



Arson with Demands. On the Swedish Riots

Arson with Demands

– On the Swedish Riots

30-40 years ago, the state could afford to BUILD 1 million flats in 10 years, now it's too poor to even RENOVATE them.¹

This exclamation is highly representative of the activism that has flourished in the suburbs of Stockholm these past years. In this case, it comes from Megafonen ('The Megaphone'), a grass-roots activist group founded by young people in the Stockholm suburb Husby in 2008, around the principles of democracy, welfare, community, work and education. The state, says Megafonen here, no longer lives up to its proper function, which would be to ensure the material well-being of people through housing policies. The ambivalence of this perspective is already clear in the nostalgic reference to the heyday of Swedish social-democratic welfare, represented by the state housing policy which led to the construction of '1 million flats' between 1965 and 1974. On the one hand, it recognises cuts, privatisations, closures, etc. as symptoms of an already existing capitalist restructuring. On the other hand, its actions emerge as the affirmation of what is left of the infrastructure and political institutions that formed the Swedish workers' identity, e.g. public housing.

This ambivalence can be made coherent: by fighting the advancement of the restructuring, one is at the same time defending that which it has not yet reshaped. But then, one leaves aside an essential product of the destruction of workers' identity: the end of the political existence of the proletariat in Sweden which, in the most pauperised areas, has been accompanied by the development of inarticulate riots between 2008 and today. If we take the practices of these riots into account, the ambivalence of Megafonen's type of activism – the fact that it operates within that which incarnates the end of workers' identity, and at the same time tries to organise upon the remnants of that identity –, appears as a contradiction between the conditions in which it exists and its perspectives. In a time in which the proletariat, in the obligation to sell its labour power which defines it, is structurally excluded from the table of collective bargaining, this activism still does, through its denunciations of 'the state' and its various institutions, affirm the possibility of a dialogue and a future within this society. In a word, it defends a welfare state which no longer exists.

It would be tempting to analyse this contradiction along a revolt-reform axis, in which the riots would incarnate the destructive language of ruptures, whereas the activists would

¹ Megafonen, Alby är inte till Salu! [Alby is not for sale!], <<http://megafonen.com/alby-ar-inte-till-salu/>>, our translation.

incarnate the constructive language of politics. The riots would be a mere symptom of the destruction of workers' identity, whereas the activists would be trying to find a remedy to it. But if one takes a closer look at the events in the long run, this political-theoretical construct does not fit. Of course, the riots are not harmoniously united with this activism. The practices of burning cars and setting fire to the head-quarters of various institutions, or fighting the police and the fire brigade, are qualitatively different from practices such as demanding specific political transformations and explicitly stating what institutions' function should be. But with regard both to the subjects that carry out these practices, and to the practices themselves, the relation between riots and activism is not that of two clearly distinct camps. What is at stake is to reveal this contemporary relation between rioting and activism in Sweden, to see what this says about the current period more broadly.

Six years after the riots in Malmö, five years after the riots in Göteborg, and more than a year after the week of riots in Stockholm and other Swedish cities, the scarcity of writings about these events prevents us from even picturing what happened during the riots. Therefore, what is needed first and foremost is a description of the emergence of both riots and activism in the suburbs of these cities between 2008 and last year. The focus on the practices which compose the riots on the one hand, and the activism on the other, must be followed by an exposé both of their historical production and of that which structures the so-called suburbs today. This will lead us to look at the inner relation between the riots and the activism in these suburbs, and to formulate a question which exceeds the Swedish context: that of social and political integration.

Occupations, Campaigns... And Riots

The 'Stockholm riots' of 19-27 May 2013 do not just appear in a social and political vacuum. They were preceded by other Swedish riots, most notably the 2008 riots in Malmö, which started with an occupation of a public space, the 2010-2011 riots in Göteborg, which culminated in the formation of a movement for the refurbishment of the suburbs, and last but not least, the 2013 'Stockholm riots' are in themselves inseparable from a longer Stockholm-specific history of defending public utility. When we take a close look at the practices which compose these events, the fragile relation between riots and activism comes to the front. As we will see, riots in the suburbs coexist with civic protest movements with explicit demands, although they also develop their own specific tactics. In the Swedish context, suburban riots emerged in defence of public space or against rent increases, and as such, they can be seen as a kind of illegitimate negotiation.

Along these lines, both in terms of subjects, practices and political outcomes, the 'Stockholm riots' of 2013 are a product of a longer contemporary history of riots. We could say that this history began in the part of Malmö called Rosengård in December 2008.² The riots in Rosengård were preceded by the occupation of a locale in the centre of Herrgården, one of the neighbourhoods which compose Rosengård. The occupation was organised by local youth with immigrant background and some white housing activists from other parts of the city. For 16 years, this locale had been used as a mosque by the Muslim Cultural Association, but also – a fact often left out in most reports of the events – by *twenty other*

² The following account of the riots in Rosengård is primarily based upon: Mookie Blaylock, 'It takes a nation of millions to hold us back – Rosengård i revolt', *Direkt Aktion* no. 58, August 2009, pp. 8-17.

associations for cultural and educational activities like youth recreation, supplementary tuition and so on. With the planned restorations of the neighbourhood, Ilmar Repalu, a local social-democrat, as well as representatives of Contentus, the real estate company that owns the place, thought that a mosque would no longer 'fit in'. To understand such an attitude, one must bear in mind that Rosengård, much like Husby in Stockholm or Backa in Göteborg, is an area which, following the transformations of the labour market and the growing unemployment starting in the 1970s, gathers almost exclusively first or second generation immigrants, of which a great number are Muslims. Once neighbourhoods with public housing for the working class, these 'suburbs' have now become some of the rare places which still offer rents and housing accessible to newly arrived people with refugee or family reunification background, but also to the unemployed, long-term sick-listed, former convicts, early retired/sick pensioners, etc. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, such suburbs were commonly perceived as hideouts for gangs or drug addicts, their symbol is now another figure of Otherness: the Middle Easterner or the African, often associated with Islam. Hence, from the point of view of public authorities, the line between social refurbishment and cultural edification might be a very fine one.

However, the police only intervened in the locale with full powers – muddy boots, dogs, shields, batons and pepper spray – on 12 December, after three weeks of occupation. According to all the parties involved, the night after the eviction was probably the calmest of the week. More and more people gathered to defend the occupation, so the police had to drag them out of the place again. An hour or so later, calm was restored, but the occupation continued, displaced to the lawn in front of the place. People stayed around the police perimeter for several days and nights, pursuing the activities that were usually held in the premises. Mats were laid out for prayers, young people were hanging around, tea and bread was served, a couple of older men set up tents to sleep in, and an old parabolic antenna was used as fireplace.

Riots only broke out on Monday 18 December. Youth from the neighbourhood who had taken part in the occupation and their friends, most of them male and under 18, started gathering in small groups, circling around the area of Herrgården. To begin with, containers and some dustbins were set on fire, and the windows of another real estate company, Newsec, were broken. The day after continued in the same way while the police started to intervene more actively. One of the guys they had arrested was liberated by force, an officer was beaten to the ground, stones were thrown at the fire brigade. Finally, some of the young adults from the neighbourhood gathered and attacked the cops that were standing in front of the locale. They threw rocks at them and ran away. Still, both children, younger and older people stood in front of the locale. Having kept it under uninterrupted watch for two days and nights, the police then decided to close access to it by placing large containers by truck. This only caused general irritation to escalate. During the Wednesday, arson, the throwing of fireworks, stones and glass bottles at the police, as well as attacks on the offices of the local real estate companies spread all over the area of Herrgården. The police station in the centre of Rosengård was attacked. People set fire to dustbins placed out along Ramels väg, a central road in Rosengård, in order to stop the traffic. When the fire brigade arrived, it was chased away with fireworks and stones. It was also on Wednesday that a dozen autonomous activists, some with links to the Antifa scene, arrived in this part of Rosengård, but gathered only very briefly before they were all encircled and caught by the police (19 people were arrested that

were not from the neighbourhood). The next day, Thursday, the police station in the centre of Rosengård was completely wrecked, while the local offices of the real estate companies Contentus and Newsec were destroyed and looted (some computers and other valuables were stolen). Powerful home made bombs started to circulate within certain groups. The whole of Rosengård was burning. People rebuilt barricades as soon as the police destroyed them, but only few of them directly confronted the police when they arrived.

The police, which was literally chased out during the Wednesday and Thursday, regained control over the area on Friday, aided by reinforcements from two of Sweden's biggest cities, Göteborg and Stockholm. Several hundred riot police officers were now constantly present in Herrgården. Although the long period of intense arson, attacks on the police and building of barricades which we may call the 'Rosengård riots' was over, the practices that compose this event persevered. As a matter of fact, on 16, 17 and 18 March 2009, several dustbins, overfull due to the bad garbage maintenance of the local real estate companies, as well as a recycling room on Ramels väg were burned and stones were then thrown at the fire brigade as it arrived.³ Stones were again thrown at cops on 2 July 2009, and containers set on fire on Ramels väg. Rosengård also faced minor riots in April 2010. The general climate was so tense that hundreds of people gather within less than a day when someone was reported to have been mistreated by the cops.

During the two following months of 2009, arsons multiplied in and around Göteborg, a couple of hours away from Malmö. Also, stones were thrown at the police and windows of various institutions wrecked. On 10 August, cops arrested a person suspected for illegal ownership of weapons and during this event ten clients in a shop in Backa were drawn out onto the street to be searched.⁴ On 4 April 2011, the police chased two guys who had stolen a couple of pairs of jeans in a clothes shop in Göteborg and ended up hitting their car into them, hurting one of them badly. Riots broke out the day after, and lasted for two nights: in Backa, cars were burned and more stones thrown at the police.⁵ In the meantime, Pantrarna ('The Panthers'), a grass-root activist group which, very much like Megafonen in Stockholm, aims at defending the infrastructure and reinforcing the sense of community, had formed in Biskopsgården, a Göteborg suburb.

In Stockholm too, 2008 was a pivotal year. The new tactic of starting fires in order to attract the cops and the fire brigade, so that stones can be thrown at them, was to be introduced in its suburbs, indicating a change towards a more aggressive stance against the police. As the riots in Rosengård were going on in December 2008, cars were burned and confrontations with the police also occurred in Tensta in Northwest Stockholm. At the

3 'Tredje dagen det brinner', *Sydsvenskan*, 18.03.09.

