



HAL
open science

Introduction. The discreet mobilisations of working-class and subaltern groups

Ivan Sainsaulieu, Julien Talpin

► **To cite this version:**

Ivan Sainsaulieu, Julien Talpin. Introduction. The discreet mobilisations of working-class and subaltern groups. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 2023, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 10 (1), pp.1-16. 10.1080/23254823.2023.2179209 . hal-04382903

HAL Id: hal-04382903

<https://hal.univ-lille.fr/hal-04382903>

Submitted on 9 Jan 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Special issue: **The discreet mobilisations of working-class and subaltern groups**

Coordinated by Ivan Sainsaulieu (Lille, CLERSE) and Julien Talpin (CNRS, CERAPS)
Ivan.sainsaulieu@univ.ch; julien.talpin@univ-lille.fr¹

Introduction

The discreet mobilisations of working-class and subaltern groups

Ivan Sainsaulieu and Julien Talpin

Social movements are visible and loud. It is by publicly and visibly disturbing the social and political order that they can make social change happen. In recent years movements led (at least partially) by subaltern and precarious groups have been highly visible: the Yellow Vests movement in France, aimed, by wearing this flashy outfit, at attracting visibility for the sake of these excluded suburban residents; women's movements – by posting collages on the walls of French cities, wearing pink hats in women's marches in the US or singing and dancing in the street *El violador en tu camino*, a Chilean performance – follow the same logic. The existence of social media has helped to publicise invisibilised or marginalised causes or groups, as with the hashtag 'Black Lives Matter' in the US. Occupation movements – which have been particularly dynamic in the last decades – also aim at imposing in the public sphere the presence and demands of certain groups, such as the victims of the financial and housing crisis at the roots of the 15M movement in Spain (Nez, 2016). To raise awareness for their cause in a time of retreat of progressive movements, the antiglobalisation or Global Justice Movement also used spectacular tactics to raise political and media attention (Della Porta, 2007). Visibility is therefore part and parcel of the struggle for social justice (Barozet et al., 2022). More broadly, since the Enlightenment publicity has been conceptualised as a necessary condition for emancipation, to come out of the shadows and closets of tradition and obscurantism.

This focus on the struggles for visibility and publicity raises, however, a number of problems that we address in this issue. First, focusing on visible movements induces studying only the visible face of the iceberg, movements that have become strong or significant enough to gain the attention of the media, politics and the social sciences. We know, however, that classic intermediary organisations like unions, non-profits or political parties are less and less able to grasp, coordinate and organise social unrest, so that they are frequently overtaken by more spontaneous and unexpected upsurges of anger (the Yellow Vest Movement in France or the anti-Covid 19 movement in Europe offer good illustrations of this phenomenon of de-institutionalisation of mobilisations). An ocean of hidden or discreet practices risks therefore remaining under the radar if research focuses only on the more visible movements or organisations.

¹ Ivan Sainsaulieu is professor of sociology at Lille University. His main research topics in the Clersé laboratory (CNRS UMR 8019) are work, politicisation, health and mobilisation. Julien Talpin is permanent research fellow in political science at the CNRS (CERAPS-UMR8026). His research deals with working-class and minority civic participation in France and the US.

Therefore, and this is the second reason, there is a risk of considering that subaltern groups do not mobilise or participate except in these more exceptional moments of outburst that are social movements, thereby accrediting the idea of apathy of the working class (Gaventa, 1980).

Finally, the focus of the sociology of mobilisations on the most visible movements – due to certain methodological choices, like protest event analysis – risks offering partial analyses, overdetermined by the relation of protest to politics and the political field, especially from the perspective of the ‘political opportunity structures’ (Tarrow, 1990), as if any form of resistance could only be positioned in relation to the power in place. However, the mobilisation of health care teams in the face of the Covid 19 have recently reminded us that there is a whole field of apparently consensual practices, real collective mobilisations whose political impact is neither a prerequisite nor an inevitable consequence (Sainsaulieu, 2021). Studying more discreet practices is therefore part of an open or enlarged definition of mobilisations and collective action (Fillieule, 2009), insofar as they are collective, largely intentional and directed towards social change, understood here as a practice of (partial) subversion of a social relationship of domination. They relate to social norms and forms of life that are partially autonomous from the political field; in any case they do not position themselves *hic et nunc* in relation to politics – they are discreet.

What could be a discreet mobilisation of workers and subaltern groups?

Graffiti, hip hop and civil unrest in the French banlieue; Deliveroo drivers sharing tactics to avoid control by platform algorithms; community organisers remaining in the shadow of grassroots leaders in the fight for social justice in Chicago; French rural residents trying to live despite precarity by relying on self-help or autoconstruction; health-care workers in Senegal; young women on job training programmes in Switzerland; French Maghrebi women gathering to promote young people’s interests in poor neighbourhoods of Marseille.... What do these different practices and groups, gathered in this special issue, have in common? We contend that they embody different forms that the discreet mobilisation of people from the working class can take.

Discretion can be understood as both limited publicity and distance from the political field. Certain mobilisations can be defined as discreet because they are not labelled as such by either social scientists, political actors or activists themselves: due to the forms they take, they are rooted in people’s everyday lives and raise the question of the maintenance or subversion of the social order; they remain, however, under the radar because of their lack of publicity.

Lack of publicity and distance from the political field find a first meaning in an ‘ordinary’ or profane relationship to politics: there are modes of politicisation that are not necessarily oriented towards the political field (Berger, Céfai & Gayet-Viaud, 2011; Luhtakallio, 2012; Carrel, 2015). In this way, voluntary associations or staff members can become discreetly politicised through their daily activities without publicly manifesting themselves (Eliasoph 1998; Hamidi, 2010; Sainsaulieu et al., 2016). Discretion should not, however, be conceived as a ‘lack’ or a stage in a necessary evolution towards greater publicity. It can be, as shown by several articles in this special issue, an end in itself. This raises nevertheless the question of the intentionality of these practices, which we address below.

