Updated 2006-09-03

(XX = facts/references need to be completed)

Political Undergrounds –

Can Raging Riots and Everyday Theft become Politics of Normality?

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This is an investigation in a neglected possibility: Is there a potentiality that our contemporary and suppressed "political underground" might contribute, in a similar fashion as earlier in history, to the democratisation of society? This chapter discusses some of the submerged, non-recognised and disrespected forms of politics and problematise prevalent dichotomies of political normality. Initially the neglected politics as resistance is outlined. Then it is argued that earlier criminalised forms of underground movement resistance, e.g. 19th century suffragettes' urban riots and workers movements' unlawful strikes and street-barricades – shows that frequently "un-civilised" norm-breakers become "civilised" norm-creators, some even turning into the new establishment. After this overview the chapter focus on two contemporary challenges to traditional politics; the political street-battles of crowds and the everyday resistance of unorganised individuals (exemplified with "theft"). The chaotic and destructive riot is possible to understand as an angry no-nonsense shadow civil society, communicating a political drama in the name of the dispossessed, enforcing limits on political-economy colonisation of urban public space. While using violent means in perceived self-defence, it actively constructs a popular alternative to elitist armed rebellion. The disguised and individualised everyday resistance is possible to understand as a non-explicit yet political response to a needs-industry's capitalisation on identities and life-styles. In a process where citizens are reduced into consumers by flexible network corporations within a globalised economy, the everyday resistance by individuals can be described as not only accommodating political repertoires according to structures of the contemporary political economy, but as engaging in a political battle on the very frontline of contemporary market-

expansion: the (re)construction of individual life-style. In a concluding discussion it is argued that labels like "destructive" and "undemocratic" are themselves expressions of the political struggles they describe: historical battles between social forces which decides who and what belong to the "underground" or the "normality". Ignoring the reasonable and symphatic interpretation is by itself a political expression of the present "overground".

1: *"The political underground"*

Contemporary globalisation does change traditional forms of political opposition as expressed in transnational social movements and their organised forms of protest (e.g. Vinthagen 2002; 2003). But there are even less obvious forms of resistance and politics. Resistance to established power structures is a non-accepted voice of politics, part of what we might call "the political underground". Or with the words of one of the worlds most seasoned scholars on collective action, Charles Tilly; we are talking about that "contentious politics" which is not likely to be prescribed, neither tolerated, but tend to be forbidden by the regime (Tilly 2003: 44-55). We refer to an opposition which not accept the established rules of oppositional articulation, or which is not interested to get legal protection or legitimising pardon from a ruling system of value standards establishing the hegemonic view of "political correct". That kind of politics is per definition in conflict with "politics". The "underground" resistance is in conflict with the public and accepted form of power struggle of a certain society in a certain historical period.

But here is a fundamental conceptual problem. We need to acknowledge that the political underground consists of more than resistance, e.g. avoidance of engaging power relations and the "non-political" disguise of the political. As a subconscious, hidden or only potentially political field of politics, it becomes resistant to strict definitions. The "underground" needs to be related to what is constructed as the "overground"; the "normal", visible, established or self-evident "truth". The underground will always be a matter of non-accepted subcultures, the political cultures of "Others", different lives and suppressed groups – the naming of the non-nameable.

Still, I will try to analyse some aspects of the contemporary political underground. I am interested to expand on the meaning of *trespassing* of structured social space (in the form of "riots") and *transgression* of legitimate normative order (in the form of "theft") as political methods, which in my understanding are central features of underground oppositional politics. The labels "riot" or "theft" are usual accusations, not objective descriptions. Here these degrading labels are used in a polemic sense while the activities behind them are problematised

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during the discussion.[1] Occupations of houses by homeless are an example of trespassing and punk culture a kind of transgression.

The angry no-nonsense shadow-civil society that became visible during the "the battle" of the European Union Summit in Gothenburg 2001, is conventionally seen as apolitical, destructive, undemocratic and criminal: the nightmare of a "civilised" understanding of politics.[2] On the contrary it is possible to understand these riot-makers as a long-standing and highly politicised movement, dating back to at least the 1960ies. This riot-making transeuropean *antiauthoritarian autonomous movement* is also one of the more organised articulations which help me to understand a lot less visible form of underground politics, everyday form of resistance. But here I also make extensive use of Internet-based *digital movements*, loosely connected or co-inspiring individuals and groups who use the information technology to advance their interests.

This means that the focus is on two limited forms of underground political expressions: the illegal, informally organised, anonymous/secret, confrontational and sometimes violent political "riot"; and the non-articulated, non-organised, individualised, non-confrontational or disguised political opposition within a late modern society which among other things use "theft".

But firstly I will discuss "resistance" and make a short historical description of the political underground in general. The historiography serves to show how in some respect underground politics are not-yet recognized but normal, sensible and responsible, nevertheless presumed un-normal, irrational and irresponsible forms of protest. Through a number of sociological concepts, like "life politics" (Giddens 1995), "impression management" (Goffman 1974), "in-"/"out-definitions" (Mathiesen 1978; 1982), "hidden transcripts" and "everyday resistance" (Scott 1985; 1990?XX), I will be able to problematise the ambivalent relations between taken-for-granted *dichotomies* like counter-culture vs. establishment, power vs. image, public vs. private, democratic vs. undemocratic and alternative vs. resistance.

2: Understanding "resistance"

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[1] Even though some political activity is accused of being theft it does not mean it is. E..g. is copying of copy-right protected material, according to a ruling by the US Supreme Court 1985, not possible to classify as "theft". Thus, it is not likely that digital downloading of films and music on the Internet is theft – even if it might be criminal. Other activities which we will discuss as activities of the political underground are indeed also legally classified as theft, e.g. shopliftning. In the same sense is "riot" a term regularly used by those who dissaprove of that political activity or who unreflectively use official labels.

[2] During the EU-summit protests police officers and party politicians described riot-makers interchangeably as; "hooligans", "looking for a fight", "trouble-makers", "unserious", "not interested in the issues", "ignorant", "like violent football fans", "terrorists" or similar.

"Resistance" is commonly understood as singular; a destructive and violent rejection – and "resistance movements" as underground military opposition to rulers. But why would not resistance as other similar social activities be complex, productive and dynamic (Hardt & Negri 2004; Lilja 2000; Vinthagen 2005)? If we by "resistance" mean the obstruction, disruption or undermining of power by acts of underdogs, such power subversion is not exceptional or unsocial but a "part of everyday life in most cultures" (Turiel 2003) and "immanent facts of social life" (Singh 2001: 222). Resistance does not have to be solely a matter of rejection; it might very well be linked to "struggles for collective rights and more inclusive form of democracy" (Harvey 2001). Even aggressive resistance and riots can sometimes be understood as an appropriate and effective defence of genuine life forms, communicative rationality and the autonomy of civil society (Katsiaficas 1997; Piven and Cloward 1979). During 1966-68 USA lived through nearly 300 racial "hostile outbursts", yet these riots played a key role in creating "a reactive pattern of favourable federal action" meeting the interests of blacks (McAdam 1999: 223, 227, 182). Although the violent resistance of the rioters might have been unwanted and destructive, somehow their resistance did play a constructive role.[3] According to Castells (1997) hopes of future "project identities" develops from present "resistance identities".

