance of movements from startlingly diverse places. The international neo-liberal institutions were used to stand in for much wider processes; in turn the Red Zone acted as an attractor for our desires. The G8's response was to change its focus, attempting to legitimise itself as an essential arena of governance. Just as at Gleneagles in 2005, when the G8 presented itself as the organisation best placed to tackle global poverty, so in Heiligendamm it created the impression that it is the leaders of the world's largest capitalist economies who will solve the

The movement came into being at Seattle around a shared opposition to the related neo-liberal policies that the G8, WTO and World Bank were enforcing globally. This allowed a resonance of movements from startlingly diverse places

'global challenge' of climate change. They evaded the antagonism we had created by shifting the topic to one so large that movement-based solutions were harder to envisage.

GREENHOUSE EFFECTS

Concern over climate change is now indisputably mainstream. Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, the various IPCC reports, the Stern Report all spell out the seriousness of the challenge. This is a huge change from a few years ago when scientists and other climate activists struggled to force the issue. In these conditions it's no longer a question of 'raising awareness', but of how to innovate, to creatively push an agenda that opens up new problematics.

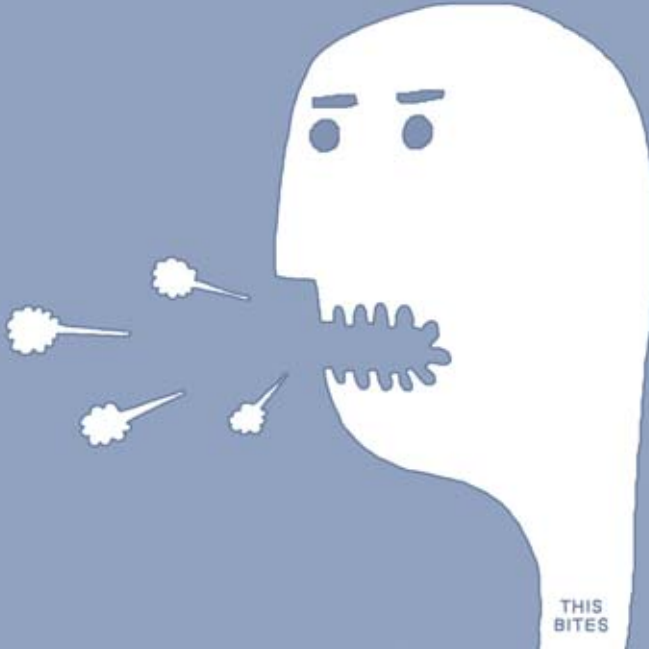
Social movements typically grow from 'cramped spaces', situations that are constricted by the impossibilities of the existing world with a way out barely imaginable. But precisely because they are cramped, these spaces act as incubators or greenhouses for creativity and innovation – "creation takes place in bottlenecks". Social movements that grow from these spaces

might form around antagonistic demands (more money, better housing, withdrawal of the police) but they also produce their own problematics. They throw up concepts, desires, forms of life that don't 'make sense' within existing society and so call forth new worlds. But just as social movements take root and slow down, so these problematics stop moving. What was once new becomes codified. It's a vicious circle: as problematics slow down, they acquire baggage; as they acquire baggage, they slow down. Rather than being innovative and productive, the problematic loses its purchase and becomes cliché. It becomes saturated in meaning.

The victory in the battle to raise awareness of climate change has had strange consequences. When you've been banging your head against a brick wall, it's hard to know what to do when the wall gives way. Some have maintained momentum by focusing disproportionate levels of energy against a tiny handful of climate-change deniers. Others are looking towards governments and supranational institutions to provide solutions, in the same way that Make Poverty History asked the G8 to solve the problems of world hunger. On one level, this is driven by a sense of urgency, and the (mistaken) notion that the problem is so massive that nothing short of a centralised body can tackle it. But on a deeper level, it's symptomatic of a 'politics without antagonism', where we can make our feelings known (by marching, wearing ribbons or white wristbands, or refusing to fly) and all the rest is administration.

This idea of a politics without antagonism is an illusion. Many of the state's 'solutions' – which some climate activists are clamouring for – will limit our freedom and our autonomy; they will make us poorer, will impose more work on us. They involve a shift of wealth and power from the poor to the rich. The individualism of 'ethical' consumption, for example, leads to an implicit antagonism with those

TODAY I CAN SEE MY BREATH WITH THE HEATING ON



England in the 18th and 19th centuries, factory owners were forced to shift from a strategy of extensive exploitation (longer working day and shorter breaks) to one of intensive exploitation (using machines to increase productivity). This launched a new cycle of accumulation, celebrated as the Industrial Revolution. The strategy reached its zenith with Henry Ford's mind-numbing production lines.

The second reason for capital's resilience is the fact that its inherent antagonism is constantly displaced. Capital as a social relation dominates our lives yet it's virtually impossible to get a grip on it. Some have argued that it's just a matter of 'false consciousness', as if all we have to do is pull aside the curtain and reveal the man pulling the levers. But it's not about ideology. Capitalism doesn't need us to *believe* that commodities have a life of their own, or that capital produces wealth. We simply have to act as if those things are true when we work or consume. That's the way in which reality cannot but appear under capitalism. Nothing else 'makes sense', because of the presuppositions that capital places on us. It's the same with the violence that separates us from the commons, as people are forced off the land in the global South or, in the North, find their working hours seeping into the rest of their lives. "It is very difficult to pinpoint this violence because it always presents itself as pre-accomplished... From a standpoint within the capitalist mode of production it is very difficult to say who is the thief and who is the victim, or even where the violence resides."

Even in the most exploitative workplace, it's difficult to be precise about where the antagonism lies. Are you up against your line manager? The chief executive? The foreign pension fund investing other workers' savings in the company? Through its strategies of class decomposition, marketisation, the naturalisation of individualism and so on, neo-liberalism forces an intensification of competition:

who make the 'wrong' choices, and/or to 'militant lobbying' of governments and other authorities to impose the 'right' choices on people. At the 2007 Camp for Climate Action in the UK, one prominent speaker warned that 'we' had to be ready to put down riots against austerity. (We intend to do the opposite.)

THE CAT EATS THE RAT, THE PIMP BEATS THE WHORE

Surely we can't be suggesting that we need more antagonism? Isn't there enough hatred and violence in the world? Isn't there enough separation and rupture already? Yes. And this is the point. The ongoing history of humanity's separation from the commons is

written in "letters of blood and fire". Across the world, whether you're picking through garbage in a slum, or struggling to make the next mortgage payment, the capital relation is one of violence, of separation, of antagonism.

This ceaseless, debilitating antagonism is central to how capitalism works. Compared with feudalism or slavery, capitalism is a dynamic and relatively resilient social system for two related reasons. The first is its ability to feed off antagonism, to use antagonism to fuel its own development. One example of this is the move from the production of absolute surplus value to relative surplus value. As the workers' movement became stronger in

A different relationship to antagonism can be seen in the post-war 'welfare states' and the Keynesian policies that underpinned them. These societies institutionalised the antagonism between capital and the industrialised working

class; a certain level of welfare provision was negotiated in exchange for rising productivity. The fierce autonomous struggles of the 1960s and '70s exploded this frozen antagonism by asserting new problems and new antagonisms.



Violence can play a part in antagonism, but they are not the same thing. It's hard to disentangle them because we're used to dealing with a very restricted notion of violence. It's easy to see the violence in a street robbery; it's harder to see the violence meted out to us over the course of our working lives; and it's nearly impossible to see the violence in the way we are daily separated from the commons.

that is, an intensification of the competitive struggle between every worker on the planet. With trade liberalisation, a coffee farmer in Ecuador now competes directly with one in Indonesia, whilst the growth of global financial markets means both are now competing with teachers in Leeds and call centre employees in Bangalore. Thus, capital's antagonistic nature manifests itself less as a clash between worker and boss than as a bitter struggle between worker and worker, as everyone struggles to meet or beat the market-determined norm (and set a new one).

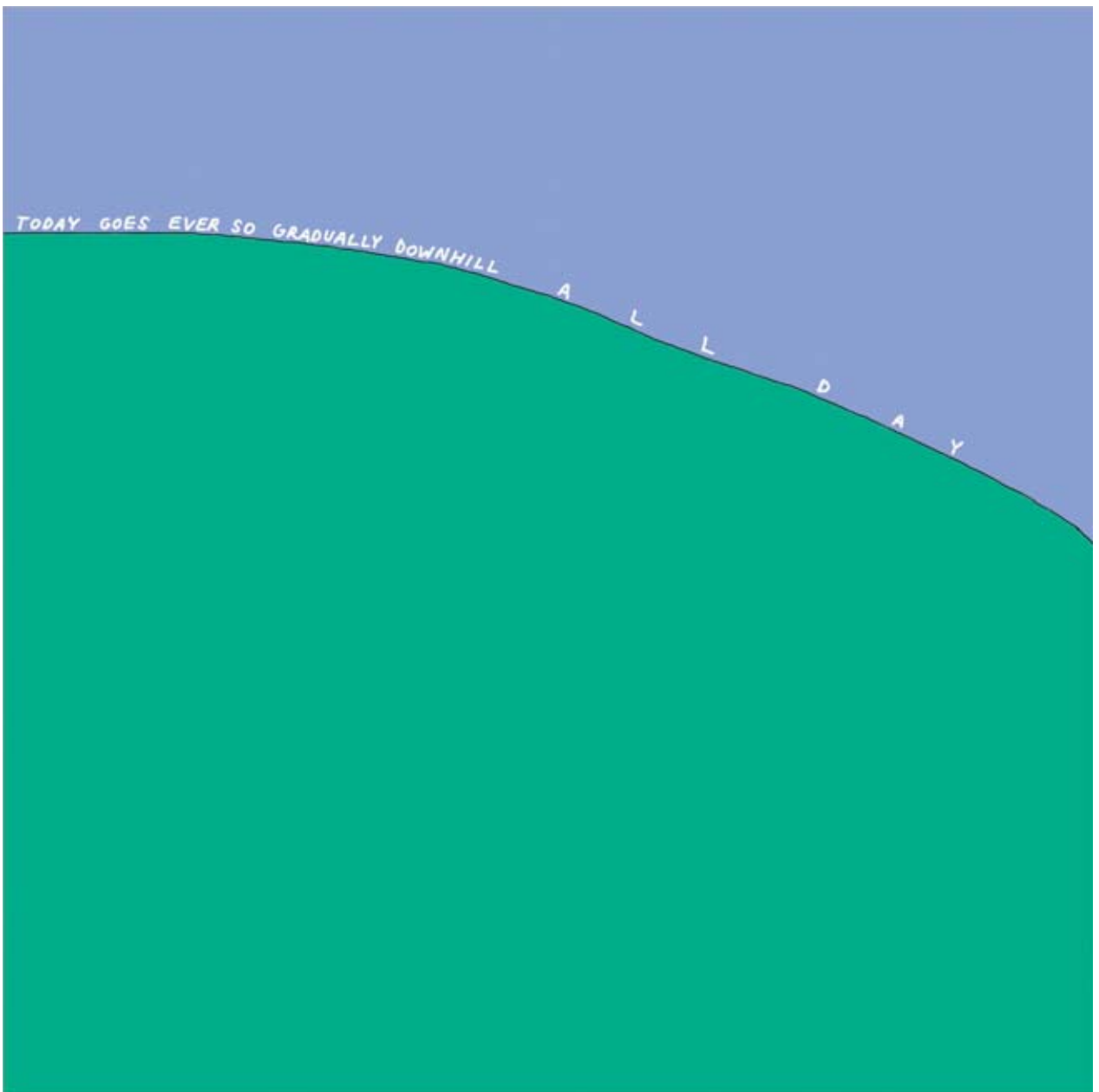
This displaced antagonism is

aggravated by climate change – and not simply by wars over water and other resources. As we've hinted, capital's solution is a new round of austerity, a redistribution of income from workers to capital. Measures like carbon taxes and road pricing will increase the cost of basic items like food, heating and transport, so limiting our mobility and our autonomy. Climate change is a double whammy for the vast majority of the world's population. Not only are we more likely to suffer from its effects – the rich don't have to live in areas susceptible to flooding and always have insurance – we will also suffer more from capital's solutions to the

Climate change is a double whammy for the vast majority of the world's population. Not only are we more likely to suffer from its effects – we will also suffer more from capital's solutions to the problem

problem. Moreover, given capitalist social relations, the best *individual* response lies in trying to get more money (since money buys mobility, etc), just as the best *individual* response in a workplace is to get ahead at the expense of fellow workers. It 'makes sense'. The net effect is to intensify competition, the war of all against all that is capital's lifeblood.

The enormous changes in the structure of capitalist relations over the last three decades have also had major implications for how antagonism appears in our everyday lives. With outsourcing and privatisation it's increasingly unclear who our enemy might be at any one time. Governance is multi-layered, with responsibility always lying 'elsewhere'. Politicians and decision-makers at every level, from local councils to national governments, can honestly say "our hands are tied". Politics, as it's traditionally understood, is replaced by administration, with the result that a political antagonism often makes no sense. Take the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which operates across schools, hospitals, prisons and so on in the UK: it's a way of injecting private capital into public services in return for long-term service contracts. Under the school scheme, for example, the local authority doesn't own the building, but leases it from a company. Widely seen as a disaster, the PFI scheme is almost impossible to oppose: "There is no other funding available..." It's the fundamental cry of neo-liberalism: There Is No



Alternative. It's non-negotiable. Neo-liberalism is a totalitarianism not based on belief but simply on 'efficiency', on getting the job done.

ANGER IS AN ENERGY

Yet, despite all this, hatred of the rich and powerful persists. People resent the 'fat cats.' The torched BMW is the scream of refusal, of rage. NO! It's a current that has a long history, existing in parallel with more affirmative politics. Alongside the Anabaptists' cry of *Omnia sunt communia* [all things

are common] and the Diggers' notion of an immanent republic of heaven on earth went hatred of the gentry and all they stood for.

But can we found a politics on an antagonism formulated in this way? There are three major problems. The first is that of simply identifying our antagonist. It's too glib to simply say that the enemy is capital. Capital is horribly real, it dominates our lives, but it is an abstraction. We experience it in its effects, which means that the antagonisms it

produces run right through us. The problem is not so much that of *revealing* antagonism, as if we just have to show people the true nature of capital as a social relation. Instead it's one of *re-composing* the antagonism that we experience.

This leads to a second difficulty: it's hard to re-compose that antagonism without falling into the trap of personalising capital. In the 2004 film *The Edukators*, one of the characters explains, "It's not who invented the gun, man. It's who pulls the trigger." There's a



The problematic of antagonism makes a different kind of sense when placed alongside the problematic of exodus. After all, antagonism can help tell us about what we are but it can't tell us what we can become

contradiction here. For us, one of the most liberating moments in the 1980s was the way that anarchist politics gave names (and addresses) to the people who dominate our lives. It broke the rules of the game. It rejected the power imbalance between rich and poor, the asymmetry of a world where profits are privatised but loss is always socialised. (Look at the current credit crisis: whilst the 'subprime' poor are being turfed onto the streets, top bankers are selling third homes or luxury yachts.) In a bizarre way, naming the rich re-asserts a common humanity by denying them the ability to hide behind limited liability companies,

off-shore tax havens, and multi-layered management. It is an echo of Lucy Parsons in 1885 when she said "Let us devastate the avenues where the wealthy live."

There are a huge number of dangers here. Besides the obvious dead-end of terrorism, this approach can easily slide into populism. Naming capital (a social relation) as the enemy doesn't offer an easy course of action; naming the rich simplifies the social field, offering us some grip on the world. But it does this by providing a scapegoat. This stand-in might be the aristocracy, the ruling class or investment bankers – any element that is seen as 'parasitic' or

'unproductive'. And historically it has often been linked with violent anti-Semitism.

The third problem is even more fundamental. By themselves resentment, antagonism and so on will only take us so far. Because an antagonistic relationship with capital is still a relationship with capital, it still involves defining ourselves in relation to capital. But we don't want *any* relation with capital (or the state), antagonistic or otherwise. We want to destroy these relationships, just as we want to refuse definition. We want exodus, autonomy. And this is the paradox. Although autonomy is about movement – "by our own efforts bringing ourselves to happiness" – it still has to contain some sort of 'No', a break with the world-as-it-is. It's difficult to start swimming in open water: it's much easier to push off against something. Antagonism provides that 'No' by simplifying social space enough to offer some purchase on the world and so allow political action.