Discretion is not specific to subaltern groups. Secrecy and discretion are indeed a powerful resource in the hands of the powerful – and fantasised as such by conspiracy theories (Wu Ming 1, 2021). The mobilisations and forms of influence of powerful social groups do not necessarily have an interest in becoming visible (Skocpol, Williamson, 2012), just like political parties (Sainsaulieu, Sawicki & Talpin, 2023). Discreet forms of mobilisation could even be

seen as the specificity of powerful actors who can invest the salons and corridors of power (Ollion, 2015). Clientelist practices must remain discreet in order to operate and, above all, to maintain political hegemony (Auyero, 2001). Public policies frequently use nudging to convince people without seeming to (Leclerc, 2017). Even repression should remain discreet: the repression of protest should not make martyrs, to avoid stimulating counter-mobilisations (Kurtz & Smithey, 2018).²

The discretion of subordinate groups is largely defined in relation to dominant ones. In our understanding, it does not necessarily mean consent, nor acceptance or even justification of domination (Scott, 1990), since we associate discretion with mobilisations. In both cases, for both powerful and weak actors, discretion is a way to avoid the costs of publicity. But for powerful groups it is a strategic choice among a variety of options – discretion making it possible to avoid the cost of public justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) – while for subaltern groups discretion is not necessarily chosen and strategised. Discretion stems from unfavourable circumstances and limited resources. It is also often a way to avoid head-on repression. It will be seen, however, in several articles of this special issue that discretion can be openly and strategically chosen. It can also appear as an end in itself, as a way to gain autonomy and experiment with alternative forms of life.

What forms then do these mobilisations take? Are certain social spaces (the street, occupational settings, cultural, urban or rural environments) more conducive to the expression of discreet mobilisations than of public ones? And what are the consequences of discretion, both for the realisation of working-class aspirations and for the subjectivities of the individuals involved? This special issue addresses these questions by exploring all their ambiguities and by considering the constraints experienced by subaltern groups as well as their creativity. These different contributions, all based on qualitative and ethnographic methods, shed complementary lights on the issue of discreet mobilisations. This collection therefore allows refreshing questions to be raised on the sociology of collective action.

Discretion: ‘safety valve’ or stepping stone?

Before exploring the variations of the empirical forms of discreet mobilisations, we need to address a central question: is discretion a ‘safety valve’ of the system, an ephemeral parenthesis that does not shake the social order, or a stepping stone towards greater social change or even the enactment here and now of a new and alternative social order?

There is a long tradition, inspired by Marxist scholarship, that sees discreet forms of resistance as ‘rituals of rebellion’ (Gluckman, 1960)³ or the expression of a form of alienation or false consciousness. American historian Barrington Moore argued for instance that ‘fantasies of liberation and revenge can help preserve domination through dissipating collective energies in relatively harmless rhetoric and ritual’ (Moore 1978: 459). In France, more recent work in the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu goes in the same direction, as when Eric Darras stresses that ‘considering (with good intentions) graffiti, hip hop, the rock movement, or youth municipal councils as “direct” “political” practices should not lead one to overestimate the possibilities of a consciousness, a discourse, still less of the political efficacy of such practices from dominated groups, thereby denying the monopoly of the members of the political field on the instruments of definition of the legitimate problems and opinions’ (Darras 1998: 9). Studying discreet mobilisations runs the risk, indeed, of magnifying these forms of ordinary resistance and

² These authors qualify this as ‘smart’ repression, avoiding the traditional curvilinear effect of repression, which, when too coercive or violent, can spur mobilisation in reaction.

³ In Gluckman’s view, symbolic revolts against authorities are based on the ‘acceptance of the established order as just and well-founded, or even sacred’, and therefore contribute to the reproduction of the ruling political and social order.

therefore adopting a 'populist' perspective lacking sociological rigour (Grignon & Passeron 1989).

Conversely, James C. Scott has highlighted how infrapolitical practices could shake the political order. Sabotage, dissimulation, critical chants, etc. testify to the defiance of subaltern groups towards power. Based in particular on the works of E. P. Thompson and Maurice Agulhon on wood theft, Scott shows that despite public deference towards authorities, the subaltern can express political critiques of the powers in place. This testifies to the political capacities of subaltern groups. Often, infrapolitics embodies the cultural grounds of more structured mobilisations:⁴ 'It would be more accurate, in short, to think of the hidden transcript as a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it. (...) Under the appropriate conditions, the accumulation of petty acts can, rather like snowflakes on a steep mountainside, set off an avalanche' (Scott 1990: 191-2). For instance, the civil rights movement in the US cannot be accounted for unless it is associated with the informal discourses and practices of resistance by slaves, students or congregants that took place backstage for decades before it emerged (see Kelley 1993). Subaltern mobilisations, even if discreet, have been able to participate in changing society. Revolutions go through paradoxical moments of silent collapse of the old world and the emergence, without any confrontation, of a new one. Hannah Arendt (1963) described how, before the Russian intervention, Hungarian soviets were able to replace previous institutions without noise, due to a collapse of power. In a dialectic of discretion and public uproar, one could highlight the moments of politicisation that take place on the margins of protest – and contribute to its dynamics. Without aiming at central power or political change, these mobilisations can also be part of a logic of countervailing power within the crevices of the system (Holloway, 2002; Fung & Wright, 2003).

Why and how do movements emerge from discretion?

