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Chapter Title	Introduction: Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom?	
Copyright Year	2019	
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Author	Family Name	<b>Jacquemain</b>
	Particle	
	Given Name	<b>Marc</b>
	Suffix	
	Division	
	Organization/University	University of Liège
	Address	Liège, Belgium
	Email	Marc.Jacquemain@ulg.ac.be
Corresponding Author	Family Name	<b>Frère</b>
	Particle	
	Given Name	<b>Bruno</b>
	Suffix	
	Division	Faculty of Social Sciences
	Organization/University	University of Liège
	Address	Liège, Belgium
	Email	bfrere@ulg.ac.be
Abstract	<p>The societies of Western Europe—“Old Europe”, as George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, called it—have lived for three full decades through what one might call a “crisis of social conflict”. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the level of conflict has become lower—even if the hypothesis seems true for a fraction of this period—but rather that the conflict has become less structured and so less easy to grasp. We can say that “today’s world resembles the one in which classical Marxism emerged. In other respects, it is significantly different—above all, no doubt, in the absence of a clearly identified ‘subject of emancipations’” (Keucheyan, <i>Left Hemisphere: Mapping Contemporary Theory</i>. London: Verso, 2014). This empirical work of identifying “grips” is more indispensable than ever. It is the necessary condition for rearming an effective critique, that is, a critique that dares to be radical but does not mistake its dreams for realities. Texts gathered in this volume suggest new grips by showing how several activist organisations (mainly) in France share a common practical utopia imaginary by trying to change the world here and now.</p>	

## AUTHOR QUERIES

Q1 Please check if the closing single quote is correctly placed in the quoted sentence “In other respects...”

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## Introduction: Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom?

*Marc Jacquemain and Bruno Frère*

The societies of Western Europe—“Old Europe”, as George W. Bush’s Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, called it—have lived for three full decades through what one might call a “crisis of social conflict”. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the level of conflict has become lower—even if the hypothesis seems true for a fraction of this period—but rather that the conflict has become less structured and so less easy to grasp. In a recent work on new critical thought, sociologist Razmig Keucheyan (2014: 4) summarises the situation in a formula we can easily agree with: “Today’s world resembles the one in which classical Marxism emerged. In other respects, it is significantly different—above all, no doubt, in the absence of a clearly identified ‘subject of emancipations’”.

In both its Marxist and social-democratic tendencies, the historic workers’ movement drew on a considerable symbolic resource: a *teleology* in which the proletariat, a special actor, had a “natural” calling to the

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M. Jacquemain  
University of Liège, Liège, Belgium  
e-mail: [Marc.Jacquemain@ulg.ac.be](mailto:Marc.Jacquemain@ulg.ac.be)

B. Frère (✉)  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Liège, Liège, Belgium  
e-mail: [bfrere@ulg.ac.be](mailto:bfrere@ulg.ac.be)

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B. Frère, M. Jacquemain (eds.), *Everyday Resistance*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18987-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18987-7_1)

19 universal. Its emancipation was supposed to emancipate the whole of  
20 humanity, and the question of what form the resultant classless society  
21 would take could be left to future generations. To be sure, this teleology  
22 posed significant problems. What should be done, for example, about the  
23 desire for national emancipation, about the rejection of colonialism and  
24 sexism? But it nonetheless provided a compass, a “red thread” which  
25 allowed all forms of resistance to be linked at least on the level of the  
26 imagined. This vision of the world has now lost its relevance because capi-  
27 talism’s “displacements” have “defeated” the historic actor with universal  
28 calling by denying it a clearly identifiable adversary (Boltanski and  
29 Chiapello 2005 [1999]), leaving only a landscape strewn with injustices  
30 that are deeply felt but difficult to identify and to denounce, and still  
31 more difficult to link together. Institutions evade responsibility for and  
32 refuse to describe the multiple injustices whose victims are the weak  
33 (Boltanski 2011 [2009]). The weak then experience an “indignation”  
34 without a target; they might even feel culpable if they accept that their lot  
35 is inscribed in the nature of things, or in the world itself, to use Luc  
36 Boltanski’s terminology again (2011 [2009]). Responsible for their own  
37 fortune, they only get what they deserve.

38 But the injustices persist. Even when they become difficult to theorise,  
39 even if reality tends to conceal itself, all the indicators point towards their  
40 having worsened over the last three decades. During that time, the atten-  
41 tion of political scientists and sociologists has been drawn increasingly to  
42 situated and often monothematic practical demonstrations of resistance to  
43 injustice. These forms of resistance were not all born yesterday, as Lilian  
44 Mathieu and Bruno Frère observe in their chapters. Some of them have  
45 even been around for several decades. But they all benefit from increased  
46 visibility now that the “tide” of totalising and politicised social critique,  
47 that of the historic workers’ movement, has been partially taken out of  
48 circulation.

