

THE PAPER

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MARCH 2011

raise raise, raise your voice
على على، على الصوت
those who chant
اللى هيهتيف مش هيموت
won't die

EDITORIAL

The people who disobey. The people who resist in the obscurity of everyday life. The people who, when forgotten too long, remind the world of their existence and break into history without prior notice... There is no oppression without resistance. There is only time stretching more or less slowly before unexpected – or out of sight – the collective heroism of a people arises.

Sadri Khiari, Tunisian activist and writer

We have witnessed amazing events on television - mostly via Al Jazeera - in which puppets of power are being pushed away and a new world born. They say these are youth revolts and call them spontaneous eruptions of demands for civil liberties and democracy. Yet across North Africa, everywhere from the streets to the factories to the universities, there are strong, established and radical organisations. In the story we are told the liberties and democracies demanded are, of course, 'like ours'. The newly humanised 'Arab street' is compared with 1989 and the triumph of 'freedom' over authoritarianism. This all seems like the kind of transition they wish to see. A shift to 'stable' democracies, where wealth isn't redistributed, where hierarchies and inequities go unchallenged and, most importantly - the oil flows. So notes of caution are issued: rights must be respected - the right to property the most sacrosanct of all.

Pause this scene - what is unfolding?

A re-activation of the 'colonial machine' of power emerges in the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. These revolts can - and frighteningly most probably will - allow for the reappearance of these methods of domination onto these oil rich territories, continuing the extraction of valuable resources and labour. It happened back then, in the world after the Second World

War, when most of the colonies in Africa became independent, and there is no reason to believe it will not happen now. In the world after the 2008 financial crisis, the colonial machine is enabled to complete its task: to clear the political grounds and prepare the terrain for another cycle of displacement, dispossession, and death.

The question at stake, then, is whether the movements can maintain momentum, continue to mobilise and stay organised. If not, new regimes will likely [re]appear, similar to the ones so recently pushed from power. The newfound self-confidence of the people will fight to co-exist with a recomposed elite that remains suspicious and fearful of the people. If the mobilisations continue we might see the establishment of parliamentary democracies. But there is another option, that of a continuing revolution; tearing open the economic and political structure, refusing the dying Pax Americana and instituting another way of living together beyond both an empty democratic theatre and an economic system built on blood and sweat, that profits only the few. It is within this choice that our hopes and dreams lie. The images that we see, of those that are not us, promise so much.

If we desire to be more than mere spectators, we need to get closer and closer to the screen and finally crack the looking-glass. It may be that making a collective newspaper is as

much about investigating the behind-the-scenes practices, the mechanics of working together, as it is about the finished product. What can we learn from 'doing' together? Which of our own experiences might prove useful to all of the other clusters of people out there learning, like us, what it means to create collectively? In grappling with these questions, we trip up a lot, we argue over what should be printed in The Paper and over what we want it to become.

In the next edition (Edition One) we will be paying attention to 'Fear and Disobedience'. How is fear used to govern and rule and how, through resisting the discipline, violence and laws imposed on us, can we stand together and feel strong? As we look around us - at university lecturers balloting for strike action and at trade unionists, workers and students preparing for the 26 March demonstration - we gain courage from the sense that our own squabbles, terrors, jokes and projects might be part of something bigger - something that demands to be taken seriously.

Front cover image: University professors march on Tahrir Square
| Hossam el-Hamalawy | www.arabawy.org

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مقالة المحرر

شاهدنا أحداث مزهلة علي شاشات التلفزيونات المختلفة و خصوصا علي قناة الجزيرة ، حيث دفع بالعويات القوة من مكائنها لتفسيح المجال لميلاد عالم جديد.

يقولون هذه هي ثورت الشباب ، يدعون انها انفجار عفوي للمطالبة بالحرية المدنية و الديمقراطية.

ولكن عبرشمال افريقيا ، في كل الاماكن عبورا بالشوارع و المصانع و الجامعات ، توجد منظمات قوية جذرية ثابتة التأسيس.

القصة المقدمة لنا تدعي ان الحريات و الحقوق الديمقراطية المطالب بها ، هي بالطبع مطابقة " لما تتمتع به نحن من حريات و حقوق "

يقارن "الشارح العربي" المستانس جديدا بسقوط الكتلة الشرقية في عام ١٩٨٩ او ظفر "الحرية" على السلطة القمعية

و يبدو كل هذا كنوع الانتقال الذي يريدون رؤيته ؛ نظام ديمقراطي 'مستقر' ، ليس فيه تقسيم عادل للثروات العامة و عدم المساواة يمر دون اعتراض ، لكن من المهم استمرار سريان البترول.

و بناء عليه يقدم التحذير: الحقوق يجب ان تحترم - و دون شك يكون حق الملكية الاكثر تقديسا

اووقف المشهد.ماذا يحدث؟

ان اعدت تشغيل 'الماكينات الاستعمارية' القابضة على القوة و الرغبة حاضره في التفرقة ما بين 'نحن' و 'هم'

الثورة قادرة-بشكل جدي و مخيف- على السماح لعودت طرق للسيطره التحكم في هذه الاراضي الغنية بلبترول.

لنستمر في استغلال ثرواتها الطبيعية و طاقتها البشرية.

، لقد حدث هذا من قبل ، في العالم بعد انتهاء الحرب العالمية الثانية، عندما حازت معظم الدول الافريقية للمستعمرة على استقلالها

ولا يوجد سبب للشك ان ذلك ممكن تكراره مرة اخرى الآن.

في عالم مابعد ازمة ٢٠٠٨ الاقتصادية، استحضرة الماكينة الاستعمارية لتنتهي مهمتها: لتمهيد الساحة السياسية و تحضير المنطقة لحلقة جديدة منالترحيل و التهجير و الموت

و السؤال المطروح ، هو ، هل تستطيع الحركة الابقاء على قوتها الدافعة ، و الاستمرار في التعبئة و التنظيم.

لو لا ، سيظهر نظام جديد ، مشابه للنظام السابق الساقط من الحكم.

ان الثقة بالنفس التي اكتسبها الشعب مجددا ستصارع ضد النخبة المنتلفة ، الحذرة من الشعب.

لو استمرت التعبئة ، من الممكن ان نرى تاسيس ديمقراطية برلمانية.

لكن هناك اختيار بديل ، ان تستمر الثورة ؛ تمدق كل الهياكل السياسية و الاقتصادية ، و رفضة التحالف الامريكى المحتضر ، و تاسيس اساليب جديدة للتعيش تتخطى المسرحية الديمقراطية الفارغة و الانظمة الاقتصادية المبنية

على العرق و الدم و تخدم القلة القليلة.

في هذا الاختيار تقع امالنا و احلمنا ، بطبع ، الصورة التي نراها في هؤلاء المختلفون عنا ، يبشر بلكثير.

لو عندنا الرغبة لتكون اكثر من مجرد متفرجين ، فعلينا ان نقترب و نقترب من الشاشات حتى نخترق الزجاج الذي نرى من خلاله.

من المحتمل ، ان تحريرصحيفة جماعية مهم ، بلتحقيق في ما جرى وراء الكواليس ، و مابنية العمل الجماعي ، كما هو في المنتج النهائي.

ما الذي يمكن ان نتعلمه من 'الفعل' سويا ؟ اي من تجاربنا تثبت فائدتها لكل الجموع الذين يحاولون التعلم مثلنا ، ما معنى تشكيل مؤسسة جماعية ؟

في محاولت وضع اليد على هذه الاسئلة ، نتضر كثيرا ، نتجادل عما يطبع في الجريدة و رغبتنا في ما ستكون.

في هذا العدد (العدد واحد) سنعطى اهتمام خاص لل 'الخوف و العصيان'.

كيفية استخدام الخوف للحكم و الادارة ، و كيف انه بمقاومة النظام، العنف و القوانين المفروضة علينا، يمكننا ان نقف سويا و نشعر بقوة ؟

عندما ننظر حولنا- في الجامعات المدرسون يصوتون للضراب ، في الاحادات العمالية ، العمال و الطلبة يحضرون لمظاهرة ٢٦ مارس- نشجع من المنظر ، و نرى ان اختلافاتنا و مخاوفنا و نكاتنا و مشروعا يمكن ان يصبح

جدي من شئ اكبر- شئ يطلب ان يعامل بجديّة

Correspondence

The Paper's mailbox was full this month with letters, comments and questions from friends and foe. So don't be shy and keep 'em coming.