Resistance is related to power, and power is possible to understand as relational and multiple in networks of productive interactions (Foucault 1980). Even if e.g. a movement wants to "throw out" a Transnational Company (TNC) from a country and neither the TNC nor the movement want to be involved in political agreements, resistance sometimes seem to produce agreements simply because existing power relations force all pragmatic parties to compromise. One example is the international standards created of the World Dam Commission which in 1998 brought together all stakeholders in large dam projects after resistance by displaced and affected social groups threatened some major dam projects. Another is the struggle against the Narmada dam system in India which resulted, after the withdrawal of the World Bank and several TNCs, in a unique resettlement scheme in one Indian state (Sangvai 2000).

Resistance is here seen as relational, being part of a complex web of simultaneous and contradictory alliances, accommodation and rejections; sometimes producing agreements and inclusive forms of democracy or at other times isolation, violence and polarisations. Even the state itself manages demands within and beyond the country through a social order which is

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[3] Even though more than 150 people were killed and thousands wounded during these riots, McAdam (1999) is not making the necessary difference between the violence of the resistance and the resistance itself (which might be done by other means). It is an altogether different question if the *violence* of the rioters created progressive policy change or not, and even if it did, in this case and in some other cases, if the violence was *necessary*.

regulated by "ruling elite's and social forces' resistance to and/or alliances with, transnational capital" (Chin 2000).

There is a need to understand the dynamics, conditions and variations of resistance to power. Generally social science focus on understanding the world order, nation state systems, capitalism or other such parts of established power structures.

The "other side" or the "underground" of power is resistance. Knowledge of society in general and especially societal change needs to take processes of resistance into account. Michel Foucault has revolutionised power studies with his work on discourse, truth regimes, discipline and the micro physics of power production and his emphasis on the fact that wherever power exists there is also resistance – but even Foucault focused on understanding power, not resistance (Vinthagen 2005).

Within social movement research the focus is on explicit protest activities which are only one aspect of resistance repertoires. Conflict resolution studies investigate the role of mechanisms which contribute to settle disputes, not the conflict dynamic of resistance as such. Studies of revolution focus on understanding the general social and historical structures contributing to system change and power strategies of violence (Kaplan 1973. Foran 1997. Skocpol 1994. Tilly 1978). The understanding of how resistance – i.e. the undermining of power relations – contribute to social change is simply poor. While "power" is a contested concept "resistance" is often reduced to "counter-power". With a simplified understanding of resistance it becomes difficult to distinguish between different forms, ideologies and effects of resistance towards different kinds of power relations, e.g. economic, political or cultural. Then, movements' continuous experimentation and creative invention of new forms of resistance become even less possible to understand.[4]

Depending on our understanding of "power" different forms of resistance becomes relevant for the study of social change. In general there is a wide spectrum of perspectives on "power"; monolith, consent or plural, with different variants of emphasis on ideology, economic relations, technology, political-bureaucracy, socio-culture, conceptual-image-making or biological-embodiment. The articulation of "resistance" varies in a similar fashion. It might be violent or nonviolent, confrontational or circumventing, deconstructing or reconstructing, refusing or affirming, productive or hindering, individual or collective, accommodating or enforcing,

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[4] One interesting example is the "Critical Mass" which is an anti-car-culture movement from USA which merges the traditional demonstration and the road blockade into a huge mass of cycling non-organised individuals that on a certain time and place fills the roads being on a "bicycling tour". Since there is no law against bicycling when there is a lot of others doing the same, this explicitly declared "tour" is a non-demonstration which at the same time is a de facto demonstration or blockade. This amorphous in-between-ness or "living blockade" creates legal problems for the courts, e.g. in New York City where the legal situation despite a decade of critical mass is undecided.

materialistic or idealistic. The political context of resistance might also vary, e.g. in liberal democracies, authoritarian regimes or disintegrating societies.

Resistance to power is poorly understood, even more so when it comes to constructing types of resistance. General categories like armed resistance (rebellions, revolution etc.) or legal protest (lobbying, demonstrations, vigils and such) are assumed to cover the field.

Besides being a specific phenomenon – the undermining of power – which articulations varies extensively as seen above, resistance is also, like all social phenomena, formed by general social factors and its historic context. Empirically resistance will be shaped by a complex combination of different features. Resistance of all above types will entail specific tactical means, aesthetic articulations, concepts, images, symbols, historical traditions and ideologies; i.e. its specific *repertoire* which combine forms of discourse, action and organisation. In distinct ways every resistance movement will construct its own understanding of the frustrations which nurtures the mobilisation, its own collective understanding of a "we" in relation to an equally constructed "them", through their own use of movement specific *interpretative frameworks* (Johnston & Klandermans 1995). The production of resistance also involves a construction of *resources*; skills, technology, money, commitment and knowledge, which makes confrontations possible, as well as the accommodation to prevalent and national *political opportunity structures* which simultaneously enable and restrict forms of resistance, and the dynamic interaction with other actors in *political processes* (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). And, of course, resistance, as other social expressions, is related to *historic processes of change*, e.g. colonialism, modernism or globalisation. The historic macro change is made visible through the micro cycles of movement mobilisations, with its particular wave-pattern of progress and stagnation, e.g. in the first (from the mid 19th century), second (mid 20th century), or third (the 1990ies) wave of the world feminist movement (Castells 1997).

Resistance is not by itself "evil" or "destructive", as well as not intrinsically "good", "progressive" or "democratic". We have to acknowledge that not only do fascist or religious fundamentalist resistance exist but are common examples of how people try to undermine established power relations. Still, the research interest of this chapter is on the *potentially* democratic development arising from certain effects or elements of some resistance. It is assumed that this possible outcome exists (and that resistance groups with explicit anti-democratic ideologies less likely facilitate democratisation).

