

## Continue

This book has no conclusion, nor could it. As we mentioned in the introduction – and presented in more detail in the last chapter – the purpose of this work is to situate itself within the political struggles currently underway. It is true that the intuitions, ideas, and practices systematized here were elaborated out of militant experiences and intellectual exchanges among hundreds of people across the world over the past decade, but this does not mean that this collective elaboration has come to an end or that this theoretical effort is complete. Both the format of this book and our strategy for its dissemination, as well as the restructuring processes we have begun in our collectives, aim to enable other experiences and exchanges between organizations to emerge and connect with that prior process. For us, the success or failure of this writing is better measured by the articulations between emancipatory political organizations it helps to promote than by the intellectual agreement or approval of its readers.

As could not be otherwise, much of what has been presented here is indebted to the social and political context in which it was elaborated – beginning with the choice to explicitly cite only one book, the Manifesto of the Communist Party, and to center the theoretical dialogue on Marxism. Even the choice to preserve the name “communists” is partial, and may unnecessarily clash with the thinking of other political processes that, feeling the need to abandon this particular language, have elaborated other tools and ideas to guide their own practice of articulation and composition. We hope that the effort we have made to keep our theory abstract enough to encompass very diverse contexts while, where it was relevant, centering it on structures and practices rather than on names or banners, helps to mitigate these disagreements and to throw light on possible articulations between struggles that understand themselves through political traditions that are effectively in conflict with one another.

Thus, instead of proposing a theoretical conclusion or a final wrap-up to this work, we would like to address the main “loose end” we have left. Both the diagnosis we presented in the first part of the book and the tools we built in the second and third parts served to delimit what we have called investigation and composition. To investigate is to act within our struggles from the communist

standpoint, transforming questions of organization, of intervention, and of how struggles are perceived by others into an expanded field of action that takes into account the political space in which they are embedded. To compose is to transform these practical processes of investigation – whether in the form of experiments, exchanges of “technology,” or surveys – into ever more consistent and larger networks of concrete articulation between struggles. But the title of this book includes a third term: continue. What does it mean to continue, and how does this relate to investigation and composition?

As we have seen, the communist standpoint, for us, is not the one that takes the lead and directs a political process. In some struggles, there are well-defined vanguards, and this can be important; in others, this is secondary, or even a symptom that something is not going well. Furthermore, depending on the context, the most advanced sectors of each struggle or movement may shift drastically. It is possible that parties, movements, and communities that today manage to formulate a way forward will tomorrow run into adverse conditions they have never faced before, and come to depend on other political forces, more capable of setting the example. Communists, then, must not only know the reality of struggles – investigate – and seek points of articulation and construction – compose – but they must do so aware that this does not necessarily mean carrying out the program of any one organization in particular. It is as if we were in a labyrinth: the question is not “this way or that way,” the question is how to reach the end – and that may involve going in one direction, then in another, stopping and rethinking what has already been done. In practice, this points to a general orientation: to take every decision, every victory or defeat, as material for a next step. Continuing is the only thing we can do that transcends victory and defeat, since both winning and losing can help us rethink which path to take.

But to continue is not only an injunction in the sense of a direction: it is also what guarantees concern with the material reality of struggles. It is not just a matter of continuing the investigations and processes of composition, but also of thinking about these practices with a view to the fact that we need to continue. It is in this sense that the third “watchword” of our book becomes more tangible: it is what situates both the problem of investigation and that of composition in the field of political economy – that is, in the field of the costs of energy and time we can spend on each

thing when we are aware that the journey will be long. As we have seen, the action of communists takes place largely through their own organizations, insofar as the concern with the “movement as a whole” creates a new contradiction, lived by every militant and organizer who engages with this standpoint. But if there is a new contradiction, there is also more effort, more concerns, more tensions. Before reducing everyone’s work, cooperation always demands a bit more work: it is as if, in order to undo the bad habits that isolate us – precisely so that we can support one another and grow stronger – we needed to work even harder, until the collective effort begins to bear fruit. Communist practices face this challenge. And it is therefore crucial that communists be able not only to look around them, but also to recognize the magnitude of their historical task, the better to prepare themselves, choose their battles, and also value the capacity of articulations to give an afterlife to struggles and political histories. Through articulations, the legacy of a struggle, or of an important political experience, can continue to influence and transform reality even when we ourselves are no longer able to carry on.