I freelance for the *Evening Standard*. Simple question - is it not irresponsible to give thousands of cash-strapped students a detailed step-by-step guide to shoplifting in a newspaper part-funded by the university and presumably ultimately the taxpayer?
/Tim Stewart

Read shoplifting article on the train, and of course it seems utterly harmless to me, not even particularly enlightening. The real issue is how to get the tags with electronic codes off the garments so that one can pass the detectors on the way out of bigger shops (which it seemed to be describing), and I feel sure that system was already in place well before 1995. Odd.
/Maria Collins - Sweden

Great paper. I agree with the correspondent who suggested that other news be included. For example, Tunisia. I think it should not be assumed that universally, today, a piece of paper is more lasting than what happens on the web. There has been a bit of a mindset change. I also think that deliberate non-hierarchical behavior -- supposedly much practiced in the United States -- ignores the fact that people are different and a "vanguard", people who actually are workhorses, invariably appears. I myself have found the work of supplementing vanguardism more useful than denying the emergence of a something that one need not call a vanguard, but that surely is one. My own feeling is that the classroom should be used as an instrument rather than be written off. Educational institutions are also places of change. As for evaluations, I am 100% opposed to them, on the other hand it is a genuine double-bind, when students actually look for placement, they inevitably compete. How to get around this? I very much appreciate "Anyone's" contribution where a distinction is made between working in anonymity, trying to build a real collective, and star activists showcasing themselves. I think the point can also be made about taking fundraising as an end in itself and as activism. My congratulations to this effort and I hope it continues.
/Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), the English romantic poet, wrote about the Great French Revolution:

*"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!--Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!"*

*When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchantress--to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!"*

Well, without any attempt to come off as too pompous, I found these words fitting to describe the excitement with which I read the first issue of The Paper (which, btw, fittingly enough, I received a copy of on last Saturday's demo)! Hats off to the whole crew for having put together a twelve page paper smacked with articles that are both witty and thought provoking: a truly exemplary piece of a revolutionary newspaper! So congrats again and best of luck in the future!
/Adam Fabry - Brunel University

Read your first issue. Loved it. Cut above the rhetoric. Keep it coming.
/Boo

I think that Issue Minus 1 is great. My own reservation would be this: I was disturbed that one or two of the authors seemed to take it as axiomatic that representative democracy was dead or pointless. This assumption is worse than naïve - it is false, and it is tantamount to a sign of psychological appeasement. In saying that it is false, I mean to reference for example the arrival of the Green Party at last in Parliament - is this really to be taken as making no difference? Are we really saying that the movement now underway doesn't care whether Greens or Tories and New Labourites are elected? In speaking of psychological appeasement, I mean to reference the way in which giving up altogether on representative democracy risks being a kind of blind-alley of purism, and a giving up of hope. It takes strength to continue to hope, despite its terrible current state, that democracy in this country can be revived and enriched, even via Parliament. I hope that the Paper will encourage such strength.
/Dr. Rupert Read, Reader in Philosophy - University of East Anglia

I just came back from Syntagma Square. The sight of it tonight was surely not what most of us would have hoped for: even if during the day (for the first time ever)

protesters attempted to hold on the square, riot police would clear off wave after wave after wave of protesters. I went home, I got some rest, I went back. There they were, tiny groups of people still massing up, trying to walk up the stairs leading to the courtyard outside parliament: "thieves, thieves". People who had never met each other before. People who saw this as a game, almost. I see around twenty of them gather around a fountain. They decide they should poke some fun at the police standing opposite them all serious, ever-watching. They pretend they are going to bypass their row and head for a left exit from the square. Within minutes, I count five police cars spinning to the scene: "Everyone to the Police HQ, everyone is being detained".

Is this surprising, extreme? With the events unfolding over here in the past few days and weeks - not really. Why are people not allowed to congregate at Syntagma anymore? The explanation is easy enough: they understand that it only takes a tiny bit for enough people to be empowered and to create a snowstorm in return. Our struggle must now be precisely about trying to occupy and keep public space, to become fully visible. There were a few thousand of us this morning at Syntagma who seemed to have realised that. There were another twenty or so who realised it, the hard way, tonight. As we grow in numbers, as we become more and more visible, we start building confidence that *just about anything is possible*. Today was a good start.
/Anonymous

A letter from Syntagma Square, Athens

Contact us

Email: emailthepaper@gmail.com

Send your letters to the editorial collective, event listings, drawings, reports, articles, photos and other bits and pieces for the next edition: **by March 16th**. We have a free subscribers postal service, so to receive the next edition email your contact details.



The Shoplifter's Conundrum: Musings on a (non) scandal



"If we accept this idea, that the revolutionary enterprise of a man or of a people originates in their poetic genius...we must reject nothing of what makes poetic exhalation possible. If certain details of this work seem immoral to you, it is because the work as a whole denies your morality..."

Jean Genet, *Soledad Brother: the prison letters of George Jackson*

Dora Kaliayev from the University for Strategic Optimism stirs up a media storm in a (stolen) tea cup and pours hot water on it all

If you take a look at the *Letters* section of this edition of *The Paper*, you will find the following polite inquiry: "is it not irresponsible to give thousands of cash-strapped students a detailed step-by-step guide to shoplifting in a newspaper part-funded by the university and presumably ultimately the taxpayer?" This 'simple question,' in the words of the author, is not an isolated case in the feedback we received in the weeks following Edition Minus One. From the *Evening Standard's* desperate stalker attempts to get a quote, to spontaneous reactions of readers picking up *The Paper* for the first time, much of the reaction and attention largely remained on the DIY guide: *The Art of Shoplifting*. Even among our editorial collective, there was more internal debate as to the place this article should take in the final layout than for any other article.

Yet *The Paper* Edition Minus One was full of potential for controversy and re-envisioning. The repressed rose out of the kettle in an ominous cloud of rage. Cops were denied access to the plane of labour solidarity. We were encouraged to abandon the kind of hope that made us stand our grounds and to conquer new territories instead. The riot act was read. Why, then, was it the DIY guide that was considered so shocking above all the other radical content of the newspaper? I tend to take a hint from the infamous quote 'when a feminist is accused of exaggerating, she's on the right track' and believe that whatever makes people uncomfortable, defensive, or even scared, is a proof of its effectiveness; it points to a space of vulnerability, the promise of potential disruption.

Thus I ask: why would a DIY guide to shoplifting be more effective in creating that uneasy feeling? Why did it feel more threatening? One explanation might lie in the form. More academic/analytical articles might seem more innocuous because of their theoretical frame, but a hands-on guide implies concrete action. *The Paper* also published *How to Make a Collective Newspaper*, though. Yet the *Evening Standard* did not dispatch a photographer and journalist to question us about "rethinking the structures of collaborative production".

The question might be naïve. It might seem obvious. Shoplifting is illegal. Collectively produced newspapers printed on A3 sheets by a Risograph are not (even if they more or less directly encourage other illegal behaviours). That's our first hint, but let's go further. Are the sacrosanctity of property, the notion of a commodity, the untouchability of profit more deeply engrained in our collective unconscious than other forms of illegal behaviours? If so, what strategic insights does this give us about what we have left to deconstruct in ourselves and about which new targets to attack in our struggles?

Just when we thought the *Evening Standard* had surely given up, on 22 February the *Daily Mail* published an outraged article: "University Students publish guide to STEALING without being caught." The scandalous uncovering of our "celebration of criminality" then swooshed into the media cycle and got relayed from *Metro* to the *Daily Star* in such a display of copy-paste journalistic looting that one might wonder where the authors' respect for [intellectual]

property had suddenly gone. The online comments to these articles, though, revealed an angle that hadn't previously occurred to me: people thought the article was a joke! One forgiving comment said: "Students are taking the mick. Having a lark. Messing about. It's a joke. It's probably a jibe that, when the tuition fees rise, they won't be able to afford to buy anything." Hilarious indeed. Which is the most worrisome? That the possibility of students shoplifting be found utterly scandalous? Or that it would be disregarded as too surrealistically unimaginable to be believed? The second scares me most. Now I'm finding myself hoping for more outrage! Where's our vandalism DIY? Our drug-smuggling guide? We will keep them coming, and you better believe it.

This questioning takes us to new wicked territories, pushing forward the frontiers of our political imaginations towards a politics of dangerousness. More boundaries have to be broken, the false sense of security manufactured by the 'end-of-history' lullaby of neo-liberalism has to be dismantled. Let's make the world a dangerous place – dangerous not just for those for whom it has never ceased to be dangerous, but for those who have been spared until now. A critical step will be to turn the escalation in the practices of intimidation towards the student and other resistive movements against their perpetrators: the fear-mongering apparatuses of the kettle, the hunting-down and arrests of student protesters, the riot horses. To subvert and retaliate. But the equally policed lines of collective imaginaries also have to be broken down - cultural shock and awe - so that from this newfound sense of insecurity might rise unsuspected fires in the most unlikely places.

Post-fordist production test

University professors march on Tahrir Square | Hossam el-Hamalawy



MORTEN PAUL

What do academics do, when they go on strike?" our professor asked during one of the many discussions last autumn, only to give the answer immediately: "They use the additional time to work on their research". His question was intended to encourage a more self-conscious perspective on the protests. It presupposed a fundamental difference between industrial and academic work and questioned the appropriateness of the latter's protest forms in the former context. In hindsight I wonder if the statement does not pose a more general question: Is there something like a post-fordist articulation of protest, how does it look, and what would it mean for our most recent protests?

After Millbank a multitude of initiatives turned towards the "student" issue sprang up anew. Protest forms proliferated, putting the lessons learned by critical theory to practical use. These creative protests supplemented the more traditional modes of demonstrations and university occupations, often transforming them. The use of social networking to organise and disseminate rapidly led to the formation of new groups. Articles appeared in academic journals and lifestyle magazines, written by the same people either blogging and/or protesting. In January, *The Paper* was published, the first newspaper dealing exclusively with the student protests. An increasing number of research projects are being conceived, incestuously based on contacts acquired throughout the protests. These projects often incorporate the alternative methods they attempt to analyse. Lectures, conferences, teach-ins, etc. are taking place daily, attended by people organising more lectures, workshops, etc, sometimes financed by art councils, public funds and universities themselves.

