

There are no scales or statistics to measure subversive tensions and practices...to put it simply, the specific struggle against the new construction in steenokkerzeel was not restricted to a group of comrades- it had, beyond a doubt, contributed to an intensification of diffuse hostilities, both within the specific struggle, as well as on other fronts.

Nothing is. *Finished*

Essays from anti-prison struggles in Belgium

think more deeply, but it is experience that teaches us which metal to forge our weapons with. Therefore these few considerations about an experience of struggle, which in total didn't last much more than a year, are inscribed in a course that some comrades had been writing for a few years.

It doesn't make much sense to sit down after a rich experience and think, with a deep sigh, that everything is over. Neither does it make sense to limit the questions to the cleanup, to searching for a ravine in which to throw the pieces which are weighing down on our shoulders and our hearts. Rather, it is about taking the effort to put the different pieces next to each other, to look to them, to confront them in a new context and to wonder which pieces one still would like to use to build something new. Not just as a part, as a door or window of a new house, but rather as one of the solid foundations on which a new experience of struggle can be built. The more intense, vast and riper the experience, the more effort it will take to think about it afterwards. But the effort it takes is proportional to the effort it is worth, as well as the need which arises when one is determined not to bow their head, nor to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Nothing is Finished

Essays from anti-prison struggles in Belgium

*Archipel- Affinité, Organisation Informelle
& Projects Insurrectionnels,
Les Contours d'une Lutte &
Quelques Réflexions suite à la Lutte contre la
Construction d'un Nouveau Centre Fermé.*

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And across the borders of the countries. We have experienced the joy of an international solidarity which became very tangible at times, with comrades from other countries coming over for demonstrations, contributing to discussions, and involving themselves in what was going on and contributing to it. We saw a nascent internationalism, one that goes beyond the self-promotion on the internet. A nascent internationalism that needs further deepening and orientation.

Apart from the frustrations afterwards (discussions and conflicts which, in some cases, will never be solved), the comrades and their development throughout the struggles and revolts will remain the most beautiful aspects of the struggle. There are mental pictures from it that will never disappear, that one can evoke by closing their eyes: the smile of comrades that share in a struggle, that prepare themselves to take risks together, that discuss and try to get further through discussions, that learn to know each other in ideas as well as practices, the moments in which they are really close to each other and strengthen each other. The solidarity, the comradeship, that is the rare pearl that only struggle can offer. It is everyone offering what he can, and some crazy alchemy which engenders a struggle.

Pfff...

It is by searching for struggle and the confrontation between ideas and practice that every comrade can move forward. It is not through thinking without acting, or acting without thinking, but through the confrontation between both that we can sharpen our ideas about how to struggle. Books and discussions can always help us learn to

Local & *international*

Just like a scene or a centralized meeting space can impose borders upon initiatives of people who want to struggle, and can extinguish it in the end, a localist view of struggle can cause the same thing. The choice for beginning a struggle against the construction of the new camp in Steenokkerzeel was made on the basis of a local situation: on one hand as a more consistent continuation of a local struggle course around the theme, on the other hand as a challenge to crowbar open a terrain of struggle that doesn't only concern anarchists.

But a struggle for freedom can only exist when it crosses borders, the borders of cities, the borders of countries, of themes. An internationalist angle is a necessary condition for every struggle that doesn't want to end up closed-minded, considering its own context as the most important one, its own theme as the most urgent one, if one doesn't want to lock up the struggle in its own neighborhood. Only when revolt and insurrection are diffuse do they become truly problematic, only when they are crossing borders they can have an authentic energy. If it is the existent which isolates us from one another, it is the revolt against it that unites us.

One of the intentions when starting this struggle was the strengthening of the ties between comrades in different cities. This gave rise to some exceptional meetings, no doubt. Yet, too much weight has been put on Brussels, because there seemed to be the more activity there, which created some kind of attraction. Ideally, comrades from different cities communicate through the struggle; during this struggle, the communication intensified at moments, creating the most beautiful sparks. At other moments, there has been more emptiness, but the ideal still remains a cross-pollination across the borders of the cities.

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eventually becomes a burden, until one decides to break with it. On the other hand, the ones that the proposals are coming to will feel passive, ever more unsure about what they actually want, in contrast with those who always seem to have a clear idea of what they want. This role begins to gnaw at us, until one has had enough of it and takes a step back from everything. An organizational model which is unbalanced can keep burning on enthusiasm for a while, but when the enthusiasm disappears everyone is left with sour feelings.

And so? Every struggle is in need of spaces that can help shape it. Spaces in which there is discussion or in which one can coordinate for specific goals (for example the organization of a demonstration). However, when there is only one space, and this space becomes the reference point, it will inevitably become a burden to the struggle and will suffocate people's autonomous courses, rather than giving them oxygen.



does that mean? If you consider the struggle as a struggle growing in “participants,” you automatically start thinking about what you can share with all of these people. You start proposing things toward “the group,” and if the group takes up the proposals you can give them new proposals, on and on, until it bumps onto its inevitable limits.

But what are those limits? First of all the paralyzing effect of collectivity, some kind of dictum that everybody needs to agree upon before something can begin, and so everyone needs to be *persuaded* of the validity of a proposal. This causes extremely destructive discussions, which hurt more than they help— for example, when the deeper notions of ones view on social reality or what one demands from a struggle don’t coincide.

Secondly, these sorts of spaces impose a collective rhythm on the struggle, a rhythm which everyone feels alienated from in the end. It is a rhythm of action after action without deepening, because deepening is not possible when discussion is limited to collective moments. And so, at the end, one doesn’t know what one is doing anymore, except reproducing the same thing. When, in such a space, proposals are made that differ from what has been the norm so far, these proposals are charged with an exaggerated weight, because no one wants to be dragged into an initiative that seems over their heads. What is known is milked dry until it becomes routine, what is unknown provokes adverse reaction. We’ll say it again— this is the consequence of a lack of autonomy, permanent discussion and thought about what one wants *outside* of the collective moments.

Thirdly, those who are accustomed to making proposals will feel exhausted after a while, because thinking about proposals each time and taking the effort to realize them takes more energy than simply participating in an action. In every relation, the lack of mutuality

Any person, at any time, alone or with others, is capable of making their own theoretical or practical contribution toward contesting the diffuse network of control that constantly expands around us. Here— like in Belgium— the state increases its hold on our lives through more prisons, security cameras and immigrant detention centers, and more efficient policing tactics, all interconnected to streamline exploitation. The deck is stacked against us, but subversive acts against the repressive machine continue.

But the system is not afraid of individual acts; rather, it fears the *circulation* of subversion. Because try as it might, the state will never possess the means to police society fully, to the extent of preventing a strategy of diffuse social sabotage and criminality.

The following texts were recently translated from the second issue of the journal *Salto: Subversion and Anarchy*. They comprise accounts from some comrades who have chosen to fight back, in specific struggle, against the construction of a new immigrant detention center in Steenokkerzeel, Belgium.

The first article, Archipelago, is not specifically about the anti-detention center struggle but, in conjunction with the other two articles, serves to provide some background on ideas which informed how the actors

deliberately chose to engage with the various forces at play – the state and the police, prison contractors, anarchists and antagonists, immigrants and uncontrollables – and all of the potential affinities and antagonisms that exist between them.

It all gets pretty messy, but that's one of the most beautiful things about these texts: the authors are humble about this messiness, bluntly acknowledging that they're still learning and experimenting, while simultaneously confident in saying that the only way they'll learn how to struggle is by struggling. There isn't a clear, easy formula for revolution. "Everything we will ever try will cause problems. And that is not a problem." The value isn't in the mythical end product, but in the struggle itself– the drawing out and highlighting of tensions within society, while placing oneself at odds with the wretched misery of capitalism.

Of course, the state has responded to protect its interests, deploying repressive measures against anarchists in Brussels, including heavy surveillance and a series of raids on homes and social centers. But we didn't only choose to reproduce these articles as a dutiful ritual of anti-repression. We keep our comrades who are facing repression with us, in our minds and our hearts; however, we cannot treat the documents from their struggles like artifacts, or obituaries.

Rather, we think that the best way to help support our comrades is both to engage critically and combatively with them, their projects and their ideas, and to continue to act, utilizing the lessons we can glean from their experiences in formulating our own projects of revolt and attack. This is revolutionary solidarity– a practice of solidarity rooted, above all, in action.

In continuing to circulate these texts, we hope to actively engage with the important questions herein (and there are many posed within the texts): How do we organize our struggles? When and how does it make sense to

The enthusiasm at the beginning of a shared project after a period of searching for affinity is contagious and attracts others who are willing to struggle. Enthusiasm is one of the driving forces behind every fight, but it is far from a solid base on which to build a struggle. What happens when it all becomes a bit less playful and demands a bit more seriousness? What about when there are difficulties and setbacks? This is not a plea for marrying a certain struggle or signing a contract at its inception, but an underlining of the absolute necessity of the development of an autonomous course. Without autonomy, without being able to revolt and struggle *starting from oneself*, and without a project being offered, one can only be swallowed into projects and not able to *make them their own*.