49 The social-scientific literature of the last 15 years has often described  
50 these practical forms of resistance in terms of a transformation of commit-  
51 ment (Ion et al. 2005; Jacquemain and Delwit 2010; Vassallo 2010; Tilly  
52 and Wood 2013). The “total activism” that developed within the tradi-  
53 tional workers’ movement was said to have been replaced by a “distanced”  
54 commitment: activists now fought for a specific cause and for a given time;  
55 they refused to “sacrifice themselves” for the cause; selfish and altruistic  
56 motivations coexisted. This last point is, without doubt, one of the most  
57 controversial: in the classical conception of commitment as defended, for

example, by Hirschman (1983), invoking personal, selfish, reasons for commitment destroyed the value of even public engagement.<sup>1</sup>

But we cannot even be sure that these characteristics of contemporary modes of activism are new (Kriesi 1995) or not (Pichardo 1997)—an old question that is still actively debated (Peterson et al. 2015). There is no doubt that, as Snow and Soule remind us, there are differences between, for example, the cultural struggles of LGBTQ+ and ecological movements—which want to secure procedural rights and protect lifestyles—and the “older movements” (trade unions, etc.)—which are oriented towards labour and correcting distributional inequities (2010: 236). This seems to be particularly true in the case of France, where some have no hesitation in talking about “new citizenship” or “new associativeness” in the public sphere—which differs dramatically from formalised structures such as parties and trade unions (Waters 2003: 147, 21). And this kind of distinction even inspires the thoughts of critical philosophers (Fraser and Honneth 2003). On the other hand, as Lilian Mathieu suggests, some claimed novelties may consist more in an effect of “belief”, in a displacement of the sociological gaze, than in a transformation of reality. Besides, one can easily imagine that it is not just the social sciences that are responsible for this displacement—that the activists themselves engage in *storytelling* that foregrounds those forms of activism that are socially valued at a given point in time. Thus, the existential difficulties linked to activist commitment certainly afflicted the workers’ movement of the 1920s, just as they afflicted the activist movements of the 1960s, as autobiographical memoirs attest. But today they are without a doubt easier to integrate explicitly into the canonical account of activist experience.

This is why the texts assembled here do not seek to address this question of novelty. They present a sample of experiences all of which provide evidence of forms of collective resistance to injustice in our cognitive<sup>2</sup> (Moulier-Boutang 2011) and connectionist (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005 [1999]) capitalist societies. What these texts have in common is that they all—to different degrees—privilege a *pragmatic* approach: they set out to describe this resistance through actors’ concrete practices, reconstructing the rules that these actors set themselves in order to decide on the legitimacy of their own engagement. For pragmatic sociology, the sociologist cannot claim to know the reasons for actors’ concrete practice better than the actors themselves—and this is because the sociologist does not necessarily have access to a privileged viewpoint. This work thus sees itself as very different from a sociology that “unveils”, whose ambition is

97 to free *hidden reality* from domination so as to better combat it (Boltanski  
 98 and Thévenot [1991] 2006; Frère and Laville 2019; Frère and Jaster  
 99 2018). It also distances itself from a sociology that is too “generalising”—  
 100 a sociology that aims to sketch a universal model of activism today. Yet, the  
 101 chapters collected here are united by a common hypothesis: that committing  
 102 to a cause implies a fundamental moral ability to be outraged by  
 103 injustice. But this ability can be deployed at very different levels of gener-  
 104 ality. It is through the empirical analysis of practices and justificatory dis-  
 105 courses that we must uncover the logic of each of these forms of  
 106 resistance—the *moral grammar* of an indignation that although effective  
 107 may struggle, even refuse, to “rise to generality”, to acquire a theoretical  
 108 justification (Boltanski [2009] 2011).

109 The examples taken up in this book constitute a sample of practices  
 110 because they by no means include all instances of resistance to contempo-  
 111 rary injustice. Common to all of them is their focus on France or, more  
 112 accurately, the French-speaking world, following in the footsteps of exist-  
 113 ing well-known studies (Cerny 1982; Duyvendack 1995). Why focus on  
 114 France? Probably for the reasons highlighted by Waters: “France provides  
 115 a particularly rich and fascinating setting in which to observe social move-  
 116 ments. This is after all a nation defined historically by mass popular upris-  
 117 ing, whose values, principles and ideals have been fashioned by a  
 118 deep-seated revolutionary tradition. French culture was created through  
 119 dissent, through constant challenges to the status quo. From the  
 120 Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Commune of 1871 to the more recent  
 121 events of May 1968 or the ‘big strikes’ of 1995, the course of French his-  
 122 tory has been punctuated by moments of profound social and political  
 123 upheaval. More than with any other European country, conflict lies at the  
 124 heart of French political life and is woven into the very fabric of society,  
 125 symbolising for many the ideals of popular resistance, democratic change  
 126 and the struggle for justice” (2003: 2).<sup>5</sup>

127 On the wide spectrum of social movements that can be classified as  
 128 belonging to the European “new left”—which demand global justice  
 129 while pointing to an almost stunning diversity of candidates for emancipa-  
 130 tion (Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2013)—those who were at the origin of  
 131 the alter-globalist movement in the 1990s and 2000s are today well known  
 132 and have captured the attention of all the specialists (Sommier and Fillieule  
 133 2013: 48). Thus, we no longer focus on *droits devant* or AC! (who fought  
 134 for the rights of the unemployed), ATTAC (the Association for the  
 135 Taxation of Financial Transactions) or José Bové’s *confédération paysanne*,

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who were among the era's central actors (Morena 2013). Even if the alter-globalist tendency is no longer there to unify the movement, the fact remains that in its margins—or a short time after its decline—forms of struggle were born that are less well known and have less media presence. But it is probably they who are aiming to keep the spirit of this “new left” alive today. And it is them who we focus on in this collection.

