

Beyond Property Destruction



The Tactical Analysis
Series



This text was written by tom nom(A)d with the help of many others

Beyond Property Destruction is the fourth installment in the
Tactical Analysis Series

This and other installments can be found at
introanarchy.blogspot.com

Suggested Reading:

US Army Field Manual 3-19.15- fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-19-15.pdf

On War- Carl Von Clausewitz

Society Against The State- Pierre Clastres

Cyberwar Is Coming! (Arquilla and Ronfeldt)

Networks and Netwar Chapters 1,4,6,9 (Arquilla and Ronfeldt)

From the Centre to the Periphery- Alfredo Bonanno

Armed Joy- Alfredo Bonanno

Intro To Civil War- Tiqqun

20 Thesis on the Subversion of the Metropolis- The Invisible Committee

Our Enemies in Blue- Kristian Williams

Lockdown America- Michael Parenti

Overkill: The Rise of Paramilitary Police Raids in America: Radley Balko

*note: Balko is a fellow at the CATO Institute, a super capitalist think-tank. I have endless disdain for what CATO does but this piece is really good.

Intro

“All politics is against the police”

- Jacques Ranciere

There have been some remarkably disruptive concentrations of property destruction in the last series of years. This is a welcome shift away from the aimless black blocs marching in circles with no obvious direction, away from blocs that rely on numerical concentration in a specific space, away from the island effect (where a group at the front becomes isolated and boxed in because the rest of the bloc has dispersed due to some minor police threat). The streets of Athens, London, Pittsburgh, Santa Cruz, Asheville, Oakland, Los Angeles, Vancouver and Toronto (among others and the list grows daily) have been littered with broken glass and barricaded off with burning dumpsters (or cop cars). But beyond the ability to become immediately appropriated by the media spectacle and the post-action pay-day for plate glass companies, something seems lacking. From the obsession with “riot porn” to the images on the materials that are produced to “explain” or call for actions, this reliance on property destruction, both as a tactic and indicator of “success”, has moved from being a tactic, conceived of in a tactical sense, to a fetishized necessity, a trap that we do not seem to be able to move away from. Maybe it is the militant rejection of nonviolence coupled with overwhelming police force, leaving property destruction as a direct, yet low risk alternative to actual conflict; but regardless of the reasons we need to move away from this tactical definition, this concept of a certain tactical necessity, and move beyond property destruction.

Property destruction can be remarkably disruptive, especially in high concentrations, but it has come to exist as some sort of abstract anarchist threat in a reactionary politics of

consequences. Every time a city announces a summit the calls to action go out, the grandstanding starts, the hype builds, and the security apparatus is put in place to “maintain order”. The script has played itself out, and seemingly without end or even acknowledgment that we have been down this path before. Yet, this discussion of where to go from here tends to fall into a series of ridiculous dichotomies; direct action or community organizing (as if there is a separation) or the endless violence or nonviolence debate (as if concepts can ever speak of particular tactical terrains). In this collapse into dichotomy we have lost the fundamental purpose of the discussion, what we are doing and how it is, or is not, effective. In other words, in the swirling conversations about concepts and definitions one thing gets lost, tactics, action, material tactical situations. It is not as simple as saying that property destruction is the logical surpassing of nonviolence, we need to look at tactics themselves, and remove them from the conceptualizations of politics that we have all become so “fond” of.

[This is not a call for a return to the days of mass movements or the large-scale parades of the antiwar movement that were as well attended as they were ineffective, far from it. It is about seeing beyond this dead end of mass actions and the shattered windows that sometimes result. In other words, these tactics are exactly that, tactical deployments into space, deployments with effects that change tactical terrains. It is not a question of the affectivity of property destruction or how rioters constitute our “subjectivity”, or something like that; this is merely a question of the material dynamics of conflict. When we look at these instances of concentrated property destruction, or even the isolated attack in the middle of the night, we need to see not the action itself but rather the tactical medium that it exists in and as a part of.]

antagonism, to the point of making definition inoperable. In other words, we need to really get over this idea of the anarchist revolution, or of insurrection as a categorical goal, and realize that insurrection is constant to more or less of a magnitude. To say that insurrection is constant is to say nothing but to rename the constancy of crisis that is always present in every moment. But this thing that we call the “anarchist movement” needs to sever itself from the notion that we are politics, that we exist to define moments by transferring politics across time and space. We need to stop pretending that we are gods predicting situations and determining moments from some transcendental point of view and realize the other possibility of the philosophical; that in its very stating, in the very reality of it being an action in a particular moment, it generates effects/affects and generates possibility. We need to understand “the movement” for its potential. In the very absence of being able to define the anarchic we always exists within our own impossibility, and we should embrace this. Instead of existing as a political movement in the traditional sense we need to realize our very “power”, that as the undefinable we can amplify the crisis in the attempt to operate definition. We need to become, not a mass movement, but rather organize and prepare to amplify crisis and antagonism through tactical means. It is only through becoming a tactical attempt rather than another form of political definition that we can amplify the crisis in the logistical operations of the state and make politics itself possible.

As we mentioned earlier, we must get beyond the notions of “victory” and “defeat”, but this requires us to challenge another categorical mythology handed down to us from the trajectory of traditional politics; the myth that movements in themselves accomplish anything directly. We have to dispel the notion that anarchists are the “movement”, that we directly construct “the new world”. This trap has led us down the road of traditional politics to often, into the trap of attempting to define moments and enact theory. If we can learn anything from the gulags, the massacres and the numerous other failures of the radical project it is that once we go down this road of defining moments, the moment we go beyond understanding “our role” as anything but being another disruption to the functioning of the state, we come to replicate the very impossibilities that have plagued all politics, the arrogance of disregarding the very basic fact that theory exists at a divide from the material. Once we forget that we come to replicate the very possibility of the police. It is not that we ourselves cannot have “politics”, it is not that we cannot take positions, on a certain level we are attempting to encourage the assertion of positions and possibilities that can enter into conflict. Rather it is that we should not be so arrogant as to assume that those are something other than vain attempts to make sense of the world. It is not about the operation of theory, which is really nothing but an opinion from a particular point of view, but rather it is about generating the possibility of possibility; of generating the possibility of politics itself through the disorganization of the police.