It is this short circuit that I want to call a post-fordist mode of protesting. Are we creating a self-perpetuating circulation of information, affiliations and people? And is the suspicion that by feeding back into

academia this circulation also entails another way of accumulating social and cultural capital not warranted, despite 'all the best intentions'? Flexibility, mobility, creativity, networking, personal engagement, self-organisation and a familiarity with new media are some of the key ingredients to the rapid success of our protests. But they are also the mantra of neo-liberalism's reorganisation of higher education. What if it is this similarity that eventually allows for the integration and neutralisation of our protests?

By adopting a post-fordist organisation for our protests, many of its negative consequences are inevitable: By mid-December exhaustion was visible at every occupation. Not to be dismissed as an unfortunate side effect, self-exploitation to the point of breakdown is inherent to post-fordism. Precarious self-employment abolishes the benefits of the division of labour. Networking, on the other hand, has yet to provide an adequate alternative, because it does not challenge the central position of the competing individual. Study, work, engage, create, disseminate, apply, move, meet, talk, write; see connections where they exist, build them, if they are missing; do something special, do more, repeat in random order.

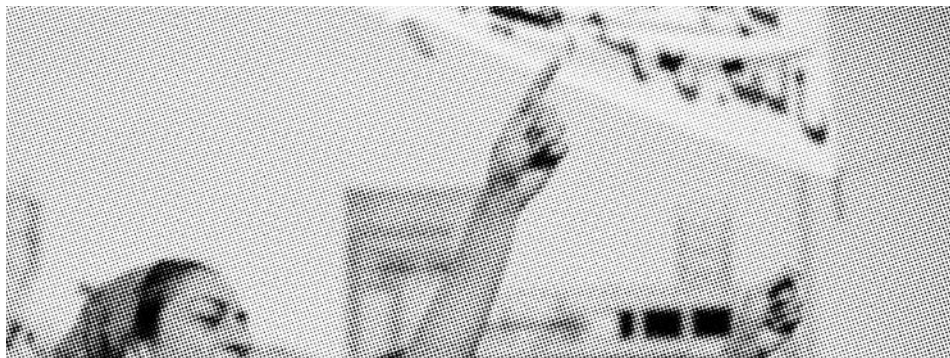
Our protests replicate this modus operandi. Having eliminated enough, somehow average seems to be the default. This discontent introduces a variation of alienation. The products of our protests are constitutively deficient, without us being allowed to articulate this deficiency. To see people trying to keep spirits up after the parliamentary vote had passed was somewhat dismaying. Michel Foucault's liberating "do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant" had transformed into a cruel imperative for optimism.

That the goal of non-hierarchical self-organisation is not only very demanding but can also result in its opposite is palpable in many accounts of university occupations. There are no official leaders, but nonetheless many de facto leaders

emerge. Set up as additional structures, these self-organised cells often fail to challenge the institutional framework they accrue from. Establishing continuous commitments is difficult, because mobility is deeply ingrained into the designated trajectory of contemporary academia even within one institution. Because of the multiple locations and modes of our engagement, recourse to resentment and a fetishisation of spontaneity is common. In a way, it provides the glue for our initiatives and actions. But if we turn the problematic around we might ask what ad-hoc allegiances, important as they are, prevent from entering into the discussion? What is still missing, it seems, is a widespread cross-social and internationalist analysis. Given our political differences, this analysis will necessarily diverge. But only if these accounts are articulated and contest each other, can appropriate forms of protest and resistance develop.

If the recent student protests mark the abolition of the education-deal in the 'developed nations', they bear the potential of a political questioning far more radical than the student revolts of '68. After all "precarious workers of art, education and the creative industries have nothing to lose but their feedback questionnaires". It is the generalisation of the condition of precariousness facilitated by post-fordism that engenders the chance for a wider struggle to emerge. It could provide a foundation to a political project. However, it also presents a challenge. Precariousness does not equal precariousness. As students, academics or workers in the creative industries we are in a privileged position and have therefore still a lot of privileges to lose, even if it is sometimes only a slightly more impressive CV. Complicity is not accidental: specific modes of production allow for and facilitate the transformation of protest participation into cultural capital. In doing so a gap appears that separates those who can put their participation in protests to work, from other forms of precarious labour that is not easily bridged.

A retreat to be sure, but a retreat to the only possible victory



Going back to the only thing that is really ours

EDDIE MOLLOY

What were the features of those heady days back in November and December when it seemed that 16 year olds were making the government shake and a new movement was in the pangs of birth? What excited us so as missiles were hurled and cavalry charged? For now we find ourselves on the other side of the holidays heading towards yet another break and having attended a demonstration that insisted on the existence of a 'movement'. But our movement's immediate aim of defending education is fast retreating from view.

It is necessary at this point to take stock once again of where we are, how we got here and where it is we can and should go. This is no simple reminiscence nor is it idle speculation. It derives from a concern, shared by many, that the changes that are taking place in our society and our world may be beyond us in reach and scope; rendering a situation characterised by a deficit of democracy even more immune to the most basic of democratic demands.

The change in mood between the demonstrations of October and November last year was characterised by a change in the form and magnitude of the protests. The placid (citizen expressing a democratic right/let's march from A to B) attitude crumbled in the face of genuine rage and enthusiasm. The petty numbers of the police mixed with the surging mass of protesters

overcame the reservation and timidity that such protests usually display. In the face of what seemed to be a last chance, joy exploded as people danced in the wreckage of Millbank.

Subsequent weeks saw kettling, police horses charging and mobile groupuscules roaming the streets of the West End as the police tried in vain to contain these dancing figures of revolt. The brutality of the police and the ideologically driven nature of the government became savagely clear. To this mix was added the collapse of the legitimacy of the NUS leadership (if indeed any legitimacy could be ascribed to them at all) and an explosion of university occupations in which protest mingled with new and imaginative educational practices.

The emergence of the London Assembly further isolated the NUS from the grassroots revolt that was everywhere appearing. Nevertheless, it became apparent around and after the vote on 10 December that no clear strategy for the movement had emerged, with even the apparent suspension of sectarian activity by the radical left having done little to aid the situation. Indeed the general consensus now appears to be that the student movement 'look forward to' and 'build' the Trade Union Congress (TUC) demonstration planned for 26 March 2011.

This position is problematic, however, in the flagging enthusiasm and relevance for anything to do with central London.

It is precisely there that the government and their police have shown themselves to be strongest. The former through their total control over parliament and the latter through numbers, violence, and kettling. The education reforms have been passed and any belief in the accountability of the government has been broken. All that remains is for the universities, local councils, colleges, hospitals, schools, libraries and childcare centres to implement these loathed cuts.

It is precisely for these reasons that we should be looking at where we are, where we are strongest and where the government is weakest. For students, it is clear that this place is amongst ourselves. In our halls, in our classes, on our campuses and in our communities. Let them try to kettle the university and we will live there. Let them try and close our classrooms and we will build barricades. Let them try to divide us from our neighbours and friends and we will teach them the meaning of solidarity. It is now that we must stop the implementation of the cuts and in doing so we need to stand in the way of precisely those people who are implementing the cuts. This is the task that faces us now. The streets of London may not yet be ours, but we are not alone and it is our collectivity which is ours. Only from here can we defeat this government's assault on our lives and communities. This marks a retreat to be sure, but a retreat to the only possible victory.

DeSchool, D-Skool, ReallyReally Freeschool

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Surrounded by institutions and universities, there is newly occupied space where education can be re-imagined. Amidst rising fees and mounting pressure for 'success', we value knowledge in a different currency: one that everyone can afford to trade. In this school, skills are swapped and information shared, culture cannot be bought or sold. Here is an autonomous space to find each other, to

gain momentum, to cross-pollinate ideas and actions.

If learning amounts to little more than preparation for the world of work, then this school is the antithesis of education. There is more to life than wage slavery. This is a part of the latest chapter in a long history of resistance. It is an open book, a pop-up space with no fixed agenda, unlimited in scope. This space aims to cultivate equality through collaboration and horizontal

participation. A synthesis of workshops, talks, games, discussions, lessons, skill shares, debates, film screenings. Our time in these buildings is short, we have the next couple of weeks to zhumba, zhumba, zhumba. Lets take education into our own hands.

Propose a session, share your knowledge, extend your skillz, or just come down to the space - for venue and more details see <http://www.reallyfreeschool.org/>

Loveable and Capable

Abdel Moneim Riyadh Square | Hossam el-Hamalaawy



Compulsory voluntary work is set to become a permanent fixture in our welfare system. *Dave Riddle* gives a first hand account of being put in place(ment).

I have been referred to Working Links, my local (part private, part government-funded) "employment provider". I am expected to attend from 9:30am until 4pm, Monday to Friday without fail; otherwise my benefits will be suspended.

The first few days were spent in workshops: motivational training ('IALAC' - "I Am Loveable And Capable"); improving your CV colour from red to green (analogical to the traffic light code); and cold-calling (speculatively phoning potential employers for jobs they don't have). For these first few days, I sat like a school kid waiting for the lunch bell, unresponsive and insolent.

