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an A to Z of commun ization

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an A to Z of communization

gilles dauvé

bruno astarian

play play play play play play play play play play

dont work
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AUTONOMY

In 2012, radical Oakland occupiers made it clear that "no permission would be asked, no demands would be made, no negotiation with the police and city administration": nobody or no body had the power to grant them anything relevant, so there was no point in bargaining with wannabe representatives.

Participatory decision-making implies a communal capacity often called "self-empowerment". Autonomy is inclusive. As participants share an equal stake in the creation of a different world, the most important thing in their lives becomes their relation to others, and this interdependence extends far beyond the circle of relatives and friends.

In a different time and place, some people have stressed the spontaneity of many recent Chinese strikes, demonstrations, protests, street blockades and riots. Other observers have emphasized the careful planning that

takes place beforehand. Yet organization and spontaneity are two sides of the same coin. A self-initiated work-stoppage needs previous secret talks and meetings, and its continuity needs durable independent information channels (such as a mutual help hotline) and decision-making structures.

However, the ideology of autonomy is one of the up-to-date nostrums. Autonomy is acting by oneself: it says nothing about what this individual or collective self actually does. In the ebbs and flows of social battles, most occupations and strikes meet the limit of one company, one neighbourhood, one town, one city. Workplace, neighbourhood, kinship, etc., create a potential community of struggle which by its own strength alone can certainly self-manage an occupation, a strike, even community life for a while… but it is not enough to break the log jam.

2 How does a community of struggle create more than its struggle? Can it go beyond social breakthroughs occur elsewhere. Not forgetting "Zomia" zones also exist within so-called modern countries: there is more than one Zomia on this planet, hence the "s" to title this last entry.

ration reflects the opposition between man and the world, and between the individual and society. It is an expression of the anomie of the individual and his inability to understand his own needs in order to satisfy them." (A World Without Money)

Governments are now manipulating indigenous traditions, such as sumak kawsay ("good living" in Quechua) incorporated into Ecuador's constitution in 2008. As the Western "productivist" model dysfunctions, time-honoured customs become useful political props. Part of it is good intentions. Part is a ploy to divert attention from the contradictions of Latin American militant reformism.

So-called "pre-capitalist" areas will take part in communisation in so far as they will achieve a lot more than reassert their traditional ties: they will use and supersede these ties at the same time. Obviously this is impracticable in isolation, and only possible if

rituals of social partnership? How does solidarity not become an end in itself? When can collective will wield its transformative power?

Unlike a book divided into chapters which gradually make their point from beginning to end, this A to Z is more like a dictionary in which each entry is to be read in relation to all the others. It is by accident thatautonomy begins with the first letter of the alphabet. But it is no accident that self-activity should be a starting point. Autonomy is a necessary condition of the whole A to Z of communisation. It does not encapsulate the whole process.

BLUE COLLAR

In Italy, 1969, after work stoppages for wage rises at the Mirafiori plant, the movement escalated until labour started repossessing the work-place: internal marches, meetings, debates, rotating strikes. As fear was switching sides and top-down authority broke

down, the relation of the worker to his work changed. Before, though he felt no love for work, he regarded it as an inevitable fact of life. Now this necessity appeared conditioned by forces that collective labour could act upon.

It was an active strike, but it was still a strike. Autonomy had changed scale: it had not changed level. Labour was "taking the factory into its own hands", a new balance of power was born, then what? "I've finally now realised we're not just fighting the boss, we're fighting everything", a Fiat worker said (Lotta Continua, November 7, 1969). Everything was at stake. In fact everything can be exhilarating but prove too much of a challenge: everything brings one close to tipping point, putting one's life support system in jeopardy.

Outside the workplace, the movement spread into worker districts, schools, hospitals, media…. But the heart of the system

comes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development."

In their anti-populist polemic, Lenin and other socialists were led to deny the relevance of the issue: for them, socialism was based on industrial growth. In any case, a communist revolution would not have developed the mir as it was: regular land redistribution and cooperation were supervised by the pater familias. Self-administration meant the rule of the elders. Pre- or even anti-capitalist brotherhoods are inclined to conformism and usually exclude women. Extended kin networks and neighbourhoods are bonds in both senses of the word. Community begs the question of what "common" is concerned.

"What we reject is the philosophy that opposes free will and determinism. This sepa-

football stadium consumes more energy in a year than the whole of Liberia (2013 figure), are we to conclude that we should equalise their respective levels of consumption?

Lenin defined communism as “Soviets plus electricity”. Radicals now would rather have “Autonomy plus ecology”, with universal Internet access down to the remotest recesses of Africa. (The same person is adamantly against fossil fuels and nuclear power, yet wishes everyone had a mobile, without questioning the bedrock of cutting-edge technology: where do electricity - and rare metals - come from?)

What Zomia’s inhabitants can contribute is not their communal ways of life as they are now (or were until recently), but as they could be both revived and deeply altered by social revolution in the whole region. The Russian peasant commune (mir) was signif-
icant enough for Marx and Engels to write in 1882 that “If the Russian Revolution be-

was left intact: rent, bus fares, bills, taxes, i.e. all that had to do with housing, transport, shopping, utilities, money for the State… Despite many attacks on those terrains (self-reduction, looting…), there was no attempt at a “world without money”, which would have implied doing away with the workplace and with work separate from the rest of life.

Paradoxically, as it extended, the protest lost its cutting edge. Meanwhile, the bourgeois sat out the deadlock, and after 1980 found new means of controlling labour.

At about the same time, in the Argentine cordobazo (1969), worker/popular neighbourhoods asserted themselves in self-defence against bosses and police. The insurgents took over the city and did not do anything with it. They stayed where they were. Their strength derived from what they were and where they were: it was also their limitation.

These are only two examples among many. Because no insurrection so far has durably attempted to effectively communise society – which means the insurgents communising themselves - all past and recent historical endeavours reached a stage where their breaking point happened to be their end point.

The 1970s are now regarded as the Western working classes' gallant but desperate last stand. Blue collar workers are less lionised than given a bad image. While Asian factory workers receive considerable praise, in the West their colleagues are treated as a dying species. The Western working class has been progressively disempowered and it's for the best, some say, since the average worker, especially male and white, tends to be parochial, sexist, racist, possible a far-right voter, in any case "integrated" into this society, as Marcuse used to write, only concerned with a cash-and-hours agenda. The metal worker is no longer a working class hero, he is

relations than State rule, but comes with women's submission. The individual may well be the bourgeois form of liberty, but traditional community lords over its members. Collective myths may seem to us Westerners more palatable than established religions but can be equally oppressive. Finally, some groups (for instance the Hmong in the Indochina wars) have had to side with one State against another to retain their autonomy.

Leaving controversy aside, from a communisation process point of view, Zomia warns us against the tendency to smoothe the jagged path of evolution into a straight line. By the measure of history, the span of time of the so-called modern proletariat - a couple of centuries at the most – has been quite short. Zomia also cautions us against Eurocentrism or industry-centred communism. Our goal is not to "develop" or help develop "poverty-stricken" or "pre-capitalist" areas.[147] When we are told that the Dallas Cowboys

theory. But the concept of a different epoch, ours.

ZOMIAS

The word zomi ("highlander" in several local languages) is used to designate an area overlapping the borders of Laos, Thailand, Burma and Southwest China, where about 100 million people live on the fringe of – and in resistance to - states and empires. "Zomia" is made up of mostly egalitarian and often nomadic peasant societies. It has been conceptualised by James Scott as a semi-autonomous zone where over the centuries the population has managed to evade (most) of the evils of civilisation: slavery, taxation, forced labour, war… Money exists but no overall merchandisation of life.

This concept has aroused controversy. Critics contend that it idealises societies which are not immune to division and conflict. Kinship probably allows for more "humane"

more a liability than a historical asset, only capable of lubricating the social machinery. The working class is consequently ignored or ditched as an inadequate "revolutionary subject". For a variety of reasons. Because it never made the revolution it was supposed to spearhead. Because when it did try (1917), it created a nightmare. Because if they had ever got the upper hand, workers would have promoted a productivist model detrimental to the environment. Because class is a divisive bourgeois category. Because there are and will be fewer and fewer industrial workers in a service and information economy.

According to this world view, we ought to look for an entirely newly-defined proletariat: an overlap of groups defined not by their position in production relationships, but in power relationships: women, coloured people, ex-colonial subjects, mental patients, sexual minorities, outcasts, undocumented persons, etc., workers being just one cate-

gory among many. In the main, the new received version focuses on a combination of identities that intersect to form a multi-layer class.

The matter is shelved rather than solved by this catch-all concept.

Our concern is what revolution will do. Surely, no revolution can happen without mass strikes and blockades, which are unlikely to be achieved only by people outside the workplace: a university lecturer and a power-plant technician do not have the same social leverage. But that does not tell us what either of them will do once the insurrection is under way. The crux of the matter is not the personnel of the revolution.

CLASS

Though "class" talk is often equated with a marker of radicalism, focusing on class struggle is not a specific tenet of communist theory:

If communism is not the liberation of work from capital, but of the workers from work, if revolution is the destruction of work by the workers, revolution cannot be equated with the working class seizing the world. So communism is not simply the ultimate step in a long series of uphill and downhill labour vs. bourgeois struggles. It is that and it is more than that. The link between resistance to capitalism and social revolution is no longer direct. No wonder present and future are not as clearly coupled as before.

The class struggle is the only terrain we have, yet up to now the class struggle has sustained itself without giving birth to communist revolution. No dialectical twist can evade that.

An era is drawing to a close and we are still unable to read the signs of the new eruptive period.

Communisation is a concept, not a whole

to maintain a straightforward connection between present and future. If communism is equated with worker management in the future, present worker attempts at self-management of struggles are to be interpreted as positive steps towards a revolution to come. The problem is for the working class to really take and keep power and not give it up to a bureaucratic class as happened in Russia. Boiled down, this view amounted to the central tenet that worker autonomy is essential today and must be promoted as the key to emancipation tomorrow.

The 1970's surge, particularly when Italy hovered close to civil war in 1977, was a major milestone in the shifting of this viewpoint. A historical breaking point was forcing us to sharpen our focus.

Though today as much as yesterday the world is structured by class, there is an inadequacy in the core theory of class as we used to know it.

"[L]ong before me, bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle", and "what I did that was new" was to prove how it led "to the abolition of all classes" (Marx).

Class is a group defined by its specific interests in relation to or against another group. It is not a question of manual work, nor of poverty, but of property. Not just legal ownership: what matters is who manages society, and first of all its productive material basis. Neither is property necessarily individual: in the USSR, the Russian bureaucratic elite collectively controlled the economy and the State. Yet property was private in the sense that the vast majority was deprived of any say over the running of society. Today's bourgeois control the means of production as much as in 1848, and today's proletarians are equally dispossessed (though usually not disfranchised) as in 1848. The bourgeois is the one who can hire other people, put them to work and therefore profit from them.

This implies a belonging, an ability of the group to self-define in a confrontation between "Us and Them". It does not follow that the proletarians confront the bourgeois in order to get rid of the labour/capital divide: most of the time, labour fights to claim a bigger share of social wealth. The proletarians are not revolutionary in essence.Only practices that start to get to the roots of the social divide open up communist potentials. A prime condition is for the confrontation to go beyond the workplace. Then new issues can be raised: What of the other social groups? The police and army? The man/woman relation? Employed people and the jobless? Workers and looters? Homeless and renters?

When Dhaka police invade slum areas, this draws in a wider community: strikers turn into rioters. In the last ten years, there have been dozens of factories burnt down in Bangladesh. When proletarians destroy their own means of livelihood, they start acting

theory went parallel to the power build-up of the labour movement. For him, in spite of all their shortcomings, socialist parties and trade unions were "the real movement", the often inadequate but forward-going vehicle of a class struggle that would finally (quasi inevitably) take over society and create a working community of associated producers. In a nutshell, the proletariat was identified with the working class, and revolution was the last decisive step in the evolution of the class struggle. Therefore there was an obvious linkage between the ups and downs of the present and its future outcome. There were recesses (the 1850's), highlights (1871) and crushing defeats, but the growing social and political power of the working classes prepared for their turning the world into a workers' worl

In the 20th century, especially after the 1920's, communist minorities found themselves in dire straits, but for instance the German-Dutch "councilist" Left was able

power".

Only recently has the word begun to denote more than a set of real communist measures: it defines a practice that would evolve out of the proletarian experience but not build up a work community. And the action verb to communise puts the emphasis on communisation as conscious human activity.