Populism dovetails neatly into the moments of piety that pass for 'politics' under neo-liberalism. One minute we're asking the GB to solve hunger in Africa, the next we're condemning young mothers for feeding their children junk food. Each wave of po-faced moral panic absolves capital of responsibility for

the state of the world it dominates. Yet because neo-liberalism doesn't rely on any of these beliefs in particular, each one collapses in turn and their serial nature robs us of all belief. De-politicised politics is precisely that wild swing between piety, like Make Poverty History, and a numbing cynicism.



We can't pretend that antagonism doesn't exist, and nor can we wish it away. But we must act in recognition of that antagonism in order to dissolve it. These simplifications have an excess to them, which we might think of as their impossibilities. This is the cramping that each problematic contains. And it is in these cramped spaces that we can create new problematics, tracing a path between impossibilities... and so open up new possibilities.

THE REVENGE OF THE RED QUEEN

If we find ourselves at an impasse when we try to think through antagonism, perhaps that's not the fault of the concept but rather of the impasse we are placed in, "in both our lives and our thinking", by capital and governmentality. The problematic of antagonism makes a different kind of sense when placed alongside the problematic of exodus. After all, antagonism can help tell us about what we *are* but it

can't tell us what we can *become*.

Traditional political concepts such as solidarity or alliance imply a calculation of pre-existing interests. They rest on separate discrete bodies, with a beginning and an end, whose paths can be mapped in advance. It's as though the identities involved aren't transformed by the relationship the concepts represent. That's why we like the idea of love as a political concept, because love involves a reciprocal transformation. It's a relationship of mutual becoming. As such it operates beyond a rational calculation of interest. You quite literally lose your self in love as the boundaries of separate, discrete bodies become indistinct.

We might recognise such a politics in the periodic peaks of shared intensity, which we can experience, for example, in collective political action. During such moments of excess the fictions of capital's fetishism dissolve and we face a repotentialised world. Capital's antagonism becomes

clearer, yet it loses its motivating force for us: instead we are animated by the affect of increasing collective capacity. We can escape our antagonistic identity and transform into something new.

Of course we can't just wish a political relationship of love into existence. The riot cop advancing towards us is trained to resist any relationship of mutual transformation (unrequited love is the most painful kind). Such experiences are concrete and specific, they can't be unproblematically universalised. We'd do better to think of them as trainings in love. Taken a-historically and non-specifically, love can descend into piety and opens itself to neo-liberal administration. If we're to reach a materialist love, we need the realism of recomposed antagonism.

Mired as we are in the deadening fictions of this world, a politics based on love can seem impossible. Just as a politics of antagonism is an impossibility to neo-liberalism. But that shouldn't be of any concern to us. Like the Red Queen, we must train ourselves to believe "six impossible things before breakfast". As one problematic becomes saturated we look to the next impossibility to give us purchase. This is how we'll make our escape, with LOVE tattooed on the knuckles of one hand, HATE on the other.

The quote about "pre-accomplished" violence is from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze writes about the creativity of bottlenecks and tracing a path between impossibilities in *Negotiations*; the "in both our lives and in our thinking" quote is from his book *Foucault*. United Colours of Resistance wrote of "incalculable" resistance in 'Black Block', in *Voices of Resistance from Occupied London, 2* (<http://www.occupiedlondon.org/issuetwo>). John Holloway writes about fetishisation and our scream of refusal in *Change the World Without Taking Power* and elsewhere. William Morris talked about "by our own efforts bringing ourselves to happiness" in 1891. The Free Association's virtual home is www.freelyassociating.org.

PUNDITS ARE DESCRIBING THE GLOBAL 'CREDIT CRUNCH' AS POTENTIALLY THE WORST CRISIS TO BEFALL CAPITALISM SINCE THE WALL STREET CRASH OF 1929 AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION THAT FOLLOWED. WE DOUBT THE VALUE OF SUCH COMPARISONS, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT WE NEED TO MAKE SENSE OF THE ORIGINS, NATURE AND MEANING OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS. MOST IMPORTANT, WE NEED TO GRASP ITS POTENTIAL AND ITS DANGERS FOR US. HERE WE PRINT TWO ANALYSES. IN THE FIRST, **CHRISTIAN FRINGS** SUGGESTS THAT NOT ONLY WAS NEO-LIBERAL 'FINANCIALISATION' A RESPONSE TO STRUGGLE, BUT THAT ITS CRISIS IS NOW OPENING UP NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR MOVEMENTS. IN THE SECOND, **DAVID HARVIE** ARGUES THAT FINANCE PLAYS A ROLE THAT GOES TO THE HEART OF COMPETITIVE CALCULATION, ACCUMULATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE; THE PRESENT CRISIS IS THUS A CRISIS OF BOTH MEASURE AND CAPITAL.

Global capitalism: futures and options

BY CHRISTIAN FRINGS

SINCE AUGUST 2007, it has been looking bad for capitalism's futures. Suddenly, in a matter of days and weeks, the crisis of the financial markets spread across the entire globe. What had begun as a highly localised event came to shake stock markets and banks on every continent. And it is not over yet.

The crisis has developed in several waves. After every dramatic culmination, and correspondingly hectic interventions by states and central banks, it was announced that the crisis would soon come to an end. But the downswing has so far been unstoppable. When the figurehead German President refers to financial markets as "monsters", he is recalling the Frankenstein myth already cited by Marx to describe the mysterious *thing-ification* of capital: "By

OVERACCUMULATION, that is, too much capital chasing too few profitable investment opportunities, is one of the key crisis tendencies affecting capitalist economies. Every day, the surplus exploited from our labour the previous day has to be invested somewhere. If, for whatever reason (workers' resistance, saturated markets, government regulations) capitalists can't profitably invest that surplus in production for existing markets, they either have to force open new markets, or further bid up the price of existing assets (real estate, stock markets, currencies...). This is the source of the many 'bubbles' and financial crises we've experienced in the last 15 years.



incorporating living labour with their dead substance, the capitalist at the same time converts value, i.e., past, materialised, and dead labour into capital, into value big with value, a live monster that is fruitful and multiplies.” The rulers are themselves being ruled by an anonymous force, which they defend but whose logic they do not understand.

Every crisis points towards the historical finitude of capitalism. When the futures imagined by those in power do not come to pass, options for movements from below arise. There is no inevitability at play here. But today, options for movements are incomparably greater than they were 100–200 years ago. What is on the agenda today is not merely an institutional correction, such as the return to a stricter regulation of markets. Despite the fact that this is precisely what many are calling for – including large parts of the left who see the crisis as merely an expression of the excesses of

neoliberalism – financialisation was *itself* only the articulation of a fundamental crisis. And it affected the capitalist system as a global whole, and the way it has developed since World War II.

When the futures imagined by those in power do not come to pass, options for movements from below arise

At the end of the 1960s, the system had entered a crisis, not simply because of the ‘internal laws of motion’ of capital and competition, but moreover as a result of simultaneous pressures exerted by workers all around the world. The rulers shied away from shifting the crisis’ entire weight onto workers in order

to restore profit rates. Although today this has largely been forgotten, back then it was the talk of the day. After the Parisian May 1968 and the mass strike, De Gaulle gave up any attempt to return to the gold standard, preferring to allow inflationary wage increases. In Italy, the slogan ‘Workers produce the crisis’ was widespread. Leftwing economists developed the theory of the ‘profit squeeze’ in which wage increases pushed through by militant strike movements were seen as having a decisive impact on the decline of the rate of profit. Others still showed that the bottoming-out of productivity increases was the result of an increased rejection of the monotony of work on the production line and the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic control over labour-power.

The 1970s discovery of the ‘subjective factor’ in Marxist crisis theory was thus not an accident, but the theoretical expression of a practical movement and a real transformation of historical significance. In earlier capitalist crises, during the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, workers’ movements had largely been reactions to the crises of capital, which seemed to follow only its own internal laws. Its fetishistic character appeared unbroken, and it was this character that theoretical reflections on crises dealt with. The wave of class struggles of the 1960s and ’70s has once again called into question this fetishism. We make history, and our struggles influence the development of capital.

This subversive world-historical subjectivity was once again pushed off the stage by the backlash effected by neoliberalism and state repression against movements, by unemployment and austerity. The power of money and the fetish of capital were given new legitimacy by the boom of the 1990s, but the more fundamental problem remained unsolved. Financialisation was capital’s flight from production and an attempt to create the illusion of a purely



of their hegemonic position, even after over-accumulation became acute, through shifting into the financial business. In their analyses, Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly Silver have linked the discovery of the 'subjective factor' in the theory of crises to the world historical dynamic of capitalism. This has not involved a mere repetition of the same old story of the eternal rise and fall of the empires of capital, but rather the discovery that the power of the exploited in the world system has tended to increase. With every transformation, their influence on the shape and the social character of the system has risen. What we are experiencing right now is the definitive beginning of the end of a capitalist cycle that, in spite of the barbarisms of the first half of the 20th century, was once again able to develop under US leadership. Nobody can predict how social movements from below will intervene into the crisis over the coming months and years, changing the face of the world in doing so. But we can note that our options and our power to intervene into history have become significantly greater. The initial signs of this are workers' struggles from China to Eastern Europe and Egypt, and the food riots in the global South, which are already developing at surprising speed and simultaneity against the crisis.

Translated from the German original by Tazio Müller and Ben Trott

monetary valorisation of capital. The flight was accompanied by ever more frequently occurring crises: the 1987 stock market crash; the so-called Tequila crisis which started in Mexico in 1995; the 1997 Asian crisis; the twin-crises of Russia and the Long Term Capital Management-fund (LTCM) in 1998; and in 2000, the end of the New Economy hype. The rulers of the world seemed downright surprised that none of these crises dragged the entire global system into an abyss, as had been the case in 1929. This has now changed, and in the US there is already talk of the 'global slump of 2008–2009'. This is largely the result of the

FINANCIALISATION describes the massive expansion of financial instruments, especially 'derivatives' over the last 30 years, as well as the growing power of financial institutions (banks, hedge funds, rating agencies) vis-à-vis other social forces.

last ten years' massive explosion in the trade in derivatives and its international interlinkages. This has in turn shown that the search for profitable investment opportunities is becoming ever more desperate, ever more speculative, and ever more daring. The simulation of capital accumulation by financialisation cannot be prolonged indefinitely. It is this fact that is becoming apparent today. This also shows, in a hidden form, the continued pressure of the global working classes that stands in the way of a renewed intensification of exploitation.

Seen historically, capital's flight from over-accumulation into financialisation is nothing new. Already in earlier cycles of the development of the capitalist world system, governing and organising powers – such as the Netherlands in the 18th and the British Empire in the 19th century – were able to postpone, by 30–40 years, their downfall and continue to reap the benefits

Christian Frings lives in Cologne and has been working on understanding the development of the capitalist world system, and how the struggles of the global working classes can overcome it. Tazio Müller and Ben Trott are editors of *Turbulence*.

The measure of a monster

Capital, class, competition and finance

BY DAVID HARVIE

“International financial markets have developed into a monster that must be put back in its place”
– Horst Köhler, German President and former head of the IMF

THE NUMBERS associated with finance are mind-boggling. The entire value of annual global output changes hands in just six days’ trading on the world’s financial markets! Sometimes – like now, in the midst of the ‘global credit crisis’ – finance seems to get out of control. The voices of those – such as Horst Köhler or, from the Left, Walden Bello – denouncing finance and calling for its regulation rise to a crescendo.

SUBPRIME borrowers are those with ‘poor credit histories’, individuals with no secure income or assets, who may have defaulted on loans in the past. In short, the precarious!

DERIVATIVE INSTRUMENTS are financial assets or securities whose value *derives*, in principle at least, from the price of some *underlying* commodity, asset or set of assets. A *future*, for example, is a firm commitment to exchange a certain commodity or asset at an agreed price at some point in the future; an *option* is similar, but gives its holder the right to buy or sell, but with no obligation to do so. With *swaps*, the two parties exchange income streams or debt repayment commitments, e.g. a variable-interest rate loan denominated in yen is swapped for

Is all of this financial activity merely ‘speculative’? Is it a symptom of capital’s flight from ‘a stagnant real economy’, that is, from ‘production’ where it has to struggle with living labour to extract surplus value? Certainly much financial-market activity is speculative in that traders are taking risks in the hope of making a profit. But *all* capitalist activity is speculative in this sense. There’s nothing more speculative than throwing money into production – that is, purchasing means of production, including labour-power – and then trying to make the breathing, struggling, desiring human bearers of this labour-

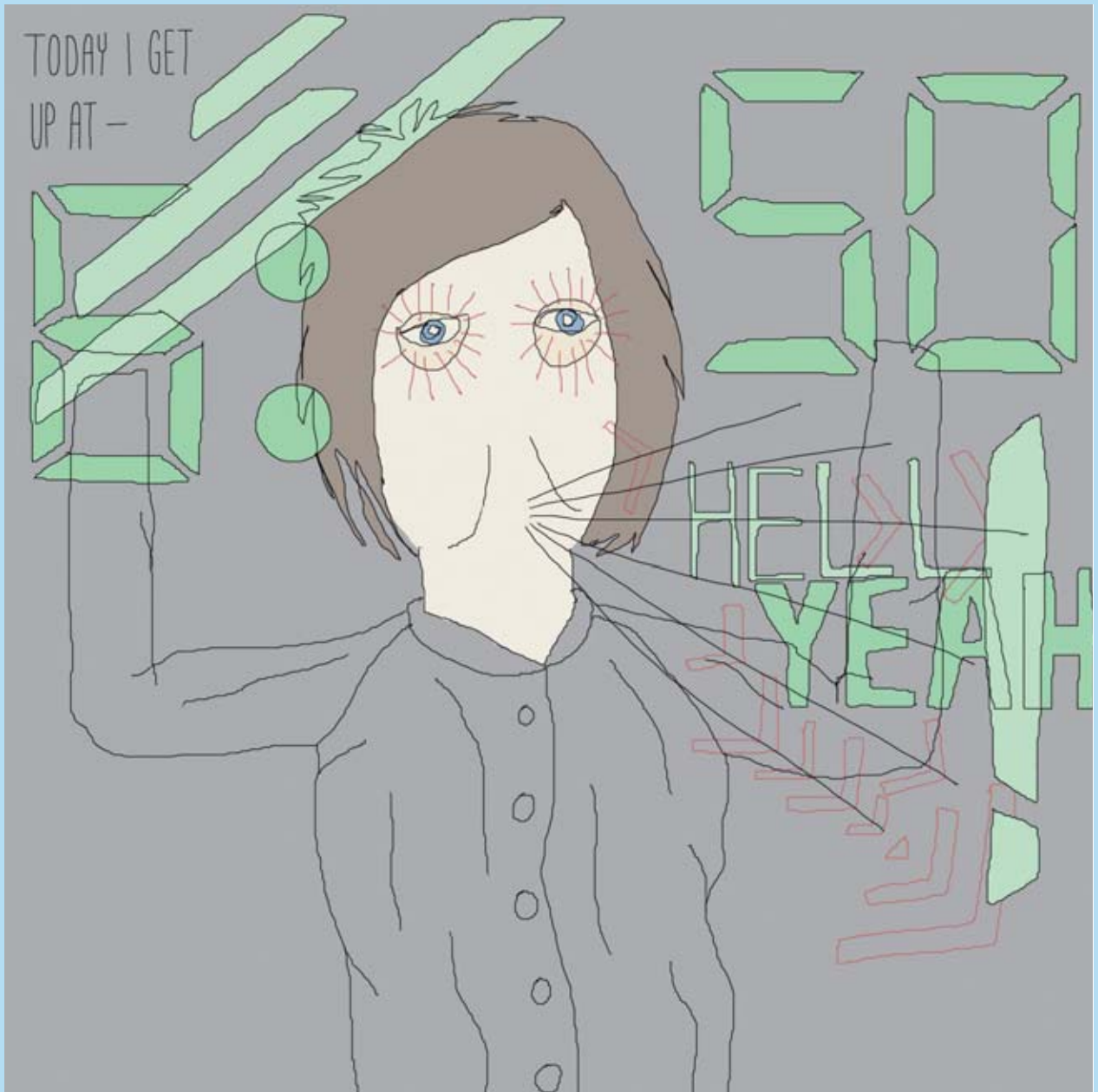
a fixed-interest rate payment in dollars. In practice, prices tend to be established in derivatives markets first, and the price of the underlying asset or commodity is derived from these. So the price a Guatemalan coffee farmer receives for her crop is actually set by traders on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (LIFFE) – occupied during 1999’s Carnival Against Capital. Derivatives may be linked to commodities (coffee, cocoa, pork bellies, oil and so on), shares or share indexes (such as the FTSE100), interest rates, currencies... There are now even derivatives based on the weather and, for a few months, there existed a ‘Policy Analysis Market’, which allowed trading on *coups d’état*, assassinations and terrorist attacks.

power work hard enough to make you a profit.