Remaining within this geographical frame, which has no pretensions towards universality, the examples described here clearly show both the *diversity* of contemporary forms of left-wing engagement in France and their *vitality* at very different scales. All these forms of engagement are unfolding at a conjuncture which could be described, from a more macro-sociological point of view, as a phase of “resilience”: even if it has really become more difficult to think, and *a fortiori* to organise, social contestation during the last 30 years, the “black hole” of the 1980s—during which the discourse of “triumphal” capitalism convinced even (and sometimes primarily) those who lost most from it of its truth—has nonetheless come to a close.<sup>4</sup>

Even if the books' chapters do not explicitly endorse this description of the present, most of their authors seem to see in it a plausible outline of the *global context* in which current forms of engagement are situated. With the fundamental resource of a totalising narrative schema no longer at their disposal, it is logical that these instances of resistance should do two things: first, that they should look to concrete situations for resources; but second, that they should once more pose themselves—but with noticeably greater difficulty than in the past—the question of the “rise to generality”<sup>5</sup>—the question of how to move towards a political demand for social transformation.

Though the forms of resistance presented here may be diverse in terms of their focus and their mode of organisation, it is nonetheless possible to make connections that point towards potentially generalisable logics. By beginning with these experiments studied in their particularity, it is possible to pose questions that concern all of them. Three points, in particular, are worth mentioning, all of which seem even more striking than during the zenith of anti-globalisation.

In the absence of an immediately available “horizon of expectations”, how can indignation express itself and what role do the pressures of necessity play? How can resistance arise from the brute experience of injustice and to what extent does this experience constrain the form in which resistance expresses itself?

175 How do these instances of resistance position themselves in relation to  
 176 institutions and in particular to the state? Is it a question of opposing the  
 177 established authorities, of adapting to them, of enrolling them as allies, or  
 178 some of all these things simultaneously? How can these problems be  
 179 resolved in the face of a state whose boundaries have become increas-  
 180 ingly elusive?

181 What resources can these forms of resistance mobilise in a period that  
 182 appears hostile to them? Are there some themes that lend themselves bet-  
 183 ter than others to transforming local resistance into global critique?

### 184 THE PRESSURES OF NECESSITY

185 The impact of necessity—and even of urgency—is a topic common to  
 186 most of the engagements described here. In their study of the Réseau  
 187 Éducation Sans Frontières (RESF, the Education Without Borders  
 188 Network), Claudette Lafaye and Damien de Blic (Chap. 2) show how  
 189 parents and teachers discover that the threat of expulsion has suddenly  
 190 disrupted the “everyday and unremarkable” worlds of students and their  
 191 parents. Here, moral indignation reaches its maximum; this moral register  
 192 is a powerful “boost” to a highly committed type of activism that consists  
 193 of regular support and presence. In the case of the RESF, it is easy to  
 194 imagine that “there is no room for asking questions”: a strong activist  
 195 response is almost inevitable because it is difficult to “pass by” something  
 196 that happens to someone who—because they belong to a “community”  
 197 (whether centred around the neighbourhood or schools)—is already com-  
 198 pletely endowed with the attributes of an individual. The example of the  
 199 RESF brings this logic of necessity—which involves a commitment that  
 200 almost “goes without saying”—into sharp focus. In this case, actors stick  
 201 closely to moral indignation and, if they move away from this indignation  
 202 (towards the more abstract register of the civic city, which questions the  
 203 legitimacy of current immigration policy), the activist response loses its  
 204 legitimacy. This allows the RESF’s activism to be locally effective; at this  
 205 scale, weak generalisation allows allies to be enrolled more easily (in par-  
 206 ticular civil servants, who would be much more reticent if confronted with  
 207 more militant language). But its critical potential is thereby diminished.

208 Though the RESF reveals the pressure of necessity particularly clearly,  
 209 this pressure is present in many other cases. The transformation of homo-  
 210 sexual activism under the pressure of the emergence of AIDS, described by  
 211 Marta Roca i Escoda (Chap. 3), provides a paradigmatic example of this.

Urgency forced homosexual associations to totally reorient themselves, partly by re-centring themselves around serving the community (leaving to one side the more radical critique of normalising society), and partly by committing to a policy of active collaboration with the state to promote information, support and prevention. If the epidemic took a heavy toll on the homosexual community, this dramatic moment was also paradoxically the occasion of a real victory. Every piece of research conducted during the last 30 years, in Europe as well as in the United States, has shown the progressive “social normalisation” of homosexuality: homophobia has of course not disappeared but it has ceased to be the dominant social norm. In what seemed like a struggle for its survival, the homosexual community—particularly in France and North America—gained a form of recognition, notably thanks to the construction of a “counter-expertise” which impressed even the medical world (Collins and Pinch 2001). Although driven by the pressure of the most extreme necessity, homosexual activism thus achieved a particularly effective “rise to generality” by expanding the frontiers of “common humanity”: in certain countries, in less than a lifetime, the state’s engagement with homosexuality transitioned from moralising penalisation to the promotion of a vigorous anti-discrimination policy.<sup>6</sup>

The solidarity economy, addressed by Éric Dacheux and then Bruno Frère (Chaps. 5 and 10), draws on the same idea of a fight for survival. What neither André Gorz (2001: 205–214) nor Holloway (2010: 69–70) seem to recognise when they criticise the solidarity economy is that it has not arisen from the theories of authors who write about it but has emerged from necessity pure and simple. The solidarity economy has emerged because without it living conditions would seriously deteriorate. This observation holds as much for self-managed cooperatives in Argentina as it does for some local exchange services in France, as well as citizen banking schemes that have developed throughout the world. Perhaps it is true that, as Marx’s *Capital* says, “the realm of freedom really begins only when labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends. It lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper” (Marx 1981 [1867]: 958–959). The realm of freedom really begins when the rule of immediate physical needs comes to an end. But here and now these needs are visible, and there is no other option but to fulfil them and to take every step possible to “get by”.