The police exist to prevent conflict, but do so by employing conflict. However the goal of the logistics of police is to define situations and to operate that definition to the point of eliminating conflict itself. If we are to avoid our downfall, if we are to make politics itself possible, the operations of action must exist to amplify conflict, to increase

The focus or fetishization of property destruction has tended to come from two perspectives, perspectives that are not only not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. On the one hand property destruction is spoken of affectively, as something that has an affective resonance with those that carry out the actions. On the other property destruction and its fetishization tend to focus attention on the act itself, as if any action has some inherent meaning outside of the terrain and medium that it exists within.

This focus on affectivity, the idea that an action is carried out for the affective results, exists as an attempt to isolate actions while marginalizing the action in some attempt to “proliferate subjectivities”. In order for this sort of analysis to carry through the action needs to be isolated as a site of generation, as some space that will generate results, and then be analyzed in relation to this affective result. In other words, what occurs, at the point of treating actions as something with a specified, legible, result, is that the action becomes isolated from history, from the dynamics of conflict that construct its possibility, and then judged through some “transcendental” lens, in this case the transcendental lens of abstracted affective profit. But this isolation, in order to obtain some “profit” or gain in the amount of possible subjective manifestations, is just another form of isolating action from the context that it is a result of and produces. It seems odd to how much some of this rhetoric surrounding affectivity, especially among the more hipster among us, begins to resemble early capitalist arguments about the importance of material profit. We have noticed the same focus on the isolation of “individuals” from the shifting totality that we exist within, that constructs our possibilities, combined with a discourse of profit. It is not that we should reject affectivity or something like that. . Rather it is that we need to understand the coimmance, the necessary relation, between the affective and the effective. In other words, there are no actions that in themselves exist purely affectively,

there is always an effect, and with that effect a consequent construction of other particular

moments.

Action itself exists as a manifestation of one of a series of possibilities present at any

moment and has effects, it participates in the construction of other possibilities. To put it another way, there is no action that is not necessarily external, that does not project a

certain existence into the world, and on that level there is no way to separate the effective from the effective, effective results from effects. Again, it is not that we should reject

that we can see into the future to determine that amount of possibilities that any action can generate, which would require some odd ability to transcend the particular time and

space of existence in a particular moment. In other words, due to the necessary

connection between the effective and the effective the ability to predict the affectivity of an action, to plan effective actions, is an impossibility. There is just no way to sit in a

room and determine the possible effects, the shifts in the terrain of action that we call a world, before an action is taken. And, because no action exists completely internally, no

action is completely effective, all action implies effect and thus a reconstruction of the entirety of the terrain of existence in the very "truth" of its occurrence as something that

had not occurred before.

Nothing can exist as more or less effective, all moments are singular as what they are,

they are all moments that have never occurred before, and as such we cannot understand something like the effective as a quantity that produces subjectivities (especially because

the very act of production is one that is necessarily also an effect, but that is a minor point here). The effective is not a quantity and its coimmanence with the effective, or the tactical,

“Conclusion”

“The movement of time is guaranteed by the birth of generation after generation, a never-ending succession that fills the gods with fear”
-Mikhail Bakhtin

The fetishization of property destruction makes a series of fatal errors, but two of these errors are primary. On the one hand it relegates action to isolated times and spaces.

When we focus on individual broken windows, or spaces of concentrated destruction, we fail to see the tactical terrain that made this space possible, the amplification of the

constant crisis in policing that generated this possibility. Instead we relegate action to broken glass, to isolated points in a vacuum, separated from the tactical medium. Again,

we are not here to reject property destruction, just its fetishization. We need to understand that property destruction has a space, but it is not in “riot porn” videos on

Youtube. The place of property destruction is that it exists as one of many means to amplify the crisis in policing, to generate space for more actions to occur which further

amplify this crisis to the point of rupture, the point of disorganization. But we need to understand this rupture, this disorganization, not as an end but as the possibility of

possibility itself, as nothing but a beginning. Like in Napoleonic strategy disorganization is not some goal, not a singular moment in history where the cops are run off the street,

but rather is a constant movement that makes policing impossible and severs the state from any possibility of material attempts at manifestation. What the fetishization of

property destruction has done is that it has taken these gaps for granted. It has squandered them on actions that only exist in isolated moments, that begin and end with

the swing of a crowbar rather than understanding the broken window as something that amplifies, as something that disorganizes or has resonance.

proliferate, crisis amplifies, and, if not reinscribed, the logistics of the police becomes disorganized to more or less magnitude. In a story about the Greek insurrection an anarchist said that they knew the insurrectionary events had resonance when they realized that old ladies were smoking cigarettes on the train and telling the cops who came to stop them to “fuck off!”. In other words, the insurrection had resonance because, long after the windows were replaced, long after the streets were cleared of the burned out carcasses of cars, the ability of the police to project themselves through space, the ability of the state to operate logistically, was still disrupted; and in this disruption the space to realize new possibilities was present, even if that only meant that people smoked on the subway with impunity.

necessarily means that not only does all action exist as one trajectory of affect/effect within a innumerable series of actions (or everything that has ever occurred) and trajectories that come into conflict in the tactical medium but that this very conflict, this very collision of trajectories means that not only is the future indeterminable but that the conflict itself, the unfulfilled trajectory of affect/effect is what constructs what we call the world. To go back to something Patton said, following Clausewitz, “no battle plan survives first contact with the enemy”. In other words, this theoretical attempt to isolate affectivity, to predict affective consequences, is not wrong in the absolute conceptual sense, but it is plainly impossible. We project the theoretical within this smooth context devoid of actions and affect/effect, devoid of conflict, devoid of the unfulfilled; but the moment any action occurs the very context that was theorized is already obsolete, the theoretical and the material necessarily exist at a division across a wide gap.

