

# Occupy in Valsusa: The No Tav Movement\*

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## Introduction

The No Tav movement against the high-speed train line—for which the Italian acronym—bears similarities to the Occupy and Indignados movements in its capacity to interweave struggle and social cooperation, and to act as a strong point of reference for those demands for mobilisation and countersubjection which, given the global crisis, have also been re-emerging in Italy, albeit not without difficulty. In this article, after briefly outlining some elements of its development, we will focus on the dynamics which have made the No Tav movement a *commune of struggle* which has been forging strong ties in those who live in the territory, in those who came there at the height of the mobilisation, and in those in the country who feel as if it is theirs because they see in it a restarting point and a possible common perspective in the context of a terrible and ever-deepening crisis.

We are in the Susa Valley, a broad alpine valley to the west of Turin, and one of the central traffic corridors between Italy and France. Since the late-nineties there has been a movement of resistance against the construction of the high-speed railway line planned as part of pan-European corridor 5 (which is supposed to go from Portugal to Ukraine) and which receives minimal funding from the EU.<sup>2</sup> To date resistance has been successful, particularly thanks to the efforts and progress made in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

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See: [http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/media/San\\_Precario\\_Quaderno\\_2.pdf](http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/media/San_Precario_Quaderno_2.pdf)

These notes, which certainly do not represent the breadth of opinion expressed by the movement as a whole, draw heavily on a long interview conducted with three activists of the No Tav Committee of Popular Struggle: Luigi Robaldo, Ermelinda Varrese and Luigi Casel. To a great extent, this article owes its existence to their contribution.

<sup>1</sup> The paragraph of introduction is translated by prof. James Brookes, the others paragraphs by dr. Emanuele Leonardi. The authors thank for this attentive and careful translation.

<sup>2</sup> For information on the No-TAV movement as well as the project itself, see: [www.noitav.eu](http://www.noitav.eu)

<sup>3</sup> From “the battle of Seghino” to the reconquest of the plots of Venaus where the first construction site for the project was supposed to appear. Two films from 2006 show the events of Venaus and plot the history of the movement up until

Construction work has, as yet, not begun: indeed, a single plot of land has merely been fenced off to permit an exploratory tunnel for the construction of the tunnel between Italy and France to be begun. This success has been achieved despite the fact that the movement has been up against all the main Italian political parties, especially the centre-left (boosted today by the explicit support for the project expressed by newly-elected French president Hollande).

The TAV's impact on the environment and on health is worrying, both on account of the duration of the works—expected to exceed fifteen years, and of the further concreting-over of the territory, as well as of the various types of pollution to be faced (including the dispersal of the asbestos and uranium present in the rock to be bored in building the tunnels). All this, when two high-capacity roads, a motorway, an overhead power line and a railway line already run the length of the valley. It would, though, be a mistake to see in this struggle a simple reworking of the environmentalist movement. The No Tav argument has broadened to include not only the defence of a territory, but also a questioning of the interests and the basic model of development which lie behind such grandiose capital projects. The main interest in the creation of the TAV has nothing to do with future flows of traffic between Turin and Lyon, already in a declining trend today, and one which, according to all the most serious cost-benefit studies, cannot be turned around. It does, however, have a great deal to do with the opportunities for profit inherent in the construction work itself thanks to a system in which the investments are made by the State while the profits thereof are private. All this combined, of course, with the already obvious absurdity of the project: even taking as good the ridiculously inflated official figures on the volumes of passenger and goods traffic expected for the future, corresponding supply capacities would be achievable more swiftly and more economically by modernising the existing line which operates today at only 30% of its capacity.<sup>4</sup>

In summer 2011 the conflict grew more violent: after a further ultimatum from the European Union; the end of June saw nothing less than an action of military occupation of the area of Chiomonte