The work of James Scott has inspired much research questioning the relationship between infrapolitical resistance and mobilisations. For instance, according to Richard Fox and Orin Starn, the hidden dimension of infrapolitical resistance protects it from repression and could therefore fuel contention: 'By challenging the view of the political as understandable only from speeches, marches, and elections, studies of everyday resistance encouraged and expanded understanding of the dialectic of compliance and opposition that takes into account the concealed as well as the visible, the scattered as well as the organised, the small as well as the massive' (Fox & Starn 1997). Olivier Fillieule Mounia and Bennani Chraïbi emphasise the continuum between individual resistance and contentious collective action. They invite us to study the conversion of the ordinary time of critique, backstage and in close-knit circles, into public expression on the streets (Fillieule & Bennani-Chraïbi, 2003). This recalls what Asaf Bayat qualifies as 'arts of presence', the investment of the public sphere, capable, even when spontaneous or loosely coordinated, of shaking power relationships. Individual resistance practices, by questioning hegemonic cultural standards, can constitute a reservoir of politicisation that can potentially be grasped by social movement organisations, if they organise for it and if the context allows it, and if repression is not too strong.

The conversion of resistance into collective action is never sure and automatic and requires intermediation and political work. François Ploux and Laurent Le Gall argue, however, in a rich historical synthesis, against a form of teleologism relating informal discreet mobilisations to formal ones. On the contrary, informal mobilisations could appear as rivals or substitutes for formal ones. They stress in particular the crucial role of 'politicisation operators'

⁴ 'I mean to suggest that... infrapolitics... provides much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused' (Scott, 1990: 184).

playing this role of translation and conversion between formal and informal' (Ploux & Le Gall 2012: 395). How can the role of such actors be conceptualised while avoiding seeing them as *deus ex machina*? For a long time, in the Leninist tradition in particular, the answer was in the role of avant-garde of the militants and of the political party. In a different fashion, the tradition of the mobilisation of resources has stressed the role of organisation leaders in the advent of social change (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Classic studies have shown, however, that organisations could slow down or pacify mobilisations (Piven & Cloward, 1977; McAdam, 2005: 60). Already in the 1970s, communist activists were the target of harsh criticisms from workers, such as this woman, in *Le torchon brûle*, journal of the French Women's Liberation Movement (MLF) in 1971: 'I shout to the "established" that, if they want to stop registering failures in women's factories where they work, they shouldn't repress as they do the spontaneity of women workers to speak about their problems as women above all' (cited by Vigna & Zancarini-Fournel, 2009: 22).

Fed by this distrust of organisations and forms of oligarchy, social movements have been experimenting with horizontal modes of decision in the last two decades (Snow and Moss, 2014), trying thereby to attract newcomers and more spontaneous leaders (Sainsaulieu, 2020). In the French context, the Yellow Vest movement was structured 'in the making' despite a certain 'heterogeneity', due to the absence of previous 'material and symbolic work' (Fillieule, 2022, p. 28). Such tensions between organisation and democracy, spontaneity and organising, structure mobilisations between voluntarism and intuition, knowledge and action, experience and improvisation, infrapolitics and politics, visible and discreet forms of resistance. The conceptualisation of discreet mobilisations allows one to shed a fresh light at these classic questions. To avoid a form of binarism we have tried to typify different forms of discreet mobilisations.

Four shades of discreet mobilisations

Given the developments and critiques of the work of James Scott, we contend that the category of discretion and discreet mobilisations can be heuristic to understand these forms of informal and everyday resistance practices in ways that avoid certain limits of his approach. The different cases investigated here illustrate different forms and configurations of discreet mobilisations. While subaltern groups have agency, the question of the intentionality, strategy and autonomy of these practices is complex and appears at the heart of all the contributions in this issue.

The seven articles gathered in this special issue are neither exhaustive of the forms discreet mobilisations can take, nor mutually exclusive, and they sometimes even overlap. Of course, these different nuances also result from a review of the existing literature. They help to understand fine nuances in the underground processes of ordinary people's mobilisation, between tactics of adaptation and alternative ways of living. The choice of a clear typology has been discarded by colleagues, as social movements and forms of resistance are often mixed (Chraïbi & Fillieule, 2003). Furthermore, the theme of discretion does not facilitate the work of distinction.

If the papers gathered in this special issue do not allow a strong conceptualisation of the different forms of discreet mobilisations, they suggest an inductive depiction rather than ideal types. We can distinguish four shades of discreet mobilisation: fermentation, bypassing, autonomy, and daily improvisation.

Fermentation

Like a mole ('Well dug, old mole!' said Marx about the underground process of the revolution), mobilisation is underground, preparing its return to the surface (Blumer, 1969; Della Porta Diani, 2006).

Fermentation can appear as a consciously designed strategy. It is a way of preparing more visible movements, as incubators for larger public mobilisations, such as digital networks and other ad hoc committees gathering forces before the crucial battle (Tufceki 2017; Casilli 2017), whether spontaneous or strategically orchestrated (Sainsaulieu, 2020). Historically, many movements and organisations have remained clandestine or discreet to avoid repression or gather their strength before more open battles.

A typical form of discreet fermentation is the 'safe spaces' implemented by subordinate movements, in particular feminist (Mansbridge, 1994, Podmore, 2006) or antiracist (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Taylor 2016) mobilisations. More broadly, 'free spaces' (Poletta, 1999) where activists or subaltern groups can remain among themselves appear strategic in protecting stigmatised identities but also in preparing for more visible and public battles. Discretion is therefore seen and conceptualised as a strategy of social change. It has been shown that women-only or black-only spaces produce empowerment. The Yellow Vests movement in France in 2018-2019 also included sequences of politicisation in rather separated spaces, such as traffic roundabouts or dedicated websites. The question is more open concerning the policy, political or cultural consequences of such tactics. The women-only spaces studied by Marion Lang in her article appear, however, less as fermentation than bypass practices, as they do not embody a consciously chosen strategy but rather an ad hoc situation imposed by external and internal constraints.