Now I do not want to reject the affective consequences of direct action. Going on “missions”, smashing bank windows, taking out cameras, building barricades, running through streets has a large affective result for a lot of people. For some of us that grew up in places that elevated property to the status of the sacred destroying property was a way to “break free” from that particular limit that we had placed on ourselves. For those of us that grew up in places where there was very little property to fetishize destroying banks and fighting cops exists as a way to find an outlet for the rage that we had always felt about the positions that we had been relegated to from birth. It was a way to get over the fear that the police had instilled in us from a very young age when they rolled up on us, searched us, walked into our classrooms to pull people out for “questioning”, beat us for minor infractions and then dropped us off without being arrested (because arrest would entail explanation), the killings in cold blood, the criminalization of our youth, the

friends locked in the dungeons of America; for us it was about finding a catharsis, a way to fight, a way to feel powerful in a world that constantly beat us down. But often this discourse of affectivity tends to focus on only the "positive" or "empowering" aspects of property destruction and fails to deal with the trauma, the mental affects that this has had on a lot of us that have been in some "serious" situations; and we feel that this has a lot to do with the inattention that trauma gets in our community, but that is a topic for another essay.

This focus on affectivity exists as a result of and comes to reinforce a certain theory of isolation. To focus on the affective in action, to the exclusion of the coimmance with the affective, can only be possible through a dual isolation, the isolation of agents and the isolation of actions. The focus on the affective exists within a focus on "subjectivity"; Now we all love the situationists but they made this same error. While recognizing that our actions can cause wider destabilizations, the purpose of these destabilizations became about the manifestation of some "subjective" desires. Now we are not rejecting the existence of a certain sense of the "subjective", rather what we need to reject is the separation of this "subjectivity" from some form of "objectivity". In other words, we need to reject the basic error of the Enlightenment, the separation of the subjective from the objective, the "individual" from the totality of our existences, the "self" from history. It is an error that permeates Kant and Hegel and one that has again crept in with this discourse of affectivity. But back to the point, to focus on the subjective to the exclusion of effects, or the external and tactical, is to isolate our existence into the perpetuation of some form of the "individual", to isolate "selves" from the very conditions and possibilities of our existences. Not only is that the same move replicated in all capitalist discourse (the isolated producer that owns property which implies exclusion as well as

operates with a certain gap. The information gathered still needs to be fit within notions of sense. Namely it needs to be sent from the field, interpreted and categorized and then orders for movement, new strategic projections, need to be transferred back to the field. In other words, even though the logistics of policing has increased in speed it can never overcome its very impossibilities, its constant crisis.

Because policing operates as a logistical attempt to define space, even fluidly define space, it is always locked in the impossibility of being undetermined through its own operation in a resistant medium. Each and every thing that occurs, each breathe, each step, each person leaving a building or crossing a street, each conversation, generates a new contingency and a series of possibilities that strategic models could not project. When we think of strategic models, even fluid ones, we need to see their narrowness in time and space. They fundamentally are conceived of in a theoretical vacuum in a certain time and place, from a certain perspective with a certain amount of information and a particular interpretation of this information. They operate purely in the realm of the categorical in order to make sense of a situation that it always shifting. And the ability to cope with and mitigate the possibilities generated through basic, banal everyday actions is limited. Each act of property destruction gives them something else to respond to, each barricade disrupts their ability to project through space, each action amplifies the crisis that is always present, especially in spaces where "self-control" does not operate totally. Materially, the police are constantly disorganized, it is just a matter of whether they have the capacity to constantly project or reinscribe themselves into space. This is why they patrol constantly, why they stand on sidewalks, why they use overwhelming brutality, it is in an attempt to amplify this projection to operate in the face of their uncertainty. But in the gaps that are always constantly forming and dissipating possibilities

sections of the city. The very magnitude of the force of the occupation, and the sheer number of arrests through arbitrary searches and road checkpoints, is meant to reverberate in times of non-concentration by defining territory so thoroughly, including through the elimination of “problem elements”, that the very space becomes defined almost totally. She also began the use of “Predictive Policing” in DC which uses “crime stats” to “predict” where “crime” will occur. In other words, the attempt is to take trends that are categorized by the police as “criminal” and use that very categorical analysis to gather data, analyze this data and from that determine coverage. This approach found its logical absurdity in New York City under Giuliani. The staffing of the NYPD was based on “criminal statistics” at a time when they instituted the concept of “zero-tolerance” policing. Instead of being fluid with enforcement every situation that was defined as criminal, even for minor infractions, resulted in the arrest of not only the “perpetrator” but usually anyone else that may have information on what occurred. The police are the ones that create “crime”. It is not just that they are an organized “criminal” apparatus but that it is in the arrest that a situation is defined as a “criminal” situation. So when they redefined the threshold for the definition of the criminal they of course found that “crime” went up, which justified the hiring of more police, which resulted in more arrests, which caused more cops to be hired, and so on. The size of the NYPD exponentially increased, along with the prison population, under this absurd logic which does nothing but generate total police state conditions; and this has only amplified even more since 2001 with the construction of New York as a zone of total warfare.

All of these approaches take into account that terrain is both resistant and fluid, that the very reality of existence is that it occurs within a resistant medium that shifts through its very actions. But this attempt, though it affords a certain amplification in fluidity, still

use) it is also the generation of a “subject” that cannot speak, that would have no context for words, no way to make sense of things, no way to actually experience phenomenon. But in this isolation of agents there is a coimmanent isolation of actions. We tend to see single smashed windows, or even instances of large scale property destruction, as actions in themselves, as if they have meaning in themselves. Theory only exists as a way to make sense of the world, but it cannot actually describe moments which always exist as singular, unrepeatable, unreplicated in history. In other words, all actions are possible due to the dynamics of everything that has ever occurred, yet that totality of actions is something inaccessible in a moment. Theory is the impossible attempt to chain moments together, to generate concepts from some notion of a constancy of actions; what it forgets is that the ability to ever describe a moment, all the dynamics that led to the manifestation of a certain possibility, all the possible meanings, all the moments that have ever occurred, is impossible from the positionality of theory as something that occurs at a specific time and place; the theoretical requires transcendence that in itself is an impossibility. To put it another way, property destruction actions in themselves are meaningless, all actions are materially meaningless. Not that they do not have effects, but rather that there is no way to theorize about the affect/effect of an action or moment isolated from the totality of history that led to that moment and there is no way to make sense of history in any way that is not just more or less persuasive speculation.