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that time: “Stop that Train – Video-inquiry into the NO TAV movement – Images and interviews from the struggle”. [http://www.arcoiris.tv/modules.php?d\\_op=getit&id=5097&name=Flash](http://www.arcoiris.tv/modules.php?d_op=getit&id=5097&name=Flash) with subtitles in English and *Centro Autogestito Askatasuna e Comitato di Lotta popolare*, “Fermarlo è possibile. Fermarlo tocca a noi!” (“It can be stopped. It's up to us to stop it!”), 2006. For in-depth analysis of the events of 2006 we recommend the book: Centro Sociale Askatasuna e Comitato di Lotta, eds, (2006), *NO TAV, la valle che resiste*. (No TAV, the valley which resists.) Turin, Ed. Velleità Alternative

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of the data for the project and its completion was undertaken by the participants of the recent conference: *TAV Torino-Lione. Quali opportunità e criticità?*, (TAV Turin-Lyon. What opportunities and threats?), Politecnico di Torino, Thursday 26 aprile 2012, Records of the contributions on the web page: <http://areweb.polito.it/eventi/TAVSalute/>

in which the works were due to commence, with the violent clearing of the camp—known as Libera Repubblica della Maddalena (Free Republic of Maddalena—indicating the name of the locality) which the movement had set up there. There followed a mass uprising from the third of July which saw the presence of more than 50,000 residents of the valley and activists from all over Italy and beyond<sup>45</sup> with clashes with the army and police force throughout the day. The mobilisation continued in the following months both with initiatives from the movement and in response to the decree of the new Monti government which has made the area a military zone and to the arrest last January of twenty-six activists.<sup>6</sup>

The third of July 2011 marked a great step forward for the inclusive dynamic of the movement. From then on, those who have mobilised in Italian towns and cities have not merely shown solidarity to a valley under military rule, but have felt that what is at stake is the future of all. People, “ordinary” and indignant, have felt called upon to take a stand on a point which is as simple as it is crucial. High speed: with whose money and to what purpose in the economic crisis? What future is in store with this model of development? And is this democracy?

## A Constituent No (In Its Own Way)

The No Tav movement<sup>7</sup> has been, and continues to be, an important *laboratory* for the constitution of co-operative *subjectivities* in a struggle which surely shows peculiar traits but has nonetheless elaborated a language (and tackled political problems) that goes beyond the specific issue of the High Speed Train (HST). In fact the movement, after the “re-conquering” of Venaus in December 2005,<sup>8</sup> has not stopped its activities—in so far as the counterpart has persisted in its intentions. On the contrary, the movement has consolidated itself as a diffused and intergenerational movement by reinforcing its

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<sup>5</sup> The history of those days is richly documented in numerous works by mediactivists. A documentary film: *Fratelli di TAV, I peccati della Maddalena, (Brothers in TAV, the sins of Maddalena)* 2011, <http://vimeo.com/27579834>. A collective e-book: Agenzia X, (2011) *Nervi saldi, cronache dalla Val of Susa, (Strong nerves, chronicles of the Susa Valley)* <http://www.agenziax.it/?pid=53&sid=30>. A concise reflection on the July days: K. Carls, D. Iamele, (2011) *Stop that train – Entwicklung und Aktualität der No-TAV-Bewegung gegen die Hochgeschwindigkeitstrasse Turin–Lyon, Sozial.Geschichte Online, Heft 6 / 2011*, <http://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DocumentServlet?id=26827>

<sup>6</sup> S. Maglioni and G. Thomson, (2011) *Trans Euro Express* <http://www.infoaut.org/index.php/blog/culture/item/3967-trans-euro-express>, Tube Track in solidarity with the NoTav arrestees.

<sup>7</sup> The No Tav movement arose more than ten years ago in Susa Valley, an alpine region in North-West Italy which connects the Turin area and France. Since then, the movement opposes the planned High Speed Train line and its impacts on the territory.

