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POLITICAL UNDERGROUNDS
Raging Riots and Everyday Theft as Politics of Normality?

THIS IS AN investigation of a neglected possibility: Is it possible 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, unrecognised and disregarded forms of politics and problematises 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 survey the chapter focuses on two contemporary challenges to traditional politics; the political street-battles of crowds and the everyday resistance of unorganised individuals (exemplified with "theft"). The paper endeavours to show how the chaotic and destructive riot, as an expression, can be understood 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, the riot actively constructs a popular alternative to elitist armed rebellion. Similarly, it will be argued that disguised and individualised everyday resistance can be understood as a non-explicit yet political response to a needs-industry's capitalisation of identities and life-styles. In a process where citizens are addressed primarily as consumers by flexible network corporations within a globalised economy, everyday resistance by individuals can be described as not only accommodating political repertoires according to structures of the contemporary political economy, but also as engaging in a political battle on the very frontline of contemporary market-expansion: the (re)construction of individual life-styles. 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 decide who and what belong to the "underground" or to the "normality". Ignoring the rational and sympathetic interpretation is by itself a political expression of the hegemony of 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 in the words of one of the world's most seasoned scholars of collective action, Charles Tilly; we are talking about "contentious politics" which are not likely to be prescribed, nor tolerated, but tend to be forbidden by the regime (Tilly 2003: 44–55). We refer to an opposition which does not accept the established rules of oppositional articulation, or which is not interested in getting legal protection or legitimising pardon from a ruling system of value standards, which establishes the hegemonic view of "politically correct". This 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 ("hidden transcripts" or "infra politics", Scott 1987; 1990). The "underground" needs to be related to what is constructed as the "over-ground"; 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 – thus underground description becomes the naming of the non-nameable.

Nevertheless, I will try to analyse some aspects of the contemporary political underground. I am interested in expanding 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 interrogated during the discussion.[1] Occupations of buildings by homeless are an example of trespassing and punk culture is a kind of transgression.

The angry no-nonsense shadow-civil society that became visible during "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

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1. Even though some political activity is accused of being theft, it does not mean it is objectively so. E.g. copying of copy-right protected material is, according to a ruling by the US Supreme Court 1985, not "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 legally classified as theft as well, e.g. shoplifting. In the same sense "riot" is a term regularly used by those who disapprove of the 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.

contrary it is possible to understand these riot-makers as a long-standing and highly politicised movement, dating back to at least the 1960s. This riot-making trans-European *antiauthoritarian autonomous movement* is also one of the more organised articulations which help me to understand a much less visible form of underground politics, i.e. everyday forms of resistance. But here, I also make extensive use of Internet-based *digital movements*, loosely connected or co-inspiring individuals and groups who use 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 uses "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 respects, underground politics are not-yet recognized but normal, sensible and responsible, nevertheless presumed unnormal, irrational and irresponsible forms of protest. Through a number of sociological concepts, such as "life politics" (Giddens 1995), "impression management" (Goffman 1974), "in/out definitions" (Mathiesen 1978; 1982), "hidden transcripts" and "everyday resistance" (Scott 1987; 1990), I will be able to examine the ambivalent relations between taken-for-granted *dichotomies* such as counter-culture versus the establishment, power versus the image, public versus private, democratic versus undemocratic and alternative versus resistance.

2: Understanding "resistance"

"Resistance" is commonly understood as being 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 define "resistance" as the obstruction, disruption or undermining of power by acts of underdogs, this 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 the years 1966–68, the USA experienced 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 African-Americans (McAdam 1999: 223, 227, 182). Although the violent resistance of the rioters might have been unwanted and destructive, their

resistance somehow did play a constructive role.[3] According to Castells (1997), hopes of future "project identities" develop from present "resistance identities".

Resistance is related to power, and power can be understood as being relational and multiple in networks of productive interactions (Foucault 1980). Even if a movement wants to "throw out" a Transnational Company (TNC) from a country, for example, 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 by the World Dam Commission which brought together all stakeholders in large dam projects in 1998, after resistance by displaced and affected social groups who were threatened some major dam projects. Another example is the struggle against the Narmada dam system in India which resulted in a unique resettlement scheme in one Indian state after the withdrawal of the World Bank and several TNCs (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 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 sciences 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. The study 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. However, even Foucault focused on understanding power, not on understanding 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 settling disputes, not the conflict dynamics 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). The understanding of how resistance – i.e. the undermining of power relations – contributes to social change is simply poor. While "power" is a contested concept "resistance" is often reduced to

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.