Yet, this fetishization of property destruction as an action-in-itself is the attempt to do just that. When we isolate actions from the totality of history that led to the possibility of that action itself in order to make sense of the action itself we are consequently rejecting another view, the view of the context that the action exists within, the terrain of conflict that constructs possibility, the effects that action has in the construction of history, or the

dynamics of the tactical medium itself. This is just a really long way to say that we need to see beyond single actions, beyond single windows, beyond single streets isolated by the tactical medium that made these moments possible. In all instances of property destruction another phenomenon is presenting itself, one that we need to be able to see and analyze, if only speculatively. Rather than seeing single actions outside of the dynamics that they exist we need to look at tactical mediums as a dynamic, as a conflict and collision. When we look at the burning of cop cars in Toronto, the smashing of shopping districts in Santa Cruz and Asheville, the riots that broke out in Pittsburgh and the property destruction around Oakland after the verdict in the Oscar Grant case we notice one commonality, and it is not just that a lot of stuff got smashed. In each of these instances, and in innumerable other sites of unrest globally, beyond the property destruction, beyond the taking of streets, beyond the barricades, the ability of these events to be possible is the very disruption of police coverage, the disruption of the ability of police to suppress conflict, to stabilize situations, to operate their theoretical and strategic projections of a situation. What we are witnessing is not the result of any one action, any one window, but the result of a disorganization of the ability of the cops to define territory and situations, a break down that is always possible if we only take a moment to analyze police tactics through a certain lens.

This is not a rejection of the legitimacy of property destruction, whatever choices people make in actions are the choices they make. Rather, this is a rejection of the attempt to systematize property destruction by only focusing on this gap in police coverage, to only see the gap as an opportunity to break stuff rather than a disruption of the very dynamic that the operation of the state is an attempt to operate in itself. In other words, when we separate the gap from the dynamics that create these gaps we lose the very resonance that

should not understand rupture as some privileged historical moment, yet another metaphor for Revolution. Rather this rupture exists fluidly and along side space where projection can operate. But it is these spaces of rupture, these gaps in coverage where projection ceases to operate, that can be expanded and amplified as an amplification of the constant crisis present in all attempts to operate the logistics of policing. Numerous attempts have been made over the years to develop more fluid forms of strategy, or strategy that embraces its crisis in operation. These are loosely grouped under the term "topsiht". This approach, pioneered by the RAND Corporation, is based in the recognition of the perpetual crisis of policing and attempts to amplify projection through a process of constant strategic redefinition. This can be seen in the use of battlefield cameras at the end of soldiers guns, the use of satellite imagery and helicopters, as well as the use of undercoverers during demonstrations and in the process of organization in an attempt to gain access to spaces where projection does not operate. This ability to "see from above" to attempt to make sense of movements in "real-time" does not overcome the inability of categorical analysis and definition to transfer into the material world, it only speeds up the process of redefinition almost to the point of the elimination of the time of redefinition. But no matter the approach, this gap between the theoretical world of strategy and material and resistant mediums of conflict can never be closed.

We also see this in the policing of terrain through preemptive measures. In Washington DC for example this falls under two categories, All Hands On Deck and "Predictive Policing". All Hands On Deck is an approach pioneered by Chief Cathy Lanier in which police are all called off weekends and vacations for a weekend and literally occupy entire

operate this projection into the future by constructing terrain to fit the plan. Like the often cited Borges story, the map attempts to become the territory, but this is a fundamental impossibility. The failure is not in poor military planning but rather in the very concept of the plan; the idea that plans developed in a space with no resistance will ever survive even a single action. As action multiplies the crisis in the logistical attempt to operate the plan becomes amplified until it reaches the point of disorganization, the point where strategy is abandoned and conflict amplifies this impossibility of “coherence” to the point of operational rupture. The operation of the plan is not only a projection of a plan temporally but sets the stage for policing as a spatial projection, one that is always attempting to compensate for the impossibility of definition or the impossibility of philosophy applied.

The logistics of policing therefore, again, cannot be understood as something to be defeated but rather as a projection that can be disrupted and disorganized, a crisis that can be amplified. We cannot understand strategy as something to be destroyed but rather we need to understand projection for what it is, a capacity to operate a strategic projection in time and space. When we talk about capacity we are not just talking about material capacity or the amount of vehicles and personnel that can be mobilized but, rather, the ability to mediate contingency, the ability to operate logistically to define territory according to strategy. That capacity, as the ability to logistically project across time and space, is a capacity to deal with the crisis that the very operation of policing implies. When that capacity is exceeded the police are reduced to nothing but a physical force that operates in direct physical contact, responding to situations without being able to either define the limits of movement or space. This is what we call rupture, it is the disorganization of the logistics of policing and the policing of logistics itself. But we

conflict and destabilization amplify and instead take actions that in themselves exist as isolated opportunities taken rather than an amplification of the crisis in the functioning of the state itself. This attempt at systematization is largely known by the term “Plan B” and exists as both a strategy based in defeat and one that does nothing but amplify this defeat.

The concept underlying Plan B, that attacks an actions occur outside of concentrations of conflict, is sound, it is based in the necessity of the crisis in policing, the impossibility of a totality of policing. But, rather than seeing the gaps in police coverage, the impossibility of total policing, as something that can be amplified Plan B takes these gaps as “the best we can do”, as something to be exploited by single actions that can be easily mediated and repaired. It begins from the assumption that we are already defeated, that all scenarios necessarily lead to our defeat tactically, that no new possibilities are able to be generated, that the situation is totally defined and then goes to entrench this notion of defeat in our very actions and the way we imagine our tactical possibilities; this same mistake is being repeated by a similar group of people now with the notion of only being able to be pro-revolutionary, that the historical conditions are not “correct” for us to fight, as if they have all of a sudden become the sages of history. It is not that they are wrong, it is only that the ability to access this perspective necessitates one becoming able to transcend the particular moment of theory, but again this is the group of people that demands that we need a “new theology”, a new ideal or concept, and this is why they tend to separate insurrection from actual actions. Because, really, what is the importance of broken glass, how much existential weight is carried by a smashed ATM screen. What we need to begin to see is that even isolated attacks, if carried out with frequency, are important to the degree that they stretch the police apparatus to the breaking point, to the point of rupture. The word rupture is thrown around a lot in contemporary

insurrectionary anarchist theory but what we are speaking of here is the very material

situation where the cops are prevented from operating in and as a tactical terrain of action and begin reacting to a proliferation of actions on the street.