These texts clearly show how activist commitment arises or transforms itself under the impact of necessity: what can appear heroic in ordinary contexts can become ordinary in heroic contexts.<sup>7</sup> But at a more “banal”

251 level, necessity is omnipresent as a cause of commitment: it is, again, the  
 252 contact with profound poverty that allows Agir Tous pour la Dignité  
 253 (ATD) Quart Monde (All Act for Dignity Fourth World), studied by  
 254 Frédéric Viguier (Chap. 4), to demand that its members engage in a form  
 255 of activism that verges on asceticism. As Fabrice Ripoll explains (Chap. 7),  
 256 repeated food security crises provided the Associations pour le Maintien  
 257 de l'Agriculture Paysanne (AMAP, Associations for the Protection of  
 258 Paysan Agriculture) with the social need that their survival depends on.  
 259 And it was the will to take control of their own professional and technical  
 260 environment that led programmers to establish the free software commu-  
 261 nity, according to Gaël Depoorter (Chap. 6). All these movements' cri-  
 262 tiques vary in their levels of reflexivity and radicalism; but remaining in  
 263 touch with a form of immediately recognisable "need" seems to be a cen-  
 264 tral element of the birth and longevity of the commitment they involve.  
 265 Certain "vital" experiences retain their ability to fuel indignation, even if  
 266 the transition from indignation to critique (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005  
 267 [1999]) has become more fragile for the reasons outlined above. To the  
 268 question of knowing "how is one to continue believing in the feasibility of  
 269 socialism, when the facts have brutally and repeatedly invalidated the  
 270 idea?" (Keucheyan 2014: 30), it becomes possible to respond: resistance is  
 271 possible *without reaching the threshold* of belief. For that reason this resis-  
 272 tance remains fragile, whether it is supported by different "horizons of  
 273 expectations" or unsupported by any such horizon. So it is difficult to  
 274 make it permanent. But the pressure of necessity constantly reactivates it.

## 275 AN AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP TO THE STATE

276 In the various types of engagement we have before us, the relation to the  
 277 state (envisaged in its broadest sense as a public authority) is ambiguous,  
 278 to say the least. The state is by turns an adversary and a tutelary power,  
 279 depending on the circumstances, and sometimes both at the same time.  
 280 The example of the homosexual movement is, without doubt, the most  
 281 revealing in this regard. Immediately following the Second World War, the  
 282 state was in some sense "out of the picture", doubtless because the idea of  
 283 social normalisation of homosexuality seemed relatively inaccessible. The  
 284 movements that emerged consequently appeared more inward-looking;  
 285 they were less activist groups than "circles" of sociability within a com-  
 286 munity that saw itself as discreet. The conjuncture of the 1970s rendered  
 287 the perspective of normalisation more concrete. At this point, the most

conservative states (such as Francoist Spain) appeared as clear adversaries through their preservation, and even their strengthening, of repressive laws that were losing support among the general population. Finally, at the start of the 1980s, AIDS came along and practically inverted the problematic, turning the homosexual movements into allies of a state pressured into acting against the epidemic in a manner that was preventative as well as curative. If, as seems to be the case, this (inevitable) alliance ended up benefiting the homosexual movement—at the very least by drawing attention to the issue of homosexuality’s legal normalisation—this has not necessarily been the case for other forms of resistance.

Thus, anti-poverty movements such as ATD Fourth World are described by Frédéric Viguier as “an instrument for controlling the working classes”; he describes the “cause of the poor” as constituting a space “much less external to the state than it is normally represented as being”. The question of who benefits from an alliance of this kind is much more problematic here. By declaring that the transformation required depends on “work on the self by the poor”, movements like ATD propagate what might in a very general sense be called “the dominant ideology” of network capitalism, which extends demands for individual responsibility and “limitless activation” even to its *outsiders*. The pressure of necessity fuels resistance but, at the same time, it integrates this resistance into a type of global social policy that sustains poverty. This is why, citing Bourdieu, Frédéric Viguier refers to “the left hand of the state”, which may try to offer an ultimate “safety net” but which does so by favouring aid over insurance, thus relieving capitalism of any responsibility for the least productive part of the workforce.

The relation to the state is therefore very problematic. For most activist associations, no matter what their cause, it would be untenable to refuse to collaborate with the authorities—but forming such an alliance comes at a heavy cost because it hampers the development of critical thought. In particular, these associations tend to block “civic” tests<sup>8</sup> centred on the model of making political demands in the public sphere, as demonstrated by their hostility to the idea of occupying the banks of the Canal Saint-Martin in Paris.

This refusal to “rise to political generality” is common to various forms of resistance, including those that confront the power of the state head-on: it is seen in both the solidarity economy and the RESF, whose activists dismiss any critical reflection on immigration policy as this would in some sense “pollute” their existential commitment to serve real flesh-and-blood

327 people. This raises the risk of a “Sisyphean effect”, whereby any partial  
 328 victories are achieved only at the price of refusing to interrogate sys-  
 329 temic effects.