"counter-power". Given 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. Consequently, movements' continuous experimentation and creative invention of new forms of resistance become even less comprehensible.[4]

Depending on our understanding of "power", different forms of resistance become relevant in the study of social change. In general, there is a wide spectrum of perspectives on "power"; monolithic, consensual or pluralist, with different variations 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 non-violent, confrontational or circumventing, deconstructing or reconstructing, rejecting or affirming, productive or obstructive, individual or collective, accommodating or enforcing, 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 such as 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 – the articulations of which vary extensively as seen above, resistance is also formed by general social factors and its historic context, like all social phenomena. Empirically, resistance will be shaped by a complex combination of different features. Resistance of all the above types will entail specific tactical means, aesthetic articulations, concepts, images, symbols, historical traditions and ideologies; i.e. its specific *repertoire* which combines 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,

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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 fill the roads being on a "bicycling tour" at a certain time and place. Since there is no law against bicycling when there is a lot of other people 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 is undecided, despite a decade of critical mass.

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 1990s) 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 does resistance by fascist or religious fundamentalists exist but that they 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.

3: The political underground as the future "overground"

Since the 1980s an "explosion" of action groups with aspirations to deepen democracy has been observed throughout the world's poorer countries (Haynes 1997). And, civic associations in general have been proposed as a key factor behind democratic development (Putnam 1996). But it is then a kind of polite, public and civilised expression of demands and needs in accordance with hegemonic liberal western values which counts. Resistance which challenges hegemonic values becomes more controversial. Social movements' resistance against mega-development projects – e.g. when tribal groups blockaded 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 localised search for autonomy by "claiming exclusion" (Rist 1997: 244) or as attempted "de-globalisation". 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 as a threat to society, and is repressed through police surveillance, state violence and punishments. This also applies to peaceful 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. All kinds of social groups can of course display sectarian *tendencies*, even resistance groups (Vinthagen 1998; 2005), but when a certain *form of political*

action which involves "physical confrontation" is *per definition* equated with a "sect", it becomes a power act. But labelling radical groups as "sects" or "extremists" based on their politics rather than prior empirical evidence of such characteristics is just one way of stigmatizing resistance (see "out definition" as a power technique, Mathiesen 1978; 1982). The contemporary problem with hegemonic loyalty of some academics is their labelling of what earlier has been simply understood as (non-killing) criminal political opposition as "low-level terrorism" (Jervas 2002) or "eco-terrorism" (Beck 2007), echoing the FBI and their labelling of animal rights activists and eco-activists as one of the worst internal terrorist threats in the US... This kind of conscious marginalisation of non-established politics by academics through the use of derogatory 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 established power structures.

Throughout history, different forms of submerged politics and marginal counter-cultures have always existed. Some of them have been positioned as being outcast and excommunicated, and have been suppressed by hegemonic elites, while others chose voluntary marginalization, interpreting it as a sign of their truth or of radical politics. Some have moved to the surface and have become the establishment and the new normality. The people of the 1850s "underground railroad" who helped liberate slaves from the southern states of the USA by facilitating their refuge to the north, the suffragettes in the UK and the "underground resistance movements" of the occupied European states during WWII, are now celebrated heroes of freedom and democracy. However, at the time of their actions, they were often seen in a similar fashion as our contemporary underground; as criminal, uncivilized, undemocratic and their actions were regarded as reckless and ineffective behaviour provoking repression.

Afterwards, in clear hindsight, we know that resistance by transnational movements has sometimes contributed to a fundamental democratic change. The work of the 19th century abolition of slavery movement is one such example (Keck & Sikkink 1998). 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 and was made possible through a combined strategy of effective resistance, negotiated compromise and the forming of new counter-hegemonic blocs challenging old elites (Abrahamsson 2003; Appelquist 2001; Velesco 2000). The creation of the welfare state was made possible through an alliance between some of the very same social forces which were previously in fierce contention during the 19th century.