Our entries have borrowed examples from history, while making frequent use of the future tense, as if communism was moving further away into a time yet to come. Why is it difficult to speak of communisation in the present?

In Marx's time and later on, communist theory had no such trouble. Although Bordiga wrote "we are the only ones who found our activity on the future", he titled a long series of articles The Thread of Time, dividing each one into three parts: "Today – Yesterday – Tomorrow". For Marx anyway, communist

against their very existence as proletarians. This was not done by a raving mob, but by a coordinated mass. Some groups blocked the road so firemen could not put out the fires, while others attacked a business area.This is when borders are more likely to break.

In a very different situation, the 2011 London rioters came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The media made much of the fact that torching a carpet showroom destroyed thirty flats that housed poor tenants. Law and order will always conflate street-fighting with nihilistic violence,and try and sort out the good (the deserving wage-earners) from the bad (the undeserving rabble). We cannot answer this by drawing our own "radical" demarcation line between positive anti-police brick-throwing and unacceptable shop-wrecking or luxury looting, between true proles and a merely destructive sub-class. Let politicians denounce welfare scroungers, and sociologists debate on the working class as opposed to

the underclass. We are not looking for the "real" proletariat. It's best to ask why sections of the proletarians reject forms of political protest that have failed to bring about real lower class life changes. Rioting breaks with usual socialisation, and causes a variety of behaviours, displays of solidarity as well as "anti-social" attitudes. Only communist insurrections will be able to re-socialise their participants and build a new type of community. This question has been hanging over theory for over a century:

"(..) a mere general strike by itself has ceased to play the role it once did. Now nothing but a general uprising on the streets can bring about a decision." (Rosa Luxemburg)

Any significant historical movement is born out of social relations (first of all productive relations, then in present society, class relations), builds on them and risks confining itself to them.

ferent languages fuse into one. Bogdanov was a Bolshevik. We can find more roundabout ways to universality.

YESTERDAY

"(..) many of us Communists for our part are willing to admit that the communisation of the means of production will inevitably lead to the communisation of the products of labour also, and that (..) it is a programme sufficiently big to put before the people of our generation (..)" This is how William Morris defined co-operation and community in 1887, as opposed to centralisation "in the tutelage to the state". His platform, however, included no rejection of money and did not inquire into value.

In 1920, when a French communist/anarchist paper spoke of communisation (because "socialisation has become an ambiguous word"), it basically meant the "taking over by the proletariat of all wealth and all

tion is how. Nothing is irreversible or eternal. The struggle for life is a myth, so is universal love. Fourier's fanciful and insightful plans had at least the merit of not aiming to create a new perfect man: on the contrary, they were based on the versatility of human beings.

Communisation will not be built on a definition of what the human species is or should be. For a pre-historic hunter-gatherer, humankind was restricted to those who were part of his group. Arabic peninsula Bedouins and South American Guayaqui did not know what a State was, but a lot of their energy was devoted to war.

Communisers won't be travelling back in time anyway. Nor will they appeal to an abstract humanity, or dissolve the individual in the community. In Alexander Bogdanov's science-fiction utopian novels written a few years before 1914, communist Martians live in such close harmony that gradually all difClass is a weapon, is a limitation, and the proletarians cannot evade this contradiction: revolution is the time when they settle scores with the bourgeois, but also with themselves.

"The proletariat begins, to one degree or another, as those who individually have nothing to lose but their chains and becomes those who collectively have this existence. This class is a matter of "life conditions" and not "identification"." (Kill the Ism)

DAILYLIFE

Everything today comes under (usually verbal) attack: inequality, finance, suffering at work as well as the plight of the jobless, productivism, sexism, commodification of the self, ecological degradation, tourism, addiction to speed, industrial food, energy waste… not a week goes by without a new critical essay against either the trammels of convention or the excesses of moderni-

ty. But the attack addresses fragments, detached from their seemingly inaccessible totality. Communisation would re-connect these disjointed parts by dealing with their common cause.

For example, today, growing one's food is impossible for most people. Each meal is one more proof of our utter dependency on a system beyond our reach. The crisis, however, is making a virtue out of necessity. In Detroit's inner-city, with so many people out of jobs and the city out of money, vegetable gardens have appeared on empty, vacant or foreclosed lots. At least 15.000 residents have turned their backyards into allotments. At present, urban farming is a way of supplementing a meagre income for the poor, and a leisurely fad for the middle classes. Just as yoga alleviates work stress, growing and eating organic is therapeutic.

14 It is another matter entirely when the experience clashes with vested interests. There's

nationalist energy finally prevailed over social unrest. The ruling class exploited ethnic fault lines under the guise of securing the rights of "the (Serbian) people" against threatening outsiders (Croats, Albanians, Moslems, etc.). The success of Milosevic's regime did not result from an absence of class conflict, but from the inability of the proletarian community of struggle to turn itself into a transforming power. Inner protest in fact continued in the workplace and even in the army, but Serbian nationalism managed to divert tensions and grievances toward exterior enemies.

Only doing away with present society will bring the proletarians together: among other examples, there was an effort in that direction in Greece, 2008, when native-born and immigrants (from Albania, especially) acted together.

Human nature only exists for the biologist.[139] We are what we make ourselves: the ques-

olutionary periods, the proletarian class is no less conservative than others. Internecine violence among the exploited is not a temporary aberration. A banal example is cross-border strike-breaking.

Although all proletarians share a common dispossession and a separation from the means of living, that commonality is negative, and if it is experienced passively,it is not enough to rally the proletarians against capitalism. For Israeli and Palestinian workers to fight a joint battle will require more than them all being exploited by capital: until they realise they have deep common interests, calls to solidarity are likely to fall on deaf ears. Actually even solidarity limited tohelping each other is not yet acting in common.

The sharpening of class conflict is not enough. Serbia in the 1980's went through intense social struggles, enough to paralyse the State and the rulers for a while, until

a difference in scale if most consumed food no longer comes from a supermarket: then it shakes the political balance. Reclaiming large expanses of previously common and now enclosed land implies fighting privatization, and building another type of community. The property issue is raised, and with it the question of class. Gardening tools, seeds and water supply cannot be all locally-produced, so people have to invent new productive ways. Re-appropriating what is common cannot be equated with just taking it over and managing it. As the proletarians are the property-less, with no money and no capital, it is impossible for them to produce with the same methods and norms.

In 2013, Jakarta was rocked by a revolt against a government plan to raise the price of subsidized fuel. Daily life and workplace coalesced into a sprawling resistance. The city's satellite industrial centres were paralyzed, while demonstrators and rioters occupied the streets.

The difference between Detroit's urban farms and Jakarta's riots is not the presence or degree of violence. Even if only for a few days or weeks, the Indonesian rebellion brought together usually separated dimensions of the proletarian condition: productive labour and reproduction of labour power, work and home. On this terrain – a confrontational one - daily life changes can start to have a generative subversive effect, providing they keep upping the stakes against huge inertial forces.

Capital, money, wage-labour and the economy are very material realities, so their critique must come down to earth. Objects solidify relationships. For instance, a tower block full of 3-room flats materializes the coexistence of hundreds of nuclear families. Another example is the ever-expanding panoply of digital communicating prostheses. Capitalism deprives people of social links and gives them back in the form of commodities. It has the ability to integrate

reactionary backlash feeds off exacerbated modernity.

How do insurgents go beyond identity barriers?

Community is possible when people are not passive. History gives us as many examples of proletarian solidarity as of xenophobia.

In the May 68 general strike in France, though "French" workers were not immune to racism, the anti-strike forces did not manage to make much use of racism to divide the strikers.

Later, as the proletarian tide was ebbing, a number of "native" French workers began to act and think of themselves as distinct from non-national or migrant labour. Only struggling can develop what is common to all: "the working class is not weak because it is divided (..) it is divided because it is weak" (Anton Pannekoek). Apart from rev-

those of the military. Nor to develop a people's agro-business, nor build row after row of uniform housing blocks.

XENOPHILIA

Capitalism has never swept away divisions and frontiers. 21st century globalization does not unify humankind any more than the international flows of trade and investment pacified the world before 1914. As long as capitalism exists, it will bring some countries and areas into a unit, and break up others. The Ukraine is a case in point. The "national question" is far from over, and border conflicts will flare up when we least expect them. Ethnoreligious factors cut across class lines. In the Near and Middle East, Islam offers a surrogate community when traditional ties are shattered and capitalist relations too unstable.Globalization creates new national, religious, "ethnic" rifts and revives old ones. The present world seems to go through a time-warp where

billions, even those who can only afford a cheap mobile. The cell phone does (re)connect atomized individuals.

Experience shows how reversible "conditioned reflexes" are. In 1924, André Breton cautioned us about the paucity of reality. Partitions can be brought down in tower block flats. However impressive today's digital paraphernalia are, there is no need to worry about screen addiction: we will suppress, divert and devise ways of communicating. (Besides, let's not be judgemental about smartphones: in the past, quite a few good people were unable to pass a day without buying a paper.) Watertight compartments can break down.

Historical changeovers are material as well as subjective. Today's machines have the built-in characteristic of requiring more machinery, at an ever-growing pace, with constant compulsory updating. They function like life-support systems: we cannot do

without them and, what's worse, we do not know how they operate. People good with their hands are able to fix a car engine: "repairing" a computer hardly makes sense. So a criterion for communisation would be to use procedures and technologies that end the productivity and standardisation drive which infuses every level of our lives and urges us to count and save time all the time.

Communisation is when proletarians start acting and relating to each other differently. The sense of community is certainly not innate: neither is self-centredness. Contrary to popular (or elite) belief, "natural" disasters do not necessarily unleash a panic-stricken self-destructive mob: they often bring about solidarity and inventiveness. Afterwards, social difference and division reassert themselves. In an insurrection, the participants change… and change themselves at the same time:

"Both for the production on a mass scale of

tation, not the beginning of the destruction of the capital/proletarian intertwining. Communisation would take the opposition from a negative to a positive level by transforming the production site – which could mean pulling it down, leaving the place and doing something else.

In that case, what would prevent the proletarians from reviving work? Realists will undoubtedly champion a pragmatic resumption of production to meet urgent needs by all efficient acceptable means. The only answer to this "politics of effectiveness" is that doing away with work, i.e. with value, that is to say with productivity and standardisation, will be the most "efficient" way for the insurgents to produce what they need to live and fight. The only viable option, actually. Standardised production is as impossible for them as resorting to banks to finance rioting equipment. The insurgents' predicament will not be how to manufacture helicopter gunships that would outperform

are now taken for granted, particularly the one between a need and the object that will fulfil this need, i.e. between the need and the activity that produces the object.

The concept of communisation is not a utopian project. Though nothing today "communises" the world, present endeavours indicate how the breakthrough could take place. "Anti-work" practices are not a first step on a gradual path to communisation: they are caught in a contradiction that only revolution can solve.

There is no automatic move from fighting against working conditions to doing away with work. In Italy in the 70's and in Asia 40 years later, wage-labour often defends itself by a permanent disruption of production, wrecking the premises or even setting the plant on fire, thereby destroying its conditions of employment. Here the class struggle reaches its culminating stage, just before breaking point, yet this is still class confron-

this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew." (Marx)

Yet capitalism also rids "itself of all the muck of ages", so much so that it seems endlessly flexible and regenerative. In the current sliding scale of values, it is often the upholders of the norm that invite ridicule. Capitalism is endowed with a fertile imagination, market universalism is anything but feeble, and the ruling classes are experienced artful dodgers. Communisation cannot avoid navigating shifting sands. Only when we do away with the social division of labour, and

with all sorts of separation, will daily life reach a point of universality unmediated by commodities.

ECOLOGY

It is not the bourgeois lust for money that makes productivism a built-in feature of capitalism. It is the competition of firms, each of them a pole of accumulated value trying to expand, which leads to over-production and over-growth. Likewise, "extractivism" is a side-effect - albeit a major one – of the system's basic imperative: "Grow or die".

From NAFTA (1992) to the currently discussed TAFTA, government agreements have managed to protect the expansion of global trade against trade-restrictive climate policies. Successive climate negotiations aim at reducing the carbon emissions… caused by the carbon- spewing fleet required by sea, air and road transport. Roosevelt said he wished to save capitalism from itself: facing climate change in our time will prove a

Tech, and only concern a minority of white collar jobs, not the assembly line operators. They have as much impact on social reality as Friday's casual wear.