4 Swedish Police, 'Historisk tillbakablick', *Metodhandbok för samverkan mot social oro*, 2013, <<https://polisen.azurewebsites.net/index.php/social-oro/historiskt-perspektiv/>>. A comrade who lives in Backa says that there is a specific 'season' during which most of the arson and throwing of stones occurs: the end of the quite long summer holiday, just before school starts again. Those who are seeking a reason not to care about the riots, because the latter do not correspond to their own notion of workers' emancipation, often refer to this to prove that the riots are a matter of teenage anger. But when they invoke this as a dismissal of the riots, they are in fact only providing proof of their own incapacity to grasp this very anger as something profoundly social. Indeed, who exactly are those who spend their whole summer in a big city suburb, if not the most pauperised elements of the proletariat?

5 Stina Berglund, 'Backakravallerna började med jeansstöld', *Göteborgs-Posten*, 30.06.2011.

beginning of 2009, riots spread to the nearby areas of Husby and Akalla: cops reported having heard rioters shout that they were attacking them ‘in sympathy with our brothers in Rosengård’. In June 2009, the fire brigade was attacked in Husby and Tensta. Between August and October the same year, a lot of arson occurred in the neighbourhoods of Gottsunda and Stenhagen in the city of Uppsala, North of Stockholm. This started when a police patrol at which stones had been thrown called for reinforcement. In October 2009, after a one-hour bust in a youth recreation centre, which occurred because a green laser had been pointed at the police, a lot of cars burned in Fittja, another Northern suburb of Stockholm. In September 2010, due to the arrest of one of their friends, young people from the neighbourhood vandalised the metro station of Husby and attacked the local police office.⁶

During 2010 and 2011, the activist groups, which had been developing since the 2000s in Northwest Stockholm, experienced some victories. It is important to underline that the people in organisations like Megafonen originate from and live in the suburbs in which they are active, like Husby, Rinkeby and Hässelby. They are men and women who are older than those who start riots, they are more likely to take part in higher education, although they do share the racialised proletarian conditions of the rioters. One of Megafonen’s issues was the ‘Boosting Järva’ project (*Järvalyftet*) which began in 2007. The City of Stockholm is planning structural urban reforms which at the time in Husby, among other things, was to abolish the ‘traffic separation’ between roads and living spaces, demolish the existing pedestrian bridges, and create a new highway through Rinkeby and Tensta. Megafonen opposed this and during the 2012 occupation of a soon-to-be-closed recreation place in Husby called Husby Träff, the organisation put forward two sets of demands. First, the creation of a local board in each neighbourhood focusing on ‘jobs’ and ‘education’ which would give ‘real power’ to the inhabitants through the local associations of Husby. Second, the withdrawal of *Husby strukturplan*, the specific part of ‘Boosting Järva’ which concerned Husby. These actions did not hinder the planned closures of several schools (the Bredby school and the Bussenhus school), the local post office, the local health centre and the tax office of Tensta. But the demand of a withdrawal of *Husby strukturplan* was ultimately satisfied with the argument that given the resistance, there was no point in pursuing it. Megafonen also managed to stop the demolition of several houses, the privatisation of a bathhouse and ultimately the closure of Husby Träff.⁷

6 Swedish Police, op. cit.

7 During 2013, this intense activism was kept alive, but not without difficulty. In March in Botkyrka, a suburb in the Southwest of Stockholm, the communal real estate company Botkyrkagruppen was to organise a non-public meeting with potential buyers of the 1 300 apartments on Albyberget they were about to sell. A pacifistic gathering opposing this privatisation, involving coffee and cinnamon buns, was met with two police vans, three cops and one helicopter (!). Before that, some prominent figures of the resistance against these transformations were told by municipality workers and police officers to keep their politics away from youth recreation centres, and not to put petitions in the local libraries – so many signs of a zero tolerance strategy, often motivated by the angst of ‘radicalisation’. At the same time, the campaign ‘Alby is not for sale’ (*Alby är inte till salu*), created to oppose the selling of the 1 300 apartments on Albyberget, was running a petition in order to get the 6000 names needed to force a referendum on the question. But the list of 6600 names was never accepted by the municipality because some of the names were said to be ‘indistinct’ or ‘old’.

Riots broke out again in the neighbourhood of Risingeplan in Tensta, another Northwestern suburb of Stockholm, at the beginning of April 2013. Two recycling rooms and two cars were set on fire and the same night a demand was sprayed all over the neighbourhood: 'LOWER THE RENT' (*SÅNK HYRAN*). When the police and the fire brigade arrived they were surprisingly let in, probably because the rioters wanted the demand to be seen.⁸ Six years earlier in this same neighbourhood, the monthly rent of a five room flat was 7 900 Swedish kronor; at that point it was at least 11 700 Swedish kronor, and during March and April 2013, the inhabitants were informed that a retroactive rent raise for the year was to take place.⁹ The struggle against these transformations previously took other forms than riots. Some young people from the neighbourhood created the campaign The future of Risingeplan (*Risingeplans framtid*), with the explicit goal to speak to the media in order to spotlight the problems of their surroundings. The campaign not only highlighted high rents, but also the ill-treatment of inhabitants by service and maintenance representatives of the company.¹⁰ Nevertheless, both the riots and the campaign focused on the local real estate company Tornet, which manages rental flats in Stockholm and in Skåne. At this point, it was hated by almost everyone in the neighbourhood because of the degraded flats (although there had been a renovation three years earlier) and the bad state of the public spaces, including wall sockets and electric cables hanging loose, stuck cellar doors, non-isolated windows, spots in wet areas, paint falling off cabinet doors, problems with the toilet flushes, etc. More riots took place in the middle of April: in the same neighbourhood, a recycling room was set on fire and a car trashed. On surrounding walls and in the recycling room, there was also more graffiti with demands, now looking more and more like threats: 'Lower the rent or take consequences', 'Lower the rent with 50%', 'Remember 50%' and 'Hans you're gonna die' (Hans Erik Hjalmar being the director of management of the 500 flats).¹¹

Worth mentioning as a possible heightening of tensions running up to the Stockholm riots was the police killing, in Husby, of a locally known 69-year old man. According to the man's neighbours, he had been acting in a threatening way towards authorities, and when the police called for reinforcement the man locked himself in his flat. The police then forced the door and threw in a stun grenade, and as the man ran out he was shot dead – witnesses say he was shot 14 or 15 times by several heavily armed cops. Following his death, the police made a public announcement stating that he had been driven to the hospital in an ambulance, but according to young people from the neighbourhood who had witnessed the incident, the man's body was left on the spot until late, and then simply driven away in a hearse. A demonstration against police violence was organised by Megafonen in Husby on 15 May. As in Rosengård in 2008, riots did not erupt immediately. For a week, tensions grew day by day. The riots only broke out six days later.¹² On the evening of 19 May, a group of young people

8 Rouzbeh Djalaie, 'Bilbränder byttes mot flygblad och organisering', *Norra sidan*, April 13-May 17 2013, p. 11.

9 Rouzbeh Djalaie, 'Vi betalar Östermalmshyror i Tensta', *ibid.*, p. 10. Following the exchange rates of November 2014, 1.00 SEK = 0.11 EUR = 0.13 USD.

10 Johanna Edström, 'Hyresvärden får dem att se rött', *Mitt i Tensta-Rinkeby*, 16.04.2013, p. 6.

11 Kenneth Samuelsson, 'Hårt kritiserade Tornet stoppar renovering', *Hem & Hyra*, 17.05.2013.

12 The following account of the riots in Stockholm is primarily based upon a collage of our own

enticed the police, the local firemen and the ambulance into Husby by setting several dozens of cars, a couple of trucks and a garage on fire. The police, whose function at this point was to protect the firemen, were targeted with stones and incendiary bombs at their arrival. Calm was restored quite soon. The next day in Husby was a very much like the first one, but the number of rioters grew to over 50. Police was called due to burning cars and on their arrival, accompanied by the fire brigade, stones were thrown at their cars. Four cops were wounded, and the windows of local schools and shops were broken. Earlier the same day, less than 24 hours after the outbreak of the riots, the organisation Megafonen held a press conference on the riots, highlighting the realities of segregation and police brutality.

On the third night, riots were pursued in Husby, but also spread to Jakobsberg, a Northern suburb, where the local police office was attacked, two schools damaged and an art centre set on fire. All in all, 30 cars were burned, and that night, eight people were arrested. On the fourth night, fires spread to 90 different places. As usual, when the police came to help the fire brigade, stones were thrown at them from all directions. Another police office was attacked with stones in Kista, close to Husby, and two police offices in the South of Stockholm were damaged. In Skogås in Huddinge, a restaurant was set on fire. The only police questioning of the night was that of a girl in her teens suspected of preparing a fire because of the blasting agents she was carrying under her jacket – she was sent back to her parents. Many other young people were sent back to their parents too, without questioning. This fourth night was the first one during which hundreds of parents, locals and members of the above-mentioned associations hit the streets of Northwest Stockholm to put an end to the violence and the arson. They were often referred to as ‘citizen patrols’ (*medborgargarden*). The riots then moved to the Southern suburbs of the city, accompanied by the same kind of practices: cars set on fire, cops attacked with stones when they arrive to help the fire brigade. A police car was set on fire and during this night, cars burned and stones were thrown at the police in Malmö.

On the fifth night, dozens of cars, three schools and a police office were set on fire. Fires spread to 70 different places, most notably to Rinkeby (five cars), Tensta (a school), Kista (a kindergarten), Jordbro (a car and a supermarket), Älvsjö (a police office) and Norsborg. Stones were thrown at the cops in Södertälje. There were still hundreds of people voluntarily patrolling the streets to restore calm, and the cops became a bit more active, as 13 questionings occurred during the night, all of them of people between 17 and 26 years of age. On the sixth night, less cars were set on fire in Stockholm (30-40) where police reinforcement from Malmö and Göteborg joined the local troops. The riots now spread to the city of Linköping, 235 km from Stockholm, where a kindergarten, a primary school and some cars were set on fire; to Uppsala, 70 km from Stockholm, where a school and cars were set on fire and some rioters wrecked a pharmacy; to Örebro, 160 km North of Stockholm, where a school and several cars were set on fire, a police office was attacked and a cop wounded. The seventh night was calmer in comparison: a police patrol in Vårberg in the South of Stockholm was attacked; in Jordbro, stones were thrown at the cops when they tried

sources as well as newspaper articles and statements made during the riots and in their aftermath, most of which were gathered on the ‘Brèves du désordre’ section of the site cettesemaine.free.fr. The articles in question can be found here, sorted following the chronology of the events: http://cettesemaine.info/spip/rubrique.php3_id_rubrique=96.html

to arrest a young guy. Finally, on the eighth night, less than ten cars were set on fire which, according to the police spokesman, could be considered 'a return to normal'.