But, viewed from another angle, what do you do when you are meeting other enthusiasts and impatient people in the middle of a struggle? During the development of the struggle against the new camp, some individuals in Brussels took the initiative to create an assembly, a space where everyone (except politicians and other leaders) willing to struggle without trade unions could come to. A space for debate and coordination in the struggle.

However, discussion and thinking about what one wants need to happen in a more permanent way, outside of the collective moments, otherwise these moments become nothing more than moments in which one is either competing with others (by selling proposals and looking for adherents, or by shooting down the proposals of others), or letting oneself be dragged along by the best speaker. An assembly on the one hand risks the strengthening of a "waiting attitude" (we are waiting for discussion and proposals until we are all sitting together instead of autonomously looking for comrades and starting discussions on an individual level or in smaller constellations), and on the other hand risks strengthening the illusion of the number. What

The social conflict is perhaps not always visible to the eye, but its expressions are permanently present and feed each other. Like all the riots that erupted in the neighborhoods during the struggle against the new camp have been an impetus to continue in a more daring way, an insurrection in a prison encourages other prisoners, and the insurrections on the other side of the Mediterranean sea have echoed everywhere in the world. If we consider our proper course to be in dialogue with other rebels, we must also learn to evaluate our efforts differently. We can't retreat, disappointed, when there are no masses of people going to the streets together with us, or when we don't notice the typical signs of a certain model of conflict. The world we are living in is bursting with conflict, and we are part of it. The question is not how to gather everyone around us, but rather how we can continue our autonomous course and deepen the conversation with others.

Autonomous course & ***permanent discussion***

As anarchists, considering insurrection and looking for ways to make it possible is not the same as drawing up a master plan leading towards insurrection and looking for the cattle to execute it. Neither can it be about a crowd joining an initiative and not taking responsibility for thinking for themselves, discussing, creating an autonomous course. Of course this is a caricature, but it enables one to sketch out certain mechanisms inherent to each attempt to bring people together without, at the same time, proposing circles of affinity and permanent discussion as necessary conditions to enable informal organization.

choose to struggle against specific projects of capitalist devastation? How does a struggle end, and when it does, how do we make sense of things?

For a world without borders or cages...

AUGUST 2013



a lot of people like us before we can start. Rather, we wish to put the accent on the communication between rebels, through words and deeds. We are not the saviors of the world. We are anarchists, we exact blows to submission, embrace the deeds of revolt, and warm our hearts with words of solidarity. Our home is wherever a person throws off his shackles, our ideal where a person rouses another towards revolt. This is our relation towards *the others*, it is a relation of solidarity in insurgency, and this is what we are looking for— under the direction of our beating hearts.

Affinité
insurre

And so we don't think that we need to be many in number before taking a leap forwards. We never asked to the whole world to gather behind our flag, but we do want them to decide where they stand, and act in accordance. What we want is that our leaps be undertaken in communication with the actions of other revolting people (who are not like us) always opening up a bit more space, with an eye toward generalizing the revolt, or *insurrection*. Even if it takes a lot of courage, and even if we don't always find the right words at the right moment, we are not trying to fool others by pretending to have socially acceptable ideas, because it's not true: our ideas are currently completely socially unacceptable. Given the current situation, we neither believe that there are freedom loving people to be found on every street corner, nor do we retreat bitterly when we find out that "the people" are not anarchists. Just as we don't get cynical because of the current disaster and only see shit, or at the end of the day satisfy ourselves with some polite words of a neighbor or whatever. Our language is the language of solidarity in insurgency, the one of freedom, of attack. These are the words we are trying to speak with, in our spaces, in the street. And we think that it is possible to share a struggle with others, but maybe not in the typical way everyone imagines: all together behind the same flag.

anarchists, we want more than a life in revolt. Hence the project of struggle, or in other words: *projectuality*. It has a logic: if one doesn't completely withdraw himself from this world (but where to go?), one will always continue to bump up against the world, to hurt oneself. Oppression doesn't only disappear by way of revolt, it always forces itself upon life, in your life, in the lives of loved ones, in the lives of people far away. Hence the need for more. We can also say that it all doesn't matter if people want to live like sheep and wolves, and that is where the ideal comes in: the struggle for an ideal, the one of freedom. Because that is what we desire, and what is needed. And freedom is not something that exists as such, but something to discover and conquer, to learn and experiment with. Therefore, we are in need of accomplices.



It's not because we're just a few anarchists that we should be prevented from beginning to struggle. We don't think that we need to find

Archipelago

ty, informal organization &
ectional projects.

“If the question isn’t how to organize people for the struggle, it becomes **how to organize the struggle.**”

of posters pasted and put up (in bars, shops...). It was in the air, but we were not ready for it, and the massive police presence and their repressive way of dealing with initiatives taken earlier in the week leading towards the demo didn’t help. The hangover that was caused by seeing all the work slipping out of our hands is huge. But after all of that, it enables us to imagine something that could have hit deeper than what we’ve known so far. It gives us a beginning point from which to imagine what could be possible on the scale of a city, as well as what could not. Perhaps a concentration of people which confronts the police forces head-on is (currently) out of the realm of possibility for us, and perhaps the perspective of diffuse hostility offers more to us. It is closer to the way social conflict is expressed today in our environment, and it is more in line with our choice of decentralization, informality and affinity.

Some questions pop up: why take these leaps when the social consequences of our practices and words are hardly noticeable? Why put everything at stake when the word around us is taking very few steps towards a revolutionary struggle?

The debate around these questions is often rendered stupidly, with two positions becoming crystallized: those who believe in the absoluteness of “the will,” that “everything is always possible,” and those who put their expectations too much into “the others,” that “everyone needs to be with us.” Or more: those who see revolt everywhere, and those who become disappointed and mostly notice submission.

Let’s be clear: if the world wasn’t so peppered with submission, we wouldn’t be permanently talking about revolt. Talking about revolt encourages revolt, giving an echo to acts of revolt. Revolt is necessary, without revolt we aren’t getting anywhere. But, at the same time, revolt is just the beginning. As revolting rebels, and also as

wide palette of initiatives, a stirred time in which many diffuse attacks took place. An involvement of many people— how many, we will never know.

So if we want to ask what has been the actual “result” of this struggle, it would be the space that was opened during this struggle, not the year-and-a-half delay of the opening of the center, nor the euros of damage that were caused to the collaborating companies. A certain social space (even if only minimal) in which one struggles against a world full of camps, in an offensive, non-mediated and non-centralized way. Not lobbying, but attack; not beautified political language, but the raw, poetic dialect of revolt; not negotiations or exercising “political pressure,” but solidarity and communication between rebels and revolutionaries through direct action. But, every space that is forced open can later on be filled up again with half-baked ideas, until everything becomes vague again and the space is filled with more reformist ideas of struggle. Deeper openings become necessary, cracks that are more difficult to repair, which contain the possibility for more, much more. After hostility, there is a need for insurrection.

But how to reach that point? Agitation, gatherings, disruptions of normalcy, attacks against structures and those responsible are always absolutely necessary, because it is impossible to move towards insurrection out of a paralyzed situation. And it also has a value in and of itself. But it is not sufficient. And so, there needs to be discussion about which ruptures we can imagine will go deeper and last longer. The failed manifestation on the first of October could have been such a rupture. Not an insurrection, but the starting gun for expanding riots. Hundreds of people came together, to a call *against all borders, against all camps and prisons, against all states*, in a city where the atmosphere is always tense, where tens of thousands pamphlets announcing the demonstration were distributed, as were thousands

Why

return to questions about affinity and informal organization? Certainly not because we are lacking attempts to explore and deepen these aspects of anarchism, not because yesterday’s discussion, like today’s, aren’t being somewhat inspired by them, and also not because there is a lack of texts — true, most of the time in other languages — that approach these questions perhaps in a more dynamic manner. However, without a doubt, certain concepts require a permanent analytical and critical effort, if they don’t want to lose their meaning by being overused and repeated. Otherwise, our ideas run the risk of becoming commonplace, some “evidence”, a fertile ground for the idiotic game of identity competition, where critical reflection becomes impossible. It also happens that some people quickly dismiss the choice of affinity, as if it was about a relationship perched on its own ideas, a relationship that wouldn’t allow contact with reality or with comrades. Others wave it around like a banner, like some kind of slogan — but like all slogans, it is usually the real meaning, deep and propulsive, that is the first victim.