But how can communists know whether we are advancing? Whether it is right to continue?

In a certain sense, the Western communist tradition imagined two ways of thinking about how continuity could lead us to a radical rupture. The first – which in the Manifesto is represented by the “utopian socialists” – thinks of this rupture as a question of space. At that time, capitalism appeared to be a phenomenon circumscribed to certain countries and regions, and so it was possible to imagine that a new society would begin elsewhere, in a commune or community far from the dictatorship of the commodity and of capital. Flight, the outside, the expansion of a territory or of a guerrilla – these are all images we find here, and which remain crucial to the revolutionary imagination.

But as it became clear that capitalism was spreading to every part of the world, and that it was increasingly difficult to imagine a safe space outside its grasp, another way of thinking about transformation began to emerge, this one centered on the dimension of time – the science of history, “scientific socialism,” was largely responsible for creating and nourishing this other form of imagining. Rupture, here, became a question of the transition between global social systems –

between a “now” and a “later,” rather than between a “here” and a “there.” The revolutionary imagination that takes time as its central category thinks largely in terms of accumulation, of stages, of crucial moments where everything will be at stake. And it makes sense that this way of imagining the revolution emerged: once capitalism had colonized all of space, it seemed that the only point of escape was awaiting us in the future.

Today it is possible that both the spatial imagination of refuge and expansion and the temporal imagination of free time and an open future are somewhat saturated, in the sense we gave to that idea at the beginning of the book: they are still important, but they no longer have as much political traction in a peripheral social terrain like ours. To keep going forward, to survive, seems not to lead to any great confrontation, any moment of true rupture. What we have called the peripherization of capitalism is also, as we have seen, a crisis of modern temporality, which had anchored that expectation in a common future supposedly hidden within capitalism itself. And who today believes that the world is moving, by its own inertia and internal contradictions, toward the conditions adequate for a great planetary insurrection?

It happens that there is a third dimension, as fundamental as time and space, and equally capable of accommodating our revolutionary imagination and desire for transformation: the scale of things. And this is a dimension where, by continuing, even with all the multiplicity of struggles, even without guaranteed convergence, we can still glimpse a form of radical rupture.

It may seem counterintuitive, but when I tell someone an object’s position in space and time, that does not yet tell me what its size is. To define that, I need another criterion of comparison, not a map or a clock. A football is large compared to an ant, and tiny compared to a city – and practically nothing if we think of the enormous solar system. Scale, however connected it may be with space and time, can change without them changing, and is therefore independent of them to some degree.

This way of thinking about parts and wholes, the small and the large, can also inspire our revolutionary imagination, situating what we are capable of doing collectively in a space of much

greater reach than what we have immediate access to. It is clear that we must act politically with a view to how a strike at a single institution can be made to expand until it becomes a strike of the whole sector, or a general strike, just as we must think about how to make a strike last until it secures its demands – space and time – but we must also be able to think the larger space of institutional strikes and breques (small revolt-stoppages in supermarkets), of party pressure for the advancement of labor legislation. It is not that each of these things automatically moves in the same direction – but if we want them to come together and relate to one another in some way, then we must also exercise this capacity to keep thinking politics beyond our own action and form of organization. Sometimes struggles have short extensions and durations, but in their totality, in the way they influence one another, they in fact think and act with magnitude and horizon.

Struggles spread across the world, yet interdependent, can cover the globe, and can therefore constitute a larger point of view, even if these connections do not yet guarantee the spatial or temporal continuity of these processes. To sense the existence of a political force of this magnitude does not mean trying to lift ourselves out of our immediate reality in order to decide and intervene directly “in the whole,” but rather to be attentive to those moments when the point of view of this totality offers us means of reorienting our forms of organizing and acting that are truly consequential and powerful. When this point of view – grounded in the existence of a network of articulations and real interdependencies – becomes consequential, that is, when what we build is better organized once we take the communist perspective into account, we have here an important indicator that there is a revolutionary struggle underway, however silent it may be.