3: The political underground as the future "overground"

Since the 80ies an "explosion" of action groups with aspirations to deepen democracy has been observed throughout the global south (Haynes 1997). And, civic associations in general have been proposed as a key factor behind democratic development (Putnam 1996). But it is then the polite, public and civilised expression of demands and needs in accordance with hegemonic liberal western values which counts. That resistance which challenges hegemonic values becomes more controversial. Social movements' resistance against mega-development projects – e.g. when tribal groups blockade construction work at the large Narmada dam in India – are often regarded as a problem for necessary development, modernisation and democratic governance (Sethi 1993: 138), as a localist search for autonomy by "claiming exclusion" (Rist 1997: 244) or as attempted "deglobalisation". The defamation of current resistance seems to be a universal phenomenon. In a historical perspective it is normal that resistance is regarded as reckless, anti-social, non-political, destructive and a threat to society, and is repressed through police surveillance, state violence and punishments – even resistance by those who later become the guardians of the society and whose norms become sanctioned by law. A prime example is Christianity which after suffering 300 years of violent prosecution became the compulsory religion of the Roman Empire.

Also within academic circles contemporary resistance is marginalised. Some even define resistance as necessarily sectarian:

> "High-risk activism, violent or non-violent, amplifies the sense of 'we' in a political neo-sect. High-risk activism involves per definition physical *confrontation* with a political adversary, and the processes of confrontation which are enacted in the struggle result in 'moments of communion', or highly charged moments of emotional intensity, which weld the group together through processes of fusion." (Peterson 1997: 153)

By the same logic even Greenpeace becomes a neo-sect, yes virtually all oppositional groups using politics of confrontation becomes sectarian. This kind of conscious marginalisation of non-established politics by academics through the use of derogating labels is more embarrassing than the regular and expected bashing done by the media or politicians, at least if we expect academics to strive for a critical understanding of society, not one which is just serving and confirming the rulers of today.

During history there have always existed forms of submerged politics and marginal counter-cultures. Some of them are being put as the out-cast, marginal and suppressed by hegemonic elites, while some chose excommunication voluntary, interpreting it as a sign of their truth or radical politics. A few sometimes move to the surface and become the establishment and the new

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normality. The 1850ies "underground railroad" which liberated slaves from the southern states of US by bringing them to the north, the suffragettes in UK and the "underground resistance movements" of the occupied European states during WWII, are today celebrated heroes of freedom and democracy, but then they were often seen in similar fashion as our contemporary underground; criminal, uncivilised, undemocratic or reckless youth behaviour.

Afterwards, in clear hindsight, we know that transnational movements' resistance sometimes have contributed to a fundamental democratic change, e.g. the 19th century abolition of slavery movement (Keck & Sikkink 1998). Or the trade union movement which can be regarded as key to the creation of the social partnership model in Western Europe, a historical and national model for movement-facilitated dialogue between governments, corporations and social groups, developed in contexts of economic need but made possible through a combined strategy of effective resistance, negotiated compromise and the forming of new counter-hegemonic blocs challenging old elites (Abrahamsson XX; Appelquist 2001. Velasco 2000; XX). The creation of the welfare state was made possible through an alliance between some of the very same social forces who earlier where in fierce battle during the 19th century.

One key mechanism which decides if an oppositional activity will be recognized as valid politics is the process of *in/out-definition* done by the media and political establishment (Mathiesen 1978; 1982). Border management is essential for protecting what counts as political normality. The same kind of act might in certain situations and depending on issues or who did it, be defined as "inside" the border of normal society or as "outside". Despite repeated democratisation through underground groups' challenge of the established overground, repression, ridiculing and marginalisation seems to be the typical response. A blatant example is that governments, which per definition monopolize the legitimate use of violence, tend to dismiss oppositional groups who uses violence, refusing even to talk to their representatives as long as they do not give up their weapons. This is the case even with the strongest military power on earth, the US, who will uphold an (official) policy of not negotiating with terrorists. The same definition power is expressed through political groups' different use of the labels "freedom-fighters" vs. "terrorists" in describing the same type of activities or groups. And the power of the in/out-definition is used as well on peaceful activities of the underground, e.g. with the moral panics created in media against youths who perform mega-dramas in public space ("live") or do role-plays in private homes, acting out their joy, fantasies and imaginative politics. Suddenly these youth cultures are described as criminal and violent threats to society. Those underground groups who are interested have counter-measures and strategies to manage this regular construction of the outcast, e.g. internal discipline or respectable intellectuals as spokes-persons.

Even in a globalising world of information technology the power of in/out-definitions exists since the struggle between established and competing social forces continues at a global level. Transnational mobilisations of social movements articulate needs and demands, trying to influence traditional and national political structures as well as global actors like TNC and multilateral regimes (e.g. the World Bank) to such an extent that "complex multilateralism" describes present global governance (O'Brien et al 2000). It is not possible to understand the world as simply an international system anymore, controlled solely by competing nation states. Other actors, and among them are counter cultures, social movements, oppositional networks and NGOs; also construct the present world order of today.

Still, there is a lack of knowledge of movements' attempts at creating new arenas and democratic mechanisms between conflicting parties of contemporary global change processes. It is even less known just how vital social movements are for democratisation, even when they occasionally use violent means (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001; Giugni, McAdam & Tilly 1998; Tilly 2004).

4: Globalisation of resistance

Contemporary movements' combination of *personalization of politics* and *politicising of the world* creates a globalisation of politics: simultaneously expressed by movement convergence and struggles on a "global arena" and *political maximalism* in the globalised local cultural sphere (Abrahamsson 2003. Vinthagen 2002). By turning not just work, national independence, citizens' rights, democracy and redistribution into politics, as the social movements of the 19th century, but also making traditionally "apolitical" everyday life-forms and "private" life-style into political arenas, they *pierce* the micro-world. It is nowadays a political question e.g. what food you eat, what clothes you wear, who makes the dishes at home, with whom and how you make sex. Nothing is apolitical. Politics is everything. This expansion of politics is often misunderstood by professional politicians as being apolitical, because it goes together with movements' mistrust and opposition of traditional party politics or trade unions. By linking personal and local politics with global questions they are *broadening* traditional nation-oriented politics, embracing the macro-world (Gills 2000).

Unlike classic movements they do not typically form ideologies or political parties with holistic views. The single-issue-orientation of movements is making them competent spokes, who by self-supporting work, specialisation and even research become skilled alternative experts and

creators of new cosmologies (Eyerman & Jamison 1991). But particularism and isolation endangers if they do not network with movements oriented around other issues. In "globalisation from below" or the global "movement of movements" and the open space of World Social Forum, it is exactly that issue-networking which is happening. Broad alliances of issue specialized groups replace the role of parties. At the same time, utopian social change is made visible through the construction of alternative social structures in economic, cultural and political sectors, e.g. through the creation of new "movement societies" on occupied land (Vinthagen 2005). Their celebration of a world which contains "several worlds" simultaneously contradict Thatcher's infamous "There is no alternative"-speech and the neoliberal hegemony.[5]

These movements combine a wide range of political methods. On a practical level this *combinatory repertoire* involves boycott, economic sabotage, symbolic confrontations, judicial struggles, the nurturing of their own media structure, development of alternative technology and networking. The system-abiding methods like e.g. lobbying are functional for existing world/national systems since it helps a system adapt to occasional system imbalance and correct malfunctions that otherwise would risk becoming a threat to the survival of the system. System-critical methods like disruptive direct action are usually treated as illegal acts, and met with counter-reactions, since they break system rules and block system functions.