No human activity is possible without organization, at least if we understand “organization” as the coordination of the mental and physical efforts deemed necessary to achieve a goal. An important, oft-forgotten aspect appears within this definition: organization is functional, it is focused on the realization of something, towards action in the broadest sense of the word. Those today who urge everyone to just organize in the absence of clear goals and, while awaiting that from this first moment of organization, all the rest would automatically develop. They put organizing on a pedestal, as an end in itself. In the best of cases, maybe they hope

that a perspective will will spring forth, a perspective that they are not able to imagine by themselves or roughly draw up, but which would become possible and palpable only within some kind of collective and organized environment. Nothing is less true. An organization is fruitful when it is nurtured, not from a banal quantitative presence, but from individuals that use it to realize a common goal. In other words, it is pointless to believe that, just by organizing ourselves, the questions of how, what, where and why to struggle will be resolved by the magic of the collective. In the best of cases – or the worst, depending on the point of view – someone could perhaps find a bandwagon to jump on, a wagon pulled by someone else, and just get comfortable in the rather unpleasant role of *follower*. It would only be a matter of time before one would, disgusted and dissatisfied, break with this organization.

Organization is therefore subordinated to what one wants to do. For anarchists, it's necessary to add the direct ties between what one wants to do, the ideal for which one struggles, and the way to obtain it. Despite the present disguising and word games, in more or less marxist meanderings, parties are still considered to be an adequate means to fight against political parties. Today, we see them continue to put forth political affirmation of the productive forces (in times when the scale of industrial disaster is visible to everyone's eyes) as a road to end with capitalist relationships. Some want to take *measures* to render all other measures superfluous. Anarchists have nothing to do with these kind of magic tricks– for them, the ends and the means need to coincide. Authority cannot be fought with authoritarian forms of organization. Those who pass their time picking apart the fine points of metaphysics, and find in it affirmation, arguments against the use of *violence*, an alibi, or a capitulation by anarchists, demonstrate above all their profound desire for order and harmony. Every human relation is conflictual, which does not mean that it is therefore *authoritarian*. To talk about such questions in absolute terms is certainly difficult, which doesn't take away the fact the *tension towards coherence* is a vital need.

courages rebellion in all aspects of life, gives it some oxygen, makes it imaginable. Needless to say we can't forget that the religious and political vultures are always lurking to recuperate the dissatisfaction for their oppressive goals.

Attention: keeping all of these reflections in the back of the mind (fed through years of discussion), my reasons to struggle don't prevent me from sharing a part of this track with others, anarchists or not. If someone's main reason to struggle against prison is the fact that her partner is inside and she wants to end the hopelessness of the situation by beginning to struggle, she is welcome. Likewise, someone who doesn't necessarily dream about insurrection but does consider prison an atrocity. I won't wait for everyone to become an anarchist before I start to struggle with them on a radical base.

From the spreading of hostility **towards insurrection**

The proposal to struggle against the construction of the new camp in Steenokkerzeel was to make the construction into a social problem. A *problem* signifies that it would become difficult for those who were building it and collaborating to continue with the construction– a *social* problem signifies a problem that is created in the social space and not within the borders of a scene or movement. If we think back on this time, we can see different interpretations of this struggle: a large agitation around the thematic, attempts to sit together with different people, disruptions of normalcy, a series of attacks against those responsible, discussions in different cities and countries... A

life, but in the lives of everyone. To put it positively: the thought of what could be possible when we conquer freedom is exciting. In this part of the world we are far away from this dream. Apart from the fact that everyone is navel-gazing, there is also a lack of courage. But throughout history there have always been people who have kept the dream of the conquest of freedom alive and have been thinking about ways to reach it. Insurrection is one of them. As insurrectionary anarchists, we are thinking about what a contemporary insurrection could look like.

More concretely: take the example of prison. I consider the thematic of prison anything but exciting and I don't struggle against it out of personal experience. Thinking of prison doesn't make me any angrier than thinking about patriarchy or psychiatry and emotional distress. But in our context, the specific thematic of prison seems important, not only because it is connected to so much suffering (you can find suffering everywhere), but because it has a history of experiences in this geographic area, and also because it is a very moving theme. Prison is a social question in the Belgian context; the announcement of the biggest prison building project in Belgian history follows tumultuous years of riots, insurrections, guards strikes, overpopulation, escapes... furthermore, the relation between prison and the neighborhoods in certain cities is a real relation, not only because of the suffering that prison causes in the lives of those in the neighborhoods, but also because both spaces have similarities: we are living like sardines in a controlled can. The thematic of prison is tangible everywhere. But apart from the similarity of the space, there is also the rebellious character that binds them together. Both spaces seem infected with the virus of rebellion: although it does not always express itself, it is always present in a latent way, and when the conditions allow for it, it breaks open in full violence. We can enter into dialectics with all of these elements, and begin on a track which en-

If today we think that affinity and affinity groups are the most adequate form for struggle and anarchist intervention in social conflictuality, it is because such a consideration is intimately tied to how we conceive of this struggle and this intervention. In effect, two roads exist to face the question, roads that are not diametrically opposed, but that also do not totally coincide. On one hand, there is the non-negotiable need for *coherency*. From there comes the question of the extent to which certain anarchist organizational forms (taking, for example, the organizations of synthesis with programs, some declarations of principles and some congresses such as anarchist federations or anarcho-syndicalist structures) answer to our idea of anarchism. On the other, there is the matter of *adequateness* of certain organizational structures. This *adequateness* puts the question more on the grounds of historical conditions, of goals that we want to reach (and therefore to the organizational form that is considered most apt to this), of analysis of the social and economic situation... Certainly we would have always preferred small groups who move with autonomy and agility over big federations. But on the level of *adequateness* to the situation, with great difficulty and in certain conditions, one can exclude *a priori* that the choice of a specific, federated anarchist organization of struggle or a guerrilla constellation... can (or rather, could have) answer to certain needs.

We think that contributing to insurrectional ruptures and developing them is the most adequate anarchist intervention to fight against domination. By insurrectional ruptures we mean intentional ruptures, even if temporary, in the time and space of domination; therefore a *necessarily violent* rupture. Even though such ruptures also have a quantitative aspect (as they are *social phenomena*s that cannot be reduced to a random action of a fistful of revolutionaries), they are directed towards the quality of the confrontation. They take aim against structures and relations of power, they break with their time and space and allow, through the experiences made and the methods used to self-organize and of direct action, to question again and to attack more aspects of dominion. In short, the insurrection-

al ruptures seem, to us, necessary on the road towards the revolutionary transformation of the existent.

From this logically follows the question of knowing how anarchists can organize themselves to contribute to such a rupture. Without giving up on the always-important spreading of anarchist ideas, today it is not about gathering, at all costs, the biggest amount of people possible *around anarchism*. In other words, we don't think that what is necessary is strong anarchist organizations with a broad, shining ability to attract the exploited and the excluded, as a quantitative prelude for these organizations that in turn will give (when the time is ripe) the signal of insurrection. Furthermore, we contend that it is unthinkable in our time that insurrectional ruptures could start from organizations that defend the interest of a particular social group, starting from more or less anarcho-sindicalist forms. The integration of such organizations within democratic management, in fact, perfectly answers to contemporary capitalist economy; it is this integration that made it impossible to potentially cross from a defensive to an offensive position. Finally it seems to us impossible that today a strong "conspiracy" would be able, through different surgical operations, to make domination tremble and to drag the exploited in the insurrectional adventure; beyond the objections that can be made against this way of considering things. In historical contexts where power was very centralized, such as in czarist Russia, one could still somehow imagine the hypothesis of a direct attack against the *heart* (in this case the assassination of the czar) as a prelude to a generalized revolt. In a context of decentralized power like the one we know, the question can no longer be about striking the *heart*, hypothesizing a scenario where one well-aimed shot could make domination shake in its foundations (which obviously doesn't take anything away from the validity of a well aimed shot). Therefore, other paths should be explored

Let's take a few steps back. It is possible to begin a struggle in any domain, and it is true that there will be no struggle if no one instigates it. But we have a different outlook. If we find ourselves in a common room and discuss which area of struggle we want to open or deepen, we are thinking about perspectives. It is neither tastes nor desires which decide upon the outcome of the search for a perspective of struggle in the social space. It is rather the *hypothesis* that we can go into communication with others on this domain, the hypothesis that breaches in this domain could create more chaos than in another domain (and this without claiming that struggle in other domains would be "irrelevant").



It is a social and (important) insurrectional perspective: it isn't the misery in this world that is attracting our attention, but rather the dream of what could end this misery, and not only in our personal

What do we base our choice upon? As insurrectionary anarchists, we want to clear away the oppression that is poisoning our lives, and the lives of so many others. This seems possible only through a *social* turnover, so together with others. Therefore we are closely examining the map of the social situation in which we are living, and look for spaces where there is friction, *conflictuality*. We are studying the social questions of the present times, wondering where we could intervene as anarchists. If there is a breach caused by revolt, if the state of affairs is on shaky ground somewhere, it makes it easier for us to return to dialectics and, now and then, use a crowbar.