330 This dilemma is not new. The entire history of the 20th century work-  
 331 ers’ movement can be read along the same lines: that of the dialectic  
 332 between the mobilising and demobilising effects of partial victories. The  
 333 workers’ movement at least proposed a theorisation of the state’s role.<sup>9</sup>  
 334 But this theorisation has become difficult today, while the state itself has  
 335 become evanescent: on the one hand, it ceaselessly reaffirms itself through  
 336 symbols and its repressive authority,<sup>10</sup> but on the other, it constantly weak-  
 337 ens the distinction between the public and the private, borrowing its man-  
 338 agerial forms of control from capitalism. On the one hand, it reminds  
 339 actors of their “sovereignty”, while on the other, it partly incorporates  
 340 these social actors to make them into its subcontractors: the state thus  
 341 becomes, according to Zaki Laïdi’s neat formulation (2006), a “fractal  
 342 state” that must negotiate with parts of itself.

343 What results is really a “game with the rules” (Boltanski 2011 [2009]):  
 344 actors find themselves in a system full of blurred lines where the state  
 345 appears as much as an ally as it does as an adversary, and sometimes, as  
 346 mentioned before, both at the same time, depending on the circum-  
 347 stances. Perhaps this situation is impossible to clarify today in France given  
 348 the plasticity of institutions, which are both increasingly fragile and quick  
 349 to claim their “sovereign power” over the weakest actors. But this lack of  
 350 clarification appears, on the whole, as a weakness, liable to lead activist  
 351 engagements to a kind of recurrent impotence.<sup>11</sup> Like Sisyphus pushing  
 352 his boulder, critique, in this case, must always be begun again.

### 353 A CAPACITY FOR SUBVERSION?

354 Contrary to the engagements we have just been talking about (deporta-  
 355 tions, poverty, etc.), which have struggled to “rise to generality”, in other  
 356 cases a similar phenomenon has come to light that gives more reason for  
 357 optimism: forms of commitment that are not a priori anti-capitalist, even  
 358 behaviours that are not experienced a priori as forms of activist commit-  
 359 ment, can produce what we will call “non-intentional critical effects”.

360 We have in mind, first, the AMAPs analysed by Fabrice Ripoll. As his  
 361 chapter clearly shows, their success is partly due to the plurality of registers  
 362 of commitment they have mobilised. One can join an AMAP either  
 363 because of solidarity with rural communities or because of a more general

desire for an ecological form of production. But also because of motivations that are more easily accessible to “ordinary people”, that is, a desire to eat food that conforms to one’s own dietary preferences, whether this desire is generated by fear of certain foods “contaminated” by chemicals (fertiliser and other pesticides), or by a taste for certain flavours. “Moral and political” commitment can thus be minimal, to begin with. This plurality of registers can of course serve to weaken associations (e.g. when a minority of “activists” carry out collective tasks for a majority of “consumers”). But it is also a strength that allows people with commitments that are very different in nature and intensity to come together. The “consumer” who primarily acts according to a “selfish” logic (for their health or to save money) nonetheless provides support for the group by increasing its critical mass. Thus, one can commit oneself without really claiming to perform an *act of commitment* in the traditional sense. The logic of the AMAPs acts as a “transmission mechanism” between the initial investment and the collective result.

The same mechanism is at work, in an even more explicit way, in the “free software community” analysed by Gaël Depoorter. The “founding narrative” of Richard Stallman (Stallman et al. 2010) appeals to an “existential experience of frustration”: seeing yourself excluded from projects to which you yourself have contributed. The justification for free software may rest on a critique of capitalism (the rejection of the private appropriation of collective intellectual work), but this justification does not a priori presuppose a higher level of critical commitment. It rests on “an improbable hybrid of an academic ethos and primitive communism” and above all involves itself in practical activity: the resolution of problems and the sharing of knowledge. Christophe Lejeune (2009) has clearly shown how “the spirit of commitment” among digital communities invokes mutual technical support and not “abstract” critical distance with regard to the internet’s commercialisation. This spirit is translated by the imperative “*Do it yourself!*” It is particularly well illustrated by the use of the *troll*, a (dis)qualifier used to ridicule disputes judged nonessential (not linked to the resolution of problems) in dedicated forums. On reading these interactions, any taste for polemic—which is very common in certain spheres of critical engagement—must be pushed aside in favour of a “virtuous practical register pacified by a weaker level of reflexivity”.

By concretising this practical register, “viral” tools such as the GNU General Public License enable these communities to mobilise resistance even more robustly through the “transmission mechanism” effect

403 mentioned above in relation to the AMAPs: “All software using all or part  
 404 of a development protected by this licence must *de facto* apply its rules,  
 405 thus enabling the construction and permanence of an alternative praxis”.

406 Free software communities are at the heart of what Yann Moulier-  
 407 Boutang (2011) calls the “cognitive” productive mechanism of capitalism.  
 408 Without appearing to affect this mechanism, free software is thus a practice  
 409 with “high subversive potential” due to the very nature of its object. Moulier-  
 410 Boutang summarises the problem very simply: “At the very moment when  
 411 the market seems to have consolidated its position, historically eliminating  
 412 socialism as an alternative to the production of material goods outside the  
 413 market, the quantity of goods, of information and of knowledge which present  
 414 all the characteristics of collective goods becomes so significant that the  
 415 basic justification of private appropriation becomes increasingly acrobatic  
 416 and largely inoperative” (2011). This analysis seems to echo the Marxist idea  
 417 that the development of the “collective intellectual worker” will end up rendering  
 418 the relations of capitalist production suboptimal.