Speculation isn’t the whole story, though. In fact arguing whether financial markets are primarily about ‘speculation’, or whether they are ‘stabilising’ or ‘destabilising’, easily falls into the trap of implying that investment in the ‘real economy’ – the accumulation of alienated labour in factories, fields, call centres and schools – is somehow more ‘ethical’. This sort of critique of finance also misses its most important function, which goes to the heart of capital accumulation, competition, class and the class struggle.

The financial markets, and in particular those arcane instruments known as ‘derivatives’, are all about *measure*, measuring the production of value, measuring capital accumulation. Financial derivatives allow all the different ‘bits’ of capital (across time, across space and across sectors) to be priced against – or *commensurated* with – each other. Derivatives even turn the very contingent nature of value – its contestability – into a tradeable commodity.

The ‘performance’ of different assets – that is the ‘performance’ of its associated ‘bit’ of capital, including the workers exploited by that bit of capital – can be measured by its rate of return. And thus each asset, if it is to survive, must deliver a competitive rate of return. Each must *meet or beat* the market ‘norm’. Financial investors, speculators – call them what you will – do not care whether they trade cocoa futures, the Argentinian peso or some index linked to the FTSE100. They seek simply the greatest return (taking risk into account). And so, by their trading actions, the ‘performance’ of those ‘top’ 100 companies is compared to the ‘performance’ of the entire Argentinian economy (if that economy is ‘strong’ the peso will rise in value) and to cocoa farmers everywhere. The implications for workers across the planet are clear. *Our* ‘performance’ is being measured. The performance of a Detroit



car-worker can be compared not only with that of his neighbour on the production line, or even with her counterpart in Alabama or South Korea, but with garment workers in Morocco, programmers

in Bangalore and cleaners on the London Underground. Competition is intensified, as is class struggle.

Which brings us to the present crisis. At the heart of the crisis lay

'subprime' borrowers and so-called Collateralised Debt Obligations or CDOs, another type of derivative instrument linked to these borrowers' mortgages. Not only is our access to housing dependent upon capitalist exchange. Not only has our struggle to keep a roof over our heads become a profit-making opportunity for investors. Our 'performance' as debtors is measured by the global financial market and is yoked to that market, and through it to the performance of all other 'assets' –

In the 1970s, another decade of escalating oil prices, Western banks 'recycled' petrodollars to many 'Third World' governments in the form of loans (at variable interest rates). Whole economies were thus exposed to the measure and discipline of international financial markets. The real meaning of discipline became apparent in the course of the international debt crisis of the 1980s and the various financial crises throughout the 1990s and the first decade of this century.

The word **MORTGAGE** has its roots in Norman French; literally it means 'death grip'. **CREDIT** has its origin in the Latin word *credere*, 'to believe'.



investors – or capital – for a rate of return. It's a crisis that, like all crises, reveals how our access to social wealth, such as housing, is rationed by money. Just look at the growing 'tent cities' – American shanties – whilst houses made of timber, bricks and mortar stand empty as a result of foreclosure.

But the present crisis is also a crisis of measure. Investors mispriced risk, they miscalculated. Bankers are now talking about market 'corrections'. What's interesting about this crisis is not so much that financial institutions have lost a lot of money – so far \$300 billion has been 'written down' – but that, more than one year on, they still don't know exactly *how much*. Through the duration of the crisis, financial markets have failed to measure value and thus to commensurate capital. Capital – for it to be capital – must be commensurated. If 'bits' of capital cannot be measured and entered onto a balance sheet as so many dollars or euros, then they're just so many barrels of Brent crude or such-and-such a number of tonnes of coffee: their status as capital is threatened. Thus a crisis of the measure of value is a crisis of value, and of capital itself.

Part of our politics must take the form of resistance to competitive calculation. The holders of sub-prime loans showed this potential negatively: the capacity of a (generally black) working class in the US triggering crisis by refusing to perform the role assigned them and the calculation implied. The challenge is to work out how to frame this power positively.

the programmers and the cleaners, the farmers and the garment workers. In short, we become – in our reproductive activity as well as our waged work – subjects of competitive calculation.

Those who invested in mortgage-backed CDOs clearly believed that those borrowers, 'subprime' and otherwise, and the US economy in general, would 'perform'. In other words, that US householders and workers would perform their assigned

role in competitive calculation. Of course, a small proportion of borrowers would not 'perform', but these risks had all been taken into account in CDOs' 'risk-and-return profiles'. Risks had been calculated and priced. In the event, many more borrowers failed to perform and, as the defaults spread, the financial system in its entirety was threatened.

At one level this crisis is a crisis about needs versus profits. Our needs for housing versus those of

Part of our politics must take the form of resistance to competitive calculation. The holders of sub-prime loans showed this potential negatively... the challenge is to work out how to frame this power positively

David Harvie is a member of The Free Association and an editor of *Turbulence*.

Et tu Bertinotti?

THE PREVIOUSLY STRONG ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY RADICAL LEFT EXPERIENCED A FRACTURE WITH THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND WAS THEN WIPED OUT IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS. **SANDRO MEZZADRA** EXAMINES THE FALLOUT, WHILE BELOW **KEIR MILBURN** AND **BEN TROTT** OFFER SOME BACKGROUND.

APRIL 28, 2008: Supporters of the newly elected, rightwing mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, crowd outside the City Hall. He appears on the balcony and waves the Italian tricolour. The cry goes out, 'Duce, Duce'. Supporters raise the straight-arm 'Roman salute'. The aesthetic is decidedly Fascist.

These echoes of Italy's past have been accompanied by a wave of anti-immigrant violence. Both come on the back of Silvio Berlusconi's return to power at the head of a rightwing coalition which includes the 'post-Fascist' *National Alliance* and the anti-immigrant *Northern League*.

What is more, this shift to the right has involved what, in the following short text, Sandro Mezzadra describes as the 'abolition' of the parliamentary left at the last election. It also coincides with an incredibly strained moment in the complex relationship between the movements and institutions of the Italian left.

All this is in stark contrast to the previous period of Berlusconi government, between 2001 and 2006. This had been characterised by an explosion of struggle, what some had called 'the springtime of the movements'. It had also been a period of intense and largely productive cooperation between social movements and institutions, including political parties. The 300,000 strong demonstrations against the GB, the

general strikes of 2002 against a package of labour reforms and budget cuts, the proliferation of local social forums around Italy, and the protests against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were all characterised by collaboration between autonomous movements and non-autonomous others. Of particular importance were the grassroots syndicalist union, Cobas; the FIOM metal workers union; the *Tute Bianche* (White Overall movement)/*Disobbedienti*; and the youth-wing of *Rifondazione, Giovani Comuniste e Comunisti* (the Young Communists).

The decision by *Rifondazione* to seek participation in the post-Berlusconi government, ahead of the 2006 election, however, led to a rupture in its relation with social movements. The 'area of autonomy' in Italy, all of a sudden, became much more easy to define. With the calling of a snap election, only two years after a number of radical-left parties, including *Rifondazione*, entered into Romano Prodi's coalition government, efforts to pursue change via the parliamentary route (or, for the more cynical: 'the path of opportunism') catastrophically collapsed. It seems likely that it is within this 'area of autonomy' that the left in Italy will increasingly need to concentrate their efforts over the years to come.

Keir Milburn & Ben Trott

THE RESULTS of the recent elections in Italy were a shock. The parliamentary 'left' was abolished. It was a particularly crushing defeat for *Rifondazione comunista* and Fausto Bertinotti, the initiator of the *Sinistra Arcobaleno* project.

I belong to those who fundamentally criticised this project even before the elections. *Arcobaleno* was, from the beginning, pure 'coalition politics'. There was no serious discussion about the two years (2006–2008) in which *Rifondazione* had taken part in the Prodi government. The entire *Arcobaleno* election campaign was characterised by a form of 'identity politics'. Its goal was to rescue the 'left', which was reduced to a value in itself.

Within *Rifondazione*, between 1998 and 2003, there was – parallel to the development of powerful struggles and social movements – at least an attempt to take seriously the crisis of representative democracy; to conceive a new relation between social struggles and institutions; to develop this relation in the new transnational spaces of Europe; and to make full use of militant investigation into the transformation of class composition as a means of participating in social struggles. This route was interrupted when *Rifondazione* came to the decision to invest everything in

participation in the government and to resolve the crisis of historic communism through a kind of 'left-social democratic' project. The elections have passed a devastating judgement over this project.

There are many comrades in Italy who celebrate this judgement. Some believe that the defeat of Bertinotti shows the necessity of a traditional communist identity. Others point towards the necessary autonomy of social struggles and movements. Whilst I find the former position to be a type of 'identity politics', I feel very close to the latter. But I think that it is urgently necessary to pose the problem of politics anew within social struggles and movements. Such movements and struggles are not absent in Italy. Quite the opposite! But the elections did not only lead to the defeat of Bertinotti and *Arcobaleno*. The victory of Berlusconi and Bossi (the leader of the *Northern League*) is characterised by singular traits which have not been emphasised strongly enough. In particular, the *Lega* ran an extremely aggressive election campaign, characteristic of the crisis of 'neoliberal' globalisation. We are now confronted by an occupation from the right of the critique of globalisation. In considering the consequences of the signs of an international economic crisis, the territorial and/or national community is being defensively rediscovered as the exclusive point of reference for politics. The ubiquity of the rhetoric about 'security' has to be interpreted within this context.

Social struggles and movements, under these conditions, run the

danger of being reduced to the status of resistance. The problem to be addressed by leftwing politics, in my opinion, consists precisely in the opening of new horizons which go beyond this. The Seattle (1999) and Genoa (2001) protests brought this question forth powerfully, anticipating the crisis of 'neoliberal' globalisation.

There is no 'national' answer to this problematic: the task that we are confronted with here in Italy is similar to that which needs to take place everywhere. We are trying to interpret the situation here in the context of Europe and the globe.

Three parties of the radical-left, *Federazione dei Verdi* (the Federation of Greens), *Rifondazione comunista* (the Refounded Communist Party), and *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani* (the Party of Italian Communists), had taken part in the post-Berlusconi governing coalition. In the election brought on by that government's fall, they formed the *Sinistra Arcobaleno* (Rainbow Left) coalition, led by the former head of *Rifondazione comunista*, Fausto Bertinotti. The coalition suffered a crushing defeat. For the first time since the Second World War, there is no communist participation in the Italian parliament, and Italy is now one of very few European countries without Green Party representation in parliament.



Beyond the traditional 'left' there are new spaces and possibilities for radical politics to be discovered and built.

The situation in which we set ourselves this task is very different from that which the 'global movement' emerged from. The world is changing. Neither Empire (the global, networked form of rule first described by Hardt and Negri) nor imperialism appear to be able to stabilise – in the capitalist sense – the 'world order'. The discussion of this task is something I am sure we will continue to pursue together in the near future.

Translated by Ben Trott

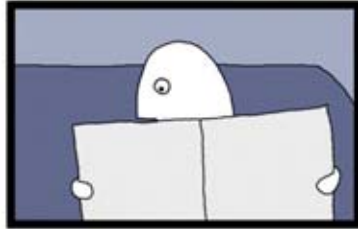
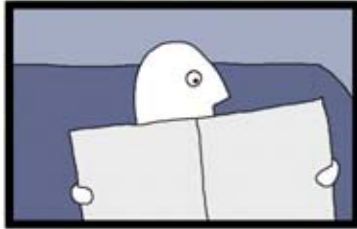
Sandro Mezzadra is an editor of the Italian journal *Posse* (www.posseweb.net) and teaches Political Theory at the University of Bologna. This text is an edited version of a message sent to the Interventionist Left's conference in Germany, at the end of April.

Keir Milburn and Ben Trott are editors of *Turbulence*.



THIS IS NOT MY FIRST APOCALYPSE

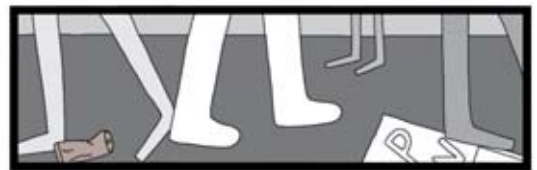
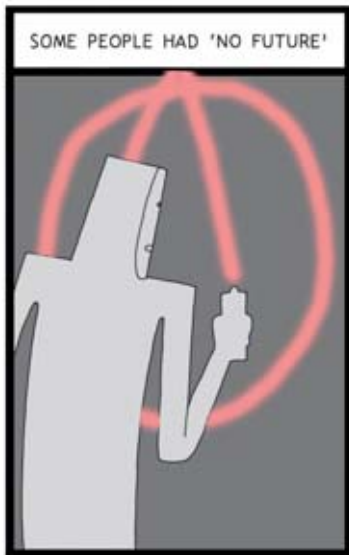
WORDS-FABIAN FRENZEL IMAGES-OCTAVIA RAITT



APOCALYPSE
The word originally meant the disclosure to privileged persons something hidden to most of mankind. It evolved into a term that refers to the end of the world. It has been used, for some time now, to nurture a politics of fear.



OTHER GENERATIONS HAD HOPE FOR SALVATION. BUT THE LIGHT AT THE END OF OUR TUNNEL TURNED OUT JUST TO BE THE GLARE FROM THE BURNING AMAZON.



WHY WOULD YOU DEMONSTRATE?

THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO!



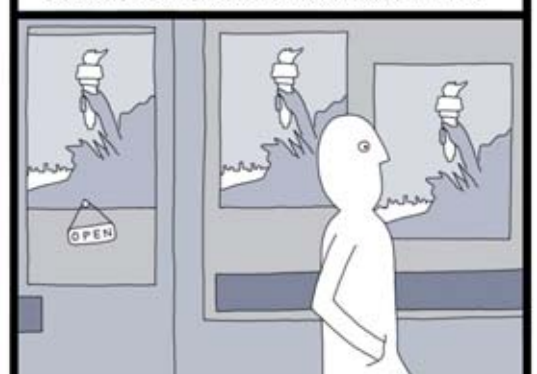
PEOPLE IN EASTERN EUROPE HAD CHANGED THE WORLD PARTLY BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO BREAK FREE FROM RESTRICTIONS. THEY WANTED TO TRAVEL AND THEY DID.