<sup>8</sup> The village of Venaus represented the first place where the confrontation between the movement and its counterpart reached high levels of conflict. About this phase of struggle see the video “Stop that Train – Video-inquiry into the NO TAV movement – Images and interviews from the struggle”. Available for free downloading at [www.arcoiris.tv](http://www.arcoiris.tv).

disseminated local presence in different forms and by widening its areas of interest to include more general issues and to seek forms of co-ordination with other mobilizations around real democracy and social commons (M15, Indignados and Occupiers), territorial and natural commons (from the No Dal Molin to the No Ponte, from the region of Campania to the referendum against the privatization of water<sup>9</sup>). Just a year ago the movement has actively blocked a series of planned logs, imposing after a month the definitive retreat of the drills transported in the valley during the night. In the meanwhile, the movement has resisted the absorption into the tactic of the Observatory<sup>10</sup>—the invitation to shift from a “destructive” no to a participatory (!) “how to” that has “seduced” some previously skeptical mayors—and has not changed its attitude—radical openness while maintaining the clarity of its goal and the distinction of political roles—towards those political representatives and local institutions available to participate in the struggle against the HST, even if just to a given extent.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the no to the HST has become something deeper, aware and informed after (and thank to) the collective involvement of bodies and minds. At first, an exponential raise at the “hot” level of conflict—also the militarization of the valley has “helped” –, then a consolidation *after* the uprising. Let us note that this process of consolidating has allowed the valorization of the enormous work of organization, knowledge and communication carried out by the first groups of activists *before*, sometimes even well before, the decisive confrontations, reactivating in this way the non-institutionalized memory of past struggles. Maybe this dynamics—which can be defined, without emphasis, constituent in its own way—tells us something about the phase we are living through, and also about the struggle-organization link...

### **From the Critique of *Grandi Opere* [Big Infrastructures]...**

All this refers to the peculiar mass-character of the movement. The term *community* is often used to describe this situation: we can like it or not, but the fundamental element is that this is a non-given, non-natural community. Rather, it self-constituted itself within and through the struggle (and, as a consequence, it is always at risk). So, the question is: how did it form itself? Let us synthetically recall it.

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<sup>9</sup> Respectively, these struggles refer to: the movement against the enlargement of the US military base in Vicenza; the movement against the planned Strait of Messina bridge between Sicily and Calabria; the struggles against incinerators and new landfills in Campania; the referendum campaign against the privatization of water public services.

<sup>10</sup> An institutional device for negotiations, proposed by the counterpart after the resistance in Venaus. Beyond its rhetoric, the Observatory aims at “softening” the radical positions assumed in the valley by mayors and the *Comunità Montana* [a local institution whose aim is the management of mountainous districts].

<sup>11</sup> Even the creation of electoral rolls in 14 municipalities for the 2010 elections has not been experienced as the highest point of the participatory process, even less as the political outcome of the struggle. The same can be said about the “lobbying” towards the *Comunità Montana*, led by a dissident member of the former *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* [Left-wing Democratic Party]. Moreover, the movement has always refused to endorse the referendum as a political tool, since within the current context it could only be used against its goals (Luigi C. in the interview). There is no “forms” fetishism, but a full and resolute practice of substantial democracy within mobilizations.

The movement, which at the beginning was not numerically large, has initially examined the technical, environmental and economic features of the HST project. As for these issues, it has been able to incorporate also the knowledge of technical “experts” in a sort of permanent learning laboratory that positively affected both elaboration and diffusion (Cancelli, Sergi, Zucchetti, 2006). It has been an “anonymous” work but, little by little, it has become more and more widespread through a process of mass self-communication (Castells, 2002). At first, the emphasis was concentrated on the territorial and health-related costs to be sustained in exchange of basically inexistent social and economical advantages. A sort of reversed cost-benefit analysis, to be used against corporations and politicians, transversally with regard to the constitutional arch. Hence, the second passage: who is going to profit from the realization of the HST? How is it financed? What emerged here was the model of subtle privatization which suits the project of *Grandi Opere* [big infrastructures] particularly well. This contractual system relies on the State to provide liquidity for investments, but grants the act of construction to big private companies (“general contractors”) without any call for tenders. This model entails a constant raise of construction costs and is structured around a system of subcontractors which employ precarious labor and overexploit it (Bologna, 2011)—as it has been widely documented for the High Speed lines already built throughout Italy. Such a model survived the Tangentopoli era and was subsequently refined under the rule of centre-left governments (during the Nineties). Its perfection, however, has been reached with the *Legge Obiettivo* (Goal Law), promulgated by the Berlusconi's government in 2002. Here we have a classic example of socialization of losses—under the form of negative externalities—and privatization of profits (Cicconi, 2004).<sup>12</sup>