On the contrary, radical critique is a definitive condemnation of work as a crime, an alienation which cannot be redeemed. Now, if work is a constraint, which it is, why is it? The bourgeois who wants ever more profit merely plays his part in a structure that compels him to make money hand over fist. Saying that work is class is only relevant if we see how class functions. For work to benefit the interests of the bourgeois, it has to be a production that is only production, a productive activity separate from the rest of life, determined by norms, which means time-counting and time-saving.

Communisation does not turn work into play, nor does it systematically try to avoid manual labour. Doing away with productivity rule involves questioning separations that

he was one of the main proponents of the universal extension of productive work. His stand did not result from a love of labour: "the true realm of freedom (..) can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite."

This indeed is the most common critique of work: how to get free use of as much as possible of one's time? With the best of what capitalism has given us: machines, automation, everything that could make work a lot less physically painful and psychologically stressful. Or, in reverse (possibly in combination), by reviving non-Taylorised handicraft, in collectively managed human scale workshops.

Most contemporary post-work imaginaries are not very imaginative: computerised co-ops, networking, collaborative or mutualistic work, team work, leisure mixed with work…, these schemes adapt work to Hi-

harder task than having a New Deal a century before. The "push" factors that create the problem are still at work.

Only producing and consuming differently will be able to lower carbon emissions to a level that hopefully would minimise global temperature rise. Not because of more planet-conscious management : only breaking with productivity can bring about "degrowth". Exploited labour and "exploited" planet go together, and the latter depends on the former. The fate of the rain forest is linked to the human, i.e. proletarian condition.The ecological problem is not to readjust the planet, but to change ourselves. All the goodwill in the world will never be enough to tip the scales. Success in cutting down carbon emissions will not come out of a will to save nature, even less out of proletarians' willingness to tighten their belts for the sake of their environment, but only out of a fight to radically improve their condition by transforming their relation to

production. Production (i.e. production of value, of surplus value) now rules.The way out of the capitalist economy is a "non-economy" where productive acts and techniques are more than merely productive.

At present, tyre workers want tyre production to go on in order to keep their jobs, and who's to blame them? Most of us use cars.

But when the road monster is addressed by workers and local people, what was previously split between workplace demands and "reclaim the street" protests starts to fuse into something that goes to the root cause. Since capital is circulation, it needs cost-cuttingtransport, with ever faster trains, ships, planes and lorries. Besides, the individual car still epitomises freedom. The motor industry has expanded from a labour process into a way of life. So the road question opens up onto how we move, what we transport, where and how we live, as illustrated by Reclaim the Street in the UK in the 1990s. Part of it (actions against machinery and properwalk in with desires and suggestions about the kind of roof they'd like, get hands-on experience in tile-fabricating, and make the tiles according to where and how they live. Breaking with standardisation is a step towards the end of value. As a result, the tile factory is no longer a work-place: we are at a loss for words here, all we can say is that it is becoming one of the places where people live. This is what communisation is about: the end of work as such. Time is not ignored (how could it be?), but it ceases to act as the main regulator of production, therefore indirectly of life.

WORK

The labour movement wished for everybody to share the burden of work (alleviated by modern technology): when we all work, we'll work a lot less, that was the plan.

Though Marx in his youth advocated a revolution that "does away with labour", later

a blueprint for communism, the GIK theorised a backslide into capitalism.

Either time-counting helps achieve maximum input/output ratios, which cause systematic cost-cutting at the expense of the producers, or producers don't care about maximising yield, but then why keep track of every productive minute and second?

In fact, this is what "communisers" will do: instead of time-counting and time-saving, they will "take their time". Imagine a place where people are making clay tiles. Needless to say, communisers will not mind being "slow" and stopping for a chat or a game of table-tennis. But they will do more. They will leave the "work-place" for a while to do something else: take part in an occupation, a debate, a riot, or engage in another production. Meanwhile, people not yet involved in tile-making will come to the fac-

tory and spend some time helping, learning the trade… More decisively, people will

ty) directly conflicted with State and capital. However, its separation from larger issues enabled democratic bargaining to sit out the movement.

Opposition to new airports (Narita in the 60's-70's, Notre-Dame-des-Landes in France since 2013), based on the idea of a common wealth ("this space is ours"), causes wars of attrition and usually ends in partial defeat. Few workers are involved, and when they are, they are dissociated (in reality and in their minds) from their life in the office or on the shopfloor.

In contrast, the Taranto ILVA conflict pointed the way towards a connection between labour and ecological struggle, all the more so because some of it developed in autonomy vis-à-vis the State and the unions. ILVA, the biggest European steel mill (with a work force of 12.000) was also probably the most lethal workplace and town in Europe (with

1.650 related deaths per year, and 15 to

30% more cancers than in the rest of Italy). In 2010, a court ordered the factory closure: later the order was reversed, then partly implemented. Actually, the health predicament was also an economic (i.e. profitability) one: European steel mills are said to have an overcapacity of 30%.

Your job or your life? Money v. life. Local authorities and unions opted for what they regarded as the lesser evil. But when a big "Let's save jobs" rally took place on August 2, 2010, hundreds of people disrupted the consensus with songs, jokes and slogans: a Free & Conscious Citizens & Workers Committee asked for the plant to be shut down and ILVA be made to pay for the human and natural disaster it had been causing for decades. As a committee member said: "Before, people went to football matches and that was all. Now they're in the street and talking to each other." Another commented: "It's like the whole town had been waiting for that demo for years." A local woman de-

the assumption is that nobody better than the associated producers knows how much labour time is necessary to produce goods.

Unfortunately, this amounts to maintaining value, albeit only as a management tool, and companies as the focal points of production. The advocates of this model contend there will be no competition between companies, therefore no pressure on labour to step up the pace of work: if there is no need to undercut competitors, there is no pressure on labour. In other words, producers could make the best of productivity without becoming a slave to it. The rub is, productivity is no servant: it masters the producers. Who is naïve enough to believe that the pressure for ever more "worker-managed" efficiency would apply only to machines? Calculating the numbers of hours necessary to manufacture anything entails the imperative of performing the required tasks in the required time. Productivity inevitably comes with labour-time reckoning. Instead of providing

Time-counting comes with the imperative of time-saving, viz. having the lowest possible labour costs. No stopwatch expert will ever know the exact average labour time necessary to manufacture any specific object. What every manager knows is that he must bring his company's particular production time down to the lowest possible level.

For this reason, schemes (such as the councilist one by the GIK in 1930)that wish to base a communist society on labour-time accounting are founded on a misunderstanding of what value is. Valueis labour time. Therefore replacing money by time as the regulator of production would be tantamount to creating a worker-led capitalism.

The purpose of running production and circulationdirectly, by computing the amount of labour necessary to produce goods, without the mediation of money, is to have an economy (and therefore a society) that the workers themselves will be able to manage:

scribed "a potential repossessing of our destiny, bottom-up this time".

In 2013, an Italian court ordered 8 billion euros of ILVA's assets to be frozen, to make up for what ILVA had failed to invest in safety and environmental measures. At the time of writing, Arcelor-Mittal (the biggest steel and mining company in the world) might buy ILVA, providing Italian public money pays for ecological damage.

Meanwhile, the committee is still active, but has not grown strong enough to impose its solutions. In 2014, it had about 30 permanent members and 100 sympathisers. Most of the workers are at a loss.

The ILVA movement could be interpreted as another labour and environment failure on both counts: class and ecology. Its participants realise only overall change will do. A couple of years ago, a worker member of the Committee said: "Above all, we must

think about what will come after ILVA: what activities we'll do, what we'll live off, maybe turn to the sea, restore ruins that go back to Ancient Greece, renovate the old town…" Yet overall change in Taranto will imply a lot more than Taranto.

Up to now,few proletarian struggles have brought up the environmental issue, and the cold hard fact ofecological struggles is that they merely green capitalism. Nuclear power stations go on or, as in Germany, they are replaced by so-called clean coal-fired plants. World economy needs more energy not less, and Big Green and Big Business go hand in hand.

It would be an illusion to believe that environmental issues are more inclusive than labour struggles because impending disasters concern us all. The imminence of a catastrophe does not mean that billions of people will do something about it. Despite countless examples of festive and/or violent

Herein lies the difficulty.

Whether producers are companies or individuals, value can only be understood from its origin in production. Though it manifests itself in the moment of exchange, it is born out of production, because the production we are dealing with is not production in general, is not just production of objects, but is determined by the imperative of average minimal time. The exchange moment is essential because the market is where the respective amounts of value meet to be compared and assessed.

Value is the form of exchangeability of items according to the average labour time necessary to produce them. Time is the substance of value.

The need to measure the time "labour content" of goods derives from the need to produce goods in the shortest possible time[127] and to standardise their manufacturing.

ian management tool. (More on that below.)

The fact that a certain social reality shows up in visible forms but can only be approached as an abstraction does not mean this reality is a fiction. Prices are visibly accessible figures, but what do they result from? Two centuries ago, the most perceptive classical economists explained that the value of a commodity was not determined by what is paid for the labour that produces it, but by the relative quantity of labour necessary to produce it. The analysis was moving from manifestation to substance. The concept of value points to the pivotal role of labour, productive labour and labour time.

Now, since value is obviously related to the market, what exactly is the relation? Is value created by the market? (And consequently, if we replaced independent producers or companies by associated producers, would everything become different?)[126]

opposition to the degradation of the natural and social environment, the vital change can only occur when the challenge becomes more than a one-issue struggle, when the ecological extends to the social, linking pollution to industry, industry to profit-making, profit-making to labour, labour to capital/labour relation, and class to State power. This raises the stakes to a possible breaking point: insurrection no longer just fights the police, it also creates new social and productive relations.

Communisation is the only way to degrowth. Workers would stop working in places that are dangerous for them and detrimental for the environment. Then the question becomes what to do. For instance, "agro-ecology" is impossible when agro-business rules. Nowadays, Andalusian mega-farms manufacture organic cherry tomatoes, rely on over-exploited labour, waste lots of input, then have the output sent any day of the year to Finnish or Polish super-

markets. Only non-productivist holistic techniques sequester carbon in the soil and use less carbon for transport.

FAMILY

"[T]he concept of mother has absorbed the concept of woman (..) function has nullified the individual", so "(..) resolution of this problem lies solely in a proper resolution of the economic question. In revolution. And nowhere else."(Lucia Sanchez Saornil)

It all hinges on what is meant by "economic question".

Class domination does not explain all of masculine domination, which long predated capitalism.

Saying that the emancipation of woman will be part of proletarian emancipation is true, but only valid if we understand that women's liberation is not a mere consequence of revolution: it is one of its integral parts.

To quote the SI again, "words are insubordinate", whichis just as well.

VALUE

"Value" is a term we hear all the time: value creation, VAT, market value, etc. What the economist calls value, however, is something that everyday businessdeals with in three forms: profit, interest and rent, which appear at the bottom of the balance sheet, and whose reality is validated by the fact they can be bought and sold. That is the self-understanding that each capitalist needs to compete with other capitalists and to manage his labour force.

Marx's notion of value is unavailable for direct verification by figures. Because of that, Marx is accused of metaphysics.

It is worth emphasising that value does not compute, since some communist theorists have tried to make use of value as a proletar-

growth-induced happiness has withered, and the consumer dream has soured. 21st century people do not fantasise about mastering nature, they reject Francis Bacon and Descartes, and their own wonderland would rather be the opposite: small scale sustainable Earth-friendly industry capable of providing the benefits of growth (computers and hi-performance medical care) without its disadvantages (global warming and NSA surveillance). If they still believe in "common", they want it now, and "commons" theory suits them, in its radical or moderate versions.

So, if it's not communism, and unlikely to be communisation, what label? Maybe insurgents will be weary of what Victor Klemperer called the "depreciation of the superlatives". Maybe they will prefer to experience the darkness of a missing word, and they will have to make do with off-target terms, until they complete the phrase.

Looking back at the demise of past insurrections, what happened to women was not just the result of a general defeat: it was one of the causes of defeat. In Spain, it is in the Autumn of 1936 (i.e. before the militarisation of the militia) that women were expelled from front line fighting and sent home or restricted to non-armed roles. One self-defeating measure among others. And it would be historically wrong to put the blame only on the bureaucrats: a man-first political culture was widespread among the rank-and-file as well.