THEY KNEW WHERE THEY WANTED TO GO- TO A BETTER FUTURE

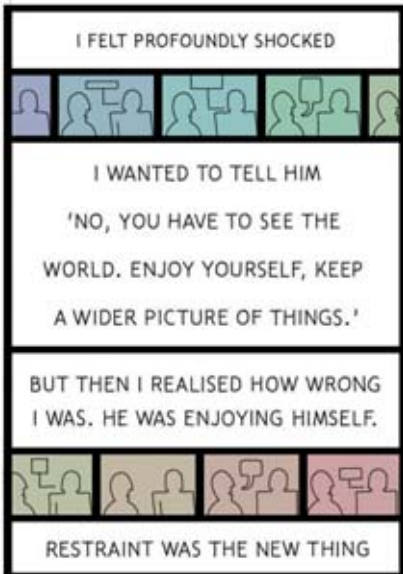
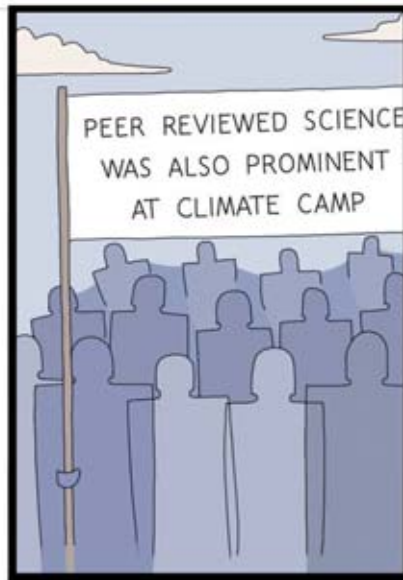
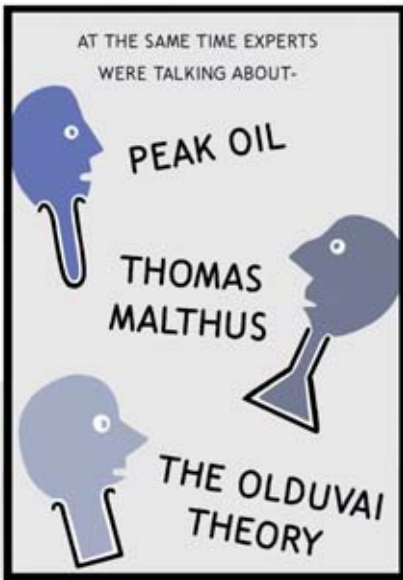
MANY PEOPLE FOUND THIS GREAT, SOME FOUND IT RATHER SCARY

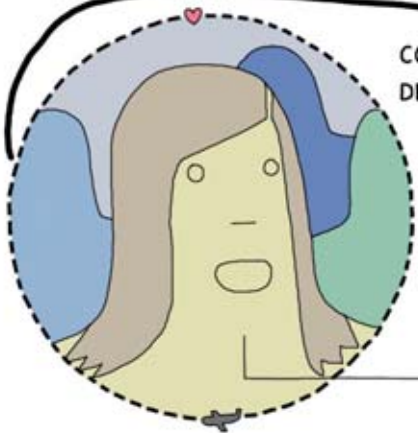
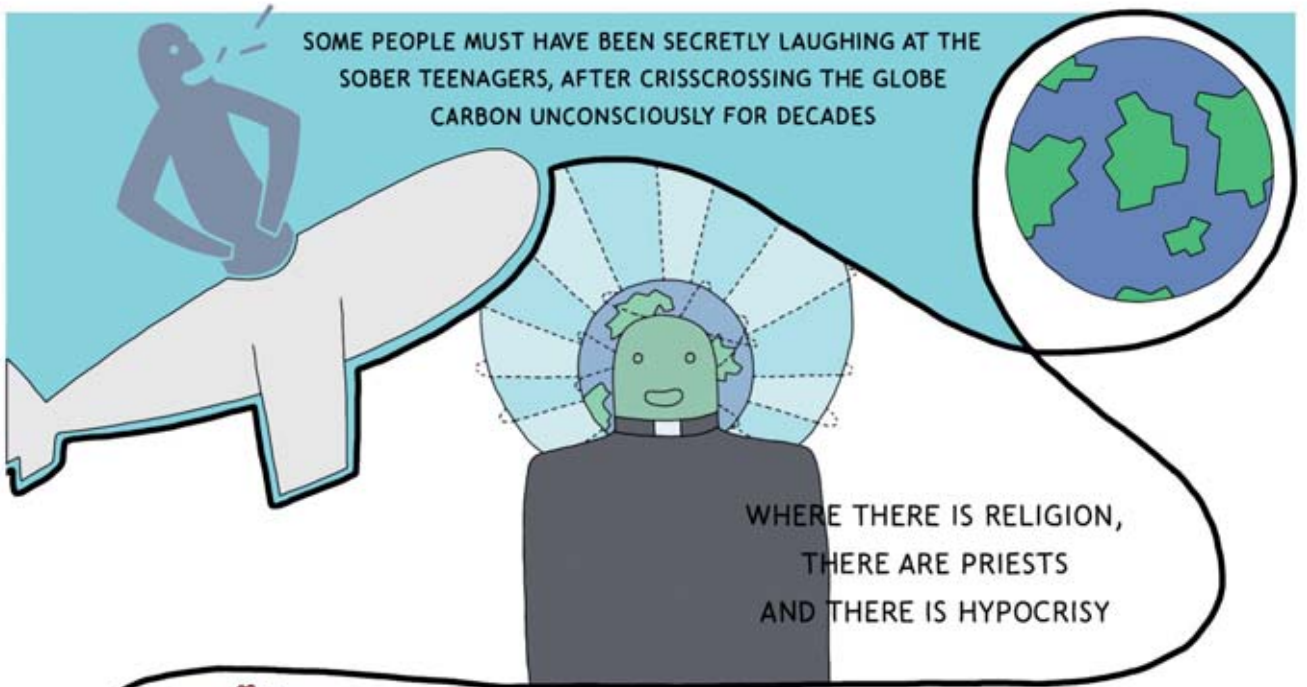


WITH 'THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW' CLIMATE CHANGE BROUGHT NEW FEARS INTO MAINSTREAM POLITICS



SOME HEROIC INDIVIDUALS WERE BOUND TO SURVIVE THE CATASTROPHE, ACCORDING TO THE FILM





CONSEQUENTLY, AFTER SHOWING SO MUCH PERSONAL EFFORT, THE DEMAND TO RESTRICT OTHERS CAME EASILY TO MANY PARTICIPANTS LIPS-

What we need to tackle are LOVE MILES. With families dispersed all across the globe by migration, they are constantly flying to see each other. We have to start a conversation with migrant communities HERE.

ALL THIS APPARENTLY JUSTIFIED BY PEER REVIEWED SCIENCE. SINCE WHEN DID WE TRUST THE 'PEOPLE IN WHITE COATS' SO SUPERNATURALLY MUCH?

AND OF COURSE- THE IMMINENT URGENCY OF THE MATTER

URGENCY

ALWAYS COMES WITH THE APPROACHING APOCALYPSE.

URGENCY TO PREVENT THE WORST, TO SAVE THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

RADICAL MEANS ARE ADVOCATED

TOTALITARIAN POLITICS ARE THE RESULT

CAN SOMEONE PROPOSE SOMETHING THAT LOOKS BEAUTIFUL?

A FUTURE I WOULD LIKE MYSELF AND OTHERS TO LIVE FOR, TO FIGHT FOR?

IN THE STORM OF ALL THIS CLIMATE ACTIVISM, THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT THE ADVOCATES OF FEAR IS TO

Imagine

HOW BEAUTIFUL THE FUTURE **COULD BE**

'There is no scope for futurology; history will decide'

Félix Guattari on molecular revolution

RODRIGO NUNES AND BEN TROTT EXAMINE FÉLIX GUATTARI'S TRIP TO BRAZIL IN THE EARLY 1980S, AND THE WAY HE ANALYSED THE TRANSFORMATIONS TAKING PLACE AT THE TIME, ASKING: HOW CAN THEY RESONATE WITH THE EXPERIENCES OF TODAY?

THE RISE of a new political generation at the turn of the century put a swagger in the step of people doing 'movement politics'. The resurgence of the global left had essentially taken place outside political parties and institutions, sometimes openly against them. There was not only a tremendous optimism about the possibility for change, but a similar conviction that this time it was not going to be a top-down affair.

In 2001 the world's only existent superpower changed gears in its foreign policy. The new, unilateral political landscape provided a temporary solution for the management of what seemed like a global crisis of systemic legitimacy. It sent ripples across much of the globe, signifying a severe cramping of the space in which movements had been thriving. They became squeezed between growing criminalisation, a clampdown on civil liberties and a militarisation which left them up against a degree of force they could not match. Across much

of Europe and Australasia, this translated as a macro-political shift to the right. It was the same process, but with inverted signs, that took place in Latin America. The quagmire effect of the 'war on terror' on a US administration, which would otherwise have been far more 'interventionist' in the region, helped create the conditions in which popular opposition to neoliberalism translated into victories for the institutional left. Desires and demands of diverse movements became inscribed in legislation and policy experiments,

However much those doing 'movement' politics may wish to ignore it, the field of possibilities open to them is always affected by institutions

and new room for manoeuvre was opened. At the same time, in various cases, movements found themselves in a 'lesser evil' double bind whereby governments banked on unconditional support as a way of 'keeping out the right wing', even when making highly unpopular decisions.

This alone should be enough to demonstrate that the relations between *movement* and *institution* are too complex to be posed in ideological terms. If one pole is automatically 'good' and the other 'bad', or one side 'real' politics and the other only its 'fantasm', you miss the most important, and essentially practical, point: both are real, and relate to each other in real ways; and however much those doing 'movement' politics may wish to ignore it, the field of possibilities open to them is always affected by institutions. Conversely, however much institutional politics may cover it up under the narratives of governmental 'decisions', the acts of 'great leaders' are always conditioned by the field of constantly transformed social relations in which movements, well, move.

Today's conjuncture suggests a real possibility that the political sequence opened by 9/11 may be coming to an end with the twilight of neo-conservatism in the US. Much of this hope for change has been invested in Barack Obama, a charismatic figure onto whom



today the lord of lateness is on my side

the symbols of 'young outsider', 'ethnic minority' and 'multicultural background' have been projected.

To be sure, he hardly represents radical transformative politics. His record is that of a left-of-centre Democrat. Even if you take his pledge for 'change we can believe in' at face value, there are obvious limits to what he promises (and generally to what can be done within the constraints of the Washington beltway). Yet the reactions he has stirred, and the meanings with which he has been

invested, suggest the possibility of a transformation in *sensibility*, a change in the way 'politics' is seen and related to. Most importantly, this implies a potential which is not necessarily limited to its object, nor entirely eliminated by the probable disappointment which will follow an equally probable victory.

Yes, of course we've seen this film before: (1) change is promised; (2) a lot is banked on the promise; (3) the promise is betrayed, or left partly unfulfilled. But isn't just falling back on the

comfortable, age-old narrative, that institutional politics always betrays transformation, simply stating the obvious, disguised as world-weary experience? Moreover, it precisely avoids asking what movements can/should do in a space that is opened up, for however short a moment. It is a way of dodging the practical problems of political work, similar to saying that revolutions are not desirable because they always fail or turn out bad.

In an interview, Gilles Deleuze once ridiculed those who had

Revolutions always fall short of their stated objectives, not to mention the desires invested in them. But a revolution must be distinguished from a becoming-revolutionary: the moment when people undergo a radical transformation as a result of their increased, shared capacity to shape the world in which they live

‘discovered’ that revolutions turn out bad: revolutions always fall short of their stated objectives, not to mention the desires invested in them. But a revolution must be distinguished from a *becoming-revolutionary*: the moment when people undergo a radical transformation as a result of their increased, shared capacity to shape the world in which they live. This is not exhausted by the failure to achieve any particular goal, and can go beyond any betrayal.

It is, of course, too early to speak of what the situation opened by an Obama presidency might or might not be. Instead, we’d like to reopen a discussion on the interplay between movements and institutions, desires and demands, practices and policies, micro- and macro-politics by looking at a different historical moment. In the early 1980s, at the end of two decades of military dictatorship, Félix Guattari travelled to Brazil on the invitation of fellow psychoanalyst and cultural critic, Suely Rolnik, who wanted to expose him to the boiling culture of changes – in racial, gender, political and personal relations – taking place. They organised a series of meetings, interviews and talks across the country, debating those changes with people who were directly engaged in producing them. Some of these were edited and reworked by Rolnik into a book, *Molecular Revolution in*

Brazil, only now made available in English, and from which we have taken the following extracts.

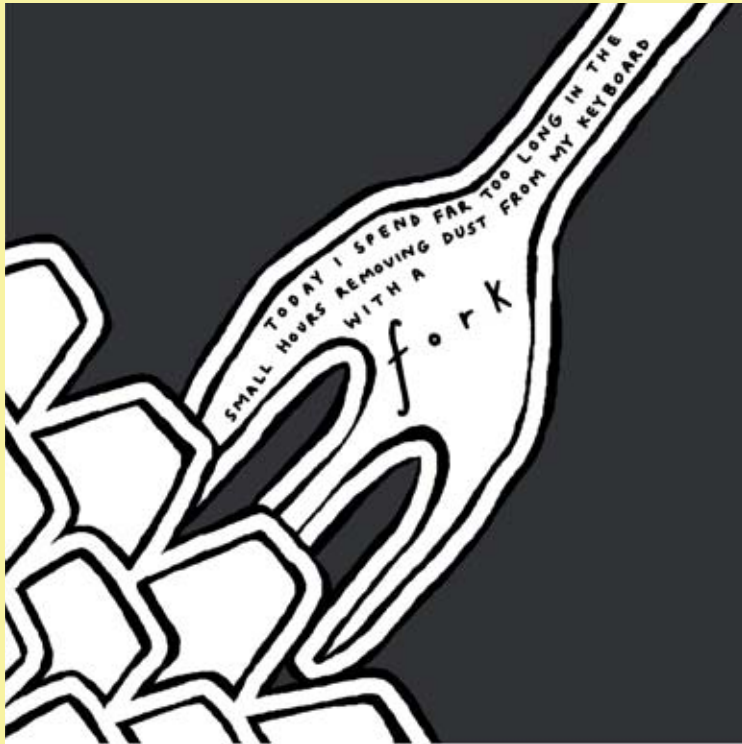
Part of Guattari’s interest lay in seeing how micropolitical changes in sensibility and subjectivity could find support in a focal point provided by the charismatic figure of an outsider relayed by the mass media – Lula – and be given a certain consistency through the formation of the young Workers’ Party (PT). Of course, both Lula and the PT finally won the elections in 2002, and it didn’t take long for cries of ‘betrayal’ to ring out. Soon after electoral victory, one of Lula’s aides, Frei Betto, explained, “We are in government but not in power. Power today is global, the power of big companies, the power of financial capital.” But to merely repeat the narrative of betrayal is to miss what is really important in what has happened, is still happening, and will always happen again in the future: the relations between global, non- or para-State powers and what can be achieved in the framework of the nation-State; and the dynamics between movements and institutions, or micro- and macro-politics. Once an open field of concrete relations is reduced to an empty division between ‘good’ (movements) and ‘bad’ (institutions), it is this complexity – which is always unique to each case – that is entirely erased.

Rodrigo Nunes & Ben Trott

Question: Don’t you think it’s a bit over-optimistic to consider that this kind of good faith by the parties in relation to autonomy is possible?

Guattari: There’s always the risk that the parties will crush the minorities. It’s not a matter of optimism or pessimism, but of a fundamental, definitive questioning about all the systems of party, union, group, and sectarian group involved in the course of a liberation struggle. There’s nothing that provides an a priori guarantee that they won’t again transmit the dominant models in this field. Not their program, nor the good faith of their leaders, nor even their practical, concrete commitment to minorities. So what might intervene to prevent this kind of “entropy” (a term that I don’t much like, but I’ll use it) in this field? Precisely the establishment of devices (which we can call whatever we like-analytic devices, devices of molecular revolution, of singularization, and so on), devices on the scale of the individual or the group, or even broader combinations, which would make us raise the issue of the collective formations of desire.

Lula on page 42?



see stuff on "co-aptation" on page 45?

cf discussion of homosexuals on page 43?

Luiz Swartz: *I would like to make an observation. It seems to me that the great paradox in your whole explanation lies in the question of the coexistence of parties with autonomous movements. In your first statement you said that certain kinds of struggle should be routed through that kind of organization, the parties. And that another kind of struggle takes place autonomously. And now you've put the question in terms of the party being an instrument that has to be used at a certain point, and not used again afterwards. It seems to me that there's something very important here: perhaps there's an incorrect evaluation of the strength of the party. The party, in my opinion, doesn't lend itself to being used as an instrument, because it eventually acquires a bureaucratized, disciplinary dynamic of its own that practically prevents the continuity of these molecular struggles.*

Guattari: I think the treatment of these issues calls for great prudence, because history shows us that this kind of view can have disastrous consequences. First of all, I would like

^{p44}
 you to understand that I'm not saying that the PT is the eighth wonder of the world (...). I know that there are many problems precisely in relation to the articulation of these minorities with a certain relatively traditional conception of organization. I also know that a trace of what I would call "leaderism" is being established, leaderism that is embodied in the media, and that triggers off a whole series of mechanisms, precisely in the field of collective subjectivity. This, of course, always introduces a certain risk of reification of subjective processes. However, when all is said and done, I believe that even so, there is great novelty, great experimentation, in what is being done here in the PT. It's not my place to give lessons on revolution, for the good reason that, in my view, there are no possible lessons in this field. Nevertheless, there is at least one thing that I think Europe can try to transmit: the experience of our failures.

In France, after 1968, there was an intense movement of waves of molecular revolution on all levels

(...). But the problem was that none of those modes of action was able to pass to another level of struggle.

The only link with that other level of struggle, the struggle of other sectors of the population, continued to be the old systems of sectarian groups, the old party and union systems. What happened was that the nonintellectuals who took part in those movements became intellectuals of a kind during the experiments. So there was a gradual agglutination of those nonintellectuals—some militant immigrants, for example, who, by the very nature of the movement, eventually became isolated from the rest of the immigrant population.

(...) The problem with this kind of experiment does not have to do with the establishment of an intensive contact between intellectuals and a particular group. But if those groups are actually isolated from all the other social movements, if there is an absence of essential links, they eventually lead to processes of specialization and degeneration. It's like a kind of wave ceaselessly breaking on itself.

MICROPOLITICS For Guattari and his long-term collaborator, Gilles Deleuze, with whom he wrote *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'desires' (productive, living, material flows) are always in excess of any stable system in which they can be articulated (the state, capital, but also a social or political group). Micro-politics largely refers to this excess, to the fact that there are always new connections, flows, and desires that take place. 'Micro' and 'macro' is not a matter of scale, but of levels – the first has to do with transformations in sensibility and ways of relating, the second with conscious positions, demands, open struggles. This does not mean that a 'micro' transformation cannot happen to a large number of people – for instance, in the way in which a figure in the mass media can serve as a relay for subjective transformations to communicate with each other.