These plural approaches to movement activity are sometimes *mutually enforcing* while at other times *contradictory* (Vinthagen 2002). The functions of methods depend on issues, situations and what kind of system and regime is opposed. Since different groups have different priorities about what needs to be done and what methods are legitimate or effective, the movement mobilisation in civil society is reconstructed according to constantly shifting alliances and conflicts; expressed in issue-campaigns and "rainbow coalitions" (Thörn 1997).

One of the more controversial political expressions is the "riot" or "street-battle".[6]

4. 1: A War drama which defends communities and liberates local space?

The autonomous movement is anti-authoritarian, socialist and striving for self-organised social institutions (De Autonome 1994; Geronimo 1990).[7] The groups are often anarchist but always,

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[5] Her neoliberal thesis *in extremis* stating that "There is no such thing as a society, only individuals" is similarily de facto contradicted on a global level.
[6] The term "riot" is often used by authorities or media (Tilly 2003: XX), but also by activists (Situationist International (2003 [1965]), especially the ones here discussed (cf Do or Die 1999; 2000; 2003).

might as well be left-radicals, social ecologists, radical feminists or anti-fascist, even communists (AFA 19997; Dielemans & Quistbergh 2002; Do or Die 2003). They exist more or less throughout the western world and started historically in Europe. The autonomous movement started before and around the antiauthoritarian counter-culture of 1968, inspired from the radical political art movement "The Situationist International" (Knabb 1981) and "autonomia" developments among working class in Italy (Katsiaficas 1997; Hardt & Negri 2004). With the movement of house occupations in the 1980s they got a new momentum (Kriesi 1995:115, 120; Mikkelsen 2002), in clashes with neo-fascists in the 1990s and again with the global struggles against multilateral regimes (Vinthagen 2002). Already during the 1980s the autonomous groups made resistance to neoliberal globalisation (e.g. the World Bank in Berlin 1988?XX) and thus, together with the "IMF-riots" in poor countries in the south, prefigured the global wave of resistance made visible since Seattle 1999 against WTO.

Violence is seen within the movement as a necessary "birth giver" of social change but one which needs to be subordinated to political judgement and which is a continuous authoritarian risk and moral problem, and violence is, in a Fanonian sense, a necessary part of "self-liberation" (Geronimo 1990:207-211)

The Situationist International plays an important role, not least with their praise for riots "transcend the spectacle" of commercial and dehumanized life (cf Situationist International 2003 [1965]). Situationist *trespassing* methods of "detourné", i.e. "the rearranging of popular sign-systems in order to produce new meanings", and "dérive", .i.e. "a short meandering walk determined by one's desires:" are all important inspirations for the autonomous movement (Thompson & Scholette 2004:16). Working under cover, anonymous or in disguise, is a necessary tactic when trespassing. *Interventionism* is a closely associated political art movement which "points to new forms of resistance in the age of an increasingly privatized and visualized cultural sphere" which "provide tools for engagement" or "opportunity" (Thompson & Scholette 2004:21-22).

The *antiauthoritarian resistance tradition of direct action* is integrated in otherwise peaceful global confrontations between multilateral regimes and transnational social movements. This direct action approach involves attempts to effect the aspired change through indigenous means, bypassing (representative) elites (Wall 1999:155-158). It is a tradition developed since 19th-century anarchism and the antiauthoritarian movements of 1968 (Heinemann 1995). It encompasses reformist and revolutionary aspirations as well as defensive reactions and offensive trends, attempts at temporary or permanent change. It ranges from building direct democracy to

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7 In Sweden the more than one hundred years old anarchist journal *Brand* has played a key role in articulating "autonomous" perspectives, at least since the late 1980s.

facilitating riots, burning down Shell gas stations, tearing down fences at prison camps for refugees or sabotaging the meat industry, as well as liberating entire streets or city-centres from cars, racist manifestations and multinational business.[8] The urban city streets and private life-styles are their turf, their preferred battleground. It is a kind of *Do It Yourself culture* (Wall 1999:159-162) – an IKEA-model of politics where you make the wished-for changes yourself.[9] The uniting feature of this multitude of actions and groups, I suggest, is the direct change of something in society according to activists' own values/ideas/needs, where perceived problems are directly redeemed or possibilities realised. Direct actionists are per definition not interested in asking for official permission, and are usually not keen on discussing the merits of the actions with elites, only with other movement activists. This is the dramatisation of a partial revolution, the direct action drama. The drama is created through the direct effects of the actions, i.e. through not being just gestures or protests. The direct action used during confrontations with police is a kind of *anonymous* (wearing balaclavas, evasion of identification) and *violent* (with stones, sticks, petrol-bombs etc.) direct action, i.e. political rioting. Their violence is typically a kind of "broken negotiation": a peaceful demonstration that develop into a street-battle. Typically a peaceful activity is done with a preparation for violence and the violence will be used if seen as suitable in the tactical situation. It might be at a different place in town (as in Seattle), side by side together with (as in Prague), or before/after peaceful demonstrations (as in Göteborg). The street-battles will depending on the dynamic develop into "scattered attacks", "opportunism" (e.g. looting), or if more experienced activists take the initiative, even "coordinated destruction" (Tilly 2003: 14-15, 145-149, Chapter 8).

These groups would not emphasise the dramaturgy of their actions, but instead revolutionary strategy, direct effect and tactical necessity. Still a dramaturgy is constructed from the symbolism of the (partially) direct effects. Similarly to normal everyday interaction in society (Goffman 1974), social movements also construct and manage impressions and thus their actions become possible to read as dramaturgy (Benford & Hunt 1995).

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[8] The direct action tradition is cultivated in diverse but similar movement cultures, like e.g. the Animal Liberation Front in England, the Autonomen in Germany, the Black Bloc in US, Ya Basta! in Spain, and Disobedienti in Italy. Reclaim The Street (or in Sweden, Reclaim The City) has at several occasions during the 1990ies mobilised mass actions mainly in England where street parties with thousands of dancing people have occupied motorways or city-centres, thus in direct action turning an environmental problem or commercial site into a free and public space of desire.

[9] The genious business model of IKEA letting *the costumer* herself make the furniture she bought, only supplying the map and equipment for a price accessable for the commoner, is directly translated into the *political model* of direct action, where the citizen herself is equiped with accessable tools to affect desired effects by herself. (But historically speaking it is of course the other way around; IKEA, which is developed in the mid 20th century, is translating the political direct action model!)