There are also forms of revolt that are less visible, often because they take place at an individual level, and not all revolts necessarily have something to offer to us. An insurrectional project doesn't equal the adoration of any riot, such as one instigated by religion or elections, and neither does it equal the underestimation of individual rebellion such as the rebellion of a woman cutting her chains and escaping from the prison of her relationship. For example: when we hear that certain riots in the prison have the Qur'an as their base, it makes us rather sad (the lies of religion poisoning the mind), while the news of an escape (an individual act of revolt) always puts a smile on our faces. However, the news of a revolt *in solidarity* with other prisoners (as happened in 2009 when the youth in the streets of Anderlecht – a neighborhood in Brussels – as well as prisoners in Andenne revolted in solidarity with prisoners in Forest that were tortured by the police who took over the task of striking prison guards), as well as the news about an escape during which all the cell doors are opened (as happened some years ago in Dendermonde) all have this beautiful extra quality within, this ethics which makes one able to take not only oneself into consideration, but also extends a hand towards the other, as an invitation to revolt.



Affinity & **Affinity Groups**

Many draw back when faced with affinity. It is, in fact, a lot easier and less demanding to sign up for something, be it an organization, a permanent assembly or a scene, and to take up and reproduce formal characteristics, rather than embarking upon a long and never-ending search for comrades with whom to share ideas, analysis and eventual projects. Because affinity is exactly this: a reciprocal knowledge between comrades, shared analysis that leads to prospects of action. Affinity is therefore directed, on one hand, towards theoretical deepening and, on the other, towards intervention in social conflictuality.

Affinity is radically situated on the *qualitative* plane. It aspires to the sharing of ideas and methods, and it does not have infinite growth as its goal. For some comrades, one of the main, often camouflaged preoccupations still seems to be the number. How many are we? What should we do to be

more? From the polarization on such a question and from the assessment that today we aren't many, and given by the fact that many others do not share our ideas (no, also not unconsciously), derives the conclusion that we should, to grow numerically, avoid putting too big of an emphasis on certain ideas. These days it is rare to still find those who will try to sell you a membership card to some revolutionary organization, destined to quantitatively grow and aspiring to represent always more exploited; but there are many who think that the best way to get to know others consists of organizing "consensual" activities such as self-organized bars, workshops, concerts, etc. Surely such activities can have their role, but when we face the topic of affinity we are talking about something else. Affinity is not the same thing as friendship. Of course the two are not mutually exclusive, but it is not because we share certain analysis that we sleep together, and vice versa. In the same way, just because we listen to the same music it doesn't mean we want to struggle in the same way against domination.

The search for affinity occurs on an interpersonal level. It is not a collective event, a group affair, where it is always easier to follow than to think for oneself. The deepening of affinity is clearly a matter of thought and action, but in the end affinity is not the result of carrying out an action together, but rather a starting point from which to then pass to action. OK, this is obvious, some might say, but then this would mean that I will not meet many people who could be good comrades, because in some way I would confine myself in affinity. It is true that the search and the deepening of affinity require a lot of time and energy, and that therefore it is not possible to generalize it to *all* comrades. The anarchist movement of a country, of a city or even of a neighborhood cannot become one big affinity group. It is not about enlarging different affinity groups with more comrades, but to make possible the multiplication of autonomous affinity groups. The search, the elaboration and the deepening of affinity leads to small groups of comrades that know each other, share analysis and pass together to action.

emptying field, to start a struggle from our own bases, to launch our own proposal for a struggle. In addition, the Belgian state has, for many years, been plagued by a series of revolts and escapes, in the prisons as well as in the closed centers for people without papers. Around this theme, a whole course of struggle had developed. In the new camp in Steenokkerzeel, prisoners would be subjected to a more isolated regime, a new instrument for the state to break the revolt inside of the closed centers. And for us, one more reason to struggle against it.

The specific choice for a specific struggle against this specific camp was actually quite logical. On the one hand, there was the desire to build upon our foundations (against all papers and states, as well as the proposal of direct action and attack against all cogs of the whole deportation machine), a struggle that goes beyond the punctuality of interventions and reactions to external factors (for example raids), the development of a conscious course of struggle: in short, a specific struggle. On the other hand, the specific choice for this theme didn't just fall from the sky: years of social conflict around the theme, as well as years of experiences, discussions, knowledge. To end, this specific new camp could be a weapon in the hands of the state to repress the revolt within.

A problematic that was raised several times during this experience of struggle, and afterwards, is a typical one— the choice of a specific theme. Why this one, and no other(s)? First of all it seems important to underline that there is no anarchist measure to indicate what form of oppression is "more important" or "more urgent" to struggle against than others. Simply because we are struggling against oppression as such, whatever expression it takes. In other words: given the fact that all forms of oppression are equally in need of struggle, how do we orient ourselves?

Why a specific struggle? *Why specifically that struggle?*

The choice to start a specific struggle against the construction of a new closed center (deportation camp) in Steenokkerzeel was based upon an analysis of the social context, as well as it was the continuation of experiences made throughout the years around the subject of papers, camps and borders (from solidarity and support, to sporadic interventions, as well as the sketching out of every element which constitutes the deportation machine). After some years of church occupations and demonstrations of (collectives of) people without papers demanding a general regularization,¹ the state decided to start constructing a new deportation camp (the first new camp in many years) while the movement of people without papers stopped after the necessary repression (deportation of those who struggled fervently, evictions of occupations, the cardinal who called his priests to no longer let people without papers occupy the churches or parish centers, a rougher dealing with demonstrations) as well as the promise of a regularization.

Considering that there has always been some friction around these themes (we think, for example, about the tumultuous period around the Collective against Deportations and the murder of Sémira Adamu), and that, when the struggle for regularization came to an end, we evaluated that it was a good time to insert our content into the

1. In the beginning, this movement also demanded the closure of all closed centers and the immediate end to deportations, but this perspective increasingly vanished, and was even replaced by the demand for regularization of well-integrated families. In Antwerp, some even said: “papers for those who speak Dutch.”

[ed: regularization refers to the legalization of illegal immigrants; the movement for general regularization means giving papers to everyone.]

There’s the word... The “group” aspect of an affinity group has regularly been criticized, in both wrong and right ways. Often there are comrades who share the notion of affinity, but it becomes a lot more complicated when we start talking about “groups” which, on one hand, go beyond an interpersonal aspect, while on the other hand seem to limit “growth”. Most of the time, the objections consist in underlining the pernicious mechanisms of the “interior/exterior”, of the “inside/outside” that such affinity groups can generate (such as, for example, the fact of renouncing to one’s own path to follow the one of others, the sclerosis and the mechanisms that can surface such as certain forms of competition, hierarchy, feelings of superiority or inferiority, fear...). But these are problems that arise in any kind of organization and are not exclusively tied to affinity. It is about reflecting on how the search for affinity can avoid bringing stagnation and paralysis, but rather bring expansion, spreading, and multiplication.

An affinity group is not the same as a “cell” of a party or an urban guerrilla formation. Since the search for it is permanent, affinity evolves in permanence. It can “increase” up until the point that a shared project becomes possible, but on the other hand, it can also “decrease” until it becomes impossible to do anything together. The archipelago of affinity groups therefore constantly changes. This constant change is often highlighted by its critics: one cannot build anything from this, because it is not stable. We are convinced of the opposite: there is nothing to be built around organizational forms that revolve around *themselves*, away from the individuals that are part of it. Because sooner or later, at the first sign of repercussions, excuses and tricks will surface. The only fertile ground on which to build is the reciprocal search for affinity.

Finally, we would like to point out that this way of organization has the further advantage of being particularly resistant to the repressive measures of the state, since it does not have representative bastions, structures or names to defend. Where crystallized formations and big organizations can

practically be dismantled in one hit, because of the fact that they are rather static, affinity groups remain agile and dynamic even when repression hits. Since affinity groups are based on reciprocal knowledge and trust, the risks of infiltration, of manipulation and snitching are much more limited than in huge organizational structures, to which people can formally join, or in vague surroundings where it is only necessary to reproduce certain behavior to join the club. Affinity is quite a hard base to corrupt, exactly because it starts from ideas and evolves according to these ideas.