MOLAR AND MOLECULAR In chemistry, a 'mole' is the name given to a (large) unit of molecules dissolved in a solution. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'molar' and 'molecular' form a paired concept: not exactly opposites, connected yet distinct, whose use is 'dependent on a system of reference' (whether an object is seen from its 'closed' or 'open' side) and scale (the cell is molecular in relation to the organism, the organism is molecular in relation to the social group etc.). To the extent that it refers to larger aggregates, the political meaning of molar tends to be associated with the level of governance, the state, political parties, but also social movements, policies, demands: what is extensive and can be measured. The molecular generally refers to the micro-political level, to processes which take place below the level of perception, in 'affects' (impersonal sensations which transform a body's capacity to act and be acted upon). To think of politics as composed of both molar and molecular transformations, and of the two levels as distinguishable by right but not distinct or separate in fact, provides a model for thinking the complexity of relations through which political movement and struggle takes place.

Néstor Perlongher: *I think that not enough importance is being given here to the problem of political statements, in the following sense: the big problem of the connection of these small micropolitical movements (...) is the statement with which those micropolitical movements are articulated. If this is true, I think that the power of those declarations is being underestimated. The conventional guy, whether he's a worker or not, becomes totally unglued when a pretty, intellectual fag appears, speaking on behalf of the PT. A guy like that isn't going to connect with this kind of statement. (...) So what I ask is: up to what point are we from the micropolitical, minority, molecular movements going to defend these archaic statements like democratic censorship, or the reduction of the idea of revolution to a modification of the economy, which leads, as has been seen, to overexploitation and superdictatorship?*

Guattari: I don't suppose you're going to prepare a notebook of complaints for Lula, asking him for proof that he has an accurate conception of what the fate of homosexuals, blacks, women, the psychiatrized, and so on is going to be. What Lula has to be asked is to contribute to the overthrow of all molar stratifications as they exist now. As for everything else, each person has to assume his responsibilities in the position he's assembled socially. I don't think that Lula is the "Father of the Oppressed," or the "Father of the Poor," but I do think that he's performing a fundamental role in the media, and that's essential at this point in the electoral campaign. He's the vehicle of an extremely important vector of dynamics in the current situation, such as the well-known power that he has to mobilize people who are totally apolitical. In this respect, Lula is not identifiable with the PT. The role that Lula is performing in the media is very important, because nowadays one can't consider the struggles at all the levels without considering this factor of the production of subjectivity by the media.

→ page 40 "molecular"?

page 45
"two dimensions"?

Sonia Goldfeder: In your view, how does the participation of minority groups in a process of social mutation take place? Should they be coopted by society as a whole, or should they remain apart in order to maintain their difference?

Guattari: It's necessary to distinguish two levels of reality. Firstly, the level of present reality, in which minority groups are marginalized—their ideas and their way of life are repressed and rejected. Secondly, the level of another reality, where there is a linking up of the left, and where these groups are taken into account, listened to, and have some weight in society. Homosexual groups, for example, obtain new legislation, or groups of psychiatrized people question current methods. All this forms part of a normal, traditional logic of power relations, pressure groups, and so on. Does this mean a cooptation of everything that's dissident in the movement? That's the kind of thing I can't answer. Will Lula's PT coopt the whole dissident movement that can be seen in part of its grassroots support? I hope not. I only know that among the final points of the PT program there's one that speaks specifically about "respect for autonomy." This kind of affirmation in a political program is extraordinary. I've never seen it anywhere.

To reject this attempt because of a fear of cooptation isn't justified in the name of an incapacity to completely express our desire in the situation, in the name of a mythical ethics of autonomy, in the name of the cult of spontaneity. This is an attempt of great importance (...).

TODAY I
FAIL TO
GET THINGS
DONE



see p 41

'LULA' AND THE WORKERS' PARTY (PT) The Brazilian *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) was founded in 1980 by workers and intellectuals. Luiz Inácio da Silva (Lula), leader of the metal worker strikes of the late 1970s, was one of the founders and is currently President of Brazil, elected in 2002 and again in 2006.

MINORITY 'Minority' can be understood in reference to the molar/molecular distinction. Whilst 'major' is taken to represent a relatively fixed, stable, perceptible and measurable mode of being, the 'minor' is what is potentially capable of unsettling it, being open to movements of becoming that open the major to new compositions and make deterritorialisations possible.

page 41 about France 68

see page 44 - "new components of subjectivity"

**page 43?*

PT??
page 41

WAR MACHINE The [nomadic] 'war machine' has nothing to do with the military-industrial-complex. It is opposed to the 'State machine' as exteriority is opposed to interiority. The latter always works by incorporating what is outside it, putting it to work. The former is a positive (non-antagonistic), productive, restless movement that, while always creating the territories where it gathers some temporary consistency, is always going beyond the sedentarism (stillness) and centralisation that characterise the State.

Suely Rolnik: I've been thinking about how the book should deal with the considerable space that the discussions about the PT took up during the trip. Perhaps it isn't appropriate to reproduce the "electoral campaign" facet, for the simple reason that it's no longer a topical issue. But at the same time, it could be important to do so as long as it's in a way that reveals, and even emphasizes, what in my view was central in your investment in the PT: not to focus on the PT itself, as something sacred, but on the kind of device that the PT represented at that time. A device that made possible the expression of issues concerning formations of desire in the social field; and, above all, a device that made possible the articulation of that plane of reality with the plane of the struggles that require broad social and political agglutinations. I would even say that the agglutination of these two planes was the leading figure in your campaign for the PT. What was unusual about your position was precisely the fact that you called attention to the need and possibility for that articulation to take place. And throughout the trip you never stopped recalling the fact that, recently, this tendency to downplay the broader social struggles has caused damage at least as serious as the disregard for the problematics related to desire.

In addition to having made it possible to highlight this kind of issue, the discussions about the campaign also helped us to tune in to the frequency of a completely deterritorialized official political voice in the voice of Lula (a kind of free radio station, but with the peculiarity of broadcasting directly from within the official media). Those discussions also helped to make it possible to see, in the PT at that time, a collective assemblage that was drawing the political scene outside its traditional domain. In short, a "war machine." But now things are different. In addition to the fact that we are no longer in the electoral campaign, there's no guarantee that the PT still is and is still going to be

that device, which makes the presence of this element in the book questionable, at least with that emphasis. That's why I was saying that it would only be interesting to preserve it in order to share the understanding that the existence of this kind of device is essential in order to make the processes of singularization less vulnerable. Therefore it's necessary to be sensitive to its emergence in a great variety of social fields-not only in political parties, of course, and not only in the PT.

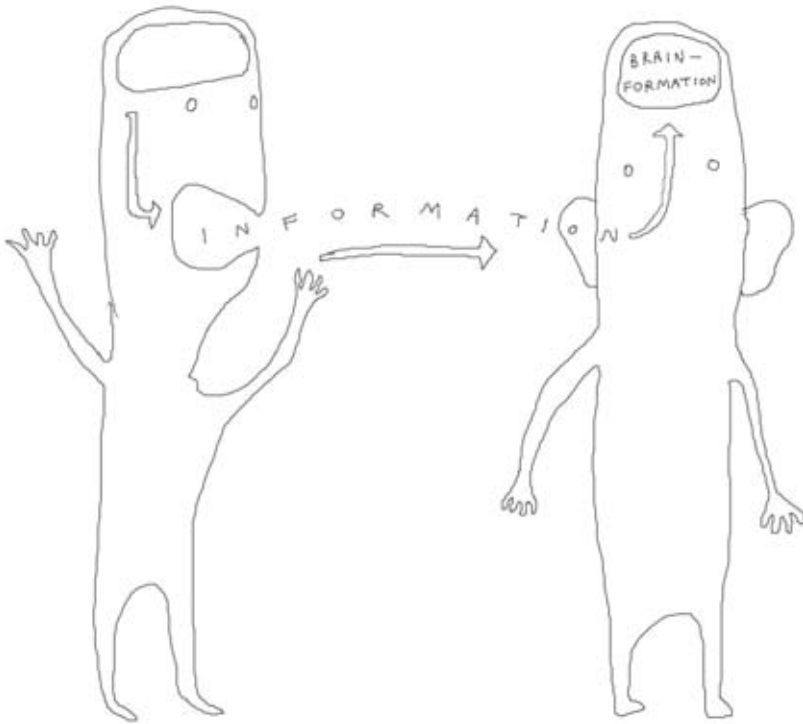
Guattari: It seems to me important that the problems of the organization and the constitution of a new kind of machine for struggle should be concealed as little as possible. Even as a failure-which, after all, may not be the case-it seems to me that the experience of the PT is primordial. How can we make the new components of subjectivity emerge on a national scale (in terms of the media)? What is important here is not the result, but the emergence of the problematics. There is no scope for futurology; history will decide. There are two possibilities: either the PT will be completely contaminated by the virus of sectarianism, in which case each autonomous component will "make tracks," and the PT can go to hell; or else the process that seems to be being triggered off in some places will tend to neutralize these sectarian-style components, and it may even happen, according to Lula's hypothesis, that, depending on the strength of the movements, those components may eventually dissolve. Everything will depend on the local circumstances and the usefulness or not of the instrument of the PT. If all this goes "down the drain" if the PT becomes another PMDB and Lula becomes a leader of heaven knows what, then that's it, it's over. It would only mean that the consistency of the process didn't take hold in this kind of assemblage, and that the struggles of molecular revolution will continue through other paths.

"vector of dynamics" - p42

page 42

'plane of autonomy'?? - see 47

TODAY IS MOST INFORMATIVE



PMDB From 1965 to 1979, the military enforced a two-party system in Brazil, where the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement) gathered all the politicians who opposed the regime (and who hadn't been persecuted or had their political rights suspended). This made it into a strange amalgam of forces ranging from regional oligarchs to liberals and infiltrated leftwing elements. When a plural political system was reintroduced, many of these forces broke away and formed their own parties – many PT founders were MDB members at some point. The newly named PMDB stayed the largest Brazilian party, but without any politics of its own: a hugely contradictory, often corrupt, loose association of interests that uses its size to negotiate with each government. It is part of Lula's parliamentary base.

What I think is important in Brazil, therefore, is the fact that the question of an organization capable of confronting political and social issues on a large scale is not going to be raised after some great movement of emancipation of minorities and sensibilities, because it's being raised now, at the same time. It is clear that it isn't a question of creating some kind of collective union in defense of the marginal, a common program, or some kind of reductive unifying front. That would be utterly stupid, because it certainly isn't a question of the minorities and marginal groups making an agreement or adopting the same program, the same theory, or the same attitudes.

That would take us back to the old mass movement conceptions of the socialists and the communists. It's not a question of adopting a programmatic logic, but a "situational logic." On the other hand, it also doesn't mean that tendencies seeking to affirm their singularity should abandon machines such as that of the PT. If that happened, gradually we would find only one kind of singularity in the PT: that of the "hard line" professional militants (...). That's where the problem lies. Of course, I'm not trying to outline a philosophy of this issue. But it seems to me that it's necessary to invent a means that allows the coexistence of these two dimensions. Not just a practical means, a means of real intervention in the field, but also a new kind of sensibility, a new kind of reasoning, a new kind of theory.

page 42
"struggles at all the levels..."



THE ARBORESCENT AND RHIZOMATIC 'Arborescent' means tree-like and describes centralised and hierarchical structures, where the only connections between the various parts that make up the whole pass through its single core. In botany, 'rhizomes' are horizontal roots systems, usually underground. They do not have a centre and tend to be characterised by numerous transversal connections. They are not static. Yet these are two tendencies that can be distinguished in thought rather

than completely opposite realities: arborescent structures contain and can become rhizomes, and vice-versa. The text you are reading is probably best read rhizomatically. There is no single clear argument, beginning or end, but rather a distribution of connected thoughts and questions to be taken up and deployed in different contexts. The lines and notes connecting words, sentences and segments of text only illustrate a small number of some of the most obvious connections.

see page 40 - "molecular"
and Lula??

"struggles at all the levels"?

If we insist on dealing with the problems of a political practice from a classical viewpoint—a tendency, a group, or a method of organization versus autonomous groups that do not want to know about leaders, or to articulate themselves—we shall find ourselves in a total impasse, because we shall be revolving around an eternal debate that sets modes of apprehension of the domain of centralism against "spontaneism" or anarchism, considered as sources of generosity and creativity, but also of disorder, incapable of leading to true transformations. It does not seem to me that the opposition is this—between a supremely efficient, centralized, functional device on the one hand, and autonomy on the other.

The dimension of organization is not on the same plane as the issue of autonomy. The issue of autonomy belongs to the domain of what I would call a "function of autonomy," a function that can be embodied effectively in feminist, ecological, homosexual, and other groups, but also — and why not? — in machines for large-scale struggle, such as the PT. Organizations such as parties or unions are also terrains for the exercise of a "function of autonomy." Let me explain: the fact that one acts as a militant in a movement allows one to acquire a certain security and no longer feel inhibition and

guilt, with the result that sometimes, without realizing it, in our actions we convey traditional models (hierarchical models, social welfare models, models that give primacy to a certain kind of knowledge, professional training, etc.). That is one of the lessons of the 1960s, a period when, even in supposedly liberating actions, old clichés were unconsciously reproduced. And it is an important aspect for consideration, because conservative conceptions are utterly unsuitable for developing processes of emancipation.

The question, therefore, is not whether we should organize or not, but whether or not we are reproducing the modes of dominant subjectivation in any of our daily activities, including militancy in organizations. It is in these terms that the "function of autonomy" must be considered. It is expressed on a micropolitical level, which has nothing to do with anarchy, or with democratic centralism. Micropolitics has to do with the possibility that social assemblages may take the productions of subjectivity in capitalism into consideration, problematics that are generally set aside in the militant movement.

In my view, it is necessary to try to construct a new kind of representation, something that I call a new cartography. It is not just about a simple coexistence of

centralized apparatuses and processes of singularization, because, at the end of the day, the Leninists always had the very same discourse: on one side the Party, the Central Committee, and the Politburo, and on the other, the mass organizations, where everyone does his own little job, everyone cultivates his garden. And between them are the "transmission belts": a hierarchy of tasks, a hierarchy of instruments of struggle, and, in fact, an order of priority that always leads to manipulation and control of the struggles of molecular revolution by the central apparatuses.

The construction of machines for struggle, war machines, which we need in order to overthrow the situations of capitalism and imperialism, cannot have only political and social objectives that form part of a program embodied by certain leaders and representatives. The function of autonomy is not that of a simple degree of tolerance in order to sweeten centralism with a pinch of autonomy. Its function is what will make it possible to capture all impulses of desire and all intelligences, not in order to make them converge on a single arborescent central point, but to place them in a huge rhizome that will traverse all social problematics, both at a local or regional level and at a national or international level.

"consistency" - p44

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p44?

The extracts reprinted here are taken from Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik (2008) *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* (Semiotext(e)). Alongside several of his essays, the book contains interviews and talks given by Guattari, recomposed and edited by Rolnik. The extracts were selected by Rodrigo Nunes and Ben Trott who also wrote the Introduction and accompanying explanatory texts. Both are editors of *Turbulence*. Rodrigo Nunes revised the translation of the English language edition of *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*.

Suely Rolnik is a cultural critic, curator, psychoanalyst and professor at the Universidade Católica de São Paulo, where she conducts a transdisciplinary doctoral program on contemporary subjectivity, and at the Programme of Independent Studies of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona. Félix Guattari was a French activist, psychoanalyst and philosopher, with a long-term involvement in the experimental La Borde clinic, institutional analysis, and different movements. Best known for his collaborative works with Gilles Deleuze, particularly *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, he also authored books such as *Chaosmosis* and *The Three Ecologies*.

The movement is dead, long live the movement!

THERE'S A NEW BIG STORY: CLIMATE CHANGE. TADZIO MÜLLER SUGGESTS A WAY FOR ANTI-CAPITALISTS TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE'S URGENCY WITHOUT FALLING INTO CATASTROPHISM OR QUIETISM.

R.I.P., OR: THE DEATH OF A MOVEMENT

The movement's dead! More precisely: the alter-globalisation movement as a common place for movements and 'activists' to meet and to become-other, together, linking their struggles under and against the common referent of neoliberal globalisation, is dead. Not that the particular struggles are dead. Nor have we seen the end of countersummit mobilisations: as I'm writing this, preparations for engaging the G8 in Japan are in full swing, and at every gathering of the radical and not-so-radical left, plans are busily being made to shut down one summit or another: the G8 in Italy in 2009; NATO's 60-year birthday bash in France; and so on and so forth: Countersummits-R-Us?