Every society must have mastery over the (re)making of life. The question is whose control over whose reproduction. Up to now, nearly all societies have done it by forcing women into a submissive role. In today's world ruled by the capital/wage labour relation, it is the reproduction of labour power that organises masculine domination. The family does not create masculine domination, but that is where it takes place. Unlike

the Brave New World children, kids are still born by what a 17th century London doctor called the "trivial and vulgar way of coition". But it is not because she bears children that woman is subjugated, it is because motherhood happens within the framework of the family, which forcefully specialises her into activities which confine her to an inferior status. And whatever historical origins the family may have, in modern times it is structured and maintained by private property. True, most people have hardly anything to bequeath, but the social function of property does not end there. Even people with just £ 500 in the bank generally live in a family circle which restricts and protects them at the same time, and these £ 500 are all the more precious as the group has no other reserves, and that its existence revolves around the upkeep and welfare of the children. The family framework is a constraint and a shelter. Even more so in times of crisis when fear of loss (loss of job, of money, of home, of partner) is widespread.

lution as opposed to peaceful reform: CP supporters did not want insurrections any more than Labour voters. What attracted them most was the CPs' full commitment to a planned development that would truly benefit the common people. As the CPUSA used to say, "Communism is 20th century Americanism", the great facilitator and maker of history. Millions supported Stalin because he had defeated Hitler, also because of what they thought to be Russian economic success, demonstrated by the Red Army's victory in 1945. For them, communism was modernity as well as fairness, with a deep belief in community based on technological progress. In post-1917 Russia, electricity was at the same time a "modern energy source" and "the emblem of triumph over the dark forces of ignorance, superstition, religion, and disease." (R. Stites)

Now the utopian scientific myth is over. If "communism" is as devalued as "socialism",[121] it not just due to the Gulag: the chimera of

it expressed their opposition to the individualist evolution of modern times. For some like Saint-Simon, it meant making the world consistent with the historical evolution launched by the Industrial revolution: doing away with out-of-date ruling classes and promoting a democracy of producers and entrepreneurs. This agenda was fulfilled by capitalism which was busy socialising the world in its own way. Though the social-democrat "socialisation programme" was only really put into practice after 1945, by the beginning of the 20th century socialism had started being devoid of content. Confusion reached a logical peak when liberals said "We are all socialist now" and the far-right called itself national socialist.

As socialism was cheapened and degraded, communism came to mean the real thing, to be achieved by mass parties opposed to class collaborationist labour and unions. Le-
[120]ninism and then Stalinism did not appeal because of their emphasis on violent revo-

In spite of a diversity of household models, of a broader range of patterns and a rising divorce rate, the family is not on the wane. Blended families are nuclear. Though in North America and Europe there is a lot more task-sharing between man and woman in the home, that changes nothing about the fact that woman stays locked in a traditional mother's role.

As long as the family remains the basic unit of society, masculine domination will prevail, albeit toned down and cushioned. Men "naturally" have a public life. Whatever public life they have (in politics or business), women also have to fulfil their role in the home, and the adverb is loaded with ambiguity, as this also so often translates into mainly or chiefly.

Female submission is also visible in many social conflicts: though women act outside their homes, they are still bound by

home-related tasks. Quite often, in a strike

or even insurrection, family and home issues are treated as private (i.e. woman) matters, as opposed to "general" questions regarding the running of the struggle. Therefore creating a day centre or a communal kitchen will shift the individual woman's burden to a collective… run by women. This does not change the man/woman balance of power any more than female PMs or admirals change the nature of the ruling class.

Only an insurrection that starts altering the family structure, which means getting rid of the family as the social nucleus, as the focus and transmitter of private property, will move women from the private sphere to the public realm.

This will not be done by having children forcibly brought up in dormitories. Collectivising kids (as well as women) was, and perhaps still is a bourgeois nightmarish vision of communism: doing away with private property was equated with total negation of

used by our adversaries."

"Communism" is not the only word subjected to forced labour:

In 1974, an Ulster Workers' Council coordinated a general strike led by Ulster loyalists opposed to concessions to Irish nationalists, in fact in support of Protestant privileges over the Catholics. It was not improper for it to call itself a Workers' Council, since a lot of Protestant workers took part in the strike (there were 100 Catholics out of a 10,000 labour force in the Harland & Wolff shipyards, then the biggest industrial company in Belfast).

No need to dwell on the misfortunes of a term like freedom : Orwellian newspeak and contemporary softspeak compete to fill it with and empty it of meaning.

When it was born, socialism had nothing[119] of a stunning simplicity. For many people,

UNLABELLED

Like name tags display the wearer's name, political discourse is an ideological marker. Communism… now communisation. We do not know how communist insurgents will call themselves, most likely not "communist". The 20th century has given communism a bad name.

"Every revolutionary theory has had to invent its own terms", the situationists wrote:

"It is impossible to get rid of a world without getting rid of the language that conceals and protects it (..) Words forged by revolutionary criticism are like partisans' weapons: abandoned on the battlefield, they fall into the hands of the counterrevolution. And like prisoners of war, they are subjected to forced labour. (..) Concepts of radical critique suffer the same fate as the proletariat: they are de prived of their history, cut off from their roots.(..) To deny ourselves the use of a word is to deny ourselves a weapon

the individual. We would rather tentatively describe communisation as the creation of a way of life in which children could be the children of all as much as the children of their parents. We have no blueprint for this revolution in parenthood, which will be achieved jointly by men and women. Short of that, revolution would soon exhaust its propulsive power. To quote Lucia Sanchez Saornil again, "Anything else would merely be calling the same old slavery by a new name."

GIOTTO

Orwell wrote a scathing criticism of the "slovenliness and vagueness" of political speech, its "staleness of imagery" and "lack of precision": "Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style". Nearly 70 years later, the plight of the proletariat is complemented by the poverty of language. The impoverishment is not absolute (the word flow is staggering, nearly 200 billion emails per day), but rela-

tive (in terms of form and content, with the rise of Globish, texting and stilted administrative lingo).

By contrast, resisters and rioters make a point of speaking for themselves, which requires a re-appropriation of words and an innovative language. Instead of being confined on the back of an envelope or a laptop screen, poetic creativity suffuses oral speech, leaflets, text messages, posters, papers… Mental acuity and linguistic clarity go together.

That being said, insurrectionary times are also fertile ground for stereotyped romantic idiom and imagery, with the risk of word inflation turning into hollow and padded discourse. Nothing rings through the words any more. Language is weighed down.

The ebbing of revolution goes together with expression functioning as a substitute for action, with a twofold outcome. From the bot-

now self-evident separation between workshop and warehouse (a supermarket is simply a warehouse where you pay) goes. Once again, this is not saying we only eat and use what we grow and make as individuals or as a local group.

On the first evening of the Paris 1830 insurrection, "the dials on clock-towers were being fired at simultaneously and independently from several locations" (W. Benjamin), as reported by an eyewitness who wrote about "firing on clock faces to make the day stand still". Nowadays, primitivists sometimes refuse to wear a watch and won't arrange a meeting time at 10 a.m. or 4 p.m., only at sunrise or sunset. A future society may still prefer to use watches, street clocks or sundials, but the 1830 insurgents had an insight of the coming tyranny of computed time.

will be more than production procedures, it will be the social relation experienced by the participants. Sharing becomes not just giving to other people (e.g. a shelter to the homeless), but acting together: the homeless may be involved in house-building. Organising, resisting and fighting imply places to meet, eat, sleep, produce and repair. When social relationships integrate what is now distinct - "producing" and "consuming" – time-count and its coercion are ignored. Since objects are not made to be exchanged according to the average quantum of time necessary to make them compared to other competing objects, there is no point in keeping track of minutes and seconds. People "take their time", literally. It hardly needs saying that some people will be slower than others, and that people will rush to do something urgent: time of course matters, but it no longer rules as the universal quantifier."The idea that time is something that [116]can be lost or gained [would be] itself somewhat odd." (A World Without Money)The

tom, folk art and a simplistic depiction of the people and its archetypal enemies (the bourgeois is always fat). From the top, propagandist pomposity: grandiose educational French revolution paintings, post-1917 Russian agitprop posters, Mexican murals in the 1930s. When the social movement fails to change the mode of life, it loses its autonomy, therefore its own language, which sooner or later is taken back by specialists.

On the other hand, in previous revolutions, a number of thinkers, factions and leaders opposed art which they perceived as unsocial and corrupting. Rousseau would much rather have the locals organise a village fête than watch a play. He was not alone in thinking that the people's simple pleasures illustrate and maintain the virtues of grassroots community. Moralising is a sure sign of the revolution withdrawing inward and dying off.

The early 20th century saw the emergence

of a self-critique of art. It is no coincidence that Duchamp's Fountain ("ready-made" out of a urinal) and Malevich's White on White painting respectively appeared in 1917 and 1918. They seemed to substantiate the claim that "Art is dead" as a social relationship. The 1919 German Dadaists' programme asked for "The introduction of progressive unemployment through comprehensive mechanization of every field of activity. Only by unemployment does it become possible for the individual to achieve certainty as to the truth of life and finally become accustomed to experience (..)".

Avant-garde artists recognized an issue that they could not address on their own. In Russia, they sided with the Bolshevik party. The failure of "communist futurism" paralleled the downfall of the proletariat. The tidal wave was drowning everybody, and the revolution was long dead when Mayakovsky's suicide in 1930 drove the final nail into the artists' contribution to the overthrow of the

best time-saver. This is called productivity.

Saying communisation will switch from a quantitative to a qualitative approach sounds fine but highly idealistic. Words are flawed by what they inevitably mean today. We may prefer quality but it is rarely accessible (and it is expensive, organic food for example), so we now have to make do with mass production. Things may appear more realistic when seen as part of an insurrection process, which will make quantity and quality less of a contradiction.

Insurgents do not count how long it takes them to seize buildings, vehicles, goods, to use or transport them, divert them from their previous use or destroy them. When they transform or reproduce what they have taken over, what matters is the material and psychological satisfaction obtained not just by the product, but also by the productive activity that these objects result from. Put it another way, what will "regulate" production

niques. We might be reluctant to go back to the Ancient scribe's habit of writing 75 words per minute, but surely we will experience a mutation of our relation to time.

Communisers will try and do something quite different from what the Grundrisse advocated: though Marx's deep insight was to perceive time as the key to the problem, he wanted to keep time as a measuring rod and to bring working-time down to a minimum (thanks to automation, particularly) while increasing free (extra-work) time to a maximum. This is still having time as the great social regulator.

In present society, time constraints mean a lot more than being aware of the passing of hours and minutes. The market compares the amounts of time taken by different producers to produce an item, and eventually selects the best cost-cutter, viz. time-cutter. To avoid being driven out of business, each producer is therefore compelled to be the dominant social order.[114]

"Dadaism wanted to suppress art without realizing it; surrealism wanted to realize art without suppressing it." (Debord)

Anti-art is art now, and boundaries are blurred between elite and mainstream art. In the age of the high-low mix, the rock star quotes Rimbaud and the academic loves rap. Because of these shifting borders, it is difficult to think of "art" as having a subversive effect in a communisation process.

In the past, iconoclasm was a frequent feature of revolutionary times, after 1789 in France for example, when anti-religious vandalism was rampant (and the word coined). Communards' voices were heard for the demolition of Notre-Dame cathedral in 1871, but nothing came out of it. At the Paris Sorbonne in 1968, rebels did not deface bourgeois-humanist paintings and only wrote graffiti on them. Quite a few

Spanish churches were torched in the 1930s. In modern countries, established religion has lost most of its direct temporal power or political authority. Still, people might display their utter displeasure at Assisi's basilica, not because the frescoes by Giotto are offensive, but because woman visitors have to cover their shoulders to walk in and look at them. And what of mosques? Most of this entry so far has dealt with Western countries. Actually, iconoclasts today are far less motivated by atheism, more by religious competition, as when the Taliban destroyed Buddhist statues, or when Iraqi mosques are targeted because of Sunni-Shiite strife.

What we call "art" has gone through a long history and many forms, but as we know it today, it is a product of the class divide. Art has been a "natural" privilege of the ruling class, and remains so today. One of its consequences is the near unbridgeable gap between craftsman and artist. The superseding of work as such entails the end of the age-

cost is even much lower. So why bother always cutting down costs more?

For the bourgeois, downsizing has its merits and shortcomings: direct labour brings in new value. The fully automated factory is still a bourgeois dream. There has to remain a work force and it must be made as productive as possible. Unlike the middle managers, the ad men and the machines, the workers are able to resist and are prone to strike. One of the best ways for the boss to have maximum power over labour is to regulate working time and production rates. Contrary to what Barbara Garson writes, it is not "control for the sake of control", rather for the sake of profit.

Communisation will break away from the logic that gives precedence to result (the product) over process (the productive activity). Sometimes this will be done with the help of computers and robots, sometimes by a return to (and a reinvention of) craft tech-

employee: “the customers (..) are getting programmed (..) They are getting (..) used to dealing with machines (..) [the bosses] will replace us with machines (..) We know we’ll be phased out in the next few years.”