However, I then started to realise that the Working Links staff 'consultants' did in many ways want to help me get work. And not, as I had suspected, just as disguised government agents trying to force me into badly paid retail jobs. Many of the consultants at Working Links had themselves been 'long-term unemployed' (2 years or more), and their first jobs after this period were in Jobcentres or recruitment agencies.

One method used to get people back into work is to find them a "voluntary placement". Voluntary labour is quite rightly getting a lot of negative media attention at the moment, as David Cameron

slashes public sector jobs only to force this newly unemployed workforce into the voluntary sector (the Big Society). But there is also a positive side to voluntary labour, as a way of easing particularly the long-term unemployed and young people with no experience to put on their CVs back into work. Voluntary work can be good for the long-term unemployed who may have become depressed, socially isolated perhaps, and quite hopeless. When you are unemployed for a long time, you kind of forget what working was like, especially on the level of routine - getting up early, being out all day, living a separate daily life from one's partner/family. Voluntary work can also be a creative and liberating experience; you choose to give your time to something you're interested in (of course, compulsory voluntary work is an absurd oxymoron, a perfect example of Orwell's Newspeak).

After the failure of my own attempts to find work after graduating in 2009 (with a 2:1 in Philosophy, from Warwick University - a prestigious member of the Russell group no less), after my "gateway" period (the time you are given on the dole to find work yourself), I have opted for the subsidised work-placement option and will soon begin working as a literacy and numeracy tutor for Springboard, Hackney. This will involve working 25 hours a week, for a minimum of eight weeks, for nothing, not even bus fare.

The person I can thank for finding me this placement is a man known within Working Links as "The King". While working at the Jobcentre, King claims to have "discovered" work placements as a great way of getting the long-term jobseekers back into work. This, however, created tensions at the Jobcentre between King and his colleagues, as he was spending more time with individuals and this contradicted the unwritten "speed-sign" policy, an integral part of the conveyor-belt approach to welfare. Eventually, after months of hassle, King found a job at Working Links and left the Jobcentre.

I was told another story about a consultant at a competing "employment provider" which operates much more in line with the new Conservative approach to welfare. After refusing to apply for a number of jobs suggested to him, a "client" was told that his benefits would be suspended for three months as a consequence of "failing to carry out a reasonable jobseeker's direction" (see www.benefitsnow.co.uk on "sanctions"). The client returned the next day with a cup full of his own urine and threw it in the consultant's face. I think that this is an understandable reaction to a "sanction" that will deprive this person of his - and possibly his family's - only means of living.

ESOL is Under Threat

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision now faces its biggest attack yet. Eligibility changes proposed by the government will mean that in many places around 70 per cent of students will no longer be eligible for funded courses. Under the government strategy on skills, the only people eligible for full funding are those on "active benefits" - jobseeker's allowance (JSA) or employment support allowance (ESA). Those on so called "non-active benefits" such as income support or

on low incomes, including spouses, will not be eligible, nor will asylum seekers, migrant workers and refugees. In addition ESOL in the workplace will no longer be funded.

A planning meeting held on January 12th organised by an ESOL Alliance was attended by around 70 people and a campaign set up called "Action for ESOL".

Meetings of ESOL students and teachers are starting to happen in colleges and community centres around the country and teaching resources are being produced.

Sign the petition against the cuts here: www.gopetition.com/petition/41552.html

Find out more about the campaign at www.natecla.org.uk

We are political

Protestors in Tahrir Square | Hossam el-Hamalaawy



What is politics made of? *Jodi Dean* takes a look at technological determinism, affect and communicative capitalism

Networked cultures and social media are embedded in communicative capitalism, a form of capitalism where communication itself is a productive force. Our words and energies, our opinions and critiques, provide media content, commodified spectacle. The few profit from the words, ideas, and expressions of feeling of the many. To grapple with how contemporary politics is reconfigured, to update radical politics so that it can transform this setting, we must jettison the critical vocabulary of the late sixties and understand how we are political now.

First, technological rationality is not the problem. Our technologies are not a set of command and control protocols that insert us into a large, uniform structure, assign us numbers, and direct us to our proper place. Contemporary communication technologies are configured by users, consumers, capitalists, programmers and states, as well as by trial and error. They are products of contingencies—old decisions and new. Twitter did not result from rational planning, it makes little sense to repeat critiques of planning and centralisation today. Think of any code written by Microsoft; it is sloppy and filled with errors. Think of Apple's constant changes and upgrades. The world of communicative capitalism is technologically turbulent, with multiple platforms, applications and codes flowing into and out of each other in unpredictable ways.

Second, what entraps us in our current setting is not a set of constraints that go under the name of reason: our networks are affective. Wanting friends and driven to express our creativity and individuality, we embrace social media. The sharing of

thoughts and feelings—the more intense the better—ties us into mediated practices of expression. As Franco 'Bifo' Berardi describes it, the pathologies of the present are not those of repression but of 'hyper-expression'. This does not mean there is no repression, it is part of a general description of our present setting in communicative capitalism. What is at stake is the repression of alternative political possibilities. As a general phenomenon, repression operates at a level different from that of the repression of specific social sectors; it operates in advance to prevent the emergence of alternatives, to block new possibilities from our imaginations before they even arrive. Stuck in the micro, imagination has a hard time moving to the macro, to communicative capitalism's basic system and structure.

Third, we are not alienated. More precisely, alienation is not a primary attribute of communicative capitalism even as specific conditions of alienation persist for some workers in some sectors. Instead, we are enjoined to communicate, share our feelings. Network culture is participationist. The system depends on our participatory, expressive acts—so long as they keep their place in the media networks. We are supposed to cultivate respect for multiple opinions, open-mindedness, sensitivity to difference, as if our environment were responsive to our needs and concerns. We are supposed to talk, even when this very talking has lost political efficacy and displaces attention from actual sites of extreme brutality and precarity. All around us people are engaged, expressive, and creative.

Fourth, and most important: we are not post-political. Even before the protests of

November and December 2010 and the heady days of revolution in Tunisia and Egypt, we were active, politicised. The despotic financialism of neoliberal capitalism and the aggressive militarism of the so-called war on terror are blatant political attacks on people and ways of life. Their seizure of our goods and lives, our futures, uses state power as an instrument of class domination. Many of us have been vitally engaged around these and other struggles. What, then, are positive corollaries to these rather negatively formulated ideas? How do these indications of the distance between our setting in communicative capitalism and the mass culture of the last sixties show up in network cultures?

First, our networks are affective. We circulate our feelings and hopes, our anger and rage. We connect our impulses to criticise, reject, resist. Circulating intensities amplify one another and combine into ever more present and undeniable forces.

Second, our connections are communicative. For many of us, our physical locations do not provide our primary political connections. We might be unemployed, temp workers or students. We might work in sectors with high degrees of turnover. Many of our connections do not stem from our workplaces or even from our neighborhoods. They traverse multiple domains. Sometimes this traversal can amplify concerns, enhancing their capacity to register with more and more people. Other times this traversal is a popularizing that takes the edge off. Our connections feel flatter, more like matters of taste than political conviction.

Third, we are active and engaged. The political problem is not that our voices are missing—we are talking and expressing most of the time. Many of us are pretty well informed about crucial issues. We are connected with networks of people who care and who are doing things—making

Independent Union of Real Estate Tax Collectors Tahrir Square | Hossam el-Hamalawy



*Knowing that people
will be there when
you need them,
that someone
has your back,
is crucial for an
opposition that builds
something new.*

posters, writing blogs, emailing various figures and officials.

Fourth, communicative capitalism arises out of antagonism. Whether one uses the Marxist term, class conflict, or emphasizes multiple contemporary antagonisms, the dynamic interactions circulating in our contemporary setting stem from fundamental division. Each political engagement derives its intensity from this division. We know there are substantial inequalities, patterns of systemic exploitation, oppression, and violence.

These four components provide the conditions of possibility for revolutionary change. So where's the change? Why, in the US, UK, and much of the EU, does radical change seem impossible to grasp? Because the first three components— affective networks, communicative connections, and active engagement—are the ideological dimensions of communicative capitalism

that fragment, disperse, and redirect the fourth.

This fragmentation, dispersion, and redirection manifests itself in multiple ways. One way is through the decline of symbolic efficiency. As Slavoj Žižek explains, this decline points to how symbols do not travel, even though our interconnected media provides an infrastructure that lets them intersect and converge. What means one thing to me means something else to someone else. I see a photograph of police brutality. Someone else sees the reestablishment of law and order. I associate Lenin with emancipatory change. Someone else links him to totalitarian oppression. The overall effect is that the communication practices that connect us also provide barriers to the organisation of an opposition with duration. Participation, the sharing of multiple insights and opinions, of critically responding, redirects radical energies into circuits of communication instead of onto

the streets. The solution is not to stop writing and reading (although we might be better off if we tried to get to the point rather than consider every option and alternative no matter how unlikely). The solution is to supplement communicative networks with dedicated and organised people on the streets. We can reach almost everyone. The challenge lies in how we organise ourselves after we've been reached.

Strong organizations do not emerge organically and spontaneously. Planning matters. Knowing that people will be there when you need them, that someone has your back, is crucial for an opposition that builds something new. Fortunately, the aura of participatory media is wearing off and the energy of organised action is increasing. The challenge is making sure that this energy is focused on antagonism and not redirected back into the circuits of communicative capitalism.