But somehow these mobilisations don't pack the same punch as they used to: how many last hurrahs have there been, how many times have people mobilised and thought "if it fails this time, we'll stop doing this"? Even the comparatively powerful German movement could do little more at the G8 in Heiligendamm than to realise that it's one thing to bring tens of thousands onto the street,

but quite another for their actions to *resonate* beyond the immediate circle of participants.

Don't get me wrong: the movement didn't die the ignominious death of the defeated. In many ways, it also won. And for movements, who must move to survive, their victories are also often their deaths, for they live and breathe antagonism, they need an enemy. So what of our enemy? Let's ask Martin Wolf, the *Financial Times'* chief ideologue, an eloquent and considered spokesman for the neoliberal offensive. Talking about the day when the US Central Bank bailed out a huge bank to prevent the financial crisis from spreading, he wrote: "Remember Friday March 14 2008: it was the day the dream

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of global free-market capitalism died." So neoliberalism is dead (in some ways), as is (again: in some ways) the movement against it, of which the explicitly anti-capitalist current from within which this text is written was only ever one part. It seems to have lost precisely that which can forge a movement out of an irreducible multiplicity of struggles, that which can counter the decomposition of resistance that capital and the state constantly seek to impose on us. We need a story, a hope, a hook to move: and at this point, the alterglobalist movement is clearly a movement without a hook, without an enemy, without a goal.

THE NEW 'BIG ONE'?

But as much as there's a movement without a story, there's also a story without a movement: climate change. An increasing number of policies (even many that have hardly anything to do with the subject) are being justified in terms of their relation to 'the climate'. And ever since being outmanoeuvred by the G8 and especially chancellor Merkel at Heiligendamm, the European movements have realised that they must develop a position and a practice around climate change or risk irrelevance in this brave new world of green issues. The most advanced fractions of capital and government apparatuses have spotted a great way to create political support for a new 'green fix' to both the crisis of overaccumulation (the problem of too much money chasing too few profitable investment opportunities) that has given us the current financial chaos, and to the legitimisation crisis that global authority has been suffering since the power of the story of 'global terrorism' began to wane. In a way, the fact that everybody is now talking about this issue is a massive victory for the green movement – but at the same time it's meant the final nail in that movement's coffin: every single large green NGO is involved up to its neck in the negotiations about the Kyoto follow-up treaty, and thus unlikely



to articulate a political position that would diverge significantly from the dominant agendas in the field.

So there's a movement without a story, and a story without a movement – which means that, as it stands right now, there is little hope that climate change will be dealt with in ways that don't simply further the interests of states and whatever happens to be the dominant fraction of capital. And since the default anti-capitalist position on climate change is that there is

a fundamental contradiction between the requirements of the continued accumulation of capital (i.e. economic growth) on the one hand, and the requirements of dealing with climate change on the other, this would seem to constitute the perfect opening for a reenergised anti-capitalist politics that can manage to connect to people's widespread worries about climate change, and the impression that what is being done (Kyoto, Bali, emissions trading, etc.) is far too little, far too late.

These are precisely the situations where radical social movements have the greatest capacity to act and 'make history', when the usual problem-solving approaches (these days: create a market around it, or repress it) don't seem to provide any believable way of dealing with something that is widely perceived as a problem. It's precisely when it seems *impossible* to find any solutions that openings exist for social movements to expand the limits of the possible. On the face of it, the perfect storm...

THE POLITICS OF POINTLESSNESS

... or so it seems. In reality, if the practical difficulties faced by most really existing attempts to contribute to the emergence of an effective anti-capitalist movement around the climate change issue are any guide, things seem a lot more difficult. Looking at it from the perspective of the global North, there are definitely attempts to develop an anti-capitalist climate change politics, but each of them is facing a mounting set of difficulties. Seen from here, it all begins in the UK in 2006, with a 'climate action camp' that aimed to "shut down for a day" a coal-fired power station in northern England, but more importantly, to provide a space for developing new ideas and practices for an anti-capitalist climate change politics. The idea of organising similar 'climate action camps' has since then inspired people in Germany, Sweden, the US, Chile, Australia and New Zealand and elsewhere, and currently this seems to be the main 'weapon' in the emerging climate movement's repertoire of action (somewhat ironically, the initial idea for the camp also arose out of the lessons learnt about the shortcomings of one-off summit protests).

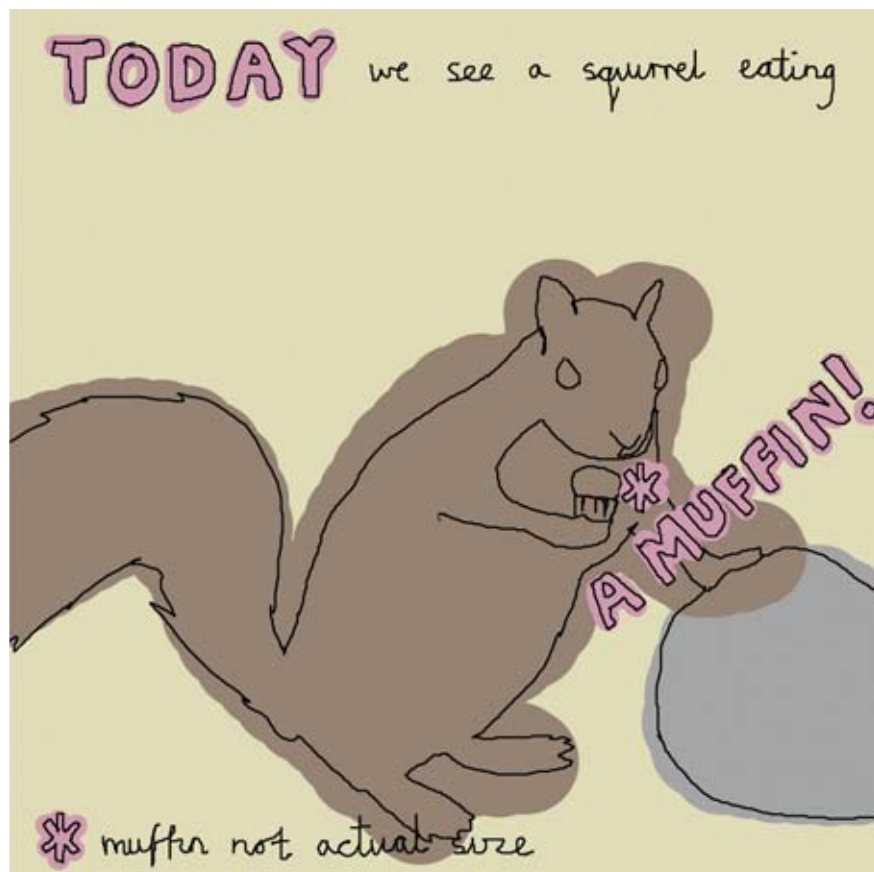
I really don't want to talk down the importance of these camps – after all, inspiring so many people in so many different countries is no mean feat – but from the many critiques of the climate camps, one thread stuck out: the question of whether these camps were in fact doing much good beyond satisfying a desire to *do* something? It feels good to hang out and camp with your mates and comrades, but there's that nagging question: what do we want? What can we achieve? And does this whole camping-business, trying to shut down power plants one at a time, while at the same time constantly fighting not to be drowned out by the more powerful voices that crowd this political field, stand in any relation to the magnitude of the challenge of climate change? That's the kind of question that's likely to leave

people pretty frustrated.

To be clear: this is not to say that people shouldn't organise climate camps – only that these camps need to be part of a wider project that gives them some political meaning beyond their highly localised intervention. We could of course hope that this wider meaning, a certain kind of political globality, would emerge from the links being formed between the various climate camps happening this year, but this kind of coordination has been limited to non-existing. No common 'demands' (other than that of being 'against climate change', which is about as politically useful and distinguishing as being against clubbing baby seals), no common story, no 'shut down the WTO', not even a vague compromise like 'fix it or nix it': no 'another world is possible'!

So if the UK-movement's way of dealing with the challenge of climate change comes across as somewhat limited in its political

scope, at the other end of the spectrum there's the way the issue has been approached in Germany. Attempts to kick-start a climate camp-process here have not only been beset by the usual leftist bickering and infighting, and there has even already been a split in the process, it has also come up against another political problem: here, the radical left is so academic and steeped in the tradition of 'critical theory' and 'deconstruction' that the main response to the challenge posed by climate change is to engage in a 'critique' of the 'dominant climate change discourse' and the 'hegemonic role of scientific knowledge' in constructing climate change as a crisis. Sure, it's important to remember that the reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) come from a deeply conservative institution, and to critically reflect on how recourses to 'scientific knowledge' are often used to shut 'non-



experts' out of political debates, but *Diskurskritik* can't be the *only* response to the climate change issue. It feels a bit like throwing copies of Adorno and Foucault at a coming flood and hoping that it'll just go away.

FROM TIMELESSNESS TO EFFECTIVENESS

But let's be honest: the anti-capitalist left in the global North should be pretty used to being politically ineffective and marginal, small outbursts of transformative power in particular moments of excess notwithstanding. What does one 'social centre' in Hackney, Kreuzberg or Las Ramblas really contribute to the struggle against gentrification? Does an anti-war demo in San Francisco really 'interrupt this Empire', as a film made on the occasion claims? Does shoplifting, even conducted *en masse*, significantly disrupt processes of capitalist commodity circulation? To be honest, I don't know, and I think very few people who engage in these practices have a clear idea either. But, and this is the important point, when talking about 'capitalism', anti-capitalists feel they don't really have to have an answer to that question. One way of dealing with that is to point to the non-linear dynamics of change in complex (social) systems, meaning that we can't know what effects our actions of today will have tomorrow (think butterfly in Bali and hurricane in Haiti). Or, by referring to an argument that's achieved nearly dogmatic status in anti-capitalist discussions: 'look, capitalism hasn't been around forever, it began in some place at some point, so it'll also end at some point' – much the same could be said about the universe! I could



go on enumerating the various intellectual tricks that exist to rationalise our relative political irrelevance, but hope the point is made: that anti-capitalist politics in the global North exist in a sort of timelessness because we either can't or don't dare to think their effects in the future. Ostriches come to mind. As does the graffiti sprayed on the wall of a school in Gothenburg that had been stormed by the cops: "But in the end, we will win!"

And this is where we get back to why it seems so hard for the anti-capitalist movement to develop a politics around climate change: whatever rationalisation makes it

possible to think that 'in the end we will win' against capital, it's pretty impossible to think that in relation to climate change. Against the usual timelessness of anti-capitalist politics, climate change poses the issue of urgency. And the problem then becomes how to deal with that urgency. Both positions described above (the overly 'activist' as well as the overly 'critical' one) are attempts to do so, and both are pretty unsatisfying. The first takes this urgency far too seriously, and jumps head over heels into a political field dominated by much stronger players. The second position recognises that the construction of urgency and the resulting politics of fear are often strategies of domination – but then contents itself with criticising that construction, rather than engaging with the urgency of the issue behind the discourse. And this urgency emerges precisely from a conflict of times, of temporalities, between the exponential temporality of capital

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(where capital perpetually speeds up social life and production) and the temporality of complex eco-social-systems, which are of course not static, and can adapt to new circumstances, but generally not at the speed required by capital – if change is too fast, that's when the by now infamous 'tipping points' are reached, where changes to particular eco-systems become irreversible and catastrophic (the infamous 'switching off' of the Gulf Stream being one such example, the melting of polar ice caps another).

So how do we deal with this problem of urgency? First, by admitting that it's unlikely, actually impossible, that the politically marginal radical left will be able to effectively slow down the production of greenhouse gases such as CO₂, in a world where the accumulation of capital is inseparable from the burning of fossil fuels (someone called this 'fossilistic capitalism'). Neither are we able to somehow force the faster adaptation of ecological systems

to the speed of capital. But we *can* intervene into the temporality of politics, of governmental 'climate change politics', whose role it is to *insulate* the speed-up effected by capital from social criticism by creating the illusion that the continued accumulation of capital is compatible with socio-ecological stability: that, in other words, we just need to make a few (preferably market-based) adjustments, and can otherwise continue more or less as we were. The result of this insulation is that the potentially

The KYOTO PROTOCOL (short: Kyoto), which was signed in 1997 and came into force in 2005, is an international treaty whose signatories pledge to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO₂ and methane. The protocol's key mechanism is 'emissions trading', where countries and/or companies buy and sell licences to pollute. As the Kyoto protocol is set to expire in 2012, a major international summit was held in Bali in December 2007 to begin negotiations on a follow-up accord to be signed in Copenhagen in 2009.

explosive force of the increasingly widespread realisation of this antagonism between capital and a humanity that exists embedded in complex ecological systems is contained, even captured. Captured so as to provide support for a new round of accumulation (think: 'green capitalism') and the further extension of political regulations ever deeper into our lives.

FORGET KYOTO!

So again: the anti-capitalist left in the global North can't 'stop' or even significantly mitigate climate change. To assume that we could would necessarily leave us trapped in our timelessness, because we could only ever hope to achieve our goal at some point far, far in the future – out of real time, as pie in the sky. But we can, with our limited strength and resources intervene into the insulation of capital's time from the 'slowness' of genuine democracy. If we once again leave the depressed certainty of our own decomposition and timelessness, if we remember that as movements we have the capacity to be faster than the state, then we can escape from and intervene into their capture and internalisation of antagonistic energies.

And how do we do that? How do we keep open the political space created by the increasingly widespread concern about climate change, which has the potential to produce new ideas and solutions, new *possibilities*, that might in turn promise to go beyond capitalism? How can there be an intervention into the powerful pressures towards the constitution of a new 'green capitalism', towards an 'eco-Empire', a global authoritarian eco-Keynesianism? If urgency forces us to think in terms of effectiveness and, what's more, efficiency, how can our small, resource-poor wing of the movement effectively deploy our limited strengths to achieve a maximum outcome with respect to the goal of creating and/or maintaining space for the development of multiple, bottom-up, non-capitalist solutions to the climate crisis?



The answer to this question begins with two further questions, and then takes us back to the beginning of the whole argument. First question: what is probably the single most important process by which the governments of the world are trying to insulate capital from public criticism in relation to climate change? Answer: almost certainly the Kyoto/Bali-processes, where the world is treated to the dramas of international high politics, but which in the end produce little or nothing that

would actually protect the climate (just as an aside: since the signing of the Kyoto-agreements, global CO₂-emissions have exceeded even the worst-case scenarios projected by the IPCC), and where a tiny bit of emissions reductions legitimate a huge pile of continued production of greenhouse gases

– not to speak of the creation of a whole new market in emissions credits (expected to value about US\$2 trillion by 2020), much to the delight of global capital. The follow-up process to Kyoto, which began in Bali in December 2007, is supposed to be signed at an international summit in

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Copenhagen in December 2009.

Second question: where do the strengths of the radical global movements lie both in comparison to our enemies and to our more moderate allies? Answer: in the organisation of large-scale, disruptive summit mobilisations. It is precisely in summit mobilisations that we have developed something that could be called 'best practice', where we have before achieved a substantial political effect. In Seattle, we not only managed to shut down the conference by being on the streets, we also exacerbated the multiple conflicts that existed 'on the inside' between the negotiating governments. If we manage to do the same thing again, and to build a political coalition around and momentum behind the demand to 'Forget Kyoto', we would both be able to keep open the political space to discuss potential 'solutions' to climate change that go beyond the reigning, market-driven agenda, and also provide a focal point and common demand for the emerging global climate movement to rally around. Forget Kyoto – Shut down Copenhagen 2009!

But why suggest organising yet another big summit protest after arguing that countersummits have become a lot less effective than they used to be? Because the politics of climate change in 2008 look very different from the politics of neoliberal globalisation in 2008 – in fact, they look more like the politics of globalisation did before the WTO summit in Seattle was shut down. Back then, during the decade of the 'end of history', many knew that neoliberal capitalism wasn't flawless, but there was no recognition, not



even on 'the left', of a movement, or maybe even a 'movement of movements' that could oppose it. Seattle created the possibility of seeing the commonality in many different struggles, of seeing them as all fighting the same enemy. Of a 'movement' in the first place, which is where the argument comes full circle: the alterglobalist cycle of struggles may have ended, but its lessons have not gone away, like the importance of avoiding the 'one-week-a-year' movement problem of focusing only on big events. The emerging climate movement must be rooted in

sustainable and everyday practices of resistance and transformation at all levels, not just global, but also regional, national or local. But before 'it' can even see itself as 'a movement', something is needed to make a mark, show that there is a position on climate change that's more radical than simply asking for more and better emissions trading. That there are those who don't just focus on climate change, but also on the cause of climate change: capitalism. And for that to happen, we might just need what some people once called a 'moment of excess', where time speeds up, and changes become possible that were impossible before. A countersummit can do it. So in that sense: the movement is dead – long live the movement!