“Control is what the system is all about”, B. Garson concludes. Not only because “the system” knows what everyone is doing every second. Most of all because every gesture has been subdivided into so many meaningless parts that the global comprehension of the whole evades our understanding and consolidates the command of capital over labour.

Rather than lamenting the past, let’s wonder what control really is about. According to official figures, between the 1980’s and 2005, the hourly unit labour cost as the percentage of US new car costs has gone down from 26 to 15%. For Nike shoes manufactured in Asia and sold in America, the part of the Asian worker’s wage in the overall

old manual/intellectual split, therefore the end of the artist as a (privileged and looked-down upon) profession, just like the end of any job for life, be it gardener or welder. It does not mean that every human being has the same ability (and desire) to play the flute or compose songs. So what? Our concern is not to substitute people’s art to artists’.

Communisation will not compress individuals into a homogenised mass. Community is not anonymity. Why should the participants in a collectively organised spectacle have to remain nameless? For a few years after 1917, Russia staged huge “mass theatre” events that combined fairs and carnivals with party-State propaganda and a touch of futurist aesthetics. Dozens of thousands of people took part, sometimes as spectators and actors. History was frozen. Revolution was turning into social engineering, with the proletarians re-enacting their own deeds for show. A perfect illustration of the beginning of Society of the Spectacle: everything that

was directly lived had moved away into a representation.

Since then, at various times, particularly in the 1970s, radicals have called for a co-operative self-managed theatre where the audience would not come to sit and watch, but decide on the content of the play and be part of the performance. Why not… bearing in mind that collective art does not suppress art as separate. And who knows what genres and forms will communisers invent, remodel and discard? After 1750, baroque music went out of fashion for 150 years. It is all very well to call for generalization of art and its supersession as a separate commercial sector, but the bottom line is, there will be no superseding of the manual/intellectual divide, therefore of art, as long as work continues. Actually, there is controversy about Giotto's "authorship" of the Assisi frescoes: like other famous painters, he had assistants. Was it a collective effort?

ster)

For the first time in history, a common work tool (the computer in its various incarnations, from desk PC to portable smartphone) has become the near-indispensable omnipresent object in everyday life.

Technology, however, is not its own driving force: object processing and people processing are two peas in a pod.

In 1988, Barbara Garson analysed the evolution of airplane ticket purchase by telephone. The American Airline clerk would slice his talk into four compulsory phases (opening, sales pitch, probe, close),and then be given 13 seconds recuperation time (16 with Canadian Airline) before the next call. Every phase was of course monitored. How banal it all seems today. "In a sense, the computer-aided clerk is merely a transition toward a machine". True: today's traveller[111] books a virtual ticket on-line. Says a 1988

now complemented by software recording the time spent on each specific task. On labour's side, fighting for fewer working hours and less productivity constraints is a constant of the worker movement. From Taylor's stop-watch to the digital age, worker insubordination or resistance has had to be kept in check: a century ago, when meters were added to typewriters to record the number of keystrokes, time-rebeltypists reacted by doing more strokes, using 2, 3 or 4 times the space bar.

Capitalist speed-up now extends to daily life.

"(..) the need to make sure that work time is filled with as much work as possible creates, on the other side, a need to make sure that leisure time is filled with as much leisure as possible. (..) We feel cheated if we just rest up on the week-end", so workers go to the pictures or a match, eat out, pay a visit the shopping mall, etc." (The Housing Mon-

HABITAT

About one billion people live in squats, favelas, shanty-towns and slums, e.g. one third of the Sao Paulo state population.

For them, one of the prime communising activities would be getting out of these areas, as well as building, renovating and pulling down their dwellings, and the task would rarely be done by bringing in the industrialized building industry.

Actually, though "modern" construction firms do their utmost to break the work process into repetitive tasks, construction is a sector where standardisation meets its limits. Physical constraints and coordination between trades make it very difficult to operate a building site like an assembly line. Large scale house manufacturing (on the type of W. Levitt's suburbia in the US after 1945) remains an exception. Le Corbusier may have wished to "make houses like others make cars", but a construction worker

cannot be Taylorised as easily as an auto worker or a supermarket cashier.

Therefore, once the cost-cutting imperative goes, it will be possible for a building site – as indeed many other production places – to become a "training ground" where skilled workers will help the locals learn carpentry, scaffolding or electricity as they take part in the process.

In the most adverse circumstances and with little or no outside assistance, Argentine slum dwellers have already devised simpler construction techniques (and developed urban micro-agriculture). In more favourable conditions, they could move from resistance to rebuilding their neighbourhood and try out a wide range of social experiments. Communisers will not be meeting urgent needs primarily by drawing up a list of priorities, which of course they may well do (among them, sheltering the homeless), but by developing the social inter-relations

mer carries on. Equally, the sexual division of labour – and male domination – will persist while the social division of labour exists, i.e. as long as work remains. That will be a litmus test.

TIME (IS OF THE ESSENCE)

" (..) he liked to get rid of time. By doing that he could concentrate on important things without interruption." This was written in a novel by Philip K. Dick in 1977. It is significant that the plot (set in 1994) should revolve around the drug traffic: an author's note specifies that drugs are to be regarded as the "metaphor" of the growing trend of "a speeding-up, an intensifying of the ordinary human existence."

About 40 years later, we work more to get more free time to work faster, and so on.

Time-count and time-minimising are vital[109] for capital. The punch-clock on the wall is

at other moments I would have felt very ashamed of doing so. "(In Argentina today, abortion still is legally a crime, only allowed for health reasons for the mother, or in case of rape.)

The final word to Eva, an Oaxaca housewife: "Then we were fighting two different fronts, the system, and the men inside our own movement."

After millennia of male rule, for an age-old prejudice to dissolve into a new desire, man/woman conflict is not just inevitable, it is necessary, but not unbridgeable. In the process men will feel the need and desire to discard their dominant role. Otherwise the continuation of the conflict would signify the insurgents' inability to solve it, and prove to be one defeat among others.

The sexual division of labour is an integral part of the social division of labour. We will not get rid of the latter as long as the for-

born out of the insurrection. Building a home goes along with building links, in the "material" sense, a learning-by-doing process which includes but goes beyond mere empathy. People will draw upon the wells of their own collective imagination as much as they will benefit from outside help. With a combination of local make-do and "low impact" materials, it might prove easier to create eco-villages, recycling and passive housing in Sao Paulo than in New York city.

The purpose of the activity will be the activity itself as much as its result, as much as producing a place to dwell, and probably, after the house is completed, some of the builders will be moving on to other pursuits.

INSURRECTION

To grasp how all-encompassing and holistic communisation would be, we can look back at how Albania in 1997 went through a modern civil war that left 2.000 people dead.

Even before its final demise in 1991, the bureaucratic regime had passed its expiry date. Stations were being stripped of their seats, schools looted, strikes and riots were widespread. People were stealing back from a State that had oppressed them for decades. After 1991, Albania proved as ineffectual and unstable under market capitalism as under State capitalism. A liberal shock policy only resulted in "pyramid" bank Ponzi schemes, with little real assets, paying high returns to clients out of new investors. While the West was being taken over by finance, this was neo-liberalism for the poor, without a content, viz. with no productive basis.

In 1997, Albania finally imploded: against a background of "lumpen proletarian" outbursts, the police vanished. Military stores were looted and most cities taken over by armed groups. All (seven) prisons were emptied and destroyed.

However, there was no occupation, therein "the material reproduction of the organization", i.e. menial manual and administrative chores. So they took action for task-sharing.

They also realised that the movement set itself priorities that endorsed and perpetuated male domination: demands related to poverty (regarded as "general") would rank higher than demands related to the female condition (deemed as "partial"). Often priority is another word for (boss, bureaucrat, expert or husband-led) hierarchy. One of these women declared:

"Sometimes we are running behind urgency, of children's meals for example, but if one of our mates is beaten by her partner, that is also urgent, isn't it?"

As one woman said: "they think that we join to defame them, but we are not only working for women… now I can explain to my[107] daughter what a contraceptive method is,

about sex inequality: masculine domination also exists in classless "primitive" societies. So, overturning the reproductive labour constraints implies some degree of sex confrontation between proletarians.

"I couldn't go to the picket because my husband beat me up and locked me up", a piquetera interviewed in 2004-2005 said. Another man burnt his wife alive. "He couldn't stand her going out. Why? Because going out changes your life. Going out is a revolution", Juanita explained.

In Argentina 2002, when Assemblies of Women Piqueteras were set up, domestic violence was a pressing issue, which meant conflict with a number of male fellow proletarians. Battered women's shelters were organised.

Within the movement, though women were a majority in the members and the organisers, they often found themselves confined

fore no transformation of the workplace. Here and there public meetings managed to rearrange life… less so after a while. Middle class people and local worthies took over with proletarian support. The result was "fully armed rebels failing to complete what started as an insurrection and to reorganize social life. The subsequent result was a situation of general inertia, stagnation, boredom and waiting." (TPTG) Gangs appeared. Most local committees acted only locally, in a moderate, reasonable way, afraid the revolt would turn uncontrollable.

When no transformative program is put forward, the inevitable demand is for a return to normalcy and democracy: people wanted their money back and free elections.

Order was eventually restored with the help of a multinational 7.000-strong humanitarian-military force, with little resistance: the revolt had run its course. Elections brought into office a left-wing coalition.

After the rulers had lost their grip and the ruled taken control,the Albanian proletarians had restricted themselves to an addition of “liberated spaces”, none of which broadened the scope of its action. They did not escalate from looting food to repossessing lodgings, nor move from the individual to the collective. When looted items are consumed at home, looting is collective in the act but individual in its purpose.

Insurrection breaks the normal order of things. Time flies, there is a suspension of disbelief in change and yet everything is on hold. Whereas the bourgeois can sit out the crisis, the proletarians cannot. In a way, their material situation is “worse” than before when at least a number of them got wages. Now the insurgents are separate from everything, cut off from the means of production which provided for their livelihoods. In most cases, it will be impossible for them to leave the cities and live off the land, as many Russian workers did after

The insurrection had run out of steam when it was put down in October by police and armoured vehicles.

As seen in this short survey, fighting alongside is not enough: the question is what men and women do together, what respective roles are played or denied. In Albania, 1997, though in the early days women took an active part in the demonstrations and the looting of the barracks, they became far less visible afterwards. Albanian patriarchy managed to hold the fort.

The involvement of women in an insurrection is a clear indicator of its depth or limitations. Woman insurgents shatter the relations (and mental blocks) that lock them into submission. (To a lesser extent, this is also true of children: insurrection re-socialises them away from the minor role where they were previously confined.)

Class structure does not explain everything

wash the dishes (..) We demonstrated that we can take actions as part of the movement ourselves." Some challenged the men to perform "female" duties. On the whole, the separation (and hierarchy) between private and public spheres, between reproductive and productive domains, was questioned but not gone beyond.Collective self-support was rarely more than poverty-sharing: solidarity is not enough to question production relations.

It is therefore normal that there were fewer woman occupiers after a while.

Some women reacted by creating their specific Coordination of Women of Oaxaca (COMO, August 31). A number of participants later split from it, mainly housewives employed in the informal sector who thought COMO was over-influenced by women with more education and better jobs. Class reasserted itself in COMO.

1917. Where traditional family farming still exists, it is barely capable of coping with extra mouths to feed.

Insurrection is a historical breakdown for both classes: it challenges capitalist domination, but first of all it is a challenge for the proletariat. Either the proletarians go back to work,possibly with some degree of self-management, or they move on to an altogether new way of life, which poses the question of the resumption of production.

Self-management will only be an opportunity for a minority, and a divisive option. The theory of self-management developed when plants were to a large extent self-sufficient, when for instance there was a blacksmith shop in a Ford plant and most motor parts were turned out on the premises: now they are usually outsourced. Today's "recovered factories" are mainly to be found in sectors that require little or no international cooperation, and they rarely involve manufactur-

ing. Upstream, where are raw materials to be found (bought)? Downstream, where are the goods to be circulated (sold)? Self-organised miners would soon be unable to renew their equipment and vehicles. The same applies to farming tools… and computers.

The point of departure is, communist insurgents act outside the workplace and confront society's power centres. Their "transformative" capacity is not a result of their professional skills, but of the inter-relations created among themselves by the insurrection. True, previous labour experience can help: shopfloor or office struggles breed links and solidarity, and when it comes to blocking the street with an articulated lorry, the ex-professional driver will be more reliable than the ex-bank clerk. But this is not essential. Insurrection de-socializes and re-socializes. It is as much a break as a continuation of previous bonds and skills.