A day I will never forget

ANONYMOUS

That Friday in January 2011 will be a day that my six workmates and I will never forget. At 10 a.m. UK border agents entered our workplace saying that they had received a report about people working illegally there. For my mates and I it was a crushing blow because seven out of the nine of us were detained. For some it was the day when their dreams were shattered, for others it was the tragedy of being separated from their families as a result of this action. Among the seven detained, there were two women. One of them cried a lot out of anger and impotence for not being able to do anything. Afterwards we were divided. The women were taken to a detention centre in north London and the men to another detention centre near Gatwick Airport.

Cases such as ours have been happening every day for the last two months following different raids of UK border agencies in workplaces and in places where many people spend time hanging out. Many people have been detained and taken to detention centres that to me are just like prisons. Hundreds of people are detained for over three months and up to three years for different reasons. For the Chinese, Indian and Pakistani for instance, it is impossible both to leave and to return to their countries since their embassies will not provide travel documents.

Of the seven detained, six were deported to their countries of origin, and I, thanks to God and to the efficient help of a few organisations acting in solidarity with migrants, got my freedom back. But I still

have to walk a long way in search of the acknowledgement of my rights as a human being, the right to freedom, the right to free movement, the right to dignified work regardless of race, colour or the place where you are from.

I invite everyone to look for mechanisms to stop deportations, and to work and collaborate with sending information to the people detained in different detention centres. We have to fight so that stories like ours are not repeated and so that human rights are recognised in this and every other country in the world. Thank you.

The question of childcare

Interview with a parent

"We put our son down on the waiting list for the nearest nursery when he was two weeks old, because we had been warned that there were long waiting lists. I was due to start back part-time at my old job after Christmas when my son turned one and thought that by then he'd have a place, but when I inquired they told me he wouldn't get a place before he was two. We have now found a child-minder, by going through the council's accredited list, but this works out more expensive than a nursery and you are relying on one person, so today when she called and told me she was sick I had to phone my work and take holiday as I don't have anyone to fall back on."

"The other problem is that the government offers free nursery places part time when a child is 3 years old, but if you have been working and are on maternity leave you must return to your job when your child is one, not three. As it is difficult to get a nursery place many women have to leave their old job or go part-time. Currently I work one day a week just to cover my childcare costs. There is obviously a real need for more nursery places so women can have a choice about going back to work."

Nurseries, as we know them today, are a relatively new phenomenon. Until the 20th century most people started work before they reached ten years old. There was no public support for working mothers, who depended on relatives and childminders to look after their young children.

In the 1970's, the Women's Liberation Movement demanded free, state-funded childcare as vital for women to escape the home and traditional female roles and to participate fully in 'public' life. Feminists and community activists struggled to set up community nurseries, controlled by parents and the community and funded by the state. The National Childcare Campaign was set up in 1982 to further these demands. It has since evolved into the Daycare Trust which continues to campaign for more and better quality childcare.

As a result of such campaigning, combined with the increasing numbers of women entering the labour market, the last 10 years have seen a huge expansion in the numbers of nursery places and free places for children aged over 3. New Labour aimed to expand childcare places and set up Sure Start centres.

In addition to providing childcare, Sure Start included toy libraries; psychologists; access to retraining, support, information and a space to meet for parents. All of these services are particularly important for those on low incomes. However, childcare tax credits cover only 70 per cent of childcare costs. Parents in the UK still pay more towards the costs of childcare than in any other European country. Waiting lists for good childcare are long, and the nursery sector is still dogged by high staff turnover, poor pay and staff conditions.

Now, the future of Sure Start centres is under threat. Jobs will be lost, some centres may have to charge for services and others will close. It is easy to forget that nursery provision, whilst not perfect in many respects, is essential for families and communities. Campaigns to defend nurseries and childcare services have won in places such as the boroughs of Hackney and Lewisham. It is essential that we defend nurseries, childcare services and activities in every borough that they face cutbacks or closure.

Source: *Feminist Fightback Newsletter*
<http://www.feministfightback.org.uk/>

Dangerous Alliances: Class and the Student Movement

FEDERICO CAMPAGNA

Recently, I have been asked several times by Italian friends and comrades to talk about the British student movement. I must confess that their questions always made me feel slightly embarrassed.

At first, I tried to forget about this uncomfortable feeling, talking about the rise of a new civic participation, which had been lacking in this country since the 1980's, with the brief exception of the anti-war movement of 2003. Then, in my heart of hearts I acknowledged that in the UK at the moment there is not a 'movement' as such, but rather a constellation of small groups and organisations.

But that feeling of discomfort would not be forgotten so easily. So I tried again, gathering all the hope I had and created a narrative along the lines of 'this-is-just-the-beginning' and 'let's-give-it-some-time'. Still, the discomfort would not leave me. From an intuition of a problem, it turned into a medical premonition of a disease. Something is rotten within the 'movement', and it is not just the fact that there is no movement as such.

So I took a deep breath, stepped back, and decided to move beyond the facade of slogans and banners that often, and foremost, confound those who carry them. On the other side of political and pseudo-

political labels and claims, I found only people. Yet, if I still wanted to satisfy my desire to discover the origin of that feeling, I had to try to understand this multitude using simpler filters than the existential one. As a good Marxist would do, I decided to start with the class filter.

Of course, I was aware of the fact that class today has become an increasingly blurred demarcation of social differences. A further adjustment of the filter was necessary. So I started looking at the people that composed the 'movement' under the simple lens of their individual economic positions.

Looking at the socioeconomic composition of the 'movement', the differences were stunning. On the one hand we have a proletariat, or even sub-proletariat, mass, represented mostly by youth coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. They are often present at demonstrations where they seem to take the role of physically confronting police brutality, and taking violent pleasure in the odd act of vandalism. Despite their role, and the fact that they are those who will be hit the hardest by the measures of austerity, their involvement in the decision-making process of the 'movement' is almost completely absent. The 'movement' seems to have forgotten them. You will never have seen them at the general assemblies, held in occupied universities, or in the various meetings promoted by the more 'cultured' side of

the 'movement'. Once the demonstration is over, they will not look for the other parts of the 'movement', and the rest of the 'movement' will definitely not look for them. Maybe this has something to do with a more general negative attitude of the left towards the 'so-called' lumpenproletariat, which further marginalises the most fragile part the underclasses.

Then we have another mass that perceives itself as middle class. This is, at least numerically, the core of the 'movement'. However, the middle class itself is on the path to extinction, slowly disappearing like an obsolete language. In fact, for the vast majority of young middle class people, the economic indicators (in terms of family wealth, welfare benefits, current income and potential future income) place them increasingly closer to the dispossessed proletariats than to the wealthier end of their class. Despite this, the common feeling amongst the young middle class is of an innate belonging to the same cultural world of the upper classes (with which, despite their apparent hatred, they believe they share the same cultural values), alongside a deep, almost automatic, feeling of 'being other' from their proletariat and sub-proletariat comrades. This feeling of otherness is perfectly exemplified by the general attitude that the middle class (left or right wing alike) has towards the mass of sub-proletariats that they define as chavs.

Demonstrations and Diversions

Our reporter in Manchester counts the good eggs and the bad

VIRINDER S KALRA

The follow up to the TUC/ Students Against the Cuts demonstration in Manchester on 29 January has been a media led storm about the supposed chanting of 'Tory Jew' at Aaron Porter, NUS President. The *Daily Mail*, that bastion of progressive thought, headlined 'Student leader faces barrage of anti-Jewish abuse at rally as protesters accuse him of being a Tory'. This was followed by a program on *Radio 4* exploring the way that Jew is used as racist epithet amongst the youth of Manchester. This use of racism as a way of avoiding the actual issue at stake is not new, but seems to be part of a wider trend of vilifying those who are resisting the state in any way.

At the Manchester demonstration, eggs were thrown at Porter and the stage for a number of correct reasons. Firstly, the demonstration itself was an insult to the people who turned out as it went from a place where there was no public (Manchester Museum) through an area where all the shops were closed at that time (Wilmslow Road) to a park which at that time no one visits (Platt Fields). A group of protesters rightly heckled Porter for his capitulation during the protests in London. Whilst the chants of 'You Tory You' could be misinterpreted (you can make your own mind up from the YouTube video clip: <http://tinyurl.com/5tqavey>). Their anger was not misdirected. To their credit, a group of students did then form an impromptu march back up Wilmslow Road to get into the City Centre and were

subsequently harassed and kettled by the police.

The second point is that the media coverage of the issue of racism (*Sky News* and then the *BBC*) totally eclipsed that on the demonstration and, of course, on the issues of cuts, not only in education, but across the board. Delegitimising struggles or even justifying repressive action - racist Manchester students getting locked up by the police is more palatable than young people defending their right to an education - has become an integral part of propaganda that seeks to make all resistance illegitimate. It seems as if resistance itself is now subject to a kind of set of rules and regulations that are set by the media. When newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* begin using racism as a way of delegitimising protest it is time to shout louder.