They construct a kind of street War drama with serious consequences for all involved, still it would be a mistake to understand them as terrorists or soldiers (see Cuevaz 2000), since they are a historical part of the "new left" of the 60ies who criticise orthodox left wing authoritarianism, militarism and social democratic reformism. While organising solidarity activities and support for the rights of some imprisoned terrorists/soldiers, distributing information about ongoing armed resistance, and displaying occasional romanticism of armed rebellion, they are *themselves* not using arms.[10] Despite having, in their perspective, *good reasons*, after decades of state repression and violent confrontations with police forces – and *easy access* to criminal networks selling arms, they are still not armed.[11] Assuming that the history of 40 years of transeuropean movement of autonomous mobilisation is rooted in some intelligible logic, we have to conclude they are non-armed resisters for a political reason. They display an awareness of their weakness relative to the police and a conscious and collective practice not to arm the movement with military equipment.[12]

In a drama perspective this strategy is perfectly logical since real war is not their project, the *War drama* is: enacting a social war against the unrecognised war against the poor. They want to appeal to the oppressed, marginalised and radicals and inspire them to a kind of popular uprising in the urban space. The UK "Poll Tax Rebellion" stands out as a symbol of what they strive for, riots in connection to a very popular issue that mobilise millions in the movement and thousands in the riots, and which leads to a victory against the regime (Burns 1992). The Poll Tax was proposed by Thatcher and was a kind of flat tax which was connected to the voting right and thus endangered poor peoples' democratic participation.

In an unorthodox interpretation of the biblical story of David as the street warrior and Goliath as the militarised police, we could imagine the inferior but righteous David bravely challenging the giant oppressor Goliath. Through intelligence, technique and the help of God (the subjugated people, the "multitude") David could win. The drama is an appeal to all of us to support David in his righteous but seemingly impossible struggle against the illegitimate and

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[10] At the most they might develop into a kind of "youth branch of terrorism", recruiting and training future terrorists, which according to some observers has been the case in West-Germany during the 1980s. But that also depens on regimes' tactical repression or facilitating measures and degrees of integration or marginalisation within the wider established and peaceful oppositional groups.

[11] The access to criminal networks exists through territorial proximity and certain but limited common concerns as criminalisation of drugs, degrading prison conditions, police violence etc., not because there is a *political* commonality. The autonomous movement is anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist etc. to such a degree that they are incompatible with profit-geared, amoral and traditional criminality.

[12] When someone during the preparation of the street battle in Prague raised the question of what they should do if they did succeed to break trough the police line and get to the building of the IMF-summit – the gathered group of black bloc activists laughed and went on planning the tactics of street battle (according to one interviewed member of the preparation). It was simply obvious they would only *try* to get through but not succeed more than temporarily. Their magazines regularly criticise not only reformist lobbying and nonviolence but as well the elitist dynamic of leftist terrorism.

mighty global empire: the political economy World Order and its guardians (the police/military and teachers/social workers). This drama was enacted by Palestinian youth during the first Intifada in the end of the 1980s. With stones they struggled against the heavily armed Israeli army units in the streets of occupied Palestine. They lost on the streets but won great victories in world opinion, especially at times when Israeli soldiers used brutal force against captured children in front of TV-cameras. So, it is no coincidence that one of the Web-pages of urban street fighters in Europe is called "Global Intifada".

Movement cultures rooted in the direct action tradition believe in *creating or enforcing the change themselves*. The drama attempts to mobilise other movement activists and dismiss the idea of reaching elite-negotiations. It is criticising other movements' "naïve" belief in rational dialogue with the elites, attempting to disturb the interaction and smooth everyday business of the gentle and obedient civil society.[13] They hope to undermine the position of established criticism and comfortable radicals, to mobilize the ones already knowing they are the losers in the present world order (e.g. long-term unemployed, refugees and others with a kind of education, ethnicity, national belonging, sexuality, age or gender, not on demand at the world market) into an angry and impatient civil society. Their slogans are typically: "Everything Now, Immediately!", "Rather a failed action than sleeping in front of the TV", "If not Now, when? If not You, who?", or "Eat the Rich!".

Like all social interaction this drama also structures and regulates emotions. The catharsis of the battle, permission of anger, destruction of what inhibit the activists and their construction of enemy images within their radical culture are all examples of how the War drama fosters and channel individual emotions through collective interaction. But it is not only a matter of letting forbidden emotions loose, it is probably more important how the movement and its collective actions discipline thoughts, dreams, needs and emotions according to what is considered political correct (cf Wettergren 2005; Vinthagen 2005).

Anonymisation is an ingredient of the War drama. It is an essential part of the movement logic, internally and in relation to others.[14] Being dressed in black and wearing balaclavas the "Black Bloc" activists are not only avoiding police control; it is part of their image-making, the message. The anonymity of masks is not only hiding faces, it is creating the impression that anyone of us could have been there, your neighbour next door or someone from your work place. You do not

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[13] See *Do or Die* (1999) on the J18-action, globalisation and "The Great Liberty Riot" or Wall (1999:106) on activists' frustration with established movement culture and hope of empowerment in direct action movements.

[14] Through a spontaneous action culture, informal structures of organisation and decision-making (Geronimo XX) they are also creating anonymity *internally*. It makes them less vulnerable of infiltration and protect their cultural logic from police control, societies' interpretations and other movements' influence. At the same time it makes the drama real even inside of the movement when fellow activists do not know who did what.

know for sure where they are and who they are. "Our masks are not to conceal our identity but to reveal it…Masking up releases our commonality, enables us to act together…[giving] resistance a face".[15] By de-personalizing the resistance the Black Bloc makes it transferable. Their dramaturgy displays the *ghost of civil society*. Depending on social position or culture members of a civilised civil society interpret the image. For some the image is frightening, for others it is promising.

In an ideal model we will get confrontations that are sufficiently organised to frame a consistent dramaturgy in the global media arena, visualising the People's Anger against the Unjust World Order. The actors of the *War Drama* are unarmed virtual guerrilla-like networks. They operate without commanders but with "swarm intelligence", tactical knowledge and improvisation, similar to a jazz orchestra (Hardt & Negri 2004: 91-93; Vinthagen 2002).

During field work I observed this War Drama at the "S26": the protests and riots against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, September 2000 in Prague.

Wearing black clothes, leather jackets or rubber protection suites, gasmasks, shields or helmets, with hoods or scarves ensuring their anonymity, equipped with stones from the streets, they walk, holding sticks or bicycle chains, petrol bombs or glass-bottles. Hundreds of them are marching in silence or shouting aggressive slogans. "We only use our body, our hands and what we find in our homes or on the street, to show our anger", as one interviewed participant said. The Black Bloc is marching towards the Summit of global elites. On the walls their messages are left with spray paint.