Whereas the 1871 Paris communards band (it remains to be known whether he was a male chauvinist insurgent, or simply hostile to the insurgency). APPO debated for an hour (which does not seem much for such a sensitive issue) on the question of representation on its consejo (directive body). Women asked for a 50% share, or 33% as a minimum, which they eventually got. Men argued 33% was enough: according to them, there had been fewer woman participants in the movement, so 50% would have been unfair to all. The argument was highly debatable, since for instance in many demonstrations there were mostly female marchers. And who was voting in the first place? Was it a majority of men who voted in favour of male majority representatives? It is the whole procedure that was off track: when representation prevails over action, it shows the movement is stalling.

Luz, a woman aged 40, later said: "We told them we weren't here just to cook their food[103] at the plantons [protest encampments] and

all started with an apparently modest demand: the removal of the State governor, compounded by a teachers' strike. The eviction of striking teachers from a camp in the city centre (June 14) sparked the insurrection. The creation of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) added an "indigenous" Indian dimension to the movement. APPO wished to reclaim and extend traditional local Indian autonomy. Community ties and customs acted as an asset… also as a drawback.

Against the (imposed) myth of female non-violence, one of the main women's aims was to be accepted as fighters. Canal Nueve was taken over and controlled by thousands of women (August 1 to 6). They set up TV programs, patrolled at night and barricaded to protect the transmitter. In fact, several Oaxaca barricades were all-woman.

[102]A woman was reported as fighting on a street block with an arm broken by her husblocked themselves behind highly elaborated barricades because they had to defend a liberated space they were unable to transform, communist insurgents are mobile and outward-going.

Their first need is to stand up to repressive forces, and the second is to survive. The insurgents make use of what they find. Everything tends to be diverted from its "proper" use. Brick and metal from a building site are used as weapons, as many other unlikely objects are. History tells us how inventive fighters are, throwing down their own furniture in the street as barricade stuff, turning everyday objects into missiles, etc.

In insurrection times, cars are used for transport, as barricades, as battering-rams, used for fun, destroyed or left to rot. In 1936 Spain, metal plates were added to lorries to create makeshift armoured vehicles.

At this point, insurrection reaches the wa-

tershed where everything switches, or does not. So far, it has borrowed its material bases from the past. Taking hold of streets and public buildings is not enough. Nor is mutual help. After a few days or weeks, when all available food has been eaten, the question arises of where and how to produce it.

To create a durable sustainable mode of life, communisation cannot take mere contingency measures: it must invent new ways of reproducing the material bases of society.

As we know, this is what past insurrections did not do. Failure was not caused by a refusal to take account of harsh down-to-earth realities, but by a (probably inevitable then) propensity to fall prey to false realism. Basically, revolutionaries drew a line between the insurrectionary phase and what was expected next. Insurrection was reduced to getting rid of the enemy. Then an entirely new stage was supposed to begin, when productive activity would resume as if "produc-

up to now.

In Argentina, as early as the 1990s, when women initiated road blocks, they took care to integrate demands related to daily (i.e. women's) life. In 2005, the Movement of Unemployed Women (MMD) was born as a self (women's)-organisation. Law and order tried to fight back on the same level: in January 2006 the police sent in woman cops to clear a road blocked by piqueteras. When that failed, the army was called in. (Interestingly, in London in the 1980's, when female nurses occupied a hospital, the police chose to have them evicted by woman PCs.) In the words of Marta, a piquetera: "The biggest change was the relationship with other people in the neighbourhood, the development of friendship and the possibility of sharing (..) Now I live in a large family, my neighbours are my family."

In 2006, the city and region of Oaxaca, Mexico, became un-governable for 7 months. It

Communisation will depart from revolutionary imagery of revolution, and found revolution on different grounds. No need for self-dramatising rhetoric. Communisation will be impossible unless social disruption undermines the reliability and efficiency of law enforcement agencies. Past insurrections did not fail because they used too much or too little violence. Rather because

"In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons, whilst the communist revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity (..)" (Marx)

SEX

A rupture with capitalism must be accompanied by an overcoming of the reproductive labour system, i.e. of what family has been

tion", "consumption", "work" were inevitable quasi-neutral realities.

The issue is how the social inter-proletarian relations that can make the uprising a success also enable the people involved to create a new way of life.

For example, there is more in sharing than meets the eye. Usually, sharing is a way of handing out (fairer) portions of personal or collective wealth. In an insurrection, sharing entails doing things in common. Whereas sharing used to divide something, it now implies making it.

In "normal" times, sharing is another mode of distributing goods, a mode that keeps the separation between production and circulation, which itself maintains the productive moment as distinct from the rest. As the insurrection unfolds, a new "consumption" arises, which would call for another word, one that connects "producing" with "con-

suming".

Does it mean that people will only eat what is locally grown? No. It means production will be more than merely productive. As we said, during the insurrection, motor vehicles will socially function in a variety of ways, and a lot of items and activities as well. The increased number and range of uses, most of them non-productive of value but also of current "utilitarian" usefulness, means more than fun or make-do: it points to a situation where productivity starts to wane as the main social standard. One of the defining features of work is that it sets apart doing something useful (in our society, to get money, usually), from doing it for pleasure. Work time is split from leisure time. Also, doing something primarily for oneself (usually, to get money for the worker and his/her family) is disjoined from doing it for others as well.

On a larger and larger scale, production and they will do it again, with an addition of public and private forces: in a social earthquake, the official "monopolist of violence" never minds delegating some of its powers to unofficial militias.

Communisation cannot be all bread and honey. States will face the situation by whatever means available. The bourgeois usually hope that a social storm will spend itself without much damage to their position. Politics is amazingly apt at channelling social change into the creation of institutions that achieve minimal change and postpone real change to a supposedly better day. This, however, may not stand up to the challenge. Not everything can be solved by prevarication and delaying tactics. Revolutions have their days of reckoning.

A historical discontinuity cannot be peaceful. This was true of the advent of the parliamentary system. It applies even more so to communist revolution.

lence may be a respectable principle. It is historical nonsense. No major change or even improvement has ever been brought about without some degree of antagonism, agitation, rioting and destructiveness. Social passion is never serene. Even democracy cannot be fought for and won in harmony (and the only revolutions acceptable to democrats are past or present democratic revolutions). A historical breakthrough is not a debating society, it is a trial of strength between conflicting interests.

It is contrary to reason and experience to maintain that mass popular pressure will be enough to peacefully deflect State action and neutralize bourgeois counter-violence. Occupying the street, a public building or a workplace is illegal, and violators will be dealt with to the full extent of the law, prosecution or worse. Modern police are equipped like an army ready for civil war. The ruling classes have repeatedly resorted to guns and tanks to defend their interests,

will become more than a way of matching resources with needs, and the reality and notion of need will change.

Insurgents will stand at the crossroads. What we name insurrection covers a long time span, but in the early days its participants have a limited time-window to get on the right track. If they let the opportunity slip, they will be soon forced to stall and back-pedal. The unstable and uncertain defining moment cannot last too long. Insurrection is a crisis.

JAILBREAK

In 1831, the canuts (silk workers) took over the French town of Lyon for a couple of days, in support of their demand for a minimum price imposed on silk. While some rioters threw bundles of notes into the Rhône River, others stood watch in front of banks. When prison inmates tried to escape, armed workers helped put them back behind bars.

Two looters were shot on the spot (it remains unclear who they were stealing from). "We are not thieves", the canuts protested, meaning it was the bosses who were acting as thieves, stealing from labour what the dignity of labour was entitled to. Their revolt was based on what the bourgeois turned them into, not on what they could turn themselves into. In a rising both against and within capitalism, respect of property and law is inevitable. To the canuts, "Justice" meant fairness in society as it exists: thus, punishment meted out to "criminals" was justified. L'Echo de la Fabrique, a genuine worker paper which stood for worker identity and gave a detailed report on the Lyon events, took the same line. In like manner, 19th century French rioters would often release persons imprisoned for debt, and keep common criminals locked in. Predictably, in the repression that ensued, the canuts were to be labelled criminals themselves.

Later, Engels wrote on the lumpenproletariat-

ware.

REVOLUTION

Rather an ill-chosen wording: "revolution" refers to a body going round on an axis before completing its course where it started. First overall transformation, then back to starting point. Cynics contend this applies perfectly to Russian history from 1917 to present times. The more things change, the more…

"Revolution" also casts a verbal spell: for the activist, it calls upon the true subversive spirit of the proletariat; for the pure theorist, it conjures up the hidden meaning of universal history. Word extremism is a trap.

So why insist on revolution ? Because history is not just a succession of long evolutionary trends: cut-off points rupture the continuum, and a break from the past is always a destructive/constructive process. Non-vio-

of neutralisation. Communist theory transmutes into ideology when its parts are disjoined from the whole and transferred into an altogether different mental mapping. In former times, for millions of people, socialism/communism embodied hopes of a fraternal community via substantial planned economic development. Meanwhile, Marxism was "a guide to action" for the vanguard.

The objective is more modest and inward-looking these days: mixing old references (capital, value, labour…) with new ones (communisation, identity, gender…) to provide suitable material for a whole array of critical specialists. No writer's block here. There is no limit to the further spread of "communisation" as an ambiguous word expressing the promise of panoramic cover-all irresistible change.

Whenever the concept of communisation swallows up the rest of communist theory, it is sure to gain quick wide acceptance. Be-

ians: "If the French workers, in the course of the Revolution, inscribed on the houses: Death to the thieves! and even shot down many, they did it, not out of enthusiasm for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary to hold that band at arm's length."

Though we can appreciate the point made by Engels, the Lumpenproletariat concept raises more problems than it solves, and proves as slippery as the middle class concept is stodgy.

The opening ofRussian jails after February 1917 released lots of prisoners. Idle soldiers, deserters, homeless, jobless people and waifs and strays sometimes swelled the revolutionary crowds and sometimes added to what was resented as public insecurity. To make buildingssafer, house committees were set up by bourgeois, also by lower class dwellers afraid of losing what little they had.[55] It was a common saying that people of all

classes were aggrieved by the lapse in civilised behaviour. Well, self-control never rules everything, even less so in revolution. A time of social storm quasi naturally develops illegal and outlandish behaviour, law and order is in disarray, with an often thin line between actions that aim to go beyond disorder, and actions that take advantage of disorder for the benefit of individuals or groups. It can be hard to distinguish between a "gang" organised around money-making, and a "gang" veering towards community self-help.

What qualifies as "anti-social" acts, and what is to be done with them? In his 1776 theory of minimal government, Thomas Paine argued that while society "promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections", government acts "negatively by restraining our vices": "Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design

to structural change. In that sense, "communisation" is so extremely revolutionary that it dispenses with the need for a revolution: communisation theory is communism made accessible to all.

Further and equally damaging obfuscation is when specific aspects of communisation are played up (immediacy), and others (class) downsized to the point of dismissal. The complete de-coupling of the proletarian from the worker results in the explicit disconnection of revolution from class: "The notion of a 'contradiction between classes' appears to be of strictly Maoist lineage. (..) We can find no reference in Marx's work to a contradiction between 'capital and labour', or 'capitalists and workers'." (Endnotes) What started as an effort to update class finally buries it. This has more to do with post-modernism than with communist theory.

Radical thought always undergoes a process

Enters communisation.

Often more than enough the reader is left with the impression of having stumbled through the wrong door.

The concept of communisation denies the necessity of an in-between transition period that would be neither capitalist nor communist. This describes a future revolution, not something happening at present.

However, it is too often interpreted as if that process was already on its way now : "no transition" is mistaken as infinite persistent reform instead of revolutionary break. "We want the world and we want it... Now!", the Doors used to sing, but there is a difference between lyrics and historical change. The confusion makes for the popularity of the communisation concept, which is often degraded into a blanket term for the theory and practice that cumulative change (especially in the daily life sphere) naturally leads

and end of government, viz. freedom and security."

Th. Paine is held in high regard by anarchists because of his belief that the common people have the right and ability to run society. Yet what is "security"? And how does it relate to "freedom"? What we now call and treat as "crime", Kropotkin wrote, will be regarded as "social disease" by our grand-children. Certainly, but how do we treat this disease? Are prevention and education enough? According to Kropotkin,

"A new family, based on the community of aspirations, will take its place. In this family people will be obliged to know one another, to aid one another, and to lean on one another for moral support on every occasion. And this mutual prop will prevent the great number of anti-social acts which we see today. (..) The great number of these [anti-social] acts will no longer have their raison d'être. The others will be nipped in

the bud."