One key mechanism which decides whether an oppositional activity will be recognized as being valid politics is the process of *in/out-definition* done by the media and the political establishment (Mathiesen 1978; 1982). Border management is essential for protecting what counts as political normality. The same kind of act might, be defined as "inside" the border of normal

society or as "outside" in certain situations, depending on the issues or who did it. 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 use violence, refusing even to talk to their representatives as long as they do not give up their weapons.

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 TNCs and multilateral regimes (e.g. the World Bank) to such an extent that global governance is now described as "complex multilateralism" (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, including counter cultures, social movements, oppositional networks and NGOs also construct the present world order.

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

4: Globalisation of resistance

The combination of *personalization of politics* and *politicising of the world* made by contemporary movements (see "life politics" Giddens 1995) 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 did, but also by using traditionally "apolitical" everyday life-forms and "private" life-style as political arenas, they *pierce* the micro-world (see "life politics" Giddens 1995). Nowadays what food you eat, what clothes you wear, who does the dishes at home, with whom and how you have sex, are all political questions. Nothing is apolitical. Politics is everything. This expansion of politics is often misunderstood by professional politicians as being apolitical, possibly because it goes together with mistrust and opposition to traditional party politics or trade unions. By linking personal and local politics with global questions, the new movements 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 ho-

listic views. The single-issue-orientation of movements makes them competent spokes-persons. They become skilled alternative experts and creators of new cosmologies by means of self-supporting work, specialisation and even research (Eyerman & Jamison 1991). But particularism and isolation poses a threat if they do not network with movements oriented around other issues. Exactly this kind of issue-networking is taking place in "globalisation from below" or the global "movement of movements" and the open space of World Social Forum. Broad alliances of single-issue 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 contradicts Thatcher's infamous "There is no alternative" speech and the neo-liberal hegemony.[5]

These movements combine a wide range of political methods. On a practical level, this *combinatory repertoire* involves boycotting, economic sabotage, symbolic confrontation, judicial struggles, the nurturing of their own media structure, development of alternative technology and networking. The system-abiding methods such as 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 such as 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 might as well be leftist radicals, social ecologists, radical feminists, anti-fascist or even communists (AFA

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5. The so called "TINA" (There Is No Alternative), i.e. there is only one way for politics – the neoliberal politics – all other politics are unrealistic and based on misunderstandings. Her neoliberal thesis in extremis stating that "There is no such thing as a society, only individuals" is similarly de facto contradicted on a global level.

6. The term "riot" is often used by authorities or media (Tilly 2003), but also by activists (Situationist International (2003 [1965]), especially the ones here discussed (cf Do or Die 1999; 2000; 2003).

7. In Sweden Brand ,the century-old anarchist journal, has played a key role in articulating "autonomous" perspectives, at least since the late 1980s.

1997; 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 anti-authoritarian counter-culture of 1968, inspired by the radical political art movement, the "Situationist International" (Knabb 1995), and "autonomia" developments among the working class in Italy (Katsiaficas 1997; Hardt & Negri 2004). They gained new momentum from the building occupation movement ("squatters") in the 1980s (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). During the 1980s, the autonomous groups began to make resistance to neo-liberal globalisation (e.g. the World Bank in Berlin 1988) and thus, together with the "IMF riots" in poor countries in the south, they preceded the global wave of resistance made visible since Seattle 1999 against the WTO.

Violence is seen within the movement as being 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. 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 which "transcend the spectacle" of commercial and dehumanized life (see 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 seen as 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 which developed from 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 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 desired 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 not interested in asking for official permission, by definition, 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 develops into a street battle. Typically a peaceful activity is done, with 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 1999), side by side together with (as in Prague 2000), or before/after peaceful demonstrations (as in Göteborg 2001). The street battles will develop into "scattered attacks", "opportunism" (e.g. looting), or if more experienced activists take the initiative, even "coordinated destruction", depending on the dynamic situation (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. Nevertheless, a dramaturgy is constructed from the symbolism of the (partially) direct effects. In a similar way to normal everyday interaction in society (Goffman 1974), social movements also construct and manage impressions and thus their actions can be read as dramaturgy (Benford & Hunt 1995).