When encountering a police line they charge, trying to break through. David's war against Goliath begins. The riot-police look like the Star Wars troops of Darth Vader: big boots, black uniforms, helmets with visor, shields, batons, guns, rifles, beside armoured vans and water cannons. Very similar to the Black Bloc, just a lot better armed. The street war goes on for hours, gas fills the air, and the water canon throws away some combatants and makes the ground soaked. At the front the global media covers the battle between stones, "Molotov-Cocktails" (home made petrol bombs) gas and water-canons.

On the media stage of globality where the War drama is temporary played out in Prague, some police officers run around in panic with burning uniforms, while *The Infernal Noise Brigade* plays Balkan music, emphasising the virtual reality of the war-situation. An ad-hoc organisational division makes street-warriors to dig up stones, transport them to the front, take care of injured

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[15] Quote from the text printed on the 9 000 masks (in different colours) distributed during the J18-action in London 1999, the Carnival Against Capitalism, *Do or Die* (1999:19).

activists and take turns standing in the frontline battling "Goliath", tiring him down. In the wood some activists takes a break, eat snacks to get new energy, smoke and chat. Then they join the battle again. Some activists suddenly break through; most are driven back by the responding police shock, some run towards the conference building of the Summit. Being dispersed some gather again through mobile phone communication and build a barricade further down the street. Advertisement stalls are destroyed and used together with litter cans and burning cars as protection against the advancing police.

Later they retreat and gather in central Prague and dominate the city centre smashing multinational company stores (KFC and McDonalds) – thus "liberating" the high-street, making it into their land, a public area free of commercialisation. The Black Bloc rules during an hour before the police take it back. Then police arrests hundreds of suspicious-looking people in central Prague throughout the night. The brutality of the police increases. The attempt of Czech police to act civilized, polite and restrained fails. Amnesty International moves in and makes an investigation of reported police brutality. The roles of the drama are confirming activists' perceptions. Goliath hits David with superior force, once again showing his lack of legitimacy. The established Civil Society turns out to be un-civilised. But David is not broken and small victories exist. From the perspective of the already critical movement the drama images speak for the assistance of David in the next unfair battle. A global appeal is launched through the CNN broadcasted riot-images: join the forces of good against the forces of evil – the same as in all battles throughout history.

Conflicting roles' behaviour is constructed as *movement mobilising images* which are culturally embedded in existing subcultures. The War drama seems to ideally fit global mass media logic, over and over again it creates a massive media attention if violence occurs on mass scale. Previously non-active but already affiliated movement actors or receptive young radicals get mobilised. The goal of urban fighters is not to create dialogue, but to make *forceful statements* in order to mobilise one's own movement to do more, recruit among close movement cultures to join the war, and show solidarity. The ideal effect of the War drama is internal movement mobilisation through massive media attention and anti-dialogue pressure on regimes to change through costs from economical and political disturbance. The costs in themselves are not likely to force regime elites toward reform and the methodology is not likely to mobilise a society, but when this resistance is part of other more acceptable opposition, when enough angry participants are mobilised and legitimacy of present world order already is in crisis, explosions of disturbances might very well influence regime changes or system retreats.

In the meantime riots give the movement communities breathing space and liberated islands of autonomy, e.g. Hafenstrasse in Hamburg or Christiania in Copenhagen. With these "autonomous zones" a resistance culture of the everyday develops, new tactics emerge and political experimentation flourishes. The global arena struggle thus gets translated into a local struggle, which in its turn is the base for ongoing global mobilisation.

5: *Glocalisation of resistance*

Global changes within the political economy create an "infotainment telesector" which goes from hard-ware production to soft-ware, where the construction of our needs is at the centre (Barber 1996). We get "virtual needs-industries" with a "post-modern sovereignty" (Barber 1996: 69, 80f). Not only teenagers are the objects of needs-creation, as after WWII, but all of us are learning to connect consumption with values, needs, identities and the very meaning of life. More objects and dimensions of social and private life are offered on markets, for those who can afford the price: entertainment, sexuality, social service, spirituality as well as weapons, drugs, children and organs. Let us take one example, soft-drinks. The biological thirst is not constructed by companies, but taste is. Drinking is connected with new needs, tastes and status.

> "You must drink because it makes you feel (your choice): young, sexy, important, 'in', strong, sporty, smart, with it, cool, hot (as in cool), athletic, right on, part of the world as in we-are-the-world as in we-Americans-are-the-world: in sum, like a winner, like a hero, like a champion, like an American, which is to say, above all, fun-loving…" (Barber 1996: 69)

The ideal drink pleases the consumer while leaving her biologically and emotionally unsatisfied, wanting more. The late modern project of society is above all to mould us into consumers, not citizens (Bauman 1996: 74ff). We are given an inner pressure of longing for sensations and a dissatisfaction with what we just consumed, of an impossible but necessary satisfaction of (new) needs to fulfil, a consumption "disguised as free choice" (Bauman 1996:80, my translation). "The new virtual reality corporation…acquires an 'actual personality'…acting more like a civil state or a state religion, than like a shoe company." (Barber 1996: 67). Even if it is not difficult to find political ambitions behind companies' activity it is not politics that really matters, it is profit – but that makes this commercial culture even more irresponsible and culturally subversive. "The ideology of having fun actually *is* an ideology" (Barber 1996: 72). "It is the capacity to

commercialize all ideas and the material products in which they adhere….not the ideas themselves, that global capitalism strives to appropriate" (Sklair 2000).

But the globalised commercial culture also opens new possibilities and arenas of political struggle and resistance (Merchand & Runyan (eds.) 2000: 157ff), even local ones, restructured though global processes, i.e. "glocal" space (Robertson XX). The individualised, secret, everyday resistance is well suited to meet the invasion by the needs-industry. Since life-style, taste, identity and personal habits is what companies target, they become the appropriate sites of politics or front-lines in the wars. Life-styles are no longer private but become in themselves political or politics becomes a matter of socialised life-styles (Giddens 1995; Thörn 1997). While an individual of course might chose to opt-out, completely chose another way of life, openly defy the global consumption culture by living a self-sufficient rural life – that would still only make capital losing one more consumer. The commercial trading festival of life-forms and life-values would grow as long as enough of us participate. A boycott of individuals doesn't affect profit-making ability. But resistance might.

People who steal at work, tear down adverts, take long lunch breaks, report sick and instead goes to a café with friends etc., do diminish profit-making irrespective of their motives. Their small acts of destruction are not articulated as political, but still they are. As expressions of disloyalty to a political system of rules they have political implications. And some of the individuals or groups who propagate such resistance are highly politicised.