The common elaboration and assimilation of such a critical point of view explains the constant presence, within the movement's discursive toolbox, of issues linked to the accusation of political corruption and of the active role of organized crime. It also accounts for the particular attention paid to the issue of public debts. However, this is not “populism”. At a closer sight, what we see here is the emergence of a “situated” form of criticism toward financial capital, especially regarding its destructive effects on a whole territory: an uncertain future, no longer in terms of mere employment but in terms of life in general and a debt-based economy organized around the structural plunder of the “public” sector (Sciortino, 2011).<sup>13</sup> From this perspective the No Tav struggle is certainly a *local* conflict, but

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<sup>12</sup> On this issue the contribution of Ivan Cicconi's book *Le grandi opere del cavaliere* [“The Cavalier's (Berlusconi's) Big Infrastructures”] has been fundamental to the movement. Notwithstanding its title, the book contains strong critiques of centre-left governments as well.

<sup>13</sup> This issue has rapidly emerged in recent months, most notably in connection with the constant worsening of the debt-induced economic crisis. See Sciortino, 2011 and the debate organized on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in the context of the self-organized No Tav camping: <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/17211868>.

absolutely not *localistic*, namely affected by the NIMBY syndrome. At stake is territory not as an egoistic object of re-appropriation but, rather, as a *common* that refers to the crucial elements of production and, more generally, of redistribution of social wealth. This notion of territory as common allows to grasp politics and economy as strictly interconnected and, as a consequence, to undertake a practical critique of, as it were, *public political economy*.

### **...To the Critique of Political Representation**

Through this passages a new awareness arose: the movement was responding not only to the project of *Grandi Opere*, but also to the crisis of legitimation experienced by institutional powers, which is to say the crisis of political representation in the post-democracy (Crouch, 2005). It has been an important development: it stemmed from concrete practices to grasp the material base of the current “crisis of politics”, namely the link among state, banks, big companies and institutional consortia. The mass resistance for the safeguard of the territory grew its strength through the awareness—that at a certain point became generalized—of acting legitimately against an arbitrary legality imposed by the state and political parties. This affirmation of *another legality* (Mattei, Nader, 2008) had to break the law, to exercise its right-power to resist for a real democracy on the territory. Correspondingly, at the beginning the problem of organization was carried over outside traditional forms, such as parties and unions, since these latter were deaf to the movement's claims (Melucci, 1991; Farro, 2001; Biorcio, 2005). This went on until the full autonomy of local institutions became a value in itself and a necessary condition for the essential question: “who decides?” (Chicchi, Leonardi, 2008). This element represented, together with the safeguard of the territory from an omnivorous idea of development, the specific common defended by the movement, well beyond the Susa Valley. This has been done within a democratic practice—that proved effective and self-organized—characterized by the originality and creativity of procedures, “institutions” and communication circuits. In other terms, the movements—as M 15—performed a practice of real democracy (Citton, Querrien and Secretan, 2011), a sort of “democracy of control” over local political institutions (Della Porta, Piazza, 2008; Caruso, 2010). Although some terms rapidly deteriorate, the word “horizontality” still describes in a fairly precise way the movement's organizing and participatory practices. During the “hot” moments of conflict, the process of activation has been concentrated in the assemblies where, so far, it has always been possible to find non-forced syntheses in the context of which the unity of the movement and the direct reference to the goal constitute the most fundamental shared principle.

Even the spatial dimension has been reconfigured. Meeting places (no longer parties or unions offices, but *presidi* [protest sites on the territory], “re-appropriated” buildings of local institutions, streets, schools, courtyards, etc.) have become open spaces where people interact in two ways: multifarious goal-oriented co-operation; (re)construction of social relationships against atomization. This is the true bonding agent of the movement, the essence of its *political work*: “It is a form of submissive and dormant subjectivity that the population of the Susa Valley seems to have refused” (Leonardi, 2008: 419). This dimension has allowed a constant and punctual seeking for unity within heterogeneity: a unity built around different subjects, visions, individual histories, perspectives and even political roles (Pittavino, 2012).