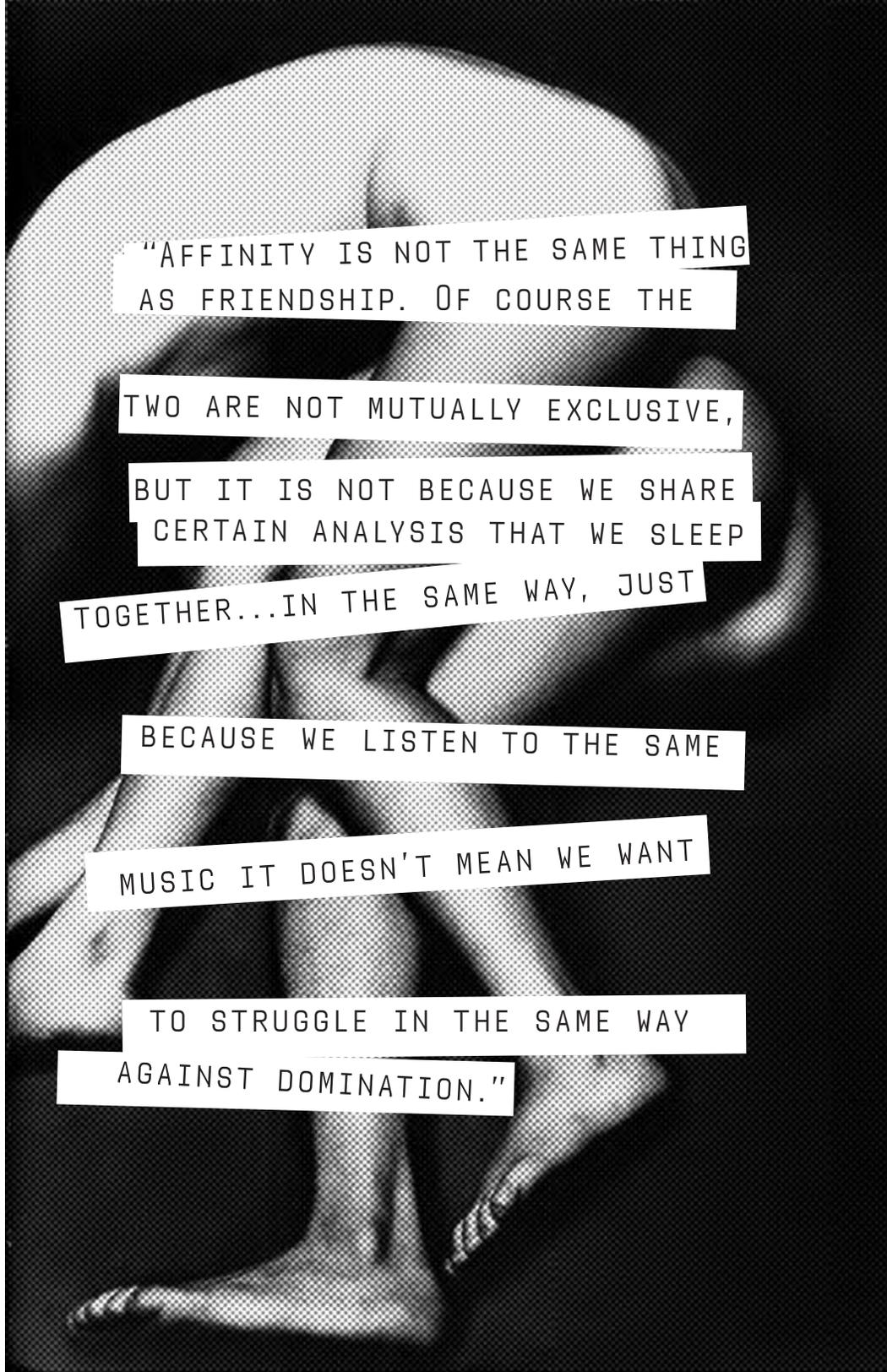
Informal organization & projectuality

We believe that anarchists have the most amount of freedom and autonomy of movement to intervene in social conflictuality if they organize themselves in small groups based on affinity, rather than in huge formations or in quantitative organizational forms. Of course, it is desirable and often necessary that these small groups are able to come to an understanding between each other. And not for the purpose of being transformed into a Moloch or a phalanx, but to realize specific and shared aims. These aims therefore determine the intensity of the cooperation, of the organization. It is not impossible for one group who shares affinity to organize a demonstration, but in many cases a coordination between different groups could be desirable and necessary to realize this specific goal, anchored in time. Cooperation could also be more intense in the case of a struggle conceived on a medium term, like, for example, a specific struggle against a structure of power (the building of a deportation centre, of a prison, of a nuclear base...). In such a case, we could talk

During a period of discussion that followed the extinction of the struggle against the construction of the new closed center in Steenokkerzeel (near Brussels), someone arrived at a remarkable conclusion: “Everything we will ever try will cause problems. And that is not a problem.”

An easy struggle, a struggle without problems, will never exist. A+B will never equal revolution. Racking one’s brains over “the perfect thing” to keep oneself busy with is often paralyzing– you can put new question marks after every thought, until you get lost inside the labyrinth. Let it be clear: there is no “perfect” action which carries everything within itself and knows indomitable impact, one which brings us, in one go, towards insurrection, nor is there a “perfect” struggle which brings us from the postmodern vagueness straight to the social revolution. But taking this into consideration does not prevent us from thinking. Stopping to think, stopping to discuss, like stopping to act, can only cause us to lose everything we’ve conquered. And so we think– about struggles from the past, about a project for the future, about new challenges which connect our different activities in a *struggle*. To move beyond the sporadic, flying around on loose ground trying to elaborate an insurrectional project. There is nothing that offers us even the slightest guarantee of success, nor of arriving at concrete results. But it challenges us, and it is worth trying, worth living. And so we stretch out our arms.

“Books and discussions can always help us learn to think more deeply, but it is experience that teaches us ***which metal to forge our weapons with.***”



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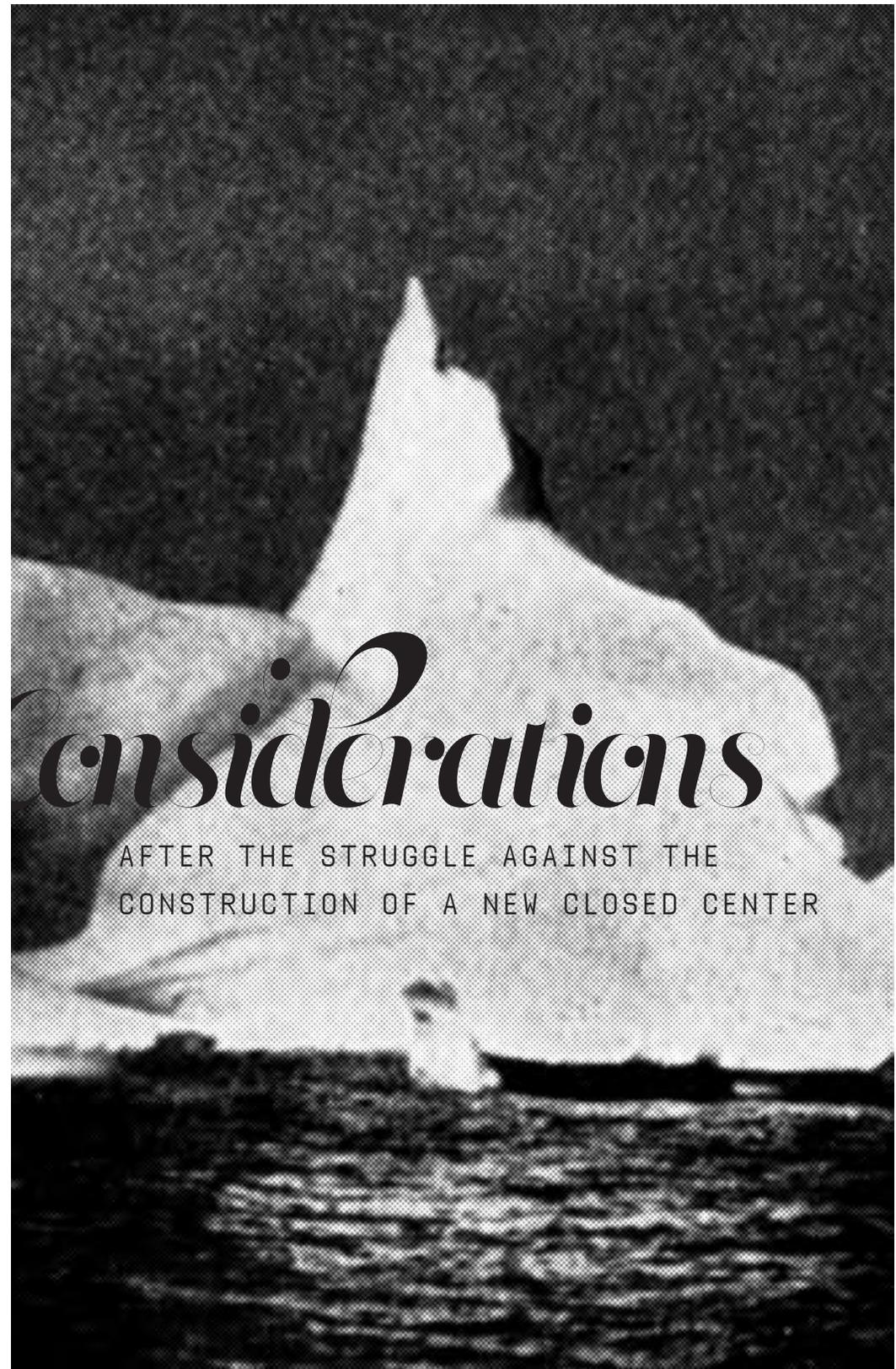
TO STRUGGLE IN THE SAME WAY

AGAINST DOMINATION.”

about informal organization. *Organization*, because we are dealing with a coordination of wills, means and capacities between different affinity groups and individuals that share a specific project. *Informal* because we are not concerned with promoting some name, quantitatively strengthening an organization, or signing up to a program or a declaration of principles, but of an agile and light coordination to satisfy the needs of a project of struggle.