They construct a kind of Street War drama with serious consequences for all involved, but 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 1960s 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

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8. The direct action tradition is cultivated in diverse but similar movement cultures, such as the Animal Liberation Front in the United Kingdom, the Autonomen in Germany, the Black Bloc in the USA and Ya Basta! in Italy. Reclaim The Streets (or in Sweden, Reclaim The City) has mobilised mass actions on several occasions during the 1990s, mainly in England, where street parties with thousands of dancing people have occupied motorways or city centres, thus turning an environmental problem or commercial site into a free and public space of desire by direct action.

9. IKEA's ingenious business model, making the customer herself assemble the furniture she bought, only supplying the map and equipment at a price accessible to the common (wo)man, is directly translated into the political model of direct action, where the citizen herself is equiped with accessible tools to affect the desired effects by herself. (But historically speaking it is of course the other way around; IKEA, which was developed in the mid 20th century, is translating the political direct action model!)

resistance, and displaying occasional romanticism for armed rebellion, they are *themselves* not using arms.[10] Despite having, *good reasons*, in their perspective, 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 trans-European movement towards autonomous mobilisation is rooted in some intelligible logic, we have to conclude they are unarmed 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 radical 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 mobilised millions in the movement and thousands in the riots, and which lead to a victory against the regime (Burns 1992). The Poll Tax was proposed by Margaret Thatcher and was a kind of flat tax which was connected the voting rights 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. David could win through intelligence, technique and the help of God (the subjugated people, the "multitude"). The drama is an appeal to all of us to support David in his righteous but seemingly impossible struggle against the illegitimate and 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. Throwing 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

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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 depends on the 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 raised the question during the preparations for the street battle in Prague, of what they should do if they did succeed in breaking through the police line and getting into the building of the IMF summit – the assembled 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 non-violence but also the elitist dynamic of leftist terrorism.

TV cameras. So, it is no coincidence that one of the Web sites posted by 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 dismisses the idea of negotiation with the elites. It criticises other movements' "naïve" belief in rational dialogue with the elites, attempts 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 for 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 channels 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 politically correct (see 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 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*. Members of a civilised civil society interpret the image according to their social position or culture. For some people, the image is frightening, for others it is promising.

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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 1990) they are also creating anonymity internally. It makes them less vulnerable to infiltration and protects their cultural logic from police control, societies' interpretations and the influence of other movements. At the same time, it makes the drama real even inside of the movement when fellow activists do not know who did what.
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).

In an ideal model, we will get confrontation that is 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).

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

Wearing black clothes, leather jackets or rubber protection suits, gas masks, shields or helmets, with hoods or scarves ensuring their anonymity, equipped with stones from the streets, they walked on, holding sticks or bicycle chains, petrol bombs or glass bottles. Hundreds of them marched in silence or shouting aggressive slogans. "We only use our bodies, 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 marched towards the global elite's Summit . Their messages were put on the walls with spray paint .

When encountering a police line they charged, trying to break through. David's war against Goliath began. The riot police look like the Darth Vader's troops in *Star Wars*: big boots, black uniforms, helmets with visors, shields, batons, guns, rifles, together with armoured vans and water cannon. Very similar to the Black Bloc, just a lot better armed. The street war goes on for hours, gas fills the air, the water canon knocks some combatants over and soaks the ground. At the front, the global media covers the battle between stones, "Molotov Cocktails" (home made petrol bombs) tear gas and water canon.

On the media stage of globality where the War drama was temporary played out in Prague, some police officers ran around in panic with burning uniforms, while *The Infernal Noise Brigade* played Balkan music, emphasising the virtual reality of the war situation. An ad-hoc organisational division made street warriors dig up stones, transport them to the front, care for injured activists and take turns in standing at the front line battling "Goliath", tiring him down. In the woods, some activists took a break, eating snacks to get new energy, smoking and chatting. Then they joined the battle again. Some activists suddenly broke through; most were driven back by the responding police shock, some ran towards the Summit conference building. Being dispersed, some gathered again through mobile phone communication and built a barricade further down the street. Advertisement stalls were destroyed and used together with litter cans and burning cars as protection against the advancing police.