This occurred in Pittsburgh, and many have spoken about this. Rather quickly into the actions on September 24, 2009 the cops were unable to actually police the action and

began reacting in a frantic attempt to contain the rioting and respond to actions that had already occurred. This led to the hilarious scenario of a group of anarchists pulling an

action, dispersing and blocking down, and going back onto the street only to see the cops respond to the last place site they were called to almost 15 minutes after people had left. We need to look beyond the isolation of moments imposed by the theories that underlie

Plan B. Again, we are not rejecting property destruction...but we are here to reject Plan B, not in favor of some "Plan A", but in an attempt to take the thing that Plan B

recognizes, that there is always a necessary gap in police coverage, that policing exists as a dynamic in crisis, and amplify this crisis rather than understanding it as a static reality that we cannot amplify, one that only serves as an opening for actions that are isolated.

Until we begin to analyze the dynamic of policing as an operation in constant crisis we are doomed to minor attacks, that bear almost no marks hours later, locked within a

strategy of defeat. We are not here to claim that we understand victory, there are also to many anarchists claiming to know how to "fight the revolution", an equally absurdist

perspective and one that has been critiqued ad nauseum. Just because we are not arrogant enough to claim some insight into "victory" does not mean that we cannot call out the the

absurdity of defeatism.

apparatus through both casualties (the shifting of numeric balance) and in the very

shifting of the medium of combat itself. At the end of the day there would be time to regroup, count the dead, and reorganize. This period of reorganization was necessary in

order to continue fighting, to prevent the total failure the the operation of the conceptual "coherence" of the "army", or fighting force conceived of as a "unity" both of material

constancy and conceptual totality. The brilliance of Mongolian military strategy was not the brutal force employed but rather the inability to fall into this form of definition. From

the outset Mongolian units would begin dispersed across a vast territory and then converge to fight, dispersing and reforming when the situation suited. In this fluidity

whole militaries, legendarily powerful militaries, fell almost instantaneously. This dynamic also formed the core of Napoleonic military strategy in the tactic of constant

pursuit and the use of advanced skirmish lines. After battles Napoleonic militaries would not give this time for reorganization; rather they would pursue, continue the attack. The

point was not to win on the plane of force or the numerical. Mainly the success of Napoleonic tactic sets was to disorganize the opposing side, to amplify the impossibility

of the theoretical model and cause an amplification of disruption to the point of disorganization of the other side. In other words both tactic sets were primarily based not

on plans or strategy but the disorganization of the opposing sides ability to fight at all, the disorganization of the military apparatus rather than territorial victory, or the inscription

of operations over space. This has also been the primary issue that has plagued US military units fighting in Vietnam and now Iraq and Afghanistan, the inability to define

the "insurgency" within any models condemns them to operation without strategy. To put this another way, strategy develops a way to make sense of terrain. In the attempt

to operate strategically the attempt is not so much to move according to a plan but to

We can see this operation in the attempts of the military and police apparatus to compensate for their impossibility by constructing more and more fluid conceptual structures. But before we get to this we need to understand that at its base the logistics of policing is a projection forward in time. In order to allocate resources the police project from a fixed moment in time into the future. For example, the use of “crime statistics” to develop patrol patterns or the use of the study of past demonstrations to determine coverage patterns to prevent “civil disturbance”. But as has been shown through numerous experiences, this strategic perspective fails at the very outset, at the moment of enactment; “no battle plan survives initial contact” (Patton). As was spoken about at length earlier, the police rely on action that necessarily shifts the medium of operation, making the projection of the strategic an impossibility. This approach, of developing static strategic models, has failed dramatically in circumstances ranging from the fall of empires under Mongolian fluidity to the failure of force to quell guerilla conflicts. As Che said, if you can attack from anywhere, the battlefield becomes everything. In other words, at the moment that the strategic fails; at the moments where it fails to be able to be enacted, and it always must, there becomes no way to define terrain conceptually. It is a problem of the necessary gap between theoretical projection across time and space and material fluidity. But at its core, the strategic is an attempt to make sense of a fluid terrain of operation that attempts to apply itself.

In traditional military engagement between state forces battle lines were drawn and rules of engagement were agreed upon, the basic limits were set and adhered to. Primary among these, especially in the European context, was the temporality of battle. During battle individual combats would shift the terrain of the battle, disorganizing the military

The Impossibility of Total Policing or Why Policing Exists as a Motion

“War is the province of chance. In no other sphere of human activity must such margin be left for this intruder. It increases the uncertainty of every circumstance and deranges the course of events.”

-Carl von Clausewitz

When we look at police it is all too easy to see the riot shields, the armored personnel carriers, the tear gas, and the lock-step formations and forget that the police operate within a certain paradox, a certain impossibility. When we are on the streets it is easy to see the cops as some mechanistic force, marching to orders, and we begin to forget that they themselves move. To move outside of the context of viewing policing in mechanistic forms is not an attempt to “humanize” police, to make them into people with feelings. The very basic reality of policing itself is that the police exist as a logistical form of organization that attempts to accomplish the impossible. Like our friends that demand that theory can speak of the world itself, that it is directly applicable, the cops exist in the vain attempt to organize space and channel possibility to manifest some abstract theoretical principle, the construction of their own materially impossible “coherence” as well as the “unity” of time and space in the very operations of policing. This is not some reductionist claim to the necessity of certain police operations due to abstract political ideology, what we are speaking about is not so simple.