In contrast, the Alinsky-style community organising practices studied by Clément Petitjean embody discreet fermenting strategies of mobilisation. While they unfold through public and visible contention (demonstrations, occupations, etc.), the non-profits studied by Petitjean display a dialectic of private/non-visible and visible/public. Discretion is enacted through an internal division of labour: community organisers voluntarily remain in the shadows to carry out the work of legitimising public leaders and set them in motion. In this case, the discretion of community organisers is strategised and clearly conceived: it is a condition for empowerment and social change.

Bypass

Here we leave the natural mole to choose the cultural and mythic figure of Bartleby. Bartleby is a well-known short-story character created by Melville. He is a minor bureaucrat who can neither say no to his hierarchy, nor disappear, and whose choice is to say: 'I prefer not to'. As such, he has been perceived as a great figure of modern resistance, where it seems possible to bypass the obstacle rather than fight against it. In a more sociological perspective, not confronting, avoiding and circumventing often seem to be the prerogative of weak actors (Scott, 1990). If they are not constrained to hide themselves, or if they cannot, they can try to bypass. Thus, no drums or trumpets, but rather the dry tap of a wooden bell is used to escape the grip of housing owners – unlike squatting, which is loudly advocated by radical activists (Péchu, 2009). The case of young Swiss women undergoing integration (Eve Nada) illustrates such dynamics, since they oscillate between constraint and tactics of resistance.

Labour has generated many discreet resistance tactics, hidden challenges such as sabotage or slowdown, withdrawal attitudes or resilience strategies that are more individual than collective (Roscigno & Hodson, 2004). Thus, Aldo Rubert shows how delivery workers in the Paris region bypass the logic of the algorithm of the platform that employs them, sometimes managing to use a scooter instead of a bicycle, sometimes taking more orders or covering more distance than expected, with the active complicity of colleagues and sheltered from

management. Sometimes, in this case, bypass is close to a ‘daily improvisation’, delivery workers trying also to survive or at least maximise their autonomy, the number of rides they make and in the end their income, rather than aiming at challenging their employers. The two feelings – self-interest and defiance towards authority – are nevertheless often mixed, as Rubert shows with great subtlety.

The article by Purenne and her colleagues shows that discretion might result from a double form of bypass. On the one hand, antiracist collectives have to remain discreet to avoid repression in an unfavourable contest (Guiraudon & Escafré-Dublet, Talpin, 2023). They therefore opt for rather consensual or non-confrontational strategies – organisation of debates and conferences, action-research, making documentaries, etc. – to raise awareness rather than pinpoint culprits. On the other hand, discretion and non-confrontational tactics are also a way to bypass the mistrust of poor neighbourhood residents towards non-profits and collective actions. Discretion, therefore, is not only a matter of reacting to an unfavourable political environment, it might also be more actively and consciously (if not freely) chosen for strategic reasons related for instance to the targeted public that one aims to mobilise. This article reminds us how much the conversion of discreet forms of mobilisation into coordinated collective action is neither automatic nor even easily translated by intermediaries on the ground.

Marion Lang’s research questions the effectiveness of local practices of ‘non-mixing’ by groups of women and people of colour in Marseille. Such practices must remain discreet due to their illegitimacy in the French public sphere. An emancipation might result from these hidden spaces that would not have happened in more favourable or public conditions. Women-only spaces in the non-profits she studies, while not actively chosen, result in a form of empowerment and development of new skills and capacities for stigmatised Maghrebi women. One condition, however, of such emancipatory processes is that they remain discreet, not necessarily declared.

As such, this contribution, like those of Eve Nada, Abdoulaye Diallo and Fanny Hugues, questions how discreet mobilisations can subvert gender relations. In Rubert’s and Purenne’s papers, it is masculinity that is potentially subverted by these discreet mobilisations. Eve Nada shows in her article how, in Switzerland, struggles for visibility can be studied through a detour by job training programmes: young women in social integration programmes can use gendered training, seen as ‘feminine’, to empower themselves and thus subvert or question the gendered division of labour. Diallo’s contribution also shows a partial emancipation of African women, for the time of acquired financial autonomy and of the social space conquered as health volunteers, and likely to leave traces later once they are married and unemployed.

Bypassing often means making alliances to get around the obstacle. The case of the home helpers was examined in depth (Avril, 2019) to show how, because of the neighbourhood links that develop as a result of their repeated visits and their knowledge of the neighbourhood, an atypical trans-class front can form around them and give them an unexpected hegemony over a given demand. In the articles of this issue, alliances are often built with social workers (Nada, Diallo, Lang, Purenne and to some extent Petitjean); community organisers could be seen as allies of working-class residents), which often means class alliances with the middle classes.

Autonomy

The strongest understanding of the logic of autonomy can be summarised by the idea of counter-society. The working class has been able to put forward alternative spaces in a discreet form, a 'moral economy' (Thompson, 1963) highlighting another, more collective relationship to the economy. Houses of the people, pubs and taverns, churches, slave dormitories or community kitchens offer spaces of autonomy for subaltern groups where they can discreetly develop alternative practices seen as prefiguring another form of life. Autonomy can take the form of an alternative project, an 'interstitial strategy' (Wright, 2010), which aims at experimenting here and now with another world, or even the construction of a counter-society on the sidelines, as in Chiapas (Baschet, 2014) autonomous zones (Bey, 2010) or like the ZAD in Notre-Dame-des-Landes in France (Bulle, 2021).