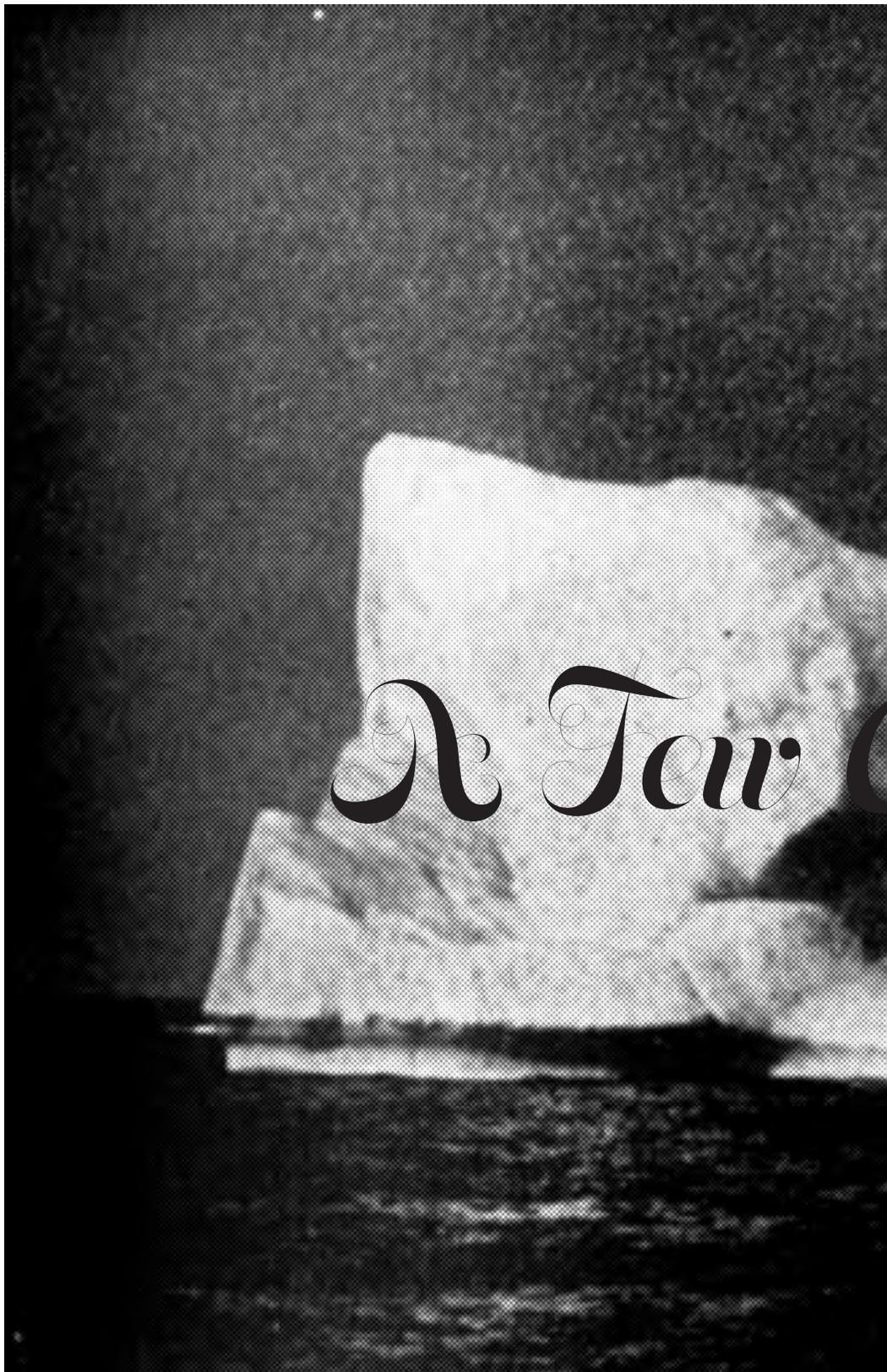
In one way, *informal organization* finds itself also on the ground of affinity, but it goes beyond the interpersonal character. It exists only in the presence of a shared projectuality. An informal organization is therefore directly oriented towards struggle, and cannot exist apart from this. As we previously mentioned, it helps to answer to particular requirements of a project of struggle that cannot be at all, or with great difficulty, sustained by a single affinity group. It can, for example, allow the ability to procure the means that we deem necessary. The informal organization does not therefore have the goal to gather all comrades behind the same flag or to reduce the autonomy of the affinity groups and of individualities, but to allow this autonomy to dialog. This is not a loophole for doing everything together, but it is a tool to materialize the content and the feeling of a common project, through the particular interventions of affinity groups and individualities.

What does it mean to have a project? Anarchist want the destruction of all authority, and from this we can deduce that they are on the constant search for ways of doing this. In other words, it is certainly possible to be an anarchist, and active as such, *without* a specific project of struggle. In fact, this is what happens in general. Whether anarchists are following the directive of the organizations they belong to (something that seems to belong more to the past), or whether they are waiting for the arrival of struggles they can participate to, or whether they attempt to include as many anarchist aspects as possible into their daily life: none of these attitudes presumes the presence of a real projectuality – something that,



Considerations

AFTER THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW CLOSED CENTER



A Few

let's make it clear, does not make these comrades less anarchist. A project is based on the analysis of the social, political and economic context one finds themselves in, and from which one refines a perspective that allows them to intervene in the short and medium term. A project that therefore contains an analysis, ideas and methods, coordinated to reach a purpose. We can, for example, publish an anarchist newspaper because we are anarchists and want to spread our ideas. OK, but a more projectual approach would require an analysis of the conditions in which this publication would be suitable to intervene in the conflictuality, which form it should therefore take... We can decide to struggle against deportations, against the deterioration of the conditions of survival, against prison... because all these things are simply incompatible with our ideas; developing a project would necessitate an analysis to understand from where an anarchist intervention would be the most interesting, which methods to use, how to think of giving an impulse or intensification to the conflictual tension in a given period of time. It goes without saying that similar projects are usually the occasion for organizing informally, in a coordination between different groups and anarchist individualities.

An informal organization cannot be founded, constituted or abolished. It is born in a completely natural way, fulfilling the needs of a project of struggle, and disappears when this project is realized or when it is assessed that it is no longer possible or relevant to realize it. It does not coincide with the entirety of the ongoing struggle: the many organizational forms, the different places of encounter, the assemblies, etc., produced by a struggle will exist independently from the informal organization, which does not mean that anarchist cannot also be present there.



The “*Others*”

Up until now we have mainly talked about organizational forms *between* anarchists. Without a doubt, many revolts provide valuable proposals that are parallel to what we have just said. Let’s take, as an example, the revolts of the last years in certain metropolises. Many rebels organized themselves in small, agile groups. Or, let’s think of the riots on the other side of the mediterranean. There was no need for a strong organization or some kind of representational structure of the exploited to spark the uprisings— their backbone was built on multiple forms of informal self-organization. Of course, in all this, we’ve said nothing of the “content” of these revolts, but without rather anti-authoritarian organizational forms, it would be completely unthinkable that they would have taken a liberatory and libertarian direction.

It is time to say goodbye, once and for all, to all political considerations, even more so in these times when revolts do not answer (at least, not any-

example an arson attack against a security expo in Liège, a simultaneous arson attack against Besix and the architects Bontinck in Gent, an arson attack against the offices of the Federal Police in Brussels. In some prisons there were riots in the days immediately following October 1st and, in the beginning of November, a “blitz” demo crisscrossed the streets of Anderlecht.

How does a struggle end? Who gets to declare when a struggle is over? In any case, we can say that the specific struggle against the construction of the new closed center in Steenokkerzeel never really recovered from the hangover after October 1st— it just couldn’t find new roads to explore and therefore continue. As often happens in such moments, everyone’s determination was put to test. Controversy arose after such an experience of ‘failure’ (the non-demo of October 1st), and everyone suddenly began to question the whole idea, pointing fingers at one another. If you don’t create space for the purpose of criticism, and simultaneously don’t have a finger on the pulse of your own activities and perspectives, you’ll inescapably find yourself on a dead end street. But if we throw our own experiences in the garbage, and if, deep down, we haven’t ceased to aspire to quantifiable, measurable results, if we recoil from the engagements which a project of struggle demands, we risk the degeneration of the critique that enables us to refine, to deepen, to redirect our projects, to better strike the enemy— the critique which requires a certain distance from things, a plea to resign and to take distance *as such*. As always, to each his own conclusion.