The state itself exists as a theoretical principle at its core, the idea of the nation as a singular unit, the idea that law can express some truth or operate within a certain immanence in particular moments, the idea that those that construct laws could possibly represent others. But on this level the state is something that exists on paper, in constitutions, in theory books. This is not what we are speaking about. There have been

a lot of really fascist theory books written, there have been a lot of attempts to generate some all-knowing theoretical principle that defines life itself, and that is problematic enough. But what we need to understand is that the state, though guided by certain notions of making sense of the world, do not exist on paper. Rather the state is the logistical attempt to make concepts manifest materially. In other words, the state itself does not exist without the attempt to structure the material possibilities of our lives, to construct immanence in the very moments that are existence; it cannot exist without the attempt to conceptualize all change, all life, all contingency within certain defined limits that must attempt to transcend the theoretical and become material. As we have spoken about already, the theoretical always exists as a certain impossibility. Not only must the state attempt to project theoretical principles (whether these are laws or "revolutionary principles" does not matter) into the future and across all space, particular momentary existences, and all moments from the moment of construction but, barring the state all of a sudden leaving the material world and becoming the "kingdom of god", it must do so at every moment, moments that are increasingly divergent from the moment of conception.. To put it another way, the state is a constant operation, a constant attempt to channel the dynamics of everyday life into the models generated by politicians, to make some consistency of moments operate in spite of the singularity and particularity of moments themselves. Theory is just not enough to accomplish this task. Regardless of how bought off some of think the average American may be they are still interpreting this form of agreement through a particular series of circumstances and experiences, in a particular way that changes momentarily, unless we can somehow actually freeze existence itself.

To cross this gap, to make the theoretical operate, requires an actual logistical form of

But these types of actions only operate due to a certain impossibility of definition amplified. The impossibility of definition of material moments is always present, and that is why the very operations of the state are always in constant crisis. But we cannot just look at crisis as something that can occur, or consequently goes through periods where it does not occur. The mistake that works like Nihilist Communism make is assuming that because a situation does not give off the air of being in crisis that it is somehow stabilized. But to assume this is to assume that at some point theory crosses this divide and becomes actualized in some immediate way. In other words, and to use an argument from Capital (Volume 1), it is not that abstract value actually functions, rather it must be inscribed over moments on a momentary basis, constantly, but in itself it is an impossibility. To say that crisis is ever eliminated, that there are periods of crisis and periods of non-crisis, is to make the assumption that sometime, on some level, concepts actually come to be joined with and define moments and objects. To mirror Adorno, the philosophical always maintains a separation between the conceptual and the object of contemplation, but a resistant separation, one that necessarily frames the conceptual without defining it while the conceptual frames the understanding of the object without ever being able to be inscribed, at the moment where inscription is attempted the very object of inquiry is changed and the conceptual must become the point of departure for the object. It is not that crisis exists or does not exist. Rather it is that crisis is perpetual in the attempt to actualize the impossibility of the philosophical. So instead of seeing crisis as only existing in some moments and not others we need to embrace the impossibility of philosophy becoming actualized and treat crisis as a magnitude, as generating more or less resistant mediums of operation or tactical mediums that become disruptive to the point of disorganizing the attempt to logistically materialize conceptual definitions.

Constant Crisis and Capacity

“Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security”
-John Allen Paulos

As was mentioned earlier, due to the very impossibility of policing numerically and tactically, the police must operate through a certain sense of projection. What this means is not just that they need to operate and move with a speed, both communicative and logistical, but also that, as a movement, it requires an absence of interference in order to function. Every person on the street that calls the cops, everyone that gives them information, all the snitches and informants, all the cameras, are minor in comparison to the overall effect of fostering a space organized through a certain notion of “self-control”. Now we do not want to get into the particular manifestations of self control, I think that these are obvious. But what this means is that not only do police project themselves spatially in a material way but that the crux of their ability to construct space, their ability to operate in non-resistant spaces, is a product of their potential projection. In the most concrete terms possible, it is not that people do not shoplift because there is a cop in every store but that the notion of being able to shoplift is made difficult by the possibility of arrest, by the possible projection of police into a space that they are not immediately within and as. For those that have marched in bloc marches or been in militant actions, the anonymity of the group and the mask gives space for action not just out of direct resistance to this projection but because in the organization to resist directly it prevents projection from operating outside of the physical proximity of the police. In other words, it is in this invisibility combined with movement that generates a profoundly resistant space, generating the possibility of all sorts of actions.

organization, or the police. To put this another way, it is not that the state is not at its basis a certain conceptual reality but just not one that can be grouped into the categories that we have generated to understand political history. It is not that that the United States is a liberal democracy, it is that the United States is a conceptual reality, in that it constructs its own reality, that exists in wildly divergent ways in different spaces and at different times; the United States exists as what it is now, a conceptual coherence which exists at a distance from the attempt at “coherent” operation not as some expression of a certain reality constructed in times gone by by rich white men. Rather, it is that the ideological allegiance claimed by the state itself, though it can serve to set a series of abstract limits to the state's operation (we have elections periodically for example and courts), is in itself largely inconsequential. To put this another way, the question is not the “what”, the attempt to conceptually define the state conceptually (which implies a materially impossible coherence and differentiation); rather, the question is “how”, a question of tactical operation in the impossible attempt to overcome the infinite distance between transcendental concept and materially articular moment. When we think of the state we need to not think of a political operation, an operation borne of conflict, but rather the attempt to operate as a totality in a constantly shifting tactical medium. To say this another way, the state is not, at its most basic, a political reality. Rather it is a logistical policing operation that attempts to avert conflict, that attempts to be the end of politics itself. For many of us this is clear in the post-Cold War age (hell, Francis Fukuyama wrote “The End of History and the Last Man” about this end of politics). But we need to see beyond the historical moment of the manifestation, or increasing “success” of this attempt to end politics and understand that the very possibility of this move lies in the basis of the state itself.

This may all seem like so much hot theoretical air, but the point is that when we speak of the state it makes no sense to talk of policies, rather we need to see policies (and politicians) as nothing but certain appropriations of a logistical attempt to operate a conceptual "unity" materially in a constantly shifting tactical medium through constant policing; this is what is meant by social war. A constant operation is waged everyday to operate a coherence of the operations of the State in a moment, a situation that, by the very fact that it is constructed by actions that are constantly generating different possibilities, is in itself necessarily particular in each moment. Social war is the reality of the state, not some fight to choose to engage in. If we choose to fight back, that is all the better, but we do not have a choice as whether to participate (ever tried to tell a cop that they have no authority over you... don't try it, we don't have the capacity to support more political prisoners).