At some point, the line between secession and revolution or subversion becomes thin. In the labour environment, these alternative forms of life have manifested themselves in attempts at self-management, following the occupation of a factory (Wright, 2010), or in the more ordinary construction of another type of collective collaboration, of more democratic grassroots unions open to the neighbourhood (Duhalde et al., 2017), or in a more egalitarian organisation of work (Fantasia, 1989; Sainsaulieu, 2012).

Autonomy can also take the form of counterculture (Hebdige, 1979; Fine, 1996), where one can grasp a deviant, original or minority form which does not openly 'contest' (Bouilly, 2018). The political and historical analysis of social movements and the socio-economic or socio-anthropological approach can be based on an understanding of emotions, the role of memory, forms of sociability and mutual aid networks (Collectif Rosa Bonheur, 2019). For example, Fanny Hugues reports on a range of food self-subsistence practices and modes of transportation set up in some rural areas to establish an alternative solidarity to the market economy. These constrained forms of self-help can sometimes be given political significance by actors, seen as a means of resisting a consumer society in which they have no place and against which alternative lifestyles are being tried out. In another genre, Parisian delivery workers studied by Rubert consume psychotropic drugs at work with a 'political and escapist function' (Chauvin, 2010) in ordinary masculine interrelations.

Ambivalence in everyday life

The literature has questioned forms of popular self-affirmation, with its ambivalent meaning between resistance and passivity. Thus the play of workers at work, which accompanies productive effort, has been understood both as an escape from oppression by Donald Roy and as an objective reinforcement of relations of domination by Michael Burawoy. This contrast illustrates the gap between the two anthropological dimensions of the emic and the etic, between the subjective perception of the actors and their objective integration into a relationship of domination. The dilemma is undoubtedly insoluble. One is led to choose, to privilege one or the other aspect, without being able to be fully satisfied. Indeed, play escapes from or play submits to work, alternatively. Laughter liberates, entertainment enslaves.

Daily improvisation is often ambiguous. Neither resistance nor submission, this popular self-affirmation which consists in taking advantage of the situation to adapt to it, represents neither a dead end nor a defeat nor an art of resistance. One could, like Hugues, speak of resourcefulness in connection with particularly inventive practices of recovery of objects. The subsistence practices and the popular economy she describes are not always thought of and experienced as acts of resistance by the actors themselves. It is first and foremost a matter of getting by, of surviving. Between consciously living on the margins and suffering marginality, the boundary is thin, and Hugues succeeds in restoring its ambiguities. The lived situation

remains inextricable, without real or supposed exit. If one manages to find one's way, when resourcefulness is a way of life, it is because the situation is tangled up. There is no longer any real way forward, moreover precarity often consists in not making a plan, in living from day to day. The term *débrouille* ('improvisation') renders well a key dimension of any discreet mobilisation: less normative than the one of resistance, less finalised than those of bypass or even of fermentation, which hint at a choice or a way out, less affirmative than the idea of counter-society, where a flag is planted, daily improvisation leaves more open the alternative between emic and etic, subjective and objective perspectives.

Through these nuances of daily confusion, we explore the discreet mobilisations of subaltern groups as mobilisation in 'half-tone', in *chiaroscuro*. A fog in which everyone can be mistaken, at the bottom as well as at the top: how to interpret workers' play? Sociologists do not agree, the actors vary, probably according to the cases and the situations. In the great movie *The Wages of Fear*, the worker-driver played by Yves Montand constantly oscillates between camaraderie, tyranny, frank gaiety, affliction, revolt and fatalism. In the same way, the psychotropic drugs of Rubert's young delivery men, or their masculinist postures, help them to hold on, give them courage, as alcohol used to in working-class circles. There is laughter, there is life, but it is not glorious. Getting by.

References

- Abdelnour, S. & Bernard, S. (2018). Vers un capitalisme de plateforme? Mobiliser le travail, contourner les régulations. *La nouvelle revue du travail*. <http://journals.openedition.org/nrt/3797>
- Abbott, A. (1988). *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ait Ben Lmadani, F. (2008). Dynamiques du mépris et tactiques des 'faibles'. Migrantes âgées marocaines face aux institutions d'action sociale. *Sociétés contemporaines*, 70(2), 71-93.
- Aldrin P., & Vannetzel, M. (2019). Dans les lisières. Une sociologie des acteurs secondaires de la politique dans deux petites villes françaises. *Politix* 128(4), 31-63.
- Anchisi, A. (2010). Communauté quotidienne et symbolique: le placement d'un parent dépendant en maison de retraite médicalisée. In I. Sainsaulieu, M. Salzbrunn & L. Amiotte-Suchet (Eds.), *Faire communauté en société* (pp. 131–138). Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Arendt, H. (1963). *On revolution*. Viking.
- Auyero, J. (2005). *Poor people's politics: Peronist survival networks and the legacy of Evita*, Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Avril, C., Cartier, M. & Serre, D. (2010). *Enquêter sur le travail. Concepts, méthodes, récits*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Barozet, E., Sainsaulieu, I., Mélo D. & Cortesero, D. (2022). *Where has social justice gone?* Palgrave Macmillan.