419 Of course, this development is in no way necessary. Capitalism has  
 420 amply demonstrated its ability to incorporate critique and turn its weak-  
 421 nesses into instruments of its own transformation (Boltanski and Chiapello  
 422 2005 [1999]). But the fact remains that there is decisive ongoing battle  
 423 around the private appropriation of the means of intellectual produc-  
 424 tion—in particular, on the internet—and that, ten years after Moulier-  
 425 Boutang was writing, the struggle continues. The practice of free software  
 426 thus contests the global logic of capitalism almost “by default”—that is,  
 427 without the need for a higher level of reflexivity. Free software actors can-  
 428 not be suspected of naivety: they know very well the level at which the  
 429 game is being played. But it is important to note that they do *not need to*  
 430 *know this* for the critique to be effective: *Do it yourself!* is itself a radical  
 431 questioning of capitalism because it weakens its hold on a sector that is  
 432 crucial to the future development of the productive activity.

433 Saying this is not to promote the possibility of “bringing about the  
 434 revolution without knowing it”. Nonetheless, practices of resistance that  
 435 enjoy this privilege, which is usually reserved for capitalism itself, are  
 436 developing: we are seeing the emergence of a capacity for subverting capi-  
 437 talism through the simple effect of contagion. Even if we will not be able  
 438 to dispense with reflexive self-transformation within this process of trans-  
 439 formation, certain slopes will be easier to climb than others. Both the  
 440 AMAP and free software experiments give us examples of the relevance of  
 441 practices that in a sense “spontaneously” access a higher level of generality.

## THE DIFFICULTIES OF “PRACTICAL UTOPIA”

442

Across the different experiences examined, one theme regularly recurs: the difficulty of translating the transformational aims of those involved in acts of “ordinary” resistance into a “coherent praxis”.

Thus, Manuel Cervera-Marzal and Bruno Frère (Chap. 8) provide a detailed analysis of the relationships that arise in an activist collective based on general civil disobedience, *Les refuseurs*. This group of around 50 members, which surrounds a “hard core” of around 20 people, organises acts of disobedience on a wide range of themes. Its members are mostly students or young activists with high cultural capital, but who have relatively precarious lives.

Starting from participant observation and discussion with the members, Cervera-Marzal and Frère demonstrate the “omnipresence” of a latent sexism that is translated in multiple different ways. To begin with, there is what one could call a “differentiated reward” from activism: in a way that is not made explicit, the women are regularly given “execution” tasks and much less often the task of coming up with actions. “Differentiated” reward thus doubly disadvantages them: the tasks are materially less pleasant (cleaning, cooking and purchasing materials) but are also the least symbolically rewarding. Thus it is the male members of the group who take charge of “mediatising” the group’s actions, both through contacts with the media and by publishing on social networks.

To this sharing of tasks, which is implicitly but clearly gendered, can be added the domination of women in the group’s “discursive space”. Cervera-Marzal and Frère thus show how, through examples often not perceived by the group (at least by the men), speech is systematically unbalanced to the detriment of the women, who are either not heard or are even “snubbed”. A female activist explained at length how she experiences this “gendered” way of addressing women, who are subjected to palpably harsher treatment than men.

These observations are not new: since the start of the 1970s, sexism has been summarily denounced by the female members of revolutionary groups and the issue has accompanied the success and then the decline of these groups throughout history. The “resistance” of the 2010s is still struggling to come to terms with this contradiction and, from this point of view, it is firmly “ideologically embedded” in “mainstream” society.

Elsewhere, the “Zone à Défendre” (ZAD) studied by Sylvaine Bulle (Chap. 9) is a success but struggles to accommodate very different forms

480 of “occupation”. The ZAD occupies the site of a proposed airport at  
 481 Notre Dame des Landes near Nantes in western France. Its occupants  
 482 might be divided into three principal groups: the few farmers who were  
 483 there from the beginning; the “activists”, young politicised intellectuals  
 484 who are often influenced by situationist ideas; to whom have been added  
 485 a number of young people who have radically broken with their previous  
 486 lives and are running away from the “normality” of capitalist work and  
 487 consumption. The cohabitation of these three groups takes place largely  
 488 informally: though each agrees to the rejection of capitalism and the need  
 489 to “defend the zone”, no organisation has really come along to “head” the  
 490 occupation and give it a common strategy. The occupants interviewed all  
 491 stress the principle that “no-one can tell anyone else what they should  
 492 do”. For all the residents, the ZAD is both a place of *retreat* and a place of  
 493 *attack*: it is both a question of “fleeing” from capitalism and fighting it,  
 494 even if the predominant tendency differs from person to person.

495 More than just a “cause” in the classical sense, the Zone à Défendre is  
 496 thus an attempt to construct a practical or a real utopia (Wright 2010) that  
 497 provides a great deal of room for individual autonomy and for non-  
 498 institutionalised ways of resolving conflicts. In place of the model and the  
 499 constraints of a largely urban capitalism, the Zone substitutes the paradigm  
 500 of “inhabitation” in a way that cultivates and protects the place inhabited.

501 So has the ZAD been victorious in the end? At the time of writing, the  
 502 government of Emmanuel Macron has just announced the abandonment  
 503 of the airport project. It is not known what the “territory”—which has  
 504 been designated as such for decades—will become. Doubtless, the French  
 505 state would like to reassert its authority by evicting the occupants. But the  
 506 symbol remains strong.