Even so, a revolutionary period gives rise to all kinds of reactions, tensions, and conflicts. As Emma Goldman says, "every society has the criminal it deserves", so a very different society would have very different "deviants"… but would have some. Until then, there could be some sad irony in quoting Lenin in his supposed Spring 1917 anti-State phase:

"We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of individual persons, or the need to stop such excesses. In the first place, however, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression, is needed for this: this will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted."

ing change.

QUERY

As the situationists wrote in 1966: "A dialectical book in our time is not only a book that presents a reasoning dialectically; it is a book that recognizes and calculates its own relationship with the totality to be actually transformed."

Radical theory is only consistent if it cares to reflect upon itself and contains its own potential critique. Otherwise, instead of contributing to transforming the world, it keeps busy transforming words.

In the last few years, as a quick Internet search will show, "communisation" has become a novelty on the intellectual market.

Now that the USSR is gone and the Red Scare over, exit "communism".

not on the principle of self-sufficiency but of maximum possible self-control of the initiatives by the people involved. To be concrete, the aim is not to eat only what we grow, but to stop depending on a mega-machine for survival. Communisation will carry the day by proving its ability to improve the existence of the proletarians here and now, not in some remote future when all the conditions of communism have been met. Or else people would turn against the revolution, some actively, most in a passive way.

Marx's early writings initiated a critique of primarily political revolution. He also questioned democracy as the condition of true emancipation, and left us with a still largely untapped source of inspiration. This line of investigation was later discarded or ignored, including by Marx himself. Communisation will reconnect with it practically. Communisers would be doomed if they waited for adequate public administration and decision procedures to exist before implement-

It is doubtful "any crowd of civilized people" would spontaneously act "to prevent a woman from being assaulted". Even so, social relations cannot be only immediate, i.e. inter-personal, without the intervention of any organised body. True, when an accident happens, witnesses help, and when a young child goes missing, the locals rally round to contribute to the search. But mediations also play their part, e.g. hospitals and their personnel. Lenin was a bit naïve to (briefly) believe that all anti-social gestures would eventually die out. Proletarians will have to deal with attitudes that run counter to communisation. Sometimes simple neighbourhood action will see to it, sometimes ad hoc structures will play a part.

Insurrections naturally set free prison inmates. So-called "criminals" and "outlaws" have been known to side with the rebellion, others with its repression. Both happened in Egypt in 2010-2011. Those entrenched in the money world have a vested interest

in the perpetuation of capitalism, and their managers are used to navigating between illegal and legal business. It is part of their trade to cut deals with the police, and they will try to come to terms with any local or central power that is likely to accommodate them.

However, while a drug baron is perfectly adapted to his own market niche, the illegality of the petty thief (often stealing from the poor) or the street corner dealer is usually a form of forced survival imposed upon the lowest proletarian strata. In a communising phase, when private property is being broken down, the question becomes whether an attack on property is collective re-appropriation or private re-possessing (as theft now is), and we cannot hope for clear social skies every day. The situation will be cloudy and blurred. Gangs will appear to try to hoard, especially as the breakdown of money exchange and the interruption of trade flows will cause scarcity here and there. Besides,

worker at the ILVA Taranto plant was saying: "I've been there for 15 years, I still don't understand anything about what's going on, it's too huge." Lots of tasks were performed by computers with the workers watching screens: their decoupling from the operative process made it incomprehensible how steel was made.

Communisation will not aim at creating a global government. Establishing an Earth parliament, Fourier's World Congress of Phalanxes, a world workers' council or federation of communes would be bottom-up social engineering.

The global/local relation has to berethought. Of course communisation can never succeed as an addition of isolated areas. But it will develop by a succession of knock-on effects and threshold effects. Only a non-economy can start localising production, because that is how it functions. The key is to be able to start and develop locally,

post-colonial India to the end of Eastern Europe bureaucratic regimes, democracy is a multidimensional form, adaptable to a large variety of situations where social groups have to bargain and people have to let off steam. Politicians wage war with words instead of swords, but police and army swords are always in the background, and their presence is enough to put a damper on protest and if need be to grind rebellion into submission. In the 21st century, democracy has not run its course, and it will endeavour to channel transformative energy into debate and institution.

Communisation can only be done by the proletarians themselves, but how will they achieve self-organisation? How we decide what to do depends onwhat we do. Collective mastering of our conditions of production is a condition of mastering the general evolution of society. It is obvious that a nuclear power station cannot be community-run. And what about modern industry? A

the extension of police-free zones might also create no-go areas controlled by thugs. All will depend on the expansion and depth of community building. Then the question is what becomes of crime when property is abolished.

Here again nothing can be taken for granted. Lots of objectionable things can be done in the name of the common good, particularly when "community-based" control takes the form of present Neighbourhood Watch, CrimeMapping.com, the National Sex Offender Registry, televised Crimewatch, and calls to "Report Violators".

KARL (MARX)

In January 1848, Marx declared that "(..) the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this sense alone (..) that I vote in favour of free trade." Marx thought liberal free trade destroyed national borders and favoured the progress of capitalism. When in June he became the editor of the

New Rhineland Gazette, subtitled "Organ of Democracy", his goal was to push the bourgeois revolution as far as possible: the more capitalism grew, the closer it got to proletarian revolution.

Later, during the American Civil War, the purpose of the First International's letter to Lincoln, drafted by Marx, was to help get rid of the horror of slavery, but equally to contribute to the advent of a modern capitalism in the US:

" (..) the workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class (..) as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Antislavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the

political forces, to the extent that it included the State, namely the Catalan commissar of public order. The workers thought they had gained a foothold in political power when in fact they had let the enemy in. It is no wonder the Central Committee of the Militias quickly began to unravel.

The smothering of the revolutionary momentum took months before it was finally completed in May 37, but it originated in the summer of 1936. When communist measures were left aside for later, politics occupied the field and installed social shock absorbers. CNT and POUM acted as buffers between the masses and the bourgeois, and when this was done the CP finally took control and the State cracked down on dissent.

Politics functions like a lock chamber, a social-tight terrain where social division is neutralized, so that all classes allegedly cooperate in the running of society. From Ancient Greece to the first general elections in

In Spain, in July 1936, the worker rising defeated the military putsch in more than half of the country. Proletarian autonomy had been achieved by armed action: now it could only be consolidated by further action, this time against the bourgeois and State, by a decisive break with capital and wage-labour. This did not happen. Though there were lots of changes, they did not cut deep into the social fabric.

The result was a step-by-step loss of proletarian autonomy. In the following weeks, the main body that the Barcelonan workers gave themselves (or accepted: the process is different, the outcome similar) was a Central Committee of Antifascist Militias, which included delegates from the CNT, the FAI, the UGT (socialist union), the POUM, the PSUC (product of the recent fusion of the CP and the socialists in Catalonia), and representatives of the Catalan regional government. This structure served as a bridge between the workers' movement and bourgeois

rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world."

Marx's last public speech, in 1872, stated that while "in most countries on the Continent it is force which will be the lever of our revolution", in North America, England and perhaps Holland "the workers may achieve their aims by peaceful means".

Let's not wonder whether Marx was a revolutionary or a reformist. It is pointless to engage in a war of quotes. Marx both criticised andsupported "class collaborationist" English labour leaders as well as "gradualist" German social-democrats (the forerunners of the "peaceful transition to socialism"), because he believed that despite their shortcomings they represented the irresistibly growing worker movement. "[F]inal victory is certain", Engels wrote shortly after his friend's death. The world expansion of capitalism was leading to the rising power of the working class. In that sense Marx was

a progressivist: he believed in a quasi-natural historical advance towards completion – worker and human emancipation.

This conception was directly related to how he perceived the content of communism and therefore of revolution.

From the Communist Manifesto to Capital, Marx left only scattered remarks about communism, sometimes giving us indirect insight by quoting others, like this illuminating extract from P.-Ed. Lemontey in Poverty of Philosophy:

"We are struck with admiration when we see among the Ancients the same person distinguishing himself to a high degree as a philosopher, poet, orator, historian, priest, administrator, general of an army. Our souls are appalled at the sight of so vast a domain. Each of us plants his hedge and shuts himself up in this enclosure. I do not know whether by this parcellation the world is en-

bodies, councils, collectives, circles, units… knowing that no problem is solved by getting rid of pejorative words like institutions.

Organisation means more than the all-powerful general meeting (which cannot go on permanently, or its participants would be doing nothing else), and more than an ad hoc body (set up merely for one single task). Whatever organisation there is has to give to give itself a minimum of fixed forms and provide for some distribution of tasks. Not everyone does everything at the same time, but everyone is expected to be able to do anything some time, from sweeping the floor to speaking in public.

No rule of conduct, no bylaw will ever be perfect safeguards from "institutionalisation": the most democratic organisation can become independent from the rest of the movement, perpetuate itself and even survive the demise of the revolution.

tune with the illusion of a force within capital but somehow untouched by it, a force that could grow and take over. Commons theory is communism made easy: aren't 99% of the world population dispossessed and ready to act? Safety in numbers. Old socialism has gone out of fashion with the decline of the Western labour movement, but a new-style reformism also promotes incremental steps to a better world, similar to the Gramscian strategy of the permeation of civil society.

In insurrectionary days, such views will be attractive because they will appear as practical and communal DIY options, and seem to offer a tangible lever for action, with no shortage of reasonable alternative suggestions.

POLITICS

The communising process by which the proletarians take their lives into their own hands is both spontaneous and organised in

larged, but I do know that man is belittled."

Marx hardly mentioned communism in Capital. He only elaborated on this theme in the Critique of the Gotha Programme (1875) where he expounded his scheme of labour vouchers for "the first phase of communist society". Basically, he wished for planned economic development under worker guidance and in the interest of the masses. The working class would build up to a critical mass, seize political power and replace bourgeois rule by an association of producers who would engage in a (non-communist) transition period necessary to create the conditions of communism.

Contrary to what his early writings envisaged – the abolition of work – Marx thought work would be completely different once everyone worked. When he wrote that work would become "not only a means of life but life's prime want", he was still aiming at a radical change of human existence, but

thought to achieve this by putting production at the centre.

The only way to go beyond work is for productive acts to be more than merely productive, for production to be part of life: then "life's prime want" will become the whole social activity. This is why we can speak of a non-economy.

LABOUR

In 1643, during the English Civil War, the parliamentarians were preparing to defend London against an attack by the King's army. Fortifications were built around London: "each day a different group of parishes and a different group of trades went and worked on the fortifications". According to a Scottish tailor, they included 8.000 "lusty" tailors, 7.000 watermen, 5.000 shoemakers, 3.000 porters in "white shirts", 1.000 oyster-wives, 3.000 felt-makers, fishmongers, coopers, 5.000 cordwainers and many oth-

boss by the banker, the woman banker by her husband, the sick husband by medical power, the coloured head of the clinic is discriminated against in the street by a racist wage-labourer, in an endless domination circle. Class and capital concepts have been so enlarged that they are now devoid of meaning. Capitalism is never addressed except as a big dispossessing system against which we ought to reclaim what used to be ours or what we are now communally and collaboratively producing.

Whereas traditional political reform has lost credibility, commons theory plays upon our desire for grassroots social change, and its appeal comes from its ability to resonate with effective piecemeal transformations worldwide. It presents the - now inevitable - limit of change as the ultimate objective of change. Commons theorists are popular because they paint reform in revolutionary colours : people veer to the most gratifying version of social change, the one more in

present society contains a “common”, a social wealth, a common practice: if we liberate this “social” element, we’ll liberate ourselves.

This conceptualisation misunderstands current struggles as a fight for the resurrection of former community ties or the extension of already existing ones. Yet when the Latin American inhabitants of a destitute neighbourhood mobilise against land privatisation, they may rely on old community links, but they are acting as proletarians who were driven out of the countryside and deprived of their livelihoods. They are now resisting capital, not defending past or re-emerging ways of life.

In so far as it is willing to admit exploitation as the fact of being forcibly put to work by a bourgeois for a profit, commons theory treats it as one among many levels of disempowerment and constraint. The white wage-labourer is exploited by his boss, the

ers. A continuous 18-mile long line of ditch and rampart linked twenty-third elaborate forts made of earth and timber, armed with cannons. This was the self-defence of labour allied with the bourgeoisie. The royal army in fact did not attack London, was later defeated and Charles II beheaded in 1649. Labour as a class was directly acting as a major back up in a democratic revolution.