- Baschet, J. (2014). *Adieux au capitalisme. Autonomie, société du bien vivre et multiplicité des mondes*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Bayat, A. (2010). *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bayart, J.-F. (1985)., L'énonciation du politique. *Revue française de science politique*, 35(3).
- Beaumont, A., Challier, R. & Lejeune, G. (2018), En bas à droite: Travail, visions du monde et prises de position politiques dans le quart en bas à droite de l'espace social. *Politix* 122(2), 9-31. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pox.122.0007>
- Berger, M., Cefaï, D. & Gayet-Viaud, C. (Eds.) (2011). *Du civil au politique. Ethnographies du vivre-ensemble*, Brussels, Peter Lang.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Boltanski, L. & Thévenot, L. (2006). *On justification: Economies of worth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bouilly, E. (2019). *Du couscous et des meetings contre l'émigration clandestine. Mobiliser sans protester au Sénégal*. Paris: LGDJ.
- Braconnier, C. & Dormagen, J-Y. (2007). *La démocratie de l'abstention*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Burawoy, M. (1982), *Manufacturing Consent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Burawoy, M. & Holdt, K. (2012). Burawoy Meets Bourdieu. In *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment* (pp. 175–197). Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Burawoy, M. (2011). La domination est-elle si profonde? Au-delà de Bourdieu et de Gramsci. *Actuel Marx*, 50, (2), 166-190. <https://doi.org/10.3917/amx.050.0166>
- Buton, F., Lehingue, P., Mariot, N. & Rozier, S. (2016). *L'ordinaire du politique. Enquêtes sur les rapports profanes au politique*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- Carrel M. (2015), Politicization and publicization: the fragile effects of deliberation in working-class districts, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology* 2(3-4).
- Carmichael, S. & Hamilton, C. V. (1992): *Black Power: Politics of Liberation in America*, 2nd edition [1967]. New York: Vintage.
- Casilli, A. (2017). How venture labor sheds light on the digital platform economy, *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 3934-3954.
- Certeau, M. de, (1990). *L'invention du quotidien, 1. Arts de faire*. Paris: Gallimard.

- Chauvin, S. (2010). *Les agences de la précarité. Journaliers à Chicago*. Paris: Seuil.
- Chevallier, T. (2018). Des publics pas si dépolitisés. *Politiques de communication*, 2(11), 43-72.
- Collectif Rosa Bonheur (2019). *La ville vue d'en bas. Travail et production de l'espace Populaire*. Paris: Editions Amsterdam.
- Collovald, A., Lechien, M.-H., Rozier, S. & Willemez, L. (2002). *L'humanitaire ou le management des dévouements: enquête sur un militantisme de solidarité internationale en faveur du Tiers-monde*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Comby, J. B. (2015). À propos de la dépossession écologique des classes populaires. *Savoir/Agir* 33, 23-30.
- Corteel, D. (2015). Des déchets faire surgir une capacité d'agir. Enquête dans une association berlinoise de récupération. *Ethnologie française*, 45(3), 511-522.
- Darras, E. (1998). Pour une lecture réaliste des formes non-conventionnelles d'action politique. In E. Darras (Ed.) *La politique ailleurs*, Amiens: Curapp.
- Davenport, C. (2007). State repression and political order, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 1-23.
- Dazey, M. (2018). *In search of respectability: The politics of the Union des organisations islamiques de France*. PhD in political science. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- Dejours, C. (1998). *Souffrance en France: la banalisation de l'injustice sociale*. Paris: Seuil.
- Della Porta, D. & Diani M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. London: Blackwell.
- Desmond, M. (2014). Relational ethnography. *Theory and Society*, 43(5), 547-79.
- Demazière, D., Horn, F. & Zune, M. (2009). Les développeurs de logiciels libres: militants, bénévoles ou professionnels? In D. Demazière & C. Gadéa (Eds.), *Sociologie des groupes professionnels. Acquis récents et nouveaux défis* (pp. 285-295). Paris: La Découverte.
- Dufour, P., Bherer L. & Allison, C. R- (2015). 'Faire de la politique soi-même': le cas des mobilisations contre les gaz de schiste au Québec, *Revue canadienne de science politique*, 48(1), 125-146.
- Du Gay, P. & Lopdrup-Hjorth, T. (2016). Fear of the formal. *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 3(1), 6-40.
- Dunn, K. (2016). *Global punk: Resistance and rebellion in everyday life*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Duhalde, Montes Cató, J. S. & Rouxel, P. (2017). Le 'syndicalisme de base' dans l'Argentine kirchneriste. Une autonomie en question, *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, 86, 71-87.

- Earl, J. (2013). Repression and social movements. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*.
- Eliasoph, N. (1998). *Avoiding politics: How Americans produce apathy in everyday life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eliasoph N. (2011). *Making volunteers: civic life after welfare's end*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fantasia, R. (1989). *Cultures of solidarity consciousness, action, and contemporary American workers*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Ferree, M. (2004). *Soft Repression: Ridicule, stigma, and silencing in gender-based movements*. In D. J. Myers & M. Cress (Eds.) *Authority in Contention* (pp. 85-101). Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Fillieule, O. (2009) De l'objet de la définition à la définition de l'objet. De quoi traite finalement la sociologie des mouvements sociaux? *Politique et Sociétés*, 28(1), 15–36.
- Fillieule O. (2022), Les tribulations de l'engagement. Introduction. In O. Fillieule (Ed.), *Le malheur militant*, Louvain-La-Neuve: Deboeck.
- Fillieule, O. & Bennani-Chraïbi, M. (2003), Exit, voice, loyalty et bien d'autres choses encore.... In Bennani-Chraïbi, M. (Ed.). *Résistances et protestations dans les sociétés musulmanes* (pp. 43-126). Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Fine, G. & Holyfield, L. (1996). Secrecy, trust, and dangerous leisure: Generating group cohesion in voluntary organizations, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59(1), 22-38
- Fox, R. G. & Starn, O. (1997). (Eds.) *Between resistance and revolution: Cultural politics and social protest*: New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Fung, A. & Wright, E.O. (2003). Countervailing power in empowered participatory governance. In A. Fung A. & and E. O. Wright (Eds.), *Deepening democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance* (pp. 259-289). London: Verso.
- Frank, P. (2006). Islamism, Islamic reformism and the public stigmatization of Muslims: A study of Muslim discourses in France. *Oriente Moderno*, 86(3), 443-460.
- Galluzzo, A. (2020). *La fabrique du consommateur. Une histoire de la société marchande*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Gamson, W. (1992). *Talking politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilliom, J. (2001). *Overseers of the poor: Surveillance, resistance, and the limits of privacy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Giraud, B. (2009). Des conflits du travail à la sociologie des mobilisations: les apports d'un décloisonnement empirique et théorique. *Politix* 86(2), 13–29.