5.1: "Theft" as the every day resistance and creation of commons

The book by Michael Hardt and Anontio Negri "Multitude" (2004) is describing present world order in terms of an Empire without a centre, a global high-technology political economy which is network-based, and the new proletariat (or "precariat", with precarious jobs), which is the "multitude" of different individuals and groups who for different reasons do not serve the Empire but act against it. Among the seemingly self-serving or apolitical resistance acts they count such things as "active non-engagement" at the job-place motivated by laziness, survival or disloyalty (Maier 2005). What is in focus here is the opposite to the public and dramatic character of the riot; it is a kind of "everyday resistance" (Scott 1985) which strives to not become detected, to not confront directly, not being organised and which might not even be politically articulated at all. The point is to *evade power*, look like you adjust and cooperate – in order to gain (small) *advantages*, (passively) *defend* your interests or (undetected) *diminish* the effects of

oppression. Everyday resistance is typically done by those who can't afford to confront publicly since they are not united enough to stand the repression or do not have resources enough to defend themselves against an overwhelming enemy. Still, you do not have to be weak in order to use this "weapon of the weak" (Scott 1985), it might be the perfect weapon: networks of micro-resistance against networks of micro-power. Or it might sometimes also be the preferred tactic for underground warriors running a silent guerrilla warfare against (for the moment) superior power groups.

During the medieval times thieves where one of the more prominent members of the "underworld", regarded as "sinners", as breakers of the "chain of being" and the by God created "Ideal Universe", irrespective if they where stealing since they where poor (McCall 2004). Today the world view is different, God is not the authority behind the condemnation of thieves but "property rights". We need to remember that who is stigmatised as the "thieve" and who is celebrated as the "owner" is a matter of how these rights are understood. That interpretative judgement is by itself a political expression of established normality. And political struggles do change this normality. Thus, the "thieves" of today sometimes become the "owners" of tomorrow. "Primitive capitalism" is a name for the early historic period of capital accumulation which also could be named as robbery, extortion and violent accumulation.

The modern underground thieves operate preferably though the Internet within a broader movement of digital activism (cf Cleaver 1999; Critical Art Ensemble 2001; McCaughey & Ayers 2003; Rheingold 2002). And the main difference with these "digital thieves" is that the "goods" they steal do not disappear; each copy of the original is as good as the original, virtually indistinguishable from the original. In a fundamental sense they do actually not steal. The property is not expropriated, but the property right and the profit making is undermined. While recognising that a major part of digital theft is done by companies who earn cheap money from commercial trade with copied digital property (usual in e.g. China and Russia), this chapter focus on the non-profit part of this phenomenon.

High-tech communication changes the foundations of political organisation and action within the underground. Through the linking of Internet, the camera, mobile-phone and video, new possibilities of actions arise ("smart mobs", Rheingold 2002). It is shown through playful happenings when people that never met before at a certain place and time suddenly do something unexpected, e.g. when some hundred people of those walking through a city square stopped and simultaneously bent down and rolled on the ground and then walked on like nothing happened. Or when thousands demonstrators united with the help of SMS made the regime to fall in the Philippines 2001 (Rheingold 2002). Or, when the probably largest demonstration in the world

history on the 15th of February 2003 gathered about 15-20 million people around the world in protest against the planned US attack on Iraq, without any central organiser but through Internet based coordination (email and Web-pages with free downloads of your demonstration kit).

At the transnational arena of Internet digital movements do different resistance actions (Digital Resistance 20XX. Rheingold 2002. Wettergren 2005). One form of activities is the "anti-branding" which Adbusters and similar "mental environmental movements" do when they destabilize the brands of transnational companies (Lasn 2000). They use the PR style of the companies they fight and recreate their slogans, logos or posters in such a way as it, at the first and distant look, seems to be the real thing, or through other creative and skilled means do their "cultural jamming" of a hegemonic consumer culture. Others do more direct resistance when they sabotage/recreate homepages of regimes or companies (see the archive of "hacked homepages" on www.flashback.se), do "virtual sit-ins", "electronic civil disobedience" or "email-bombing" and thus directly block others from (efficient) Internet access (Klang 2004; 2005? XX). These "digital warriors" or "cyber terrorists" regularly attack and disturb major companies, especially those dominating the cyberspace; Microsoft, Google and Yahoo. The anonymity of Internet use makes the posing as someone else or the construction of new identities possible, at the same time as the advanced communication net makes the coordination of gigantic numbers of people possible (e.g. the multi editing of texts through "iwaka-technology", http://me.sphere.pl/indexen.htm). But more importantly, more or less all production tools of the media – software or programs – are accessible for movements to change, copy and develop for their own needs. This historically unique situation makes the proactive resistance possible in which creative hackers construct public property; *digital commons*.

Since long an open-source movement creates public software (e.g. Linux, Gnu, Creative Commons) through free and collective collaboration, testing and development of programs. After years involvement of thousands of computer enthusiasts it is today possible for anyone who wants to run her computer only on open-source programs, making even nation states join the digital commons, like e.g. Brazil and Venezuela (Arena 2006).

Some even fight private property with the help of copyright laws by inscribing into their own programs that you are not allowed to sell them for profit, not even as a program developer (www.gnu.org). "Copyleft" or "Anti-copyright" is thus protected by copyright! (Stallman 2004). If regimes take that protection away private ownership of knowledge gets undermined. Quite a problematic situation for the guardians of intellectual property rights.

Besides open source there is the P2P-technology (person-to-person) which makes file-sharing and exchange of programs directly between persons possible (Rheingold 2002; Vaidhyanathan

2004). Downloading of music, film or games has grown into a common activity by younger generations, scaring the entertainment industry into fighting these "thieves" through political lobbying, PR, surveillance and litigations. In Sweden there is an escalating battle between the Pirate Bay (the downloaders) and the Anti-Pirate Office (the industry) (Piratbyrån 2005). Despite the counter measures from the entertainment industry these digital activists have found new methods and avenues, making file-sharing bigger than ever, despite the successful court judgement against Napster. These activists are not necessarily driven by any political ideology. It might as well be digital enthusiasm, dreams of fame, money or danger. But behind the non-profit computer culture is a shared idea that "information wants to be free", that digital copying is no theft but a human right. When Madonna and Metallica supported legal processes against downloading music they lost support from many fans. In the view of the "hacktivists" the stars and the rest of the big business have more than enough money.

The creation of digital commons is already happening. While it is not completed and not always as advanced as the commercial alternatives it is good enough to be a real challenge to profit making. A collective ownership is being realised, not an expropriation but free distribution of the means of production – the information technology within the new economy – something the early socialist movements dreamt of achieving. The problems is of course how this creative commons' movement will be able to bring not only free software (programs, music, films etc.) but the "hardware" of social life, e.g. computers as well as bread and butter. As you might suspect, the groups who experiment on solutions to this more difficult problem do already exist.

Through the homepage of Sharewares (www.shrwr.se) the production and distribution is organised of "free clothes without rules", where stolen or second-hand clothes are redesigned and given away. The private ownership of clothes is undermined and an alternative is offered. Another example is "proletarian shoplifting", i.e. theft of livelihood goods from big companies.