It is a real process—as such not always painless, constitutively non-linear—of unification among concrete subjects which are irreducible to a pre-given common perspective. These subjects transformed themselves through struggle, creating new relations and producing something not only unprecedented, but even unthinkable in advance<sup>14</sup>.

### **A New Kind of Inquiry**

The movement's internal debate has experienced, and still experiences, different themes of discussion and analysis that share a common interest but incorporate different problematics. We witness here a kind of collective participation which valorizes specific competencies and sensitivities and produces, through a subterranean but systematic work, an *ensemble* of critical information not easily available, incorporating the contribution of the “experts” in an intelligent way.

Just a few months ago, to mention exclusively the most recent example, the Co-ordination of Susa Valley Physicians presented its inquiry on the effects on public health of the possible opening of new constructing sites in the valley (www.notav.eu 2011).

The movement implements a true program of self-education, starting from a critical reflection on issues such as environment, noxiousness, mobility. Thank to this program, energies and ideas circulates through a larger body. There are no “organic” intellectuals: knowledge is produced by many subjects, direct integration between competencies and practices of struggle.

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<sup>14</sup> Ermelinda Varrese in the interview.

We do not want here to propose improbable continuities between these processes and previous experiences of workers' inquiry or co-research (Alquati 1997). Nonetheless, it is somehow surprising to note how in the No Tav movement the inquiry-form strikes back in an embedded guise, as an internalized but non-theorized practice (Armano and Sciortino 2006).

Activists acquire official documents (often very complex), analyse them by confronting their contents with territorial experiences and evidences, discuss them publicly and, in so doing, elaborate and produce new critical knowledge. In this way knowledge becomes an endogenous element of the movement, one of its internal productions. There is no “objective” or “scientific” knowledge to be placidly trusted. There is no deference towards experts. When new technical elements emerge, the movement must be in the position to discuss them. Meanwhile, the relationship with knowledge is, so to speak, “thing”-related, namely non-ideological: the movement acquires specific—not specialistic—contents. Experts are welcome but do not set the agenda: knowledge is knowing together. It goes without saying that this kind of behaviour entails a pitiless but attentive critique of mass-mediatic propaganda concerning issues which are sensitive to the movement<sup>15</sup>.

The movement utilizes new media, but does so in a sober manner (as tools of diffusion) to reinforce previously established face-to-face relationships. In this way, communication through networks proves itself decisive with regard to practices of resistance. In fact, it deploys itself either on previously inexistent bonds or on links created by struggles. Moreover, it shows the full potential of message proliferation and mass self-communication which is typical of new media.

On this basis communication turns into organization: fluid, open and non-hegemonic, it is able to involve different subjects around common goals without imposing an exclusive point of view, but rather respecting different practices and forms of expression.

Through these modalities the movement is able to *reflect on itself*, to question its moods and perceptions. In other words, it educates itself through the production of new information. In this way, knowledge, communication networks and organizational processes overlap with subjective self-recognition and self-constitution (personal as well as collective).

## **Development and Class Composition**

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<sup>15</sup> “Among activists, a common joke states that in Susa Valley is to be found the highest world-wide concentration of transportation experts” (Leonardi 2008: 421).

As a first step what is needed is a reflection about the composition of the movement. It is a composition linked to a profound sense of space which is, from a social and political perspective, transversal. This aspect produced different reactions: “purist” ones, suspicious of the inter-class feature of the movement; “open but reductionist” ones, according to which the movement would be led by “reflexive middle classes”; “dismissive” ones, which stress that since labor is not the centrepiece of the No Tav movement, then it must be limited not just territorially (which is obvious) but also in scope. The essential point here is to avoid confusion between political and “programmatically” evolutions of the movement, that can obviously be criticized and that, in any case, did not occur in a pneumatic void, and its reduction to a merely environmentalist struggle *et similia*. What we can say is that, also from the perspective of composition, we are facing something which embryonically overcome both the traditional environmental struggle and the merely additive link between environment and labor.