- Gluckman, M. (1960). *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Griesbach, K. et al. (2019). Algorithmic Control in Platform Food Delivery Work, *Socius*. doi: 10.1177/2378023119870041.
- Grignon, C. & Passeron, J.-C. (1989). *Le savant et le populaire: misérabilisme et populisme en sociologie et en littérature*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Hamidi, C. (2020). Associations et mouvements sociaux In O. Fillieule et al. (Eds.) *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux* (pp. 73–81). 2nd edition. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Haenfler, R., Johnson, B. & Jones, E. (2012). Lifestyle movements: exploring the intersection of lifestyle and social movements. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(1), 1-2.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*, London: Routledge.
- Higginbotham, E. B. (2003). *Righteous discontent: the women's movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880 - 1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Holloway, J. (2002). *Change the world without taking power: The meaning of revolution today*. Amsterdam: International Institute for Research and Education.
- Jan, A. (2018). Livrer à vélo... en attendant mieux. *La nouvelle revue du travail*, 13 <http://journals.openedition.org/nrt/3803>
- Jenkins, S. (2002). Organizing, advocacy, and member power: a critical reflection. *WorkingUSA*, 6(2): 56-89
- Jounin, N. (2009). *Chantier interdit au public*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Karpowitz, C. F. & Mendelberg, T. (2014). *The Silent sex: gender, deliberation, and institutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kelley, R. (1993). 'We are not what we seem': rethinking black working-class opposition in the Jim Crow South. *The Journal of American History*, 80(1), 75-112
- Kergoat, P. (2014). Entre élaboration et transmission (en situation de travail). Quand le genre bouscule les résistances. In J.-A. Calderón & V. Cohen (Eds.), *Qu'est-ce que résister? Usages et enjeux d'une catégorie d'analyse sociologique* (pp. 39–52). Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
- Laferté, G. (2014). Des études rurales à l'analyse des espaces sociaux localisés. *Sociologie*, 5, 423–439.

- Lamamra, N. (2016). *Le genre de l'apprentissage, l'apprentissage du genre: quand les arrêts prématurés révèlent les logiques à l'œuvre en formation professionnelle initiale*. Zurich: Seismo.
- Lamont, M., Silva, G. M., Welburn, J. S., Guetzkow, J., Mizrachi, N., Herzog, H. & Reis, E., (2016). *Getting respect: responding to stigma and discrimination in the United States, Brazil and Israel*. Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Leclère, C. (2017). Les nudges: un outil pour les politiques publiques? *Idées économiques et sociales*, 188(2), 41-47.
- Lemozy, F. (2019). La tête dans le guidon. *La Nouvelle Revue du Travail*, 14. <http://journals.openedition.org/nrt/4673>
- Luhtakallio, E. (2012). *Practicing Democracy: Local activism and politics in France and Finland*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Mansbridge, J. (2013). Everyday Activism. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*.
- Martinez-Alier, J. (2003). *The Environmentalism of the poor: a study of ecological conflicts and valuation*. Edward Elgar.
- McMahon, M. (1997). From the ground up: ecofeminism and ecological economics. *Ecological Economics*, 20(2), 163-173.
- Mauger, G. (2006). *Les bandes, le milieu et la bohème populaire. Étude de sociologie de la déviance des jeunes des classes populaires, 1975-2005*. Paris, Belin.
- Mazouz, S. (2014). Le cadre de l'émancipation, *Politix*, 4(108). Available at: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politix-2014-4-page-31.htm> (Accessed: 22 June 2019).
- McQuarrie, M. (2015). No contest: participatory technologies and the transformation of urban authority. In C. W. Lee, M. McQuarrie & E. T. Walker (Eds.), *Democratizing inequalities: dilemmas of the new public participation* (pp. 83-101). New York, NYU Press.
- Minkoff, D. C. (1994). From service provision to institutional advocacy: The shifting legitimacy of organizational forms. *Social Forces*, 72(4), 943-69.
- Molinier, P. (2000). Virilité défensive, masculinité créatrice. *Travail, genre et sociétés*, 3, 25-44. <https://doi.org/10.3917/tgs.003.0025>
- Moore, B. (1978). *Injustice: The social bases of obedience and revolt*. White Plains NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- de Moor, J. (2016). Lifestyle politics and the concept of political participation. *Acta Politica*, 52(2), 179-197.