In the end, the new closed center was opened at the beginning of 2012. According to the Immigration Office, the end of the construction was delayed with more than a year and a half, due to “civil actions,” amongst other reasons. The demonstration planned in Steenokkerzeel for the occasion of the opening collided with a militarized zone. A few hours later, dozens of masked people attacked the Immigration Office in Brussels in broad daylight.

outside or riots on the inside. Many metro stations were closed off. In Anderlecht, cops with balaclavas were patrolling with machine guns. They were prepared for the worst. But the failure of the manifestation can certainly not only due to the repressive presence (because after all, such a presence was expected and taken into account). It was *possible* to start that demo. It would certainly have been heavy, a heavy fight, but it could have been a fight which could light the fuse of the powder keg. But this *consciousness needed to be present* in order for the demo to begin. In the end, the demo never took off, and some two hundred people were arrested in the neighborhood of the meeting point. Dozens of people underwent all sorts of brutality in the police barracks, in a systematic way, in a *terrorizing* way. Later on in the evening, dozens of masked people attacked a police station, breaking its windows, damaging the police cars and private cars of policemen and injuring two policemen. Four comrades were arrested in the streets around the police station and were locked up in prison for a month. A week later, the trade unions of the police organized a demonstration in the center of Brussels to denounce the violence against them.



The hangover in the weeks after October 1st was heavy, even if the struggle didn't immediately appear extinguished. Many attacks took place— for

more) to political prerogatives. Insurrections and revolts should not be directed, neither by authoritarians nor by anarchists. They don't need to be organized in one big formation. This does not take away the fact that our contributions to such events (phenomenons that are really social) cannot remain simply spontaneous if they aspire to be *qualitative* contributions— this requires a certain amount of organization and projectuality. However, the exploited and the excluded do not need anarchists to revolt or insurge. We can, at most, be an additional element, welcomed or not, a qualitative presence. But that nonetheless remains important, if we want insurrectional ruptures to break through in an anarchist direction.

If the exploited and the excluded are perfectly capable of revolting without anarchists and their presence, we aren't ready to abandon the search for some points and a terrain where we can struggle with them. These points and this terrain are not "natural" or "automatic" consequences of historical conditions. The encounter between affinity groups, as well as informal organization of anarchists and exploited willing to fight, occurs better in the struggle itself, or at least in a proposal of struggle. The necessity of spreading and deepening anarchist ideas is undeniable, and in no moment should we hide them, confine them to the back-alleys, or disguise them in the name of a given strategy. However, in a project of insurrectional struggle, it is not about converting the most amount of exploited and excluded to one's own ideas, but rather to make possible experiences of struggle with anarchist and insurrectional methodology (attack, self-organization and permanent conflictuality). Depending on the hypothesis and the projects, it is necessary to effectively reflect on which organizational forms this encounter between anarchists and those who want to struggle on a radical basis can take. These organizational forms can certainly not be exclusively anarchist constellations, since other rebels take part in them. They are therefore not a medium to "promote" anarchism, but have the purpose of giving shape and substance to an insurrectional struggle.

In some texts, drawn up from a series of experiences, there is a mention of “base nuclei” formed within the project of a specific struggle, of forms of organization based on the three fundamental characteristics of insurrectional methodology. Anarchists take part, but together with others. In a certain sense, they are mostly points of reference (not for anarchism, but for the ongoing struggle). They function somewhat as the lungs of a insurrectional struggle. When this struggle is intense it involves many people, and it diminishes in number when things cool off. The name of such organizational structures has little to no importance. One must discern, within certain projects of struggle, if similar organizational forms are imaginable or necessary. We also have to underline that this is not about previously formed collectives, committees, popular assemblies etc., that have the purpose of lasting in time, and whose composition is rarely anti-political and autonomous (since there are often institutional elements involved). The “base nuclei” are formed within a project of struggle and only carry a concrete purpose: to attack and destroy an aspect of dominion. Therefore they are not para-unionist organizations that defend the interests of a social group (in the committees of the unemployed, in the assemblies of students...), but occasions of organization geared towards attack. The experiences of self organization and attack do not obviously guarantee that in a future struggle the exploited would not accept or not tolerate institutional elements. But without these experiences, these kind of reactions would be practically unthinkable.

To summarize, we don't think it's about building organizations that would “attract the masses” or to organize them, but instead about developing and putting into practice concrete proposals of struggle. Within these insurrectional proposals, it is therefore important to reflect on the organizational forms that are considered necessary and adequate to realize a proposal of attack. We underline once again that these organizational forms do not necessarily implicate structures with meetings, places of encounter etc., but that these can also be born directly on the street, in moments of struggle. In certain places, for example, it can be easier to

A qualitative *leap*

By the end of Spring 2010, some difficult questions were emerging. How can the struggle continue? What of all the work that had been done, with all of the diffuse hostilities, how to reach toward a moment of rupture (one that, with best intentions, could possibly be called *insurrectional*) within the existing social relations, towards a social, shared moment of hostility and attack? Many possibilities were open, many remain unexplored; other possibilities seemed a bit too ambitious, or at least it appeared there wasn't enough solid ground for them to stand upon. This search for a more ambitious project of attack made clear once again that the lack of autonomous affinity groups and the informal coordination between them, in the framework of a specific project of attack, was a lacking condition that couldn't simply be sailed around. Other instruments, such as assemblies, showed their limits concerning this matter. The exhaustion and tiredness, and perhaps also a certain ‘fear’ of possible consequences, were playing their parts in the struggle. The exhaustion and tiredness were perhaps due to poor timing of the project, maybe also due to other factors such as a lack of determination and courage.

In any case, one of these qualitative leaps was envisioned in the form of a combative demonstration in Brussels, which was to take place October 1st, 2010. The idea wasn't to have a demonstration like all the others, but instead a moment in which the different rebellions could meet each other and transcend the normally narrow framework of a demonstration. To give a spark to the conflict. Much preparatory work was put into this demo, on the organizational level as well as on the level of spreading propaganda. In a certain sense, it's not an exaggeration to say that the date of October 1st was present everywhere in the streets of Brussels (and to some extent in other cities as well, of course). Brussels was militarized on that day. An enormous number of cops were staged, ready to intervene. The different prisons in Brussels were closed off with barbed wire, water canons and entire cordons of riot police, out of fear of attacks from the

Steenokkerzeel was taken hostage with a ransom, demanding the closure of all prisons. Later, an unknown group disrupted lunch in the Sodexo cafeteria (Sodexo is a company which profits from food catering in the detention centers) at the Brussels university, by expropriating a part of the food and rendering the rest of it indigestible.

Discussions were initiated in regard to organizational proposals directed at other people who wanted to struggle, proposals directed towards direct struggle, towards attack and self organization, against the new detention center. Small organizational structures or places in the Brussels neighborhoods that could serve as meeting points and reference points for the struggle. These reference points could, for example, be a combative occupation of an empty building; an occupation in which the goal is not its perpetual existence, but rather the temporary creation of a radical reference point. The constitution of neighborhood committees, self organized and directed towards attack were talked about. But these would unfortunately remain on the level of “considerations”...

What ended up coming out of this proposal was a permanent assembly of struggle, a space for discussion, open to anyone who wanted to struggle. This assembly certainly permitted some issues to be explored in more depth; beyond a doubt, it has served in a certain way as a meeting point outside of the specific anti-authoritarian circles (or at least it was open to others). But it can't be considered an adequate or successful solution to the questions that were posed. Instead of decentralizing the struggle – encouraging small, autonomous groups and small self-organized structures of struggle rooted within the social conflict – this assembly tended to centralize the diffuse struggle towards a single moment of meeting, within one space. In lieu of autonomous and diffuse initiatives constituting the colorful mosaic of the struggle dynamics, the assembly actually imposed its rhythm on the the struggle.

create some “points of reference” or a “base nucleus” with other exploited by interrupting the routine, putting up a barricade on the street... rather than waiting for everyone to come to an appointment to discuss about putting up a barricade. These aspects cannot be left totally to chance and to spontaneity. A projectuality allows reflection, and an evaluation of the pertinence of different possibilities.

In *short*

If the question isn't how to organize people for the struggle, it becomes how to organize the struggle. We think that archipelagos of affinity groups, independent one from the other, that can associate according to their shared prospects and concrete projects of struggle, constitute the best way to directly pass to the offensive. This conception of struggle offers greater autonomy and the widest field of action possible. In the sphere of insurrectional projects it is necessary and possible to find ways of informally organizing that allow the encounter between anarchists and other rebels, forms of organization not intended to perpetuate themselves, but geared towards a specific and insurrectional purpose.

authority, but also helped to spread anarchist and antiauthoritarian ideas within this conflict. Once one begins to struggle for oneself and develop a project of struggle, the question is no longer of being “inside or outside” of the conflict. One is part of it, a part, and with the proper practices and desires, can influence, contaminate, provoke the rest of the conflict— or not.