But we are not just trying to make some fancy theoretical point about the state being a logistical operation, rather what we want to emphasize here is not only that the state is a logistical phenomenon, but that it is a logistical operation that exists in a state of constant crisis. The attempt to transcribe the theoretical, the legal, the ideological onto the material is an impossibility. To take an argument from Spinoza, if we were able to access the perspective that would allow us to see all of history, all possibility, all action, affect and effect, we would have to transcend our particular moments and encompass everything that exists, everything that had existed, everything that will exist, all moments in history and in that action itself would be impossible; we would only be able to speak while noise, everything at once. To encompass everything, to make determinations on moments and existences in moments, is also the impossibility of being able to act particularly, the impossibility of existing at all. Yet this is what the state is attempting to

very operation of the police there are always other possibilities open. We need to see beyond these categories of victory and defeat if and see that proliferation of possibilities in front of us all the time. Until we do this we are doomed to recognizing that "the police are stronger than us" and entrencheding this defeat in approaches that further construct our position as being "defeated".

how many hours have been devoted to talking about “what victory looks like”, is an impossibility. To claim victory implies that at some moment all action has ceased, that there is a static situation in place that can be termed victorious. But just as for the police, victory is impossible. Rather than thinking of victory we need to be thinking of movement, of speed, of the multiplication of possibilities. In other words, the logistical organization of the police is not an object to be defeated, rather it is an operation, that in the very constancy of crisis, can be disorganized and rendered increasingly inoperable. Defeat would mean the end of all options, the complete total end of action itself. But as we have mentioned at length, the very operation of the police generates possibilities in its attempt to eliminate possibility; it creates contingency in the constant security operation meant to define situations.

What this means is that there is never a tactical dead end, there are always other options, other possibilities, to the degree that we stop seeing the police as an institution that can control single actions, to the degree that we stop seeing our actions as singular actions, and begin to think of this conflict as a fluid tactical medium. The real fallacy of the dual approaches of Plan B and being “pro-revolutionary” are not even so much that they entrench defeat, although this is the case, but rather that they operate within the categories of victory and defeat but in different ways. Plan B -based tactical thinking entrenches the idea that we are already defeated in our attempts to be “victorious” over police and then comes around to say that our defeat can be mitigated by opening up other planes of conflict, only to the degree that the police are absent. The approach of being “pro-revolutionary” takes this a step further taking our “defeat” to be total, saying the “historical conditions are not correct” (what Hegelian bullshit!), and then moves into discouraging action at all, literally constructing “defeat” by failing to recognize that in the

do, this is the material attempt of the construction of the state in a moment, at once define existence in the theoretical-legal while at the same time encompass and define innumerable constantly shifting particular manifestations of the attempt to logistically operate this definition materially. To the degree that this logistics operates it is always in constant crisis, it is always reinscribing itself but only as a certain static “coherence”, as infinite particular mutations of this definition in its particular manifestations, or supposed manifestations.

But what does this all mean? Above and beyond everything we want to reject this “high” theory” abstractness that has come to pervade and destroy insurrectionist discourse. So we are not just putting all too many words on paper here. What this all points to is a certain impossibility of both the state that manifests in the constant crisis of its logistical operations. When we are looking at policing, at the attempt to make the state material, we are looking at a logistics in constant crisis, a logistics that is dealing with a dual impossibility.

On the one hand the impossibility is very material and numerical. There is no possibility of total policing spatially and mathematically. If we are to assume the totality of policing then the very differentiation of “police” would be an impossibility, the state would always already be an actual material immanence, and our existences would collapse into irrelevancy; to the degree that the police manifest through a separation, between itself and “non-police”, this totality remains always already impossible. So, if we take the many thousands of cops that they brought out in Pittsburgh for the G20, or the 50,000 that they are mobilizing for the G20 in Seoul, South Korea and stick them side by side they cover very little space. If we add all the fancy toys and vehicles that they use, they cover a little

more space but not much more. And these mobilizations exist at a much higher concentration than in normal days when summits are not in town. If we space that out across a major city their coverage begins to look rather weak. This all means that the police need to operate through a certain projection. They need to project themselves across space in order to amplify the effectiveness of these numbers through communications and vehicular transportation. In other words, the police are a logistical operation in constant movement, in constant motion, and they rely on the ability to move through space in order to attempt a construction of operational coherence..

This project is amplified through the use of switches, stings, undercoveres and informants to destroy our ability to trust our space and those around us. They stick cameras up at intersections and in "troubled neighborhoods", with big flashing lights on top, to give off the impression that we are being watched. When we look at it, we begin to see the police not as an institution but as a logistical operation in constant motion that is attempting to construct the very territory that we mediate our lives through, the tactical medium of conflict and resistance. This finds expression to its logical absurdity in the construction of grid cities, beginning with the Hausmannian reconstruction of working class areas of Paris, and the wide boulevards and freeways in the "inter-war" years to facilitate the movement and sight of police as well as the movement of capital in efficient ways. Machiavelli made it very clear in numerous writings that the street was a dangerous place, it was the space of action, where existences collided, and in this collision generated contingencies and possibilities. What this means is that, through various means, the police operate in the attempt to define space by dispersing the street itself, that their basic attempt is not to catch "perpetrators" but to prevent the very possibility of existence being able to have possibility to begin with. If they were relying on force and physical

And that is what is really at the heart of the impossibility of policing. The task itself, to end all motion, to cease all particularity, is in itself a task that requires the ability to transcend moments while always expressing itself in particular moments. It is this impossibility that leads to the material impossibilities of policing, the mathematical gaps that always must persist combined with the paradoxical attempt to use action to cease action, that really makes politics possible. This is the spirit behind the quote at the beginning of the pamphlet, that "All politics is against the police". If politics itself is a conflict, a collision between innumerable desires and the possibilities of action, then the very operation of the logistics of policing stands to operate only cryogenically, in the impossible attempt to cease this motion while at the same time amplifying it through its very operation. The impossibility of pure policing is the very impossibility of the philosophical becoming material, of moments becoming defined. It is not that the attempt is not made to realize the "promises of philosophy", it is that the very attempt implies a fascist attempt to define life itself. This attempt of the philosophical to materialize found expression in the Terror and the gulag, one organized around concepts of virtue and one around concepts of the definition of the revolutionary; this is the mistake of radical movements that is must always be avoided but always exists on the horizon. We see this ambition in all the great tyrants, from Robespierre to Lenin, from your local police captain to the president, the goal is always the same, "to fulfill the intentions of nature and the destiny of man, realize the promises of philosophy" (Robespierre).