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Network organisation for the 21st century

WILL THE UPSURGE IN ACTIVITY AROUND CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FOOD CRISIS REPEAT THE CYCLE OF THE MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST DECADE – MOMENTARY VISIBILITY THEN DISSOLUTION? **HARRY HALPIN** AND **KAY SUMMER** SAY ‘YES’, UNLESS DIFFERENT MODELS OF ORGANISING ARE EMBRACED.

“Then perhaps we would discover that ‘organisational miracles’ are always happening, and have always been happening.”

– *Mario Tronti*

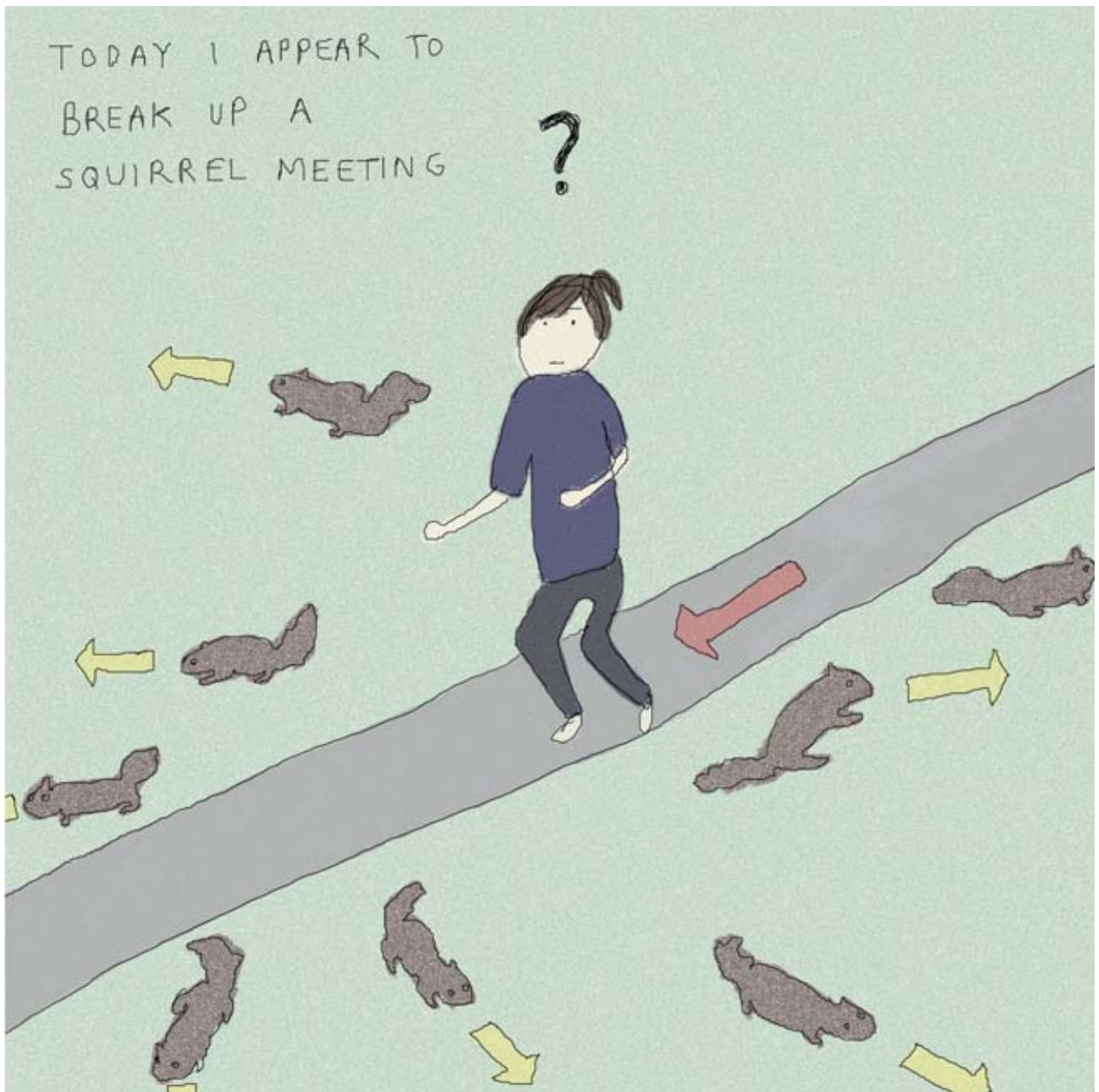
HOW DO WE organise ourselves to achieve our political aims? It is an age-old question, with the answer often revolving around two poles of attraction, the centralised cadre versus the decentralised loose network. The centralised cadres are well-known: the classic political Party models from the Bolsheviks to the US neo-conservatives and even most trade unions are diverse in many respects but all have *some* organisational features in common: a tight core bound together by common ideology and a clear leadership structure. In contrast the decentralised network is a looser cluster of individuals, often with no coherent agreement on politics, who gather together based on affinity to take some form of action. This form

was exemplified by the shut-down of the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999, and the emergence of the movement behind it. Of course, most political organisations mix aspects of both the centralised and decentralised models of organisation, balancing the benefits and problems of these two broad forms of organising. But this is usually the lens through which our debates and subsequent actions are viewed.

Let’s take a recent historical example. Almost ten years ago, protests at global summits in Seattle, Genoa and elsewhere pushed resistance to the project of neo-liberalism centre stage. New spaces to discuss moving beyond ‘summit hopping’ were formed, the ‘social forums’. Heated debates pitted what became known as the ‘horizontals’, those who distrusted hierarchy and pushed for this movement of movements to be a flat decentralised network, against

the ‘verticals’ who wanted lines of authority so political demands and action plans could be decided and stated with clarity and the apparent ‘weight’ of large numbers of people. Both tendencies have benefits and problems: cadres have the ability to take action very quickly and can project a strength far greater than their numbers, while they inevitably fail when their ‘leadership’ is either disabled or stops acting in the best interest of the network. Decentralised networks of groups or individuals have benefits of wider participation, because they need less political agreement. Yet this form of organising poses problems as well, for as soon as the issue that people coalesced around is resolved, or appears less relevant, the informal ‘leaders’ disappear; or as the wider movement loses momentum, the decentralised network as a whole dissolves, and so loses its ability to co-ordinate action and move beyond the set of conditions that caused the loose network to coalesce in the first place. With hindsight, neither idealised form succeeded, nor some amalgam of the two. How do we know they didn’t succeed? Unfortunately today this movement rarely acts with the life it once had; the ritualised summit spectacles and social forums appear less relevant with every new cycle. Both tendencies failed to keep experimenting and innovating as they began to move the world, and so in turn the world moved onwards without them.

Can we break this lens through which we see political organising? Can we stop these two extremes, these poles of attraction, pulling us in two directions? Several have tried before. The Zapatista Army in Chiapas, Mexico, has been instrumental in altering our perceptions of political organising, but given its historical lineage from a guerrilla army with its own territory in areas remote from state control, its unusual situation has had limited impact on changing our views on concrete organisational problems. The other major attempt has been to invoke



the concept of the ‘multitude’, outlined by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in *Empire*. Yet this too has broadly failed to alter our view on organising, because the multitude remains a vague and ill-defined term, often used almost mystically: with globalisation there is no ‘outside’ of capitalism, and therefore all resistance to it is similarly globalised into a linked-together ‘multitude’. We can all see ourselves as part of the multitude, yet still argue as either ‘verticals’ or ‘horizontals’ about what we do

politically today or tomorrow. The multitude is, to us, more metaphor than tool. So we take a different, complementary, approach. We analyse the organisation of successful complex networks that may be analogous to the kinds of complex networks that our political organisations tend to become. By doing this we hope to clarify *what general principles define a well-functioning network*. Then we can seek to implement these general principles to confer similar desirable traits on our political

networks. It’s time to learn what we can from the science of networks.

NODES AND CONNECTIONS

We can analyse the structure of things as diverse as political parties, natural ecosystems, trade unions, decentralised networks of political groups and individuals, the world’s financial architecture, and the internet, if we recognise that they are *all* essentially networks. A network consists of connections between otherwise disparate elements, which are called the *nodes*

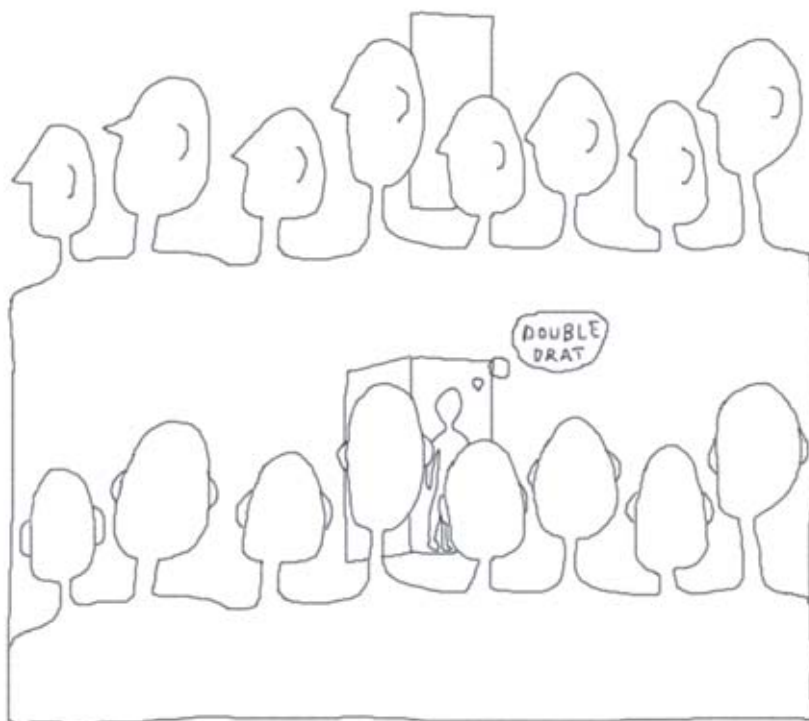
of the network. The architecture of these connections – exactly which node is connected to which other node – determines the structure of the network, and these structures can vary immensely. In a social movement setting, nodes could be of different types, which might be individuals, groups, social centres and websites. Within the movement of movements, the verticals and the horizontals, the parties and the loose collectives are all networks. They all have connections of otherwise disparate elements.

Moving up a level of abstraction, mathematical descriptions of different networks can help us to understand the similarities in architecture across very different sorts of networks. Simple characteristics such as the number of connections per node can be quantified, and shown to lead to different ‘distributions’ or spreads of network architecture. Moving beyond traditional political networks, understanding networks like ecosystems allows us to look at what characteristics render a network robust in the face of an attack. This is because ecological networks have survived eons of change – continental drift, climate fluctuations, and the arrival of new species – so any constancies in structure provide clues about which characteristics of complex networks correlate with a high degree of longevity in a changing world. In addition, ecosystems are a byword for efficiency, as the flow of energy through ecosystems has been honed by millions of years of evolution. The world’s financial architecture may also prove useful to study: not only is it a human-made artefact, but it has been successfully evolving for over 500 years and today spans the globe (of course, whether or not it survives another century is an open question). What we need to explain is what unites these ‘successful’ networks.

ON THE VIRTUES OF BEING POPULAR

In any network, some nodes are more connected than others, making them ‘hubs’. This is a

TODAY I AM LATE FOR A MEETING I AM NOT MEANT TO ATTEND



recurring pattern in the evolution of successful networks, ranging from the world wide web to many natural ecosystems. A ‘hub’ is not just a node with a few more connections than a usual node; a hub has connections to many other nodes – many quite distant – and also connects many disparate nodes (nodes of very different types). If you were to count all the connections each node has, you would get a mathematical distribution called a ‘power-law’ distribution with relatively few hyper-connected nodes – hubs –

and a ‘long tail’ of less connected nodes. This is quite different from any egalitarian ‘levelling’ that leads to a ‘flat’ distribution, as well as from the ‘Normal’ distribution where the majority of the distribution is clustered in the middle, forming the well-known ‘bell’ curve. It’s also different from a ‘centralised’ model of connections where everyone is connected only to a few nodes and not to their neighbours, which results in the ‘exponential’ distribution. *Figure 1* shows the difference between the power-law and Normal (sometimes

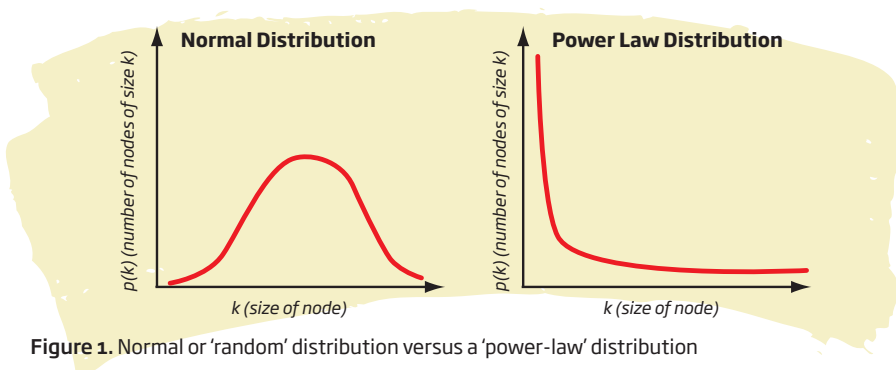
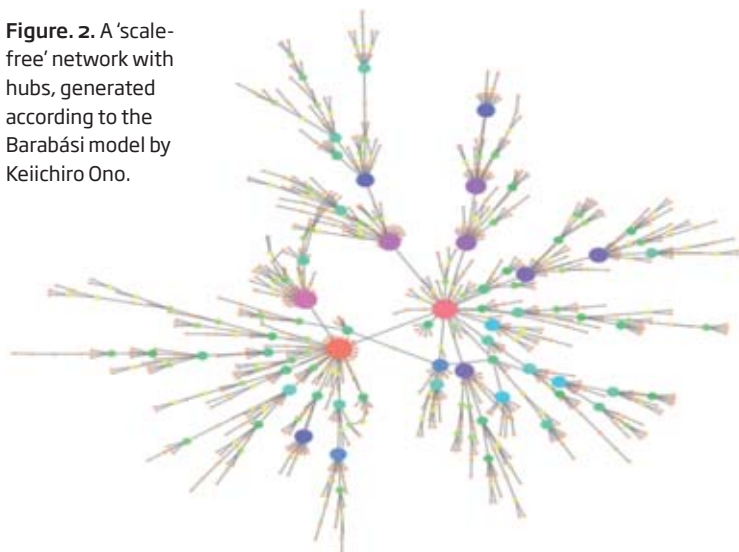


Figure 1. Normal or ‘random’ distribution versus a ‘power-law’ distribution

Figure 2. A 'scale-free' network with hubs, generated according to the Barabási model by Keiichiro Ono.



called 'random') distributions graphically. The power-law distribution is what results in both a long tail and hubs.

Unlike networks that have a Normal distribution of connections, networks that have a power-law distribution of connections are 'scale-free,' which means that no matter how many more nodes are added to the network, the dynamics and structure remain the same. This seems to be a sweet spot in the evolution of networks for stability and efficiency. The network can get bigger without drastic changes to its function. *Figure 2* gives a graphic representation of a 'scale-free' network.

The network theorist Albert-László Barabási uses the metaphor of height to understand a power-law distribution. Imagine that the amount of connections you had in a network influenced your height, so the more connections you had, the taller you would be. In the real world, average height does not vary that much: there are a few short people and a few tall people, with the rest clustered around the middle. If height followed a power-law distribution, the vast majority of people would be in the 'long tail' and have the same height, but a few people would be thousands of feet tall!

The question is: why do successful networks evolve these

hubs, these few very densely connected nodes? Hubs are useful for the survival of a network since they allow distant local clusters of the network to be connected. Imagine sending a letter from London to Japan through a centralised postal network. All letters would have to go through one routing hub in, say, New York, and this single hub would be vulnerable to overloading. It's also not very efficient – sending a letter from London to Paris would have to be routed through New York! Now imagine sending the letter through a network that consisted only of dense, local connections with no hubs, a totally decentralised network – it would take a long time, since the message would have to hop from one small connection to another. However, in a network with several hubs, you'd have direct long-distance connections from London to Mumbai to Japan that are in turn coupled with local connections, so

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the message would arrive quickly and be less prone to disruption (if London to Mumbai were down, London to Beijing and then to Japan would do just as well). Hubs allow everyone to be connected to everyone through a few short steps – the 'small world' effect. Now replace the idea of a letter travelling through the postal system with patterns of behaviour, tactics, strategies, and it should be clear that hubs are useful for political networks.