One group, the "Yes Men", is an example of how struggle is not isolated in a virtual world on Internet but is interwoven with real events and social movements "on the ground". The Yes Men do "identity corrections" (or what others call "identity theft" or "fraud") when they on Internet or in public meetings pose as representatives of companies in order to undermine their credibility (see "Yes Men" 2004; www.theyesmen.org). The Yes Men initially created a homepage of the "World Trade Organisation", with (counter-)information which put the work of the most powerful free-trade regime ever into bad light. Since their homepage were professionally made some people thought they represented the official WTO and, logically, invited them to speak at major conferences reserved for the global elite of the political economy. Thus, The Yes Men where presented with the possibility to pose as WTO and say what they (ought to) say in public if

they would be honest and public about their ambitions, values and interests. Explaining that the General Director of WTO could not come but that they where delighted to offer Dr. Andreas Bichlbaum as a speaker instead they where able to use the conference platform to argue for the "WTO policy" of selling of votes on-line (Thompson & Scholette 2004: 20). In their identity corrections they try to balance between trustworthy professionalism and scandalous cynicism, e.g. when they as WTO-representatives argue for the economic benefit of having "distance workers" in Africa instead of the more costly form of traditional slavery (The Yes Men 2004). False press releases from economic organisations are part of this identity correction, e.g. when "Dow Chemical" for the first time took full responsibility for the damage created at the Bhopal chemical catastrophe in India (which lead to an immediate negative reaction at the stock market), or when "WTO" during a press conference announced that they would disband since they had failed to create economic justice and eradicate poverty.

In *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* a collection of cultural and artistic resistance activities are displayed (Thompson & Scholette 2004). Among them are the Yomango group from Barcelona who promotes a lifestyle of "social disobedience" by their shopping bag for shoplifters;

> "This magic bag makes objects disappear. It's ergonomically designed to be the ultimate shoplifting utensil. It is simple to make and is based on the same principles as the devices used by magicians and other tricksters. YOMANGO converts going to the mall into a magical experience." (Thompson & Scholette 2004: 108).

They Yomango facilitation of shoplifting and Sharewares free clothes are just examples of free *"hardware" distribution networks* of life essentials, other networks distribute left-over food from restaurants/shops (soup-kitchens like the ones by "Food not Bombs" or Catholic Workers in the US) or create agricultural seed-banks (like the one Vandana Shiva organises in India), and "reclaim" services and open space, like free-transport systems (like www.planka.nu which helps riders travel free through a kind of insurance system against fines for their non-ticket fares) or promote creative non-car use of motorways (like Reclaim the Streets who organises street parties on roads, RTS www.reclaimthestreets.net).

Taken together they are a significant redistribution of ownership and income. It is possible to understand e.g. proletarian shoplifting, free food, seed-banks and free clothes as attempts of creating *hardware commons*, and e.g. free travel systems as *service commons*. Collective ownership of the everyday necessities is also a kind of income distribution where the corporate profit-makers gets less and the daring citizens gets more. Although this is also possible to understand as a privatized justice I maintain that viewing it as a creation of commons is a reasonable

interpretation. If developed further by strong global movements it becomes a kind of "global public good".

6: The future of our contemporary political underground?

I have tried to show the reasonable *possibility* of understanding the political underground as the future "overground", the future politics of normality. The acts we today call "riot" or "theft" might be what future generations will thank as the creators of their freedoms and rights.

We will not see any sudden shifts between what counts as the political "underground" or "overground" and there are no clear cut borders. But sometimes paradigmatic changes do happen. What belongs to the underground sometimes become the overground, the establishment, that which is so amazingly normal it even becomes strange it hasn't been like that forever. Like for example that we today have freedom of expression, the right to organise and demonstrate our opposition to the government, or that torture is illegal, that slavery is forbidden, that abortion is legal; which is just some of the things we take for granted and which only some generations ago were treated as a distant utopia, a dangerous sin or a threat to society.

Among the political objects that might transcend into the overground we can distinguish between at least three kinds: certain acts/behaviour, groups or issues. This investigation has not discussed groups or issues but concern two kinds of underground acts: the riot and theft.

We can detect at least three quite different kinds of actions in the underground, action forms which have more or less chance of becoming or fostering political normality:

1. Acts that are legal and legitimate but still not normalised or regarded as "political" even though they in themselves harbour the peaceful change they strive for, e.g. the building of ecological villages or the branding of "fair trade" products.
2. Acts that initially are illegal and illegitimate which might become legalised and legitimate as norms in the society since they are possible to incorporate in a society, e.g. the workers strike or religious freedom.
3. Acts that are extreme or reactions to extreme social conditions, acts that might initiate social change and become legitimate afterwards in the light of that change but only legalised as exceptions (since they inherently threatens social life), e.g. murder or war.

It seems reasonable to classify the everyday theft as belonging to category 2 while the autonomous riot belongs to category 3. To me it seems unlikely that a society, even a future one, will accept riots in the same sense it has been possible to accept strikes. Riots or street-battles are by themselves expressions of violence and chaos. Still, they might be catalysts of justice and democratic change. The very riots which the autonomous movement do might be legitimised in a future society as riots that were necessary to do in that historical dangerous situation and which probably helped to overcome the dangers. Maybe in the same way as the regular and violent riots that accompanied one of the most peaceful revolutions in the world; the Indian anti-colonial struggle organised by Gandhi (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994)?

On the other hand I do think there is scope for the individualised income/property distribution we today call "theft" to become part of a future overground, at least when it is done within *non-profit* groups/organisations and concerns *unlimited goods* (like digital and intellectual property) or *life essentials* (like food, transport and clothes). It is for example not impossible to imagine an acceptance of free urban transport in order to protect the environment and diminish the unsustainable dominance of automobiles. Some cities have in fact already introduced it. I am not saying "theft" will be accepted or that I know how it could (or even if it should) happen, only that the *possibility* exist that certain activities we today call "theft" will be legitimised and maybe even legalised. If it happens it will be just like before in history that the despised political underground becomes the normality.

But the possibility of normalisation of unrecognised forms of politics is not only decided by the kind of articulations emanating from the underground, but also by the reactions of the "overground". The political dynamic between social forces will ultimately decide what belongs to the underground. This process might be painful and go wrong. It will depend on how we, as actors of the underground or the overground, together with others will struggle with/for/against power, i.e. do politics. That which has the potential of becoming "democratising resistance", even if it is seemingly peaceful, might, depending on the way it is done and being treated, develop into a kind of "non-armed terrorism", harassment, bulling or involve other violations of people.

Ultimately it is the nature of the "underground" that it is somehow beyond our reach, control and knowledge. We simply can't know. That is also what makes it so interesting and challenging. That is what gives the political underground a potential of radical social change.

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