Later on, they retreated and gathered in central Prague and dominated 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 ruled for an hour before the police took it back. Then the Police arrested hundreds of suspicious looking peo-

ple in central Prague throughout the night. The brutality of the police increased. The attempt by the Czech Police to act in a civilized, polite and restrained manner failed. Amnesty International moved in and made an investigation of reported police brutality. The roles of the drama confirmed activists' perceptions. Goliath hit David with superior force, once again showing his lack of legitimacy. The established Civil Society turns out to be un-civilised. But David was not broken and small victories existed. From the perspective of the movement, which is already critical, the dramatic images urge assistance to David in the next unfair battle. A global appeal is launched through the riot images broadcast on CNN: join the forces of good against the forces of evil – the same as in all battles throughout history.

Behaviour in conflicting roles is constructed as *movement mobilising images* which are culturally embedded in existing subcultures. The War drama seems to fit global mass media logic perfectly. Over and over again, it creates massive media attention if violence occurs on a 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 the costs of economic 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 the legitimacy of the 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. A resistance culture of the everyday develops in these "autonomous zones", 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: Glocalization of resistance

Global changes within the political economy create an "infotainment telesector" which goes from hardware production to software, where the construction of our needs is at the centre (Barber 1995). We get "virtual-needs industries" with "post-modern sovereignty" (Barber 1995: 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. Physiological thirst is not constructed by companies,

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

People who steal at work, tear down adverts, take long lunch breaks, report sick instead and go 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 they still are. They have political implications, as expressions of disloyalty to a political system of rules. 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

Michael Hardt's and Anontio Negri's book "Multitude" (2004) describes the 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 workplace, 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 1987) which strives to become undetected, not to confront directly, not to be organised and which might not even be politically articulated at all ("hidden transcripts" or "infra politics", Scott 1987; 1990). The point is to *evade power*, to 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 withstand the repression or do not have enough resources 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 1987). It might be the perfect weapon: networks of micro-resistance against networks of micro-power (Foucault 1980). Or it might sometimes also be the preferred tactic for underground warriors running a silent guerrilla warfare against currently superior power groups.

During medieval times, thieves were one of the more prominent members of the "underworld", regarded as "sinners", as breakers of the "chain of being" and the God-created "Ideal Universe", irrespective of whether they were stealing because they were 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 the person who is stigmatised as the "thief" and the person who is acknowledged 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, one could argue, could be named as robbery, extortion and violent accumulation.

The modern underground thieves preferably operate through the Internet, within a broader movement of digital activism (see Cleaver 1999; Critical Art Ensemble 2001; McCaughey & Ayers 2003; Rheingold 2002). And the interesting difference is that the "goods" "digital thieves" 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 actually do not steal. The property is not expropriated, but intellectual property rights and profits are 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 focuses on the non-profit part of this phenomenon.

High-tech communication changes the foundations of political organisation and action within the underground. New opportunities for action arise through the linking of the Internet, the camera, mobile phone and video, ("smart mobs", Rheingold 2002). It has been shown through playful happenings, when people that who had met before suddenly do something unexpected at a certain place and time, e.g. when about a hundred of the people 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 of demonstrators, united with the help of text messages, made the regime fall in the Philippines in 2001 (Rheingold 2002). Or, when probably the largest demonstration in 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 (e-mail and Web sites with free downloads of your demonstration kit).

Digital movements do various resistance actions in the transnational arena of the Internet (Critical Art Ensemble 2001; Rheingold 2002; Wettergren 2005). One form of activity 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 that, at the first and distant sight, it appears to be the real thing, or do their "cultural jamming" of a hegemonic consumer culture through other creative and skilled means. 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", "Web page defacement" or "email-bombing" and thus directly block others from (efficient) Internet use (Klang 2004; 2005; 2006). These "digital warriors" attack and disturb major companies, especially those dominating the cyberspace, such as Microsoft, Google and Yahoo.