So, in a sense, 2008 was the year that brought the riots of our times to Sweden, with one of the practices which compose them, arson of cars and buildings, becoming an everyday practice in certain suburbs of the big cities. Arson and its necessary counterpart, police intervention, is here a part of normal life. It is only socially considered as an 'event', i.e. brought into the sphere of the mediatic and the political, when it is accompanied by direct confrontations with the police, or arson of buildings such as police offices, shops and schools. As we have seen, the riots as 'events' and, in some cases, the everyday practice of arson, can not be isolated from the public declarations, the occupations and the demands that punctuate them. The practices of the riots tend to converge with the language of demands.

The Swedish Workers' Movement and its Disintegration

In order to understand this state of things, we must now consider in what way the conditions, the subjects and the practices of the riots were historically produced. What has led to the current situation is the crisis of the Swedish model and the disintegration of the social-democratic workers' movement. The restructuring of capital which started in the early 1970s has not put an end to the proletariat; it has transformed the modalities of the reproduction of the latter, so that these no longer form an essential, stable component of the reproduction of capital. What's more, in the case of Sweden, the restructuring unfolds at the same time as the country becomes a centre for immigration. The transformation of the modalities of proletarian reproduction also implies a polarisation of this class, along the lines of one's qualifications and one's national origins, and most often the two together.

Central to our analysis will be the notion of *integration* and that of the *state*. Our approach thus implies to move away from the wage relation in the strict sense, because we will need to look at how concrete individuals enter and relate to the material community of capital, in ways that are always specific to them. This is why we will begin by exposing the Swedish social-democratic welfare state and its main product, namely the social integration of the proletariat, before we analyse the major effects of the crisis of this society.¹³ These historical considerations are meant to prepare the theoretical tools for an adequate understanding of the Swedish 'suburbs' and the specifically 'suburban' riots which, as we hope to show, are not to be taken for granted.

The Swedish social-democratic welfare state rested upon centrally regulated wage determination. Its foundations were laid out in the Saltsjöbaden Accord of 1938, between *Svenska Arbetsgivareföreningen* (hereafter SAF), the Swedish Employers Association, and the *Landsorganisationen i Sverige* (hereafter LO), the Social-democratic Federation of Swedish Trade Unions. Within a rather lately and rapidly industrialised country, it was the encounter of, on the one hand, the peasantry and the proletariat's need for protection from the impulses of the market and, on the other, a capital which tended to be more and more concentrated (through investment banks and holding companies, cross-ownership, cross-membership of management and executive boards, etc.). According to the so-called Rehn-Meidner model

13 For a more elaborated account of the notion of integration and its importance for the understanding of capital and class struggle today, see Bob, 'Taupe, y es-tu ? Le capital restructuré, la lutte des classes et la perspective révolutionnaire', January/February 2013, <<http://dndf.org/?p=12122>>.

emerging in the 1960s, LO was to coordinate wage demands and negotiations of all its member unions, thus setting a wage norm for all of them, which was to be high enough for wage increase and equality, but low enough not to endanger full employment. This 'solidaric wage policy' (*solidarisk lönepolitik*) supported both by the unions and the Social Democratic Party actually reinforced the concentration of capital, since corporations with intense accumulation ended up with relatively low wages with regard to what they accumulated, while smaller-scale corporations had relatively high wages with regard to their accumulation. This centrally negotiated mode of social regulation guaranteed the reproduction of a unified workers' identity. Indeed, the social-democratic policies were fundamentally policies of distribution. Welfare was a social transfer ensured not only through high income, corporate, sales and payroll taxes, in order to finance production in the public service sector, but also through the centralised wage-policy which transferred a part of the potential wage increases of workers in the export-oriented manufacturing sector to wage increases above productivity in the public service sector.¹⁴

The Swedish social-democratic workers' movement can then be said to be a spur in the development of Swedish capitalist society. The flip-side of the politics of distribution, with its central wage negotiations and high employment was, from the point of view of capital, no less than labour peace, labour mobility, total control over investments as well as over the organisation and rationalisation of the process of production. Of course, organised labour as well as farmers and reformist intellectuals were to counteract the 'economic' power of capital with their own 'political' power. But this 'political' power, though organised and represented as a popular movement or a counter-society, endorsed capital in the quest for its ideal pace: too high profits, it was said, would lead to wage drift, and too low profits would lead to unemployment.¹⁵ In this sense, the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement was a process of social integration. What allowed it to develop as such was the Fordist norms of production consolidated in the post-war era. A great increase in productivity, enabling the decrease of the cost of the commodities essential to the reproduction of the proletariat, could go hand in hand with a heightening of the real wages. In this way, mass production was validated by mass consumption, thus repressing the organic composition of capital. The capitalist development during this period was based upon the expanding scale, the technological innovation and the improvement of products developed from natural resources in the production of 'staples' commodities (such as lumber and iron).¹⁶ Throughout this era, real wages increased following an equalised pattern, while the rate of profit remained relatively low. Unemployment was kept at 1-2 %. It was this steady and protected development that permitted the well-grounded national workers' identity to support the Social Democratic Party, allowing it to maintain a parliamentary majority between 1932 and 1982 (with exception of one mandate). With no exaggeration, one could say that during this period, the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement became one with the regime.

14 J. Magnus Ryner, *Capitalist Restructuring, Globalisation and the Third Way. Lessons from the Swedish Model* (Routledge 2002), p. 33.

15 J. Magnus Ryner, *ibid.*, p. 59.

16 The engineering input industry soon became Sweden's most important export industry, which mobilised almost half of the industrial work force, and stood for the manufacturing of about 40% of Swedish exports during the post-war era. See J. Magnus Ryner, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Until the middle of the 1970s, the reproduction of a unified workers' identity and its extension to the middle strata was also accompanied by the integration of immigrants into the national workforce. The centrally determined wages and the strong political representation of the working class blocked the use of immigration as a modality of wage depreciation.¹⁷ This horizon of an inclusive national workers' identity was that of an increasingly instrumental affiliation. No anti-discrimination legislation was formulated, because the state and its active labour market policies were thought to be sufficient to create a rational social organism in which everyone could be treated equally.¹⁸ Mass consumption, education and specialisation were to make realities such as ethnicity and race irrelevant.¹⁹

The vehicle of this inclusive national workers' identity was the Swedish state. Since the social surplus that both capital and labour aimed at maximising was in need of an allocator, this specific state developed as the unity of the mutual implication of capital and labour. The form of the inclusive national workers' identity was that of universal entitlements, i.e. social incomes independent of wage labour. Both historically and in the post-war era, it generated working class unity, and extended the appeal of the coalitional social-democratic workers' movement to 'the people' in general. The Swedish people's 'home' (*folkhemmet*), the territory of the social-democratic politics of distribution, was nothing but the nation. From this point of view, the Swedish state was the locus of the collective bargaining model. It was only through the state that the distribution of welfare services could be established as a compensation for losses of income. As individual citizens, workers and capitalists were represented in the political parties in the Parliament, but they were also represented as functional interests, organised in LO and SAF, harmonised in the social regulation of the state.²⁰

This process of social integration, constituting a political power against capital, but always endorsing the latter, is what we may call the social-democratic workers' movement in the Swedish post-World War II context. The establishment of a mutuality of interests in the labour-capital relation allowed for an organisation of the proletariat upon what it represented within capitalist society (labour, welfare, use-value, etc.). This is what we call 'workers' identity'.

Grasped as such, the social-democratic workers' movement and its specific workers' identity compose a historical situation. Now, in order to understand their disintegration, we must grasp them in their development – a development which, at one point, hits against its own inner contradictions.

The wave of wildcat strikes that broke out in the spring of 1970 was symptomatic of the

17 At this time, Sweden had the highest rate of naturalisation of immigrants in Europe, and a 1976 reform gave immigrants the right to vote in local elections, as well as access to rights of civil, political and social citizenship.

18 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Aleksandra Ålund and Lisa Kings, 'Reading the Stockholm Riots – A moment for social justice?', 2014, *RACE & CLASS* (55).

19 This belief, shared by both unions and employers, impregnated the 1975 amendment of the Swedish integration policy and its principles of 'equality' (as opposed to a racial division of labour), 'co-operation' (as opposed to bureaucratic control) and 'freedom of choice' (as opposed to segregation). See Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Aleksandra Ålund, 'Prescribed multiculturalism in crisis', *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism. Essays on Swedish Society* (Avebury/Gower 1991), p. 2.

20 J. Magnus Ryner, op. cit., pp. 30 and 93.

breach of the historical agreement that had been established between labour and capital during the first decades of the 20th century. This happened as Sweden entered a crisis of over-accumulation and declining productivity growth, both exacerbated by the oil crisis. During the rest of the 1970s, due to the falling rates of profit and the subsequent global breakdown of the Fordist circuits of valorisation, productivity growth in Sweden's export-oriented manufacturing sector was no longer intense enough to permit wage increases in the domestic service sector. At the same time, unemployment began to rise.²¹

This crisis of the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement is also the beginning of the restructuring in Sweden, i.e. the transformations of the capital-labour relation starting in the 1970s. In this country, the restructuring can only be understood in the long run. First of all, the restructuring was the end of income policies. In Sweden, production as such was internationalised from the late 1960s and onwards, while relocations started in the 1980s. It then became necessary, from capital's point of view, to abandon joint central wage formation, especially since the unions had been able to force high wage increases during the 1970s. Hence the Swedish state lost its function as social regulator of the capital-labour relation, because the wage lost its status as an essential component of the reproduction of capital. Devaluation became a better option for capital than incomes policy, and the big industrial firms joined the major Swedish banks in order to develop financial activities within productive capital.²² Meanwhile, the restructuring established the impossibility of controlling exchange and interest rates. The Rehn-Meidner model presupposed low rates of interest and the development of the world market. As corporations and banks started undertaking evasive currency swaps, national state control of exchange and interest rates were rendered impossible.²³ The eradication of the Swedish state's regulation within the spheres of production and circulation was consolidated with new social-democratic policies between 1982 and 1991. Sweden's weak export industry, the lack of foreign investments, the country's budget deficit and its rising foreign debt favoured a politics of devaluation, as well as conservative fiscal and monetary policies. In the context of the financial crisis of 1991, expressed primarily as a housing bubble, this culminated in drastic austerity measures in Sweden: reductions in benefit levels, tightening of eligibility rules for health and unemployment insurance programmes and, ultimately, the abandonment of the political imperative to defend full employment.

Now, as the steady and protected development of the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement is long gone, the wage relation can no longer support an inclusive national workers' identity. Through the crisis of this movement and through the restructuring, workers' identity has been disintegrated.