And finally, we have the upper classes. Most of them are studying at Oxbridge, have a wealthy family background and have a bright future ahead, mainly thanks to their family connections and their university networks. They might be a minority in terms of numbers, but they seem to have elected themselves as 'the voice of the movement', holding the most part of the media power within the 'movement', which, in our age, means one of the most immediate forms of power. Oxbridge's domination over all British media (from *The Guardian*, to the *BBC*, to *The Sun*) and over the Parliament is infamous. In Italy we would call this mafia, in the United Kingdom it is normalised under the denomination of 'ruling elite', the main difference being that Italian mafia is usually class-neutral, while the British elite system is very much class-based, and of course race-specific. In December 2010 reports were published which showed that 89 per cent of Oxford students and 87.6 per cent of Cambridge students of that year came from the top two socioeconomic groups, and that only one African-Caribbean student was admitted to Oxford, none to Cambridge, in the year 2009.

Having looked through the lens and seen what lay behind the simple idea of the 'movement', I could not help but ask myself how this was possible. How could activists be so willing to disregard such strong contradictions in the social composition of their 'movement'? How could they, and in particular their middle-class core, decide to accept as comrades people destined soon to occupy positions of power over them, while treating as 'others' those who increasingly share with them an

underprivileged socioeconomic condition? Why did they never think to invite their natural class enemies to stay away from a movement intended to be in defense of the underclasses?

Maybe this has also to do with a 1968-esque left mythology, according to which students are at the forefront, and the driving force, of any possible social revolution. However, being a student is and always has been a very limited condition, both in terms of length of time and of social accessibility. It is one that does not fit well with the slow and persistent pace required by any serious attempt to create radically progressive social change. Being a student often means falling into an obsession for issues related to the education system, rather than focusing on challenging the general social and economic structures and patterns of inequality that affect the whole of society. This is especially so in the UK, where students seem not to be able, or willing, to distinguish between those who share their imposed place in society from those who determine social impositions altogether.

It was here, at the end of these considerations, that I found again that feeling of embarrassment. It was much closer now to the point of revealing its true name. It was the unpleasant feeling of being swindled.

In the last few months, I have spent a huge amount of energy participating in the British 'movement'. I was in the somehow privileged position of being both a student and a worker at the same time, as well as an anarchist, which allowed me the freedom

to move in and out of any specific group or label. I can't say that I have not enjoyed the wave of activism and enthusiasm that has animated countless demonstrations, meetings and occupations. However, I can't deny this feeling of being swindled each time I saw the Oxbridge kids on the news with their heated, romanticised accounts of what the 'movement' was. I couldn't help but feel defrauded of my energy every time I saw young people from Peckham or Croydon being marginalised by a method of organisation that privileged universities as the chosen place of decision-making and debate.

However, it is true this is just the beginning. We should give it more time. Let us hope that this yet-to-come movement will have the clarity of mind to attempt a thorough self-criticism and to redefine its class alliances. Let us hope that the temptations of glamour will give way to a deeper understanding of the patterns of inequality. Let us start working today to expand the organisational base to include those who are more exploited and endangered, and thus more entitled to lead the struggle. Let us move our meetings from central universities to marginal areas of the cities. Let us relocate our attack from the Parliament vs. University dichotomy to the heart of the exploitative system - to banks, offices, factories, churches and the media. And let us forget about second-hand mythologies, and reopen our imagination to a general, radical, even utopian vision of what kind of new society is necessary.

Through Europe - <http://th-rough.eu/>

Libya's Lost Promise

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The announcement of new US sanctions repeats a tragic scenario all too familiar, the second time as farce

VIJAY PRASHAD

When Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi overthrew King Idris in 1969, Libyans heaved a sigh of relief. Idris had sucked the oil profits of this oil-rich country for his own betterment. Little went to a population that slumbered through life with human indicators below most countries that had no such resource. Qaddafi's coup was in line with a series of such endeavors that began in Egypt in 1952 with the Free Officer's movement. These were low-level military officers who commanded regiments, but did not come from the elite classes (the Generals who commanded the entire general staff). Their lowly roots predisposed them to the woes of the masses, who had struggled to remove the colonial powers but had not benefitted from "flag independence." The Colonels were their deliverance in societies where the "civil" branch had been eviscerated.

Qaddafi's promise to Libya was that he would turn the oil wealth toward the creation of a socialist society. Over the first two decades of his rule, Qaddafi directed a set of economic policies that had a marked social impact. The State took over the oil fields and raised the oil rents it charged the multi-national oil firms. The money was diverted to social welfare (increase in housing and health care). The regime constrained private enterprise, encouraged workers to take control of about two hundred firms and radically redistributed land (such as in the western region of Jefara).

The State re-monetarized the currency, and allowed only a shallow ceiling for wealth. It was a straightforward redistribution of wealth conducted as a currency change.

But Qaddafi himself was not keen on the full agenda of socialism. There was to be no socialist democracy. His own "democracy" was always centered around him, his clan (the Qadhadhfa), and his friends from the military and childhood. Even so, the democratic set-up exceeded what had been allowed by King Idris. Over time, the limited democratic spaces strained against both the rhetoric of the regime and aspirations of the people. Qaddafi also promoted a radical version of Islam, with his Islamic Legion (1972) sent off to conduct insurgencies from Chad to the Philippines. The Islamic militant in Qaddafi was only brought to heel when he himself was threatened by an assassination attempt in 1993 and with the rise of militancy in nearby Algeria. Qaddafi's political Islamism was hastily converted into paranoia about al-Qaeda in the Maghreb.

After 9/11, Qaddafi hastily offered his support to the U. S. In October 2002, Foreign Minister Mohammed Abderrahman Chalgam admitted that his government closely consulted with the U. S. on counterterrorism, and a few months later, Qaddafi's heir apparent Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi warmly spoke of Libya's support for the Bush war on terror. If you went to Qaddafi's website at this time, you'd have read this remarkable statement from the old Colonel, "The phenomenon of terrorism is

not a matter of concern to the U. S. alone. It is the concern of the whole world. The U. S. cannot combat it alone. It is not logical, reasonable or productive to entrust the task to the U. S. alone." It needed Qaddafi, who was in sheer terror of groups such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. It must have chilled Qaddafi to find that Ibn Sheikh al-Libi's funeral service in May 2009 was attended by thousands in his town of Ajdabia (al-Libi was arrested in Pakistan in 2001, and he died in Libyan custody, apparently with a wink and a nod from Egypt's Omar Suleiman).

Ajdabia, al-Libi's hometown, is in the eastern part of Libya, the historical vilayat of Cyrenaica (another town here is Benghazi, which was the flashpoint of the unrest in 2011). Eastern Libya is proud of its long tradition of resistance against foreign authority. Its tribes led the resistance against the Ottomans and then against the Italian occupation. The hero of the fight against the Italians was Omar al-Mukhtar, whose face adorns the Libyan ten dinar bill and whose struggle was made immortal for the worldwide audience by Anthony Quinn in the 1981 film (financed by Qaddafi's government), *The Lion of the Desert*. It is also from the eastern provinces that the Sanussi order of Islam emerged, out of which comes King Idris. The Sanussi order continues to command the loyalty of a third of the Libyan population. Some of them still hold Qaddafi responsible for the removal of their king. The Sa'adi confederation of the East was left out of the new dispensation. The returns of the oil rent and the social wage pledged by the new revolutionary regime offered only parsimonious help to the impoverished East.

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Neglect of the East festered, but by the 1980's, Qaddafi's regime turned as well on the rest of the country. Unimaginative use of the oil surplus led to economic stagnation. Qaddafi earned a reprieve when the United States bombed his compound, killing his daughter Hanna. The Libyan people rallied around him and his regime. Anti-Americanism, easy enough with Reagan at the helm in Washington, provided cover for what Qaddafi called the "revolution within the revolution." This was the Libyan phrase to describe the entry of neo-liberalism, or what Qaddafi called "popular capitalism." In 1987, anemic import-substitution policies came to a close and "reforms" in agriculture and industry flooded out of IMF manuals. By September 1988, the government abolished the import and export quotas, allowing retail trade in the new souqs to flourish in the cities.

UN sanctions in 1992 threw the "reforms" into turmoil, and it allowed the old Qaddafi to emerge out of the sarcophagus that he had become. Cracks in the ruling elite at times slowed and at time speeded up the "reforms." The main face of the neo-liberal agenda was Shokri Ghanem, who would be removed as Prime Minister of the cabinet in 2006 for the more important role as head of the National Oil Corporation. Ghanem aggressively pushed for foreign investment into the oil sector, and hastened to implement the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreements with companies that ranged from Occidental Petroleum to China National Petroleum. Britain's Tony Blair and France's Sarkozy went to kiss Ghanem's ring and pledge finance for oil concessions. It is the reason why the British government freed the Lockerbie bomber

and that Berlusconi bowed down before Omar al-Mukhtar's son in 2008 and handed over \$5 billion as an apology for Italian colonialism. In his characteristic bluntness, Berlusconi said that he apologised so that Italy would get "less illegal immigrants and more oil."

Alongside Ghanem is Qaddafi's son, Saif, who wrote a dissertation at the London School of Economics in September 2007 on "The Role of Civil Society in the Democratization of Global Decision Making: from "soft" power to collective decision making" (the work was advised remarkably by David Held). Saif argued for the need to give NGOs voting rights at the level of international decision making, where otherwise the United States and its Atlantic allies hold sway. The "essential nature" of NGOs, he argued, is to be "independent critics and advocates of the marginal and vulnerable." To allow NGOs to temper the ambitions of the North is far more "realistic," Saif argued, than to hope to transform international relations. That kind of realism led to his faith in the "reforms" and in his recent call for the harshest armed violence against the protests in Tripoli and Benghazi. "Civil Society," in the language of neo-liberalism, is restricted to the work of establishment NGOs that are loath to revise settled power equations. The ragged on the streets are not part of the "civil society"; they are Unreason afoot.