In fact, at a closer look the generic inter-class and “popular” texture (made up by workers, public employee, old and new middle classes, small entrepreneurs, etc.) seems to be inadequate to understand the peculiarity of the No Tav movement. What emerges is something else, more disconcerting or more promising—depending on the point of view—something that, as usual when referring to new social phenomena, arises from the struggle and only through its lenses can be properly understood. What we have seen is the unprecedented connection of “simple” individuals substantially deprived of traditional vectors of belonging and of class identities—typical of the declining Fordist industrial cycle. These individuals do not possess any organized protection against a new modality of production that, at a certain point, has shown itself as being exclusively destructive. Women and men normally reduced, as everybody else, to a consumerist existence, forced to produce in a territory traversed by flows of commodity circulation, scarred by consumption cathedrals, theatre of an everyday mass commuting process toward a city which is desperately seeking a “cognitive” conversion for a manufacturing sector in deep crisis. Therefore, it was *individuals* who took the streets: not because with the collapse of old belongings also class relationships and social inequalities disappeared, but because capitalist relations are so pervasive that even individuals are nowadays weavers of *social relations*. Individuals are normally exposed to alienating and disrupting dynamics. Nonetheless, in certain conditions, it is possible to reverse such dynamics through the creation of a community that is not natural or pre-given, but rather to be continuously built on the potential richness of those *ambivalent* relationships which in everyday life are put to value for the market and not for oneself.

It is precisely this social composition, if we can still call it this way—it is very difficult to define it in sociological or statistical terms –, that undertook a process of antagonistic *subjectification*. And in this process it had to confront in a new way the issue of *development*. Clearly, the No Tav struggle is not against the “primitive accumulation” of infrastructures but rather against its, as it were, destructive “enlarged reproduction” within globalization. The critique elaborated by the No Tav movement grew “spontaneously” against the idea of sacrificing people's life to a huge but useless logistic platform for the sake of commodity circulation and the transformation of territories into an open “space of flows”. Subsequently, such a critique refined itself against that model of private appropriation of public money which, through the system of *Grandi Opere*, has not only made corruption a structural phenomena, but also led to the diffusion of precarious working relations—typical of *post-Fordist* enterprises<sup>16</sup>. In this way, an opposition to the destructive features of a certain idea of “development” has acquired consistency. This idea is not seductive any longer in so far as it dislocates more and more on two opposite fronts profits and losses. Moreover, it does so without proposing a political and economical “exchange” to workers and/or to small enterprises (as it was the case in previous phases) as compensations for damages to social life and the environment<sup>17</sup>. Needless to say, as a consequence of the economic crisis this disconnection is worsening.<sup>18</sup>

Something similar has been shown, in a Turin which tends to look backwards, by the events concerning Fiat Mirafiori: the loss of credibility of the “industrial plan” proposed by a finance-oriented management. After all, how profoundly has the workers' union Fiom-Cgil been influenced by the No Tav struggle in its progressive, if still partial, questioning of industrialism's dogmas?

To conclude on this issue, we might say that not only labor is present within the No Tav struggle, but from the collapse of the previous composition of labor (if we still want to use such a vocabulary) emerges today a texture of productive and reproductive relations—Marx's *social individual?*—which arduously attempts to turn itself into an adequate “political” figure for those capital relations that tend to cover the entire spectrum of life (Sciortino 2006).

## **Conclusion: Commons as Program?**

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<sup>16</sup> Ivan Cicconi, the already mentioned author of *Le grandi opere del cavaliere*, has particularly insisted on this point during the No Tav assemblies.

<sup>17</sup> A good example of this dynamics is the *Open Letter* sent by the No Tav movement to local craftsmen and entrepreneurs ([www.infoaut.org](http://www.infoaut.org), 2011). It is not by chance that the most recent attempt to gain consensus by the Observatory is the substitution (on paper) of mega-contracts with small-ones, so that local small enterprises can be involved in the process.

<sup>18</sup> This aspect forces the No Tav movement to face the labour-blackmailing articulated by the HST proponents.