However, the process of this disintegration can not be understood with exclusive reference to the capital-labour relation. We could say that the disintegration which occurs at the level of the capital-labour relation comes from above, from the capital-labour relation. This is the crisis of the Swedish welfare state and the end of the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement's ability to politically influence the spheres of production and circulation through the state. However, the process of this disintegration can not be understood with

21 J. Magnus Ryner, *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

22 J. Magnus Ryner, *ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

23 J. Magnus Ryner, *ibid.*, p. 110.

exclusive reference to the capital-labour relation. The disintegration at the level of the capital-labour relation (disintegration 'from above') is the crisis of the Swedish welfare state and the end of the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement's ability to politically influence the spheres of production and circulation through the state. The disintegration at the level of the capital-labour relation implied the end of national confinement of production, came with a growing financialisation of capital, and was accompanied by the constitution of a trans-national fragmented workforce. But the disintegration of workers' identity also comes from below, from the internal relations within the proletariat. At this level, we must try to deal with the historical coincidence of the decomposition of the industrial working class and the increased immigrant inflows to Sweden. The most important effect of this historical coincidence is the polarisation it has created within the class itself, between a stable, national core on the one hand and a precarious, immigrant periphery on the other.

After the post-war influx of refugees, the period ranging from the 1950s to the early 1970s saw the arrival of immigrant workers, mostly from Yugoslavia and Finland. These workers made it possible to manage economic peaks and temporary labour shortages, but they never had the status of guest workers. In 1972, a ban was set on further labour immigration, which had been put forward by the unions in order to protect the wages of the national work force. From then on, immigration to Sweden has primarily been composed of refugees and asylum seekers, in addition to those arriving for family reunification. A new type of immigration has developed, originating primarily from the Horn of Africa, Iran, Iraq and Turkey.²⁴ In the global restructuring, technological innovations and the reallocation of labour caused a decline in the number of industrial jobs, which was compensated for by the development of menial service jobs in new urban agglomerations. These jobs were and still are mainly occupied by immigrants, whilst the expansion of R&D and the 'information industry' in the late 1960s/early 1970s set the ground for the formation of new middle strata within the majority populations. These past years, there have been public programmes and subsidies to stimulate what goes under the name of 'ethnic entrepreneurship', which have boosted the already heavy presence of immigrants in the highly competitive self-employed sectors of cleaning, catering, restaurants and small retail stores. Whilst a large part of Swedish women were to be employed in the expanding public sector, immigrant women tended to be employed in the industrial sector.²⁵ Not only did immigrants have the most physically demanding jobs – thus constituting a growing part of early sickness-related retirement –; during the 1980s, the downsizing, relocation, labour-substituting reorganisation and technological upgrading also occurred within the industries where immigrants were concentrated, thus exposing them to unemployment more than anyone. Last but not least, because of Sweden's well-known inability to put its anti-discrimination legislation into practice, it was far more difficult for anyone with a foreign-sounding name, even with qualifications, to get stable employment. All of this amounted to several decades of class

24 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, 'The duty to work', *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism. Essays on Swedish Society*, op. cit., pp. 25 and 28.

25 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, "'Paradise Lost?' Migration and the Changing Swedish Welfare State', *Migration, Citizenship, and the European Welfare State. A European Dilemma* (Oxford University Press 2006), pp. 196-209.

polarisation developing along two axes: an immigrant proletariat / national middle class axis, and an unemployed immigrant / national stable proletariat axis.

These internal class relations are also mediated and reinforced by the state. The social regulation operated by the state was once a vehicle for the reproduction of a unified working class; it now tends to marginalise all those who have not long been part of the stable national core of workers, or even regulates exclusion from the formal economy. In the 1980s and the 1990s, immigrants were facing a highly protected and selective labour market, and the Swedish legislation on job security (according to the last hired-first fired principle) led to a form of indirect discrimination, since it works against immigrants in cases of lay-offs or plant closures. Because of Sweden's high labour costs and strictly regulated welfare system, small businesses must also be able to carry through large investments in order to get around, which often explains the limited niches available to newly arrived self-employed immigrants, or their necessity to 'go underground'.²⁶

At the same time, the various ethnic central organisations (*riksförbund*) which had been developed by Finns, Yugoslavs, Croats, Turks, Greeks, Kurds and Syrians were incorporated into state practices. Through its public support, the Swedish National Board of Immigration (*Statens Invandrarverk*) exercised heavy economic control over their activities, e.g. by preventing them from developing into political pressure groups, or from supporting existing parties, a control that implied a profound depoliticisation of immigrants striving to organise as immigrants.²⁷ Obviously, the political contract, the norms of the citizen's practices as well as the way by which he/she is represented, is continuously administered as a race-neutral contract. But as a matter of fact, the political contract is determined as white, because the general interest is that of those whose social integration is accomplished. The *others* are marked with a particular phenotype or genealogy, and can only hope to break into the sphere of political universality by affirming no more no less than this particularity. Indeed, the pluralistic 1970s policies of community rights did enable the formation of permanent institutions like schools or places of worship, but the modalities of the social and political integration of immigrants are becoming increasingly precarious. Certain populations are indeed encouraged to exist politically as representatives of their culture, if not to completely withdraw from the sphere of political universality. Very much like the class polarisation, both grass-root and parliamentary politics thus develop along two axes: an organised immigrant / established citizen axis, and a depoliticised immigrant / representable worker axis.

It then becomes clear that when the reproduction of the proletariat is no longer a stable component of the reproduction of capital, the state does no longer constitute the unity of a mutual capital-labour relation. Nonetheless, the disintegration of workers' identity is not only the *dismantling* of the achievements of the workers' movement. Welfare, too, is restructured, i.e. *produced* in a new form. When a proletarian movement is no longer confirmed within the reproduction of capital, welfare tends to become a mere cost for the state. The management of welfare then becomes an essential moment of the attack on real wages – 'real wages' in the wide sense of the term, i.e. including indirect wages and social transfers. This leads to austerity measures, i.e. partial or total suppression of the entitlements

26 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, *ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

27 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, 'The ethnic tower of Babel: political marginality and beyond', in *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism. Essays on Swedish Society*, op. cit., pp. 117, 120, 123, 126.

in themselves. In Sweden, this process was initiated in 1991 and radicalised from 2006 onwards with the right-wing coalition's 'work strategy' (*arbetslinjen*).²⁸ The new form in which welfare is produced lies in the particular relation between the state and the market which is at the base of the new Swedish welfare sector. Since the period between 1991 and 1994, private companies and venture capital conglomerates have emerged within the Swedish welfare system in order to conduct the welfare operations, whilst these operations remain publicly financed. This is the case in health, care and sometimes in education. Having been founded upon universal social entitlements, welfare is now a sort of public commodity. Then, as with all commodities, there are exclusive variants (for those in the inner city who can afford it) and mass produced ones (for those in the suburbs, if they are lucky enough to still have a hospital or a school where they live).

In this situation, the given integration of the national workers' identity has been completely destroyed. The general attack on real wages and the subsequent management of welfare produces a situation in which, tendentially, workers identify not so much with the political labour-capital opposition as with the labour-'outsidership' dichotomy. Indeed, the partial suppression of welfare entitlements implies an increased selection of their recipients. Welfare is no longer an investment in the social citizenship of workers, it is marked as being 'for those particularly in need', for those in 'outsidership'.²⁹ What then prevails within the proletariat – and we are here at the level of the social experience of this situation – is a tendency to desperately cling to that which remains. For growing parts of the proletariat and the middle strata in the 'majority population',³⁰ the presence of immigrants and refugees is seen as a social problem of 'outsidership' in itself, very much in the same way as the new selective form of welfare presupposes that certain individuals are problematic in themselves. Beyond this analogy of the psychological and the structural, we must grasp their common element: the tendency to *culturalise* social conditions. In 2008, the right-wing liberal People's Party (*Folkpartiet*) published a survey in which 'outsidership' is said to be a self-reinforcing culture which ends up constituting the identity of certain individuals.³¹ So far, these cultural frames of reference have produced one of the most successful political perspectives in the

28 In 2006, the costs for the individual to be part of the unemployment benefit system were differentiated: 400 000 workers had to opt out when their costs tripled. Now, less than half of the unemployed have got an unemployment insurance.

29 Mattias Bengtsson, 'Utanförskapet och underklassen. Mot en selektiv välfärdspolitik', *Fronesis* no. 40-41, 2012, pp. 184-185. We could also note that this reinforces the stigmatisation of illegal immigrants as de facto criminal beings.

30 Of course, the trajectory of the middle strata during the restructuring was not only one of defeat and disintegration. A part of the population was indeed able to benefit from the new economy, through its increased profitability and opportunities for cheap credit. But what we are hinting at here is that the restructuring, with the subsequent disintegration of the workers' identity, is at the same time a huge ideological shift, introducing a new paradigm which goes hand in hand with the individualisation of the labour contract and the new private form of welfare. Within this new paradigm, culture can be said to be essentialised, since certain cultural characteristics are by definition attributed to certain populations – in a sense, this is what 'multi-culturalism', even in its most liberal formulations, is about. The integration of immigrant populations into the national economy then becomes an issue of individual adherence to national or civilisational 'values'.

31 Mattias Bengtsson, op. cit., p. 179.

restructured Swedish welfare state, to the extent that the anti-immigration Swedish Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) became the country's third biggest party in the 2014 parliamentary elections, receiving about 13% of the votes. After the decline of what *Théorie communiste* have called the workers' movement's hegemony 'rival' to that of capital, the general tendency is not to identify as a worker *defying* capital through collective organisations such as those of Leninism or Social-democracy; it is rather to identify as a worker having to struggle to remain a worker through individual distinction from some outside threat. As already indicated by the Swedish Democrats' Party Program of 2010, what is at stake for them is not labour and capital, it is Swedish culture on the one hand and immigration, the EU, 'American imperialism' and 'economic globalisation' on the other. Since the growing immigration of refugees of Asian and African origins during the 1980s, this unease with what one is within this society has increasingly been taken out on these immigrants. When confronted with the 'benefit dependency' or 'passivity' of Mr. or Mrs. Immigrant, the Normal Swedish Worker's own disintegration is elevated to a value, and the alien character of class belonging is transcended in a cultural community. As for the immigrants themselves, the restructuring of capital and the subsequent class polarisation which divides society into whites and 'others', the perceived homeland's cultural practices is what some of them cling on to in order to create a stronger and more secure sense of identity beyond material precariousness or poverty.³²

To conclude, the restructured Swedish welfare state no longer represents a regulator and allocator of the mutuality of the labour-capital relation; with its selective welfare and privatised planning, it now rather promotes the differentiated reproduction of the classes. Both wage labour and political representation have thus lost the universal and inclusive norms that characterised them in the post-war social-democratic regime. Their inner polarisation according to qualifications and national origins must then be grasped as a constitutive element of the labour-capital relation, as something which shapes social life and the experience one has of it in its entirety. The ideas about the dysfunctional lifestyles of the suburban 'immigrant guys' (*invandrarkillar*) and the deviant values of their Muslim families have become commonplace, to the extent that the Rosengård riots were often perceived as some kind of Islamic rebellion, and the riots in Stockholm as a question of 'cultural barriers' (according to ex-Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt).