The Basic People's Congress complained about the "reforms" in September 2000. They did not appreciate the privatization of the state-owned enterprises and the creation of free trade enclaves. Their periodical, al-Zahf al-Akhdar, fulminated against foreign

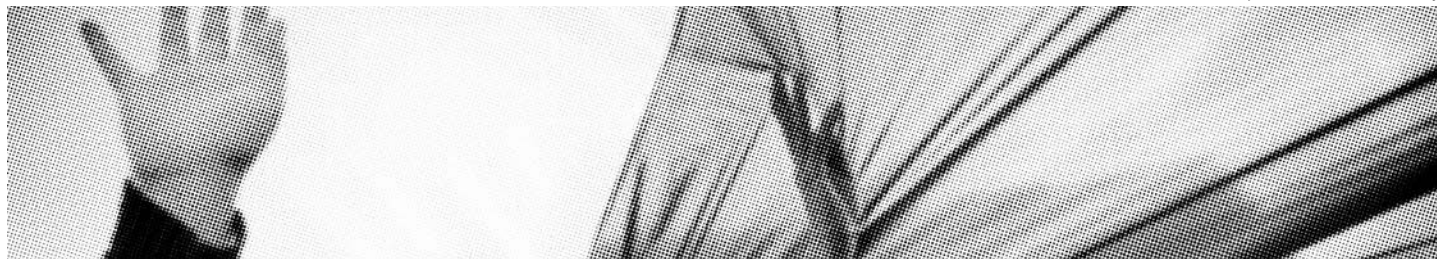
firms and the tourism sector. A section within them was also angry at Qaddafi's political concessions to scale back the UN sanction and to earn favor in European capitals (Libya's end to its nuclear program was part of these concessions). The Congress tried to hold the tempo of "reform" down. Their actions irritated the IMF, whose 2006 report concluded, "Progress in developing a market economy has been slow and discontinuous."

Uprisings in the east combined with the neo-liberal efforts from Tripoli have alienated large sections of the population against the Gaddafi regime. Little of the luster of 1969 remains with the old man. He is a caricature of the aged revolutionary. We are far from the "revolutionary instigator" whose watchword was "the masses take command of their destiny and their wealth." The game will be up when the military tilts its support (that two Colonels in their Mirages have sought refuge in Malta rather than fire on the crowds in Tripoli is an early indication of one direction, but on the other are those other pilots who did open fire on the crowd). The issue is not yet settled.

The masses have come out. Old rivalries and new grievances are united. Some of them are for reactionary tribal purposes, and others seek liberation from "reforms." Some cavil that a country of 6 million with such oil wealth does not look like the Emirates, and others simply want to have some more control of their lives. But most want release from the hidden corridors of the Libyan labyrinth.

Precariousness and the university

Revolutionaries in Tahrir Square | Hossam el-Hamalawy



As the cuts begin to bite, PhD students in Leeds are making plans and getting organised

Hourly paid postgraduate teaching assistants at the School of Geography, University of Leeds, have been informed that their wages are to be cut by half, as university departments seek to trim their budgets in response to the removal of government funding for higher education.

Previously, teaching assistants (TAs) could claim separately for time spent on marking and preparation, in addition to the actual time spent teaching itself. Now TAs may only claim for their teaching hours at a rate of £14.10 an hour. Assuming that an hour of teaching requires only an hour of preparation, then the new rate of pay is just over the minimum wage at £7.05 an hour. In reality, it often requires at least three hours preparation, equating to much less than the minimum wage. Never mind marking.

As precarious workers with little effective union protection, we are especially vulnerable to these sort of unilateral attacks on wages, terms and conditions. We are clearly viewed as an easy target by those within the universities whose job it is to decide who will bear the brunt of the current education cuts. No doubt we, like all the unpaid interns trying to break into jobs market, are supposed to be grateful that we are offered the opportunity to labour for peanuts on the grounds that we are investing in our future careers and may one day be offered one of the few remaining permanent jobs that haven't been culled as an offering to the gods of fiscal responsibility.

Postgraduate teaching staff across the UK (and beyond) need to get organised. We need to be in a better position to resist

such attacks. Yet there is currently a lack of accessible information or communication about how working conditions and rates of pay differ between departments and institutions. Getting clued up about the conditions within which this work is carried out is an important first step. To this end, members of Leeds-based group the Really Open University are currently in talks with the University of Leeds Students' Union about possibility of the latter carrying out a survey of postgraduate teaching work across the University.

In the meantime, we want to start talking to other postgraduate teaching staff. Are you a research postgraduate engaged in teaching and/or marking at a university? If so, we would love to hear from you about your working conditions, rates of pay, and whether these have been suffered as a result of the cuts. Drop us an email at this address: info@reallyopenuniversity.org

The Plebs League

Britain's Plebs Magazine was established in 1909 and connected students at the Ruskin School (Oxford) with a vast network of affiliated worker self-education groups across the UK. The Plebs Magazine and its associated pamphlets were generated through collective readings, discussion, and analysis of texts and social circumstances. Adult education reading groups developed perspectives of radical ideals, that were issued in the magazine and in pamphlet form and disseminated through public readings. Plebs League linked its 450 students at Oxford – a combination of trade unionists and middle class students – with the over 7000 affiliated students involved in reading groups outside of the school. The publications were fundamental to making transversal links between work inside and outside of educational institutions. In the words of Walter Vrooman, one of the initiators of the Ruskin School:

'We shall take men and women who have merely been condemning our social institutions, and teach them instead how to transform those institutions, so that in place of talking against the world, they will begin to methodologically and scientifically possess the world...'

Source: www.post-16educator.org.uk

TODAY IS THE END/ THIS MOMENT IS THE FINAL MOMENT/ HISTORY HAS REPEATED ITSELF FOR THE LAST TIME/ WE NOW OVERLOOK AN UNPRECEDENTED PRECIPICE/ AN INFINITY OF INVISIBLE DISSENSION/ QUESTION./ WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?/ WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?/ THIS I LEAVE TO YOU/ YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE/ THERE IS NO TURNING AWAY FROM THE UNCERTAINTY THAT FACES YOU/ CALL IT AN OPPORTUNITY/ A CHANCE TO CREATE SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW/ WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?/ LOOK AT THE GROUND/ FROM IT MUST EMERGE A STATE LIKE NO OTHER/ IT IS NOT ALCHEMY/ NOR IS IT IMAGINATION/ AS WE ARE NOT EVOLVING/ WE ARE REFORMING/ TAKING OUR FIRST BREATH/ ALTHOUGH THE DETRITUS OF THE LAST WORLD REMAINS/ IT HAS NO USE HERE/ YOU MUST FOCUS ON EACH OTHER/ THE SEMIOTICS OF BEING/ FROM THIS NOTHINGNESS A CHARGE WILL REVEAL ITSELF/ AND WE WILL HAVE A PURPOSE ONCE MORE/ ARE YOU LOOKING?/ ARE YOU SEEKING DISCOVERY?/ NOW IS THE OCCASION TO BEGIN BUILDING/ IN LISTENING TO ME YOU HAVE WASTED IRRETRIEVABLE TIME/ THE MOMENT IS UPON YOU/ WE WILL PUSH FORWARD AS ONE/ APPROACHING AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY/ AND YET ONWARDS INTO THE DARK

Translations

Translation is a practice. And as with every practice there are politics in translation.



Oil and Gas Workers on Strike | Hossam el-Hamalaawy

Student Strikes at the University of Puerto Rico, 2010-2011

RASHNE LIMKI

On 21 April 2010 - 200 students at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) achieved what few other student coalitions have in the past couple of years: transforming what began as a 48-hour campus occupation into a full-fledged, sustained, system-wide strike, thus forestalling the conservative economic and social designs of the state. The historic 60-day strike, which began at Río Piedras (UPR's main campus) and eventually spread to all 11 campuses, did not end with placated students and staff returning to business-as-usual, only to be undermined, yet again, by status quo forces. Indeed, the battle at UPR still rages - with the stakes higher, and the show of force, on both sides, stronger. What is remarkable about the UPR occupation/strike is the gathering strength and longevity of the action.

As of 17 February 2011, the president of Río Piedras has resigned and the police have

been withdrawn from campus. While this is a small, but significant, victory for the protestors, they have not yet given up, with the blockades of Río Piedras still in effect. After the conclusion of the first phase of strikes in 2010, it became evident that the austerity measures initially proposed had merely been postponed. Student fees have been doubled for the present semester and 10 academic programs at Río Piedras, including its internationally-renowned department of Hispanic Studies, have been placed "on pause." Despite this set-back, students continued to organise intermittent strikes and student action continued through the holidays and into the present.