In the context of the celebration of 'horizontality' that characterised the emergence of the alter-globalisation movement, some consider the evolution of hubs *per se* to be a sign of centralisation, and therefore tend to try to avoid them. Others might want control of a single hub and so they sabotage emerging hubs as potential competitors, a tendency that was all too visible in the UK anti-war movement. Both sets of fears are wrong: *successful networks almost always naturally evolve several or many important hubs*. If you were to compile a list of the most popular internet sites, you'd notice a few of them (Google, Yahoo, eBay) have the vast majority of the connections, while most sites have just a few. Note the redundancy: Google does the job of Yahoo, and vice versa. There is no one omnipotent leader. Nothing is indispensable. This pattern is not just repeated across the internet – it applies across a remarkably diverse set of systems, ranging from human languages to social networks of sexual promiscuity, as well as ecological and financial networks. In each we find a small number of highly-connected nodes, many less-connected nodes, and massive redundancy. These recurrent patterns across diverse networks tell us something about the characteristics our social movements need to evolve to have robust, efficient and effective networks.

Politically, hubs are easy to spot. There seem to be a few people in every network who do a vast amount of the work, a few

people with connections seemingly everywhere. In our experience across quite diverse political movements, people exert a good deal of effort trying to suppress new hubs because they view them as signs of centralisation, or because they wish to maintain their own status as 'hubs.' However, the evolution of new hubs appears to be a hallmark of maturity in long-lasting networks. And of course hubs don't have to be people, but can be places, like social centres, and events, like the protests at

world summits and 'social forums.'

THE SURPRISING STRENGTH OF THE LONG TAIL

There is a looming contradiction: how can we have hubs and still have a strong network of dense connections that is not dependent on them? Don't hubs lead to the emergence of permanent, entrenched leaders, centralisation and other well-documented problems? There is something of a tension here: the point is not simply that we should

develop hubs, but that we have to simultaneously *ensure that the hubs are never allowed to become static, and that they're at least partially redundant.* Sounds complicated, but healthy and resilient networks aren't characterised simply by the presence of hubs, but also by the ability of hubs to change over time, and the replacement of previous hubs by apparently quite similar hubs. Think about search engines on the web: Google wasn't always a key hub – once upon a time that role was played by Alta Vista,



Lycos, and others whose names are now forgotten.

While the presence of some hubs helps a network, a single or even a few hubs by themselves are a liability unless local connections are dense and new hubs are emerging in the rest of the network. The fact that a single node is not connected to a huge number of other nodes does not mean it is not important for the health of the network. Far from it, for it is precisely the density and power of the connections of the nodes in the 'long tail' that are the 'heart' of the network: taken together, their connections far outweigh the impact of the key hubs combined.

The long tail does not drop off into nothingness (which would be the 'exponential' rather than 'power-law' distribution), where there are a few hubs and every other node has almost no connections. Instead, the long tail is extensive, consisting of small groups of dense connections, going

ever onwards. In fact, the vast majority of the connections in the network are not in the hub, but in the long tail. One clear example is that of book-selling in the 21st century: the majority of Amazon.com's book sales are not in the best-seller list, but in those millions of titles in the long tail that only a few people order. Every successful movement must be built on dense local connections. It is these dense local connections that support the dynamic creation of hubs.

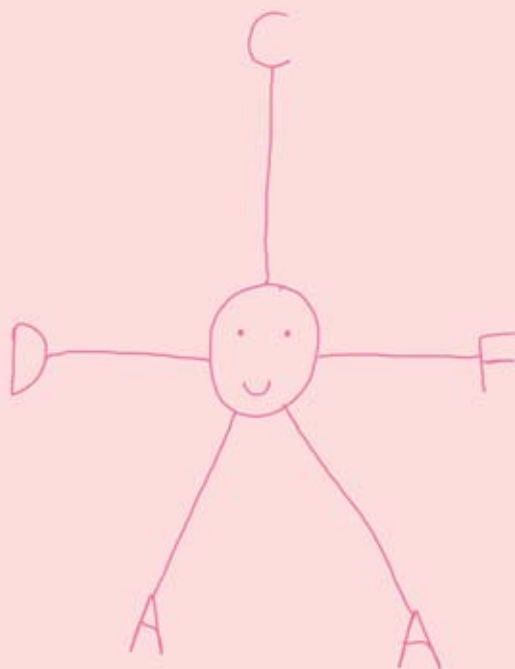
In a perfect world, every node would be a hub – we would all easily connect with any other person and be able to communicate. However, creating connections takes time and

The vast majority of the connections in a network are not in the hub, but in the long tail

energy, so nodes that are more long-standing or just have more spare time will naturally become hubs. This isn't rocket science: people who have been involved in social movement networks longer tend to become the most well-connected, as do people who have more time to spend on the cause of the network, such as people who have escaped working full-time. Of course, few people can escape working full-time forever, and few remain indefinitely involved. How can a social movement not be dependent on any one *particular* hub, or set of hubs? The answer appears to be a matter of existing hubs actively supporting the long tail, encouraging new people to in turn become hubs, by introducing them to other connections, and never forgetting that everyone should be encouraged to be as locally connected as possible. A successful network has both a dense long tail, with as many hubs as possible that collectively and redundantly span the entire network, and hubs whose massive number of connections bridge otherwise disparate parts of the network.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Hubs tend to evolve naturally in well-functioning networks – but we can accelerate the process of network development. Unfortunately people can't become hubs without largely re-inventing the wheel. It might be irritating for existing hubs, but it's true. Being a hub requires more than just introductions, it requires information, skills, knowledge, and a memory of the past. However, we can accelerate this process by decentering as much of the connections and knowledge as possible away from individual humans and onto the environment, whether this environment be books, websites, songs, maps, videos, and a myriad of yet un-thought-of representational forms. A useful example is the pheromone trace of the ant, reinforced as more



TODAY I TALK TO ALL OF MY SIBLINGS

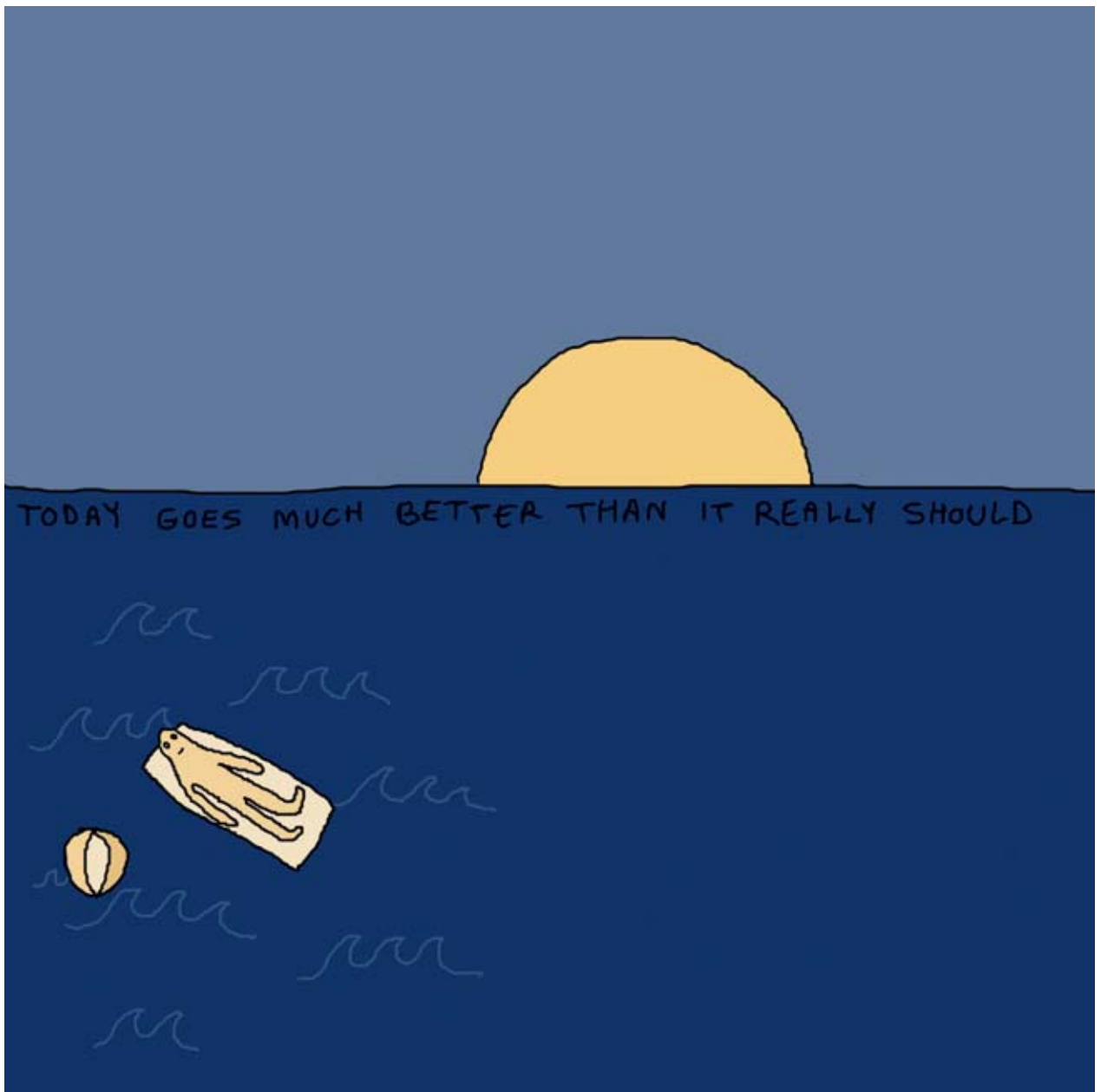


ants use a particular trail. The mere act of 'leaving a trail' shows how individuals with limited memory can use the shaping of the environment as an external memory. You can imagine this on an individual level: a person using their mobile phone to remember the phone numbers of their friends. With easy access and reliability, the phone almost seems part of your intelligence. Just extend this so that the part of your mind that is extended into the environment is accessible and even modifiable

by other people, and collective intelligence begins.

The human equivalent of the pheromone trace is nothing less than 'culture' itself. Most aspects of culturally embedded collective intelligence in the environment, ranging from the evolution of cities to Wikipedia, allow us to navigate the world around us, a world formed collectively by those treading paths before us. This use of the environment to store collective intelligence allows for the easier creation of hubs. It

has a number of advantages over direct individual-to-individual communications, as there is no need for simultaneous presence, so interaction can be asynchronous, and individuals can even be anonymous and unaware of each other. Collective intelligence allows highly organised successful actions to be performed by individuals who, with limited memory and knowledge, would otherwise be unable to become hubs. So when a hub is destroyed – for example when an individual leaves the



network – a new hub can be equipped with knowledge as soon as possible.

Over the last decade, some of the currents of the global movements, particularly those in the global North, have been radically deficient at producing collective intelligence, leading to a genuine gap in passing knowledge and abilities to the influx of people engaged in the politics of climate change and the food crisis. Collective intelligence requires a commons of collective

representations and memory accessible to the network, and so digital representations on the internet are ideal. Indymedia was a step towards this type of collective intelligence for many of these currents, but its focus on ‘reporting’ rather than analysis has reduced its use as a mechanism for passing on knowledge. Again, this seems to have arisen because of a misplaced fear of hubs.

A key focus for improving our collective intelligence would be a few central websites compiling

analyses of social movements and events, alongside practical pieces from key hubs and organisers on how particular events were pulled off. A collective ratings approach would allow people to quickly find needles in the electronic haystack, via Digg-It-style ‘I like this article’ tags, or collaborative bookmarking, allowing different users to see each other’s bookmarked webpages. Of course some of these types of things exist, with tagging systems well developed on sites of magazines, newspapers and blogs. However,

no current website performs the function of an analysis and learning hub, as Indymedia does for news. There are other effective technologies for creating collective intelligence, such as wikis for text editing and textmob for coordinating street action, but much work needs to be done to develop, explore and deploy these tools.

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE MOVEMENT OF MOVEMENTS

While struggles wax and wane, it is clear that the gloriously misnamed 'anti-globalisation' movement is declining while a new movement, which we call the 'climate change' movement is growing. Both can be considered separate moments in a greater 'movement of movements'. The question of climate change gives relatively fixed time-constraints before we reach various 'tipping points' in the Earth's climate system – major sea-level rises displacing cities and their inhabitants, droughts making agriculture difficult, and so on – which most of humanity will find difficult or impossible to adapt to. Perhaps this realisation will allow us to move beyond organisational panic and tired arguments over centralised and decentralised models of organising, and ground our organisational experiments in studies of existing and successful networks. If we are to act swiftly and sustain momentum we will need to create

KEY MESSAGES FOR POLITICAL NETWORKS

- Encourage people to become hubs
- Develop other hubs, with dense connections to lots of distant nodes
- Hub redundancy is important – don't worry about duplicating functions
- Let hubs evolve
- Focus on the long tail: have more limited interactions with the greatest number of people and places

Let's move beyond organisational panic and tired arguments over centralised and decentralised models of organising, and ground our organisational experiments in studies of existing and successful networks

collective intelligence – the ability to create accurate records of events, distribute them widely, analyse success and failure, and to pass on skills and knowledge. This is what the emerging climate change movement must aggressively focus on.

Nobody knows the precise dynamics of what actions will change the world, but we do know that any social movement will fail to head off catastrophic climate change if it sticks solely to the politics of climate change. With food riots on three continents and spiralling energy costs worldwide, changes in the weather are taking a backseat to basic questions of people getting the food and energy they want. These crises are sign-posts to the defining issues of international solidarity and justice in the 21st century: how does humanity allocate finite resources globally? The reason is simple: scientist Jared Diamond has calculated that the average amount of food, energy, metal and plastic consumption by an individual in Western Europe and the United States is approximately thirty-two times that of an average individual of the rest of the planet. Simple maths shows that as the rest of the world moves towards resource use levels that mirror average levels in the UK, US and Germany, this would use the resources equivalent

to a global population of 72 billion, against a current world population of almost 6.5 billion. This isn't physically possible – even the most frenzied capitalist would run out of world to exploit – so something fundamental must shift.

Some, seeing millions of people getting on planes, into boats, or walking to the global North every year, will call for the shift to be to even more xenophobic border control policies. Others, seeing the life-system-threatening impact of such resource depletion, will welcome a 'khaki-green' or eco-fascist authoritarian state. These symptoms of the general structural instability of capitalism will increase with time: there is now a brief window of opportunity – a moment outside 'normal' time – where a network of social movements can actively form and radically reshape the world. To do so successfully, future movements must consciously try to avoid two distinct fates: either the dissolution into a decentralised network of loose clusters of relatively isolated groups, movements and individuals – the fate of the summit-hopping phase of the movement of movements – or a decline towards a centralised network of cadres, which severely damaged the movement in the 1960s. Our lines of flight from these dead-ends consist in wilfully pushing ourselves to learn from successful networks and evolve towards a mature distributed network with abundant hubs and a powerful long tail: a movement with both mass participation and dynamic hubs of people and events, capable of evolving and responding rapidly to a fast-changing world. A tall order – perhaps – yet the alternative is bleak indeed.

Harry Halpin and Kay Summer have both had longtime involvement in the movement of movements and some of its precursors. They earn their wages by doing scientific research, some of which involves trying to better understand network organisation. You can get in touch with the authors at harry@j12.org and kaysmmr@yahoo.co.uk.

TODAY, THE VERY ACT OF THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE HAS BECOME A PROBLEM



WHAT BOTH CAPITALISM AND 'REALLY EXISTING' SOCIALISM HAD IN COMMON WAS THE BELIEF IN A FUTURE WHERE INFINITE HAPPINESS WOULD SPRING FROM THE INFINITE EXPANSION OF PRODUCTION:

SACRIFICES MADE IN THE PRESENT
COULD ALWAYS BE JUSTIFIED
IN TERMS OF A BRIGHTER FUTURE

AND NOW? THE SOCIALIST FUTURE HAS BEEN DEAD SINCE THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL AFTER THAT WE SEEMED TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE ONLY THE CAPITALIST FUTURE EXISTED (EVEN WHEN IT WAS UNDER ATTACK)

BUT NOW THIS FUTURE, TOO, IS HAVING ITS OBITUARIES COMPOSED, AND IMPENDING DOOM IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE 'CRISIS OF THE FUTURE'

-THAT IS, OF OUR CAPACITY TO THINK OF THE FUTURE-
IS BORN OUT OF THESE TWIN DEATHS:

TODAY IT IS EASIER TO IMAGINE THE END OF THE WORLD THAN THE END OF CAPITALISM