The Constitution of the 'Suburbs'

The capitalist restructuring and the disintegration of workers' identity only allows us to trace the historical production of the present situation. In order to grasp what is at stake in the

32 Within the 'majority' population, the culturalisation of social conditions is their reinvention as a united nation to be defended against immigration and its perceived sources, i.e. an essentialising projection. On the other hand, among certain immigrants, this same culturalisation of social conditions is the medium by which they define themselves as belonging to a religious community – most notably Islam, within some parts of the diverse Muslim minority – to be strengthened against the perceived general Western decadence, i.e. an essentialising self-realisation. It seems clear that in Sweden, the destruction of recognised social integration, and the reinforced attack on real wages and welfare entitlements during these past two decades, have undermined the basis of a cohesive social community. Especially in times of crisis, this leads to the desperate identification with that which appears to stand beyond 'the economy': national values or religion.

riots in Sweden, we must now look at the constitution of this situation, that is look at the processes which continuously reproduce it in the so-called 'suburbs'. In other terms, we will try to answer the question as to how the classes' differentiated reproduction and profound polarisation – both products of the disintegration of the workers' movement – persists in present-day society. This persistence is a matter of material anchoring of specific individuals in specific positions. With regard to the reproduction of capital, the processes of this persistence amount to one thing: discipline. However, the critique of class reproduction and polarisation must also understand them analytically, in and for themselves. We will try to show that these processes are a matter of (a) personifying a determined situation in the labour market, (b) of representing a certain element of the 'population' guarded by the state, and finally – only as a product of the persistence of the two previous positions, and not as something given – (c), of being located in a specific place.

a) The Market

The driving force behind the discipline is the market. The primary product of the creation of low-wage niches and a precarious informal sector, and of the production of welfare as a commodity, is a specific subject: the one who is crudely *exposed* to the market, i.e the one for whom labour is reduced to the compulsion to work. In the present period, this specific subject, and the objectivity it presupposes, are continuously reproduced in the ever-more expanding insecure, low-skill service sector. This subject is usually referred to as the 'excluded' one or, in more orthodox Marxist terms, as being part of the 'reserve army'. But the subject at stake here is neither outside a society identified with a labour market (as 'exclusion' suggest), nor destined to it (as 'reserve' suggests). Through temporary, part-time or hyper-casualised jobs, this subject is actively taking part in the labour market, but this very activity presupposes that it is expelled from it as soon as it enters it. In one word, it is alien to the market, in the sense that it is a subjectivity which faces the value production cycle without ever being incorporated into it. It is stuck in the ongoing breakdown of the third moment of exploitation:³³ the transformation of surplus-value into additional capital, which makes it necessary to maintain the *face-à-face* of labour and capital, the separation between labour power and the means of production, the fundamental subject-object split without which there can be no exploitation.

This subject is composed by the significant groups which are now relegated from both the formal labour market *and* any unemployment insurance. This was reinforced when income tax reductions (on the employed) were traded-off social insurance payment cuts (both in unemployment and sickness benefits). In the neighbourhood of Herrgård in Rosengård, only 15% of the inhabitants are engaged in formal labour.³⁴ In Husby in Stockholm, the level of formal employment is 24% lower than in the greater Stockholm region.³⁵ But the so-called 'outsidership' is not an attribute of this subject; it is only at the peak of a process of de-

33 See Théorie Communiste, 'Le plancher de verre', in Theo Cosme (ed.), *Les émeutes en Grèce* (Senonevero 2009), pp. 19-20.

34 Jimmy Bussenius, 'Herrgård, Rosengård', <http://www.ateljeerna.lth.se/fileadmin/ateljeerna/Arkitekturteori/Jimmy_Bussenius_Herrgaarden.pdf>

35 Regeringskansliet, *Urbana utvecklingsområden: en statistisk uppföljning utifrån sju indikatorer* (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 2012), p. 16.

essentialisation of labour, a process which now concerns the Swedish society as a whole. Among the 20-25 years old of the Swedish population in general, 20% are without formal employment and not involved in education; in areas such as Herrgård and Husby, 40% are in this situation.³⁶ Being at the peak of this process does not really imply a certain 'segment' of labour power, as if the whole question could be reduced to a certain level of income. It is a matter of a certain *situation* of labour power, namely the one which is never confirmed as waged labour, i.e. socially validated and socialised in a continuous process of production. This situation is constituted by the market's alien character to a specific subject, and this subject's alien character to the market.

To understand the constitution of this situation, it is no longer sufficient to speak of a mere class polarisation, in the sense of a relation internal to the proletariat. Indeed, the process through which a specific subject with specific properties is constantly thrown back into this situation must be grasped as a process of *racialisation*. In Sweden, this situation is that of the 'immigrants': persons born in the Middle-East, one of the biggest sources of immigration, are three and a half times more often employed in temporary jobs, while a growing part of young immigrants of first or second generation live on diminishing public assistance and occasional undeclared work. Just as union's capacities to regulate the labour market through the state is disappearing, the informal sector is becoming more and more important in construction, agriculture, cleaning, catering, and domestic services for the urban middle-class; this informal sector is almost exclusively comprised of immigrants and illegal immigrants.³⁷ Racialisation, then, is not only a segmentation of the class, as if a racial redefinition of the latter was occurring *a posteriori* upon a presupposed homogeneous unity. Racialisation is constitutive of the actual class, because it produces the situation of the unwaged – the alien character of the market to a specific subject – by personifying this alien character upon the basis of phenotypical characteristics, national origins and culture.

Those we referred to with the term 'rioters' above are such racialised subjects. Since they are only crudely exposed to the labour market, and their chances to be integrated into its stable core are nearly inexistent, the very conditions of their own reproduction appear as something alien to them, and can thus appear as something to burn or to destroy. Schools and shops are two of the primary targets of their practices of arson, because they materialise their experience of 'social citizenship': that of constantly being blocked out of it.

b) The Police

Therefore, if we are to understand the constitution of the 'rioter', we must leave the level of the impersonal force of the market to focus on this force's actualisation, the one to which the rioters are constantly confronted at the level of their reproduction. This implies to look at the modality through which this driving force of the market is carried out: the police.

The social existence of the racialised subject is not that of 'unemployment' or 'being surplus', as if the social norm was that of employment and essentiality. Instead, it is socially produced in relation to a form of labour of which precarity is constitutive. It exists only to be

36 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Aleksandra Ålund and Lisa Kings, 'Reading the Stockholm Riots – A moment for social justice?', op. cit.

37 Carl-Ulrik Schierup, "'Paradise Lost?' Migration and the Changing Swedish Welfare State', op. cit., pp. 215-216.

controlled. In this sense, it is not disposed of as a potential use value for capital. It is only controlled; silence and calm being the only acceptable behaviour for this alien subject. In Husby, Rosengård, Backa and the other suburbs where arson is a normal practice, 'social rest' is now a question of avoiding direct confrontations between riot police and local youth. Policing, then, is no less than constant counterinsurgency.

This situation is only understandable from the perspective of the disintegration of the workers' movement and the capitalist restructuring. Policing as counterinsurgency must be seen as a mode of social control specific to the racialised subject described above. In the heyday of the Swedish social-democratic workers-movement, social control was not primarily a matter of policing, because the reproduction of a unified workers' identity was in itself a constant interiorisation of the function of the worker within capitalist society. First of all, the separation between subject and object, between labour power and means of production, was evened out by the continuity of the process of production within the manufacturing and public service sectors, as well as by the corresponding stable forms of employment, entitlements and, last but not least, union representation. This went hand in hand with the Swedish social-democratic horizon of a development of the productive forces which would at the same time be a deproletarianisation of the workers, in the sense that in the long run, this development was to give them access to the trophies of citizenship: education, culture, democratic participation. More generally, after its emergence in the 1930s, the Swedish social-democratic historical agreement between labour and capital was constantly reproduced through a kind of city planning in which material spaces acted as fundamentals of workers' steadiness. Take the neighbourhood of Möllevången in Malmö, for example. Once in power, the social-democratic regime managed to transform the slums that once composed it into a living symbol of the Swedish social-democratic workers' movement, by literally embedding it in the institutions of *Folkets hus* ('The People's House'), *Folkets Park* ('The People's Park') and the newspaper *Arbetet* ('Labour'). By one's very presence in this neighbourhood, one could recognise one's situation as a worker as one's defining social characteristic, not only individually, but as part of a materialised and firmly established organisation. Then, the reproduction of labour power was at the same time its domination. The material life process of its regeneration coincided with the process of its continuous disposability and obedience.

Today, as growing parts of the proletariat are being expelled from the process of production, as a consequence of the disconnected circuits of the production of surplus value and the reproduction of labour power, the reproduction of labour power no longer coincides with its discipline. Capital can no longer have direct disposal of alien labour through the process of production, because there is no socially recognised identity at its base ensuring a form of spontaneous social *self*-control. This implies that the discipline carried out by the police must be considered in its historical specificity. Today, its function is to control those who are alien to the market. This control is not only carried out on immigrants within the country. In a world where any surplus value can be invested or turned into additional capital anywhere, anytime, control is a matter of global management of a fragmented and mobile workforce. It then becomes harder and a harder to distinguish control and *immigration* control. The REVA project³⁸ aims at combating irregular migration through amplified

38 REVA is an acronym for *rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete* meaning 'Legally Certain and Effective Execution'.

identity checks and deportation. It began in Malmö in 2008, and broadened its range to Stockholm in 2013 (REVA controls were reported in Rinkeby and Husby at the end of February 2013). REVA, a collaborative project between the Swedish police force, migration services and prison service, is also partly financed by the European refugee fund. National policing is thus a component of a broader, global policing. Through the control of immigrants within Sweden, another control is exerted: that of dominated populations as such, those that are structurally in an inferior position on the maps of capitalist production and circulation. Here, it is important to note that these controls often coincide with ticket inspections. Only the racial profiling distinguishes a REVA control from a regular ticket inspection. The REVA's interventions within strategic commuting and transfer hubs³⁹ suggest that this is a control of mobility. At the level of the city, it is a control of the material access to mobility, in agglomerations where the price of public transport is a real issue. At the global level, it is also a control of the legal access to mobility, in a situation where growing parts of the world's population stand outside all formal modes of reproduction, but still remain trapped within capitalist society. In this sense the police's control practices are constitutive of racialisation too. Not only through 'racial profiling', but more fundamentally by implementing the discipline of the market, which constantly retraces the frontier between the 'outsidership' of immigrants and the social citizenship of honest consumers. Along these lines, the substance of racialisation is not personal prejudice or some reactionary state ideology. It is the material and symbolic space of the Western city, where the formerly colonised African populations once essential to European capitalism, or the populations having fled from the authoritarian regimes or the war lords of their countries, are now continuously pushed out to the peripheries of social reproduction and identification.