The Susa Valley in struggle is not an idyllic alpine environment; rather, it is the extension of a metropolis under restructuring and of a densely infrastructuralized area<sup>19</sup>. At stake is a territory pervaded by economic and power relations in which social life has become conflicting with private logics of profit-making. For this reason, the No Tav movement must face the new configuration of the territory, contested between space of global-commodified flows and spaces of social life.

The movement is doing that, to a significant extent, through a non-traditional process of mobilization. Its strength, and partly its luck, is that it does not have to defend old structures and that it cannot do it by means of old tools. Or through the re-proposition of the traditional—and powerful, back in the days—link between struggles and capitalist development<sup>20</sup>. To be extremely synthetic—and avoiding any idealization—we can say that a new field of forces has emerged and that such a field shows remarkable potentialities.

The main resource of the mobilization is linked to the fact that the struggle concerns the reproduction of a kind social life which must defend something like a *common*.<sup>21</sup> This is an aspect that can widen itself through its connection to different but linked elements. It is now commonly acknowledged that life—in this case: territory, health, mobility, decision-making, critical knowledge—is not only opposed, as a limit, to markets' voracity. In addition, it must be defended also as a possibility of aware and collective reproduction against privatization. Here is situated the thin ridge that separates a “public” good—which can always be dispossessed from its producer via privatization (be it public or private)—and an authentic common.<sup>22</sup>

The No Tav movement has concretely posed this issue in Italy through its struggle of resistance. This is absolutely remarkable, especially if we consider that similar problems were already raised—although in general and “ethical” terms—by the No Global movement. More than that, however, the

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<sup>19</sup> The valley has been an important industrial centre, today largely abandoned, with a remarkable immigration from Southern Italy. Moreover, the valley is traversed by three motorways, a train line and a long-distance power line.

<sup>20</sup> Here is where the issue of de-growth becomes relevant. It is surely present in those No Tav discussions that attempt to acquire a larger – almost programmatic – perspective. In the context of this article we cannot discuss in details this theoretical perspective, neither in terms of its reception within the No Tav movement, nor in its own theoretical substance, which presents political as well as analytical shortcomings.

<sup>21</sup> Here we encounter anew the issue of labour: how can today's defensive struggles on the part of workers find new force? Should they present labour more as a common than as a right? Yet, is this possible for a kind of labour which is separated into an enterprise? Or, differently, do we necessarily need to leap into the social dimension of salary, into a new welfare?

<sup>22</sup> To this fundamental element an internal (which is to say neither external nor ideological) self-criticism should be addressed. Particularly critical seem those “spontaneous” tendencies, within the movement or in its average diffused consciousness, which emphasize the need to recuperate a “true” legality, a state without corruption or organized crime, etc. In fact, it is on this basis that arguments such as Beppe Grillo's ones can find receptive audiences. [Beppe Grillo is a popular Italian comedian. His political activity, utterly technocratic in its core, has recently been centred around the notion of legality (or, better, the lack thereof in the context of Italian public institutions)].

No Tav movement could not do, at least in these conditions. In its isolation from a depressing national framework,<sup>23</sup> the movement perceives itself as defensive and, as a consequence, cannot shift from resistance to re-appropriation, to an active production of commons. Notwithstanding, sometimes the question ends up being posed among activists: what will we be able to do once we will have won the HST battle? Will we manage to go beyond this situation, with regard to life- and labor-forms?<sup>24</sup>

So far, it took a lot of determination and a little luck. Just the proliferation of struggles about commons, if these will arise, will begin to answer to this question...

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<sup>23</sup> Although many efforts to open the struggle beyond the limits of the valley have been made, among activists is diffused a sense of separation which is perceived as an almost unsurpassable obstacle (Luigi Casel in the interview). There is a double reaction with regard to this problem: on the one hand, the national political chaos is considered to be positive since it enlarges adversary's uncertainties; on the other hand, it prefigures a trend of disintegration from which it is difficult to take distance (Luigi Robaldo in the interview).

<sup>24</sup> Ermelinda Varrese in the interview.

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