507 Finally to the third aporia of “practical utopia”: the question of the  
 508 *actors’ legitimacy*. This is highlighted in Bruno Frère’s chapter on the soli-  
 509 darity economy (Chap. 10), “politics without politics”. The notion of  
 510 “representativeness” is always leaving by the door (since the political ethos  
 511 of new forms of resistance is a priori distrustful of *delegation*) only to re-  
 512 enter through the window: since as soon as someone speaks, they must  
 513 necessarily speak *in the name of* (a group, a cause, an association, etc.). The  
 514 dispute about legitimate representation is thus both inextinguishable and  
 515 insoluble, as was again experienced by activists of the still-born movement  
 516 Nuits Debout.<sup>12</sup> How can all speak with the same voice when all voices  
 517 must be able to express themselves? How can several voices speak without  
 518 this resulting in an unproductive and unpleasant cacophony?

The accusations of “illegitimacy” levelled against each other by the MES (Movement for the Solidarity Economy) and “Les Pénélopes” (a group seeking to combine feminist solidarity economy initiatives) expose the impasse: each contests the other’s pretension to legitimacy *in the name of symmetrical arguments drawn from the same political “grammar”*.

This difficulty is linked, as Bruno Frère shows, to an inability to address the issue of power head-on. One might thus ask whether this demonstrates a problem with the very concept of “practical utopia”, whose two terms are to some extent inherently antagonistic.

These three chapters clearly show that even though concrete resistance to capitalism has not disappeared—far from it—perspectives on how to leave capitalism behind remain extremely vague. Many characteristics are shared by the “old” and the “new” social movements (we must insist on the quotation marks) as Mathieu points out (Chap. 11). And this remains true even when it comes to the difficulties they experience in concretely defining the post-capitalist utopia that they aspire to.

#### EVERYDAY RESISTANCE?

If we take utopian hopes (in the non-pejorative sense) historically prompted by the workers’ movement as a reference, then the past three or even four decades appear quite naturally as a period in which social critique was defeated. Hopes kindled by the intellectual and activist socialisation that followed the post-May 1968 turmoil share the same experience of a constantly reiterated disillusion. But the fact that it is difficult to reconstruct an effective “totalising” critical thought does not signify that the page of activist engagement has been turned. To convince ourselves of this, we must no doubt change our perspective and seek less the “grail” of a possible new utopia than daily forms of struggle against injustice.

Doubtless, not all paradigms in the social sciences are equally capable of “changing our perspective” in this way. By bringing our attention to the concrete experiments taking place today, as imperfect as they may be, and to the immanent conditions of their legitimacy, the pragmatic approach in sociology and political science shows that—at a globally unfavourable conjuncture—there is resistance everywhere, all the time and in various different forms; sometimes this resistance even achieves victories.

In sum, even if the notion of “everyday resistance” is not new (see e.g. Scott 1987), it takes on a reconfigured meaning today. As it appears in the different chapters of this book, it comes close to the definition given by

556 Stella Vinthagen and Anna Johansson in their impressive review of the  
 557 literature (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013): “(1) *Everyday resistance is a*  
 558 *practice (not a certain consciousness, intent, recognition or outcome; (2) It is*  
 559 *historically entangled with (everyday) power (not separated, dichotomous or*  
 560 *independent); (3) *Everyday resistance needs to be understood as [just as]*  
 561 *intersectional as the powers it engages with (not one single power relation);*  
 562 *and as a consequence (4) It is heterogen[eous] and contingent due to chang-*  
 563 *ing contexts and situations (not a universal strategy or coherent action*  
 564 *form)”*. As these two authors also note, everyday resistance is not neces- AU10  
 565 sarily explicitly conceptualised as resistance by the actors themselves. It  
 566 may be seen first of all as a “survival” or “emergency” practice. This is true  
 567 of the Education Without Borders Network and the AMAPs, as well as  
 568 ATD Quart Monde. Everyday resistance is thus really a *practice* before it  
 569 is an intention or a strategy. This is also how the free software community  
 570 can be defined. But whatever it is, resistance is always engaged in a relation  
 571 with “power” in one form or another—where “power” is understood in  
 572 Foucault’s sense as immanent and relational: power and resistance define  
 573 and are intertwined with each other. This is why resistance is really “inter-  
 574 sectional”: as Vinthagen and Johansson again insist, the criteria of domi-  
 575 nation are multiple and the same actors can occupy dominant or dominated  
 576 positions depending on the criterion chosen. The analysis of sexist prac-  
 577 tices within activist groups conducted by Manuel Cervera-Marzal and  
 578 Bruno Frère clearly illustrates this ambiguity of positions. And as a conse-  
 579 quence, everyday resistance is truly heterogeneous and contingent.*

580 So again, we can only agree with Vinthagen and Johansson: “*Everyday*  
 581 *resistance is a type of act available to all subaltern subjects, all the time, in*  
 582 *some form or another. But not all will resist. And even those who do resist only*  
 583 *do so sometimes and in relation to some system of domination, while they*  
 584 *might utilize other positions of dominance available to to them. When they* AU11  
 585 *resist they will not always affect power; sometimes they will even strengthen*  
 586 *power or create new forms of power techniques”* (2013). AU12

587 All the texts presented here help us to better grasp the strengths and  
 588 weaknesses of the forms of resistance at work—as well as their grips on the  
 589 reality of unremitting injustice. It is not a question of renouncing global  
 590 constructions, but of recalling that such constructions will not be able to  
 591 develop in empirical ignorance of effective forms of resistance: if it really is  
 592 life that determines consciousness, then theorisation can only be emergent  
 593 and the efficacy of local forms of resistance will clear the path towards less  
 594 dismal horizons of expectations.