No wonder that in the riots in Sweden, as in France and Denmark, cars are one of the privileged targets of arson. Even if they belong to the – naturally hard-working – neighbour, they remain symbols of the exclusive character of social citizenship. And because self-consciousness is always constituted in the Other's outlook on the individual, REVA, and the regular identity checks and strip searches by the police in the suburbs, tend to force the subject of the 'deviant immigrant kid' to identify with himself precisely as a 'deviant immigrant kid'. This identification is at the same time its recognition of itself as a subject existing only to be controlled. This is why the police becomes the focal point of all 'suburban' riots in Sweden. Through its everyday practices of control, the police is the very actualisation of the alien character of society, existing only as an external force to be imposed on the 'deviants'. Riots become a form of self-defence against the constant pressure of this external force. The rioters aim the police, the symbol of the European quelling of that without which, historically, Europe as a capitalist fortress would not have been possible: the racial construction of the global circuits of accumulation. Thus, burning cars to attract the police in order to throw stones at them, setting police cars on fire, or destroying police offices are practices that become an end in themselves. As such, they are strictly limited to the 'suburbs' spaces of the 'deviant immigrant kids'.

c) The City

In point of fact, the police control carried out on immigrants actualises the discipline of the

39 To our knowledge, mainly metro and train stations.

market along specific geographic patterns. At the level of the city, this is the relation between the ‘centre’ and the ‘suburb’, where the latter is always that which has to be controlled, kept calm. We have also hinted at how, at the level of the global cycles of accumulation, this relation could be seen as a *mise en abyme* of the relation between the centres of this cycle and their peripheries. As such, the relation between centre and suburb can not be understood as a given one, as if this relation was born out of the inherent properties of the centre and the periphery in themselves. We must try to grasp the relation between centre and suburb as the material product of discipline.

In Stockholm, suburbs such as those of Hallunda, Fittja and Alby, which compose the area called Huddinge, were initially built for the 70s working class coming from the north of Sweden (Norrland, Jämtland and Härjedalen). Indeed, in the era of the workers’ movement, which tended to integrate the reproduction of the proletariat in the reproduction of capital, housing was an essential component of labour reproduction. The housing policy formulated by the social-democratic Commission on Housing and Redevelopment in 1934, and supported by the Minister of Finance, insisted on the stabilising function of public housing, which was to be assured by municipal housing companies owned by the municipalities and run on a non-profit basis. Through subsidy programmes aimed at improving the quality of buildings, at equality between different forms of tenure, and at a rigorous control of rent levels,⁴⁰ a common housing stock was made affordable for the general population: Interestingly, no specific estates, like ‘social housing’ in the UK or in France, were built for those ‘especially in need’. These subsidies sprung out of the workers’ funds of the Rehn-Meidner plan: a 20% tax on profits was controlled by the unions for reinvestment, partly in public housing.⁴¹

But with the rising unemployment and the toughening of the labour market which followed the early years of the restructuring, the Northwest and Southwest ‘suburbs’ of Stockholm, and the historically proletarian neighbourhoods of Backa and Rosengård, were the only ones to offer affordable rents to the proletariat. Once the very milieu contributing to the social integration of workers, these areas have now become places which one is forced into, urban dustbins, much like the French *banlieues*. This process is reinforced by the progressive marketisation of public housing. Since the beginning of the 1990s, municipalities have been selling their estates – mostly to sitting tenants, but also to private landlords – while the municipal housing companies lost all government support. The deregulation of transfer pricing for housing units and the inflation of the costs of urban land are making it unattractive to build for rents. Thus, the Swedish model of housing is evolving towards that of a market-oriented system without support mechanisms. Here, too, certain aspects of persistent state regulations have the effect of regulating exclusion or of excluding through their regulation. A very monitored system for allocating rental housing, as well as strict rules concerning personal sub-letting, are blocking out all those without steady income, savings or

40 The so called ‘rule of use-value’ (*bruksvärdesregeln*) ensured that rents were set partly according to the material properties of the apartments – their size, their facilities, the distance to public transport, etc. – and not immediately by the market.

41 Eric Clark, Karin Johnson, ‘Circumventing Circumscribed Neoliberalism. The “System Switch” in Swedish Housing’, *Where the Other Half Lives* (Pluto Press 2009), pp. 175-179.

home-owning parents from the formal housing market.⁴² Hence, in neighbourhoods such as those of Herrgården in Rosengård and Risingeplan in Tensta, the 'Million programmes', once monuments of workers' identity, are commodities among others, subject to transactions on the rental housing market. Here, there is no production of space but only its degradation. Housing does not exist as an essential component of labour reproduction, as during the workers' movement; it exists crudely as a source of rent, of which mold and cockroaches are daily reminders for the inhabitants.

The 'suburb', then, is not what it is because of where it is located, but because of who lives there and how. A quick look at the map indicates that 'suburbs' like those of Rosengård, Backa, Gottsunda, Husby, Tensta and Rinkeby are actually not that 'suburban'; from the centre, they can often be reached by the bus or the metro in 15-20 minutes, and sometimes their urban landscape is not that different from that of more well-off areas simply referred to as 'Stockholm', 'Göteborg' or 'Malmö'. The distance that separates them is psychological more than anything; not 'psychological' as opposed to 'geographical', but psychological in the sense of space as it is experienced. In Swedish, the very notion of the suburb (*förorten*) has become an umbrella term for all that is perceived as deviant: first and foremost immigrants but also, as mentioned above, the long-term sicklisted and former convicts, early retired/sick pensioners (for example the 69-year old man who was shot a dozen times), etc. It is a place one is 'forced out' into, because the process of gentrification is a coercive one, which materialises the class frontiers between the white citizens of the centre and the racialised subjects of the suburb, thus materially anchoring the process of racialisation. Through Husby, Tensta and Rinkeby, a highway can be drawn, while only a couple of kilometres away, luxury flats such as those of Kista Tower are being built. Seeing as the discipline of the market, actualised in the police and materialised in the suburb, is what constitutes the alien subject – the one for whom it is sufficient to live in a certain area to be the focus of attention in matters of control and discipline –, neighbourhoods like those of Herrgården or Husby are areas that people tend to leave if they get enrolled in stable employment or education.

Despite all this shit, or maybe precisely upon the basis of it, an identity is formed in these suburbs, expressed most notably in rap lyrics, with its reference to 'the concrete' (*betongen*) and 'the hood' (*orten*). It is only with this in mind that we may understand how both the activists of Tensta in Stockholm and those of Herrgården in Rosengård could identify with themselves as 'renters' trying to establish a dialogue with the 'real estate companies', in some cases 'the municipality' or the 'state'. Indeed, as the activists of 'The future of Risingeplan', or those who occupied the cellar space in Herrgården, were continually ignored both by the real estate company and by the commune or the tenants' associations, riots eventually broke out. And the rioters, too, targeted their practices of arson, sabotage and occasional looting at the very headquarters of these 'real estate companies'. The shared demands of the activists and the rioters were those focusing on the lowering of rents, or on keeping or regenerating their infrastructures.

The identity formed in such struggles is a syncretic one, based upon these shared conditions of discipline. It is not the homogeneous workers' identity based upon the male, white, skilled worker. The suburbs of Husby, Tensta, Rinkeby, Herrgården, Backa, etc. do in

42 Brett Christophers, 'A Monstrous Hybrid: The Political Economy of Housing in Early Twenty-first Century Sweden', *New Political Economy*, DOI: 10.1080, 2013, pp. 12-22.

themselves gather hundreds of languages and backgrounds, which has given birth to the now well-known dialect of *'Rinkebysvenska'* (Rinkeby Swedish), but it is only when some aspect of the neighbourhood is attacked by elements perceived as alien to the community – cops, real estate companies or local politicians – that collective practices carried out by school kids, students, young unemployed, adult workers and the elderly emerge. However, the fact that this syncretic identity is based upon the shared conditions of discipline presupposes that it only exists through its internal divisions. Polarisation being a constitutive element of today's class relation – historically produced in the restructuring, and maintained as such by the processes of racialisation, control and segregation –, the internal divisions within the proletariat are as determining as the labour-capital relation. This is not to imply that the central division at stake here is of a sociological nature, opposing a static delimited group of 'activists' and another one of 'rioters'. We know that the members of Megafonen, Pantrarna, and other organisations that we have mentioned often both originate from and live in the same suburbs as the rioters. What we mean is that there are internal divisions within those who live in the suburbs, and that these internal divisions are expressed in different practices and discourses that come from specific subjects constituted in the struggles.

The Language of the Riots

This is where the relation between rioting and activism, and its significance for the present period, comes to the forefront. The simultaneous constitution of the rioting practices on the one hand, and new forms of activism on the other, raises the question of their respective methods and perspectives.

First, we must look at the nature of the relation between rioting and activism. In the present situation, is there a possibility for activism to transpose the riots into its own positive language, i.e. its own tendency of affirming the possibility of a dialogue and a future in our society?

Let us first stress the historical novelty of this question. Riots have not always consisted in practices separated from movements of social integration. In the riots in Möllevången in Malmö of 1926, which broke out in a conflict between strikers and non-strikers, violent practices including those of confronting the police could to a certain extent be legitimised and defended by the institutions of workers' identity, for example by the newspaper *Arbetaren* ('The Worker'). And in the end, these riots became an impetus for dialogue, since a lot of workers from the city accepted to take part in a big, centrally organised peaceful demonstration. The riots thus had the possibility of being socially integrated from the start, because the practices that composed them, unlike those of today which are often a matter of sporadic and ephemeral communities, sprung out of an emerging and increasingly institutionalised workers' identity.⁴³

We must also clarify the following: when we raise the question of the possible integration of the riots in our period, it is not to imply that the latter now stand 'outside' society, as if they were immune to recuperation or less subject to the 'illusions' of this society. What we mean is that the practices of attacking one's own living conditions, which pose one's

43 For a detailed and rich account of these riots, see Stefan Nyzell, *"Striden ägde rum i Malmö". Möllevångskravallerna 1926. En studie av politiskt våld i mellankrigstidens Sverige* (Malmö Högskola 2009), pp. 56-74 and pp. 280-292.

racialised class belonging as something alien, are impossible to integrate *as such*. As the representative of a political party, of a union or any other established institution, one can not 'organise' and 'coordinate' the burning of police offices or the sabotage of infrastructures, simply because one incarnates the very society that is attacked through these practices, and that one's existence as such a representative presupposes that of urban administration, of police control, of the cleavage between social citizens and 'outsiders'.