By the end of 2009, a kind of loose antiauthoritarian network was born, which put some deeper discussion points on the table. The presence of the struggle in the neighborhoods of Brussels; the forging of ties between the struggle against the construction in Steenokkerzeel and other revolts and conflicts; the “encounter” between an antiauthoritarian project of struggle and the more general social conflict... these were the urgent questions at that time.

Going *beyond*

What proposals for struggle, what project can be developed in such a favorable climate? How to continue to deepen ideas and analysis? These are questions that didn’t have easy answers. As was said before, one of the concrete proposals of struggle was the diffuse attack. But was that enough? What other proposals could be made?

Besides the more “classic” forms of propaganda such as the distribution of pamphlets, posters, graffiti and accounts on the street, other forms were experimented with. There were dozens of *ballads*, small demos which were not focused on the headcount, but instead on breaking up the daily routine, spreading propaganda material and ideas, indicating possibilities of struggle and highlighting the concrete structures of the enemy... demos which should also be open for “spontaneous participation.” The struggle was encouraged by many other small, anonymous actions. For example, a few days before Christmas, the Jesus statue from a Christmas stall near



Outlines OF A Struggle

a deformed way— the press, lackeys of power that they are, don't want to give bad ideas to anyone), have a quantitative and political vision. There are no scales or statistics to measure subversive tensions and practices. This doesn't take away from the fact that, to put it simply, the specific struggle against the new construction in Steenokkerzeel was not restricted to a group of comrades— it had, beyond a doubt, contributed to an intensification of the diffuse hostilities, both within the specific struggle, as well as other fronts.

A confluence of *circumstances*

In November 2009, a manifestation against the construction of the new detention center, announced well beforehand, took place in Brussels. The day before the manifestation, riots broke out in Anderlecht (a neighborhood of Brussels): a sizable group of people torched a police station after news came out that officers from that precinct had been torturing prisoners in Forest (another municipality of the capital) when they temporarily took over the job of the prison guards. Elsewhere in Belgium, for example in Andenne, revolts broke out in the prisons. The climate was tense, the tension in certain neighborhoods of Brussels was high and the struggle against the new closed center was at “cruising speed”.

Once again, it became clear that there was no good reason to wait. Only when you are mentally and practically prepared for the sudden intensification of the social conflict, for example by developing your own projects, can you enter into dialogue with what is going on around you. On top of that, social conflict has more and less intense moments, but even if latent, it's always always present in innumerable diverse forms. It doesn't strictly adhere to the classic vision of the chicken-and-egg question, but the specific struggle which took place against the construction in Steenokkerzeel certainly had its place within the wider social conflict. It permitted not only the proposals of revolt and direct attacks against



*“Migration management cannot be attacked, but what can be attacked are the **concrete embodiments, structures and people that make it possible.**”*

not be attacked, but what can be attacked are the concrete embodiments, structures and people that make it possible.

Many of these aspects, structures and people were attacked in the course of the struggle, with diverse means, but always within the lens of direct, non-negotiable and autonomous action. If one wants to believe the reports of the Belgian senate,¹ in the period from the spring 2009 to December 2009, more than one hundred attacks took place against institutions, companies, organizations, and structures connected to the prison system; ranging from slander to sabotage, from vandalism to arson. Some of those attacks were communicated or claimed by channels of “the movement,” but the majority took place in the dusk of anonymity. Although the publicizing of certain facts of attack are certainly important in order to give other rebels ideas, enthusiasm and courage, it is a fact that only when an action is anonymous can it effectively belong to everyone. A specific struggle might start from a modest group of comrades, but from an insurrectionist perspective, it can never be the goal to turn this modest group into some kind of “armed elite.” It is simply about creating the conditions in which hostility and conflict can spread; such conflict neither requires nor aspires to be translated into something *politically legible*.

Those who believe that the social conflict can be reduced to counting the number of attacks (which seldom even reach the media, or if so only in

1. After these debates in the parliament and the senate, the state (via police and intelligence services) went on high alert. There was, for example, an Early Warning System introduced, which alerted targeted companies to possible threats and at the same time offered a platform to report “suspicious behaviors.” The Coordinating Body for Threat Analysis [OCAM, a counterterrorism watch group], whose analysis is regularly utilized by the forces of order, began to consider “anarchism” the number one threat to internal security. State security had tried to stir up the situation, via organized leaks to a few of their journalist friends, encouraging them to publish ‘sensational’ and ‘revealing’ articles about the anarchist movement in Belgium. Lastly, ‘permanent security’ was installed around certain structures such as the closed and open centers— their personnel were briefed, some officials were offered protection; all of that to prevent possible raids and attacks.

The identification of the enemy & the ***diffuse attack***

Insofar as such an evaluation could be deemed interesting, there appeared to be a lot of “sympathy” in the street for this struggle, for a radical struggle. Comrades were not hitting against a wall of indifference and resignation, as sometimes happens. More so, the specific aspects of power that were being criticized (the detention center and the deportation machine) were quickly overtaken by broader critiques of prison, exploitation and so on. Analysis was put forth in various pamphlets and publications, starting from the specific struggle against the construction, and connecting it to more general anti-authoritarian and anarchist ideas, as well as other aspects of domination.

But the struggle didn’t require only ideas, perspectives and analysis— there was also a need for concrete initiatives toward attacking the enemy, for clear, sharp indications toward direct action. The concrete sabotage of the detention center had to be thought through— how to attack deportation from a perspective of destruction, not just of reform, improvement, adjustment, and so on. One proposal, which was sustained during the whole struggle and gave it a lot of strength, was that of the diffuse attack— small, easy and diffuse attacks against the monster. But the monster needed to be identified: its tentacles, its intestines, its excrements, its brains... they’re within arms reach of everyone. The center’s construction plan was dissected: which building companies, which architects, which departments, which supply companies were collaborating. The deportation machine was also dissected: which companies, organizations, institutions, public services make it run; what are the underlying connections between the world of deportations and the other repressive aspects of the domination: police structures, repressive institutions, prisons, schools, psychiatric centers... “Migration management” can

following outline of the struggle against the construction of the new immigrant detention center in Steenokkerzeel [Belgium] has no pretension whatsoever of completeness, nor of objectivity. It simply tries to create a framework that allows one to formulate their own critiques, make theoretical reflections, or deepen their own practice in regards to a specific project of struggle. An outline necessarily implies a schematizing, which doesn’t exactly coincide with reality, and coincides even less with the intensity of those that have lived, thought, felt and acted within this reality.

The choice for an autonomous, specific ***project of struggle***

The first discussions between comrades about the possibility of a specific struggle against the construction of the new detention center in Steenokkerzeel took place in the summer of 2009. The choice was made based on a certain analysis of the social and economic conditions, as well as the evolution (or rather, the extinction) of the struggle for general regularization for people without papers [tr: the simultaneous legalization of all people without papers]— not to mention being informed by experiences around agitation on the streets, as well as offensive solidarity with the huge number of revolts and insurrections inside various prisons and detention centers. This choice would enable the development of an autonomous project of struggle— in other words, a struggle that would

not only be dependent on external factors; one able to draw the necessary energy from itself and not chase after events; one that gives itself the means it considers appropriate; one that can define its own timeframe. The choice to take the course of autonomous struggle would also enable the encounter with other rebels willing to struggle at a radical base, on a terrain not contaminated by politics, representation, delay, or a purely quantitative logic.

An invitation to struggle began to circulate between different groups of comrades in different cities. This led to a somewhat informal meeting space between individuals and affinity groups coming from different corners of Belgium; a discussion space where the perspectives of the struggle could be deepened without the necessity to become one big group that decides about everything together and has to agree on everything.

Breaking *the silence*

Beginning in September 2009, the first steps were taken to diffuse information about the construction of the detention center and break the (relative) silence around this project of the state. Several initiatives were taken to distribute pamphlets in the streets, in the metros, and in the train stations— all in different neighborhoods of Brussels, as well as some other cities. Posters were made that attempted to not only to break the “silence” and highlight the topic of the detention center, but also link our reasons for fighting against the construction with a general criticism of the world of exploitation and oppression. This “agitation” was directed towards all who wanted to struggle, and not towards specific categories of people (for example, people without papers). From the beginning, the choice was made not to cooperate with any political force – a choice that never raised a single doubt throughout the whole struggle – but instead to directly address those who want to struggle and revolt on a direct, self organized and anti-institutional basis.



Modest acts of sabotage took place, attempting to disrupt the daily routine while raising the problem of the construction of the closed center in a more insistent way. For example, dozens of ticket machines of the STIB (public transport company) in Brussels and of the central offices of De Lijn in Leuven were sabotaged, ATMs were torched in Gent, and a small incursion occurred at the construction site in Steenokkerzeel. In October 2009, dozens of masked people stormed into and devastated the offices of Besix, the main construction firm. That particular attack caused a lot of echoes in the press who, accustomed to speaking in a pitied way about the struggles of people without papers who occupy buildings or revolt in the detention centers, were startled at the appearance of radical opponents against the construction of the new detention center. The tone of the struggle had been set...