It might seem that those bygone days are hardly relevant to us, but the 19th and 20th centuries provide ample evidence of genuine labour support for what turned out to be (successful or failed) democracy. Recent examples range from Poland’s Solidarnosc in the 1980’s to the Arab Spring. Worker insubordination and wildcatting often spark a social movement that later slips out of proletarian hands, and the reason cannot be a question of numbers: far from acting in an auxiliary capacity, the working class provides the bulk of the troops, but the workers exert mere countervailing pressure and

let themselves be channelled into rallying bourgeois demands.

By doing so, do the proletarians lose sight of their own interests? It all depends on what is meant by interests. Labour is the inevitable enemy of capital insofar as labour fights for higher wages and better working conditions. However it also has a substantial common stake with the bourgeois in the development of an economy which provides jobs and income. Getting rid of capitalism is not the sole interest of the proletarians. When they engage in collective bargaining, they are not mistaken or deceived: they have an objective advantage in trying to get as much as possible from the other side.

Something quite different is at stake when the labour/capital relation gets blocked because capital does not hire labour any more. This new situation opens up the possibility for the workers to do more than defend their condition as workers, it gives them the

of existence, plunged penniless into the money world and forced into precarious and low-paid wage-labour. Quite historically true. Except commons theory turns condition into definition: it reduces capital to deprivation, and logically its solution is to create a disownership society by reclaiming what was ours. Or is already ours: hi-tech service sector jobs are said to be virtually mutually and cooperatively managed, and in less developed areas many people are said to have kept solidarity and community values and habits. Capitalism is regarded as a loss of individual and collective control over ourselves, so let's regain control.

In New York, let's expand open-source activism into a full-blown sharing and meshing non-profit economy. In the Andes, let's develop the self-sustaining kinship units of the ayllu with its reciprocal obligation habits.

The linchpin in this theory is the idea that

In a time of troubles, when the impossible suddenly seems at hand, radical options co-exist with reformist ones, and distinctions between them are not obvious. Communisation will face the counteracting force of "alternativism": replacing social normality by alternative forms of life or lifestyle. For instance, dozens of moneyless schemes will be implemented and will change a lot but leave the essential: value as a ruling social mechanism.

One of the prominent obfuscators is already at work: the multifarious commons theory.

Its central plank is all about dispossession and repossession.

Commons theorists' critique of globalised privatisation reconstructs contemporary capitalism as a planetary modern version of the enclosures that were a condition of the rise of the capitalist system. Hundreds of millions are being cut off from their means

possibility to attack the capital/wage labour relationship.

The issue was irrelevant for Marx, who by and large equated the working class with the proletariat, and regarded the rise of the worker movement as the main factor and indeed the guarantee of a future successful proletarian revolution.

Is what is called worker identity a possible lever for communist assault on capitalism? Or is it only fit for claiming labour's share within capitalism?

"Worker" collective identity conflates a lot of conflicting elements. In the "we and them" or "we vs. them" opposition,them meant the bourgeois of course, also white collar labour, possibly union or party bureaucrats. It implied a self-recognition of factory workers as the creators of wealth, a belief in the dignity of labour, a rejection of intellectuals and a distrust of bourgeois "culture", but it also

came with a commitment to mass spontaneity.

Identity defines what we do, what we are, how we are defined by what we do and how we define ourselves. Individually and collectively. It is inevitable that those who work identify with their job to some extent, and consider fellow workers as similar to them. There is at least as much work identification among academics (whether Marxist, mainstream or critical) as on a factory shopfloor. Marx said one of the hallmarks of North American labour was a "complete indifference to the specific content of labour", an "ability to transfer from one branch to another". Yet what Marx called North American "variability" is no proof of a deeper critique of capitalism, more of a forced adaptation to having to move from one trade and workplace to another. Freewheeling nomads are not the (new) historical subject capable of making the revolution that the (old style) workers never attempted.

ing and eating.

"In communist society, productive activity will lose its strictly productive character." (A World Without Money)

Therefore the need to eat will change. For the malnourished, hunger equals pain, even more so because he knows he is likely to get no or too little food tonight: he is desperate to satisfy his hunger pangs, and has no time to delight in anticipation. For the person who is no longer afraid of going hungry, the waiting can be an added pleasure, like foreplay is an enjoyable part of lovemaking. " (..) why shouldn't hunger be enjoyment as well, like desire during the preliminaries to lovemaking, which is actively involved in the satisfaction of the lovers' need?" (B. Astarian) Gastronomy, or gastrosophy to use Fourier's word, is a lot more than eating.

OBFUSCATION

the power to hire and fire the members of the other class and put them to work for their own benefit. Work gives the money to rent or buy a lodging. The out-of-work lives in want.

If property breaks down, the now perfectly normal fear of not having – going hungry or sleeping in the rain - fades away. Obviously this does not mean that everyone will inhabit a palace if he should wish to. It means need is no longer a synonym for want. Desires are not all or immediately fulfilled, but they are no longer cut off from fulfilment. Today producing (a dwelling or food) is separate from consuming: first, we have to get money by wage-labour, then we spend it to get what we need. (This is why handicraft and gardening are so popular: they are one of the few ways of being personally creative.) Though communisation will not turn everyone into a builder and gardener, building a house or growing vegetables will no longer be productive work separate from inhabit-

It has become commonplace to speak about overlapping boundaries and fragmented liquid identities. Certainly they are. We can also assume that the Bangladeshi textile assembly line operator associates herself less with her job than the British Telecom software engineer. Probably, but that is not the core problem.

Identity is neither a fulcrum nor an obstacle.

A long time ago, wobblies used to joke that the "I.W.W." letters stood for"I won't work", while of course they were developing worker struggles. There is more to it than a play on words. Nothing can warrant an automatic link between the condition of the worker (employed, semi-employed, on the dole or jobless for life), her/his collective endeavour to improve her/his lot (in or out of a workplace) and the social revolution that will do away with work. This contradiction we cannot dodge. Communist insurrection will have to solve it.

MONEY

During the 1934 Asturian rising, in La Felguera, a small town with 4.000 workers, and a CNT stronghold, the people abolished money. When offered the keys of the banks, they refused: only one company was raided. (Some neighbouring towns took or accepted the money, though.) The vouchers issued by a Distribution Committee were not an account of labour-time, but a way of organising access to supplies, with a ration system and allocation by family size. When the Felguera people had to buy sheep from Extremadura, however, money was temporarily brought back.

Burnett Bolloten deserves to be quoted at length: "In many communities money for internal use was abolished, because, in the opinion of Anarchists, "money and power are diabolical philtres, which turn a man into a wolf, into a rabid enemy, instead of into a brother." "Here in Fraga [a small town in Aragon], you can throw banknotes into the

It is not enough to emphasise the relativity-of needs in time and space, nor to pinpoint their artificiality, to oppose sobriety to excess and natural pleasures to mistaken pastimes. The foundation of the concept is to be addressed.

Today, need has a negative connotation: it is a near synonym for lack: what I don't have and would like to have, and the gap between the two is said to be as natural as the unavoidable reality that you can't have sunny weather all the time. In fact there is more at play here than nature. Nobody expects every desire to be fulfilled. It is hunger and homelessness we are talking about, and these are social realities.

Some have a private home while others sleep in the street. Some are very rich and own a lot more than most. True, but inequality is an effect, not a cause.We live in a class society. The bourgeois have a monop-
oly over the means of production, therefore

than risk being shot by a police bullet. Rioting is not a good meal ticket for the hungry prole. Rioters wanted and achieved more than bread : they became part of a fighting community. The media term food riot is short-sighted: it brings the situation down to an unorthodox economic event when demand meets supply, except the consumer has no money to buy the commodity so he tries to get it by force.

It is not a matter of empty stomachs aiming at being fed, but of creating social relations with fellow proles. The insurgents' first need is to come together to arm themselves with whatever weapons are available. Only in extreme cases do men and women want to eat only to stay alive, and it is in these cases, starving in a concentration camp for instance, that social bonds are the most disconnected. Otherwise, the first human need is the need for another human being: the theoretical difficulty is todivest this principle of its usual idealist mind-set.

street," ran an article in a Libertarian paper, "and no one will take any notice. Rockefeller, if you were to come to Fraga with your entire bank account you would not be able to buy a cup of coffee. Money, your God and your servant, has been abolished here, and the people are happy." In those Libertarian communities where money was suppressed, wages were paid in coupons, the scale being determined by the size of the family. Locally produced goods, if abundant, such as bread, wine, and olive oil, were distributed freely, while other articles could be obtained by means of coupons at the communal depot. Surplus goods were exchanged with other Anarchist towns and villages, money being used only for transactions with those communities that had not adopted the new system."

Money has always been viewed – rightly – as a symbol and instrument of the ruling classes. The rich is the one who can exploit you. Money and oppression are inseparable: "I

am a piece of paper. I control your life." Although somehow unrelated to the material reality of life, money dominates us and true freedom implies getting rid of it. In the Asturian rising, the end of traditional respect for money signified a deep break with bourgeois order.

What to do with money?

Mostly, when insurrections have had time to develop, they have promoted mutualist forms of trade, non-coercitive co-operation and exchange, and kept money in one form or other as a necessary distribution instrument of goods which do not exist in abundance.

In 1922, Errico Malatesta opposed the bourgeois use of money, whereby banks speculate and bosses exploit, to people's control over money, which prevents accumulating and hiring labour:

The assertion seems indisputable: there is so much to do, and often the first thing that comes to mind is hunger: the underfed or starving billion. So it is a matter of urgency to set up an efficient supply and demand world food production and distribution system.

No-one denies the mass reality of hunger. Food deprivation has not been eradicated since 1946 when Josué de Castro wrote the first edition of his Geography of Hunger.

Let's go back to the outbreak of insurrections.

Hunger is indeed present. When Cairene proletarians took to the street as they did in 2008 because bread was unaffordable or unavailable, feeding oneself and one's family was of course an incentive. But if eating, and therefore saying alive, had been their main driving force, they could have looked for safer ways of finding or receiving food

non-accounting is more fundamental than gratuity alone, provided that the nature of this activity for which there is no accountancy is better defined." (B. Astarian) This is what communisation is about.

NON-ECONOMY

While they disagree on everything else, nearly all social theories share one common starting point: every society has to match needs and resources. Therefore the social solution is to find the best coordinated system of assessing needs, allocating products and services, and regulating implementation.

Common sense sometimes is our most deceptive ally: it hammers in the idea that after defeating the State, we must re-start production in order to fulfil real and pressing needs. Not in a capitalist way, of course: we must self-organise an economy with no boss, no profit, no value accumulation.

"Money is a powerful means of exploitation and oppression; but it is also the only means (..) to regulate production and distribution (..) rather than concerning oneself with the abolition of money, one should seek a way to ensure that money truly represents the useful work performed by its possessors."

For the Italian anarchist, "superabundance" is a myth, so choices have to be made, and a fair labour time-count will regulate the circulation of goods from one sector to another.

Other schemes suggest the use of money, not between individuals, only between production units, to adjust the use and allocation of resources. Since a house is made of very different components such as bricks, pipes, wood and labour, it might seem logical to plan the building by quantifying what is common to all elements.

At the other end of the political spectrum,

moderate reformers advocate a "credit economy" based on real value contrary to the present false value of money. Money would only function as a means of payment, and circulate without accumulating. "Local Exchange Trading Systems" imply a recording of time spent, i.e. of labour cost, but participants believe it cannot be or become exploitative, since it stays only within the community of LETS members. Similar plans wish for goods to be free if they are abundant (inexpensive, in other words). Otherwise, priority access is to be established by common agreement decided upon by a local committee elected by the neighbourhood, like a school run by the school board. Democratic money, in other words. Other schemes are already implemented: local currencies that enable people to buy and sell, usually on the small scale of a town and for a limited range of items and services.

These projects give the participants an impression of regaining some control over their lives. Paradoxically, one of the reasons of their popularity is the fact that money is everywhere now, compared to the 1950's when few working class people had a check book. It is so all-pervading that it becomes de-materialised. Most payments are now electronic in Sweden and soon modern regions or countries will live cashfree: virtualisation is freedom. The omnipotence of money allows it to adapt even to self-managed anti-establishment forms. None of the reform plans mentioned above is likely to compete with "mainstream" money, but the deficiencies of the financial world are bringing about a whole range of grassroots ways of managing "value": local currencies, vouchers, systems inspired by self-limited, self-regulated tribal barter, or peasant-craft barter.

All these plans fail to understand money as the commodity to which all other commodities are related, and the substance of which is value, i.e. labour-time accounting: "(..)