This is why the activism which, while denouncing the functioning of the state and its institutions, defends what it perceives as the remnants of the workers' movement, is poised on a knife-edge: it is trying to represent a part of this society for which this very society is something alien. If activism defends the riots, it abolishes itself as a socially recognised representative, and if it does not defend the riots, it must repress them like the rest of society. Following its press conference after the very first day of the 'Stockholm riots', Megafonen was to be treated like a cause, a reinforcement, a leader or a mediator of the riots, but always as its representative. Even the political opposition to the right-wing coalition in power in Sweden only reacted 24 hours later. During the second day of the riots, Megafonen gave its view on them. These quick reactions show in themselves how strongly Megafonen is rooted in Husby and its surroundings; otherwise, the organisation would not have had the confidence required to make statements about these events as they happened and where they happened. Although Megafonen understands the social problems which cause the riots, 'Megafonen does not start fires', because it aims at 'long-term change', 'constructive resistance' and 'social refurbishment'.⁴⁴ In other words, and this has become a widespread cliché in the Swedish left: they understand the anger of the rioters, but think that they should express it differently. Disappointment, it is said, must be made into something progressive. When they formulate such an idea of channelling the unease of what one is within this society, they are much like an echo of certain revolutionaries who appraise the rioter's 'potential of violence' against the police, but not the fact that they target their own living conditions (schools, local shops, buildings, etc.). In both cases, what is implied is that beneath the practices of the riot, there is an underlying force which could be *reoriented* in another direction. It then is up to the activist, the active subject, to organise this underlying force, a passive object. From the viewpoint of this activism, the self-destructive practices of the riots must make way for a coherent, political movement.

But when one seriously considers the social constitution of the suburbs, it becomes clear that one cannot disagree with the form of the riot *without denouncing its content*. The subject of the riots is nothing but its practices. The form is not a set of alternative mechanisms (the riot or 'constructive resistance') separated from its motor (anger because of one's living conditions). What the self-proclaimed agents of Organisation are unable to grasp is that it is not a matter of Organisation and Non-Organisation – in other words, themselves and the rioters –, but a matter of two different *forms* of organisation, and thus two different *contents* being organised. On the one hand, riots are organised by those for whom society appears as an external force. Yes, 'organised': fixing gathering places takes a lot of communication; blocking paths, getting paving stones, forming ammunition groups and trackers takes a lot of

⁴⁴ Megafonen, 'Vi startar inga bränder', *Aftonbladet*, 24.05.13, <<http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/article16834468.ab>>. An English translation is available here: <<https://libcom.org/news/megafonen-we-dont-start-nop-fires-26052013>>.

coordination; keeping these practices alive despite the reinforced police patrols implies to know all hiding places and shortcuts of an area. The content here is that of creating turbulence; the form is that of an ephemeral coming together. On the other hand, the coherent political movement is organised by those who still see a future within this society, or who are subjectively constructing a visible future, even one which looks concretely impossible from outside perspectives: the reconstruction of the welfare state. In Stockholm, Megafonen set up a fund-raising for those without car insurance whose car had been burned; it also supported the 'civic patrols' helping the fire brigade to extinguish fires and helping the police to send young rioters home. The content here is that of civic behaviour; the form is social integration.

By distinguishing these two forms and contents of organisation, we do not wish to condemn activities like those of supplementary tuition, independent lectures, and so on, which make life more bearable for a lot of young people in the suburbs. We intend to reveal their horizon, the perspective on the transformation of society that they presuppose. This horizon is, in Megafonen's own words, that of 'a more cohesive Stockholm'.⁴⁵ They thus echo the social-democratic perspective of a unified society. The very content and form of these activities make them into vehicles of a renewed social regulation. Tendentially, this is already what they are becoming in their everyday practices. In Göteborg, Pantrarna go as far as projecting to start training courses in professions that are in need of workers. It is thus noticeable that when welfare has become a public commodity, this type of activism tends to replace certain functions which were once taken care of by the state. It tends to do communal work for free, and to present this as social emancipation.

On this view, activism can indeed transpose the riots into its own positive language, but only by substituting the practices of the riots by those of social integration. The nature of the relation between riots and activism is that of an incorporation, an activity of transforming the content of the riot in order to give it a socially recognisable form.

Nevertheless, as our description of the riots in Sweden revealed, activism and riots do not develop along a revolt-reform axis as two clearly separated realities. The riots may express demands, and they do often emerge out of a politicisation operated by activism. We cannot address the question of the possible integration of the riot strictly from the viewpoint of the positive language of activism. Indeed, this positive language is not an intrinsic property of activism; it might also be shared by the riots.

Then, if the positive language, that of affirming a possibility of a dialogue and a future in our society, is not restricted to activism, the question of the relation between rioting and activism leads us to consider the different expressions of this language. How is it expressed in riots? How is it expressed in activism?

In the Swedish context, riots are not intrinsically destructive. Even from a consequentialist point of view, the one which usually concludes that 'the rioters don't hurt anyone but themselves!'⁴⁶ the riots tend to incarnate a modality of demanding. That the major real estate companies of Herrgården in Rosengård (Newsec and Contentus) finally decided to renovate the moldy flats during the spring after the riots; that no further closures of the local youth recreation centres occurred; that a new sports ground with longer opening

45 Megafonen, 'Järvalyftet är ingen bra förebild', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 04.05.12.

46 See for example the editorial of the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* from 21 May 2013.

hours was built; that, in some cases, rents were lowered 25% – all this can only be seen as a way of satisfying the demands that were explicitly formulated during the occupation, and of the demands that local politicians, municipality workers and heads of real estate companies read into the acts of the rioters. This is also the case in Stockholm where, after the events in Risingeplan of April 2013, the real estate company Tornet withdrew its proposal to construct 167 new buildings.⁴⁷ The reason, according to the CEO of the company was that '[w]e must establish a coherent dialogue with the inhabitants, and put an end to the threats against our personnel.'⁴⁸

Here, then, it seems that the riot tends to incarnate the positive language of a dialogue and a future by burning and demanding at the same time. It is a form of constructive destructivity. From the Swedish outlook, we must then ask if this could be seen as a new form of social bargaining. Of course, this would not be the centrally organised social bargaining of the Swedish workers' movement. As we have seen, the universal and inclusive norms that characterised political representation under the post-war social-democratic regime have made way for differentiated and polarised modes of political representation. From the specific outlook of the situation within the Swedish suburbs, this reveals that the strong racialisation of certain proletarians goes hand in hand with that of the political contract. For the rioters, who are not only at the peak of the de-essentialisation of labour, but also exposed to the most intense control and gentrification, social bargaining surely can not consist in that of the citizen striving to be politically representable. This bargaining can only express itself through intensified conflict which inevitably soon dies out, because what the rioters are rejecting in their practices is the very existence of this political representation of which they are normally excluded. During riots, for short periods of time, the rioters provoke political and media debates about their living conditions; they force the improvement of some aspects of their reproduction (housing, infrastructures, etc.); during this short time span, they could even be said to constitute a class – not as objectively defined by the relations of production, but in the fact that they recognise themselves as a political collective, composing itself upon the basis of things previously not understood in these terms: repression, poverty, police hatred, etc. This is at the same time the limit of the riots. The riots become an intrinsically suburban 'question', a chronic sickness medicated with occasional improvements and, more importantly, constant policing. In Sweden, the strategies of the latter have not consisted in arresting a lot of people, but have focused on re-establishing calm in collaboration with the pacifying elements of the suburbs.⁴⁹ Precisely because riots tend to become part of the

47 This would have included 30 expensive terrace apartments, exclusive superstructures on existing flats, store buildings, glazed-in balconies, and would have required the demolition of four three-storey houses close to a local park.

48 Johanna Edström, 'Tornet till reträtt efter protesterna', *Mitt i Tensta-Rinkeby*, 24.04.13, p. 4. The previous week-end, the local administration office of Tornet was set on fire.

49 In Rosengård in Malmö, the unrest's tendency to become a part of every day life led to the development of a new police strategy in 2009. The cops are now supposed to work in dressed-down uniforms and to aim at creating pleasant personal contact, in order to 'be there and prevent things from happening'. In more practical terms, this implies that all officers from the outskirts that are not participating in emergency situations have to patrol constantly in Rosengård, every day of the week. In the case of the 'Stockholm riots', it is worth noting that of the 29 persons that were arrested, only three were condemned in the end. See 'Få dömda för Stockholmsupplopp', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29.07.13.

normality of certain suburbs, the normal course of capitalist society is not endangered by them, not even at the level of its reproduction. It follows its course not *despite* the riots, but *with* them.

Thus, in Sweden, riots penetrate the movement organised around the positive language of social bargaining. But it does so by re-appropriating the language of the demands, by transforming it into a more conflictual and broader struggle. In Rosengård, the riot emerged as the very *extension* of a demand-oriented occupation, but *against* the initial civic mode of bargaining, by directly attacking the perceived forces behind the eviction (the real estate companies and the police). In Risingeplan during the months preceding the ‘Stockholm riots’ the riot emerged *from within the campaign* as another more turbulent modality of demanding: *demanding by burning*, reclaiming a very drastic lowering of the rent, and not just another survey by the tenants’ association. The positive language of dialogue and a possible future exists in the riot, but in the sense of *demanding immediate solutions to concrete problems*, not within the perspective of a cohesive society or a Social Democracy 2.0.

However, in Sweden, it is also the other way around. Not only does the riot penetrate the movement; the movement also tends to penetrate the riot, in its striving to become its representative: we have seen how organisations like Megafonen and Pantrarna stand in a relation of incorporation to the riots. By symbolically covering certain costs of the destruction of the rioters or by taking in charge the qualification of the young, they tend to affirm a *coalition*, here and now, of all the antagonistic elements of civil society. This subject strives to be ‘political’, in the sense that its practices tend to organise the coming together of people which in everyday life only exist through the racialised class relations which the reproduction of capitalist society presupposes. In activism too, the positive language exists in and through demands, but demands which are put forth following the modality of *integration*.

This is a broader tendency. The riots in Copenhagen in the winter of 2007,⁵⁰ for example, culminated in the publication of an open letter in the major newspaper *Politikken* signed ‘The boys from inner Nørrebro’ (*Drengene fra Indre Nørrebro*), in which both rioters and a young worker from a recreation centre gathered in order to describe the youth’s everyday experience of police controls and brutality. A particular police officer was actually fired after the events, and meetings between the police, the young worker, some youth who had taken part in the riots as well as parents from the neighbourhood were held in Nørrebro. More recently, this political subject has even reached the European parliaments. In Greece, for example, during the early days of the riots of December 2008, Syriza presented itself as the party that recognised that the rioters – those who occupied universities, sabotaged shops and metro stations, confronted the police – do what they do because their future is blocked. Six years later, it has become clear that the sole political recognition of this absent future implies that the state and a socialist economy is to provide this future to the rioters.