What we need to realize is that, because the police exist as a logistical organization always in crisis, the basic categories of analysis that we have been using, those of victory and defeat, are outmoded. Victory is an impossibility. The very category of victory, and

policing must be one that always is in motion and thus an operation that is always causing a crisis in its own mobilization.

But let us be clear, as clear as something like mobility can possibly be on paper, what we are dealing with here is not just the impossibility of police in a vacuum. Rather we are dealing with the very impossibility of the state which attempts to materialize through the logistical organization of the police. The state exists as a total freezing and definition of situations. The modern nation state, but this goes for all formations of the state itself, can only exist conceptually as a definition of space and/or existence necessarily. For example, the concept of the United States does not exist without the definition of territory, and the divisions of territory and “powers”, but on the other hand it also exists through the very definition of existence, by defining what it means to be a citizen, an American. We saw this play out in the ridiculous dichotomy of American's versus “terrorists”, or Americans versus a completely ubiquitous definition of the term “terrorist” which came to mean in essence “that which is not American”. We also see this playing out in the debates around immigration. But what is at the heart of both dichotomies is not policy and enforcement, rather it is the very definition that the state relies on, the definition of existence through conceptual categorization. In other words, all circumstances, all moments, must be posited as the same, as framed through this conceptual system, one that comes to define itself. But this conceptual structure, with all the case law and legislation, is nothing without actualization, an actualization that is impossible at the very moment it attempts to express itself in any particular moment. The police are not an institution in a vacuum, rather they are the vain attempt to actualize the eternal in the momentary; to make the solidity of the conceptual operate.

presence in itself control would be lost quickly; rather the attempt is to project themselves through space to operate a certain, conceptual, tactical terrain materially as space. What this means however is that, regardless of the fear that cops strike into the hearts of many (particularly in working class neighborhoods), there are always gaps, there is always crisis.

This is the element of Plan B that we do find interesting. In Plan B based tactical thought the point of departure is the gap in coverage itself, the disregard for the more psychological elements of policing in favor of understanding the very impossibility of total coverage. Where it fails is it takes this and systematizes it into a conclusive approach; a rejection of certain possibilities in favor of others, particularly others that we feel is a cop out (no pun intended). But the reality of these gaps is not just a recognition of the impossibility of policing itself but rather the very possibility of the amplification of crisis itself, of politics itself. We are able to fight back to the degree that the logistical operation of policing fails in coverage. And it is these gaps that are amplified to the point of giving time and space for the property destruction actions that anarchists tend to hold in such high esteem. Again, what we need to see is not the end result (the smashed window, the broken ATM, the burning barricade) but how these are the end result of a tactical gap that has opened and as something that makes this gap widen, that makes this crisis amplify.

The second impossibility of policing is all the more glaring in light of the first. It is not that we can just look at the problems with this logistical operation numerically. The police have developed all sorts of ways to amplify their projection through “preparing the ground”, so-to-speak. So much time and resources are spent by police departments every

year on DARE programs, Neighborhood Watch, and auxiliary programs all to amplify this projection; and this does not even mention the more sublime weapons, the tear gas, helicopters and now sound weapons that are meant to be projections of force over vast areas in the literal sense rather than just possibly and metaphorically. The second impossibility of policing, rather than being about projection outwards is rather a paradox internally. Namely, the very attempt to operate a conceptual terrain of conflict is operated through an organization of conflict. Again, policing can never be total. The very concept of policing requires there to be something to police. We find this same issue with the state itself; while it needs to claim and organize its application over time and space at its horizon it must always recognize what it is not, the anarchic. Even though the police need to philosophically maintain the projection of the state itself, a projection that must operate in all time and space, it always recognize that there is something to police, something that destroys the objectivity of the operation of police. Therefore in order for the police to operate they must mobilize the very dynamic that they are trying to operate coherently, action itself. As we already spoke about earlier, the very necessity of all action, all moments, is that through action contingency and possibility are generated affectively/effectively. New possibilities are generated, new things occur that have never occurred before; the totality of history, the entirety of the collisions of everything that has ever occurred in any one moment is now a different totality, even in something as simple as a breath. And when we speak of moments and action here we are not speaking of a temporal moment but rather the reality of things occurring.

So if things occur, if moments occur, then the tactical medium in which action is carried out is a constantly shifting phenomenon. Yet in order for the police to function in any coherence the attempt of this functioning is to “unity”, operate and define these moments;

to chain them to other moments to construct some form of coherent and constant discourse of moments that must attempt to function materially. It is not in the theoretical that the issue arises; all theory must take on this transcendent mode. Rather it is in the attempt to cross this gap from the theoretical to the material, from a notion of sense to the attempt to manifest a certain sense materially. It is at the moment of action that the logistics of operation comes to operate within a paradox. At the moment of operation the very actions that are mobilized in the attempt to bridge this gap from the theoretical to the material, or from the strategic to the tactical, end up generating contingencies, shifting the tactical medium, and generating the very destabilization that the police are logistically organized to prevent. In other words, it is not that we can approach the police through value judgments, that somehow our individual opinions of the actions of the police, the way they violate our “humanity”, the issues with their “use of force” is what is at issue. Rather what is at issue is that the very attempt to logistically operate policing is in itself paradoxical, impossible, and thus the very operation itself is one that always attempts to mediate the very internal crisis that it generates in its very attempt. To put this another way, rather than seeing police as a static form of military organization we need to see their paradox for its very magnitude; the crisis in policing is constant in the very impossibility of its being applied. In order for policing to actually function as some pure policing, a policing that realizes some form of “pure policing” in which the state through policing applies totally and defines all moments, circumstance could never change, all moments would be defined by the operation of policing; in order for them to maintain “order” they could never act because all action unleashes conflict into the tactical terrain, the very redefinition of circumstance, that the organization of policing is mobilized to prevent. In the very fact that policing does act, in the very fact that action occurs to the degree that it does, in infinite ways at all moments, the very operation of