- Nada, E. (2020). *La mise au travail d'une jeunesse populaire: ethnographie multi-située du dispositif de transition dans un contexte urbain de Suisse romande*. Doctoral thesis: Université de Neuchâtel.
- Neveu E. (2002). *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Ollion, E. (2015). Des mobilisations discrètes: sur le plaidoyer et quelques transformations de l'action collective contemporaine, *Critique internationale*, 2(67), 17-31.
- Orr, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Péchu, C. (2020). Squatt. In O. Fillieule et al. (Eds.), *Dictionnaire des mouvements sociaux* (pp. 73-81). 2nd edition. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.
- Perrot, M. (1985). Où en est en France l'histoire des femmes? *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 1(1), 3-5. doi: 10.3406/mat.1985.403974.
- Piven, F. F., Cloward R., (1977). *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Ploux, F: & Le Gall L. (2012). Conclusion. In L. Le Gall, M. Offerlé & F. Ploux (Eds.), *La politique sans en avoir l'air: aspects de la politique informelle, XIXe-XXIe siècle* Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Podmore, J. (2006). Gone 'underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 7(4), 595-625.
- Polletta, F. (1999). Free space in collective action. *Theory and Society*, 28, 1-38.
- Pruvost, G., (2015). Faire village autrement. Des communautés introuvables aux réseaux d'habitats légers. *Socio-Anthropologie*, 32 ,21-39.
- Ravenelle, A. (2019). *Hustle and gig: Struggling and surviving in the sharing economy*. Oakland CA: University of California Press.
- Renahy, N., (2010). Classes populaires et capital d'autochtonie. Genèse et usages d'une notion. *Regards Sociologiques*, 40, 9-26.
- Roche, A. (2016). *Des vies de pauvres: les classes populaires dans le monde rural*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Roscigno, V. & Hodson R. (2004). The organizational and social foundations of worker resistance, *American Sociological Review*, 69(1), 14-39.
- Sainsaulieu, I., Surdez, M. & Zufferey, E. (2016). La sociabilité politique entre travail et hors travail. In F. Buton, S. Rozier, P. Lehingue & N. Mariot (Eds.), *L'ordinaire du politique* (pp. 129-153). Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.

- Sainsaulieu, I. (2012). La mobilisation collective à l'hôpital: contestataire ou consensuelle? *Revue française de sociologie*, 53(3), 461-492.
- Sainsaulieu, I. (2017). *Conflits et résistances au travail*. Paris: Presses de Science Po.
- Sainsaulieu, I. & Surdez, M. (2012). *Sens politiques du travail*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Sainsaulieu, I. (2020). *Petit bréviaire de la lutte spontanée*. Paris: Le Croquant.
- Sainsaulieu, I. (2021). Over-mobilization, poor integration of care groups: the French hospital system in the face of the pandemic, *Forum for Social Economics*, 51(2), 207-219. doi: 10.1080/07360932.2021.1946706.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ségrestin, D. (1985). *Le phénomène corporatiste. Essai sur l'avenir des systèmes professionnels fermés en France*. Paris: Fayard.
- Siblot, Y. (2018). Entretenir un rapport mobilisé à sa condition sociale en milieu populaire. *Société's contemporaines*, 109, 65-92.
- Silver, H. Scott A. & Kazepov, Y. (2010). Participation in urban contention and deliberation, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34(3), 453-477.
- Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class & gender: Becoming respectable*. London; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi: Sage.
- Skocpol, T. & Williamson V. (2012). *The Tea Party and the remaking of American conservatism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snow, D. A. & Moss, D. (2014). Protest on the fly: toward a theory of spontaneity in the dynamics of protest and social movements. *American Sociological Review*, 79(6), 1122-1143.
- Spire, A. (2018). *Résistances à l'impôt, attachement à l'État. Enquête sur les contribuables français*. Paris: Seuil.
- Srnicek, N. (2016). *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Talpin, J. (2016). Une répression à bas bruit. Comment les élus étouffent les mobilisations dans les quartiers populaires. *Métropolitiques*, février.
- Talpin, J. (2019). L'église comme arme de lutte. La communauté religieuse au service de la justice sociale à Los Angeles. In I. Sainsaulieu, E. Barozet, R. Cortesero & D. Mélo (Eds.), *Où est passée la justice sociale? De l'égalité aux tâtonnements* (pp. 263-274). Lille: Presses du Septentrion.
- Talpin, J. (2016). *Community organizing: de l'émeute à l'alliance des classes populaires aux États-Unis*. Paris: Raisons d'agir

- Tarrow, S. (1989). *Democracy and disorder. Protest and politics in Italy.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, K. Y. (2016). *From Black Lives Matter to Black liberation*, New York: Haymarket Books.
- Thompson, E. P. (1963). *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: Gollancz.
- Tissot, S. (2007). *L'État et les quartiers: genèse d'une catégorie de l'action publique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Tsing, A. L., (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*, Yale: Yale University Press.
- Vallas, S. P. & Schor, J. B. (2020). What do platforms do? Understanding the gig economy. *Annual Review of Sociology* 46.
- Vigna X. & Zancarini-Fournel M. (2009). Intersections entre histoire du genre et histoire ouvrière. *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 38 | 2013, 181-208.
- Voirol, O. (2005). Les luttes pour la visibilité. Esquisse d'une problématique. *Réseaux*, 129-130 (1), 89-121.
- Weber, F., (1989). *Le travail à-côté : une ethnographie des perceptions*. Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales.
- Woodcock, J. (2017). *Automate This! Delivering Resistance in the gig economy*. <https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/automate-delivering-resistance-gig-economy> [Accessed 18 Mar. 2018].
- Woodcock, J. & Waters, F. (2017). *Far from seamless: a workers' inquiry at Deliveroo*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2017/09/20/far-seamless-workers-inquiry-deliveroo/> [Accessed 18 Mar. 2018].
- Workers Inquiry Network (2020). *Struggle in pandemic: A collection of contributions on the COVID-19 crisis*. Reedsy. <https://notesfrombelow.org/issue/struggle-pandemic> [Accessed 15th May 2020].
- Wright, E. O., (2010). *Real Utopias*. London: Verso.
- Wu Ming 1 (2022). *Q comme Qomplot: Comment les fantasmes de complot défendent le système*. Montreal: Lux.
- Zufferey, E. (2016). Le hacking: entre support à la professionnalisation et substitut au travail. *Mondes du Travail*, 16-17, 125-137.