Anticipating this student action, the state re-deployed its security forces to occupy the Río Piedras campus and has also spent \$1.5 million to hire a private security company to control protestors. The present strikes have been characterized by violent clashes - including physical restraint, the use of pepper-spray, tear-gas and rubber bullets - between security forces and protestors as

well their supporters. But as one protestor, pinned under the heel of a police boot, summed it up: "[This] only demonstrates the weakness of the government, it mobilises brute force in this way, it only demonstrates their weakness and their fear of us. They know we are right. They know the public agrees with us, and that's why they need to use violence."

Universities today, especially public universities, have done a phenomenal job of manufacturing consent - selling fiscal ineptitude and misguided budgetary priorities as the workings of inevitable and uncontrollable market forces. The success of the UPR strike, then, cannot be measured simply on the basis of whether any tangible outcomes were achieved. Rather, its success lies in the very persistent and resilient praxis that has put to rest any doubts regarding the possibility or efficacy of a strike within the contemporary political landscape.

<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/upr160211.html>

Report from Paris - Saint-Denis Meeting, 11-13 February 2011

COMMON STATEMENT

We, the student and precarious workers of Europe, Tunisia, Japan, the US, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Argentina, met in Paris over the weekend of the 11th-13th February, 2011 to discuss and organise a common network based on our common struggles. Students from Maghreb and Gambia tried to come but France refused them entry. We claim the free circulation of peoples as well as the free circulation of struggles.

In fact, over the last few years, our movement has assumed Europe as the space of conflicts against the corporatization of the university and precariousness. This meeting in Paris and the revolutionary movements across the Mediterranean allow us to take an important step towards a new Europe against austerity and the revolts in Maghreb.

We are a generation who lives precariousness as a permanent condition:

the university is no longer an elevator of upward social mobility but rather a factory of precariousness. Nor is the university a closed community: our struggles for welfare, work and the free circulation of knowledge and people don't stop at its gates.

Our need for a common network is based on our struggles against the Bologna Process and against the education cuts Europe is using as a response to the crisis. Since the state and private interests collaborate in the corporatization process of the university, our struggles don't have the aim of defending the status quo. Governments bail out banks and cut education. We want to make our own university - a university that lives in our experiences of autonomous education, alternative research and free schools. It is a free university, run by students, precarious workers and migrants; a university without borders.

This weekend we have shared and discussed out different languages and common practices of conflict: demonstrations, occupations and metropolitan strikes.

We have created and improved our common claims: free access to the university against increasing fees and costs of education, new welfare and common rights against debt and the financialization of our lives, and for an education based on cooperation against competition and hierarchies.

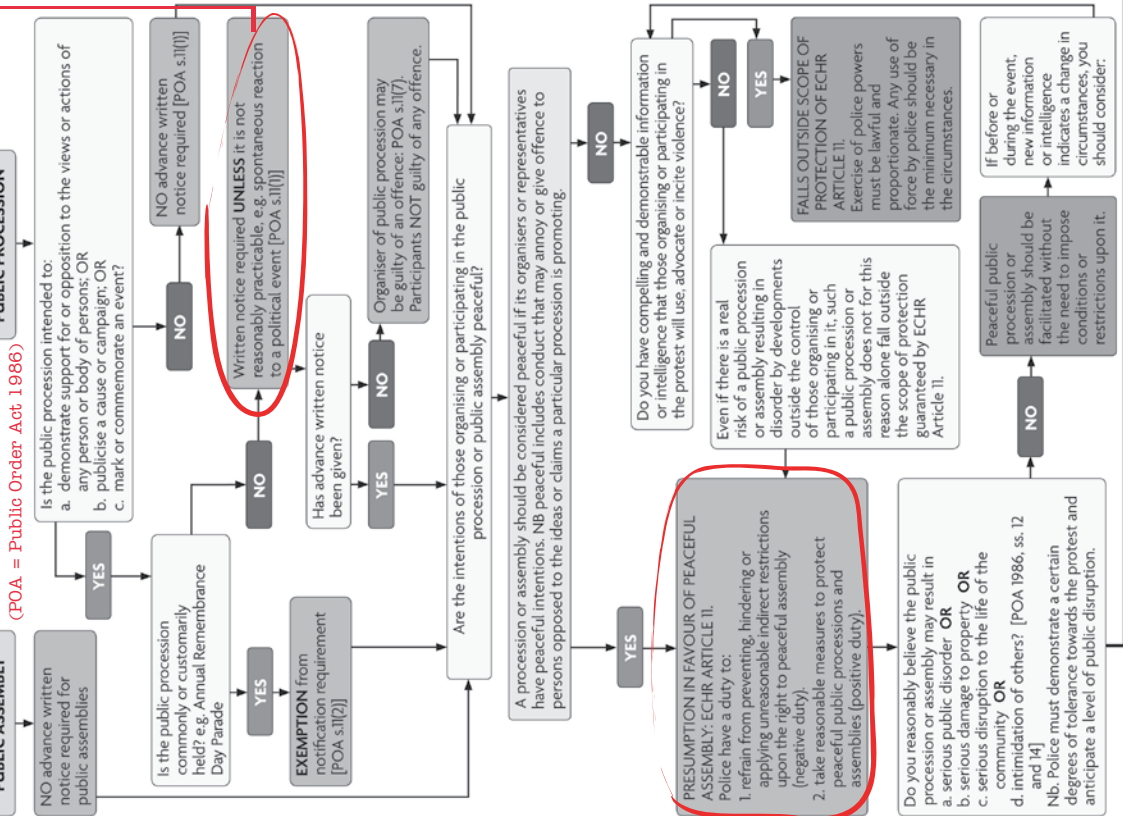
Based on this common statement:

- We call for common and transnational days of action on the 24th-25th-26th of March, 2011: against banks, debt system and austerity measures, for free education and free circulation of people and knowledge.
- We will create a common journal of struggles and an autonomous media of communication.
- We will promote a great caravan and meeting in Tunisia because the struggles in Maghreb are the struggles we are fighting here.
- We will meet again in London in June.
- We will be part of the G8 counter-summit in Dijon, June 5-7.

POLICE GUIDE TO FACILITATING PEACEFUL PROTEST

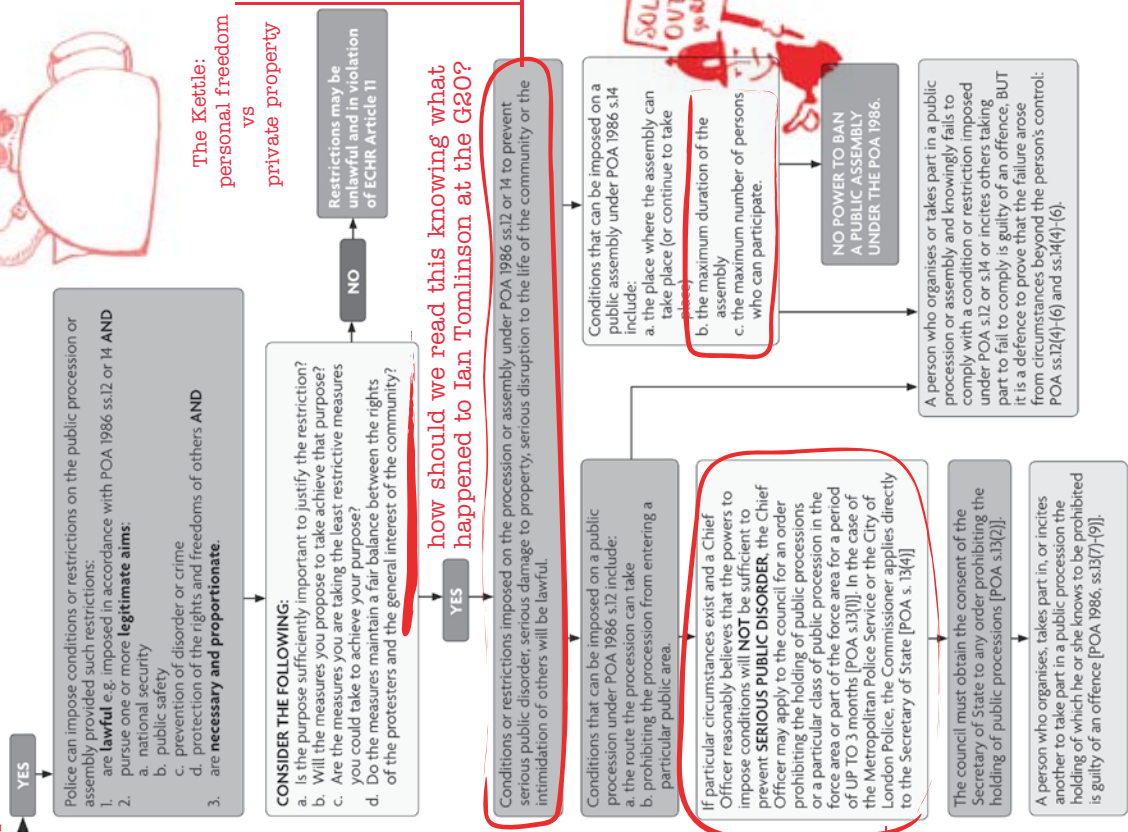
Annotations on “

FACILITATING PEACEFUL PROTEST



The Police have a DUTY to protect protesters

What constitutes a spontaneous reaction to a political event?



The Kettle: personal freedom vs private property

Restrictions may be unlawful and in violation of ECHR Article 11



This diagram was published as guidelines for policing the G20 in 2009