50 What put oil on the fire in the case of Copenhagen was the killing of an old Palestinian man in the part of the city named Nørrebro. In the context of a police control on 8 December 2007, he was pushed and, when lying, hit with batons. Between 9 and 16 February 2008, around 30 cars and 10 schools were set on fire in several Danish cities, primarily in Copenhagen and Århus, but also in Slagelse, Ringsted, Kokkedal, Nivå, Birkerød, Albertslund, Tingbjerg and Kalundborg. See Kim Ingemann, ‘De nye kampe for anerkendelse’, 23.06.11, <<http://modkraft.dk/node/15698>>.

Movement and Explosion

The specificity of the riots in Sweden, in comparison with those that took place in Athens in 2008 and in London in 2011 – which both started not as acts to defend welfare, but in response to police killings –, is that they emerge as a defence of the infrastructure of the suburbs. This reveals that the current crisis of restructured capital develops in differentiated temporalities. No important government spendings and no austerity measures were needed in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the crisis of 2008, on account of the combined attack on indirect wages during the financial crisis of 1990-1994, aggressive monetary policy as well as a rather restrictive loans policy. Hence, the restructured Swedish welfare state does, to a larger extent than countries like Greece or England,⁵¹ contain something to defend, namely social benefits, notably materialised in housing and infrastructure, often upon the basis of the particular relation between the market and the state described above. In Sweden, then, the relation between rioting and activism is not the openly conflictual one which we have seen in France where, during the French *anti-CPE* movement of 2006, the rioters from the Parisian *banlieues* literally attacked the students' demonstrations or general assemblies, by burning cars or seeking confrontation in a way that broke with the demand-oriented practices of the latter.⁵² In Sweden, the language of demands may be shared by activism and rioting although, in some cases, these demands can be projected reconstructions made by politicians, municipality workers or CEOs of real estate companies. Of course, there are demands and there are demands: the restless demands of the rioters (*lower the rent!* or *solidarity with our brothers!*) are not the general ones put forwards by organisations like Megafonen, requesting more welfare and democracy, but they do emerge in the same situation. The decline of the heavily centralised unions that were once the primary mediator of all social bargaining leaves a void that can only be replaced by forms of organisation that we may call *immediate*, in the sense that they are not integrated in a socially recognised institution.⁵³ The forms of this immediacy are diverse; they are both the taking over of

51 England is probably closer to Sweden, although intense and long-term austerity transformed its welfare more radically than in Sweden. However, during and in the aftermath of the riots in 2011, issues of welfare like housing, youth centres, etc., but also those of race and the associated policing were at the epicentre of public debate. In addition, public housing and housing prices have been a major topic in struggles over the last few years, especially in London. But in Greece, there was never a welfare state in the form it used to exist in Western Europe. 'Welfare' in Greece tends to be mediated by extended family relationships and small private property, clientelism and an overgrown public sector characterised by very low labour intensity and productivity.

52 Whereas in Paris, the encounter between rioting and activism was in fact the encounter between *banlieue* kids and university students, between two different worlds, the activists of Megafonen, Pantrarna and so on come from the same suburbs as the young racialised rioters.

53 In the public debates, the immediate aftermath of the Stockholm riots of 2013 was a sort of witch hunt, in which the most contradictory judgments coexisted. For example, Megafonen were accused of encouraging riots because of the demonstration they had organised against police violence, while a brain-dead blog post by journalist Joakim Lamotte asserting that the riots themselves were a matter of (other!) journalists paying local youth to burn cars, soon became a wide-spread rumour. The void we are speaking of, and the subsequent lack of recognised institutions of struggle, is thus also of an ideological nature. Not that all systems of ideas are dead, but because practices that break with the normal course of everyday life can not even be apprehended in everyday consciousness, they only exist as

abandoned state functions, the filling of the void, and the direct action against the perceived sources of one's social deprivation, the defiance of the void. In Sweden, then, the defence of social benefits becomes a catalyst for riots: burning and demanding can coincide.

But the practices of burning and demanding can not coexist in a harmonious way. By burning the very infrastructure of their reproduction *and at the same time* demanding an improvement of this reproduction, the rioters are acting against *and for* their perpetuation within this society. Through their practices, they thus tendentially split apart their *constitution* as racialised proletarians in relation to capital – the processes that determine their specific situation –, and their *reproduction* as racialised proletarians within capital – the processes that perpetuate what they are in this society.⁵⁴ These acts of splitting apart the constitution of what one is within this society on the one hand, and the reproduction of it on the other, is nothing revolutionary in itself. They only reveal a rift between this constitution and this reproduction; they do not undo the inner relation between the two. There is nothing that says that the mere revelation of this rift could not be integrated to the reproduction of capital. As we have seen, this is already the case in some rare occasions, when the exposure of this rift is represented politically not as the splitting apart of the constitution and the reproduction of the class – calling for a rupture with existing relations of production – but as an *inadequacy* between this constitution and this reproduction, an inadequacy that calls for social integration: 'an education and a job' to the 'excluded' who seem uncomfortable in their situation as 'excluded'. Thus, when actors such as activist groups or parties emerge in order to represent the rioters, *they are not 'recuperating' the riot*. They emerge *from the very limit* of the riots: their social and geographical isolation to those who are alien to the market – their existence as strictly 'suburban' riots.

With regards to the near future, the relation between rioting and activism we have tried to depict allows us to formulate two questions.

The first question concerns the tendency of activism to strive towards the constitution of a coherent, political movement which is to integrate the rioters. In Sweden, this is the case with Megafonen and Pantrarna. By trying to produce a coherent, political movement, these organisations emerge in response to the practices of the riot. But in this response, this alien character of racialised class belonging is represented as a deviation from a political norm, a political norm which is often that of the welfare state of the workers' movement. These organisations treat exploitation and racial domination as something which is to be transformed through the redistribution of existing wealth. For them, the economy is not constituted by class polarisation and racialisation; it is fundamentally neutral. This leads them to represent the riots as the living proof of the necessity to integrate denigrated identities, which are only blocked by the discrimination operated by those in power. A similar tendency has been seen in Ferguson these past months, especially among the older generation of militants, those affirming the necessity for black people to act like good citizens in order to be treated as good citizens. For them, citizenship is not constituted as the structural exclusion of blackness from whiteness; it is fundamentally open to everyone. As we

a locus for paranoid projections or nervous depressions.

54 We owe this distinction between constitution and reproduction to one of Théorie Communiste's many formulations of the concept of the rift (*l'écart*). See '*Théorie de l'écart*', *Théorie Communiste* no. 20, September 2005, p. 11.

pointed out above, these actors emerge from the very limit of the riots; they present the 'outsidership' of the rioters as a passive state deprived of action. It is important to note that this tendency contains a highly repressive moment: by affirming that identities must be integrated, or that we all should act like good citizens, they affirm the necessity to pacify the movement in order to produce a coalesced political subject. In Sweden, this is constantly taking the form of a differentiation between the rioters – 'criminal gangsters', 'throwers of stones', or why not 'professional activists' (*sic*)⁵⁵ coming from other parts of the city – and the locals – 'hard working people', 'shop owners', 'citizens', etc. This classification is at the same time an exclusion of the practices of the rioters. Indeed, *the coalesced political subject does not admit internal struggles* like the ones that appear both in the Swedish 'suburbs' and in Ferguson: struggles between the self-employed proletariat – owners of small retail stores, restaurants, etc. – and the younger proletarians. Then, it should come as no surprise that it stands on the side of the 'civic patrols' in Stockholm, the post-riot clean-up in London or, more recently, the Oath Keepers in Ferguson. Can this activism successfully level out the practices of the riot into a new force of social bargaining, which can be calmed as soon as its demands are satisfied? The latest developments in Greece (Syriza) and Spain (Podemos) might already be indicating such a tendency.⁵⁶ If so, upon what basis does this social integration occur, i.e. what is its internal relation to capital and to the state?

The second question concerns the tendency of the riots to take the form of social explosions. The inarticulateness of the riots – their diffuse and ephemeral character, their refusal of any civic dialogue, their restless demands when there are any – must be treated in and for itself, and not merely as the sign of an incapacity to speak properly. Indeed, *within the existing state*, the riots can not be articulated *as riots*, simply because there is no space for deliberation, especially in a period when the one and only necessity of capital is to get on with the restructuring. But also because the process of this restructuring presupposes the structural exclusion of the proletariat from the table of collective bargaining. The riots are fundamentally non-relational: their relation to the capitalist totality, although systematic, is not directly mediated by any socially recognised institution. In this, the riots blatantly reveal that the production of racialised class belonging as something alien is no less than its production as something alien. Of course, they manage to transform accumulated anger into a collective event. This is blatantly expressed by the fact during the riots, people from other 'suburbs' quickly converged in Husby in Stockholm, and that people from other parts of the US joined the riots in Ferguson. What's more, as seen in France in 2005, or in Sweden last

55 'Polis misstänker "yrkesaktivister"', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 25.05.13.

56 Here, we should pay attention to a major difference between the southern and northern European countries: in the former, even the majority populations have been victims of drastic pauperisation, in Greece and Portugal more than Italy and Spain. For example, youth unemployment in Greece is at 57.3%, 54.9% in Spain, 41.8% in Italy, and 34.8% in Portugal (see 'Table 1: Youth unemployment figures, 2011-2013Q4 (%)', in the Eurostat article 'Unemployment statistics', <[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment_trends)

[explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment_trends](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment_trends)> [visited November 2014]). 200,000 Portuguese aged 20-40 have left the country heading north since 2010. In this context, while in Greece and Spain we see the rise of certain 'radical' left forces, in France, the UK and Sweden it is the populist (anti-immigration) right which is on the rise.

year, riots are becoming longer and more spread out phenomena. This in itself can be celebrated. But communisation, the intertwined processes of abolishing capitalist social relations and of producing ourselves in new material communities, can not consist in riots, not even generalised ones. How could this intrinsic limit of the riot, its existence as a riot, i.e. as a social explosion, as the expression of accumulated unease against but always within capitalist society, be overcome? As suggested by the relation between rioting and activism, what needs to be overcome is not the destructiveness, for the establishment of constructiveness; nor is it constructiveness, to set destructiveness free. In areas like those of the Swedish suburbs, this would first of all imply to overcome the isolation of the strictly suburban riot. This would be about more than burning the cars of the rich in the city centre. It would begin as the putting at stake of the geography of capitalist accumulation: the relation between the capitalist core (Europe or the city centre) and its periphery (immigration or the suburbs). This could only be produced as internal struggles within the proletariat, because if there is one thing that these riots reveal about the revolution of our period, it is that we can not expect struggles to hit capital directly at its foundation, to only affect capitalists: *there are no pure struggles*.

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