This empirical work of identifying “grips” is more indispensable than ever. It is the necessary condition for rearming an effective critique, that is, a critique that dares to be radical but does not mistake its dreams for realities.

## NOTES

1. Hirschman notably gives the example of the person who, during a war, allows fugitives to pass to the free zone. He pointed out that it would make no sense to justify their commitment by claiming both that they acted out of patriotism and that their action also brought them financial gain.
2. In the sense that knowledge (distributed) becomes the principal means of production, which, as Marx anticipated, makes the individual appropriation of the means of production into a brake on the development of the productive forces.
3. “Despite recent prophecies to the contrary, instances of protest continue to occur with greater frequency and intensity in France than almost anywhere else. There are more demonstrations, strikes, occupations, marches and petition movements in France today than in most other European societies and conflict is widely accepted by French citizens as a normal, almost banal, occurrence” (*id.*).
4. We should note that all these texts were written, for the most part, before the 15th of May movement in Spain and its “aftershocks” in several countries.
5. Following the tradition that has spread within pragmatic sociology, “rise to generality” denotes the process whereby arguments are universalised, through which actors seek to construct agreement or to extend their alliances.
6. The example of Belgium illustrates this transition particularly well.
7. The inverse is obviously true, as all revolutionary experiences demonstrate.
8. By “civic test” we mean a confrontation with political authorities in the public sphere (see Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006).
9. Or, more precisely, several theorisations, since it was often on this question that the movement was divided. These theorisations described the state as either the dominant classes’ instrument of oppression or the expression of the popular will (via universal suffrage)—or both.
10. In this respect, the “truth tests” spoken of by Luc Boltanski (2009a)—solemn and ritualised reaffirmations of the legitimacy of institutions, which are tending to lose their influence—could experience a second youth as capitalism’s legitimacy weakens: the return to the foreground of the topic of “national identity” in many European countries is evidence of this happening.

- 634 11. In the context of the United States, Nina Eliasoph's very good book  
 635 (2010) can serve as a theoretical counterpoint to most of the experiences  
 636 presented here.
- 637 12. Nuits Debout was a major contestatory social movement that sprang up in  
 638 the outdoor public spaces of most big cities in France. It began on 31  
 639 March 2016 following a protest against the "loi travail". This law aimed to  
 640 revise the Labour Code to give businesses greater room for manoeuvre in  
 641 recruiting and, above all, laying off workers. The movement quickly came  
 642 to involve groups working on many different kinds of issue and so a "con-  
 643 vergence of struggles" was suggested. Its focus consequently expanded to  
 644 the general contestation of political, cultural and economic institutions. In  
 645 the absence of any leader or spokesperson, Nuits Debout was organised  
 646 through self-managed thematic groups. Decisions were made by reaching  
 647 consensus during general assemblies, following the Ancient Greek model  
 648 of direct participatory democracy. The movement occasionally even  
 649 stretched beyond French borders, but it subsequently waned until its even-  
 650 tual demise in summer 2016—at least in its initial form of mass gatherings  
 651 and debates in public spaces (see Wikipedia). For more on Nuits Debout,  
 652 see Gaël Brustier, 2016, *Nuit debout: que penser?*, Paris: Le Cerf.

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# Author Queries

Chapter No.: 1 0004401207

Queries	Details Required	Author's Response
AU2	Please provide details of Hirschman (1983), Frère and Laville (2018), Zaki Laïdi (2006), Stallman et al. (2010), Christophe Lejeune (2009), Boltanski (2009a) in the reference list.	
AU3	Kriesi et al (1995) has been changed to Kriesi (1995) as per the reference list. Please check if okay.	
AU4	Frère and Laville (2018) has been changed to Frère and Laville (2019) as per the reference list. Please check if okay.	
AU5	As a standard practice, quoted material that stretches for more than four to five lines is set as an extract. Please confirm if the in-line quote starting with "France provides a particularly..." should be set as an extract.	
AU6	Please check if instead of 'relation/relationship to the state', it would be more appropriate to write 'relation/relationship with the state'.	
AU7	The expansion for acronym 'AMAP' already includes 'Associations'. Would it be more appropriate to change 'AMAP' to the plural 'AMAPs' when the acronym is first defined?	
AU8	Please provide expansion for 'GNU', if required.	
AU9	As a standard practice, quotations that stretch for more than four to five lines are set as extracts. Should the in-line quote starting with "At the very moment..." be set as an extract?	
AU10	As a standard practice, quotations that stretch for more than four to five lines are set as extracts. Should the in-line quote starting with "(1) <i>Everyday resistance...</i> " be set as an extract?	
AU11	Please check and remove "to" before "to" to avoid repetition in the extract "Everyday resistance is a type..."	
AU12	As a standard practice, quoted material that stretches for more than four to five lines is set as an extract. Should the quotation starting with "Everyday resistance is a type..." be set as an extract?	
AU13	Reference "Hanspeter et al. (1995)" was not cited anywhere in the text. Please provide in text citation or delete the reference from the reference list.	