One group, the "Yes Men", is an example of how struggle is not isolated to a virtual world on the Internet, but is interwoven into real events and social movements "on the ground". The Yes Men tries to break the consumer-capitalist "society of the Spectacle" and create revealing "situations" in the tradition of the Situationists through "identity corrections" (or what others call "identity theft" or "fraud"). When they correct identities they pose as representatives of companies on the Internet or in public meetings but tell in a frank way what the companies really want, without any spin or PR images, thus undermining their credibility (see "Yes Men" 2004; www.theyesmen.org). The Yes Men initially created a web site for the "World Trade Organisation", with (counter-)information which put the work of the most powerful free-trade regime ever into a bad light. Since their web site was 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 given the opportunity

of posing as the WTO and saying what they thought the WTO ought to say in public if they were honest 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 votes on-line (Thompson & Scholette 2004: 20). In their identity corrections, the Yes Men try to balance between trustworthy professionalism and scandalous cynicism, e.g. when they, as WTO-representatives, argue the economic benefit of having "distance workers" in Africa instead of the more costly forms 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.

The (perceived) anonymity of Internet use makes it possible to pose as someone else or to construct new identities, at the same time as the advanced communication network makes the coordination of gigantic numbers of people possible (e.g. the multi-editing of texts through Wiki-technology, see for example www.wikipedia.org). 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 proactive resistance possible, in which creative hackers construct public property; *digital commons.*

A Free and Open Source Software movement has created public software (e.g. GNU/Linux, Ubuntu, Mozilla) through free and collective collaboration for a long while, testing and developing programs. After years of involvement of thousands of computer enthusiasts, anyone who wants to can run his computer exclusively on Free Software and/or open-source programs, making even nation states contribute to the digital commons, such as Brazil and Venezuela.

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.

In addition to open source, there is the P2P-technology (peer-to-peer) which makes file-sharing and exchange of programs directly between people efficient (Rheingold 2002; Vaidhyanathan 2004). Downloading of music, film or games has grown into a common activity by the younger generations, scaring the entertainment industry into fighting these "thieves" through political lob-

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16. Napster was an early file sharing service that became "a legendary icon in the computer and entertainment fields" (Wikipedia.org) which opened the way for the massive global movement of downloading on the Internet with sites such as the currently popular Piratebay (thepiratebay.org).

bying, PR, surveillance and litigation. 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.[16] 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. Collective ownership is being implemented, not as expropriation but by free distribution of the means of production – the information technology within the new economy – something the early socialist movements dreamt of achieving. The problem is, of course, how this 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 with solutions to this more difficult problem do already exist.

The production and distribution of "free clothes without rules" is organised through the Sharewears (www.shrwr.org) web site, where stolen or second-hand clothes are redesigned and given away. 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.

A collection of cultural and artistic resistance activities are displayed in *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (Thompson & Scholette 2004). They include 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 Sharewears 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; www.navdanya.org), 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 rides) 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 signify a significant redistribution of ownership and income. It is possible to understand proletarian shoplifting, free food, seed-banks, free clothes etc. as attempts at creating *hardware commons*, and free travel systems etc. as *service commons*. Collective ownership of the necessities of everyday life is also a kind of income distribution where the corporate profit-makers get less and the daring citizens get more. Although this can be understood as 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 acknowledge as being necessary for the creation 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 occur. What belongs to the underground sometimes become the overground, the establishment, that which is so amazingly normal that it even becomes strange to imagine it hasn't always been like this. For example, over 50 % of the world's 200 states today have freedom of expression, the right to organise and demonstrate opposition to the government, or that torture is illegal, that slavery is forbidden; which are just some of the things some of us 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 concerns 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 a greater or lesser chance of becoming or fostering political normality:

1. Acts that are legal and legitimate but still not normalised or regarded as "real" politics 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 could be incorporated into a society, e.g. the workers' right to 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. revolutionary 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, rage and chaos. However, they might be catalysts of justice and democratic change. The very riots which the autonomous movements enact might be legitimised in a future society as riots that were necessary to do in a 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 Mohandas K. 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 not impossible to imagine an acceptance of free urban transport, for example, in order to protect the environment and reduce 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* exists that certain activities we currently call "theft" will be legitimised and maybe even legalised. If this happens, it will be just as before in history, that the despised political underground becomes 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, struggle together with others with/for/against power, i.e. do politics. That which has the potential of becoming a "democratising resistance", even if it is seemingly peaceful, might develop into a kind of violence, harassment, bullying or involving other violations of people, depending on the way it is done and treated.

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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